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Samatha and Vipassanā

Calm and insight in mindfulness training and liberation
An introductory essay by Piya Tan ©2013

1 An overview

1.1 MEDITATION AS THEORY AND SYSTEM. Samatha and Vipassana¹ have curiously become a serious controversy beginning in the mid-20th century, involving various factions in the Theravada (The Elders' Tradition) of south-east Asia and their branches or sympathizers elsewhere.² The controversy essentially centres around meditation terminology and techniques, and there is almost no difference in their common acceptance of the sutta teachings. The main issue is that the disputing parties regard Samatha and Vipassana as *meditation methods or systems*.

The most prominent claim often made by the Vipassana proponents is that it is “the only way.”³ This is, as a rule, equated with satipatthana, where it is said to be *ekāyana*, which Vipassanavadins render as “the only way”⁴ [4.1]. This fervent notion is centred around **the Mahā Satipatṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), which is touted as the most important sutta in the whole Pali canon. This view is today upheld mainly by the “Vipassanāvāda” or “Insight School” of **Mahasi Sayadaw**⁵ of Myanmar (proponent of the “dry insight” school)⁶ and the Goenka tradition (the other main Vipassana school).⁷ For the sake of convenience, we will refer to such proponents of Vipassana as “**Vipassanavadins**.”

The “Vipassana boom” was at its height in the second half of the 20th century, mostly centred around the teachings and world tours of Mahasi Sayadaw. Vipassana was especially well received in Malaysia during this period.⁸ However, with the death of Mahasi in 1982, the popularity of Vipassana slowly began to decline. Half a decade of intensive teachings, along with the rise of Vipassana centres and countless books on the subject, have left some people with the idea that Vipassana is a meditation “method” or “system,” even though the notion is *not based on the suttas*.⁹

¹ *Samatha* (Skt *śamatha*) simply means “calm, calmness, settling,” while *vipassanā* (Skt *vipaśyanā*) means “insight,” which refers to *aspects* of meditation. Here I have used the anglicized terms, Samatha and Vipassana, with initial capitals (without diacritics), to denote the alleged “meditation methods,” which most readers of Buddhist writings should be familiar with. The lower-case forms, “samatha” and “vipassana,” are simply anglicized terms of the Pali, but can, in certain contexts, also include the modern “meditation methods.”

² In Malaysia, eg, when the Vipassana fever was at its height, there were reports of breakdowns during their meditation retreats. Even around 2009, an English exchange student at the National Univ of Singapore attending such an intensive Vipassana retreat was reported to have had a breakdown. On meditation problems, see **SD 17.8c (8.2)** Downside of meditation (the danger of cults); and **(8.3)** Who should not meditate. On safe meditation, see **SD 15.1 (14)**: Living the moment.

³ See eg Soma 1949:19 f, 1998:19; Nyanaponika 1962:7; Mahasi 1997:28, 29, 30. Conze early notes the “dogmatic” tendency of claiming satipatthana (often equated with Vipassana): 1962:51 n. On Satipatthana as Vipassana, see (4.2) below; also Sujiva 2000:3.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion, see SD 13.1 (3.2).

⁵ Orig name U Sobhana (1904-1982). It was Mahasi’s teacher, **Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw** (orig name U Narada, 1868-1954), who introduced the modern innovation of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen.”

⁶ On “dry-insight” (*sukkhā, vipassaka*), see [2.1] below.

⁷ Further see SD 13.1 (1c).

⁸ At the height of the “Vipassana boom” in Malaysia, there was even a “Vipassana Tribune,” a newsletter published twice a year by the Buddhist Wisdom Centre, Selangor, Malaysia: [Vipassana Tribune \(www.quantum.com.my\)](http://www.quantum.com.my). Its last issue was in 2009. The Centre was set up in the early 1990s in Damansara Jaya (Selangor, Malaysia) with Sujiva Samanera (LIEW Soon Guan, b 1951) as “spiritual advisor.” The Centre still exists, serving mostly as a sort of guest-house and dana-centre for visiting monastics of the tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw of Myanmar.

⁹ See esp Analayo, “The ancient roots of the U Ba Khin *Vipassana* meditation,” 2006a.

1.2 MEDITATION AND MODERNISM. It would be interesting to study in detail how such stands and reification of Samatha and Vipassana as meditation “methods” started and progressed. They are probably a manifestation of Buddhist modernism, where we try to sell Buddhism as being modern, scientific, intellectual, non-superstitious, and so on. Proponents and sympathizers of Vipassana also tend to be suspicious of any “pleasant states” in meditation, and as a rule advise others to simply disregard or get rid of them. Such an attitude could be understood as a disregard for dhyana or an unwillingness or inability to attain it [1.4.3].

Where such an attitude is strong—which scholars dub as “Protestant Buddhism”¹⁰—such as seen in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore, this is probably a reaction (conscious or unconscious) to western colonialism and evangelism. Such exploitation and encroachment on the country and culture by a foreign power (the British) made the Myanmarese (or “Burmese,” in colonial language) more defensive to the extent of fighting to win back their independence.

In an important way, the split between Samatha and Vipassana is a part of this broader Myanmarese political effort to reassert themselves with the idea of a national Buddhist identity.¹¹ The Burmese Buddhist meditation groups, for example, have constructed for themselves some sort of *national Buddhist identity* for more than a century. This is the only thing that they seem able to export to the world. As such, they are very proud of it, and their emotions can run high about such matters.

1.3 A FAMILY DISPUTE. It is natural that when followers of a Vipassana group meet, like any group members, they would discuss meditation, and the teachings and attainments of their teachers. Although such traditions often have their own set of received rules and dogmas,¹² the “Samatha-Vipassana”¹³ discourse is more like on-going family arguments. When a family gathers for their annual dinner, they would argue about the same things every time. In a way, such discussions and arguments reflect a deeper love for meditation and for one another as Buddhists.

Our neighbours or visitors would probably not understand a word about such discussion or dispute. This is the case with the on-going controversy over Samatha and Vipassana. Outsiders would be wondering why we are arguing over these methods, instead of actually meditating! It’s like two brothers, who each have a car, and both argue over whose car is better, but they rarely ever drive their own cars around or to go places!

Those better informed about Buddhism and who are themselves meditation practitioners would probably be mildly amused to see us arguing over Samatha and Vipassana. They might see us as a bunch of querulous cooks arguing over our ingredients, cooking style, utensils, or dishes, each one claiming his is the best. Isn’t it better to just cook and taste the dishes ourselves?

The “dog-fight” (Sujato’s term) between Samatha and Vipassana has a long history, rooted in the various teachings in the Suttas, with their different emphases and perspectives. As time went by, later teachers and schools, each emphasize certain ideas or perspectives, depending on their wisdom or wishes.

¹⁰ See R Gombrich & G Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, Princeton, 1988:202-240; John C Holt, “Protestant Buddhism?” *Religious Studies Review* 17, 1991:1-6; P Mellor, “Protestant Buddhism? The Cultural Translation of Buddhism in England,” *Religion* 21,1 1991:73-93. G Schopen, “Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism,” in Schopen, *Stones, Bones, & Buddhist Monks*, Honolulu, 1997:1-22.

¹¹ The British conquered Burma after three Anglo-Burmese Wars in the 19th century, making it a British colony. Burma became independent in 1948, initially as a democratic nation and then, after a coup in 1962, as a military dictatorship which formally ended in 2011. In 1989, the military government officially changed the English translations of many local names dating back to Burma’s colonial period or earlier, including that of the country itself: “Burma” became “Myanmar.” Many opposition political and ethnic groups, and countries, however, continue to use “Burma” because they do not recognise the legitimacy of the ruling military government or its authority to rename the country. (D I Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar*, Georgetown, 2002:xi).

¹² Such as not reading the works of outside groups and a fervour for Abhidhamma talks.

¹³ Generally, I have used the lower case terms “samatha” and “vipassana” to refer to the terms as used in the suttas and early Buddhism, and the initial capitalized terms “Samatha” and “Vipassana” as their modernist or sectarian concepts. All these 4 are anglicized terms, so that no diacritics are needed.

In due course, such ideas and practices become reified into meditation methods in their own right, rooted in their teacher's teaching, reinterpreting scripture into its service.¹⁴

1.4 BALANCED PRACTICE

1.4.1 Any meditation stage can be samatha or vipassana. *Samatha* and *vipassana*, as we know from the suttas, are not meditation *methods*, but integral aspects of meditation or qualities of mind associated with mental cultivation. In our times, the controversy has turned them into methods of meditation. The Buddha does not teach any “samatha” meditation or “vipassana” meditation. Take the well known case of **the Ānāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 119), where we can see the first 12 of its 16 stages as the cultivation of *samatha*, and the last 4 stages as those of *vipassanā*.¹⁵

However, in either case (the first 12 stages or the last 4 stages), we can still see both samatha and vipassana aspects in both of them. In other words, at any of the 16 stages, we could gain calm to simply enjoy its bliss, or we could, in the calm bliss, reflect on the impermanence of the whole experience [6.3.2].

Meditation, in other words, should not be taken as a ritual (unlike physical exercise, for example), but it is a process where we learn to be truly at peace with ourselves. With that peace, we gain greater insight into our own selves and even directly experience true reality. Buddhist training is not like some simplistic belief system which reduces the religious life to a single belief or ritual.

Buddhist spiritual training is a gradual training where we basically cultivate our body and speech to be wholesome so that they are a support (*anuggahita*) for intellectual growth (knowledge of the suttas and the Dharma) and mental cultivation. We then train to still the mind so that it clears itself to be able to gain right view and liberation. Hence, **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), says that right view has to be supported by moral virtue, by learning, by discussion, by calm (*samathānuggahita*) and by insight (*vipassanā'nuggahita*).¹⁶

1.4.2 The 2 wings of a bird. There are no hard and fast rules about samatha and vipassana. They are two integral and vital aspects of cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of the mind. They complement each other to help or harmonize the different parts of the mind in meditation and daily life. Each of them has a special purpose (that is, when we rightly use them), but they always work together for our mental development.

As such, the Buddha declares that the proper cultivation of samatha or mental calm leads to the ending of *lust* or emotional defilements, while the proper cultivation of vipassana leads to the ending of *ignorance* or cognitive defilements. As such, says **the Netti-p, pkarāṇa**, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* must be cultivated (Nett 43).¹⁷

Samatha and vipassana, then, deal with different aspects of mental development and spiritual liberation. Neither is dispensable. Our brain, for example, has two halves—the left brain and the right brain—that work together. Even when the two halves of human brain are surgically separated from one another (as in an epilepsy surgery), it still works “single-mindedly.”¹⁸ Or, as more famously put by **Dh 372**, samatha and vipassana¹⁹—that is, concentration and wisdom [6.3.6]—must both be harmoniously cultivated [3], just as a bird flies on its two wings²⁰ [3; 6.2.3.5; 7.4].

¹⁴ Sujato 2008b.

¹⁵ M 118/3:77-88 @ SD 7.13.

¹⁶ M 43.13/1:294 @ SD 30.1.

¹⁷ See also Gethin 2001:xiv.

¹⁸ See SD 20.1 (4.2.6). On the need for a balanced practice for both *samatha* and *vipassanā*, see Cousins 1984:65; Gethin 1992:345; Maha Boowa 1994:86; Analayo 2003:88-91.

¹⁹ Dh 372: There is no (true) meditation without wisdom; | there is no (true) wisdom without meditation || In whom there are both meditation and wisdom, | he is indeed in nirvana's presence. (*N'atthi jhānam apaññassa | paññā n'atthi ajhāyato || yamhi jhānam ca paññā ca | sa ve nibbāna, santike*).

²⁰ This famous imagery actually describes the life of a true renunciant: D 2,66/1:71 = M 51,15/1:346 = 112,14/-3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f.

1.4.3 Bliss arises in letting go. Proponents of Vipassana and Buddhist modernism often say that dhyana,²¹ even meditation itself, is not needed for enlightenment or awakening²²—but this is *not* the same as saying that dhyana is “not needed” for the attaining of arhathood. Throughout the suttas, we see, as a rule, that an arhat’s awakening, in some way, follows his dhyanic attainment, or he has previously mastered dhyana.²³ Such experiences are always described as being pleasant and as “happiness here and now” [4.2.3].

It is helpful to note that, in a most significant way, the Buddha’s teaching is rooted in the Bodhisattva’s decision to practise dhyana as a pleasure “not to be feared,” recalling how even as a child of 7, he has enjoyed its calm and profound bliss under the jambu tree.²⁴ Turning to dhyana meditation, using this as the basis for mental calm, the Bodhisattva, then applies insight into the nature of true reality, and so gains full awakening.

We have already noted [1.2] that proponents and sympathizers of Vipassana tend to be suspicious of any “pleasant states” in meditation, and as a rule advise others to simply disregard or get rid of them. Such an attitude could be understood as a disregard for dhyana on account of *an unwillingness or inability to attain it*. For any such reason, Vipassana or Zen or any other kind of safe religious or spiritual practice can be a good start for our path to happiness, but it surely should not end there, too.

The point is that in meditation, bliss only arises when we let go of pleasant states: this is the bliss of renunciation! This is often mentioned by the Buddha in various suttas, and where he is also depicted as enjoying such meditative bliss.²⁵ In short, Buddhist meditation when properly practised is always a blissful experience or would lead to some level of bliss.

Furthermore, adds **Sujato**, any kind of good meditation would bring about some clarity of mind, and some level of discernment. Hence, it is wrong to say that a certain group or person is doing Samatha, another is doing Vipassana. This is a category mistake. We cannot simply label a certain aspect of meditation and say that that is “Vipassana” meditation, when this is a quality that we must cultivate. Such a stand is therefore unfounded and wrong. Anyone who knows the suttas or has any appreciation of Buddhist history knows that the Buddha does not teach “Vipassana” meditation.²⁶

²¹ In a parallel development, but more significantly so, meditation either was ritualized or rejected by the various Mahāyāna sects and groups: see eg SD 40b (2.2.1; 3.4.4.1; 5.2.3.2); SD 36.12 (5.3.2.4) Avalokiteśvara and meditation. On the fundamentals of dhyana, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

²² See eg Ven Dr P Vajirañāṇa, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Colombo, 1962), where the writer writes that “the object of attaining these [various progressive meditative] stages is to achieve the mastery of Samādhi; for without this mastery of Samādhi his training would be incomplete” (335) but elsewhere he writes “The samādhi system, therefore, seems to be optional...but vipassanā...is indispensable and universally imperative for the attainment of Nirvāṇa, and is regarded in Buddhist teaching as a unique system” (343) (highlights added). This self-contradiction evinces the book is based purely on a *theoretical* approach to meditation. Another interesting example of modernist meditation is that of Ven Dr H Gunaratana (a Sinhala monk with PhD in jhāna studies) who holds that thinking does and must occur during dhyana: see **The Buddha discovered dhyana** @ SD 33.1b (6.4).

²³ See **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70,14-16/1:477 f), SD 11.1 (5.2); cf **(Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10), SD 33.7. See also **Samadhi** @ SD 33.1a (2.4) awakening *without* dhyana & **Bhāvanā** @ SD 15.1 (13): Is dhyana necessary for awakening? On the 2 possible path fruitions (non-return and arhathood), see SD 41.4 (2.2).

²⁴ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31-32/1:246 f), SD 1.12 (excerpts) + SD 49.4 (full tr).

²⁵ **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70,7/1:475), SD 11.1; **Saḷ, āyatana S** (M 137,11/3:217 f), SD 29.5; **Venāga, pura S** (A 3.63,5-1:182), SD 21.1.

²⁶ See Sujato Bhikkhu, 2008a: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSVQhhEt7tQ&feature=related>.

2 Types of meditators

2.1 THE “DRY-INSIGHT” MEDITATOR

2.1.1 Three kinds of practitioners. The Vipassanavadins of recent decades often invoke the popular commentarial notion of the 3 kinds of practitioners and their respective vehicles, namely,²⁷

- (1) the calm [tranquillity] practitioner (*samatha, yānika*), “one whose vehicle is calmness”,
- (2) the insight practitioner (*vipassanā, yānika*), “one whose vehicle is insight”, and
- (3) the dry-insight practitioner (*sukkhā, vipassaka*), “one who practises only insight.”

The Vipassanavadins see the last—the “dry-insight” practitioner—as their ideal, which is fine, as far as personal meditation choices go. The problem arises when such proponents claim, overtly or covertly, that “only this is true, and all else false,” that this is “the only way.”²⁸

Here, however, we will focus on how the ideas of the “dry-insight” meditator (or “pure-insight” meditator, *suddha, vipassaka*) and “pure Vipassana” arose.²⁹ Now the term “dry-insight meditator” is not found in the suttas. So, how did the Vipassanavadins come up with their notion of “pure Vipassana” meditation or a “pure-Vipassana” practitioner? They must have turned to suttas related to meditation, especially vipassana, or more correctly, to samatha *and* vipassana. We will now look at the key suttas in this connection. [2.1.2.4]

2.1.2 The (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Suttas

2.1.2.1 Besides using the commentarial notion of the “dry-insight” meditator [2.1.1] and reinterpreting the teachings of the Yuga, naddha Sutta, as we shall see below [2.2.1], the Vipassanavadins see a close connection between the notion of the three kinds of practitioners as described in especially the three (Samatha, vipassanā) Samādhi Suttas (A 9.92-94).

