

Samādhi Mūlaka Sappāya, kārī Sutta

The Discourse on the Samadhi-rooted Suitability | S 34.10/3:268 f
Theme: The suitability of samadhi guarantees the success of our meditation
Translated by Piya Tan ©2013

Introduction

1 THE JHĀNA SĀMYUTTA, 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 *sāmyutta* is also the last of the 13 chapters (*vagga*) of Khandha Vagga (the chapter on the aggregates).

The Jhāna Sāmyutta 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 Sāmyutta commentary tells us that the entire Jhāna Sāmyutta 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 Sāmyutta 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 one of 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 remain within 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 awakened mind, or one that loves 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 GO, CARA SUTTA (S 34.2), as the title suggests, gives this list of 4 kinds of meditators, in of samadhi, in a broad sense of mental concentration, especially *the suitability* of dhyana, thus:

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

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

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

⁶ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim sappāya, kārī, 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

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The Discourse on Samadhi-rooted Suitability

S 34.10/3:268 f

1-3 Originating in Sāvathī.

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 *suitability* regarding samadhi.⁹

5 (2) But, here, bhikshus, some meditators are skilled in suitability 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 *suitability* regarding samadhi.¹¹

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

8 Here, bhikshus, this meditator who is both skilled *about* samadhi in regards to samadhi and also skilled in *suitability* 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 *suitability* 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 eka cco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na samādhismim sappāya, kārī.*

¹⁰ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī neva samādhismim sappāya, kārī hoti, na samādhismim samādhi, kusalo.*

¹¹ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī neva samādhismim samādhi, kusalo hoti, na ca samādhismim sappāya, kārī.*

¹² *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco jhāyī samādhismim samādhi, kusalo ca hoti, samādhismim sappāya, kārī ca.*

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

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