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## Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta

The Discourse on Samadhi Attainment | S 34.1/3:263 f

Samādhi Mūlaka Samāpatti Sutta The Discourse on the Root Attainment in Samadhi

Theme: Four types of meditators

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010

### 1 Sutta title and topic

#### 1.1 SUTTA TITLE

**1.1.1 The Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta** (S 34.1) is the first discourse of the Jhāna Vagga (the chapter on meditation), which is the first chapter (or better, “subchapter,” *vagga*) of the Jhāna Sāmyutta (a set of 55 connected discourses on meditation) [1.2]. In fact, this is the only “sub-chapter” is *sāmyutta*, so that it is its alternate title. This *sāmyutta* is also the last of the 13 chapters (*vagga*) of Khandha Vagga (the chapter on the aggregates).

**1.1.2** The name, **Jhāna Sāmyutta**, is also the title of **S 53**, where it should be translated as “the chapter on dhyana”), since it is a collection of discourses concerning the four dhyanas as meditation attainments, that is, chapter 9 of **the Maha,vagga** (the great chapter). Apparently, the word *jhāna* in these two *sāmyutta* titles do not have the same sense. While in S 53, *jhāna* has the sense of “dhyana,”<sup>1</sup> in S 34 (where the Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta is located) it is about “meditation” (*samādhi*).<sup>2</sup> While S 34 deals with the *process* of meditation, S 53 centres around their *results*.

**1.1.3** In fact, the Khmer (Cambodian) and Siamese manuscripts do not call it Jhāna Sāmyutta, but more appropriately, **Samādhi Sāmyutta**.

**1.2 THE SAMADHI CYCLE. The Jhāna Sāmyutta** is a cycle of 55 suttas on meditation, like a wheel (*cakka*), listing all the possible twinning of 11 skills related to meditation. Each pair is then listed by way of 4 possibilities, that is, one who has only one of the skills, one who has only the other skill, one who has neither, and one who is skilled in both. The last is always declared to be the best, the “cream” (*maṇḍa*) [1.3.5]. Here is a list of the suttas of the sub-chapters (*vagga*) of **the Jhāna Sāmyutta** (as listed in the Sixth Council or Chaṭṭha Saṅgīti edition of the Burmese:

<u>Traditional</u>	<u>PTS sutta no</u>	<u>Sutta titles</u>
S 3.13.1.1	S 34.1	Samādhi Mūlaka Samāpatti Sutta
S 3.13.1.2	S 34.2	Samādhi Mūlaka Ṭhīti Sutta
S 3.13.1.3	S 34.3	Samādhi Mūlaka Vuṭṭhāna Sutta
S 3.13.1.4	S 34.4	Samādhi Mūlaka Kallita Sutta
S 3.13.1.5	S 34.5	Samādhi Mūlaka Ārammaṇa Sutta
S 3.13.1.6	S 34.6	Samādhi Mūlaka Go,cara Sutta
S 3.13.1.7	S 34.7	Samādhi Mūlaka Abhinīhāra Sutta
S 3.13.1.8	S 34.8	Samādhi Mūlaka Sakkacca,kārī Sutta
S 3.13.1.9	S 34.9	Samādhi Mūlaka Sātacca,kārī Sutta
S 3.13.1.10	S 34.10	Samādhi Mūlaka Sappāya,kārī Sutta
S 3.13.1.11	S 34.11	Samāpatti Mūlaka Ṭhīti Sutta
S 3.13.1.12	S 34.12	Samāpatti Mūlaka Vuṭṭhāna Sutta
S 3.13.1.13	S 34.13	Samāpatti Mūlaka Kallita Sutta
S 3.13.1.14	S 34.14	Samāpatti Mūlaka Ārammaṇa Sutta
S 3.13.1.15	S 34.15	Samāpatti Mūlaka Go,cara Sutta
S 3.13.1.16	S 34.16	Samāpatti Mūlaka Abhinīhāra Sutta
S 3.13.1.17	S 34.17	Samāpatti Mūlaka Sakkacca Sutta

<sup>1</sup> On def of *jhāna*, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (3).