2.1.2.2 **The (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Sutta 1** (A 4.92), the shortest of the three texts, describes these 4 kinds of practitioners (without naming them), thus:³⁰

- (1) one who gains inner mental calm but does *not* gain the higher wisdom that is insight into things.
- (2) one who gains the higher wisdom that is insight into things but does *not* gain inner mental calm.
- (3) one who neither gains inner mental calm nor any higher wisdom that is insight into things.
- (4) one who gains both inner mental calm and higher wisdom that is insight into things.

(A 4.92/2:92), SD 96.7³¹

2.1.2.3 In the (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Suttas 2 and 3 (A 4.93+94), the Buddha encourages the first practitioner—the one who gains inner mental calm but does not gain the higher wisdom of insight into things—that is, the calm practitioner (*samatha, yānika*)—to strive for “the higher wisdom that is insight into things” (*adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanā*). The second practitioner—the one who gains the higher wisdom that is insight into things but does not gain inner mental calm—is exhorted to strive for mental calm.³²

²⁷ Eg DA 3:754; MA 1:239; AA 3:142; KhpA 182; SnA 1:277, 2:547; NmA 2:313; NcA 102; PmA 3:696; VbhA 215.

²⁸ On the need to give up such a “private truth,” see **Paṭilīna S** (A 4.38,1.2), SD 43.10.

²⁹ Apparently, this term, too, is not found in the suttas, but is derived from the commentarial phrase “pure Vipassana” (*suddha, vipassanā*, DA 2:381).

³⁰ *Cattāro ’me bhikkhave puggalā santo saṁvijjamānā lokasmiṁ. Katame cattāro? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo lābhī hoti ajjhataṁ ceto, samathassa na lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya. Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya na lābhī ajjhataṁ ceto, samathassa. Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo na c’eva lābhī hoti ajjhataṁ ceto, samathassa na lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya.*

Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo c’eva lābhī hoti ajjhataṁ ceto, samathassa lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya. Ime kho bhikkhave cattāro puggalā santo saṁvijjamānā lokasmiṁ ’ti.

³¹ Details in A 4.93 @ SD 95.8 & A 4.94 @ SD 41.3. See also SD 33.8 (3) Calm as basis for insight.

³² A 4.93/2:92 @ SD 95.8 & A 4.94/2:92 f @ SD 41.3.

The **Āṅguttara Commentary** explains “mental calm” (*ceto,samatha*) here as the attainment concentration, or full concentration of mind (*appanā,citta,samādhi*),³³ and “higher wisdom of insight into things” as the insight knowledge that discerns formations (*saṅkhāra,pariggaha,vipassanā,ñāṇa*), that is, insight into the 5 aggregates (AA 2:325).

2.1.2.4 The first practitioner—who gains only mental calm—clearly refers to the “calm [tranquillity] practitioner” (*samatha,yānika*), “one whose vehicle is calmness.” The second—who gains only insight—is the “insight practitioner” (*vipassanā,yānika*). The third practitioner gains neither, while the fourth gains both samatha and vipassana (that is, the practitioner of the “twin” method or *yuga,naddha*) [2.2.1].

The commentarial notion of the “dry-insight practitioner” (*sukkha,vipassaka*) who practises “only insight” clearly comes from this Sutta or a related teaching. Again here, we should not analyze the sutta texts merely on *the word* level, but we need to understand them on a “spiritual” level (“in the spirit”), based on personal experience of meditation. The reality is that no one ever really experience meditation properly from either only samatha or only vipassana (that is, one without some help from the other)—remember the parable of the bird flying with two wings [1.4.2].

2.1.2.5 In practical meditation, when we feel calm in meditation, we should, sooner or later, reflect on such states or on whatever is going in and around us as being impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. Such passages as the above (M 4.92+93+94) are merely listing the various ways we can balance or harmonize samatha and vipassana to this effect. The two are never treated in the suttas as being any kind of separate or independent meditation “method,” but are really two strategies for proper meditation and personal growth.

2.2 PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR METHODS

2.2.1 The 4 kinds of practitioners

2.2.1.1 It is helpful here to remind ourselves that the purpose of meditation, indeed of **Buddhist training** as a whole, is *to know our mind, to tame it and to free it*.³⁴ Basically, we first need to calm the mind before we can clear it. On the other hand, we could at times have a clear mind, but somewhat lacking in calmness or inner peace. In other words, we need to have a good balance of mental calm and clarity.

2.2.1.2 **The Yuga,naddha Sutta** (A 4.170) refers to the various ways which we can cultivate a good balance between samatha and vipassana. So vital is such a mental balance in meditation that, when properly done, can lead to awakening. The Sutta speaks of the 4 vehicles for mental cultivation leading to arhathood, as follows:

- (1) **Insight preceded by calm** (*samatha,pubbañ,gama vipassanā*) or “calm before insight.” This, according to the Commentaries, is the calmness practitioner (*samatha,yānika*), that is, one who first cultivates access concentration (*upacāra,samādhi*), the dhyanas or the formless attainments, and then takes up insight (*vipassanā*) meditation. Here, “access concentration” is the concentration gained just before attaining dhyana (MA 1:112).
- (2) **Calm preceded by insight** (*vipassanā,pubbañ,gama samatha*) or “insight before calm.” The second method—where insight is cultivated first, then calm (*vipassanā,pubb’āṅgama samatha*)—refers to a practitioner who naturally gains insight, with which he cultivates one-pointedness of the mind [4.2.1]³⁵—this is the insight practitioner (*vipassanā,yānika*) (MA 1:112). According to **the Paṭisambhidā,magga**, this second mode of meditation begins right away with the contemplation of the 3 characteristics. This is followed by the cultivating of “letting go” (*vossagga*), perhaps as a result of the detachment arising from insight (Pm 2:96).
- (3) **Calm and insight coupled together** (*samatha,vipassanā,yuga,naddha*). Here, the meditator enters the first dhyana and then emerging from it, applies insight to that experience, that is,

³³ Cf **Samādhi S 3** (A 4.94.1/2:93), SD 41.3.

³⁴ See **Bhāvanā @** SD 15.1 (8.1.1). On “how to really know the mind,” see SD 17.8b (7).

³⁵ MA 1:108 f; AA 3:143.

sees the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perceptions, formations, consciousness) based on the dhyana as being *impermanent*, subject to *suffering* and is *non-self*. Then he enters the 2nd dhyana, emerges and applies insight to it. He applies the same reflection to the other dhyanas as well in the same manner until the path of streamwinning, or higher, is realized.

- (4) **A meditator’s mind is seized by agitation caused by higher states of mind** (*dharm’ud-dhacca, vigghāta mānasa*), but there comes a time when his mind becomes internally steadied, composed, unified and concentrated.³⁶ (See A 4.170/2:156 f & SD 41.5)

2.2.1.3 In all these 4 cases, it is said, “**then the path arises in him, and while he does so, the mental fetters³⁷ are abandoned and the latent tendencies³⁸ are destroyed,**” meaning that he attains arhathood (A 4.170).³⁹ It should be carefully noted here what is said and what is not. The Sutta here mentions *both* samatha and vipassana in every case. There is *no* mention of any “pure” Vipassana practice.

2.2.2 Can calm and insight occur simultaneously?

2.2.2.1 THE TWIN PRACTICE. The Yuga,naddha Sutta (A 4.170) [2.2.1.2] shows how samatha and vipassana should be cultivated in a balanced and harmonious way. There are those who interpret “twin” (*yuga,naddha*) here to mean that calm and insight can arise, even should arise, simultaneously. The commentaries do not acknowledge any such idea, but there are discourses that *seem* to point to such a notion.

Some discourses seem to suggest the possibility of calm and insight arising at the same time, that is to say, apparently insight *might* occur while we are still in dhyana, and that we need not emerge from the dhyana before beginning reflecting on impermanence and so on. Such suttas include the following:

• Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta	M 52,4-14/1:350-352	SD 41.2
• Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta	M 64,9-15/1:435-437	SD 21.10
• (Āsava-k,khaya) Jhāna Sutta	A 9.36/4:422-426	SD 33.8

³⁶ Comy says that the “agitation” (*uddhacca*) here refers to a reaction to any of the 10 “impurities of insight” (*vipassanā’nupakkilesa*) when they are wrongly taken as indicating path-attainment (AA 3:143). That is, he is distracted by any of these 10 impurities: bad conduct of body, speech and mind; sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill will, violent thoughts; thoughts about relatives, home country and reputation; thoughts about higher mental states (*dhamma, vitakka*) (**Paṃsu,dhovaka S**, A 3.100a,4.1/1:254), SD 19.11. **Visuddhi,magga** uses *dhamma, vitakka* (“thoughts about higher states”) to refer to the same 10 impurities (Vism 20.105-128/ 633-638). Bodhi: “It is plausible, however, that the ‘agitation caused by higher states of mind’ is mental distress brought on by eagerness to instantaneous enlightenment experience” (A:ÑB 294 n69). See the story of **Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya** in (**Arahatta**) **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10/6-9), SD 33.7 & also the story of Anuruddha in (**Anuruddha**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128/3:152-162), SD 5.18.

³⁷ **The 10 fetters** are: (1) Personality view (*sakkāya,dīṭṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) desire for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) desire for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 10.13/5:17; Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*).

³⁸ **Latent tendencies** (*anusayā*), alt trs “underlying tendencies,” “latent dispositions.” There are 7 of them: (1) sensual desire (*kāma-rāga*); (2) aversion (*paṭigha*); (3) views (*dīṭṭhi*); (4) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*); (5) conceit (*māna*); (6) desire for existence (*bhava,rāga*); (7) ignorance (*avijjā*). They are also listed in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(12)/3:254, 282), **Cha,chakka S** (M 148,28/3:285), **Anusaya S** (A 7.11 & 12/4:8 f) and **Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 383). They are deeply embedded in one’s mind through past habitual acts and can only be uprooted on attaining the Path. Wrong view and spiritual doubt are eliminated at streamwinning; sensual desire and aversion, at non-return; conceit, attachment to existence and ignorance, only at arhathood. See Abhs 7.9: “The latent dispositions (*anusayā*) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (*anusenti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions. The term ‘latent dispositions’ highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to arise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. Though all defilements are, in a sense, *anusayas*, the seven mentioned here are the most prominent.” (Abhs:B 268). See also Abhs:SR 172. The first 3 latent tendencies are mentioned in **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 16.3 (5).

³⁹ A 4.170/2:156 f @ SD 41.5. Further see **Dhyana** @ SD 8.4 (10).

2.2.2.2 INSIGHT INTO A DHYANA. In the **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta** (M 52)—which is identical to the **Dasama Sutta** (A 11.17)—after a description of the first dhyana in a well known stock passage, it is then said:

This first dhyana, too, is conditioned and volitionally produced, and as such is impermanent, subject to ending.⁴⁰

And *whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to ending.*⁴¹
(M 52,4-14/1:350-352), SD 41.2 = (A 11.17/5:343)

It appears *as if* we are still in the first dhyana, when this reflection—this switch to “insight” (*vipassanā*) practice—is done. This reflection is then applied, in the same manner, to the other 3 dhyanas, the 4 divine abodes, and the 4 formless attainments.

We do *not* have any sutta passage (or commentarial text) that points to the idea that such a reflection actually occurs while in a dhyana or that such a thing is even possible. While there might seem to be a subtle vestige of thinking in the first dhyana—as “initial application” (*vitakka*) or “sustained application” (*vicāra*)⁴²—thinking as we know it in daily life is completely transcended in the other dhyanas and in the formless attainments (in other words, in any kind of dhyana).⁴³

2.2.2.3 INSIGHT INTO THE 5 AGGREGATES. In the **Mahā Māluṅkyaputta Sutta** (M 64 = A 11.16), we have this description for the attaining of the first dhyana in terms of *insight into the 5 aggregates*:

9.2 Whatever states that there are by way of form, of feeling, of perception, of formations, of consciousness, [that is, any of the 5 aggregates,]

he regards them as being impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien [as being other], as breaking up, as empty, as non-self.⁴⁴

9.3 He turns his mind away from these states.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Yaṃ kho pana kiñci abhisankhataṃ abhisañcetaṃ, tad aniccaṃ nirodha, dhamman ti.* This reflection is applied to all the 4 dhyanas so as to switch to “insight” (*vipassanā*) practice. Here, in **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52/1:349-353) = **Dasama S** (A 11.17/5:343), this statement is applied to all the attainments (dhyana, the divine abodes, the formless attainments). Cf **Cūḷa Suññata S** (M 121), where this reflection is applied instead to “this signless mental concentration, too” (*ayam pi kho animitto ceto, samādhi*), in ref to arhathood (M 121,11/3:108), SD 11.3. Cf also **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,22/3:244), SD 4.17.

⁴¹ *Yaṃ kho pana kiñci abhisankhataṃ abhisañcetaṃ, tad aniccaṃ nirodha, dhamman ti.* Cf **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,22/3:244).

⁴² See **Vitakka,vicāra**, SD 33.4.

⁴³ For a study, see **The Buddha discovered dhyana** @ SD 33.1b (6.2): “While in dhyana can we examine our mind?”

⁴⁴ “Impermanent...non-self,” *aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato*: as at **M 64,9/1:435,33-35**, **74,9/1:500,3-5**; **A 4.124/2:128,16-18**, **9.36/4:422,25-423,1**. The 11 terms are expanded to 40 at Pm 2:238, and explained in Vism 20.19-20/611-613.S Comy reduces them to the 3 contemplations (*manasi,kāra*), where “impermanence” and “breaking up” represent contemplation of impermanence (*anicca,manasikāra*), “empty” and “non-self” represent the contemplation on non-self (*anatta,manasikāra*), and the others represent the contemplation on suffering (*dukkha,manasikāra*) (SA 2:334). Vism & Pm however include “alien” in the reflection of non-self” (Vism 20.20/613; Pm 3:146,13). Comy here adds that the marks of suffering are sixfold (*dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato*), the impermanent twofold (*aniccato palokato*), the non-self threefold (*parato suññato anattato*) (MA 3:146). This refrain (and the rest) shows the attainment of calm (*samatha*), leading to the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*), or “insight preceded by calm” (*samatha,pubbaṅgamā vipassanā*), ie, on emerging from dhyana, one contemplates on it as an object of insight, reflecting it as having arisen through conditions, esp volition: see **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52,4/1:350), SD 41.2, where Comy says that this is *samatha,pubbaṅgamā vipassanā*; see **(Yuga,naddha) Paṭipadā S** (A 4.170/2:157), SD 41.5. For the Āgama (Chin) version, see Analayo 2011:166.

⁴⁵ Comy: “He turns his mind away” (*cittam paṭivāpeti*) from the 5 aggregates included in the dhyana, which he has seen to be marked with the 3 characteristics (of impermanence, suffering, non-self) (MA 3:146). He goes on to regard the dhyana or attainment, thus: “This is peaceful....nirvana” (see below).

Having turned his mind away from these states,⁴⁶ he directs his mind to the death-free element, [436] thus:

“This is peaceful, this is sublime,⁴⁷ that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana.”⁴⁸

9.4 If he is steady therein, he attains the destruction of the mental influxes.⁴⁹

9.5 If he does not attain the destruction of the mental influxes because of that desire in dharmas, that delight in dharmas,⁵⁰

then with the destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he becomes one with spontaneous birth (*opapātika*) (in the Pure Abodes), and there attains final nirvana, not subject to returning from that world.⁵¹

9.6 This, Ānanda, is the path, the way, to the abandoning of the 5 lower fetters.

[The same is then said of the other 3 form dhyanas and the first 3 formless attainments.]

(M 64,9-15/1:435-437), SD 21.10

Here, we have an interesting account of a superconscious mind, calm and clarified by dhyana that is able to “see” directly into true reality, here understood by way of the 5-aggregate model. A dhyanic state—in the early Buddhist sense—is pure bliss, what we might (provisionally) speak of as being a purely affective state without any cognitive element.

This point is vital to our understanding of the nature of dhyanas, and is simple enough to understand: it has to do with what does *not* happen during dhyana. A cognitive process in a human is understood and expressed through language and concepts. But, language as we know and use it, ceases to function in dhyana (the language centre shuts down). It is like we are simply ecstatic at receiving a deeply awaited gift as a child, or at some really happy event in our life: at the height of the moment, we are simply at “a loss for words.” Only after some conscious effort, *after* the excitement is over, are we able to find the words, which often starts off with “I don’t really know.”⁵²

2.2.2.4 ATTAINING ARHATHOOD DEPENDS ON DHYANA. The whole of **the (Āsava-k,khaya) Jhāna Sutta** (A 9.36) deals with the idea of insight into the true nature of dhyana in terms of the “9 progressive

⁴⁶ Comy: That is, from the 5 aggregates, all of which are marked by the 3 characteristics. (MA 3:146)

⁴⁷ *Santam...pañitam*, as at M 2:235, 263; A 4:423, 5:8, 110, 320, 322, 354 ff.

