The Jhanas

in Theravada Buddhist Meditation

by

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Abbreviations

PTS = Pali Text Society edition
BBS = Burmese Buddhasasana Samiti edition
A. .... Anguttara Nikaya (PTS)
D. .... Digha Nikaya (PTS)
Dhs. .... Dhammasangani (BBS)
Dhs.A. .... Dhammasangani Atthakatha = Atthasalini (BBS)
M. .... Majjhima Nikaya (PTS)
M.A. .... Majjhima Nikaya Atthakatha (BBS)
Miln. .... Milindapanha (PTS)
PP. .... Path of Purification (translation of *Visuddhimagga*, by Bhikkhu Ñanamoli; Kandy: BPS, 1975)
S. .... Samyutta Nikaya (PTS)
SA. .... Samyutta Nikaya Atthakatha (BBS)
ST. .... Samyutta Nikaya Tika (BBS)
Vbh. .... Vibhanga (PTS)
Vin.A. .... Vinaya Atthakatha (BBS)
Vism. .... Visuddhimagga (PTS)
Vism.T. .... Visuddhimagga Tika (BBS)

1. Introduction

The Doctrinal Context of Jhana

The Buddha says that just as in the great ocean there is but one taste, the taste of salt, so in his doctrine and discipline there is but one taste, the taste of freedom. The taste of freedom that pervades the Buddha's teaching is the taste of spiritual freedom, which from the Buddhist perspective means freedom from suffering. In the process leading to deliverance from suffering, meditation is the means of generating the inner awakening required for liberation. The methods of meditation taught in the Theravada Buddhist tradition are based on the Buddha's own experience, forged by him in the course of his own quest for enlightenment. They are designed to re-create in the disciple who practices them the same essential enlightenment that the Buddha himself attained when he sat beneath the Bodhi tree, the awakening to the Four Noble Truths.

The various subjects and methods of meditation expounded in the Theravada Buddhist scriptures — the Pali canon and its commentaries — divide into two inter-related systems. One is called the development of serenity *(samathabhavana),* the other the development of insight *(vipassanabhavana).* The former also goes under the name of development of concentration *(samadhibhavana),* the latter the development of wisdom *(paññabhavana).* The practice of serenity meditation aims at developing a calm, concentrated, unified mind as a means of experiencing inner peace and as a basis for wisdom. The practice of insight meditation aims at gaining a direct understanding of the real nature of phenomena. Of the two, the development of insight is regarded by Buddhism as the essential key to liberation, the direct antidote to the ignorance underlying bondage and suffering. Whereas serenity meditation is recognized as common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist contemplative disciplines, insight meditation is held to be the unique discovery of the Buddha and an unparalleled feature of his path. However, because the growth of insight presupposes a certain degree of concentration, and serenity meditation helps to achieve this, the development of serenity also claims an incontestable place in the Buddhist meditative process. Together the two types of meditation work to make the mind a fit instrument for enlightenment. With his mind unified by means of the development of serenity, made sharp and bright by the development of insight, the meditator can proceed unobstructed to reach the end of suffering, Nibbana.

Pivotal to both systems of meditation, though belonging inherently to the side of serenity, is a set of meditative attainments called the *jhanas.* Though translators have offered various renderings of this word, ranging from the feeble "musing" to the misleading "trance" and the ambiguous "meditation," we prefer to leave the word untranslated and to let its meaning emerge from its contextual usages. From these it is clear that the jhanas are states of deep mental unification which result from the centering of the mind upon a single object with such power of attention that a total immersion in the object takes place. The early suttas speak of four jhanas, named simply after their numerical position in the series: the first jhana, the second jhana, the third jhana and the forth jhana. In the suttas the four repeatedly appear each described by a standard formula which we will examine later in detail.

The importance of the jhanas in the Buddhist path can readily be gauged from the frequency with which they are mentioned throughout the suttas. The jhanas figure prominently both in the Buddha's own experience and in his exhortation to disciples. In his childhood, while attending an annual plowing festival, the future Buddha spontaneously entered the first jhana. It was the memory of this childhood incident, many years later after his futile pursuit of austerities, that revealed to him the way to enlightenment during his period of deepest despondency (M.i, 246-47). After taking his seat beneath the Bodhi tree, the Buddha entered the four jhanas immediately before direction his mind to the threefold knowledge that issued in his enlightenment (M.i.247-49). Throughout his active career the four jhanas remained "his heavenly dwelling" (D.iii,220) to which he resorted in order to live happily here and now. His understanding of the corruption, purification and emergence in the jhanas and other meditative attainments is one of the Tathagata's ten powers which enable him to turn the matchless wheel of the Dhamma (M.i,70). Just before his passing away the Buddha entered the jhanas in direct and reverse order, and the passing away itself took place directly from the fourth jhana (D.ii,156).

The Buddha is constantly seen in the suttas encouraging his disciples to develop jhana. The four jhanas are invariably included in the complete course of training laid down for disciples.[1] They figure in the training as the discipline of higher consciousness *(adhicittasikkha),* right concentration *(sammasamadhi)* of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the faculty and power of concentration *(samadhindriya, samadhibala).* Though a vehicle of dry insight can be found, indications are that this path is not an easy one, lacking the aid of the powerful serenity available to the practitioner of jhana. The way of the jhana attainer seems by comparison smoother and more pleasurable (A.ii,150-52). The Buddha even refers to the four jhanas figuratively as a kind of Nibbana: he calls them immediately visible Nibbana, factorial Nibbana, Nibbana here and now (A.iv,453-54).

To attain the jhanas, the meditator must begin by eliminating the unwholesome mental states obstructing inner collectedness, generally grouped together as the *five hindrances (pañcanivarana):* sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry and doubt.[2] The mind's absorption on its object is brought about by five opposing mental states — applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one pointedness[3] — called the *jhana factors (jhanangani)* because they lift the mind to the level of the first jhana and remain there as its defining components.

After reaching the first jhana the ardent meditator can go on to reach the higher jhanas, which is done by eliminating the coarser factors in each jhana. Beyond the four jhanas lies another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepen still further the element of serenity. These attainments *(aruppa),* are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[4] In the Pali commentaries these come to be called the *four immaterial jhanas (arupajhana),* the four preceding states being renamed for the sake of clarity, the *four fine-material jhanas (rupajhana).* Often the two sets are joined together under the collective title of the eight jhanas or the eight attainments *(atthasamapattiyo).*

The four jhanas and the four immaterial attainments appear initially as mundane states of deep serenity pertaining to the preliminary stage of the Buddhist path, and on this level they help provide the base of concentration needed for wisdom to arise. But the four jhanas again reappear in a later stage in the development of the path, in direct association with liberating wisdom, and they are then designated the *supramundane (lokuttara) jhanas.* These supramundane jhanas are the levels of concentration pertaining to the four degrees of enlightenment experience called the supramundane paths *(magga)* and the stages of liberation resulting from them, the four fruits *(phala).*

Finally, even after full liberation is achieved, the mundane jhanas can still remain as attainments available to the fully liberated person, part of his untrammeled contemplative experience.

Etymology of Jhana

The great Buddhist commentator Buddhaghosa traces the Pali word "jhana" (Skt. *dhyana)* to two verbal forms. One, the etymologically correct derivation, is the verb *jhayati,* meaning to think or meditate; the other is a more playful derivation, intended to illuminate its function rather than its verbal source, from the verb *jhapeti* meaning to burn up. He explains: "It burns up opposing states, thus it is jhana" (Vin.A. i, 116), the purport being that jhana "burns up" or destroys the mental defilements preventing the developing the development of serenity and insight.

In the same passage Buddhaghosa says that jhana has the characteristic mark of contemplation *(upanijjhana).* Contemplation, he states, is twofold: the contemplation of the object and the contemplation of the characteristics of phenomena. The former is exercised by the eight attainments of serenity together with their access, since these contemplate the object used as the basis for developing concentration; for this reason these attainments are given the name "jhana" in the mainstream of Pali meditative exposition. However, Buddhaghosa also allows that the term "jhana" can be extended loosely to insight *(vipassana),* the paths and the fruits on the ground that these perform the work of contemplating the characteristics of things the three marks of impermanence, suffering and non-self in the case of insight, Nibbana in the case of the paths and fruits.

In brief the twofold meaning of jhana as "contemplation" and "burning up" can be brought into connection with the meditative process as follows. By fixing his mind on the object the meditator reduces and eliminates the lower mental qualities such as the five hindrances and promotes the growth of the higher qualities such as the jhana factors, which lead the mind to complete absorption in the object. Then by contemplating the characteristics of phenomena with insight, the meditator eventually reaches the supramundane jhana of the four paths, and with this jhana he burns up the defilements and attains the liberating experience of the fruits.

Jhana and Samadhi

In the vocabulary of Buddhist meditation the word "jhana" is closely connected with another word, *"samadhi"* generally rendered by "concentration." *Samadhi* derives from the prefixed verbal root *sam-a-dha,* meaning to collect or to bring together, thus suggesting the concentration or unification of the mind. The word *"samadhi"* is almost interchangeable with the word *"samatha,"* serenity, though the latter comes from a different root, *sam,* meaning to become calm.

In the suttas *samadhi* is defined as mental one-pointedness, *(cittass'ekaggata* M.i,301) and this definition is followed through rigorously in the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma treats one-pointedness as a distinct mental factor present in every state of consciousness, exercising the function of unifying the mind on its object. From this strict psychological standpoint *samadhi* can be present in unwholesome states of consciousness as well as in wholesome an neutral states. In its unwholesome forms it is called "wrong concentration" *(micchasamadhi),* In its wholesome forms "right concentration" *(sammasamadhi).*

In expositions on the practice of meditation, however, *samadhi* is limited to one-pointedness of mind (Vism.84-85; PP.84-85), and even here we can understand from the context that the word means only the wholesome one-pointedness involved in the deliberate transmutation of the mind to a heightened level of calm. Thus Buddhaghosa explains *samadhi* etymologically as "the centering of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object... the state in virtue of which consciousness and its concomitants remain evenly and rightly on a single object, undistracted and unscattered" (Vism.84-85; PP.85).

However, despite the commentator's bid for consistency, the word *samadhi* is used in the Pali literature on meditation with varying degrees of specificity of meaning. In the narrowest sense, as defined by Buddhaghosa, it denotes the particular mental factor responsible for the concentrating of the mind, namely, one-pointedness. In a wider sense it can signify the states of unified consciousness that result from the strengthening of concentration, i.e., the meditative attainments of serenity and the stages leading up to them. And in a still wider sense the word *samadhi* can be applied to the method of practice used to produce and cultivate these refined states of concentration, here being equivalent to the development of serenity.

It is in the second sense that *samadhi* and jhana come closest in meaning. The Buddha explains right concentration as the four jhanas (D.ii,313), and in doing so allows concentration to encompass the meditative attainments signified by the jhanas. However, even though jhana and *samadhi* can overlap in denotation, certain differences in their suggested and contextual meanings prevent unqualified identification of the two terms. First behind the Buddha's use of the jhana formula to explain right concentration lies a more technical understanding of the terms. According to this understanding *samadhi* can be narrowed down in range to signify only one mental factor, the most prominent in the jhana, namely, one-pointedness, while the word "jhana" itself must be seen as encompassing the state of consciousness in its entirety, or at least the whole group of mental factors individuating that meditative state as a jhana.

In the second place, when *samadhi* is considered in its broader meaning it involves a wider range of reference than jhana. The Pali exegetical tradition recognizes three levels of *samadhi*: preliminary concentration *(parikammasamadhi),* which is produced as a result of the meditator's initial efforts to focus his mind on his meditation subject; access concentration *(upacarasamadhi),* marked by the suppression of the five hindrances, the manifestation of the jhana factors, and the appearance of a luminous mental replica of the meditation object called the counterpart sign *(patibhaganimitta);* and absorption concentration *(appanasamadhi),* the complete immersion of the mind in its object effected by the full maturation of the jhana factors.[5] Absorption concentration comprises the eight attainments, the four immaterial attainments, and to this extent jhana and *samadhi* coincide.

However, *samadhi* still has a broader scope than jhana, since it includes not only the jhanas themselves but also the two preparatory degrees of concentration leading up to them. Further, *samadhi* also covers a still different type of concentration called momentary concentration *(khanikasamadhi),* the mobile mental stabilization produced in the course of insight contemplation of the passing flow of phenomena.

2. The Preparation for Jhana

The jhanas do not arise out of a void but in dependence on the right conditions. They come to growth only when provided with the nutriments conductive to their development. Therefore, prior to beginning meditation, the aspirant to the jhanas must prepare a groundwork for his practice by fulfilling certain preliminary requirements. He first must endeavor to purify his moral virtue, sever the outer impediments to practice, and place himself under a qualified teacher who will assign him a suitable meditation subject and explain to him the methods of developing it. After learning these the disciple must then seek out a congenial dwelling and diligently strive for success. In this chapter we will examine in order each of the preparatory steps that have to be fulfilled before commencing to develop jhana.

The Moral Foundation for Jhana

A disciple aspiring to the jhanas first has to lay a solid foundation of moral discipline. Moral purity is indispensable to meditative progress for several deeply psychological reasons. It is needed first, in order to safeguard against the danger of remorse, the nagging sense of guilt that arises when the basic principles of morality are ignored or deliberately violated. Scrupulous conformity to virtuous rules of conduct protects the meditator from this danger disruptive to inner calm, and brings joy and happiness when the meditator reflects upon the purity of his conduct (see A.v,1-7).