<sup>2</sup> S 34/3:263-278. See **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a. On *samādhi* as meditation, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1.

S 3.13.1.18	S 34.18	Samāpatti Mūlaka Sātacca Sutta
S 3.13.1.19	S 34.19	Samāpatti Mūlaka Sātacca Sutta

**(Abbreviated list)**

S 3.13.1.20-27	S 34.20-27	Ṭhiti Mūlaka Vuṭṭhāna Sutt'ādi	aṭṭhaka	(8 suttas)
S 3.13.1.28-34	S 34.28-34	Vuṭṭhāna Mūlaka Kallita Sutt'ādi	sattaka	(7 suttas)
S 3.13.1.35-40	(S 34.35-40)	Kallita Mūlaka Ārammaṇa Sutt'ādi	chakka	(6 suttas)
S 3.13.1.41-45	(S 34.41-45)	Ārammaṇa Mūlaka Go,cara Sutt'ādi	pañcaka	(5 suttas)
S 3.13.1.46-49	(S 34.46-49)	Gocara Mūlaka Abhinīhāra Sutt'ādi	catukka	(4 suttas)
S 3.13.1.50-52	(S 34.50-52)	Abhinīhāra Mūlaka Sakkacca Sutt'ādi	tika	(3 suttas)
S 3.13.1.53-54	(S 34.53-54)	Sakkacca Mūlaka Sātacca,kārī Sutt'ādi	duka	(2 suttas)
S 3.13.1.55	(S 34.55)	Sātacca Mūlaka Sappāya,kārī Sutta		

The Saṃyutta commentary tells us that the entire Jhāna Saṃyutta deals with mundane dhyana, that is, only the process of deep meditation without mentioning the results of such a practice (with neither path nor fruition).

**1.3 THE SUTTA TYPOLOGY.** The Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta gives this list of 4 kinds of meditators, in terms of samadhi, here having a broad sense of “mental concentration,” especially the attainment of dhyana, thus:

- (1) skilled about samadhi in regards to samadhi, but not skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>3</sup> [§4]
- (2) skilled in the attaining of samadhi, but unskilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi.<sup>4</sup> [§5]
- (3) neither skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi, nor skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>5</sup> [§6]
- (4) both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>6</sup> [§7]

The last is the best, the “cream” (*maṇḍa*) [§9; 1.3.5].

**1.3.1 Meditator skilled only about samadhi in regards to samadhi** (*jhāyī samādhismim samādhi,kusalo hoti*). He is one who is adept in analyzing and identifying the 5 dhyana-factors or the 4 dhyana-factors<sup>7</sup> [1.4.2.1; 2.3.1]. It is rather curious that one who is expert in the dhyana-factors would not attain dhyana. I think that here the Sutta refers to one who is only *theoretically* well versed in dhyanas (like a PhD scholar of dhyana studies), but has never really tasted them himself. Such a person may be a good teacher of meditation, but sooner or later, he would have to master the practice himself so that he is able to progress himself.

**1.3.2 Meditator skilled only in the attaining of samadhi** (*jhāyī samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo hoti*). He knows how to gladden the mind to make it pliant so that it can attain dhyana (SA 2:352) [1.4.2.2]. One commentary says that this refers to being adept in knowing and resorting to suitable food and suitable climate, as a result of which is to attain samadhi (AA 1:161, 3:354) [1.4.3.2]. Meditators who do not have a strong foundation in Dharma instruction or sutta learning, even when they attain high levels of meditative attainment, may not be able to instruct others effectively. However, if the pupils are patient and wise, they would still be able to learn from such a meditator or teacher.

**1.3.3 Meditator skilled in neither** (*jhāyī n'eva samādhismim samādhi,kusalo hoti, na ca samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo*). This person is still a meditator, except that he is having a hard time, since he does not know much about the dhyana-factors (much less how to identify them) and he is unable to attain

<sup>3</sup> *Idha bhikkhave eka cco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi,kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo.*

<sup>4</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samādhi,kusalo.*

<sup>5</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī n'eva samādhismim samādhi,kusalo hoti, na ca samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo.*

<sup>6</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi,kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo ca.*

<sup>7</sup> SA 2:352; PmA 1:231.

dhyana. Such a person might be someone with difficult progress in meditation, and with slow realization.<sup>8</sup> However with the help of a competent and compassionate teacher, such a person can easily progress.