⁴⁸ *Etam santam etam pañitam yad idam sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho sabbūpadhi,paṭinissaggo taṇha-k,khaya virāgo nirodho nibbānan ti*. Here, *saṅkhārā* is pl, reflecting the unawakened state; but is sg (*saṅkhāro*) when it describes an arhat’s mind: see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,13-15/1:301) + SD 40a.9 (2.4). For this stock as ref to nirvana: **M 64/1:-436,34**; **A 3.32/1:133,1**, **9.36/4:423,3+21, 424,18, 425,11 pe, 426,4 pe**, **10.6/5:8,8**, **10.60/110,23, 111,1**, **11.7/5:319,-15**, **11.8/320,21**, **11.9/322,15**, **11.19/354,9**, **11.20/355,27**, **11.21/357,1**, **11.22/358,14**; **Nm 2:424**; **Miln 325**. **Not ref to nirvana**: **M 102/2:230,18, 231,17, 235,18+20+23 (all pe)**, 236i2, 237: all to *diṭṭhi* and *kappa*, **106/2:263,18 (ākāñcaññāyatana)**, 264,11 (*n’eva,saññā.nāsaññāyatana*), **M 152/3:299,12+24+33 (all upekhā)**, 300,3+6+9+12+15+19+2 (all *upekhā*); It **49/2.2.12/44**; **Pm 1:159**.

⁴⁹ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*, which comes from *ā-savati*, “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, bad (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsavas*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kāmaśava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 16.1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁵⁰ “Desire...delight in dharmas” (*dhamma,rāga dhamma,nandī*), as at **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** (M 52,4/1:350), where Comy explains that these 2 terms refer to the desire and lust (*chanda-rāga*), here meaning simply “attachment,” with respect to calm and insight. If one is able to let go of all attachment to calm and insight, one becomes an arhat. If one cannot discard them then one becomes a non-returner and is reborn in the Pure Abodes (MA 3:14). *Dhamma* here clearly does not mean “teaching” or “Teaching,” but meditative states; as such, it is best rendered as “dharma.”

⁵¹ On the non-returner, see **Sa,upādi,sesa S** (A 9.12/4:378-382), SD 3.3(3).

⁵² See **The Buddha discovered dhyana** @ SD 33.1b (6.2.2): Dhyana is beyond words and thoughts.

abodes” (*nava anupubba vihāra*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments, and the cessation of perception and feeling. Having attained each of these 9 progressive abodes, the meditator *then* reflects on each of them, thus:

2.2 Whatever states that are therein, by way of form, of feeling, of perception, of formations, of consciousness,⁵³

he regards them *as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien [as being other], as breaking up, [423] as empty, as non-self.*⁵⁴

2.3 He turns his mind away⁵⁵ from these states.⁵⁶

Having turned his mind away from these states, he directs his mind to the death-free element,⁵⁷ thus:

“This is peaceful, this is sublime,⁵⁸ that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana.”⁵⁹

If he is steady therein, he attains the destruction of the mental influxes.

[But if he still has some slight defilements, he would attain non-return.]

A 9.36/4:422-426 @ SD 33.8

The refrain (...*impermanent, suffering, a disease, a tumour, a barb, a calamity, an affliction, alien [being other], breaking up, empty, non-self*) and the rest of the above passage describes the attainment of calm (*samatha*), leading to the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*), or “insight preceded by calm” (*samatha, pubbaṅgamā vipassanā*), that is, on emerging from dhyana, we contemplate on it as an object of insight, reflecting it as having arisen through conditions, especially volition.⁶⁰

The above passage gives us a vital clue to the nature of post-dhyana reflection, that is, review or insight into the dhyana experience. This is clearly implied by the line “**He turns his mind away from these states,**” that is, after reflecting on the true nature of each of the 5 aggregates, we then direct our mind,⁶¹ by way of review knowledge, to reflect on the dhyana state, thus: “This is peaceful, this is sublime...” This sentence would not make sense if we are still in dhyana!

⁵³ These are the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*): see SD 17.

⁵⁴ “Impermanent...non-self,” *aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato*: as at M 1:435, 500; A 4:422 f; cf A 2:128; Miln 418. Comy says that the marks of suffering are sixfold (*dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato*), the impermanent twofold (*aniccato palokato*), the non-self threefold (*parato suññato anattato*) (MA 3:146).

⁵⁵ “Turn...away,” Be Ce Ee WT *paṭivāpeti*, Se *patiṭṭhāpeti* throughout. *Paṭivāpeti* der from √VAP, “to shear or sow” (M 1:435 = A 4.423; DhsA 407). Other vll: *paṭipādeti*, *paṭilapeti* (MA), *paṭicāreti*, *paṭivāreti* (SHB, but inconsistent). See A:H 4:225 n, where EM Hare suggests reading *paṭinivatteti*, “to cause to turn away, to avert,” see McDonell’s Skt Dict, sv √VRT. See also SED which gives *pratinivartayati*, sv *parti-ni-√VRT*. One reason for this bewildering list of variant readings is prob that the reciters or redactors (after the Buddha’s time) were themselves not sure of the appropriate action at this point in the meditation. This problem, unfortunately, is even more rampant today.

⁵⁶ Comy: “He turns his mind away” (*cittam paṭivāpeti*) from the 5 aggregates included in the dhyana, which he has seen to be marked with the 3 characteristics (of impermanence, suffering, non-self) (MA 3:146). He goes on to regard the dhyana or attainment, thus: “This is peaceful...nirvana” (see below). See Intro (3.3).

⁵⁷ *So tehi dhammehi cittam paṭivāpetvā [paṭinivattetvā] amatāya dhātuyā cittam upasamharati.*

⁵⁸ *Paṇītam*, as at M 2:235, 263; A 4:423, 5:8, 110, 320, 322, 354 ff.

⁵⁹ *Etam santam etam paṇītam yad idam sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho sabbūpadhi,paṭinissaggo taṇha-k,khayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan ti*, as at M 1:136. See also V 1:5; D 2:36; S 1:136; A 5:8.

⁶⁰ See **Mahā Mālunḱyā,putta S** (M 64,9-16/1:435-437), SD 21.10; see also **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** (M 52,4/1:350), SD 41.2, where Comy says that this is *samatha,pubbaṅgamā vipassanā*; see **(Yuganaddha) Paṭipadā S** (A 4.170/-2:157), SD 41.5. See SD 33.8 (3.2).

⁶¹ On directed meditation, see **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.10/5:154-157) + SD 24.2 (1).

3 What is *samatha* and *vipassanā*?

3.1 SAMATHA

3.1.1 Freedom of mind. When calm (*samatha*) is developed by itself, independent of insight, it temporarily suppresses the 5 mental hindrances⁶² and brings about the “higher mind” of dhyana, characterized by the absence of lust. This is called the “**freedom of mind**” (*ceto, vimutti*) or “freedom by concentration.” When this freedom is properly attained, the mind is *completely and forever* free of the mental hindrances, that is, with the attaining of arhathood. In short, this freedom of mind refers to the skillful use of dhyana to free the mind.

With the attainment of the first dhyana, our mind is freed from the mental hindrances, especially from sensual lust. It is worth noting here that if we have truly attained the first dhyana, we would be able to destroy the fetter of sensual craving and its cognate fetter, ill will. We would be filled with lovingkindness, but have no more sexual feelings, especially when we have attained non-return or arhathood.

The point, however, remains that dhyanic experience is powerfully blissful enough for us to be revulsed⁶³ at sensual pleasure (especially sexual pleasure) for a significant while, even when we are not awakened. However, since we are unable to sustain this dhyanic bliss or uproot the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*), such sensual feelings would return under the “right” conditions.⁶⁴

3.1.2 Freedom by wisdom. The one “**freed by wisdom**” (*paññā, vimutti*) “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body” (that is, through self-effort), but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed.”⁶⁵ All arhats are fully liberated in the same way from ignorance and craving, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration.

Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “**freed both ways**,” that is, freed from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “freed both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of freedom are given in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15) and **the Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70).⁶⁶

3.2 WHAT REALLY IS VIPASSANĀ?

3.2.1 We have looked at some suttas and Commentaries that seem to be the roots of the idea that Vipassana is a meditation “method,” even as “pure Vipassana,” practised by someone called a “dry-insight practitioner” [2.1]. We have also noted how the suttas and proper meditation practice do *not* support the notion that thinking can occur in a dhyana [2.2]. In both these sections, we have also briefly surveyed the various approaches to meditation given in the suttas. We will now look more closely at the twin aspects of such meditations, that is, samatha and vipassana.⁶⁷

3.2.2 We have noted, at the start of this essay, that **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) says that right view has to be supported by moral virtue, by learning, by discussion, by calm (*samathānuggahita*) and by

⁶² “**Mental hindrances**” (*nīvaraṇā*): sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), sloth-and-torpor (*thīna, middha*), restlessness-and-worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*) (A 3:62; Vbh 378). Cf **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,13/1:274); see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,13); **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36) on how to deal with the hindrances in our meditation; **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,68/1:71), SD 8.10. See *Nīvaraṇā*, SD 32.1.

⁶³ On revulsion, see *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1

⁶⁴ See esp case of the once-returned Mahānāma, who complains to the Buddha that despite his understanding of the 3 unwholesome roots, he still has defiled mental states: **Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 14/1:91-95), SD 4.7.

⁶⁵ **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70,16/1:478), SD 11.1.

⁶⁶ **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70/1:477 f), SD 11.1. For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f). For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15,35/2:70 f), SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 @ SD 3.4.37.

⁶⁷ Note that here the terms are in the lower case, which refers to the terms in the suttas, viz, *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Where the terms have initial capitals—as *Samatha* and *Vipassana*—they refer to modern or modernist conceptions and constructions, esp as meditation “methods.”

insight (*vipassanā 'nuggahita*)⁶⁸ [1.4.1] As for mental cultivation, it should be properly cultivated with a harmonious balance of samatha or mental calm, which leads to the ending of *lust* or emotional defilements, and of vipassana, which leads to the ending of *ignorance* or cognitive defilements [1.4.2].

3.2.3 According to the **Vijjā Bhāgiya Sutta** (or **Samatha Vipassanā Sutta**, A 2.3.10), both samatha and vipassana are needed to gain liberating knowledge; indeed, when properly cultivated, they both ripen as “true knowledge” (*vijjā*).

Bhikshus, there are these two things that comprise true knowledge.⁶⁹ What are the two? Calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).⁷⁰

Bhikshus, when **calm** is cultivated, what benefit does it bring? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit does it bring? All lust is abandoned.

Bhikshus, when **insight** is cultivated, what benefit does it bring? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit does it bring? All ignorance is abandoned.

Bhikshus, a mind defiled by lust cannot free itself, and wisdom defiled by ignorance cannot grow.

Thus, bhikshus, through the fading away of lust there is the freedom of mind (*ceto, vimutti*); through the fading away of ignorance, there is the freedom by wisdom (*paññā, vimutti*).⁷¹

(A 2.3,10/1:61), SD 3.2(4.2); cf Dh 372) [3.4.1]

3.3 VIPASSANĀ IS A PROCESS, NOT A GOAL. It is clear from the **Samatha Vipassanā Sutta** (A 2.3.-10) [3.2] that “Vipassanā” is not a goal but an aspect of personal development: the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*) leads to wisdom (*paññā*). As such, **Dhammavuddho** has proposed that *vipassanā* be translated as “contemplation” (1997: 13 n6). This means that it is not a “system,” but a mental action, more exactly, wise attention, observing the impermanence in whatever is before us, whether as a physical sense-experience or as a mental state.

In an important way, vipassana, in the context of meditation practice and general mindfulness, leads to “cognitive breakthrough.” This means that we learn to see *through* what the senses project to us or hide

⁶⁸ M 43,13/1:294 @ SD 30.1.

⁶⁹ “Comprise true knowledge,” *vijjā, bhāgiya*, lit “have a part of knowledge,” “partake of true knowledge” (A:ÑB 42). According to A:ÑB (1999:280 n3), “true knowledge” (*vijjā*) here may refer to “the 3 knowledges” (*te, vijjā*) or an “eightfold division.” The 3 knowledges are: (1) the knowledge of the recollection of past lives; (2) the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings according to their karma; (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes. The “eightfold division” are: (1) insight knowledge (*vipassanā, ñāṇa*); (2) the power of creating of a mind-made body (*mano..mayā iddhi*); (3) psychic powers (*iddhi, vidhā*); (4) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*); (5) the knowledge of reading the minds of others (*parassa ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*); (6) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu* or *cutū-papāta, ñāṇa*); (7) the knowledge of the recollection of one’s past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati ñāṇa*); (8) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa*) (A 3.100.1-10/1:253-256).

⁷⁰ “Calm” (*samatha*) is the “one-pointedness of the mind” (*cittassa eka-g, gatā*), ie mental concentration culminating in the dhyanas (*jhāna*). “Insight” (*vipassanā*) is “the knowledge that comprehends the formations” (*saṅkhāra, pariggāhaka, ñāṇa*) as impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self” (AA 2:119).

⁷¹ “Freedom of mind” and “freedom by wisdom,” respectively, *ceto, vimutti* (or, liberation by concentration, ie through destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā, vimutti* (liberation through insight) (A 1:60). One who is “freed by wisdom” “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into 2 types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated both ways,” ie, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “freed both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/-2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70/1:477 f), SD 11.1. For a full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/-2:70 f), SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120,37/3:103 (SD 3.4).

from us. Properly speaking, it is not the senses that “project” anything: it is our own mind, our self-centred or mind-based way that constructs a virtual reality. Our ignorance does the rest, working like props, mirrors, curtains and walls on a magician’s stage, hiding the true reality from us, so that we are “entertained” by our experiences.

When we catch glimpses of the true reality “behind the scene,” we generally react with displeasure because we regard them as *not* being “part of the act.” Even when something life-changing appears before our consciousness, we simply discount it or are unable to see it, because we are simply unfamiliar with it. So we simply *ignore* it. When we merely ignore what neither pleases nor displeases us here, we simply reinforce our ignorance. If we do all this habitually, we become the captive audience of our own productions.

Vipassana is the sharp-eyed and sagacious critic of all this magic show of our own making. Firstly, it notices a familiarly tiresome pattern in the face of sense-experiences. We begin to notice how predictable we are in reacting to what we like, what we dislike, and the unfamiliar. It is as if we are but puppets controlled by the strings of greed, hate and delusion, pulled by the puppet-master, the “I.”

Through vipassana or insight, we see the “I” for what it really is, a pastiche of echoes from the past held together by ignorance and propelled by craving. Properly, vipassana sees only this present moment of rising and fading of what is seen, heard, sensed or cognized.⁷² This pattern now becomes familiar, only true to reality. As such, it is liberating.

3.4 SAMATHA AND VIPASSANĀ MUST WORK TOGETHER

3.4.1 We have earlier mentioned that samatha and vipassana should be practised in a balanced and harmonious way [1.4]. When calm is developed together with insight, they give rise to the noble path that uproots the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) of sensual lust (by the path of non-return) and of attachment to existence (by the path of arhathood).⁷³

The benefits of samatha and vipassana working together is described in **the Vijjā Bhāgiya Sutta** (or **Samatha Vipassanā Sutta**, A 2.3.10), and it is useful to remember them, that is to say: through samatha all *lust* is abandoned and through vipassana all *ignorance* is abandoned, resulting in “true knowledge” (*vijjā*) [3.2.3].

Briefly, this means that a mind tainted by lust cannot *free* itself, and wisdom clouded by ignorance cannot *know* itself. As such,

- through the fading away of *lust*, there is the freedom of mind (*ceto, vimutti*);

- through the fading away of *ignorance*, there is the freedom by wisdom (*paññā, vimutti*).

Thus, concludes **Analayo**, “this passage is not presenting two different approaches to realization but two aspects of the meditative path, one of which is not sufficient by itself to bring realization” (2003:89 f).⁷⁴

3.4.2 A similar theme, but on a deeper level, is found in **the (Mūla) Samatha Vipassanā Sutta** (S 43.2), where nirvana (the unconditioned) is defined as the destruction of the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion), and the way to this end is the practice of samatha-vipassana:

⁷² On this central teaching, known as the Bāhiya’s teaching, see **(Arahatta) Bāhiya Sutta** (U 1.10/8), SD 33.7 & **Mālunkya,putta Sutta** (M 35.95.12/4:73), SD 5.9.

⁷³ The Āṅguttara Comy takes “calm” in the latter sense and says that “The mind develops into the path-consciousness (*magga, citta*). Lust (*rāga*) is abandoned due to its opposing the path-consciousness, and the path-consciousness opposing lust. At the moment of lust there is no path-consciousness, at the moment of path-consciousness there is no lust. When lust arises, it obstructs the arising of the path-moment, cutting off its basis; but when the path arises it uproots and eradicates lust.” (AA 2:119)

⁷⁴ See Lily de Silva 1978.

SD 41.1(3.4)

(Mūla) Samatha Vipassanā Sutta

The Discourse on Calm and Insight (the Roots) | S 43.2/4:360

Theme: Samatha-vipassana uproots the 3 roots

1 “Bhikshus, I will teach you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned.

Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the monks replied the Blessed One.

1.2 The Blessed One said this:

2 “And what, bhikshus, is the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*)?

The destruction of lust, the destruction of hate, and the destruction of delusion—this is called the unconditioned.

3 And what, bhikshus, is the path leading to the unconditioned?

Calm and insight [Samatha and vipassana]—this is called the path leading to the unconditioned.

4 Thus, bhikshus, I have taught you *the unconditioned* and *the path* leading to the unconditioned.

5 Bhikshus, whatever a teacher should do out of compassion for the good of disciples, for the sake of their welfare, it has been done to you by me.