A second reason a moral foundation is needed for meditation follows from an understanding of the purpose of concentration. Concentration, in the Buddhist discipline, aims at providing a base for wisdom by cleansing the mind of the dispersive influence of the defilements. But in order for the concentration exercises to effectively combat the defilements, the coarser expressions of the latter through bodily and verbal action first have to be checked. Moral transgressions being invariably motivated by defilements — by greed, hatred and delusion — when a person acts in violation of the precepts of morality he excites and reinforces the very same mental factors his practice of meditation is intended to eliminate. This involves him in a crossfire of incompatible aims which renders his attempts at mental purification ineffective. The only way he can avoid frustration in his endeavor to purify the mind of its subtler defilements is to prevent the unwholesome inner impulses from breathing out in the coarser form of unwholesome bodily and verbal deeds. Only when he establishes control over the outer expression of the defilements can he turn to deal with them inwardly as mental obsessions that appear in the process of meditation.

The practice of moral discipline consists negatively in abstinence from immoral actions of body and speech and positively in the observance of ethical principles promoting peace within oneself and harmony in one's relations with others. The basic code of moral discipline taught by the Buddha for the guidance of his lay followers is the five precepts: abstinence from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from intoxicating drugs and drinks. These principles are bindings as minimal ethical obligations for all practitioners of the Buddhist path, and within their bounds considerable progress in meditation can be made. However, those aspiring to reach the higher levels of jhanas and to pursue the path further to the stages of liberation, are encouraged to take up the more complete moral discipline pertaining to the life of renunciation. Early Buddhism is unambiguous in its emphasis on the limitations of household life for following the path in its fullness and perfection. Time and again the texts say that the household life is confining, a "path for the dust of passion," while the life of homelessness is like open space. Thus a disciple who is fully intent upon making rapid progress towards Nibbana will when outer conditions allow for it, "shave off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness" (M.i,179).

The moral training for the bhikkhus or monks has been arranged into a system called the fourfold purification of morality *(catuparisuddhisila).*[6] The first component of this scheme, its backbone, consists in the *morality of restraint according to the Patimokkha,* the code of 227 training precepts promulgated by the Buddha to regulate the conduct of the Sangha or monastic order. Each of these rules is in some way intended to facilitate control over the defilements and to induce a mode of living marked by harmlessness, contentment and simplicity. The second aspect of the monk's moral discipline is *restraint of the senses,* by which the monk maintains close watchfulness over his mind as he engages in sense contacts so that he does not give rise to desire for pleasurable objects and aversion towards repulsive ones. Third, the monk is to live by a *purified livelihood,* obtaining his basic requisites such as robes, food, lodgings and medicines in ways consistent with his vocation. The fourth factor of the moral training is *proper use of the requisites,* which means that the monk should reflect upon the purposes for which he makes use of his requisites and should employ them only for maintaining his health and comfort, not for luxury and enjoyment.

After establishing a foundation of purified morality, the aspirant to meditation is advised to cut off any outer impediments *(palibodha)* that may hinder his efforts to lead a contemplative life. These impediments are numbered as ten: a dwelling, which becomes an impediment for those who allow their minds to become preoccupied with its

upkeep or with its appurtenances; a family of relatives or supporters with whom the aspirant may become emotionally involved in ways that hinder his progress; gains, which may bind the monk by obligation to those who offer them; a class of students who must be instructed; building work, which demands time and attention; travel; kin, meaning parents, teachers, pupils or close friends; illness; the study of scriptures; and supernormal powers, which are an impediment to insight (Vism.90-97; PP.91-98).

The Good Friend and the Subject of Meditation

The path of practice leading to the jhanas is an arduous course involving precise techniques and skillfulness is needed in dealing with the pitfalls that lie along the way. The knowledge of how to attain the jhanas has been transmitted through a lineage of teachers going back to the time of the Buddha himself. A prospective meditator is advised to avail himself of the living heritage of accumulated knowledge and experience by placing himself under the care of a qualified teacher, described as a "good friend" *(kalyanamitta),* one who gives guidance and wise advice rooted in his own practice and experience. On the basis of either of the power of penetrating others minds, or by personal observation, or by questioning, the teacher will size up the temperament of his new pupil and then select a meditation subject for him appropriate to his temperament.

The various meditation subjects that the Buddha prescribed for the development of serenity have been collected in the commentaries into a set called the forty *kammatthana.* This word means literally a place of work, and is applied to the subject of meditation as the place where the meditator undertakes the work of meditation. The forty meditation subjects are distributed into seven categories, enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga* as follows: ten kasinas, ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception, and one defining.[7]

A kasina is a device representing a particular quality used as a support for concentration. The ten kasinas are those of earth, water, fire and air; four color kasinas — blue, yellow, red and white; the light kasina and the limited space kasina. The kasina can be either a naturally occurring form of the element or color chosen, or an artificially produced device such as a disk that the meditator can use at his convenience in his meditation quarters.

The ten kinds of foulness are ten stages in the decomposition of a corpse: the bloated, the livid, the festering, the cut-up, the gnawed, the scattered, the hacked and scattered, the bleeding, the worm-infested and a skeleton. The primary purpose of these meditations is to reduce sensual lust by gaining a clear perception of the repulsiveness of the body.

The ten recollections are the recollections of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, morality, generosity and the deities, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of breathing, and the recollection of peace. The first three are devotional contemplations on the sublime qualities of the "Three Jewels," the primary objects of Buddhist virtues and on the deities inhabiting the heavenly worlds, intended principally for those still intent on a higher rebirth. Mindfulness of death is reflection on the inevitability of death, a constant spur to spiritual exertion. Mindfulness of the body involves the mental dissection of the body into thirty-two parts, undertaken with a view to perceiving its unattractiveness. Mindfulness of breathing is awareness of the in-and-out movement of the breath, perhaps the most fundamental of all Buddhist meditation subjects. And the recollection of peace is reflection on the qualities of Nibbana.

The four divine abidings *(brahmavihara)* are the development of boundless loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These meditations are also called the "immeasurables" *(appamañña)* because they are to be developed towards all sentient beings without qualification or exclusiveness.

The four immaterial states are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These are the objects leading to the corresponding meditative attainments, the immaterial jhanas.

The one perception is the perception of the repulsiveness of food. The one defining is the defining of the four elements, that is, the analysis of the physical body into the elemental modes of solidity, fluidity, heat and oscillation.

The forty meditation subjects are treated in the commentarial texts from two important angles — one their ability to induce different levels of concentration, the other their suitability for differing temperaments. Not all meditation subjects are equally effective in inducing the deeper levels of concentration. They are first distinguished on the basis of their capacity for inducing only access concentration or for inducing full absorption; those capable of inducing absorption are then distinguished further according to their ability to induce the different levels of jhana.

Of the forty subjects, ten are capable of leading only to access concentration: eight recollections — i.e., all except mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of breathing — plus the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment and the defining of the four elements. These, because they are occupied with a diversity of qualities and involve and active application of discursive thought, cannot lead beyond access. The other thirty subjects can all lead to absorption.

The ten kasinas and mindfulness of breathing, owing to their simplicity and freedom from thought construction, can lead to all four jhanas. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body lead only to the first jhana, being

limited because the mind can only hold onto them with the aid of applied thought *(vitakka)* which is absent in the second and higher jhanas. The first three divine abidings can induce the lower three jhanas but not the fourth, since they arise in association with pleasant feeling, while the divine abiding of equanimity occurs only at the level of the fourth jhana, where neutral feeling gains ascendency. The four immaterial states conduce to the respective immaterial jhanas corresponding to their names.

The forty subjects are also differentiated according to their appropriateness for different character types. Six main character types are recognized — the greedy, the hating, the deluded, the faithful, the intelligent and the speculative — this oversimplified typology being taken only as a pragmatic guideline which in practice admits various shades and combinations. The ten kind of foulness and mindfulness of the body, clearly intended to attenuate sensual desire, are suitable for those of greedy temperament. Eight subjects — the four divine abidings and four color kasinas — are appropriate for the hating temperament. Mindfulness of breathing is suitable for those of the deluded and the speculative temperament. The first six recollections are appropriate for the faithful temperament. Four subjects — mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the defining of the four elements, and the perception of the repulsiveness in nutriment — are especially effective for those of intelligent temperament. The remaining six kasinas and the immaterial states are suitable for all kinds of temperaments. But the kasinas should be limited in size for one of speculative temperament and large in size for one of deluded temperament.

Immediately after giving this breakdown Buddhaghosa adds a proviso to prevent misunderstanding. He states that this division by way of temperament is made on the basis of direct opposition and complete suitability, but actually there is no wholesome form of meditation that does not suppress the defilements and strengthen the virtuous mental factors. Thus an individual meditator may be advised to meditate on foulness to abandon lust, on loving-kindness to abandon hatred, on breathing to cut off discursive thought, and on impermanence to eliminate the conceit "I am" (A.iv,358).

Choosing a Suitable Dwelling

The teacher assigns a meditation subject to his pupil appropriate to his character and explains the methods of developing it. He can teach it gradually to a pupil who is going to remain in close proximity to him, or in detail to one who will go to practice it elsewhere. If the disciple is not going to stay with his teacher he must be careful to select a suitable place for meditation. The texts mention eighteen kinds of monasteries unfavorable to the development of jhana: a large monastery, a new one, a dilapidated one, one near a road, one with a pond, leaves, flowers or fruits, one sought after by many people, one in cities, among timber of fields, where people quarrel, in a port, in border lands, on a frontier, a haunted place, and one without access to a spiritual teacher (Vism. 118-121; PP122-125).

The factors which make a dwelling favorable to meditation are mentioned by the Buddha himself. If should not be too far from or too near a village that can be relied on as an alms resort, and should have a clear path: it should be quiet and secluded; it should be free from rough weather and from harmful insects and animals; one should be able to obtain one's physical requisites while dwelling there; and the dwelling should provide ready access to learned elders and spiritual friends who can be consulted when problems arise in meditation (A.v,15). The types of dwelling places commended by the Buddha most frequently in the suttas as conductive to the jhanas are a secluded dwelling in the forest, at the foot of a tree, on a mountain, in a cleft, in a cave, in a cemetery, on a wooded flatland, in the open air, or on a heap of straw (M.i,181). Having found a suitable dwelling and settled there, the disciple should maintain scrupulous observance of the rules of discipline, He should be content with his simple requisites, exercise control over his sense faculties, be mindful and discerning in all activities, and practice meditation diligently as he was instructed. It is at this point that he meets the first great challenge of his contemplative life, the battle with the five hindrances.

3. The First Jhana and its Factors

The attainment of any jhana comes about through a twofold process of development. On one side the states obstructive to it, called its factors of abandonment, have to be eliminated, on the other the states composing it, called its factors of possession, have to be acquired. In the case of the first jhana the factors of abandonment are the five hindrances and the factors of possession the five basic jhana factors. Both are alluded to in the standard formula for the first jhana, the opening phrase referring to the abandonment of the hindrances and the subsequent portion enumerating the jhana factors:

> Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (M.i,1818; Vbh.245)

In this chapter we will first discuss the five hindrances and their abandonment, then we will investigate the jhana factors both individually and by way of their combined contribution to the attainment of the first jhana. We will close the chapter with some remarks on the ways of perfecting the first jhana, a necessary preparation for the further development of concentration.

The Abandoning of the Hindrances

The five hindrances *(pañcanivarana)* are sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. This group, the principal classification the Buddha uses for the obstacles to meditation, receives its name because its five members hinder and envelop the mind, preventing meditative development in the two spheres of serenity and insight. Hence the Buddha calls them "obstructions, hindrances, corruptions of the mind which weaken wisdom"(S.v,94).

The hindrance of sensual desire *(kamachanda)* is explained as desire for the "five strands of sense pleasure," that is, for pleasant forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles. It ranges from subtle liking to powerful lust. The hindrance of ill will *(byapada)* signifies aversion directed towards disagreeable persons or things. It can vary in range from mild annoyance to overpowering hatred. Thus the first two hindrances correspond to the first two root defilements, greed and hate. The third root defilement, delusion, is not enumerated separately among the hindrances but can be found underlying the remaining three.

Sloth and torpor is a compound hindrance made up of two components: sloth *(thina),* which is dullness, inertia or mental stiffness; and torpor *(middha),* which is indolence or drowsiness. Restlessness and worry is another double hindrance, restlessness *(uddhacca)* being explained as excitement, agitation or disquietude, worry *(kukkucca)* as the sense of guilt aroused by moral transgressions. Finally, the hindrance of doubt *(vicikiccha)* is explained as uncertainty with regard to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the training.

The Buddha offers two sets of similes to illustrate the detrimental effect of the hindrances. The first compares the five hindrances to five types of calamity: sensual desire is like a debt, ill will like a disease, sloth and torpor like imprisonment, restless and worry like slavery, and doubt like being lost on a desert road. Release from the hindrances is to be seen as freedom from debt, good health, release from prison, emancipation from slavery, and arriving at a place of safety (D.i,71-73). The second set of similes compares the hindrances to five kinds of impurities affecting a bowl of water, preventing a keen-sighted man from seeing his own reflection as it really is. Sensual desire is like a bowl of water mixed with brightly colored paints, ill will like a bowl of boiling water, sloth and torpor like water covered by mossy plants, restlessness and worry like water blown into ripples by the wind, and doubt like muddy water. Just as the keen-eyed man would not be able to see his reflection in these five kinds of water, so one whose mind is obsessed by the five hindrances does not know and see as it is his own good, the good of others or the good of both (S.v,121-24). Although there are numerous defilements opposed to the first jhana the five hindrances alone are called its factors of abandoning. One reason according to the *Visuddhimagga,* is that the hindrances are specifically obstructive to jhana, each hindrance impeding in its own way the mind's capacity for concentration.