**1.3.4 Meditator skilled in both** (*jhāyī samādhismim samādhi,kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo ca*). A meditator who is both adept the theory of meditation (that is, knows the Dharma and the suttas), and also an accomplished meditator (that is, a dhyana-attainer), would be a rare and effective teacher. He would be able to teach the Dharma clearly and also instruct meditators effectively. Such a full training would be beneficial for the propagation and preservation of the Buddha's teaching.

**1.3.5 Manda.** Of these 4 meditators, the fourth is said to be the "cream" (*maṇḍa*) of meditators. Here *maṇḍa* means "cream," both literally, such as the "cream of ghee" (*sappi,maṇḍa*), that is, the best part of dairy products [§9], as well as figuratively the essence or the finest part of something good [§10].<sup>9</sup> The Sāmyutta commentary speaks of three types of cream:

- (1) "the cream of teachings" (*desanā,maṇḍa*), that is, the four noble truths and the 37 limbs of awakening,<sup>10</sup>
  - (2) "the cream of recipients" (*paṭiggaha,maṇḍa*), that is, the disciples capable of understanding these teachings; and
  - (3) "the cream of the holy life" (*brahma.cariya,maṇḍa*), that is, the noble eightfold path.
- (SA 2:51; Pm 2:86; PmA 5:381)

#### 1.4 RELATED SUTTAS AND COMMENTARIES

**1.4.1 Related suttas.** Several of the meditation skills in the Jhāna Sāmyutta are also mentioned in these suttas (overlapping items are listed in *italics*):

##### Himavanta Sutta

(A 6.24/3:311,27-30), SD 41.14  
Samadhi skills in:

- 
- (1) *attaining it*<sup>12</sup>
  - (2) *staying in it*<sup>13</sup>
  - (3) *emerging from it*<sup>14</sup>
  - (4) *keeping himself fit*<sup>15</sup>
  - (5) *resort*<sup>17</sup>
  - (6) *resolution*<sup>19</sup>

##### (Samādhi) Bala Sutta

(A 6.72/3:427,25-428,4), SD 41.15  
Samadhi skills in:

- 
- (1) *attaining it*
  - (2) *staying in it*
  - (3) *emerging from it*
  - (4) care in practice<sup>16</sup>
  - (5) commitment to practice<sup>18</sup>
  - (6) suitability in practice<sup>20</sup>

##### Vasa Sutta

(A 7.38/4:34,5-9), SD 41.16  
Samadhi skills in:

- (1) concentration [samadhi]<sup>11</sup>
- (2) *attaining it*
- (3) *staying in it*
- (4) *emerging from it*
- (5) *keeping the mind fit*
- (6) *resort*
- (7) *resolution*

Amongst them, all these suttas cover all the skills mentioned in the Jhāna Sāmyutta, except for "skill in the object" (*ārammaṇa,kusala*), which is unique to this *sāmyutta*. The Commentary explains *ārammaṇa* here as referring to the *kaṣiṇa* as a meditation object.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Dukkha,paṭipadā dandhābhiññā* (A 2:149-152, 154 f). See **Pacalā S** (A 7.58), SD 4.11 (3).

<sup>9</sup> A later, connotation or extended meaning, of *maṇḍa* is that of "clear," also "faith-inspiring" (*pasanna*), as in the cpd, *maṇḍa,peyya*, "a clear drink" or "the cream of drinks," used in **Dasa Bala S 2** (S 12.11) in reference to the holy life (S 12.22/2:28 f), SD 96.4.

<sup>10</sup> On the 4 noble truths, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:420-424), SD 1.1; On the 37 limbs of awakening, see **Bodhi,pakkhiya dhamma**, SD 10.1.