6 These, bhikshus, are the foot of trees;⁷⁵ these are empty places.⁷⁶ Meditate,⁷⁷ bhikshus! Be not heedless! Regret not later!

This is our instruction to you.”⁷⁸

— evaṃ —

3.4.3. Sujato explains the holistic functioning of samatha and vipassana succinctly, thus:

Notice that samatha brings about the fading of lust, *vipassanā* the fading of ignorance. Lust is a term for the emotional aspect of the defilements; ignorance is a term for the intellectual aspect. At their most general, then, *samatha* may be regarded as pertaining to emotional development, *vipassanā* as pertaining to intellectual development. The terms “emotional” and “intellectual” are meant here in their broadest possible connotation. They have been chosen because they offer an established usage, easily understood, which approximates to this context. No doubt we risk trivializing the concept of *samatha* and *vipassanā*; but perhaps we may succeed instead in dignifying the contemporary impoverished understanding of the emotions and the intellect.

By using the word “emotional,” we no more mean being moody and impulsive than by “intellectual” we mean mere reasoning and rational thinking. Rather, we refer to that whole side of

⁷⁵ “These are the foot of trees,” *etāni rukkhā, mūlāni*. “Foot” here is an adv, like “bottom,” and as such always singular. Bodhi curiously has “the feet of trees” here (S:B 1372).

⁷⁶ These are the 3 basic places recommended for forest meditation. A long list of secluded dwellings is “a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw” (D 2,67/1:71), SD 8.10.67. For details, see **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4b/1:56), SD 13.3 & n.

⁷⁷ “Meditate!” *jhāyatha*, lit “cultivate *jhāna*” (M 1:45, 118; S 4:133, 4:359, 361, 362, 368, 373; A 3:87, 89, 4:139, 392). Syn *bhāvētha* (2nd pl), “cultivate!”

⁷⁸ These 2 well known closing paras [§§2-3] are stock: **Sallekha S** (M 8,18/1:46), **Dvedhā, vitakka S** (M 19,27/1:118), **Āneñja, sappāya S** (M 106,15/2:266 f), **Indriya, bhāvanā S** (M 152,18/3:302), SD 17.13, (**Nava Purāṇṇa**) **Kamma S** (S 35.146/4:133), SD 4.12; **Kāya S** (S 43.1/4:359), SD12.21.1, all suttas in the same **Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta** (S 43.2-44/4:360-373); **Bhikkhu’upassaya S** (S 47.10/5:157), **Dhamma, vihārī S 1** (A 5.73/3:87), **Dhamma, vihārī S 2** (A 5.74/3:89), **Vinaya, dhara S** (A 7.70.4/4:139), **Araka S** (A 22.70.4/3:139); cf **Mahā Palobhana J** (J 507). The sentence “regret not later” (*mā pacchā vippaṭisārino ahuvattha*), in the second para, also occurs at **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.19+20/2:147, 16,6.5/2:155 ×3, the Buddha’s last words) = **Kusinārā S** (A 4.76/2:79 f); **Devatā S** (A 9.19/4:392). For comy, see MA 1:195 f, SA 3:111 f, 266 f.

experience, half of our mind or world which deals with feelings and intuitions, the soft feminine side, and that which deals with understanding and analysis, the penetrating masculine side. All of us contain both of these aspects within us. Each of these aspects contains some good and some bad and must be developed in a balanced way if we are to achieve liberation – we cannot enlighten only half our mind.

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

(Sujato, “A pair of swift messengers,” 19 f)

4 Samatha, samādhi and jhāna

4.1 A THEORY OF EVERYTHING. All Buddhist meditation is directly or indirectly related to letting go of the body so that we fully experience the mind. It is helpful to understand the basic reason for this. Our physical body comprises of the 5 physical sense-faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—which incessantly feed the mind, each demanding our attention. At the same time, how we view the world is dictated and limited by the mind that is itself dictated and limited by these physical senses, that is, our world.

All that we really “are” are our 6 senses—the physical sense-faculties and the mind—and the respective *sense-objects*. In other words, ours is the world of light and shapes, sounds and vibrations, smells, tastes, touches and mind-objects. Our tools of knowing the world are our 6 senses, and all that we can know are their respective sense-objects: this is the “all.”⁷⁹

Buddhism does not deny that there is a physical world “out there,” but it should not bother us too much as there is nothing we can really do about it, except to live in harmony with it. Our real task as living human beings is to understand how we view the world through our senses, which creates our own virtual realities; our feelings, our likes and dislikes; our thoughts, imaginations and philosophies; our hopes, desires, and religions; our knowing, sciences and technology. When we understand what our senses really are and how they work, then we can better understand our world, that is, our inner being, and so liberate ourselves from craving and ignorance.

4.2 THREE RELATED TERMS

4.2.1 Samatha. The best way to understand our world and to be liberated, is to begin with understanding our mind. To truly understand our mind, we need first and foremost to still it to a certain level. This stilling of the mind is technically known as **samatha** (*samatha*), which means wholesomely keeping it undistracted, one-pointed, concentrated, and “absorbed.” In other words, true mental peace comprises undistractedness (*avikkhepa*), one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and mental absorption (*dhyana, jhāna*). These words are all, in fact, synonyms of samatha.

For practical purposes, especially those of meditation, we can here take samatha as the *means* to attain mental stillness. We can gain mental stillness—that is, clearing away immediate distractions, so that we are inwardly calm and joyful—by such methods as the breath meditation and the cultivation of lovingkindness. When our minds are totally free of all distractions, to that extent we can say it is “concentrated” or “stilled”—it has attained samadhi.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1.

⁸⁰ See **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (1.2).

4.2.2 Samadhi (*samādhi*), as used in the suttas, often simply means “meditation,” such as in the term “meditation training” (*samādhi sikkhā*).⁸¹ Here, we will define it more narrowly as “mental concentration” or “inner stillness.” The same terms or synonyms mentioned above can be used here. For example, it is said in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44): “Avuso Visākha, the one-pointedness of mind—this is samadhi [concentration].”⁸²

Technically speaking, there is concentration present in every conscious moment, but the concentration is a relatively weak one. In our daily lives, our level of enjoyment or learning depends on the level of our mental concentration at that time. As such, we can also speak of “wrong concentration” (*micchā samādhi*)⁸³ when the mind is attending to an unwholesome mental sign (*nimitta*)⁸⁴ or linked to an unwholesome root, that is, greed, hate or delusion.⁸⁵

However, in the suttas and Buddhist writings in general, whenever the term “samadhi” or “concentration” itself is used, it usually means “**right concentration**” (*sammā samādhi*). Right concentration here refers to the 4 dhyanas [3.2.3]. Here again, we see that the three terms themselves are synonyms, but each in turn has its special usage: while samatha is a general term for “mental calm,” especially a meditation practice, samadhi refers to the mind’s being free of all distraction, attaining some level of one-pointedness or focussed stillness. The beautiful fruit of all this is that *the mind is totally free from the body*, so that it is fully focussed on itself in profound bliss: this is called dhyana (*jhāna*), which we will now turn to.⁸⁶

4.2.3 Benefits of samadhi. **The Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta** (A 4.41) mentions 4 uses or benefits of mental concentration (*samādhi*),⁸⁷ as follows:

<u>Cultivation (or method)</u>	<u>Samadhi that brings about</u>	
(1) the 4 dhyanas	dwelling happily here and now	A 4.41.2
(2) the perception of light	knowledge and vision	A 4.41.3
(3) the perception of impermanence	mindfulness and clear comprehension	A 4.41.4
(4) watching rise and fall of the aggregates	the destruction of mental influxes ⁸⁸	A 4.41.5
		(A 4.41/2:44-46) + SD 24.1 (1.1)

(1) “**The 4 dhyanas**” (*jhāna*) constitute “the right concentration” factor of the noble eightfold path. Dhyana plays a key role in transforming the focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) from the mundane to the supramundane level of path-entry. In short, we attain the path of sainthood. Even on a mundane level, the dhyanic mind is so calm and clear that, on emerging from it, the temporarily purified mind feels profound bliss. Hence, we dwell happily here and now. [6.3.3.4]

(2) “**The perception of light**” (*āloka,saññā*), which brings about “knowledge and vision” (*nāṇa,dassana*), refers to the “divine eye” (that is, the psychic power of clairvoyance and the knowledge of the working of karma and rebirth).⁸⁹ Properly speaking, such a power can only be fully developed through dhyana. However, a mind that is bright, made lucid by the perception of light, also suffuses our being with joy, which leads on to attaining samadhi.⁹⁰ With this calm and clear mind, we can have some direct experience of true reality and have an understanding of it, that is, knowledge and vision.

(3) “**The perception of impermanence**” (*anicca,saññā*) is a very simple and efficacious practice that promotes mindfulness and clear comprehension by way of watching the most fundamental characteristic of all conditioned things, that is, impermanence. This practice prevents the mind from being distracted by

⁸¹ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

⁸² M 44,12,2/1:301 @ SD 40a.9.

⁸³ On “wrong dhyana,” see SD 33.1b (4.4.3.4; 4.4.3.5).

⁸⁴ See *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

⁸⁵ On the 3 unwholesome roots, see (*Akusala Mūla*) *Añña Titthiya S* (A 3.68/1:299-201), SD 16.4.

⁸⁶ On the tr of samādhi, see *Dhyana*, SD 8.4 (6.5.2).

⁸⁷ For details, see *Samādhi*, SD 33.1a.

⁸⁸ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*: see [2.2.2.3] in the M 64 quote.

⁸⁹ See eg *Sāmañña,phala S* (D 2,97 f/1:82 f), SD 8.10.

⁹⁰ *Pacalā S* (A 7.58.7/4:86), SD 4.1.

any of the senses, and if the mind is distracted, the distraction is easily abandoned by reflecting on its impermanent nature.⁹¹ Reflecting on the impermanence of whatever arises in the early stages of meditation—whether a distraction (such as bodily pain or thoughts) or a wholesome state (such as dhyana)—brings about mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati, sampajañña*).

(4) **Contemplating on “the rise and fall”** (*udaya-b, baya*),⁹² on a simple level, works like the perception of impermanence (see previous). Watching how, say a distracting thought, arises and passes away, helps us to let it go and return to our proper meditation object. Or, we could even simply watch only the *rising* aspect or only the *falling* aspect of a mental event. With the mind cleared of distractions, samadhi is attained. A mind that is calm and clear can easily see the rise and fall of the aggregates which, when properly and patiently done, leads to insight into the true nature of reality, and in due course fruits in the destruction of the influxes,⁹³ that is, arhathood.

4.2.4 Dhyana (*jhāna*). We have noted that samatha, samadhi and dhyana are sometimes synonymous, and that each does have its special usages⁹⁴ [3.2.2]. **Dhyana** (P *jhāna*; Skt *dhyāna*), as a special term, refers to when the mind is fully free from the body, and profoundly aware of itself in utter bliss. It is a meditative state of profound single-minded stillness, clarity and transpersonal or extrasensory bliss. In an important sense, “nothing” happens in a dhyana: knowing, as we normally understand it, is totally suspended. Dhyana is pure deep mental bliss.⁹⁵

Although dhyana is usually associated with profound bliss, it is also an ideal tool for attaining wisdom (*paññā*), insight (*vipassanā*), true knowledge (*vijjā*), even liberating knowledge (*aññā*) itself. While the first three terms are sometimes synonyms of each other, the last, *aññā*, is a special term for an arhat’s liberating wisdom.

In **Dh 372**, we clearly see *jhāna* as referring to samadhi or mental concentration. This famous Dhammapada verse advises us to harmoniously balance samatha and vipassana in our mental cultivation:

There is no concentration⁹⁶ for those lacking wisdom,
there is no wisdom for those lacking concentration.
In whom there is both concentration and wisdom,
he indeed is in the presence of nirvana.

*N’atthi jhānaṃ apaññassa
paññā n’atthi ajhāyato⁹⁷
yamhi jhānañ ca pañña ca
sa ve nibbāna, santike* (Dh 372)

4.2.5 Types of wisdom

4.2.5.1 Technically, *paññā*—as right view and right thought—is the start of the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view come first and underpins all the other path-factors, making them “right” (*sammā*).⁹⁸ This is the goal of the path, that is, the supramundane eightfold path or the paths of the saints.⁹⁹ In Buddhist training or preparation for such a journey, however, wisdom, the third of the 3 trainings (*ti, sikkhā*),¹⁰⁰ is its goal.

4.2.5.2 **Vipassana** (insight) is a direct vision of the clear mind into true reality into the nature of things. In other words, it is a *way* of looking at everything within and around us. It is a mindfulness-based vision of the reality before us. This vision is the result of mindfulness that arises from mental concentra-

⁹¹ See **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25/3:225-228): see esp (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

⁹² On watching the rise and fall of feeling, see (**Aññathatta**) **Ānanda S 1** (S 22.37/3:37 f), SD 33.11.

⁹³ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*: see [2.2.2.3] in the M 64 quote..

⁹⁴ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.14: for def (3).

⁹⁵ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b esp (6.2).

⁹⁶ Comy glosses *jhānaṃ as samāhito*, “mentally concentrated” (DhA 4:109,21).

⁹⁷ *Ajhāyato* (Skt *a-dhyāyato*) = *na* (“not”) + *jhāyato*, gen sg of pres part of *jhāyati*, “he meditates.” It should be *ajhāyato*, but the -jjh- is shortened to -jh- (the -j- is elided), metri causa; *ajhāyato* also in Dh:Patna 62; *ajayado* in Dh:G 58; but Udāna, *varga* has *nāsty aprajñasya vai dhyānaṃ | prajñā nādhyāyato ’sti ca || yasya dhyānaṃ tathā prajñā | sa vai nirvāna, santike* (Uv 32.25), changing the word order to accommodate *nādhyāyato*.

⁹⁸ See **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117/3:71-78), SD 6.10.

⁹⁹ On the 4 kinds of saints, see **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118,9-12/3:80 f), SD 7.13.

¹⁰⁰ See **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6.

tion and stillness, especially dhyana. In dhyana, the mind is fully calmed and clarified, a process that is possible with a cultivated body, that is to say moral virtue and resorting to a conducive environment.

4.2.5.3 The whole process is like using a high-powered telescope. *Moral virtue* is like ensuring that the telescope is properly set up on a suitable place, like a hill where the skies are clear and away from the city lights. *Mental stillness* is like a deep knowledge of astronomy. *Meditation* is the training and skill in using the telescope. *Insight* is knowing how to work it properly, while it directed to the right part of the sky. This is what **the Ākañkheyya Sutta** (M 6) says in this connection:

Bhikshus, if a monk should wish, “May I become one to obtain at will, without trouble, without difficulty, *the 4 dhyanas*, the higher minds, dwelling happily here and now,” let him fulfill moral virtue, be inwardly devoted to mental stillness, not neglect meditation [dhyana], be possessed of insight, and dwell in empty abodes.¹⁰¹ (M 6,3/1:33,10-12), SD 59.1

4.2.5.4 Similarly, in **the Paṭisallāna Sutta** (It 45), we find almost all the qualities above mentioned together in the Buddha’s exhortation to “enjoy and delight in solitude (*paṭisallāna*),” an invitation to a balanced meditation, along with its liberating fruits:

2 Bhikshus, you must dwell enjoying solitude, delighting in solitude,¹⁰² inwardly intent on mental calm, not neglecting meditation, accomplished in insight, resorting to empty places.

3 For those who *dwell enjoying solitude, delighting in solitude, inwardly intent on mental calm, not neglecting meditation, possessed of insight, resorting to empty places*,

4 one [either] of two fruits is certain: either direct knowledge here and now, or, non-return, if there is some substrate remaining. (It 45/2.2.8/39), SD 41.4

5 Satipatthana and samatha, vipassana

5.1 IS SATIPATTHANA OR VIPASSANA “THE ONLY WAY”? Here we will continue our study of vipassana in connection with other sutta teachings, in this case, with satipatthana (*satipatthāna*). We have noted at the start of this essay [1.1], that the Vipassanavadins, as a rule, equated Vipassana with satipatthana, where it is said to be *ekāyana*, which they render as “the only way.”¹⁰³ As such, Vipassana itself is “the only way” to insight, even awakening itself [4.1].

This fervent notion is based on **the Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta** (D 22), which is touted as the most important sutta in the whole Pali canon. This view is today upheld mainly by the “Vipassanāvāda” or “Insight School” of **Mahasi Sayadaw**¹⁰⁴ of Myanmar (proponent of the “dry insight” school)¹⁰⁵ and the Goenka tradition (the other main Vipassana school).¹⁰⁶

How did the modernist notion of “Satipatthana = Vipassana” as “the only way” arise? We will now examine the second path of the question—the notion of “the only way”—first [5.2]; then we will look at the view that “Satipatthana = Vipassana” [6.3.4]

¹⁰¹ *Ākañkheyya ce bhikkhave, catunnaṃ jhānaṃ ābhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭha, dhamma, sukha, vihārānaṃ nikāma, - lābhī assa akicchā, lābhī akasīra, lābhī ti, sīlesv’ev’assa paripūra, kārī ajjhataṃ ceto, samatham anuyutto anirākata-jjhāno vipassanāya samannāgato brūhetā suññ’āgārānaṃ.* On *anirākata-jjhāna*, see SD 33.1b (4.4.3.2); SD 41.4 (2.1.2).