> The mind affected through lust by greed for varied objective fields does not become concentrated on an object consisting in unity, or being overwhelmed by lust, it does not enter on the way to abandoning the sense-desire element. When pestered by ill will towards an object, it does not occur uninterruptedly. When overcome by stiffness and torpor, it is unwieldy. When seized by agitation and worry, it is unquiet and buzzes about. When stricken by uncertainty, it fails to mount the way to accomplish the attainment of jhana. So it is these only that are called factors of abandonment because they are specifically obstructive to jhana.(Vism.146: PP.152)

A second reason for confining the first jhana's factors of abandoning to the five hindrances is to permit a direct alignment to be made between the hindrances and the jhanic factors. Buddhaghosa states that the abandonment of the

five hindrances alone is mentioned in connection with jhana because the hindrances are the direct enemies of the five jhana factors, which the latter must eliminate and abolish. To support his point the commentator cites a passage demonstrating a one-to-one correspondence between the jhana factors and the hindrances: one-pointedness is opposed to sensual desire, rapture to ill will, applied thought to sloth and torpor, happiness to restlessness and worry, and sustained thought to doubt (Vism. 141; PP.147).[8] Thus each jhana factor is seen as having the specific task of eliminating a particular obstruction to the jhana and to correlate these obstructions with the five jhana factors they are collected into a scheme of five hindrances.

The standard passage describing the attainment of the first jhana says that the jhana is entered upon by one who is "secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind." The *Visuddhimagga* explains that there are three kinds of seclusion relevant to the present context — namely, bodily seclusion *(kayaviveka),* mental seclusion *(cittaviveka),* and seclusion by suppression *(vikkhambhanaviveka)* (Vism. 140; PP.145). These three terms allude to two distinct sets of exegetical categories. The first two belong to a threefold arrangement made up of bodily seclusion, mental seclusion, and "seclusion from the substance" *(upadhiviveka).* The first means physical withdrawal from active social engagement into a condition of solitude for the purpose of devoting time and energy to spiritual development. The second, which generally presupposes the first, means the seclusion of the mind from its entanglement in defilements; it is in effect equivalent to concentration of at least the access level. The third, "seclusion from the substance," is Nibbana, liberation from the elements of phenomenal existence. The achievement of the first jhana does not depend on the third, which is its outcome rather than prerequisite, but it does require physical solitude and the separation of the mind from defilements, hence bodily and mental seclusion. The third type of seclusion pertinent to the context, seclusion by suppression, belongs to a different scheme generally discussed under the heading of "abandonment" *(pahana)* rather than "seclusion." The type of abandonment required for the attainment of jhana is abandonment by suppression, which means the removal of the hindrances by force of concentration similar to the pressing down of weeds in a pond by means of a porous pot.[9]

The work of overcoming the five hindrances is accomplished through the gradual training *(anupubbasikkha)* which the Buddha has laid down so often in the suttas, such as the Samaññaphala Sutta and the Culahatthipadopama Sutta. The gradual training is a step-by-step process designed to lead the practitioner gradually to liberation. The training begins with moral discipline, the undertaking and observance of specific rules of conduct which enable the disciple to control the coarser modes of bodily and verbal misconduct through which the hindrances find an outlet. With moral discipline as a basis, the disciple practices the restraint of the senses. He does not seize upon the general appearances of the beguiling features of things, but guards and masters his sense faculties so that sensual attractive and repugnant objects no longer become grounds for desire and aversion. Then, endowed with the self-restraint, he develops mindfulness and discernment *(sati-sampajañña)* in all his activities and postures, examining everything he does with clear awareness as to its purpose and suitability. He also cultivates contentment with a minimum of robes, food, shelter and other requisites.

Once he has fulfilled these preliminaries the disciple is prepared to go into solitude to develop the jhanas, and it is here that he directly confronts the five hindrances. The elimination of the hindrances requires that the meditator honestly appraises his own mind. When sensuality, ill will and the other hindrances are present, he must recognize that they are present and he must investigate the conditions that lead to their arising: the latter he must scrupulously avoid. The meditator must also understand the appropriate antidotes for each of the five hindrances. The Buddha says that all the hindrances arise through unwise consideration *(ayoniso manasikara)* and that they can be eliminated by wise consideration *(yoniso manasikara).* Each hindrance, however, has its own specific antidote. Thus wise consideration of the repulsive feature of things is the antidote to sensual desire; wise consideration of loving-kindness counteracts ill will; wise consideration of the elements of effort, exertion and striving opposes sloth and torpor; wise consideration of tranquillity of mind removes restlessness and worry; and wise consideration of the real qualities of things eliminates doubt (S.v,105-106).

> Having given up covetousness [i.e., sensual desire] with regard to the world, he dwells with a heart free of covetousness; he cleanses his mind from covetousness. Having given up the blemish of ill will, he dwells without ill will; friendly and compassionate towards all living beings, he cleanses his mind from the blemishes of ill will. Having given up sloth and torpor, he dwells free from sloth and torpor, in the perception of light; mindful and clearly comprehending, he cleanses his mind from sloth and torpor. Having given up restlessness and worry, he dwells without restlessness; his mind being calmed within, he cleanses it from restlessness and worry. Having given up doubt, he dwells as one who has passed beyond doubt; being free from uncertainty about wholesome things, he cleanses his mind from doubt...
>
> And when he sees himself free of these five hindrances, joy arises; in him who is joyful, rapture arises; in him whose mind is enraptured, the body is stilled; the body being stilled, he feels

> happiness; and a happy mind finds concentration. Then, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (D.i,73-74)[10]

The Factors of the First Jhana

The first jhana possesses five component factors: applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness of mind. Four of these are explicitly mentioned in the formula for the jhana; the fifth, one-pointedness, is mentioned elsewhere in the suttas but is already suggested by the notion of jhana itself. These five states receive their name, first because they lead the mind from the level of ordinary consciousness to the jhanic level, and second because they constitute the first jhana and give it its distinct definition.

The jhana factors are first aroused by the meditator's initial efforts to concentrate upon one of the prescribed objects for developing jhana. As he fixes his mind on the preliminary object, such as a kasina disk, a point is eventually reached where he can perceive the object as clearly with his eyes closed as with them open. This visualized object is called the learning sign *(uggahanimitta).* As he concentrates on the learning sign, his efforts call into play the embryonic jhana factors, which grow in force, duration and prominence as a result of the meditative exertion. These factors, being incompatible with the hindrances, attenuate them, exclude them, and hold them at bay. With continued practice the learning sign gives rise to a purified luminous replica of itself called the counterpart sign *(patibhaganimitta),* the manifestation of which marks the complete suppression of the hindrances and the attainment of access concentration *(upacarasamadhi).* All three events — the suppression of the hindrances, the arising of the counterpart sign, and the attainment of access concentration — take place at precisely the same moment, without interval (Vism. 126; PP.131). And though previously the process of mental cultivation may have required the elimination of different hindrances at different times, when access is achieved they all subside together:

> Simultaneously with his acquiring the counterpart sign his lust is abandoned by suppression owing to his giving no attention externally to sense desires (as object). And owing to his abandoning of approval, ill will is abandoned too, as pus is with the abandoning of blood. Likewise stiffness and torpor is abandoned through exertion of energy, agitation and worry is abandoned through devotion to peaceful things that cause no remorse; and uncertainty about the Master who teaches the way, about the way, and about the fruit of the way, about the way, and about the fruit of the way, is abandoned through the actual experience of the distinction attained. So the five hindrances are abandoned. (Vism. 189; PP.196)

Though the mental factors determinative of the first jhana are present in access concentration, they do not as yet possess sufficient strength to constitute the jhana, but are strong enough only to exclude the hindrances. With continued practice, however, the nascent jhana factors grow in strength until they are capable of issuing in jhana. Because of the instrumental role these factors play both in the attainment and constitution of the first jhana they are deserving of closer individual scrutiny.

APPLIED THOUGHT *(VITAKKA)*

The word *vitakka* frequently appears in the texts in conjunction with the word *vicara.* The pair signify two interconnected but distinct aspects of the thought process, and to bring out the difference between them (as well as their common character), we translate the one as applied thought and the other as sustained thought.

In both the suttas and the Abhidhamma applied thought is defined as the application of the mind to its object *(cetaso abhiniropana),* a function which the *Atthasalini* illustrates thus: "Just as someone ascends the king's palace in dependence on a relative of friend dear to the king, so the mind ascends the object in dependence on applied thought" (Dhs.A.157). This function of applying the mind to the object is common to the wide variety of modes in which the mental factor of applied thought occurs, ranging from sense discrimination to imagination, reasoning and deliberation and to the practice of concentration culminating in the first jhana. Applied thought can be unwholesome as in thoughts of sensual pleasure, ill will and cruelty, or wholesome as in thoughts of renunciation, benevolence and compassion (M.i,116).

In jhana applied through is invariably wholesome and its function of directing the mind upon its object stands forth with special clarity. To convey this the *Visuddhimagga* explains that in jhana the function of applied thought is "to strike at and thresh — for the meditator is said, in virtue of it, to have the object struck at by applied thought, threshed by applied thought" (Vism.142;PP148). The *Milindapanha* makes the same point by defining applied thought as absorption *(appana):* "Just as a carpenter drives a well-fashioned piece of wood into a joint, so applied thought has the characteristic of absorption" (Miln.62).

The object of jhana into which *vitakka* drives the mind and its concomitant states is the counterpart sign, which emerges from the learning sign as the hindrances are suppressed and the mind enters access concentration.
The *Visuddhimagga* explains the difference between the two signs thus:

> In the learning sign any fault in the kasina is apparent. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension (by insight) and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance (Vism. 125-26; PP.130)

The counterpart sign is the object of both access concentration and jhana, which differ neither in their object nor in the removal of the hindrances but in the strength of their respective jhana factors. In the former the factors are still weak, not yet fully developed, while in the jhana they are strong enough to make the mind fully absorbed in the object. In this process applied thought is the factor primarily responsible for directing the mind towards the counterpart sign and thrusting it in with the force of full absorption.

SUSTAINED THOUGHT *(VICARA)*

Vicara seems to represent a more developed phase of the thought process than *vitakka.* The commentaries explain that it has the characteristic of "continued pressure" on the object (Vim. 142; PP.148). Applied thought is described as the first impact of the mind on the object, the gross inceptive phase of thought; sustained thought is described as the act of anchoring the mind on the object, the subtle phase of continued mental pressure. Buddhaghosa illustrates the difference between the two with a series of similes. Applied thought is like striking a bell, sustained thought like the ringing; applied thought is like a bee's flying towards a flower, sustained thought like its buzzing around the flower; applied thought is like a compass pin that stays fixed to the center of a circle, sustained thought like the pin that revolves around (Vism. 142-43; PP.148-49).
These similes make it clear that applied thought and sustained thought functionally associated, perform different tasks. Applied thought brings the mind to the object, sustained thought fixes and anchors it there. Applied thought focuses the mind on the object, sustained thought examines and inspects what is focused on. Applied thought brings a deepening of concentration by again and again leading the mind back to the same object, sustained thought sustains the concentration achieved by keeping the mind anchored on that object.

RAPTURE *(PITI)*

The third factor present in the first jhana is *piti,* usually translated as joy or rapture.[11] In the suttas *piti* is sometimes said to arise from another quality called *pamojja,* translated as joy or gladness, which springs up with the abandonment of the five hindrances. When the disciple sees the five hindrances abandoned in himself "gladness arises within him; thus gladdened, rapture arises in him; and when he is rapturous his body becomes tranquil" (D.i,73). Tranquillity in turn leads to happiness, on the basis of which the mind becomes concentrated. Thus rapture precedes the actual arising of the first jhana, but persists through the remaining stages up to the third jhana.
The Vibhanga defines *piti* as "gladness, joy, joyfulness, mirth, merriment, exultation, exhilaration, and satisfaction of mind" (Vbh. 257). The commentaries ascribe to it the characteristic of endearing, the function of refreshing the body and mind or pervading with rapture, and the manifestation as elation (Vism.143; PP.149). Shwe Zan Aung explains that *"piti* abstracted means interest of varying degrees of intensity, in an object felt as desirable or as calculated to bring happiness."[12]
When defined in terms of agency, piti is that which creates interest in the object; when defined in terms of its nature it is the interest in the object. Because it creates a positive interest in the object, the jhana factor of rapture is able to counter and suppress the hindrance of ill will, a state of aversion implying a negative evaluation of the object.
Rapture is graded into five categories: minor rapture, momentary rapture, showering rapture, uplifting rapture and pervading rapture.[13] Minor rapture is generally the first to appear in the progressive development of meditation; it is capable of causing the hairs of the body to rise. Momentary rapture, which is like lightning, comes next but cannot be sustained for long. Showering rapture runs through the body in waves, producing a thrill but without leaving a lasting impact. Uplifting rapture, which can cause levitation, is more sustained but still tends to disturb concentration, The form of rapture most conductive to the attainment of jhana is all-pervading rapture, which is said to suffuse the whole body so that it becomes like a full bladder or like a mountain cavern inundated with a mighty flood of water.
The *Visuddhimagga* states that what is intended by the jhana factor of rapture is this all-pervading rapture "which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption" (Vism.144; PP.151)

HAPPINESS *(SUKHA)*

As a factor of the first jhana, *sukha* signifies pleasant feeling. The word is explicitly defined in the sense by the *Vibhanga* in its analysis of the first jhana: "Therein, what is happiness? Mental pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, the felt pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind contact — this is called 'happiness' " (Vbh.257). The *Visuddhimagga* explains that happiness in the first jhana has the characteristic of gratifying, the function of intensifying associated states, and as manifestation, the rendering of aid to its associated states (Vism. 145; PP.151).