<sup>11</sup> *Samādhi,kusalo*. [1.3.1; 1.4.2.1]

<sup>12</sup> *Samādhissa samāpatti,kusalo*. [1.3.2; 1.4.3.2]

<sup>13</sup> *Samādhissa ṭhiti,kusalo* [1.4.2.3].

<sup>14</sup> *Samādhissa vuṭṭhāna,kusalo* [1.4.2.4].

<sup>15</sup> *Samādhissa kallita,kusalo* [Be *kalyāna,kusalo*] [1.4.2.5].

<sup>16</sup> *Sakkaccha,kārī* [1.4.2.6]

<sup>17</sup> *Samādhissa gocara,kusalo* [1.4.2.7].

<sup>18</sup> *Sātaccha,kātī* [1.4.2.8].

<sup>19</sup> *Samādhissa abhinīhāra,kusalo* [1.4.2.9].

<sup>20</sup> *Sappāya,kārī* [1.4.2.10].

Other discourses that list skills needed for mastering concentration are also given in **the Vasī Sutta 1** (A 7.40), **the Vasī Sutta 2** (A 7.41) and the suttas of **the Jhāna Vagga** (S 34).<sup>22</sup>

**1.4.2 A common glossary.** Here is a list of definitions of the terms used in the sets found in the above Suttas [1.4.1].

1.4.2.1 “SKILL ABOUT SAMADHI” (*samādhi,kusala*): knowing how to determine the dhyana-factors (SA 2:352; PmA 1:231).

1.4.2.2 “SKILL IN ATTAINING OF SAMADHI” (*samādhissa samāpatti,kusala*), ie knowing how to gladden (*hāsetvā*) the mind to make it pliant so that it can attain dhyana (SA 2:352). One commentary says that this refers to being adept in knowing and resorting to suitable food and suitable climate, as a result of which is to attain samadhi (AA 1:161, 3:354).

1.4.2.3 “SAMADHI SKILL IN REMAINING (IN DHYANA)” (*samādhissa ṭhiti,kusala*), ie spending time in dhyana, keeping the dhyana stable or deepening it; also keep up the duration of the dhyana (AA 2:161, 3:255). He knows how to clear his mind of the hindrances and grasp the meditation sign (*nimitta*).<sup>23</sup>

1.4.2.4 “SAMADHI SKILL IN EMERGING FROM DHYANA” (*samādhissa vuṭṭhāna,kusala*), ie emerging from dhyana at a pre-determined time (by the body clock) (AA 3:355); or he is wise in knowing the time-limit in regards to emerging, thinking, “I will exert myself as long as the sun is gone” (*ettakaṃ gate suriye uṭṭhahissāmi* *ṭṭhāna,kāla,paricchedakā paññā*) (DA 3:979; PmA 1:232).

1.4.2.5 “SAMADHI SKILL IN KEEPING (THE MIND) FIT” (*samādhissa kallita,kusala*; *Be kalyāṇa,kusalo*): capable in keeping the mind fit for dhyana, keeping it adaptable, happy, bright. (AA 3:355). He also knows the suitability of the different kinds of kasinas (PmA 1:232).

1.4.2.6 “SAMADHI SKILL IN CARE IN PRACTICE” (*sakkaccha,kārī*): acting carefully so as to be able to enter dhyana (SA 2:352).

1.4.2.7 “SAMADHI SKILL IN RESORT” (*samādhissa gocara,kusala*): having avoided what is not conducive to concentration, he takes up what is helpful for it, knows what “sign” (*nimitta*) or “characteristic” (*lakkhana*) is best as a concentration object (*ārammaṇa*) (AA 3:355; PmA 1:232). Not only is he skilled in the meditation-work (*kamma-ṭṭhāna*) itself, but also in resorting to proper places for alms (AA 2:352).

1.4.2.8 “SAMADHI SKILL IN COMMITTED PRACTICE” (*sātaccha,kātī*): keeping up his effort in working to attain dhyana (S 2:352).