¹⁰² From here to the end of the sentence, as at **Ākañkheyya Sutta** (M 6,9/1:33), SD 59.1.

¹⁰³ For a more detailed discussion, see SD 13.1 (3.2).

¹⁰⁴ Orig name U Sobhana (1904-1982). It was Mahasi’s teacher, **Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw** (orig name U Narada, 1868-1954), who introduced the modern innovation of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen.”

¹⁰⁵ On “dry-insight” (*sukha, vipassaka*), see [2.1] below.

¹⁰⁶ Further see SD 13.1 (1c).

5.2 WHAT IS “THE ONLY WAY”?

5.2.1 Interpretations. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta opens with the Buddha’s declaring that the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati’paṭṭhāna*) is the *ekāyana magga*.¹⁰⁷ The term *ekāyana*, resolved as *eka* (one), *ayana* (going), and *magga* (path). It is possible that by the time of Buddhaghosa, the meaning of *ekāyana magga* was already forgotten.¹⁰⁸ Apparently, Buddhaghosa is himself uncertain of its exact meaning,¹⁰⁹ and gives this range of meanings for *ekāyano maggo*:¹¹⁰

- (1) *eka, maggo na dvedhā, patha, bhūto*: “the single way, comprising a path that is not (broken) in two,” ie, an undivided going, a direct path.
- (2) *ekena ayitabbo*:¹¹¹ “that which should be reached by one,” ie, to be travelled by oneself (not through someone else; self-effort).
- (3) *ekassa ayano*: “the going of one,” ie, to be travelled by one alone.
- (4) *ekasmim ayano*: “the going (found only) in one,” ie, found only in the Buddha’s Teaching.
- (5) *ekam ayati*: “it goes to the one,” ie, it leads to the one goal, nirvana.

(DA 743 = MA 1:229 f; cf PmA 486 ≠ NmA 52 f)

Having considered all these possible meanings of *ekāyano maggo*, surely it is best rendered as “the one-going path,” but this sounds somewhat vague. Others have variously translated it as “the one way,” “the only way,” or “the one and only way,” sometimes with a triumphalist tone. Other translations include: “the one-going path,”¹¹² “the one-way path,” “a path that goes one way only,”¹¹³ the “only direct way” heading for awakening,” and “the direct path.”¹¹⁴ The last translation, “the direct path,” a free one, is used by Nyanatiloka,¹¹⁵ Nāṇamoli and Analayo (who himself admits that this translation only “follows the first of these explanations,” 2003:27).

Sujato comments on the term *ekāyana maggo*:

As often, the commentaries are concerned to show how integrated this teaching is within the path as a whole. Note especially the Ṭikā’s wise reminder that the phrase *ekāyana* was not meant to exclude the other path factors, including right samadhi. The idea that *ekāyana* was meant to imply a distinction between *satipaṭṭhāna* and *jhāna* is just a product of modern polemics, [I] fear.

I have done extensive research on this point and have come to exactly the opposite conclusion (so there you go!). The word *eka* in meditation contexts always means *ekaggatā* or *ekodibhūta*,¹¹⁶ that is, *jhāna* or *samādhi*. Since *satipaṭṭhāna* is the *samādhinimitta*, ie, the cause or basis of *samādhi*, [I] think *ekāyana* means that the purpose, or at least one central purpose, of *satipaṭṭhāna* is to get into *jhāna*. There are several suttas in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta that emphasize this aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna*, using these kinds of terms.

¹⁰⁷ D 22,1.2 = M 10,2: see SD 13.1 (3.2).

¹⁰⁸ One likely reason for this was prob the Mahāvihāra (the predominant monastery at that time) introduced or used the dichotomy of “the duty of study” (*gantha, dhura*, lit “burden of texts”) and the duty of meditation (*vipassanā, dhura*) (DhA 1:7). See W Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Dehiwala, 1956:159 f; K Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900*, Berkeley, 1976:19. At the same time, we also see the rise and emphasis on *piri* (protective) chanting, merit-making (*pinkama*) and rituals (iconography, stupa-building, deva-worship and fortune-telling), which are common o Sinhala Buddhism and its influence overseas Sinhala missions and centres. See R F Gombrich 1988 or 2006 index; H L Seneviratne 1999 index.

¹⁰⁹ Gethin discusses Buddhaghosa alternatives at MA 229 in 2001:59-66. See also Analayo 2003:27-29.

¹¹⁰ For citations, see CPD: *ekāyana*. See also Analayo 2003:27-29.

¹¹¹ *Ayitabbo*, *ayano*, and *ayati* here come from \sqrt{i} (to go); *ayati* = *eti*, “he goes, goes toward; he reaches, obtains; he reaches (a state); he is involved (in)” (see DP: *eti*¹).

¹¹² “The one going way” is Anālayo’s tr (2005).

¹¹³ Nāṇamoli’s tr.

¹¹⁴ This last one is Analayo’s tr, see 2003:21-29.

¹¹⁵ “*der direkte Weg*,” Nyanatiloka 1910:91 n7.

¹¹⁶ See SD 8.9 (1.3.1).

(Sujato, Pali Yahoo website comment, 29 Apr 2005)

Considering all this complexity, and also to give it the fullness of the Pali term, I think we need to use an amplified translation, such as “**the path for one-going [the path where one goes for oneself]**,” meaning that we need to walk this path, each for ourselves, we need to take this journey for our own good, an inward journey for the oneness of the mind. It is, after all, a meditation *practice*, a path to inner space and stillness. Otherwise, it is wise to adopt the Pali term *ekāyana* (note the spelling; not *eka,yāna*), and constantly reflect on it within the context that it is found.¹¹⁷

5.2.2 The “only way” is the noble eightfold path. This “only way,” as is clear from such passages as **Dh 273-274**, is the noble eightfold way (*ariy’atth’āṅgika magga*), of which *satipaṭṭhāna* (as right mindfulness) is only one of its 8 factors.

The eightfold (path) is the best of paths;
the four statements¹¹⁸ are the best of truths;
detachment from lust is the best of things—
of the two-footed, the one with eyes (is best).

*maggān’atthāṅgiko seṭṭho
saccānaṃ caturo padā
virāgo seṭṭho dhammānaṃ
dipadānaṃ ca cakkhumā*

There is only this path, no other,
for the purification of vision.
As such, keep to this path—
this is the bewilderment of Māra.

*eso va maggo natth’añño
dassanassa visuddhiyā
etaṃ hi tumhe paṭipajjathā
mārass’etaṃ pamohanāṃ* (Dh 273 f)

This point—that the “only way” is the noble eightfold path—was noted over one and a half millennia ago by Buddhaghosa in his commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MA 1:231).¹¹⁹ In more recent times, this vital point was echoed by the monks Nāṇavīra¹²⁰ and Brahmavamso.¹²¹

It is important to note that **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) defines right mindfulness as the 4 focuses of mindfulness.¹²² Read this alongside references like **Dh 273-274**, it is clear that the “only way” is not any type of meditation but nothing less than *the noble eightfold path* itself.¹²³

6 Occurrences of *vipassanā* in the suttas

6.1 SAMATHA AND VIPASSANĀ. Although we hear the term *vipassanā*—as *Vipassana*—today used to refer to a meditation method, the word itself is not so commonly found in the suttas, especially when compared to other words related to meditation, such as *satipaṭṭhāna* and *samādhi*. Where the word *vipassanā* is found in the suttas, it never refers to any method of meditation, but to only an *aspect* of meditation. We shall now examine the main contexts in which this word is used in the suttas.

Vipassana or meditative insight is always, directly or indirectly, paired with samatha or meditative calm. In this usage, *vipassana* has a broad range of meanings which are never specifically related to *satipaṭṭhāna*. Here are some references to *samatha, vipassanā* (as a dvandva) or as separate terms, and their usages or purposes in the 4 Nikāyas:

¹¹⁷ For a fuller discussion, see SD 13.1 (3.2).

¹¹⁸ Also called the “fourfold exposition” (*catu-p, padāṃ veyyakaraṇaṃ*); see **Kiṭagiri S** (M 70,25), SD 12.1 (6a).

¹¹⁹ This term, however, should not be confused with *eka,yāna* (“one vehicle”) found in the Lotus Sutra and other Buddhist Sanskrit works.

¹²⁰ Nāṇavīra 1987:371.

¹²¹ Brahmavamso 2002:13.

¹²² D 22.21(vii)/2:313.

¹²³ On *ekāyana*, further see SD 13.1 (3.2).

[S = Sutta]	<u>Purposes</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>SD</u>
Saṅgīti Sutta	calm and insight	D 33.1.8(23)/3:213,11	
Das’uttara Sutta	to be cultivated	D 34.1.3(2)/3:273,24-25	
Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta	penetration of the many elements	M 73.18/1:494,21 f	27.4
Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta	for attaining direct knowledge ¹²⁴	M 149.11/3:289,29-30	41.9
Piṇḍapāta Pārisuddhi Sutta	to be cultivated and reviewed	M 151.12/3:297,4 f	69.1
Kiṁsuka Sutta	“a swift pair of messengers”	S 35.245/4:195,1	53.10
Kāma,bhū Sutta 2	for the cessation of perception and feeling	S 41.6/4:295,30	48.7
(Mūla) Samatha Vipassanā Sutta	the way to the unconditioned	S 43.2/4:360,6 f	41.1(3.4)
Agantuka Sutta	cultivated by direct knowledge	S 45.159/5:52,22	74.10
Vijjā Bhāgiya Sutta	development of mind and wisdom	A 2.3.10/1:61,6¹²⁵	3.2(4.2)
Dve Dhammā Sutta	the 2 states (<i>dhamma</i>)	A 2.15.10/1:95,1¹²⁶	[below]
Rāga Abhiññā Sutta	for direct knowledge of lust	A 2.17.3/1:100,10¹²⁷	[below]
(Samatha Vipassanā)			
Abhiññā Sutta	cultivated by direct knowledge	A 4.251/2:247,11¹²⁸	

SD 41.1(6.1.1) The Dve Dhammā Sutta (A 2.15.10), on the “two states [things]” (*dhamma*)—the two practices to be done harmoniously—simply says:

Bhikshus, there are these two things. What are the two?

Calm and insight [Samatha and vipassana].

These, bhikshus, are the two things.

(A 2.15.10/1:95) = A:B 2.172

SD 41.1(6.1.2) The Rāga Abhiññā Sutta (A 2.17.3)—cultivating samatha-vipassana for the direct knowledge of lust—says:

Bhikshus, for the direct knowledge of lust, two things are to be cultivated. What are the two?

Calm and insight [Samatha and vipassana].

For the direct knowledge of lust, bhikshus, these two things are to be cultivated.

A 2.17.3/1:100,10 = A:B 2.310

In a few suttas, samatha and vipassanā are mentioned within a list of qualities to be cultivated. In **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), for example, they are found in here: “Here, avuso, right view is assisted by moral virtue, by learning, by discussion, by calm, and by insight.”¹²⁹

SD 41.1(6.1.3)

Catu Kāla Sutta 1

Paṭhama Catu Kāla Sutta The First Discourse on the Four Times | **A 4.146/2:140**

Theme: The 4 timely spiritual practice

Bhikshus, there are these 4 times. What are the four?

The time for listening to the Dharma.

kālena dhamma,savanam

The time for discussing the Dharma.

kālena dhamma,sācakcham

The time for calm.

kālena samatho

The time for insight.

kālena vipassanā

¹²⁴ Here it refers to the whole of the noble eightfold path.

¹²⁵ A:B 2.31.

¹²⁶ A:B 2.172.

¹²⁷ A:B 2.310.

¹²⁸ A:B 4.254(2).

¹²⁹ *Idh’āvuso sammā,diṭṭhi sīlānuggahitā ca hoti sutānuggahitā ca hoti sākacchā’nuggahitā ca hoti samathānuggahitā ca hoti vipassanā’nuggahitā ca hoti* (M 43,14/1:294,11 f), SD 30.2.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 times.

— evam —

6.2 USAGES OF *VIPASSANĀ*

6.2.1 *Vipassanāya samannāgato.* The word *vipassanā* is sometimes used in the phrase *vipassanāya samannāgato*, “possessed of insight.” Again, here it is not directly related to *satipatthāna*. Look at its contexts in these suttas:

Ākaṅkheyya Sutta (M 6):

Bhikshus, if a monk should wish, “May I become one to obtain at will, without trouble, without difficulty, *the 4 dhyanas*, the higher minds, dwelling happily here and now,” let him fulfill moral virtue, be inwardly devoted to mental stillness, not neglect meditation, be possessed of insight, and resort to empty places. (M 6,3/1:33,10-12), SD 59.1 [4.2.5]

Mahā Gosīṅga Sutta (M 32)

Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk enjoys solitude [solitary meditation], delights in solitude. He is inwardly intent on mental calm, not neglecting meditation, possesses insight, resorts to empty places. (M 32,5/1:213,15-18), SD 44.12 ≈ **Paṭisallāna Sutta** (It 45/2.2.8/39 [4.2.5])

Ākaṅkha Sutta (A 10.71)

...let him fulfill moral virtue, be inwardly devoted to mental calm, not neglecting meditation, be possessed of insight, resorting to empty places. (A 10.71/5:131,13 f), SD 82.12

6.2.2 *Vipassanā on its own*

6.2.2.1 In a few instances, we see *vipassanā* occurring outside of the above contexts. The best known example is this statement from **the Vijjā Bhāgiya Sutta** (A 2.3.10) which says that wisdom arises from the cultivation of *vipassanā*¹³⁰ [3.1]. Here, we see vipassana as a deeper or higher form of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), which essentially is seeing all phenomena as being impermanent (*anicca*). Through vipassana, this vision of impermanence is understood on a deeper level that whatever is impermanent is also unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Whatever is impermanent and unsatisfactory is, in turn, non-self (*anattā*). In theory, at least, this is how vipassana works.¹³¹

6.2.2.2 According to **the (Yuganaddha) Paṭipada Sutta** (A 4.170), vipassana can be developed *before, after, or together* with, samatha¹³² [2.2.1.2]. Whichever way we start off—whether with insight (say, reflecting on impermanence, or watching the breath—depends on our personal inclination. When we better understand how insight inspires joy in us and how calm clears away distractions in us, then we alternate between these two states to refine both of them.

6.2.2.3 Samatha, in other words, is the basis for vipassana; samatha supporting vipassana all the way. To cultivate calm, the mind is directed to a suitable meditation-object so that it becomes stable and one-pointed.¹³³ When the calm mind then clears up, we emerge from that deep state of bliss (especially dhyana), and go on to cultivate insight. The experience of insight itself is so empowering that, with right view, we are able to attain even more profound levels of meditative bliss [6.3.6].

6.2.2.4 **The Asaṅkhata Sutta** (S 43.12) lists a large number of qualities, of which *vipassanā* is said to lead to the unconditioned, that is, nirvana.¹³⁴ Here, the insight deepens into the full understanding of non-self itself, so that all the mental fetters [2.2.1.3] are broken, and arhathood is attained.

6.2.3 *Vipassanā in compounds.* The word *vipassanā* occurs in a few compounds. The compound *adhīpaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya*, “insight into things relating to the higher wisdom” or “insight relating

¹³⁰ A 2.3.10/1:61,9 f @ SD 3.2.

¹³¹ See eg **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68), SD 1.2.

¹³² A 4.170.2/2:157,4-6 @ SD 41.5.

¹³³ On “directed meditation,” see **Bhikkhuṇi Vāsaka S** (S 47.10/5:154-157) + SD 24.2 (1.2).

¹³⁴ *Vipassanā ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave asaṅkhata, gāmī maggo* (S 43.12/4:362,25 f), SD 55.9.

to wisdom into things,” occurs in many discourses, especially in the Aṅguttara Nikāya.¹³⁵ The Commentary glosses this expression as “the insight knowledge that comprehends formations [conditioned states]” (*saṅkhāra,pariggāhaka,vipassanā,ñāṇa*), understanding all life is conditioned by the 5 aggregates (*pañcak,khandha,saṅkhātesu*) (AA 3:116).

This is a shorthand for the knowledge and vision of seeing all conditioned existence in terms of the 3 characteristics on the (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self), and understanding all living beings in terms of the 5 aggregates, that is, form, feelings, perception, formations and consciousness¹³⁶ [2.2.2.3]. Essentially, this insight is that all existence and life are impermanent and conditioned.

The Anupada Sutta (M 111) has the phrase *anupada,dhamma,vipassanā*, “step by step insight into things.”¹³⁷ The Sutta is a record of Sāriputta’s personal account of his own full awakening. The Commentary explains that he developed insight into successive states by way of meditation and dhyana-factors¹³⁸ (MA 4:86). Here again, we see *vipassanā* being used to refer to both the meditation process (in this case dhyana) as well as the insight or wisdom that arises therefrom. It does not refer to any meditation method or system.