Rapture and happiness link together in a very close relationship, but though the two are difficult to distinguish, they are not identical. Happiness is a feeling *(vedana);* rapture a mental formation (sankhara). Happiness always accompanies rapture, so that when rapture is present happiness must always be present; but rapture does not always accompany happiness, for in the third jhana, as we will see, there is happiness but no rapture. The *Atthasalini,* which explains rapture as "delight in the attaining of the desired object" and happiness as "the enjoyment of the taste of what is acquired," illustrates the difference by means of a simile:

> Rapture is like a weary traveler in the desert in summer, who hears of, or sees water of a shady wood. Ease [happiness] is like his enjoying the water of entering the forest shade. For a man who, traveling along the path through a great desert and overcome by the heat, is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the way, would ask 'Where is water?' The other would say, 'Beyond the wood is a dense forest with a natural lake. Go there, and you will get some.' He, hearing these words, would be glad and delighted and as he went would see lotus leaves, etc., fallen on the ground and become more glad and delighted. Going onwards, he would see men with wet clothes and hair, hear the sounds of wild fowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels growing by the edge of the natural lake, he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily, etc., growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water, he would be all the more glad and delighted, would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibers and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandalaka, ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and in the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently lay himself down and saw: 'O bliss! O bliss!' Thus should this illustration be applied. The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest till he saw the water is like rapture having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath and dried he laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, 'O bliss! O bliss!' etc., is the sense of ease [happiness] grown strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object.[14]

Since rapture and happiness co-exist in the first jhana, this simile should not be taken to imply that they are mutually exclusive. Its purport is to suggest that rapture gains prominence before happiness, for which it helps provide a causal foundation.

In the description of the first jhana, rapture and happiness are said to be "born of seclusion" and to suffuse the whole body of the meditator in such a way that there is no part of his body which remains unaffected by them:

> Monks, secluded from sense pleasure... a monk enters and dwells in the first jhana. He steeps, drenches, fills and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness. Just as a skilled bath-attendant or his apprentice might strew bathing powder in a copper basin, sprinkle it again and again with water, and knead it together so that the mass of bathing soap would be pervaded, suffused, and saturated with moisture inside and out yet would not ooze moisture, so a monk steeps, drenches, fills and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that, there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (D.i,74)

ONE-POINTEDNESS *(EKAGGATA)*

Unlike the previous four jhana factors, one-pointedness is not specifically mentioned in the standard formula for the first jhana, but it is included among the jhana factors by the Mahavedalla Sutta (M.i,294) as well as in the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. One-pointedness is a universal mental concomitant, the factor by virtue of which the mind is centered upon its object. It brings the mind to a single point, the point occupied by the object. One-pointedness is used in the text as a synonym for concentration *(samadhi)* which has the characteristic of non-distraction, the function of eliminating distractions, non-wavering as its manifestation, and happiness as its proximate

cause (Vism.85; PP.85). As a jhana factor one-pointedness is always directed to a wholesome object and wards off unwholesome influences, in particular the hindrance of sensual desire. As the hindrances are absent in jhana one-pointedness acquires special strength, based on the previous sustained effort of concentration.

Besides the five jhana factors, the first jhana contains a great number of other mental factors functioning in unison as coordinate members of a single state of consciousness. Already the Anupada Sutta lists such additional components of the first jhana as contact, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention (M.iii,25). In the Abhidhamma literature this is extended still further up to thirty-three indispensable components. Nevertheless, only five states are called the factors of the first jhana, for only these have the functions of inhibiting the five hindrances and fixing the mind in absorption. For the jhana to arise all these five factors must be present simultaneously, exercising their special operations:

> But applied thought directs the mind onto the object; sustained thought keeps it anchored there. Happiness [rapture] produced by the success of the effort refreshes the mind whose effort has succeeded through not being distracted by those hindrances; and bliss [happiness] intensifies it for the same reason. Then unification aided by this directing onto, this anchoring, this refreshing and this intensifying, evenly and rightly centers the mind with its remaining associated states on the object consisting in unity. Consequently possession of five factors should be understood as the arising of these five, namely, applied thought, sustained thought, happiness [rapture], bliss [happiness], and unification of mind. For it is when these are arisen that jhana is said to be arisen, which is why they are called the five factors of possession. (Vism.146;PP.152)

Each jhana factor serves as support for the one which succeeds it. Applied thought must direct the mind to its object in order for sustained thought to anchor it there. Only when the mind is anchored can the interest develop which will culminate in rapture. As rapture develops it brings happiness to maturity, and this spiritual happiness, by providing an alternative to the fickle pleasures of the senses, aids the growth of one-pointedness. In this way, as Nagasena explains, all the other wholesome states lead to concentration, which stands at their head like the apex on the roof of a house (Miln. 38-39).

Perfecting the First Jhana

The difference between access and absorption concentration, as we have said, does not lie in the absence of the hindrances, which is common to both, but in the relative strength of the jhana factors. In access the factors are weak so that concentration is fragile, comparable to a child who walks a few steps and then falls down. But in absorption the jhana factors are strong and well developed so that the mind can remain continuously in concentration just as a healthy man can remain standing on his feet for a whole day and night (Vism.126; PP.131).

Because full absorption offers the benefit of strengthened concentration, a meditator who gains access is encouraged to strive for the attainment of jhana. To develop his practice several important measures are recommended.[15] The meditator should live in a suitable dwelling, rely upon a suitable alms resort, avoid profitless talk, associate only with spiritually-minded companions, make use only of suitable food, live in a congenial climate, and maintain his practice in a suitable posture. He should also cultivate the ten kinds of skill in absorption. He should clean his lodging and his physical body so that they conduce to clear meditation, balance his spiritual faculties by seeing that faith is balanced with wisdom and energy with concentration, and he must be skillful in producing and developing the sign of concentration (1-3). He should exert the mind when it is slack, restrain it when it is agitated, encourage it when it is restless or dejected, and look at the mind with equanimity when all is proceeding well (4-7). The meditator should avoid distracting persons, should approach people experienced in concentration, and should be firm in his resolution to attain jhana (8-10).

After attaining the first jhana a few times the meditator is not advised to set out immediately striving for the second jhana. This would be a foolish and profitless spiritual ambition. Before he is prepared to make the second jhana the goal of his endeavor he must first bring the first jhana to perfection. If he is too eager to reach the second jhana before he has perfected the first, he is likely to fail to gain the second and find himself unable to regain the first. The Buddha compares such a meditator to a foolish cow who, while still unfamiliar with her own pasture, sets out for new pastures and gets lost in the mountains: she fails to find food or drink and is unable to find her way home (A.iv, 418-19).

The perfecting of the first jhana involves two steps: the extension of the sign and the achievement of the five masteries. The extension of the sign means extending the size of the counterpart sign, the object of the jhana. Beginning with a small area, the size of one or two fingers, the meditator gradually learns to broaden the sign until the mental image can be made to cover the world-sphere or even beyond (Vism. 152-53; PP.158-59).

Following this the meditator should try to acquire five kinds of mastery over the jhana: mastery in adverting, in attaining, in resolving, in emerging and in reviewing.[16] Mastery in adverting is the ability to advert to the jhana factors one by one after emerging from the jhana, wherever he wants, whenever he wants, and for as long as he wants. Mastery in attaining is the ability to enter upon jhana quickly, mastery in resolving the ability to remain in the jhana for exactly the pre-determined length of time, mastery in emerging the ability to emerge from jhana quickly without difficulty, and mastery in reviewing the ability to review the jhana and its factors with retrospective knowledge immediately after adverting to them. When the meditator has achieved this fivefold mastery, then he is ready to strive for the second jhana.

4. The Higher Jhanas

In this chapter we will survey the higher states of jhana. First we will discuss the remaining three jhanas of the fine-material sphere, using the descriptive formulas of the suttas as our starting point and the later literature as our source for the methods of practice that lead to these attainments. Following this we will consider the four meditative states that pertain to the immaterial sphere, which come to be called the immaterial jhanas. Our examination will bring out the dynamic character of the process by which the jhanas are successively achieved. The attainment of the higher jhanas of the fine-material sphere, we will see, involves the successive elimination of the grosser factors and the bringing to prominence of the subtler ones, the attainment of the formless jhanas the replacement of grosser objects with successively more refined objects. From our study it will become clear that the jhanas link together in a graded sequence of development in which the lower serves as basis for the higher and the higher intensifies and purifies states already present in the lower. We will end the chapter with a brief look at the connection between the jhanas and the Buddhist teaching of rebirth.

The Higher Fine-material Jhanas

The formula for the attainment of the *second jhana* runs as follows:

> With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second jhana, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration (M.i,181; Vbh. 245)

The second jhana, like the first, is attained by eliminating the factors to be abandoned and by developing the factors of possession. In this case however, the factors to be abandoned are the two initial factors of the first jhana itself, applied thought and sustained thought; the factors of possession are the three remaining jhana factors, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness. Hence the formula begins "with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought," and then mentions the jhana's positive endowments.

After achieving the five kinds of mastery over the first jhana, a meditator who wishes to reach the second jhana should enter the first jhana and contemplate its defects. These are twofold: one, which might be called the defect of proximate corruption, is the nearness of the five hindrances, against which the first jhana provides only a relatively mild safeguard; the other defect, inherent to the first jhana, is its inclusion of applied and sustained thought, which now appear as gross, even as impediments needing to be eliminated to attain the more peaceful and subtle second jhana.

By reflecting upon the second jhana as more tranquil and sublime than the first, the meditator ends his attachment to the first jhana and engages in renewed striving with the aim of reaching the higher stage. He directs his mind to his meditation subject — which must be one capable of inducing the higher jhanas such as a kasina or the breath — and resolves to overcome applied and sustained thought. When his practice comes to maturity the two kinds of thought subside and the second jhana arises. In the second jhana only three of the original five jhana factors remain — rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. Moreover, with the elimination of the two grosser factors these have acquired a subtler and more peaceful tone.[17]

Besides the main jhana factors, the canonical formula includes several other states in its description of the second jhana. "Internal confidence" *(ajjhattamsampasadanam),* conveys the twofold meaning of faith and tranquillity. In the first jhana the meditator's faith lacked full clarity and serenity due to "the disturbance created by applied and sustained thought, like water ruffled by ripples and wavelets" (Vism. 157; PP.163). But when applied and sustained thought subside, the mind becomes very peaceful and the meditator's faith acquires fuller confidence.

The formula also mentions unification of mind *(cetaso ekodibhavam),* which is identified with one-pointedness or concentration. Though present in the first jhana, concentration only gains special mention in connection with the second jhana since it is here that it acquires eminence. In the first jhana concentration was still imperfect, being subject to the disturbing influence of applied and sustained thought. For the same reason this jhana, along with its constituent rapture and happiness, is said to be born of concentration *(samadhijam):* "It is only this concentration that is quite worthy to be called 'concentration' because of its complete confidence and extreme immobility due to absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought" (Vism.158; PP.164).

To attain the *third jhana* the meditator must use the same method he used to ascend from the first jhana to the second. He must master the second jhana in the five ways, enter and emerge from it, and reflect upon its defects. In this case the defect of proximate corruption is the nearness of applied and sustained thought, which threaten to disrupt the serenity of the second jhana; its inherent defect is the presence of rapture, which now appears as a gross factor that should be discarded. Aware of the imperfections in the second jhana, the meditator cultivates indifference towards it

and aspires instead for the peace and sublimity of the third jhana, towards the attainment of which he now directs his efforts. When his practice matures he enters the third jhana, which has the two jhana factors that remain when the rapture disappears, happiness and one-pointedness, and which the suttas describe as follows:

With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning; and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the noble ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful' — thus he enters and dwells in the third jhana. (M.i,182; Vbh.245)

The formula indicates that the third jhana contains, besides its two defining factors, three additional components not included among the jhana factors: equanimity, mindfulness and discernment. Equanimity is mentioned twice. The Pali word for equanimity, *upekkha,* occurs in the texts with a wide range of meanings, the most important being neutral feeling — that is, feeling which is neither painful nor pleasant — and the mental quality of inner balance or equipoise called "specific neutrality" *(tatramajjhattata* — see Vism.161; PP.167). The equanimity referred to in the formula is a mode of specific neutrality which belongs to the aggregate of mental formations *(sankharakkhandha)* and thus should not be confused with equanimity as neutral feeling. Though the two are often associated, each can exist independently of the other, and in the third jhana equanimity as specific neutrality co-exists with happiness or pleasant feeling.