1.4.2.9 “SAMADHI SKILL IN RESOLUTION” (*samādhissa abhinīhāra,kusala*): being able to direct the mind to the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana and on to higher ones (AA 3:355). Having mastered the different dhyanas and attainments, he cultivates insight in terms of them (PmA 1:233).

1.4.2.10 “SAMADHI SKILL IN SUITABLE PRACTICE” (*sappāya,kārī*): being able to fulfill those qualities that conduce to concentration (SA 2:352).

1.4.2.11 MUNDANE DHYANAS. The commentary also says that the above all refer to mundane dhyanas (*lokiya-j,jhāna*).

### 1.4.3 Commentarial notes

1.4.3.1 The Saṃyutta commentary explains “**skilled about samadhi**” (*samādhi,kusala*) as skill in determining the dhyana-factors (*jhān’anga*), thus: “The first dhyana has 5 factors;<sup>24</sup> the second, 3 factors, and so on,” and “**but not skilled in the attaining of samadhi**” (*na samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo*) as “although having gladdened the mind, he makes it pliant,<sup>25</sup> he is unable to attain dhyana”<sup>26</sup> (SA 2:352).

1.4.3.2 The commentary on **the Hima,vanta Sutta** (A 6.24) notes that, “Having collected suitable food and found suitable climate, he is skilled in attaining samadhi [meditation], being expert, capable and

<sup>21</sup> On *kasina*, see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1(9.2).

<sup>22</sup> S 7.41+42/4:34 = SD 41.16; S 34 [1.1.2].

<sup>23</sup> On *nimitta* as “meditation sign,” see *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

<sup>24</sup> On the 5 dhyana-factors, see *Dhyana*, SD 8.4 (6); also *Vitakka,vicāra*, SD 33.4 (3) Dhyanas, four or five?

<sup>25</sup> SApT says that this is done by removing the opposing states and building up the helping conditions (SApT 2:278).

<sup>26</sup> *Na samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo’ti cittam hāsetvā kallaṃ katvā jhānaṃ samāpajjitum na sakkoti.* (SA 2:352)

adept in it.”<sup>27</sup> This summary gloss fails to explain the various conditions and skills that bring about samadhi and dhyana. A better way of explaining these samadhi skills would be by way of the “**fivefold mastery**” (*pañca,vasī*) in the attaining of dhyana, that is,

- (1) mastery in adverting (*āvajjana,vasī*), the ability to attain dhyana.
- (2) mastery in attaining (*samāpajjana,vasī*), the ability to attain dhyana fast enough and whenever we wish to do so.
- (3) mastery in resolving (*adhiṭṭhāna,vasī*), the ability to stay in dhyana for as long as we have determined to.
- (4) mastery in emerging (*vuṭṭhāna,vasī*), the ability to easily emerge from dhyana at the appointed time.
- (5) mastery in reviewing (*pacca.vekkhānā,vasī*), the ability to discern the dhyana-factors after emerging. (Pm 1.459/1:99f; Vism 4.131/154, 23.27/704)<sup>28</sup>

## 2 Types of meditators in terms of progress

**2.0 VIBHAṄGA TYPOLOGY.** The Vibhaṅga (the second book of the Pali Abhidhamma), in chapter 16, the analysis of knowledge (*ñāṇa,vibhaṅga*), gives three sets of 4 kinds of meditators in terms of dhyana. They are listed here along with some helpful comments from the Sammoha,vinodanī, the Vibhaṅga commentary, which gives us a better understanding of the 4 kinds of meditators in the Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta.

### **2.1 THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FOUR (Vbh 342,12-17)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) One who has attained dhyana         | who thinks that he has failed to do so. |
| (2) One who has failed to attain dhyana | who thinks that he has done so.         |
| (3) One who has attained dhyana         | who knows that he has done so.          |
| (4) One who has not attained dhyana     | who knows that he has not done so.      |

The Vibhaṅga Commentary gives the following names for these four kinds of meditators and comments thus:

**2.1.1 “Poorly-mastered dhyana attainer.”** One has attained dhyana but does not see it so, by perceiving that the meditation-subject (*kamma-ṭ,thāna*)<sup>29</sup> is not there or not the right one. This is a “poorly-mastered dhyana attainer” or “attainer of unfamiliar dhyana”<sup>30</sup> (*appagūṇa-j,jhāna,lābhī*). Dhyana is a mental state that is completely free from thinking and knowing as we understand them in daily life.<sup>31</sup> As such, if we are beginners especially, we may not realize that we are in dhyana, even after the fact, because we have not properly reviewed our practice.<sup>32</sup>

**2.1.2 “Sleep dhyana attainer.”** One who has not attained dhyana thinks himself as having done so, taking what is not the meditation-subject to be so, is called a “sleep-meditator” (*niddā,jhāyī*). This is a very common experience. As more people receive more information about Buddhist meditation, those who are inclined to contemplative life or are somehow religiously inclined, even those who have some emotional problems, may feel a strong attraction to meditative states or what they think is dhyana. Without a proper understanding of the Dharma and a proper teacher’s guide, it is more likely that they are

<sup>27</sup> *Samādhissa samāpatī,kusalo hotī āhāra,sappāya,utu,sappāyāni pariggahetvā samādhim samāpajjitum kusalo hotī cheko samattho paṭibalo.* (AA 3:354)

<sup>28</sup> See **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (2.1.3.2).

<sup>29</sup> *Kamma-ṭ,thāna*, lit “working-ground,” in the commentaries refers to “meditation object.” In modern meditation lingo, such as Thai, it refers, just like “samadhi,” generally to “meditation.”

<sup>30</sup> This second tris is from VbhA:CNS 2:210.

<sup>31</sup> See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b.

<sup>32</sup> On the reviewing of meditation practice, see **Anāpāna,sati S** (M 118.21/3:83) n, SD 7.13; also **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (8.6) Fine-tuning dhyana.

simply experiencing some sense of inner peace and mistake it for dhyana. If they do not take this as anything more than what it is, this should not be a problem.<sup>33</sup>

As for falling asleep during meditation, this is often good for us, especially if we are stressed or tired out for various reasons and have not been resting properly. This is a great way of deep rest, and we should not feel guilty about it or fight it. Meditation basically teaches us to respect our bodies, and respond to its calls. Proper meditation begins with proper respect for the body, being at total peace with it so that we can go on to mental cultivation. The idea is never to give up our gentle efforts in cultivating a habit of seeing inner peace with wisdom. This begins with constantly reflecting on the impermanence of everything in this world.<sup>34</sup>

**2.1.3 “Well-mastered dhyana-attainer.”** One who has attained dhyana and knows it to be so, seeing the meditation-subject just as it is, is called a “well-mastered dhyana-attainer” (*paṇḍita-jjhāna, lābhī*). This is usually a description of meditation master. It may also describe us when we have properly prepared ourselves for meditation, done it properly, and know what has occurred. In other words, we have previously been well trained in meditation, including learning the suttas and keeping spiritual friendship with a proper teacher.

**2.1.4 “The non-attainer.”** One who has not attained any dhyana, and knows it so, knowing what is not the meditation-subject as not so, is a “non-attainer” (*alābhī*). This describes most beginners, and we should not feel bad about such a label. In fact, as a rule, most meditators are non-attainers, in the sense that dhyana is not always easy to attain or sustain. If we regularly use meditation to clear our minds of negative states and calm it down, habitually being at peace with ourselves, and regularly reflecting on how impermanent our bodies and minds, and everything else in the world, then we are well on the way to streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.2 THE 2<sup>ND</sup> FOUR (Vbh 342,17-21)

- (1) One who attains dhyana slowly, emerges quickly.
- (2) One who attains dhyana quickly, emerges slowly.
- (3) One who attains dhyana slowly, emerges slowly.
- (4) One who attains dhyana quickly, emerges quickly.