6.2.4 Verbal forms of the word *vipassanā*. Occasionally, we see *vipassati*, the verbal form of the word *vipassanā*, meaning “to see directly (into something), to have insight” in the suttas.¹³⁹ The most famous occurrence of the verb *vipassati* is in **the Bhadd’eka,ratta Sutta** series (M 131-134), in this verse:

The present state as it arises, ¹⁴⁰	<i>paccuppannañ ca yo dhammañ,</i>
<u>With insight one sees</u> each of them;	<i>tattha tattha vipassati;</i>
Immovable, unshakable, ¹⁴¹	<i>asamhīraṃ asaṅkappaṃ,</i>
Having known that, let one be sure of it.	<i>taṃ vidvā manubrūhaye.</i>

(M 131,3+10 @ SD 8.9, 132,3+12, 133,5, 12+19, 134,3+7)

In all such occurrences of vipassana and its related words and phrases, we see no link between *vipassanā* and *sati paṭṭhāna*. While it is true that *vipassanā* means “insight” in all its usages, it only refers to a way of looking at things, that is, to see directly into things, not just on the surfaces. Nowhere in the suttas do we ever see the word *vipassanā* being used as a “method” or “system” of meditation. It is almost always used in connection with other terms related to meditation practice, especially with *samatha* [1.3].

¹³⁵ It occurs in **Samādhi S 2** (A 4.93/2:92 f ×15); **Samādhi S 3** (A 10.94/2:93-95 ×15); **Nandaka S** (A 9.4/4:360 f ×6); **Samatha S** (A 10.54/5:99 f ×7); **Parihāna S** (A 10.55/5:104); Pm 1:45, 47, 169, 2:11, 13.

¹³⁶ For detailed studies on the 5 aggregates, see SD 17.

¹³⁷ M 111,2/3:25,10 f @ SD 56.4.

¹³⁸ Sāriputta awakens while listening to the Buddha teaching his own nephew, the wanderer Dīgha,nākha, as recorded in **Dīgha,nākha S** (M 74,14/1:500 f), SD 16.1.

¹³⁹ **Anupada S** (M 111,2/3:25,11 v1 *vipassī*), **Bhadd’eka,ratta Ss** (M 131,3+10/3:187* @ SD 8.9, 132.3+12/3:189-192*, 133.5/3:193*, 12/3:195*, 19/3:198*, 134.3/3:200, 7/3:201*); **Uruvela S 2** (A 4.22/2:23,16*), **Ānaṇya S** (4.65/2:71,20+22*), **Saṅkhitta Bala S** (A 7.3/4:3,8*), **Vitthata Bala S** (A 7.4/4:4,25*), **Udakūpama S** (A 4.15/4:11,11); **Dh** 174; Sn 1115; **Tha** 471 f; **Ap** 2:506 qu M 131.3; **Nc:Be** 18, 171 f; **Pm** 1:62-64 passim, 70; **V** 2:235, 251; **Pug** 10, 71 f; **Kvu** 189; **Paṭ** ×68 passim.

¹⁴⁰ Comy: One should contemplate each state as it arises by way of the 7 contemplations of insight (ie by way of insight into impermanence, suffering, non-self, revulsion, dispassion, cessation, relinquishment) (MA 5:1 f).

¹⁴¹ Comy explains that this is said for the purpose of showing insight (*vipassanā*) and counter-insight (*pativipassanā*) [ie, the application of the principles of insight to the act of consciousness that exercises the function of insight, on the basis of which it is possible to attain arhathood: see **M** 52,4/1:350, **121**,11/1:108; also M:ÑB 1333 n1143.] For insight is “**immovable, unshakable**” [following Sn:N 1149] because it is not defeated or shaken [moved] by lust and other defilements (MA 5:2). Elsewhere, “immovable, unshakable” are epithets of Nirvana (**Sn 1149**) or of the liberated mind (**Tha 469**). Here, however, it seems to refer to a stage in the development of insight. The recurrence of the verb *samhīrati* [8, 9] “suggests that the intended meaning is contemplation of the present state without being misled into the adoption of a view of self” (M:ÑB 1343 n1213).

6.3 SATIPAṬṬHĀNA AND VIPASSANĀ

6.3.1 Samadhi and dhyanas. Ajahn Brahmali has written an instructive paper on “Satipaṭṭhāna and Samādhi” (2004), which is paraphrased here with some comments of my own where appropriate.¹⁴² Brahmali begins his paper by saying that one of the most common but wrong assumptions among Buddhist meditators is that satipaṭṭhāna is synonymous with vipassana. This assumption is often the result of reading the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22; M 10) out of context.¹⁴³

Some people may even think that the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas (D 22, M 10) are only concerned with vipassana, but there is nothing in the Suttas to support such a view. On the contrary, we can see that certain sections of the Sutta show that satipaṭṭhāna is actually concerned with samadhi (*samādhi*), mental stillness or concentration. We will examine this aspect first [6.3.2], and later the relationship between satipaṭṭhāna and vipassana [6.3.4].

Whenever *samādhi* is used on its own in the suttas, it almost always includes the 4 dhyanas. Moreover, although the suttas mention other types of samadhi, the most common type is in connection with the 4 dhyanas. Hence, we will here use “samadhi” in the context of the 4 dhyanas.

6.3.2 Samadhi and satipaṭṭhāna

6.3.2.1 **The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** is neither only concerned with *samatha* (calmness) nor only with *vipassanā* (insight), but deals with *both* aspects of mental cultivation [1.4]. In the case of **the Ānāpāna-sati Sutta** (M 119), we see that the first 3 tetrads, or first 12, of its 16 stages as the cultivating of samatha or samadhi, and the last 4 stages as those of **vipassana** [1.4.1]. Furthermore, the phrase *ānāpāna,sati samādhi*, “concentration through mindfulness of breathing,” is quite common in the suttas.¹⁴⁴

The first tetrad of the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta—usually regarded as bringing about **samatha** or mental calmness—is also found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. *Ānāpāna,sati* or the meditation on “the mindfulness of breathing” is usually regarded as a *samatha* (calmness) practice, but there is no reason why it should not be regarded as an insight practice, too, if needed.

Moreover, the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta fully and clearly states that each of its 4 tetrads fulfills respectively each of **the 4 satipaṭṭhanas**,¹⁴⁵ and then concludes as follows:

Bhikshus, when the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing is thus cultivated, thus grown, it brings the 4 focuses of mindfulness to perfection. (M 117,28/3:85,4-6), SD 7.13

6.3.2.2 Besides the *ānāpāna,sati* (breath meditation) section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, elsewhere, we find that **the cemetery meditations**, too, are clearly stated to be samadhi practices, such as in **the (Cattāro) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14):

2 And what, bhikshus, is **the striving [effort] of guarding** (*anurakkhaṇa-p, padhāna*)?

Here, bhikshus, a monk guards the auspicious¹⁴⁶ sign of concentration when it has arisen, that is to say,

the perception [mental image] of	a skeleton,
the perception of	the worm-infested (corpse),
the perception of	the discoloured (corpse),

¹⁴² I have also used my own annotated sutta translations, giving some additional details where appropriate.

¹⁴³ See SD 13.

¹⁴⁴ Also spelt *ānāpānassati,samādhi*: V 3:70,19 f; S 5:316-341 (over 50 occurrences in S); Pm 1:162; very common in Comys.

¹⁴⁵ M 118,23-28/3:83,20-85,6 @ SD 7.13.

¹⁴⁶ *Bhaddakam*, which Comy glosses as “obtained” (*laddhakam*) (AA 3:20). The Tīkā says “*bhaddaka* means beautiful, by way of the suppression of such inauspicious bad states such as the hindrances, and auspicious by way of the singular benefit, difficult to obtain, by way of the ridding of lust. For the direct knowledge of the samadhi-sign is not difficult to obtain as such, when there a direct opposition to lust.” (*Bhaddakan ti abhaddakānam nīvaraṇādi,pāpa,dhammānam vikkhambhanena rāga,vigamanena ekanta,hitattā dullabhata ca bhaddakam sundaram. Na hi aññam samādhi.nimittam evam dullabham rāgassa uju,vipaccanika,bhūtam atthi*) (AAT:Be 2239). See **Bhaddaka,ratta S** (M 131), SD 8.9 (1).

the perception of the festering (corpse),
 the perception of the fissured (corpse),
 the perception of the bloated (corpse).¹⁴⁷
 This, bhikkhus, is called the striving [effort] of guarding.

(A 4.14,5/2:17,1-7), SD 10.2 = (D 33.1.11(10))

6.3.2.3 Evidently, *all* the satipatthana practices have a samadhi aspect. This is clear from the “sati-patthana refrains”¹⁴⁸ that follow and punctuate every meditation exercise in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, thus:

So he dwells

- (1) observing the body in the body, ⟨...feelings, | ...the mind, | ...dharmaś,⟩ internally,¹⁴⁹
- (2) or, observing the body in the body, ⟨...feelings, | ...the mind, | ...dharmaś,⟩ externally,
- (3) or, observing the body in the body, ⟨...feelings, | ...the mind, | ...dharmaś,⟩ both internally and externally;

(M 10,5/1:56,27-29) & passim + SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.0 iii)+(III)

6.3.2.4 Some, especially Vipassana proponents, might argue that the inclusion of the “**rise and fall**” section, immediately after the above, means that it refers to insight practice. This might well be true. However, it seems quite clear that the initial part on *contemplating internally and externally* can often be independent of the contemplation of rise and fall, too.¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, consider the following passage which relates the “internal” contemplation directly to samadhi in **the Jana,vasabha Sutta** (M 18):

Here, sirs, a monk (meditator) dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,
 observing [contemplating] the body in the body,...
 ...observing feelings in the feelings,...
 ...observing the mind in the mind,...
 ...observing dharmas in the dharmas,
 internally removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.¹⁵¹
 Dwelling observing [contemplating] the body in the body,...
 ...observing feelings in the feelings,...
 ...observing the mind in the mind,...
 ...observing dharmas in the dharmas,
 internally, he is therein rightly concentrated, rightly purified. (D 18/2:216,10-14), SD 62.3 [6.3.4.3]

Here, “rightly concentrated” (*sammā,samādhīyati*) is explained by the Commentary as: “Therein, the mind attains one-pointedness, concentrated within the body” (*tasmim aṅghatta,kāye samāhito ek’agga,cit-to hoti*, DA 2:645). This clearly refers to the dhyanas [6.3.1]. The “body” (*kāya*) here refers to the “mental body”: since all physical experiences have shut down in a dhyana, “body” here should be understood as the “mental body” (*nāma,kāya*), that is, the group of mental factors associated with consciousness.

¹⁴⁷ “The perception of a skeleton...the bloated (corpse),” *aṭṭhikam,saññam puḷavaka,saññam vinilaka,saññam vipubbaka,saññam vicchidaka,saññam uddhumataka,saññam*. These perceptions appear in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,7/2:295) where *vinilaka* (discoloured), *vipubbaka* (festering) and *uddhumataka* (bloated up) describe the first type of corpse; *puḷavaka* (worm-infested) is one of the 2nd kind; and *aṭṭhika* (the skeleton) comprises the last 7 kinds (D 22,9 f/2:296). This simplified Aṅguttara listing is probably older than the more systematized set of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S. For lay practice, this section would comprise wise attention (esp the perception of impermanence) and spiritual friendship: see **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14 & **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1 respectively.

¹⁴⁸ This “insight” (*vipassanā*) refrain and the other 15 have very likely been added in post-Buddha times. On its possible lateness, see SD 13.1 (1b, 3.0).

¹⁴⁹ “Internally...” See SD 13.1 (3.7) above.

¹⁵⁰ See eg **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18,26/2:216,10-14), SD 62.3.

¹⁵¹ This line (omitting “internally,” *aṅghattam*) recurs in **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3.

6.2.3.5 The lack of the satipatthana refrains in the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta (M 119), a discourse on satipatthana practice, evidently means that these refrains were late and probably added to the Satipatthāna Suttas at a later date¹⁵² [6.3.2.4]. In place of the satipatthana refrain, the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta has the following “samadhi refrain” throughout:

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated]. In this way, monks, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body.¹⁵³

(M 119/3:88-99), SD 12.21

The key import of this refrain and its satipatthana context in the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta is the same: samadhi or concentration, not insight or vipassana, is the practice here [6.3.2.3]. This samadhi then brings about dhyana which further clarifies the mind. Emerging from the dhyana, the calm and clear mind can easily see with insight into true reality and gain still deeper, even liberating, insight. Here again, we see the two wings of the bird of mental cultivation helping it to fly to greater spiritual heights, space and light.

6.3.3 Samadhi and the 3 trainings

6.3.3.1 How the satipatthana refrain and the samadhi refrain work in the suttas as shown above [6.3.2] should be sufficient to at least suggest that samadhi is an integral part of satipatthana (the practice of body-based, feeling-based, mind-based and dharma-based meditations). However, to further strengthen our case for this relationship, and to consider in more detail what it involves, we need to look beyond the Satipatthāna Sutta and related discourses for a broader use of satipatthana in the suttas.

In **the 3 trainings** (*ti,sikkhā*)—the training in moral virtue (*sīla*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*)—satipatthana is classified under “samadhi,” not under “wisdom,” thus it is stated in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44):

right effort, right mindfulness [ie the 4 satipatthanas],¹⁵⁴ and right samadhi [ie the 4 dhyanas]¹⁵⁵—these factors are included in the aggregate of mental cultivation;

right view and right thought [right intention]—these factors are included in the aggregate of wisdom.
(M 44,11/1:301,7-11), SD 40a.9

6.3.3.2 Hence, if satipatthana were the same as or even closely related to *vipassana*, rather than to samadhi, would it not be included in the aggregate of wisdom rather than the aggregate of samādhi?¹⁵⁶ It is clear that the key relationship between satipatthana and samadhi, as found in the suttas, is that the practice of satipatthāna leads to samadhi, which is the same as saying that “Satipatthana is a samadhi practice.” This fact is shown in this statement from **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44):

The 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati’paṭṭhāna*)—these are the mental signs (*nimitta*) for samadhi.¹⁵⁷
(M 44,12.2/1:301,14), SD 40a.9

... These states that are much cultivated, associated with—this is here the cultivation of samadhi.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² For a reconstruction of an ancient version of **Satipatthāna S**, see SD 13.4.

¹⁵³ *Tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitatassa viharato ye te gehasitā sara,saṅkappā te pahīyanti, tesam pahānā ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodī,hoti samādhiyati. Evaṃ pi bhikkhave bhikkhu kāya,gatā satim bhāveti.*

¹⁵⁴ Right mindfulness (*sammā,sati*) is always defined as the 4 satipatthanas, eg (**Magga**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 45.8/5:9,-28-10,4), SD 14.5.

¹⁵⁵ Right concentration (*sammā,samādhi*) is always defined as the 4 dhyanas, eg (**Magga**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 45.8/5:10,5-18), SD 14.5.

¹⁵⁶ That vipassana and wisdom are closely related is stated in **Samatha Vipassanā S** (A 2.31), which says, “Bhikkhus, when vipassana (or insight) is developed, what is developed? Wisdom is developed” (*vipassanā bhikkhave bhāvītā kam anubhoti? Paññā bhāvīyati*) (A 2.31/1:61.9-10 = A:B 3.31), SD 3.2(4.2).

¹⁵⁷ *Cattāro sati’paṭṭhānā samādhi,nimittā.* Here, *nimitta* has a non-technical sense of “mental object,” ie, what we focus or “work on” during meditation, that is to say, one of the 4 satipatthanas: see SD 13.1 (3.1d): *Nimitta*.

(M 44,12.3/1:301,15-16), SD 40a.9

6.3.3.3 **The Saṅkhitta Dhamma Sutta** (A 8.63) explains this progress of samadhi in some greater detail, with the meditator training himself thus:

“I will dwell exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,
observing [contemplating] the body in the body,
...observing feelings in feelings...
...observing the mind in the mind...
...observing dharmas in the dharmas,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.”

Thus, bhikshu, you should train yourself.

Bhikshu, when you have thus cultivated, much developed, this samadhi, then¹⁵⁹

THE 1ST DHYANA:

- (1) you should cultivate this samadhi with both initial application and sustained application;
(2) you should cultivate *it* without initial application, with only sustained application;

THE 2ND DHYANA:

- (3) you should cultivate *it* with neither initial application nor sustained application;
you should cultivate *it* with zest;¹⁶⁰

THE 3RD DHYANA:

- (4) you should cultivate *it* without zest;
you should cultivate *it* with comfort;¹⁶¹

THE 4TH DHYANA:

- (5) you should cultivate *it* with equanimity.¹⁶² (A 8.63/4:300,25-301,4), SD 46.6

In the above passage, note especially how satipatthāna practice is first called “this samadhi” and then is said to lead on to the dhyanas.

6.3.3.4 Again, in **the Sūda Sutta** (S 47.8), we see a similar close connection between samadhi and dhyana, thus:

6 Even so, bhikshus, here some **foolish**, incapable, and unskillful monk, dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, observing [watching] the body in the body, (feeling in the feelings | the mind in the mind | dharma in the dharmas)¹⁶³ removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.¹⁶⁴

While he dwells observing the body in the body; his mind does *not* concentrate; his mental impurities¹⁶⁵ are not abandoned; he does *not* grasp the sign.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ *Yā tesam-yeva dhammānaṃ āsevanā bhāvanā bahulī,kammaṃ, ayam tatha samādhi bhāvanā'ti.* Here, *samādhi* has a broad sense, incl the preliminary practices and efforts, the overcoming of the mental hindrances, and the attainment of dhyana.

¹⁵⁹ The numbering in parentheses shows the Abhidhamma 5-dhyana system: see **Saṅkhitta Dhamma S** (A 8.63) @ SD 46.6 ad oc.