The meditator in third jhana is also said to be mindful and discerning, which points to another pair of frequently conjoined mental functions. Mindfulness *(sati),* in this context, means the remembrance of the meditation object, the constant bearing of the object in mind without allowing it to float away. Discernment *(sampajañña)* is an aspect of wisdom or understanding which scrutinizes the object and grasps its nature free from delusion. Though these two factors were already present even in the first two jhanas, they are first mentioned only in connection with the third since it is here that their efficacy becomes manifest. The two are needed particularly to avoid a return to rapture. Just as a suckling calf, removed from its mother and left unguarded, again approaches the mother, so the happiness of jhana tends to veer towards rapture, its natural partner, if unguarded by mindfulness and discernment (Dhs. A.219). To prevent this and the consequent loss of the third jhana is the task of mindfulness and discernment.

The attainment of the *fourth jhana* commences with the aforesaid procedure. In this case the meditator sees that the third jhana is threatened by the proximity of rapture, which is ever ready to swell up again due to its natural affinity with happiness; he also sees that it is inherently defective due to the presence of happiness, a gross factor which provides fuel for clinging. He then contemplates the state where equanimous feeling and one-pointedness subsist together — the fourth jhana — as far more peaceful and secure than anything he has so far experienced, and therefore as far more desirable. Taking as his object the same counterpart sign he took for the earlier jhana, he strengthens his efforts in concentration for the purpose of abandoning the gross factor of happiness and entering the higher jhana. When his practice matures the mind enters absorption into the fourth jhana:

> With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhana, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. (M.i,182; Vbh.245)

The first part of this formula specifies the conditions for the attainment of this jhana — also called the neither-painful-nor-pleasant liberation of mind (M.i, 296) — to be the abandoning of four kinds of feeling incompatible with it, the first two signifying bodily feelings, the latter two the corresponding mental feelings. The formula also introduces several new terms and phrases which have not been encountered previously. First, it mentions a new feeling, neither-pain-nor-pleasure *(adukkhamasukha),* which remains after the other four feelings have subsided. This kind of feeling also called equanimous or neutral feeling, replaces happiness as the concomitant feeling of the jhana and also figures as one of the jhana factors. Thus this attainment has two jhana factors: neutral feeling and one-pointedness of mind. Previously the ascent from one jhana to the next was marked by the progressive elimination of the coarser jhana factors, but none were added to replace those which were excluded. But now, in the move from the third to the fourth jhana, a substitution occurs, neutral feeling moving in to take the place of happiness.

In addition we also find a new phrase composed of familiar terms, "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity" *(upekkhasatiparisuddhi).* The Vibhanga explains: "This mindfulness is cleared, purified, clarified by equanimity" (Vbh. 261), and Buddhaghosa adds: "for the mindfulness in this jhana is quite purified, and its purification is effected by equanimity, not by anything else" (Vism.167; PP.174). The equanimity which purifies the mindfulness is not neutral feeling, as might be supposed, but specific neutrality, the sublime impartiality free from attachment and aversion, which also pertains to this jhana. Though both specific neutrality and mindfulness were present in the lower three jhanas, none among these is said to have "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity." The reason is that in the lower jhanas the equanimity present was not purified itself, being overshadowed by opposing states and lacking association with equanimous feeling. It is like a crescent moon which exists by day but cannot be seen because of the sunlight and the bright sky. But in the fourth jhana, where equanimity gains the support of

equanimous feeling, it shines forth like the crescent moon at night and purifies mindfulness and the other associated states (Vism. 169; PP.175).

The Immaterial Jhanas

Beyond the four jhanas lie four higher attainments in the scale of concentration, referred to in the suttas as the "peaceful immaterial liberations transcending material form" *(santa vimokkha atikammarupe aruppa,* M.i,33). In the commentaries they are also called the immaterial jhanas, and while this expression is not found in the suttas it seems appropriate in so far as these states correspond to jhanic levels of consciousness and continue the same process of mental unification initiated by the original four jhanas, now sometimes called the fine-material jhanas. The immaterial jhanas are designated, not by numerical names like their predecessors, but by the names of their objective spheres: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[18] They receive the designation "immaterial" or " formless" *(arupa)* because they are achieved by surmounting all perceptions of material form, including the subtle form of the counterpart sign which served as the object of the previous jhanas, and because they are the subjective correlates of the immaterial planes of existence.

Like the fine-material jhanas follow a fixed sequence and must be attained in the order in which they are presented. That is, the meditator who wishes to achieve the immaterial jhanas must begin with the base of boundless space and then proceed step by step up to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. However, an important difference separates the modes of progress in the two cases. In the case of the fine-material jhanas, the ascent from one jhana to another involves a surmounting of jhana factors. To rise from the first jhana to the second the meditator must eliminate applied thought and sustained thought, to rise from the second to the third he must overcome rapture, and to rise from the third to the fourth he must replace pleasant with neutral feeling. Thus progress involves a reduction and refinement of the jhana factors, from the initial five to the culmination in one-pointedness and neutral feeling.

Once the fourth jhana is reached the jhana factors remain constant, and in higher ascent to the immaterial attainments there is no further elimination of jhana factors. For this reason the formless jhanas, when classified from the perspective of their factorial constitution as is done in the Abhidhamma, are considered modes of the fourth jhana. They are all two-factored jhanas, constituted by one-pointedness and equanimous feeling.

Rather than being determined by a surmounting of factors, the order of the immaterial jhanas is determined by a surmounting of objects. Whereas for the lower jhanas the object can remain constant but the factors must be changed, for the immaterial jhanas the factors remain constant while the objects change. The base of boundless space eliminates the kasina object of the fourth jhana, the base of boundless consciousness surmounts the object of the base of boundless space, the base of nothingness surmounts the object of base of boundless consciousness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception surmounts the objects the object of the base of nothingness.

Because the objects become progressively more subtle at each level, the jhana factors of equanimous feeling and one-pointedness, while remaining constant in nature throughout, become correspondingly more refined in quality. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with a simile of four pieces of cloth of the same measurements, spun by the same person, yet made of thick, thin, thinner and very thin thread respectively (Vism. 339; PP.369). Also, whereas the four lower jhanas can each take a variety of objects — the ten kasinas, the in-and-out breath, etc. — and do not stand in any integral relation to these objects, the four immaterial jhanas each take a single object inseparably related to the attainment itself. The first is attained solely with the base of boundless space as object, the second with the base of boundless consciousness, and so forth.

The motivation which initially leads a meditator to seek the immaterial attainments is a clear recognition of the dangers inherent in material existence: it is in virtue of matter that injuries and death by weapons and knives occur that one is afflicted with diseases, subject of hunger and thirst, while none of this takes place on the immaterial planes of existence (M.i,410). Wishing to escape these dangers by taking rebirth in the immaterial planes, the meditator must first attain the four fine-material jhanas and master the fourth jhana with any kasina as object except the omitted space kasina. By this much the meditator has risen above gross matter, but he still has not transcended the subtle material form comprised by the luminous counterpart sign which is the object of his jhana. To reach the formless attainments the meditator, after emerging from the fourth jhana, must consider that even that jhana, as refined as it is, still has an object consisting in material form and thus is distantly connected with gross matter; moreover, it is close to happiness, a factor of the third jhana, and is far coarser than the immaterial states. The meditator sees the base of boundless space, the first immaterial jhana, as more peaceful and sublime than the fourth fine-material jhana and as more safely removed from materiality.

Following these preparatory reflections, the meditator enters the fourth jhana based on a kasina object and extends the counterpart sign of the kasina "to the limit of the world-sphere, or as far as he likes." Then, after emerging from the

fourth jhana, he must remove the kasina by attending exclusively to the space it has been made to cover without attending to the kasina itself. Taking as his object the space left after the removal of the kasina, the meditator adverts to it as "boundless space" or simply as "space, space," striking at it with applied and sustained thought. As he cultivates this practice over and over, eventually the consciousness pertaining to the base of boundless space arises with boundless space as its object (Vism. 327-28; PP.355-56).

A meditator who has gained mastery over the base of boundless space, wishing to attain as well the second immaterial jhana, must reflect upon the two defects of the first attainment which are its proximity to the fine-material jhanas and its grossness compared to the base of boundless consciousness. Having in this way developed indifferent to the lower attainment, he must next enter and emerge from the base of boundless space and then fix his attention upon the consciousness that occurred there pervading the boundless space. Since the space taken as the object by the first formless jhana was boundless, the consciousness of that space also involves an aspect of boundlessness, and it is to this boundless consciousness that the aspirant for the next attainment adverts. He is not to attend to it merely as boundless, but as "boundless consciousness" or simply as "consciousness." He continues to cultivate this sign again and again until the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless consciousness arises in absorption taking as its object the boundless consciousness pertaining to the first immaterial state (Vism. 331-32; PP.360-61).

To attain the next formless state, the base of nothingness, the meditator who has mastered the base of boundless consciousness must contemplate its defects in the same twofold manner and advert to the superior peacefulness of the base of nothingness. Without giving any more attention to the base of boundless consciousness, he should "give attention to the present non-existence, voidness, secluded aspect of that same past consciousness belonging to the base consisting of boundless space" (Vism. 333; PP.362). In other words, the meditator is to focus upon the present absence or non-existence of the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless space, adverting to it over and over thus: "There is not, there is not" or "void, void". When his efforts fructify there arises in absorption a consciousness belonging to the base of nothingness, with the non-existence of the consciousness of boundless space as its object. Whereas the second immaterial state relates to the consciousness of boundless space positively, by focusing upon the content of that consciousness and appropriating its boundlessness, the third immaterial state relates to it negatively, by excluding that consciousness from awareness and making the absence or present non-existence of that consciousness its object.

The fourth and final immaterial jhana, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, is reached through the same preliminary procedure. The meditator can also reflect upon the unsatisfactoriness of perception, thinking: "Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart... this is peaceful, this is sublime, that is to say, neither-perception-nor-non-perception" (M.ii,231). In this way he ends his attachment to the base of nothingness and strengthens his resolve to attain the next higher stage. He then adverts to the four mental aggregates that constitute the attainment of the base of nothingness — its feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness — contemplating them as "peaceful, peaceful," reviewing that base and striking at it with applied and sustained thought. As he does so the hindrances are suppressed, the mind passes through access and enters the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

This jhana receives its name because, on the one hand, it lacks gross perception with its function of clearly discerning objects, and thus cannot be said to have perception; on the other, it retains a very subtle perception, and thus cannot be said to be without perception. Because all the mental functions are here reduced to the finest and most subtle level, this jhana is also named the attainment with residual formations. At this level the mind has reached the highest possible development in the direction of pure serenity. It has attained the most intense degree of concentration, becoming so refined that consciousness can no longer be described in terms of existence or non-existence. Yet even this attainment, from the Buddhist point of view, is still a mundane state which must finally give way to insight that alone leads to true liberation.

The Jhanas and Rebirth

Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings in whom ignorance and craving still linger are subject to rebirth following death. Their mode of rebirth is determined by their kamma, their volitional action, wholesome kamma issuing in a good rebirth and unwholesome kamma in a bad rebirth. As a kind of wholesome kamma the attainment of jhana can play a key role in the rebirth process, being considered a weighty good kamma which takes precedence over other lesser kammas in determining the future rebirth of the person who attains it.

Buddhist cosmology groups the numerous planes of existence into which rebirth takes place into three broad spheres each of which comprises a number of subsidiary planes. The sense-sphere *(kamadhatu)* is the field of rebirth for evil deeds and for meritorious deeds falling short of the jhanas; the fine-material sphere *(rupadhatu),* the field of rebirth for the fine-material jhanas; and the immaterial sphere *(arupadhatu),* the field of rebirth for the immaterial jhanas.

An unwholesome kamma, should it become determinative of rebirth, will lead to a new existence in one of the four planes of misery belonging to the sense-sphere: the hells, the animal kingdom, the sphere of afflicted spirits, or the host of titans. A wholesome kamma of a subjhanic type produces rebirth in one of the seven happy planes in the sense-sphere, the human world or the six heavenly worlds.

Above the sense-sphere realms are the fine-material realms, into which rebirth is gained only through the attainment of the fine-material jhanas. The sixteen realms in this sphere are hierarchically ordered in correlation with the four jhanas. Those who have practiced the first jhana to a minor degree are reborn in the Realm of the Retinue of Brahma, to a moderate degree in the Realm of the Ministers of Brahma, and to a superior degree in the Realm of the Great Brahma.[19] Similarly, practicing the second jhana to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Luster, to a moderate degree in the Realm of Infinite Luster, and to a superior degree the Realm of Radiant Luster.[20] Again, practicing the third jhana to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Aura, to a moderate degree in the Realm of Infinite Aura, and to a superior degree in the Realm of Steady Aura.[21]

Corresponding to the fourth jhana there are seven realms: the Realm of Great Reward, the Realm of Non-percipient Beings, and the five Pure Abodes.[22] With this jhana the rebirth pattern deviates from the former one. It seems that all beings who practice the fourth jhana of the mundane level without reaching any supramundane attainment are reborn in the realm of Great Reward. There is no differentiation by way of inferior, moderate or superior grades of development. The Realm of Non-percipient Beings is reached by those who, after attaining the fourth jhana, then use the power of their meditation to take rebirth with only material bodies; they do not acquire consciousness again until they pass away from this realm. The five Pure Abodes are open only to non-returners *(anagamis),* noble disciples at the penultimate stage of liberation who have eradicated the fetters binding them to the sense-sphere and thence automatically take rebirth in higher realms, where they attain arahatship and reach final deliverance.

