

7

(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse | S 25.1

Theme: How to awaken in this life itself

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 The truth-follower and the faith-follower**1.0 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

1.0.1 The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) is the first of a series of 10 closely parallel suttas, forming **the Okkanta (or Okkantika) Saṃyutta** (Connected Teachings on the Descent) [1.6.3.2], that is, chapter 25 of the Saṃyutta. All these suttas mention two types of individuals who enter into “the certainty of rightness” (*sammatta, niyāma*), the supermundane noble eightfold path, including the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti, magga*).¹

These 10 suttas give the best definition (albeit a brief one) of the truth-follower and the faith-follower that we have in the Pali Canon.² The difference between the two is that of their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). The one who has strong faith, who resolves (*adhimuccati*) on the impermanence of the senses, the aggregates, etc, as listed in the 10 suttas (**S ch 25**), is a faith-follower (*saddhā’nusārī*). The one who focusses on wisdom, who gains understanding of the impermanence of the same factors, is a truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*).

1.0.2 Both **the faith-follower** and **the truth-follower** are declared as being certain of not passing away in this life without having realized the fruit of streamwinning. In either case, when the follower knows and sees for himself the reality of impermanence, he becomes a streamwinner. As such, the Okkanta Saṃyutta does not distinguish the character of the two as streamwinners.

1.0.3 **The Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70), however, states that the streamwinner who is strong in faith, on attaining fruition, is called “**faith-freed** [freed by faith]” or “faith-liberated” (*saddhā, vimutta*), while the one cultivated in wisdom is said to be “**view-attained**” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*), who has gained right view (although he has yet to fully realize the nature of non-self, which is the domain of the arhat).

The Sutta mentions a third class—the “**body-witness**” (*kāya, sakkhī*)—that is, those who can meditate to reach the formless attainments.³ The body-witness, however, is not a separate class but a *genus*. It applies generically or relatively (*pariyāyena*)⁴ to all the saints who experience the formless attainments leading, in due course, to arhathood.⁵

¹ S 25/3:225-228. The other 9 discourses of **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (the Connected Suttas on the Descent), ie, ch 25 of the Saṃyutta Nikāya [1.1.3], all make a distinction between 2 types of individuals—the faith-follower (*saddhā’nusārī*) [1.2] and the truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) [1.3]—who enter into “the certainty of rightness” (*sammatta, niyāma*), ie, the transcendent noble eightfold path, or the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti, magga*) [1.4].

² See Gethin 2001:126-138.

³ M 70,17-21/1:478 f (SD 11.1).

⁴ See Gethin 2001:135 f & **Pariyāya Nippariyāya**, SD 68.2.

⁵ The *kāya, sakkhī* is def at M 70,17/1:478 (SD 11.1).

1.1 SCRIPTURAL CONTEXTS

1.1.1 The Dharmafarer's destiny

1.1.1.1 The Alaggadûpama Sutta (M 22) closes with the Buddha defining the various destinies of the saints and those who keep to the Dharma:

Bhikshus, the Teaching well proclaimed by me, is plain, open, clear,⁶ free from patchwork.⁷
In the Teaching well proclaimed by me, plain, open, clear, free from patchwork:

(1) there is no (more) round of existence for those bhikshus who are **arhats with cankers destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what is to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,**⁸ destroyed the fetters of being, completely freed through final knowledge.

(2) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 5 lower fetters,⁹ are **spontaneously reborn** [in the Pure Abodes]¹⁰ and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

(3) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters [1.7.3.2] and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion, are **once-returns,** all of them¹¹ returning only once to this world to make an end of suffering.

(4) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters, are **streamwinners, not bound for the lower world** [1.7.3.2.], sure of going over to self-awakening [1.7.3.3].

(5) ... (who) are **truth-followers** or are **faith-followers.**

(6) ... those who have **just a bit of faith in me and just a bit of love for me,** are all bound for heaven.¹² (M 22,42-47/1:141 f, abridged), SD 3.13

1.1.1.2 It should be noted “**monks**” here and in similar contexts refers to any practitioner, especially when he is meditating or in a state of mental stillness. In other words, when we attain right samadhi or dhyana, we are *in effect* a monk, a renunciant, or one who attains a monk's state (*bhikkhu, bhāva*).¹³

⁶ “Plain, open, clear,” *uttāno vivaṭo pakāsito*.

⁷ “Free from patchwork,” *chinna, piloṭika*, that is, unlike a patched-up piece of cloth. Comy: a cloth patched up with stitches and knots that are similar to hypocrisy and other deceptions. SubComy: Substituting assumed attitudes and postures for non-existing practice of meditation and insight. Here the analogy—that of a piece of new cloth free of patches or stitches—refers to the inner consistency of the Teaching. All this probably means that the Buddha's teaching is not a hodge-podge of ideas to impress others or win fame, following and fortune, but a (or *the*) statement of a direct experience of spiritual liberation.