The **Vibhaṅga Commentary** gives the following names for these four kinds of meditators and comments (with additional notes), thus:

**2.2.1 “Slow attainer.”** One who suppresses an obstruction to samadhi with effort and perseverance<sup>36</sup> (VbhA 462). He is said to be a slow attainer or one with a “difficult path” (*dukkha,paṭipadā*) [1.3.3]. A slow attainer is still an attainer, such as the arhats Moggallāna<sup>37</sup> and Soṇa Koliṇḍisa.<sup>38</sup> If we notice that we are slow in our progress, or not making any meditation progress at all, then we need to examine our current moral state by making effort to understand the nature of moral virtue and the precepts,<sup>39</sup> and reflecting on moral virtue.<sup>40</sup>

One good way to ensure progress in our meditation is to either focus on breath meditation, building it up gently, or to build up our lovingkindness through cultivation of lovingkindness. A balanced practice of these two helps. To experience the full benefit of Buddhist meditation (as taught by the Buddha), we need to put aside all religious beliefs (Buddhist or non-Buddhist), at least for the duration of the meditation.

<sup>33</sup> On problems in meditation, see SD 17.8c: (8.2) Downside of meditation (the danger of cults); (8.3) Who should not meditate.

<sup>34</sup> See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:3:225), SD 16.7.

<sup>35</sup> See eg (**Vedanā**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.5/3:226), SD 17.2(4.5.1).

<sup>36</sup> *Sa,saṅkhārena sa-p, payogena samādhi, pāribandhika, dhamme vikkhambhento*. Here, VbhA:CNS 2:210 renders *sa,saṅkhārena sa-p, payogena* as “with prompting and with effort,” where I have simply translated it as “with effort and perseverance,” from the practical angle. *Saṅkhāra* in such contexts *usu* means “effort,” while *payoga* is “means, exertion, undertaking.”

<sup>37</sup> Moggallāna: **Jhāna Pañha S 1** (S 401.1/2:262 f), SD 24.11.

<sup>38</sup> Soṇa Koliṇḍisa: **Soṇa Koliṇḍisa S** (A 6.55/3:374-384), SD 20.12.

<sup>39</sup> On moral virtue, see (**Bhaya**) **Vera S** (A 5.174/3:204-206), SD 6.4; also **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6 (1.2).

<sup>40</sup> See **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11.

After all, meditation is a true experience of renunciation, and a good way of approaching it is to learn to let go of views, ideas and thinking, at least for the duration of our practice. In this sense, there is no “purpose” in meditation, except to be at peace with ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

**2.2.2 “Quick emerger.”** One who, having remained in dhyana a couple of thought-moments (VbhA 462). Dhyana or some deep level of mental concentration may come in a flash, lasting only for a few thought-moments. However, even such a glance at the joy of inner peace can be overwhelming. We should reflect on such moment in the reviewing at the end of our meditation.<sup>42</sup> A point to remember about meditation is that if we put our heart and mind into it, nothing is ever wasted: it is like planting a seed. We simply let it grow on its own accord.

**2.2.3 “Quick attainer.”** One who easily clears away an obstruction to samadhi (VbhA 462). When the conditions for meditation are good and we are properly prepared, we can easily get into a deep meditative state. We need to have a good grounding in the sutta-based Dharma, especially teachings related to meditation and the guide of a spiritual friend. After such a practice, we need to review our practice [2.2.2] so that we will remember the good experiences as an inspiration for further practice and inner peace.

**2.2.4 “Slow emerger.”** One who emerges when the time is past instead of at the predetermined time (VbhA 462). The first solution here is to work on our determining the time of emerging from meditation at the beginning of the sitting. This is usually a matter of the body clock, which we need to set right, as it were.

Emerging “late” from a meditation is not really a problem, unless we are used to long sittings (the Buddha is known to go into dhyana for a whole week).<sup>43</sup> The point is that we need to be aware of the needs and limitations of the body: we need to properly feed our body and to answer nature’s calls. In short, we need to keep our body healthy for meditation.