Beyond the fine-material sphere lie the immaterial realms, which are four in number — the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. As should be evident, these are realms of rebirth for those who, without having broken the fetters that bind them to samsara, achieve and master one or another of the four immaterial jhanas. Those meditators who have mastery over a formless attainment at the time of death take rebirth in the appropriate plane, where they abide until the kammic force of the jhana is exhausted. Then they pass away, to take rebirth in some other realm as determined by their accumulated kamma.[23]

5. Jhanas and the Supramundane

The Way of Wisdom

The goal of the Buddhist path, complete and permanent liberation from suffering, is to be achieved by practicing the full threefold discipline of morality (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (paññā). The mundane jhanas, comprising the four fine-material jhanas and the four immaterial jhanas, pertain to the stage of concentration, which they fulfill to an eminent degree. However, taken by themselves, these states do not ensure complete deliverance, for they are incapable of cutting off the roots of suffering. The Buddha teaches that the cause of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements with their three unwholesome roots — greed, hatred and delusion. Concentration of the absorption level, no matter to what heights it is pursued, only suppresses the defilements, but cannot destroy their latent seeds. Thence bare mundane jhana, even when sustained, cannot by itself terminate the cycle of rebirths. To the contrary, it may even perpetuate the round. For if any fine-material or immaterial jhana is held to with clinging, it will bring about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own kammic potency, which can then be followed by rebirth in some lower realm.

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the eradication of the defilements. Since the most basic defilement is ignorance (avijja), the key to liberation lies in developing its direct opposite, namely wisdom (paññā).

Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration it is inevitable that jhana comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but as we will see allows for differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition.

Fundamental to the discussion in this chapter is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravada philosophical exposition, "mundane" *(lokiya)* and "supramundane" *(lokuttara).* The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world *(loka)* — to subtle states of consciousness as well as matter, to virtue as well as evil, to meditative attainments as well as sensual engrossments. The term "supramundane," in contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world, that is the nine supramundane states: Nibbana, the four noble paths *(magga)* leading to Nibbana, and their corresponding fruits *(phala)* which experience the bliss of Nibbana.

Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of phenomena. It penetrates the particular and general features of things through direct cognition rather than discursive thought. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states" and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the Buddha says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration (Vism. 438; PP.481).

The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types: insight knowledge *(vipassanañana)* and the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths *(maggañana).* The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena — impermanence, suffering and non-self. [24] It takes as its objective sphere the five aggregates *(pañcakkhandha)* — material form, feeling perception, mental formations and consciousness. Because insight knowledge takes the world of conditioned formations as its object, it is regarded as a mundane form of wisdom. Insight knowledge does not itself directly eradicate the defilements, but serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in four distinct stages (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes Nibbana, fathoms the Four Noble Truths, and cuts off the defilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" because it rises up from the world of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, Nibbana.

The Buddhist disciple, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots — purified moral discipline and concentration. He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom is to work — the aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering and non-self aspect of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex it issues in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, which turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned Nibbana and thereby eradicates the defilements.

The Two Vehicles

The Theravada tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which practitioners are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity *(samathayana)* and the vehicle of insight *(vipassanayana).* The meditators who follow them are called,

respectively, the *samathayanika,* "one who makes serenity his vehicle," and the *vipassanayanika,* "one who makes insight his vehicle." Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhavipassanayanika,* "one who makes bare insight his vehicle," or a *sukkhavipassaka,* "a dry-insight worker." Though all three terms appear initially in the commentaries rather than in the suttas, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *samathayanika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration or one of the eight mundane jhanas, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. In contrast, the *vipassanayanika* does not attain mundane jhana prior to practicing insight contemplation, or if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from jhana, he proceeds directly to insight contemplation on mental and material phenomena and by means of this bare insight he reaches the noble path. For both kinds of meditator the experience of the path in any of its four stages always occurs at a level of jhanic intensity and thus necessarily includes supramundane jhana under the heading of right concentration *(samma samadhi),* the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimagga* where it is explained that when a meditator begins the development of wisdom "if firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine-material or immaterial jhana except the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc. the jhana factors consisting of applied thought, etc. and the states associated with them" (Vism. 557; PP679-80). Other commentarial passages allow access concentration to suffice for the vehicle of serenity, but the last immaterial jhana is excluded because its factors are too subtle to be discerned. The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to start directly by discerning material and mental phenomena, beginning with the four elements, without utilizing a jhana for this purpose (Vism. 558; PP.680). Thus the *samathayanika* first attains access concentration or mundane jhana and then develops insight knowledge, by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom under the heading of right view, and supramundane jhana under the heading of right concentration. The *vipassanayanika,* in contrast, skips over mundane jhana and goes directly into insight contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight knowledge he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane jhana. This jhana counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity the attainment of jhana fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed for undertaking the work of insight contemplation; and second, it serves as an object to be examined with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. Jhana accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances. As we have seen, for wisdom to arise the mind must first be concentrated well, and to be concentrated well it must be freed from the hindrances, a task accomplished pre-eminently by the attainment of jhana. Though access concentration will keep the hindrances at bay, jhana will ensure that they are removed to a much safer distance.

In their capacity for producing concentration the jhanas are called the basis *(pada)* for insight, and that particular jhana a meditator enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated his *padakajjhana,* the basic or foundational jhana. Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in jhana, since insight meditation requires investigation and observation, which are impossible when the mind is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But after emerging from the jhana the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result conduce to precise, penetrating insight.

The jhanas also enter into the *samathayanika'*s practice in second capacity, that is, as objects for scrutinization by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their marks of impermanence, suffering and non-self. The jhanas a meditator attains provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out the three characteristics. After emerging from a jhana the meditator will proceed to examine the jhanic consciousness and to discern the way it exemplifies the three universal marks. This process is called *sammasanañana,* "comprehension knowledge," and the jhana subject to such treatment is termed *sammasitajjhana,* "the comprehended jhana" (Vism. 607-11; PP.706-10). Though the basic jhana and the comprehended jhana will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A meditator cannot practice comprehension on a jhana higher than he is capable of attaining, but one who uses a higher jhana as his *padakajjhana* can still practice insight comprehension on a lower jhana which he has previously attained and mastered. The admitted difference between the *padakajjhana* and the *sammasitajjhana* leads to discrepant theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we will see.

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the *samathayanika* meditator is unproblematic, the *vipassanayanika'*s approach presents the difficulty of accounting for the concentration he uses to provide a basis

for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are, but without access concentration or jhana, what concentration can he use? The solution to this problem is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access and absorption concentrations pertaining to the vehicle of serenity, called "momentary concentration" *(khanika samadhi).* Despite its name, momentary concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts, but a dynamic concentration which flows from object to object in the ever-changing flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances. Momentary concentration arises in the *samathayanika* simultaneously with his post-jhanic attainment of insight, but for the *vipassanayanika* it develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his insight practice without his having to fix the mind upon a single exclusive object. Thus the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity. Without gaining jhana he goes directly into contemplation on the five aggregates and by observing them constantly from moment to moment acquires momentary concentration as an accompaniment of his investigations. This momentary concentration fulfills the same function as the basic jhana of the serenity vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge.

Supramundane Jhana

The climax in the development of insight is the attainment of the supramundane paths and fruits. Each path is a momentary peak experience directly apprehending Nibbana and permanently cutting off certain defilements. These defilements are generally grouped into a set of ten "fetters" *(samyojana)* which keep beings chained to the round of rebirths. The first path, called the path of stream-entry *(sotapatti)* because it marks the entry into the stream of the Dhamma, eradicates the first three fetters — The false view of self, doubt, and clinging to rites and rituals. The disciple who has reached stream-entry has limited his future births to a maximum of seven in the happy realms of the human and heavenly worlds, after which he will attain final deliverance. But an ardent disciple may progress to still higher stages in the same life in which he reaches stream-entry, by making an aspiration for the next higher path and again undertaking the development of insight with the aim of reaching that path.

The next supramundane path is that of the once-returner *(sakadagami).* This path does not eradicate any fetters completely, but it greatly attenuates sensual desire and ill will. The once-returner is so called because he is bound to make an end of suffering after returning to this world only one more time. The third path, that of the non-returner *(anagami)* utterly destroys the sensual desire and ill will weakened by the preceding path. The non-returner is assured that he will never again take rebirth in the sense-sphere; if he does not penetrate higher he will be reborn spontaneously in the Pure Abodes and there reach final Nibbana. The highest path, the path of arahatship, eradicate the remaining five fetters — desire for existence in the fine-material and immaterial spheres, conceit, restlessness and ignorance. The arahant has completed the development of the entire path taught by the Buddha; he has reached the end of rebirths and can sound his "lion's roar": "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, there is nothing further beyond this."

Each path is followed immediately by the supramundane experience of fruition, which results from the path, comes in the same four graded stages, and shares the path's world-transcending character. But whereas the path performs the active function of cutting off defilements, fruition simply enjoys the bliss and peace that result when the path has completed its task. Also, where the path is limited to a single moment of consciousness, the fruition that follows immediately on the path endures for two or three moments. And while each of the four paths occurs only once and can never be repeated, fruition remains accessible to the noble disciple at the appropriate level. He can resort to it as a special meditative state called fruition attainment *(phalasamapatti)* for the purpose of experiencing nibbanic bliss here and now (Vism. 699-702; PP.819-24).

The supramundane paths and fruits always arise as states of jhanic consciousness. They occur as states of jhana because they contain within themselves the jhana factors elevated to an intensity corresponding to that of the jhana factors in the mundane jhanas. Since they possess the jhana factors these states are able to fix upon their object with the force of full absorption. Thence, taking the absorptive force of the jhana factors as the criterion, the paths and fruits may be reckoned as belonging to either the first, second, third or fourth jhana of the fourfold scheme, or to the first, second, third, fourth or fifth jhana of the fivefold scheme.

The basis for the recognition of a supramundane type of jhana goes back to the suttas, especially to the section of "The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness" where the Buddha defines right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path by the standard formula for the four jhanas (D.ii,313). However, it is in the Abhidhamma that the connection between the jhanas, paths and fruits comes to be worked out with great intricacy of detail.

The *Dhammasangani,* in its section on states of consciousness, expounds each of the path and fruition states of consciousness as occasions, first, of one or another of the four jhanas in the fourfold scheme, and then again as

occasions of one or another of the five jhanas in the fivefold scheme (Dhs.74-86). Standard Abhidhammic exposition, as formalized in the synoptical manuals of Abhidhamma, employs the fivefold scheme and brings each of the paths and fruits into connection with each of the five jhanas. In this way the eight types of supramundane consciousness — the path and fruition consciousness of stream-entry, the once-returner, the non-returner and arahatship — proliferate to forty types of supramundane consciousness, since any path or fruit can occur at the level of any of the five jhanas. It should be noted, however, that there are no paths and fruits conjoined with the immaterial attainments, the reason being that supramundane jhana is presented solely from the standpoint of its factorial constitution, which for the immaterial attainment and the fifth jhana is identical — equanimity and one-pointedness.

The fullest treatment of the supramundane jhanas in the authoritative Pali literature can be found in the *Dhammasangani* read in conjunction with its commentary, the *Atthasalini.* The *Dhammasangani* opens its analysis of the first wholesome supramundane consciousness with the words:

> On the occasion when one develops supramundane jhana which is emancipating, leading to the demolition (of existence), for the abandonment of views, for reaching the first plane, secluded from sense pleasures... one enters and dwells in the first jhana. (Dhs. 72)

The *Atthasalini* explains the word *lokuttara,* which we have been translating "supramundane," as meaning "it crosses over the world, it transcends the world, it stands having surmounted and overcome the world." It glosses the phrase "one develops jhana" thus: "One develops, produces, cultivates absorption jhana lasting for a single thought-moment." This gloss shows us two things about the consciousness of the path: that it occurs as a jhana at the level of full absorption and that this absorption of the path lasts for only a single thought-moment. The word "emancipating" *(niyyanika)* is explained to mean that this jhana "goes out" from the world, from the round of existence, the phrase "leading to demolition" *(apacayagami)* that it demolishes and dismantles the process of rebirth (Dhs.A.259).

This last phrase points to a striking difference between mundane and supramundane jhana. The *Dhammasangani*'s exposition of the former begins: "On the occasion when one develops *the path for rebirth in the fine-material sphere*... one enters and dwells in the first jhana" [my italics]. Thus, with this statement, mundane jhana is shown to sustain the round of rebirths; it is a wholesome kamma leading to renewed existence. But the supramundane jhana of the path does not promote the continuation of the round. To the contrary, it brings about the round's dismantling and demolition, as the *Atthasalini* shows with an illustrative simile:

> The wholesome states of the three planes are said to lead to accumulation because they build up and increase death and rebirth in the round. But not this. Just as when one man has built up a wall eighteen feet high another might take a club and go along demolishing it, so this goes along demolishing and dismantling the deaths and rebirths built up by the wholesome kammas of the three planes by bringing about a deficiency in their conditions. Thus it leads to demolition.[25]

Supramundane jhana is said to be cultivated "for the abandoning of views." This phrase points to the function of the first path, which is to eradicate the fetters. The supramundane jhana of the first path cuts off the fetter of personality view and all speculative views derived from it. The *Atthasalini* points out that here we should understand that it abandons not only wrong views but other unwholesome states as well, namely, doubt, clinging to rites and rituals, and greed, hatred and delusion strong enough to lead to the plane of misery. The commentary explicates "for reaching the first plane" as meaning for attaining the fruit of stream-entry.

