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Samādhi Mūlaka Ārammaṇa Sutta

The Discourse on the Samadhi-rooted Concentration-subject | S 34.5/3:266

Theme: The right concentration-subject brings about samadhi

Translated by Piya Tan ©2013

Introduction

1 THE JHĀNA SAṂYUTTA, the last of the 13 chapters (*vagga*) of Khandha Vagga (the chapter on the aggregates), is a set of 55 connected discourses on meditation (*jhāna*).¹ Its first chapter and only chapter, actually a “subchapter” (*vagga*), **the Jhāna Vagga**, so that it is its alternate title. This *saṃyutta* is also the last of the 13 chapters (*vagga*) of Khandha Vagga (the chapter on the aggregates).

The Jhāna Saṃyutta is a cycle of teachings 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*) [§9].²

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).

2 THE SUTTA TYPOLOGY. This sutta and those in the rest of the Jhāna Saṃyutta seems to be artificially put together for the sake of Abhidhamma-like completion. This could reflect a time when the suttas were given great prominence as a scriptural canon, perhaps during on the early Buddhist councils before Asoka’s time, that is, between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE.

As sutta students, we should be curious about such developments for a broader perspective of sutta history and significance. Having said that, we can still reflect on such a sutta as an effort in directing our attention to specific qualities we need to cultivate in meditation. In this sutta, we should not only know *about* meditation, but we should also learn to grasp the meditation-subject for samadhi, that is, a concentrated and still mind, even dhyana itself.

As we persevere and progress in our meditation, such suttas become more meaningful to us. They become like a checklist reminding us to ensure that our practice is properly done. The unawakened mind easily becomes bored with repetitiveness, but an awakening mind, or one that love solitude, will notice even the passing daily, seemingly uneventful, as peaceful and meaningful as the measured moments of our own breathing.

3 THE SAMĀDHI MŪLAKA ĀRAMMAṆA SUTTA. The Samādhi Mūlaka Kallita Sutta (S 34.4), as the title suggests, gives this list of 4 kinds of meditators, in of samadhi, in a broad sense of mental concentration, especially *grasping the meditation-subject* for dhyana, thus:

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

¹ On this meaning, see **Samādhi Samāpatti S** (S 34.1) @ SD 41.12 (1.1).

² For details, see SD 41.12 (1.3.5).

³ *Idha bhikkhave eka cco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo.* Ee reads *kalla* for *kallita* throughout.

⁴ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samādhi, kusalo.*

⁵ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī n’eva samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na ca samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo.*

⁶ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo ca.*

The last is the best, the “cream” (*maṇḍa*) [§9].⁷ This pattern reflects that of **the Samādhi Samāpatti Sutta** (S 34.1), the first discourse in the Jhāna Saṃyutta itself. This Sutta has been fully translated and annotated elsewhere, and should be referred to for other detailed notes.⁸

The Discourse on Samadhi-rooted Concentration Object

S 34.5/3:266

1-3 Originating in Sāvattḥī.

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 concentration-object* regarding samadhi.⁹

5 (2) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are skilled in the concentration-object regarding samadhi, but not skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi.¹⁰

6 (3) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are neither skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi, nor skilled in *the concentration-object* regarding samadhi.¹¹

7 (4) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the concentration-object* regarding samadhi.¹²

8 Here, bhikshus, this meditator who is both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *concentration-object* regarding samadhi—

of these four kinds of meditators, he is the foremost, the best, the leader, the highest, and most excellent.¹³

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 foremost¹⁴—

10 even so, bhikshus, this meditator who is both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *the concentration-object* regarding 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.

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⁷ For details, see SD 41.12 (1.3.5).

⁸ S 34.1/3:263 f, SD 41.12.

⁹ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhikusalo hoti, na samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo.*

¹⁰ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim thūti, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim samādhi, kusalo.*

¹¹ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim ārammaṇakusalo hoti, na samādhismim samādhi, kusalo.*

¹² *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhikusalo ca hoti, samādhismim ārammaṇa, kusalo ca.*

¹³ *Ayam imesaṃ catunnaṃ jhāyīnaṃ aggo ca seṭṭho ca makkho [Ke Se pāmoḅko] ca uttamo ca pavaro ca.*

¹⁴ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave gavā khīraṃ khīramhā dadhi dadhimhā nava, nūtam nava, nūtamhā sappi sappimhā sapi, maṇḍo tatra aggam akkhāyati.* See **Samādhi Samāpatti S**, SD 41.12 (1.3.5).