**2.3 THE 3<sup>RD</sup> FOUR (Vbh 342,22-28):** As here in S 34.1 [ §§3-7].

- (1) One skilled in samadhi in regards to samadhi, but unskilled in attaining concentration. [1.3.1]
- (2) One skilled in attaining samadhi, but unskilled in samadhi in regards to samadhi. [1.3.2]
- (3) One skilled in both.<sup>44</sup> [1.3.4]
- (4) One skilled in neither. [1.3.3]

The Vibhaṅga Commentary gives the following comments on these 4 kinds of meditators:

**2.3.1 “One skilled in samadhi in regards to samadhi”** (*samādhismim samādhi,kusalo*). One who is adept in analyzing and identifying the 5 dhyana-factors or the 4 dhyana-factors.<sup>45</sup> [§4; 1.3.1]

**2.3.2 “One unskilled in samadhi in regards to samadhi”** (*no samādhismim samādhi,kusalo*). One who is unskilled in suppressing the hindrances and putting the mind into its casket.<sup>46</sup> [§4; cf 1.3.3]

The other two types of meditators, says the commentary, should be understood in the same connection. [1.4.2] That is to say:

**2.3.3 “One skilled in both”** is both adept in dhyana theory and in attaining to the first 2 dhyanas.

**2.3.4 “One skilled in neither”** neither understands dhyana theory nor is able to attain any of them.

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<sup>41</sup> Some helpful understanding may be culled from **A notion of *dīṭṭhi***, SD 40a 1.

<sup>42</sup> On the reviewing of meditation practice, see **Anāpāna,sati S** (M 118.21/3:83) n, SD 7.13.

<sup>43</sup> See **Dhamma & Abhidhamma**, SD 26.1 (5) The 7 weeks after the great awakening.

<sup>44</sup> Here, the last two items are inverted.

<sup>45</sup> *Idam jhānam pañc’āṅgikam, idam catu-r-āṅgikan’ti evaṃ aṅga,vavatthāna,paricchede cheko samādhismim samādhi,kusalo nāma*. Clearly this refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana (5 dhyana-factors), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana (4 dhyana-factors). On the dhyana-factors, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (6).

<sup>46</sup> *Nīvaraṇāni pana vikkhambhetvā citta,mañjūsāya cittam ṭhapetuṃ achedo no samādhismim samāpatti,kusalo nāma*.

## The Discourse on Samadhi Attainment

S 34.1/3:263 f

1-2 Originating at Sāvathī.

3 Bhikshus, there are these **four kinds of meditators**. What are the four?

4 (1) Here, bhikshus, some meditators are skilled about samadhi [mental concentration] in regards to samadhi, but not skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>47</sup>

5 (2) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are skilled in the attaining of samadhi, but not skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi.<sup>48</sup>

6 (3) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are neither skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi, nor skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>49</sup>

7 (4) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi.<sup>50</sup>

8 Here, bhikshus, this meditator who is both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi—

of these four kinds of meditators, he is the foremost, the best, the leader, the highest, and most excellent.<sup>51</sup>

9 Bhikshus, just as from a cow comes milk; from milk, cream; from cream, butter; from butter ghee; and from ghee, the cream of ghee: here the cream of ghee is the foremost<sup>52</sup>—

10 even so, bhikshus, this meditator who is both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the attaining* of samadhi—

of these four kinds of meditators, he is the foremost, the best, the leader, the highest, and most excellent

11 These, bhikshus, are these four kinds of meditators.

— evaṃ —

130129; 130202; 130204; 130405

<sup>47</sup> *Idha bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samāpatti, kusalo.* [1.3.1]

<sup>48</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samāpatti, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samādhi, kusalo.* [1.3.2]

<sup>49</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī n'eva samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na ca samādhismim samāpatti, kusalo.* [1.3.3]

<sup>50</sup> *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim samāpatti, kusalo ca.* [1.3.4]

<sup>51</sup> *Ayam imesaṃ catunnaṃ jhāyīnaṃ aggo ca seṭṭho ca makkho [Ke Se pāmokkho] ca uttamo ca pavaro ca.*

<sup>52</sup> *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave gavā khīraṃ khīramhā dadhi dadhimhā nava, nītaṃ nava, nītamhā sappi sappimhā sappi, maṇḍo tatra aggam akkhāyati.* See Intro (1.3.5).