Besides these, several other differences between mundane and supramundane jhana may be briefly noted. First, with regard to their object, the mundane jhanas have as object a conceptual entity such as the counterpart sign of the kasinas or, in the case of the divine abodes, sentient beings. In contrast, for the supramundane jhana of the paths and fruits the object is exclusively Nibbana. With regard to their predominant tone, in mundane jhana the element of serenity prevails, while the supramundane jhana of the paths and fruits brings serenity and insight into balance. Wisdom is present as right view and serenity as right concentration, both function together in perfect harmony, neither one exceeding the other.

This difference in prevailing tone leads into a difference in function or activity between the two kinds of jhana. Both the mundane and supramundane are jhanas in the sense of closely attending *(upanijjhana),* but in the case of mundane jhana this close attention issues merely in absorption into the object, an absorption that can only suppress the defilement temporarily. In the supramundane jhana, particularly of the four paths, the coupling of close attention with wisdom brings the exercise of four functions at a single moment. These four functions each apply to one of the Four Noble Truths. The path penetrates the First Noble Truth by fully understanding suffering; it penetrates the Second Noble Truth by abandoning craving, the origin of suffering; it penetrates the Third Noble Truth by realizing Nibbana, the cessation of suffering; and it penetrates the fourth Noble Truth by developing the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of suffering. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with the simile of a lamp, which also performs four tasks simultaneously: it burns the wick, dispels darkness, makes light appear, and consumes oil (Vism.690; PP.808).

The Jhanic Level of the Path and Fruit

When the paths and fruits are assigned to the level of the four or five jhanas, the question arises as to what factor determines their particular level of jhanic intensity. In other words, why do the path and fruit arise for one meditator at the level of the first jhana, for another at the level of the second jhana, and so forth? The commentaries present three theories concerning the determination of the jhanic level of the path, apparently deriving from the lineages of ancient teachers (Vism. 666-67; PP.778-80. Dhs.A.271-74). The first holds that it is the basic jhana, i.e., the jhana used as a basis for the insight leading to emergence in immediate proximity to the path, that governs the difference in the jhanic level of the path. A second theory says that the difference is governed by the aggregates made the objects of insight on the occasion of insight leading to emergence. A third theory holds that it is the personal inclination of the meditator that governs the difference.

According to the first theory the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator who lacks jhana, and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhana attainment but does not use it as a basis for insight, and the path arisen by comprehending formations after emerging from the first jhana, are all paths of the first jhana only. When the path is produced after emerging from the second, third, fourth and fifth jhanas (of the fivefold system) and using these as the basis for insight, then the path pertains to the level of the jhana used as a basis — the second, third, fourth of fifth. For a meditator using an immaterial jhana as basis the path will be a fifth jhana path. Thus in this first theory, when formations are comprehended by insight after emerging from a basic jhana, then it is the jhana attainment emerged from at the point nearest to the path, i.e., just before insight leading to emergence is reached, that makes the path similar in nature to itself.

According to the second theory the path that arises is similar in nature to the states which are being comprehended with insight at the time insight leading to emergence occurs. Thus if the meditator, after emerging from a meditative attainment, is comprehending with insight sense-sphere phenomena or the constituents of the first jhana, then the path produced will occur at the level of the first jhana. On this theory, then, it is the comprehended jhana *(sammasitajjhana)* that determines the jhanic quality of the path. The one qualification that must be added is that a meditator cannot contemplate with insight a jhana higher than he is capable of attaining.

According to the third theory, the path occurs at the level of whichever jhana the meditator wishes — either at the level of the jhana he has used as the basis for insight or at the level of the jhana he has made the object of insight comprehension. In other words, the jhanic quality of the path accords with his personal inclination. However, mere wish alone is not sufficient. For the path to occur at the jhanic level wished for, the mundane jhana must have been either made the basis for insight or used as the object of insight comprehension.

The difference between the three theories can be understood through a simple example.[26] If a meditator reaches the supramundane path by contemplating with insight the first jhana after emerging from the fifth jhana, then according to the first theory his path will belong to the fifth jhana, while according to the second theory it will belong to the first jhana. Thus these two theories are incompatible when a difference obtains between basic jhana and comprehended jhana. But according to the third theory, the path becomes of whichever jhana the meditator wishes, either the first or the fifth. Thus this doctrine does not necessarily clash with the other two.

Buddhaghosa himself does not make a decision among these three theories. He only points out that in all three doctrines, beneath their disagreements, there is the recognition that the insight immediately preceding the supramundane path determines the jhanic character of the path. For this insight is the proximate and the principal cause for the arising of the path, so whether it be the insight leading to emergence near the basic jhana or that occurring through the contemplated jhana or that fixed by the meditator's wish, it is in all cases this final phase of insight that gives definition to the supramundane path. Since the fruition that occurs immediately after the path has an identical constitution to the path, its own supramundane jhana is determined by the path. Thus a first jhana path produces a first jhana fruit, and so forth for the remaining jhanas.

6. Jhana and the Noble Disciples

All noble persons, as we saw, acquire supramundane jhana along with their attainment of the noble paths and fruits. The noble ones at each of the four stages of liberation, moreover, have access to the supramundane jhana of their respective fruition attainments, from the fruition attainment of stream-entry up to the fruition attainments of arahatship. It remains problematic, however to what extent they also enjoy the possession of mundane jhana. To determine an answer to this question we will consult an early typology of seven types of noble disciples, which provides a more psychologically oriented way of classifying the eight noble individuals. A look at the explanation of these seven types will enable us to see the range of jhanic attainment reached by the noble disciples. On this basis we will proceed to assess the place of mundane jhana in the early Buddhist picture of the arahant, the perfected individual.

Seven Types of Disciples

The sevenfold typology is originally found in the Kitagiri Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya (M.i,477-79) and is reformulated in the *Puggalapaññatti* of the Abhidhamma Pitaka. This typology classifies the noble persons on the paths and fruits into seven types: the faith-devotee *(saddhanusari),* the one liberated by faith *(saddhavimutta),* the body-witness *(kayasakkhi),* the one liberated in both ways *(ubhatobhagavimutta),* the truth-devotee *(dhammanusari),* the one attained to understanding *(ditthipatta),* and the one liberated by wisdom *(paññavimutta).* The seven types may be divided into three general groups, each defined by the predominance of a particular spiritual faculty, The first two types are governed by a predominance of faith, the middle two by a predominance of concentration, and the last three by a predominance of wisdom. To this division, however, certain qualifications will have to made as we go along.

[1] The *faith-devotee* is explained the sutta thus:

> Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form: nor after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers been destroyed.[27] But he has a certain degree of faith in the Tathagata, a certain degree of devotion to him, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. This person, monks, is called a faith-devotee. (M.i,479)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p 182) defines the faith-devotee from a different angle as a disciple practicing for the fruit of stream-entry in whom the faculty of faith is predominant and who develops the noble path led by faith. It adds that when he is established in the fruit he becomes one liberated by faith. Although the sutta excluded the "peaceful immaterial attainments," i.e., the four immaterial jhana, from the faith-devotee's equipment, this implies nothing with regard to his achievement of the four lower mundane jhanas. It would seem that the faith-devotee can have previously attained any of the four fine-material jhanas before reaching the path, and can also be a dry-insight worker bereft of mundane jhana.

[2] The one *liberated by faith* is strictly and literally defined as a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry through to the path of arahatship, who lacks the immaterial jhanas and has a predominance of the faith faculty.

The Buddha explains the one liberated by faith as follows:

> Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; but having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers have been destroyed, and his faith in the Tathagata is settled, deeply rooted, well established. This person, monks, is called one liberated by faith. (M.i,478)

As in the case of the faith-devotee, the one liberated by faith, while lacking the immaterial jhanas, may still be an obtainer of the four mundane jhanas as well as a dry insight worker.

The *Puggalapaññatti* states (pp.184-85) that the person liberated by faith is one who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers. However, he has not done so as easily as the *ditthipatta,* the person attained to understanding, whose progress is easier due to his superior wisdom. The fact that the one liberated by faith has destroyed only some of this cankers implies that he has advanced beyond the first path but not yet reached the final fruit, the fruit of arahatship.[28]

[3] The *body-witness* is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry to the path of arahatship, who has a predominance of the faculty of concentration and can obtain the immaterial jhanas. The sutta explanation reads:

> And what person, monks is a body-witness? Herein, monks, some person has reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers having been destroyed. This person, monks, is called a body-witness. (M.i,478)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p. 184) offers a slight variation in this phrasing, substituting "the eight deliverances" *(atthavimokkha)* for the sutta's "peaceful immaterial deliverances" *(santa vimokkha aruppa).* These eight deliverances consist of three meditative attainments pertaining to the fine-material sphere (inclusive of all four lower jhanas), the four immaterial jhanas, and the cessation of perception and feeling *(saññavedayitanirodha)* — the last a special attainment accessible only to those non-returners and arahats who have also mastered the eight jhanas. [29] The statement of the Puggalapaññatti does not mean either that the achievement of all eight deliverances is necessary to become a body-witness or that the achievement of the three lower deliverances is sufficient. What is both requisite and sufficient to qualify as a body-witness is the partial destruction of defilements coupled with the attainment of at least the lowest immaterial jhana. Thus the body witness becomes fivefold by way of those who obtain any of the four immaterial jhanas and the one who also obtains the cessation of perception and feeling.

[4] One who is *liberated in both ways* is an arahant who has completely destroyed the defilements and possesses the immaterial attainments. The commentaries explain the name "liberated in both ways" as meaning "through the immaterial attainment he is liberated from the material body and through the path (of arahatship) he is liberated from the mental body" (MA.ii,131). The sutta defines this type of disciple thus:

> And what person, monks, is liberated in both ways? Herein, monks, someone has reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and having seen with wisdom, his cankers are destroyed. This person, monks, is called liberated in both ways. (M.i,477)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.184) gives basically the same formula but replaces "immaterial deliverances" with "the eight deliverances." The same principle of interpretation that applied to the body-witness applies here: the attainment of any immaterial jhana, even the lowest, is sufficient to qualify a person as both-ways liberated. As the commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* says: "One who has attained arahatship after gaining even one [immaterial jhana] is liberated both ways" (Vism.T.ii,466). This type becomes fivefold by way of those who attain arahatship after emerging from one or another of the four immaterial jhanas and the one who attains arahatship after emerging from the attainment of cessation (MA:iii,131).

[5] The *truth-devotee* is a disciple on the first path in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant. The Buddha explains the truth-devotee as follows:

> Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; nor, after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers been destroyed. But the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted by him through mere reflection, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. This person, monks, is called a truth-devotee. (M.i,479)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.185) defines the truth-devotee as one practicing for realization of the fruit of stream-entry in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant, and who develops the path led by wisdom. It adds that when a truth-devotee is established in the fruit of stream-entry he becomes one attained to understanding, the sixth type. The sutta and Abhidhamma again differ as to emphasis, the one stressing lack of the immaterial jhanas, the other the ariyan stature. Presumably, he may have any of the four fine-material jhanas or be a bare-insight practitioner without any mundane jhana.

[6] The *one attained to understanding* is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels who lacks the immaterial jhanas and has a predominance of the wisdom faculty. The Buddha explains:

> And what person, monks, is the one attained to understanding? Herein, monks someone has not reached with his own mental body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, but having seen with wisdom some of his cankers are destroyed, and the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata have been seen and verified by him with wisdom. This person, monks, is called the one attained to understanding. (M.i,478)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.185) defines the one attained to understanding as a person who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers. He is thus the "wisdom counterpart" of the one liberated by faith, but progresses more easily than the latter by virtue of his sharper wisdom. Like his counterpart, he may possess any of the four mundane jhanas or may be a dry-insight worker.

[7] The *one liberated by wisdom* is an arahant who does not obtain the immaterial attainments. In the words of the sutta:

> And what person, monks, is the one liberated by wisdom? Herein, monks, someone has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful material deliverances transcending material form, but having seen with wisdom his cankers are destroyed. This person, monks, is called one liberated by wisdom. (M.i,477-78)

The *Puggalapaññatti*'s definition (p.185) merely replaces "immaterial deliverance" with "the eight deliverances." Though such arahats do not reach the immaterial jhanas it is quite possible for them to attain the lower jhanas. The sutta commentary in fact states that the one liberated by wisdom is fivefold by way of the dry-insight worker and the four who attain arahatship after emerging from the four jhanas.

It should be noted that the one liberated by wisdom is contrasted not with the one liberated by faith, but with the one liberated in both ways. The issue that divides the two types of arahant is the lack or possession of the four immaterial jhanas and the attainment of cessation. The person liberated by faith is found at the six intermediate levels of sanctity, not at the level of arahatship. When he obtains arahatship, lacking the immaterial jhanas, he becomes one liberated by wisdom even though faith rather that wisdom is his predominant faculty. Similarly, a meditator with predominance of concentration who possesses the immaterial attainments will still be liberated in both ways even if wisdom rather than concentration claims first place among his spiritual endowments, as was the case with the venerable Sariputta.

Jhana and the Arahant

From the standpoint of their spiritual stature the seven types of noble persons can be divided into three categories. The first, which includes the faith-devotee and the truth-devotee, consists of those on the path of stream-entry, the first of the eight noble individuals. The second category, comprising the one liberated by faith, the body-witness and the one attained to understanding, consists of those on the six intermediate levels, from the stream-enterer to one on the path of arahatship. The third category, comprising the one liberated in both ways and the one liberated by wisdom, consists only of arahats.[30]

The *ubhatobhagavimutta,* "one liberated in both ways," and the *paññavimutta* "one liberated by wisdom," thus form the terms of a twofold typology of arahats distinguished on the basis of their accomplishment in jhana.