¹⁶⁰ “Zest” (*pīti*) here applies to both 1st and 2nd dhyanas. That the 4 dhyanas are meant here is also confirmed by Comy (AA 4:42.9-22).

¹⁶¹ “Comfort” (*sāta*) here is a synonym for happiness (*sukha*).

¹⁶² *Kāye kāyānupassī (vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī | citte cittānupassī | dhammesu dhammānupassī) viharissāmi ātā-pī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassan'ti. Evaṃ hi te bhikkhu sikkhitabbam. Yato kho te bhikkhu ayam samādhi evam bhāvito hoti bahulī,kato, tato tvaṃ bhikkhu imaṃ samādhiṃ sa,vitakkam pi sa,vicāram bhāveyyāsi, avitakkam pi vicāra,mattam bhāveyyāsi, avitakkam pi avicāram bhāveyyāsi, sa-p,pītikam pi bhāveyyāsi, nip-pītikam pi bhāveyyāsi, sāta,sahagataṃ pi bhāveyyāsi, upekkhā,sahagataṃ pi bhāveyyāsi.*

¹⁶³ See **Satipatthāna S** (M 10,3-33/1:56-59) + SD 13.3 (3.4).

¹⁶⁴ For details of this passage, see **Satipatthāna S** (M 10,3-31/1:56-59), SD 13.3.

¹⁶⁵ ie the 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) (SA 3:210), viz: (1) sensual lust, (2) ill will, (3) restlessness-and-worry, (4) sloth-and-torpor, and (5) doubt: see **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55 @ SD 3.12) [3.2.1].

10 Even so, bhikshus, here some **wise**, capable, and skillful monk, dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,
observing [watching] the body in the body,...
 ...feeling in feelings,...
 ...the mind in the mind,...
 ...dharma in dharmas,
 removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

While he dwells observing the body in the body; his mind concentrates, his mental impurities are abandoned, [152] and he *grasps* the sign.

11 Bhikshus, that wise, capable, and skillful monk obtains **pleasant dwellings** in this very life itself, and he gains mindfulness and clear comprehension.¹⁶⁷ (S 47.8/5:150-152), SD 28.15 (abr)

The phrase “pleasant dwellings in this very life” (*diṭṭh’eva dhamme sukha, vihārānam*) is a common synonym in the suttas for *the 4 dhyanas*, such as in **the Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta** (A 4.41). After giving the traditional definition of the 4 dhyanas, the Sutta says, “This, bhikshus, is the cultivation, the making abundant, of samadhi for dwelling happily here and now.”¹⁶⁸ This is called “divine dwelling” (*dibba, vihāra*) in the Commentaries and later works; that is, living like a deva.¹⁶⁹ [4.2.3]

6.3.3.5 So we see this pattern where the 4 satipatthanas constitute the practice and development of samadhi, eventually leading to the 4 dhyanas, that is “right samadhi” (*sammā, samādhi*). We see this relationship between the satipatthanas and samadhi clearly mentioned in suttas, such as this passage in **the Āpaṇa Sutta** (S 48.50), where Sāriputta addresses the Buddha on samadhi:

It is indeed to be expected, bhante, that a faithful noble disciple whose energy is roused, and whose mindfulness is established that, having made relinquishment [letting go]¹⁷⁰ the support, he will gain **samadhi** [mental concentration], he will gain one-pointedness of mind.¹⁷¹

(S 48.50,6/5:225,23-28), SD 10.4

¹⁶⁶ *Tathā hi so, bhikkhave, bālo avyatto akusalo bhikkhu sakassa cittassa nimittam na uggaṇhāti.* Comy: He does not know whether his meditation-subject has attained to conformity (*anuloma*) or change-of-lineage (*gotra, bhū*). He is not able to grasp his own mental sign (SA 2:301). The 3 tts refer to the final moments of sense-sphere consciousness before one attains either dhyana or the supramundane path and fruit. Here, prob the former is meant. (S:B 1919 n135). Similar to the phrase *cittassa nimittam (na) uggaṇhāti* here is *cittassa nimittam gahessati* (S 35.241/4:179; A 6.68/3:423), where Comy glosses “mental sign” as “a mental sign of samadhi or insight, the mode of concentration of insight” (*cittassa nimittan ti samādhi, vipassanā, cittassa nimittam, samādhi, vipassan’ākāram*, AA 3:410). See **Nimitta, SD 19.7.**

¹⁶⁷ *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, paṇḍito vyatto kusalo bhikkhu lābhī c’eva hoti diṭṭh’eva dhamme sukha, vihārānam, lābhī hoti sati, sampajañña.*

¹⁶⁸ *Katamā ca bhikkhave samādhi, bhāvanā bhāvitā bahulī, katā diṭṭha, dhamma, sukha, vihārāya samvattati? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa, vitakkam sa, vicāram viveka, jam pīti, sukham pathama-j, jhānam upasampajja viharati. Vitakka, vicārānam vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanam cetaso ekodi, bhāvam avitakkam vicāram samādhi, jam pīti, sukham dutiyam jhānam upasampajja viharati. Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno sukhañ ca kāyena patisamvedeti yan tam ariyā ācikkhanti: upekkhako satimā sukha, -vihārīti tatiyam jhānam upasampajja viharati. Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe va somanassānam atthagamā adukkham asukham upekkhā, sati, pārisuddhim catuttham jhānam upasampajja viharati. (A 4.41/2:45, 1-6), SD 24.1. On the Buddha’s “great high heavenly couch” (*dibba uccā, sayana mahā, sayana*), ie the dhyanas: see **Ven-āga, pura S** (A 3.63, 5.1/1:182 f), SD 21.1.*

¹⁶⁹ AA 3:309; see also UA 26, 73, 108, 201; ThaA 1:28; ItA 1:143, 2:37; DhA 4:53; DhsA 129.

¹⁷⁰ “Having made relinquishment the support,” *vossagg’ārammaṇam karitvā*. Clearly here, “mental release” is meant, viz the overcoming of **the 5 mental hindrance**: see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50.6/5:225), SD 10.4 ad loc.

¹⁷¹ *Saddhassa hi bhante ariya, sāvakaṃ āradhā, viriyassa upatthita, satino etam patikaṅkham, yaṃ vossagg’ārammaṇam karitvā labhissati samādhim labhissati cittassa ekaggatam. Yo hi’ssa bhante samādhi tad assa samādh’-indriyam.*

Here Sāriputta is speaking in the context of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*)—the faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom. The teaching of the 5 spiritual faculties is essential that of balanced practice. **Faith** is paired with **wisdom**, balancing the emotional and the intellectual sides of the spiritual life; **effort** is paired with **concentration**, balancing the cultivating and the restraining aspects of mental cultivation. **Mindfulness** sits in the middle, as it were, moderating each of the two pairs of faculties, keeping them all in harmony.¹⁷²

6.3.3.6 **Mindfulness** (*sati*)—the central faculty, as it acts as the “moderator” for faith, wisdom, effort and concentration—in meditation practice “should be seen” (*daṭṭhabba*) as the 4 satipatthanas, and the **samadhi** faculty itself “should be seen” as the 4 dhyanas, as stated in such discourses as **the Daṭṭhabba Sutta** (S 48.8).¹⁷³ In other words, mindfulness is *the wise attention* directed to the body, or feelings, or the mind, or dharmas (mental realities)—these are the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhana*)—as appropriate.

Samadhi here refers to the dhyanas. Thus, attaining and enjoying even the first dhyana clears our minds of all mental distractions (at least temporarily) and further empowers us to keep to the precepts,¹⁷⁴ which in turn enhances our meditation, *pari passu*.¹⁷⁵ In other words, there are two ways of practising satipatthana: the beginner should use one of the 4 focuses of mindfulness to train, to calm and to clear his mind of the mental hindrances [3.2.1]; and when the mind is hindrance-free, especially with the attaining of dhyana, he enjoys it as long as he wishes, then he emerges from it to go back to cultivating the satipatthanas, this time with deeper insight. [6.3.5]

Throughout the 4 Nikāyas, we have suttas describing how the noble eightfold path arises in a noble disciple, stating the close connection between mindfulness and samadhi, thus: “For one of right mindfulness, there arises right concentration.”¹⁷⁶ Here again, “right mindfulness” (*sammā,sati*) is the 4 satipatthanas [5.2.2], and “right concentration” (*sammā,samādhi*) is the 4 dhyanas [6.1.1]. Rephrased, this means: “For one who practises the satipatthanas, there arises the dhyanas” [6.3.5]. Again, we see the close connection between satipatthana and dhyanas, especially in the more advanced levels of spiritual training.

6.3.4 Satipatthana and vipassana in practice

6.3.4.1 The suttas, as such, are clear on the relationship between satipatthana and samadhi, that the basic purpose of satipatthana practice is the attainment of samadhi. As beginners, we should cultivate satipatthana for the sake of samadhi or samatha (mental calm). However, at any point during the satipatthana practice, we could apply wise attention (reflecting on impermanence of a mental state or event) and gain some insight which would help us become more focussed in our practice. Now we need to examine the relationship between satipatthana and vipassana (*vipassanā*, insight).

Firstly, it should be noted that the close link between satipatthana and samadhi that we have noted [6.1.2] does not necessarily mean that satipatthana is only about “samatha” meditation. Rather, it means that, whether we practise samatha or vipassana, the purpose of satipatthana, in either case, is *the attainment of samadhi, mental focus*. The point is a simple one: without any mental focus, there would be no spiritual progress in any meditation.

Secondly, we need to ask what happens *after* that, that is, after we have gained samadhi or mental focus. Is there such a thing as “post-samadhi satipatthana”? If there is, what does it involve? [6.3.5]

¹⁷² **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 70,13/1:477), SD 11.1. See esp SD 48.50 (2).

¹⁷³ S 48.8/5:196,15-18 @ SD 95.9.

¹⁷⁴ It is often said in the suttas: “The noble disciple *recollects his own moral virtue*, unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, conductive to concentration”: eg (**Tad-ah’**)**Uposatha S** (A 3.-70.7.1), SD 4.18. On conditions conducive to concentration, see **Pacalā S** (A 7.58.10/4:87 f), SD 4.11. See also UA 268. Cf “states conducive to concentration” (*samādhi,pakkha,dhammā*) (DA 2:245, 426; MA 3:182, 4:167; SA 3:209). On the recollection of moral virtue, see **Stīlānussati**, SD 15.11.

¹⁷⁵ “Pari passu” (Latin), meaning “with equal step,” ie, moral virtue and meditation help better one another in alternating stages.

¹⁷⁶ *Sammā,satissa sammā,samādhi pahotīti*: **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18,27/2:217,9); **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117,34-3/3:76,5); (**Pubb’āṅgamā**) **Avijjā S** (S 45.1/5:2,5 f), SD 89.4; **Micchatta S** (A 10.103/5:212,15-16), **Vijjā S** (A 10.105/5:214,25-26, **Pubb’āṅgama S** (A 10.121/5:236,27-237,1).

6.3.4.2 Here, it is important to note that a number of suttas clearly state that satipatthana practice can take us all the way to the path's goal, that is, awakening itself. See, for example, this key passage from **the Mahāpurisa Sutta** (S 47.11):

As he dwells contemplating the body in the body (feeling in the feelings | the mind in the mind | dharma in the dharmas), the mind becomes dispassionate, and by non-clinging, it is freed from the influxes.¹⁷⁷ (S 47.11/5:158,17-23), SD 19.6¹⁷⁸

Evidently, for satipatthana to bring us to the saint's path, or to awakening itself, it requires some post-samādhi or post-dhyana vipassanā, that is, deep insight.¹⁷⁹ A direct link between satipatthana and vipassana, however, is never explicitly mentioned in the suttas. The word *vipassanā* is actually rare in the suttas [5.2.3].

6.3.4.3 Although in practice, it is possible, even proper, to cultivate vipassana with samadhi or dhyana, this is rarely stated in the suttas, not explicitly anyway [5.2.3]. Such links between samadhi and insight, however, do occur in the suttas without any mention of vipassana. We need, however, to tease out such references from implicit statements of the fact. The clues to such statements are the use of synonyms for vipassana, such as "knowledge" (*ñāna*), "vision" (*dassana*), "knowledge of true reality" (*yathā, bhūta ñāna*) and "knowledge and vision of true reality" (*yathā, bhūta, ñāna, dassana*). Such a reference is found in **the Sālā Sutta** (S 47.4), thus:

Come, avuso, dwell exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, observing the body in the body (feelings in feelings | the mind in the mind | dharmas in dharmas), clearly understanding, single-minded, mentally lucid, concentrated, with one-pointedness, so that there is knowledge of true reality (*yathā, bhūta, ñāna*).¹⁸⁰ (S 47.4/5:144,19-29), SD 95.10

6.3.4.4 This, in fact, is possibly the *only* passage in the suttas that explicitly links satipatthana with vipassana or insight. Note how this passage differs significantly from the basic satipatthana formula often found in the suttas, thus:

Here, bhikshus,

A. a monk¹⁸¹ dwells¹⁸² exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, **observing [watching] the body in the body**,¹⁸³ removing¹⁸⁴ covetousness and displeasure¹⁸⁵ in the world;¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁷ "Influxes," *āsava*: see (2.2.2.3) sutta ad loc.

¹⁷⁸ See also these suttas in Sati'paṭṭhāna Saṃyutta: **Ariya S** (S 47.17/5:166,20-167,3), **Padesa S** (S 47.26/5:175,-19-26), **Virāga S** (S 47.32/5:179,15-25), **Bhāvita S** (S 47.34/5:180,14-20), **Chanda S** (S 47.37/5:181,21-182,6), **Pariññāta S** (S 47.38.3/5:182,8-19) & **Āsava S** (S 47.50/5:190,1-8).

¹⁷⁹ By "deep insight" here Brahmali means "insight into the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*) being affected by the 3 characteristics; ie insight that is capable of giving rise to the 4 stages of awakening.

¹⁸⁰ *Etha tumhe āvuso kāye kāyānupassino* (vedanāsu vedanānupassino | citte cittānupassino | dhammesu dhammānupassino) viharatha, ātāpino sampajānā ekodi, bhūtā vipassanna, cittā samāhitā ek'agga, cittā kāyassa (vedanānam | cittassa | dhammānam) yathā, bhūtam ñānāya.

¹⁸¹ Here "a monk" (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipatthana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). See SD 13.1 (3.1a).

¹⁸² (Rest of sentence) *ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*. Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1 (4.2).

¹⁸³ "Observing the body in the body" (*kāye kāyānupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

¹⁸⁴ *Vineyya* can mean "should remove" (as pot, like *vineyya*, Sn 590) or as "having removed" (as ger, like *vinaitvā*, Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in **Satipaṭṭhāna S**. U Silananda similarly ends the sentence with "removing covetousness and grief in the world" (1990:177); also 1990:22-25. See SD 13.1 (4.2c) above.

- B. a monk dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, **observing feeling in the feelings**, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
- C. a monk dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, **observing the mind in the mind**, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
- D. a monk dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, **observing dharma in the dharmas**, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world. (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3 & 13.1 (4.3)

6.3.4.5 Two differences are especially significant in connection with our investigation here. Firstly, the vipassana relates to the deep insight of seeing true reality (*yathā, bhūta, ñāna*). Secondly, a string of related terms—“single-minded, mentally lucid, concentrated, with one-pointedness (*ekodi, bhūtā vipassanna, cittā samāhitā ek’agga, cittā*)”—put the clear emphasis on samadhi.

This emphasis on samadhi implies that satipatthana should be practised for the purpose of deep insight only *after* samadhi has been attained. It is therefore clear that there is such a thing as post-samadhi satipatthana and that its purpose is *deep* insight. We will now look at the suttas to confirm these important points.

6.3.5 Satipatthana for deep insight

6.3.5.1 In passages on satipatthana—especially the Satipatthāna Suttas (D 22; M 10)—we see that the various words signifying *samādhi* are adjectives to “watching the body in the body” (*kāyānupassī*). This means that, on a deeper level, we should dwell contemplating the body, feelings, the mind and dharmas, *after* these qualities, that is, after samadhi has already been attained, when we are mentally stilled and focussed.

6.3.5.2 That the satipatthana for deep insight practice must follow samadhi is not surprising. In the suttas, we see that samadhi is always the pre-condition for “knowledge and vision of true reality” (*yathā, bhūta, ñāna, dassana*). It is said in **the Upanisa Sutta 1** (A 10.3), for example, that “when there is no right samadhi, for one failing in right samadhi, the proximate cause for knowledge and vision of true reality is destroyed” (*sammā, samādhimhi asati sammā, samādhi, vipannassa hat’upanisam hoti yathā. bhūta, ñāna, dassanam*).¹⁸⁷

6.3.5.3 This link between *samādhi* and *yathā, bhūta, ñāna, dassana* further explains why the suttas are almost silent on any direct link between *satipatthāna* and *vipassanā*. Brahmali observes that it “seems likely that after *samādhi, yathā, bhūta, ñāna, dassana* is used in place of *satipatthāna* to more precisely explain what is happening at this stage” (2004:4 & n9).

6.3.5.4 Elsewhere, such as in **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117), the term “right knowledge” (*sammā, ñāna*) is used in a similar way.¹⁸⁸ *Yathā, bhūta, ñāna, dassana*, as such, may be regarded as a subset and specialised aspect of *sati’patthāna*, concludes Brahmali (id).