The *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant experiences in his own person the "peaceful deliverances" of the immaterial sphere, the *paññavimutta* arahant lacks this full experience of the immaterial jhanas. Each of these two types, according to the commentaries, again becomes fivefold — the *ubhatobhagavimutta* by way of those who possess the ascending four immaterial jhanas and the attainment of cessation, the *paññavimutta* by way of those who reach arahatship after emerging from one of the four fine-material jhanas and the dry-insight meditator whose insight lacks the support of mundane jhana.

The possibility of attaining the supramundane path without possession of a mundane jhana has been questioned by some Theravada scholars, but the *Visuddhimagga* clearly admits this possibility when it distinguishes between the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhana but does not use it as a basis for insight (Vism.666-67; PP.779). Textual evidence that there can be arahats lacking mundane jhana is provided by the Susima Sutta (S.ii, 199-23) together with is commentaries. When the monks in the sutta are asked how they can be arahats without possessing supernormal powers of the immaterial attainments, they reply: "We are liberated by wisdom" *(paññavimutta kho mayam).* The commentary glosses this reply thus: "We are contemplatives, dry-insight meditators, liberated by wisdom alone" *(Mayam nijjhanaka sukkhavipassaka paññamatten'eva vimutta ti,* SA.ii,117). The commentary also states that the Buddha gave his long disquisition on insight in the sutta "to show the arising of knowledge even without concentration" *(vina pi samadhimevam nanuppattidassanattham,* SA.ii,117). The subcommentary establishes the point by explaining "even without concentration" to mean "even without concentration previously accomplished reaching the mark of serenity" *(samathalakkhanappattam purimasiddhamvina pi samadhin ti),* adding that this is said in reference to one who makes insight his vehicle (ST.ii,125).

In contrast to the *paññavimutta* arahats, those arahats who are *ubhatobhagavimutta* enjoy a twofold liberation. Through their mastery over the formless attainments they are liberated from the material body *(rupakaya),* capable of

dwelling in this very life in the meditations corresponding to the immaterial planes of existence; through their attainment of arahatship they are liberated from the mental body *(namakaya),* presently free from all defilements and sure of final emancipation from future becoming. *Paññavimutta* arahats only possess the second of these two liberations.

The double liberation of the *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant should not be confused with another double liberation frequently mentioned in the suttas in connection with arahatship. This second pair of liberations, called *cetovimutti paññavimutti,* "liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," is shared by all arahats. It appears in the stock passage descriptive of arahatship: "With the destruction of the cankers he here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge." That this twofold liberation belongs to *paññavimutta* arahats as well as those who are ubhatobhagavimutta is made clear by the Putta Sutta, where the stock passage is used for two types of arahats called the "white lotus recluse" and the "red lotus recluse":

> How, monks, is a person a white lotus recluse *(samanapundarika)?* Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. Yet he does not dwell experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a white lotus recluse.
>
> And how, monks, is a person a red lotus recluse *(samanapaduma)?* Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. And he dwells experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a red lotus recluse. (A.ii,87)

Since the description of these two types coincides with that of *paññavimutta* and *ubhatobhagavimutta* the two pairs may be identified, the white lotus recluse with the *paññavimutta,* the red lotus recluse with the *ubhatobhagavimutta.* Yet the *paññavimutta* arahant, while lacking the experience of the eight deliverances, still has both liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom.

When liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom are joined together and described as "cankerless" *(anasava),* they can be taken to indicate two aspects of the arahant's deliverance. Liberation of mind signifies the release of his mind from craving and its associated defilements, liberation by wisdom the release from ignorance: "With the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind, with the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom" (A.i,61). "As he sees and understands thus his mind is liberated from the canker of sensual desire, from the canker of existence, from the canker of ignorance" (M.i,183-84) — here release from the first two cankers can be understood as liberation of mind, release from the canker of ignorance as liberation by wisdom. In the commentaries "liberation of mind" is identified with the concentration factor in the fruition attainment of arahatship, "liberation by wisdom" with the wisdom factor.

Since every arahant reaches arahatship through the Noble Eightfold Path, he must have attained supramundane jhana in the form of right concentration, the eighth factor of the path, defined as the four jhanas. This jhana remains with him as the concentration of the fruition attainment of arahatship, which occurs at the level of supramundane jhana corresponding to that of his path. Thus he always stands in possession of at least the supramundane jhana of fruition, called the "cankerless liberation of mind." However, this consideration does not reflect back on his mundane attainments, requiring that every arahant possess mundane jhana.

Although early Buddhism acknowledges the possibility of a dry-visioned arahatship, the attitude prevails that jhanas are still desirable attributes in an arahant. They are of value not only prior to final attainment, as a foundation for insight, but retain their value even afterwards. The value of jhana in the stage of arahatship, when all spiritual training has been completed, is twofold. One concerns the arahant's inner experience, the other his outer significance as a representative of the Buddha's dispensation.

On the side of inner experience the jhanas are valued as providing the arahant with a "blissful dwelling here and now" *(ditthadhammasukhavihara).* The suttas often show arahats attaining to jhana and the Buddha himself declares the four jhanas to be figuratively a kind of Nibbana in this present life (A.iv.453-54). With respect to levels and factors there is no difference between the mundane jhanas of an arahant and those of a non-arahant. The difference concerns their function. For non-arahats the mundane jhanas constitute wholesome kamma; they are deeds with a potential to produce results, to precipitate rebirth in a corresponding realm of existence. But in the case of an arahant mundane jhana no longer generates kamma. Since he has eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of kamma, his actions leave no residue; they have no capacity to generate results. For him the jhanic consciousness is a mere functional consciousness which comes and goes and once gone disappears without a trace.

The value of the jhanas, however, extends beyond the confines of the arahant's personal experience to testify to the spiritual efficacy of the Buddha's dispensation. The jhanas are regarded as ornamentations of the arahant, testimonies to the accomplishment of the spiritually perfect person and the effectiveness of the teaching he follows. A worthy monk is able to "gain at will without trouble or difficulty, the four jhanas pertaining to the higher consciousness, blissful dwellings here and now." This ability to gain the jhanas at will is a "quality that makes a monk an elder." When accompanied by several other spiritual accomplishments it is an essential quality of "a recluse who graces recluses" and of a monk who can move unobstructed in the four directions. Having ready access to the four jhanas makes an elder dear and agreeable, respected and esteemed by his fellow monks. Facility in gaining the jhanas is one of the eight qualities of a completely inspiring monk *(samantapasadika bhikkhu)* perfect in all respects; it is also one of the eleven foundations of faith *(saddha pada).* It is significant that in all these lists of qualities the last item is always the attainment of arahatship, "the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," showing that all desirable qualities in a bhikkhu culminate in arahatship.[31]

The higher the degree of his mastery over the meditative attainments, the higher the esteem in which an arahant monk is held and the more praiseworthy his achievement is considered. Thus the Buddha says of the *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant: "There is no liberation in both ways higher and more excellent than this liberation in both ways"(D.ii,71).

The highest respect goes to those monks who possess not only liberation in both ways but the six abhiññas or "super-knowledges": the exercise of psychic powers, the divine ear, the ability to read the minds of others, the recollection of past lives, knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings, and knowledge of final liberation. The Buddha declares that a monk endowed with the six *abhiññas,* is worthy of gifts and hospitality, worthy of offerings and reverential salutations, a supreme field of merit for the world (A.iii,280-81). In the period after the Buddha's demise, what qualified a monk to give guidance to others was endowment with ten qualities: moral virtue, learning, contentment, mastery over the four jhanas, the five mundane *abhiññas* and attainment of the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom (M.iii,11-12). Perhaps it was because he was extolled by the Buddha for his facility in the meditative attainments and the *abhiññas* that the venerable Mahakassapa assumed the presidency of the first great Buddhist council held in Rajagaha after the Buddha's passing away.

The graduation in the veneration given to arahats on the basis of their mundane spiritual achievements implies something about the value system of early Buddhism that is not often recognized. It suggests that while final liberation may be the ultimate and most important value, it is not the sole value even in the spiritual domain. Alongside it, as embellishments rather than alternatives, stand mastery over the range of the mind and mastery over the sphere of the knowable. The first is accomplished by the attainment of the eight mundane jhanas, the second by the attainment of the *abhiññas.* Together, final liberation adorned with this twofold mastery is esteemed as the highest and most desirable way of actualizing the ultimate goal.

About the Author

Mahathera Henepola Gunaratana was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1947 and received his education at Vidyalankara College and Buddhist Missionary College, Colombo. He worked for five years as a Buddhist missionary among the Harijans (Untouchables) in India and for ten years with the Buddhist Missionary Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In 1968 he came to the United States to serve as general secretary of the Buddhist Vihara Society at the Washington Buddhist Vihara. In 1980 he was appointed president of the Society. He has received a Ph.D. from The American University and since 1973 has been Buddhist Chaplain at The American University. He is now director of the Bhavana Meditation Center in West Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley, about 100 miles from Washington, D.C.

Notes

1. See for example, the Samaññaphala Sutta (D. 2), the Culahatthipadopama Sutta (M. 27),etc.
2. *Kamacchanda, byapada, thinamiddha, uddhaccakukkucca, vicikiccha.*
3. *Vitakka, vicara, piti, sukha, ekaggata.*
4. *Akasanañcayatana, viññanañcayatana, akincañññayatana, nevasañññanasañññayatana.*
5. See Narada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma, 4th ed.* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), pp.389, 395-96.
6. A full description of the fourfold purification of morality will be found in the *Visuddhimagga,* Chapter 1.
7. The following discussion is based on Vism.110-115; PP.112-118.
8. Buddhaghosa ascribes the passage he cites in support of the correspondence to the "Petaka," but it cannot be traced anywhere in the present Tipitaka, nor in the exegetical work named *Petakopadesa.*
9. The other two types of abandoning are by substitution of opposites *(tadangappahana),* which means the replacement of unwholesome states by wholesome ones specifically opposed to them, and abandoning by eradication *(samucchedappahana)*, the final destruction of defilements by the supramundane paths. See Vism.693-96;PP.812-16.
10. Adapted from Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest* (Wheel No. 26). This booklet contains a full compilation of texts on the hindrances.
11. Ven Ñanamoli, in his translation of the *Visuddhimagga,* renders piti by "happiness," but this rendering can be misleading since most translators use "happiness" as a rendering for sukha, the pleasurable feeling present in the jhana. We will render piti by "rapture," thus maintaining the connection of the term with ecstatic meditative experience.
12. Shwe Zan Aung, *Compendium of Philosophy* (London: Pali Text Society, 1960), p243.
13. *Khuddhikapiti, khanikapiti, okkantikapiti, ubbega piti* and *pharana piti.* Vism 143-44; PP. 149-51. Dhs.A.158.
14. Dhs.A.160-61. Translation by Maung Tin, *The Expositor (Atthasalini)* (London: Pali Text Society, 1921), i.155-56.
15. The following is based on Vism. 126-35; PP.132-40
16. *Avajjanavasi, samapajjanavasi, adhitthanavasi, vutthanavasi, paccavekkhanavasi.* For a discussion see Vism. 154-55; PP.160-61. The canonical source for the five masteries is the *Patisambhidamagga,* i.100.
17. Based on the distinction between applied and sustained thought, the Abhidhamma presents a fivefold division of the jhanas obtained by recognizing the sequential rather than simultaneous elimination of the two kinds of thought. On this account a meditator of duller faculties eliminates applied thought first and attains a second jhana with four factors including sustained thought, and a third jhana identical with the second jhana of the fourfold scheme. In contrast a meditator of sharp faculties comprehends quickly the defects of both applied and sustained thought and so eliminates them both at once.
18. *Akasanañcayatana, viññanañcayatana, akincañññayatana, nevasañña sañññayatana.*
19. *Brahmaparisajja brahmapurohita, maha brahma.*
20. *Paritabha, appamanabha, abhassara.*
21. *Parittasubha, appamanasubha, subhakinha.*
22. *Vehapphala, asañña satta, suddhavasa.*
23. A good summary of Buddhist cosmology and of the connection between kamma and planes of rebirth can be found in Narada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma,* pp.233-55.
24. *Anicca, dukkha, anatta.*
25. Dhs.A.259.See *Expositor,* ii.289-90.
26. Dhs.A.274. See *Expositor,* ii.310.
27. The cankers *(asava)* are four powerful defilements that sustain samsara; sensual desire, desire for existence, wrong views and ignorance.

28. The *Visuddhimagga*, however says that arahats in whom faith is predominant can also be called "liberated by faith" (Vism.659; PP.770). Its commentary points out that this statement is intended only figuratively, in the sense that those arahats reach their goal after having been liberated by faith in the intermediate stages. Literally, they would be "liberated by wisdom". (Vism.T.ii,468)
29. The first three emancipations are: one possessing material form sees material forms; one not perceiving material forms internally sees material forms externally; and one is released upon the idea of the beautiful. They are understood to be variations on the jhanas attained with color kasinas. For the attainment of cessation, see PP.824-833.
30. It should be noted that the Kitagiri Sutta makes no provision in its typology for a disciple on the first path who gains the immaterial jhanas. Vism.T.(ii,466) holds that he would have to be considered either a faith-devotee or a truth-devotee, and at the final fruition would be one liberated in both ways.
31. The references are to: A,ii,23; iii,131,135,114; iv,314-15; v,337.

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