6.3.5.5 In **the Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (M 64), we find a clear example of the sort of insight practice that comes after *samādhi*: after emerging from the *jhānas*, we are to reflect on them as being affected by the 3 characteristics.¹⁸⁹ Although *satipatthāna* is never mentioned here, observes Brahmali, this practice apparently falls right into “observation [contemplation] of the mind” (*cittānupassanā*) (id). On a deeper level, as realization or direct experience, such visions of the 3 characteristics—that any of the 5 aggregates, any moment of experience—is impermanent, unsatisfactory or non-self, would of course be regarded as part of the “observation [contemplation] of dharmas” (*dhammābnupassanā*).

¹⁸⁵ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā, domanassam*, alt trs: “desire and discontent,” “desiring and disliking,” or “longing and loathing.” Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as “hankering and fretting [for the world].” See SD 13.1 (4.2) above.

¹⁸⁶ “World” (*loka*). See SD 13.1 (4.2d) above.

¹⁸⁷ A 10.3/5:4,9-11 @ SD 89.5; see also A 5:212,16; 5:214,26 f; 5:236,27.

¹⁸⁸ M 117/3:76,6 @ SD 6.10.

¹⁸⁹ M 64,10/1:435,26 f @ SD 21.10.

6.3.5.6 Further, it should be noted here that although at this stage the satipatthana's emphasis is on vipassana, this does not prevent satipatthana from being helpful in bringing about deeper states of samadhi. In fact, the deeper the samadhi, the more powerful the subsequent vipassana experience will be. This is like using a well-polished powerful telescope to look at some distant heavenly body on a clear night.

6.3.6 Two aspects of satipatthana

6.3.6.1 From our survey thus far, it is clear that satipatthana, properly practised, leads to samadhi, but on a higher level of practice, it brings about deep insight. So we see two aspects or "stages" here: the stilling and the seeing. These are, in fact, the two aspects of satipatthana, the proverbial "two wings of a flying bird" [1.4.2], as concentration and wisdom, calm and insight, thus:

- (1) The first aspect or "stage" of satipatthana, in accordance with the natural progression of mental stilling (with samadhi as the precondition for deep insight), is the attaining of samadhi.
- (2) Once mental stilling or samadhi (the precondition for deep insight) has been attained, the mind is empowered to see the true nature of the 5 aggregates¹⁹⁰ and realize the successive stages of awakening.

6.3.6.2 These two integral aspects of satipatthana are, in fact, clearly laid out in the suttas, such as **the Danta,bhūmi Sutta** (M 125):

23 [*Just as a wild elephant is tamed...*], even so, Aggivessana, **these 4 focuses of mindfulness** (*sati'paṭṭhāna*) are the leashes¹⁹¹ for the noble disciple's mind for the subduing of his conduct [habits] of the household life, for the subduing of his thoughts rooted towards the household life, for the subduing of his distress, fatigue, and fever for the household life, [6.3.6.7] for the sake of attaining the true way and realising nirvana.

24 Then the Tathāgata leads [disciplines] him further, saying, "Come, bhikkhu, dwell observing the body in the body (feelings in feelings | the mind in the mind | dharma in the dharmas), but do not think thoughts¹⁹² connected with the body (with feelings | with the mind | with dharmas)."¹⁹³ (M 125,23-24/3:136,14-26), SD 46.3

In §23 of the Sutta, the Buddha instructs us to keep a firm hold of the mind (maintain mindfulness) so that it does not wander into worldliness, especially in the case of a monastic. This is the letting-go of "the

¹⁹⁰ In the suttas, the 5 aggregates are the standard analysis of a living being.

¹⁹¹ "Leashes," *upanibandhana*, ie *upa* ("close up to")+ *ni* ("down"+ *bandhana* ("tying"): "tying, fastening, what ties or connects, rope." From vb *upanibandhati* (BHS *upanibadhnāti*; Skt, "to compose"] "to connect, attach to."

¹⁹² "Thoughts" (*vitakka*): This is clearly the keyword in this para. See foll n: Either reading *kāmūpasamhitam* ("connected with sensuality," Be Ce) or *kāmūpasamhitam* ("connected with the body," Ee Se) is acceptable here, as the import here is that no "thinking" but only "observing [contemplating]" (*anupassanā*) should be used in any of the 4 satipatthanas. With the *sati'paṭṭhāna* (focus of mindfulness) fully established, all thoughts cease: see eg **Piṇḍo-lyā S** (S 22.80.20/3:93,21), SD 28.9a & its Chin parallel SĀ 272/T272a24.

¹⁹³ *Evam eva kho aggivesana ariya,sāvakassa ime cattāro satipatthānā cetaso upanibandhanā honti gehasitānañ c'eva silānañ abhinimmadanāya gehasitānañ c'eva sankappānam abhinimmadanāya gehasitānañ c'eva daratha,-kilamatha,parilāhānam abhinimmadanāya ñāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya. Tam enaṃ tathāgata uttarim vineti: Ehi tvam bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī (vedanāsu vedanānupassī | citte cittānupassī | dhammesu dhammānupassī) viharāhi mā ca kāmūpasamhitam* vitakkam vitakkesi. (M 125.22/3:136,14-26), SD 46.3 (qv). * Be Ce *kāmū*~, also in Chin version MĀ 198 @ T1.758b15; Ee Se *kāyū*~, also *kāya,sahagatān* in *Pañca,vimśati,sāhasrikā Prajñā,pāramitā* (ed) Dutt 1934:204,2, cf **Harrison** 1978:130,13 (cf 155,22) &1990:125, 144, which applies the instruction not to think any thoughts to all 4 *smṛtyupasthāna* (**Analyo** 2006c:12-13+n32 & 2011:719+n167). Cf M:-ÑB 1338 n1177 for pref of reading *kāmū*~: see prec n. See also **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.10), which apparently shows a similar split between satipatthana before and after samadhi (S 47.10/5:155,31-157,20), SD 24.2. See **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125,24(1)n), SD 46.3, for further details.*

world,” of spiritual renunciation—that is, not being distracted in anyway on account of the 5 physical senses or any thought;¹⁹⁴ in other words, working to remove all the 5 mental hindrances [3.2.1].

6.3.6.3 In this connection, the Buddha is recorded as declaring in **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Nīvaraṇa Sutta** (A 9.64), thus:

Bhikshus, the 4 satipatthanas should be cultivated for the abandoning of these 5 hindrances.¹⁹⁵
(A 9.64/4:458,4 f), SD 14.13

In §24, the meditator goes on to let go of all thoughts (*vitakka*) concerning the 4 satipatthanas. In other words, the mind is now fully focussed on the satipatthana itself as its object, and when we let go of this focus, the first dhyana arises. With the abandoning of all subliminal thought of directing the mind to the object and keeping it there, with mental focus sustained, the second dhyana is attained, along with zest or joyful interest. When zest is abandoned, we attain the third dhyana. With the mind utterly equanimous, the fourth dhyana is attained.

6.3.6.4 Elsewhere, the word “impurities” (*upakkilesa*) is used to refer to the remaining finer hindrances, such as in **the Sūda Sutta** (S 47.8) which essentially states the same process, but in fewer words, thus:

10 Even so, bhikshus, here some **wise**, capable, and skillful monk, dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, observing [contemplating] the body in the body, (feelings, | the mind, | dharmas,) removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

While he dwells observing the body in the body; his mind concentrates, his mental impurities are abandoned, [152] and he *grasps* the sign. (S 47.8.10/5:151 f), SD 28.15 [6.3.3.4]

The first paragraph refers to the meditator’s practising samatha or mental calm to overcome all the mental hindrances [3.2.1], referred to as “mental impurities” in the second paragraph. The phrase, “**he grasps the sign**” (that is, the meditation object), means that he attains dhyana. Even where dhyana does not arise in us, there would still be at least some level of samadhi or mental stillness in us. This should be sufficient to be of great help in the perception of impermanence for streamwinning, at least.

6.3.6.5 **The (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128) gives a list of **11 mental impurities** (*cittassa upakkilesa*)—doubt, inattention, sloth-and-torpor, fear, excitement, inertia, excessive effort, weak effort, longing, perception of diversity, and excessive gazing at forms—which are the finer hindrances identified by the Buddha and explained to Anuruddha who has difficulties with his meditation.¹⁹⁶ These 11 mental impurities are taught to advanced disciples and meditators. This is more briefly stated in **the (Ānāpāna,-samādhi) Kimbila Sutta** (S 54.10), thus:

So, too, Ānanda, a monk who dwells observing [contemplating] the body in the body (feeling in the feelings | the mind in the mind | dharma in the dharmas), would destroy bad unwholesome states.¹⁹⁷
(S 54.10/5:325,6), SD 12.22

6.3.6.6 To reiterate: the first stage of satipatthana is that of abandoning the finer hindrances [6.3.5], which brings about samadhi. The second stage of satipatthana is when sense-desire has been fully abandoned (in fact, all the hindrances and impurities have been overcome), meaning that samadhi has been fully attained. Although we speak of “stages” here, in practice, they work together to soar to greater heights in inner peace and wisdom. [1.4.2]

Apparently, in **the Danta,bhūmi Sutta** (M 125) above, the phrase “distress, fatigue, and fever for the household life” [6.3.6.2], refers to the 5 mental hindrances, in particular sense-desire [3.2.1]. The Sutta

¹⁹⁴ On the 6 senses as “the all” (*sabba*), see **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1. On the 6 senses as “the world” (*loka*), see **(Samuday’atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73), SD 7.5.

¹⁹⁵ *Imesam kho bhikkhave pañcannaṃ nīvaranānaṃ pahānāya cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvetabbā.*

¹⁹⁶ M 128,16-20/3:158 f + SD 5.18 (3).

¹⁹⁷ *Evam eva kho Ānanda bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī <vedanāsu vedanānupassī | citte cittānupassī | dhammesu dhammānupassī> viharanto pi upahanat’eva pāpake akusale dhamme.*

here, however, says that the 5 hindrances *have already been removed*, that is, immediately before this passage (M 125,23-25), it says:

Having abandoned these 5 mental hindrances, mental imperfections that weaken wisdom, he dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, observing [contemplating] the body in the body, (feeling in the feelings | the mind in the mind | dharma in the dharmas), removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.¹⁹⁸ (M 125,22/3:136,3), SD 46.3.

This contradiction, however, is only apparent but not real. As **Brahmali** suggests, the removal of the 5 hindrances allows for *finer* aspects of the hindrances still to be present and that “distress, fatigue, and fever for the household life” refers only to these finer aspects of the hindrances (2004:4 & n34). We see a similar removal of finer hindrances in satipatthana practice, for example, in **the Sūda Sutta** (S 47.8).¹⁹⁹ [6.3.6.4]

6.3.6.7 Similarly, in **the Danta,bhūmi Sutta** (M 125), we do not see the phrase *satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassam* (which is part of the satipatthana pericope)²⁰⁰ [6.3.6.6]. It has been replaced with a phrase signifying samadhi, that is, *mā ca kāmūpasamhitam vitakkaṃ vitakkesi*, “do not think (any) thought connected with sensuality (towards any of the focuses of mindfulness).”²⁰¹ Evidently here, this passage refers to the same type of post-samadhi satipatthana. [Cf 6.3.4.3]

There is an important alternate reading for this Danta,bhūmi Sutta phrase, where instead of *kāmūpasamhitam*, we have the readings *kāyūpasamhitam* (“connected with the body”), *vedanūpasamhitam* (“connected with feelings”), *cittūpasamhitam* (connected with the mind”), and *dhammūpasamhitam* (“connected with realities”), respectively. In other words, here, the instruction is not have any thought regarding any of the 4 focuses of mindfulness.

Both readings (especially the second) indicate that sensuality has been abandoned through samadhi. Furthermore, in the present passage, in the subsequent text, the first dhyana is missing, with the meditator going right into the second dhyana. This suggests that the first dhyana is here included in the satipatthana practice. The point is clear: we are dealing with post-samadhi satipatthana. (2004:3 & n35)

6.4 SATIPATTHANA AS CONDITION FOR SAMADHI. Almost all sutta passages relating to satipatthana in the broader scheme of Buddhist training show that it is a condition for samadhi. As such, we can rightly conclude that the main purpose of satipatthana is to bring about samadhi, mental focus. This understanding is vitally important because it contradicts the common view that satipatthana is only concerned with vipassana.

The second important conclusion we can draw from our survey here is that satipatthana, as a deep insight practice, giving us a direct knowledge into the true nature of the aggregates, only begins *after* samadhi has been attained. This understanding is clearly in line with a common sutta theme: that “the knowledge and vision of true reality” depends on samadhi.²⁰² [6.3.5]

¹⁹⁸ *So ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbali,karaṇe kāye kāyānupassī* (vedanāsu vedanānupassī | citte cittānupassī | dhammesu dhammānupassī)viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassam. In other words, here dhyana has been attained, and the meditator (emerging from it) re-directs his attention to the satipatthanas.

¹⁹⁹ S 47.8/5:151,25-152,1 @ SD 28.15.

²⁰⁰ Meaning “exertive, clear, mindful...putting away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world”: see SD 13.1 (4.2)

²⁰¹ An alt reading has *kāyūpasamhitam*, *vedanā~*, *citta~*, and *dhamma~*, respectively, instead of *kāma~*, See **M 125,24/3:136,21 @ SD 46.3.**

²⁰² For “historical” comments on **Mahā Satipatṭhāna S** (D 22) and how satipatthana was “vipassanized,” see SD 13.1 (1c).

7 Meditation as practice

7.1 ALL GOOD MEDITATIONS WORK IN SOME WAY. Vipassana meditation is a well marketed system with a great number of devoted followers, and for most, if not, all of them, it works (as defined by those who use them). We have nothing against this, nor are we questioning its effectiveness. As well evident from our study here, Vipassanavāda is not based on the Buddha’s teachings or the suttas. This is our main point.

Our main objection is the Vipassanavadins’ claim that Vipassana (as they define and practise it) is the Buddha’s teaching. No matter how “pure” Vipassana Meditation might be, it is *not* a method in its own right: there is no support for this in the suttas. Still, we are not questioning it as a meditation method. We are only saying it is *neither sutta-based nor Dharma-inspired*.

7.2 USES OF VIPASSANA. It should be reiterated that we are not in any way questioning the effectiveness of Vipassana as a meditation method. It has its uses and benefits, as evident, from the feedback of many who have used the method, and also won well acclaimed success.

However, because it is not fully and solidly based on the Buddha’s teachings in the proper balance of samatha and vipassana, calm and insight, it would not bring about awakening, despite all the other benefits that Vipassana meditation might bring.

7.3 PURPOSE OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION. The purpose of Buddhist meditation is based on the 3 trainings, that is, those in moral virtue, mental cultivation and insight wisdom.²⁰³ Moral virtue is essentially the respect and disciplining of our body and speech in keeping with the spirit and practice of the 5 precepts.²⁰⁴ When our body and speech are thus well cultivated, we are ready for mental cultivation, which begins with the letting go of all mental distractions through the 5 physical senses so that we can fully focus on the mind.²⁰⁵

This is the stage when we embark on the higher purpose of Dharma-based meditation, that is, to know the mind, to tame the mind, to free the mind. Through sutta study and spiritual friendship with morally virtuous, compassionate and experienced teachers, we learn the nature of the mind. As we endeavour in our meditation or mindfulness practice, we begin to see for ourselves what all these sutta teachings are really about.

Beginners of meditation are known to report experiencing various states of bliss and inspiration. Through such personal experiences, they easily connect with the Dharma through the suttas and quickly understand them. Their practice is further enhanced, and their self-understanding, that is, knowing better how the mind works, grows.

7.4 THE BENEFITS OF DHARMA-BASED MEDITATION. If we properly practise the Buddha’s meditation, even on a simple level (such as going for a beginner’s course) there is a feeling of inner peace and spaciousness. If we keep up our practice (especially the breath meditation)²⁰⁶ and sutta study, our wholesome qualities become even more enhanced. Since we are happy, it is easier to naturally keep to the precepts of moral virtue.

If we also practise the cultivation of lovingkindness,²⁰⁷ we feel even more happy and easier to accept others unconditionally. As such, we are in a better position to help and heal others. Generally, we are more friendly to others. If we are creative people, then we would feel more inspired with a better understanding of truth and beauty, and expressing them better in our works.

²⁰³ On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

²⁰⁴ On the 5 precepts, see **Right livelihood** @ SD 37.8 (2.2).

²⁰⁵ On the 5 hindrances, see *Nīvaraṇā*, SD 32.1.

²⁰⁶ On breath meditation, see *Āṇāpāna,sati S* (M 118), SD 7.13.

²⁰⁷ On cultivation of lovingkindness, see **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Sn 1.8 = Khp 9), SD 38.3.

Basically, good Buddhist meditation brings peace, happiness and harmony to our lives. We easily calm ourselves, we easily learn things. With this calm and open mind, we easily see the impermanence of all existence, and so see greater value in life, work, love, truth and freedom. We are on the way to awakening in this life itself.

There is no concentration for those lacking wisdom,
there is no wisdom for those lacking concentration.
In whom there is both concentration and wisdom,
he indeed is in the presence of nirvana.

(Dh 372) [4.2.4]

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Bibliography

See the end of SD 41.bib.

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