⁸ *Sadattā* may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-attā*, “one's own goal,” (2) *sant + attā*, “the sublime goal,” “the ideal.”

⁹ The 10 fetters: see below, under “three fetters” n.

¹⁰ *Opapātika*, that is, reborn in the Pure Abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa, loka*) where only non-returns assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are *Āviha* (“Non-declining”), *Ātappa* (“Unworried”), *Sudassā* (“Clearly Visible”), *Sudassī* (“Clear-visioned”) and *Akaṇiṭṭhā* (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

¹¹ “All of them,” *sabbe te*, omitted in **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

¹² “Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me,” *yesaṃ mayi saddhā, mattaṃ pema, mattaṃ*. This phrase is found in **Alaggadûpama S** (M 22,47/1:143), **Bhaddāli S** (M 65,27/1:444) & **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70,21/1:479), SD 11.1. Cf **Sarakāni Ss** (S 55.24-25/4:375-380). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipassaka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not even streamwinning, but are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has “mere faith, mere love” in the Buddha are reborn in heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

¹³ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (esp, doing satipatthana): see **Satipatṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) + n, SD 13.3 + SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). See DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf

When we attain any state of sainthood, that state is no different from the one attained by a monastic, as stated in the closing of **the (Mahānāma) Gilāyana Sutta** (S 55.54).¹⁴

In short, with proper Dharma living, training and meditating, especially the perception of impermanence, even a lay practitioner spiritually attains the mind of a true monk, as intended by the Buddha. However, those who become monastics as true renunciants—keeping to the moral training, mental cultivation and insight wisdom—will attain arhathood, or at least streamwinning, in this life itself.¹⁵

1.1.2 The 7 kinds of individuals. The **Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70) gives a list of 7 individuals, but omitting (6), and lists the truth-follower and the faith-follower separately. The 7 “noble individuals” are always listed in the same order, from the highest to the lowest, thus:¹⁶

(1) The one freed both ways or dual-freed,	<i>ubhato,bhāga,vimutta</i>
(2) The wisdom-freed,	<i>paññā,vimutta</i>
(3) The body-witness,	<i>kāya,sakkhī</i>
(4) The view-attainer,	<i>diṭṭhi-p,patta</i>
(5) The faith-freed,	<i>saddhā,vimutta</i>
(6) The truth-follower, and	<i>dhammānusārī</i>
(7) The faith-follower.	<i>saddhā'nusārī</i>

(M 70,14/1:477), SD 11.1 (5.2)

Of these 7 saints, according to the Kīṭā,giri Sutta, only the first two have done their “duties with diligence” (M 70,15, 16), that is, they are totally freed as arhats.¹⁷ The other five saints still need to “do their duties with diligence” (M 70,17-21).¹⁸ The last—the truth follower and the faith-follower—are not aryas (that is, saints of the path) yet, but are true disciples (*ariya.sāvaka*) nevertheless, and because of the certainty of their attainment of the path in this life itself, they are so listed. The faith-follower and the truth-follower are in fact the two kinds of individuals who are practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning in this life itself.¹⁹

SnA 251. On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

¹⁴ S 55.54,19 (SD 4.10). The Sutta actually says that one has directed one’s mind to “the cessation of identity” *sakkāya,nirodha*, a syn of the 3rd noble truth = nirvana: D 3:216 (*antā*), 3:240; M 1:299; S 3:159, 5:410; A 2:33, 2:165, 3:246, 3:401; see also DA 3:992, AA 3:153; *sakkāya = te,bhūmaka,vaṭṭa* (“cycles of the 3 worlds,” ie sense, form, and formless worlds) (AA 3:404). On a simple level, the overcoming of *sakkāya,diṭṭhi* (“self-identity view”) leads to streamwinning; hence, to any of the stages of sainthood. See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(5.1).

¹⁵ See SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5).

¹⁶ For a comprehensive comparative table of “Persons according to strength of *indriyas* in descending order,” see Gethin 2001:127 (Table 2).

¹⁷ The key difference between the two kinds of arhats—the dual-freed arhat and the wisdom-freed arhat—is that the former has a direct experience of the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*), while the latter does not.

¹⁸ The uniqueness of the Kīṭā,giri S classification of **the 7 saints** is that it is not only based on path and fruition (as found in the more common eightfold scheme), but also according to their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). See **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70/1:473-481), SD 11.1 Into (5.2). The 7 types are defined somewhat differently at **Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 1.30-36/14 f) & **Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 21.74-78/659 f).

¹⁹ On the 3 types of streamwinners—the single-seeder, the clan-goer, and the seven-at-most—see **Niṭṭha S** (A 10.63), SD 3.3(1b).

1.1.3 Through faith or through wisdom

1.1.3.1 The truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) and the faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*) are mentioned in all the ten suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (ch 25), which consists of ten parallel and short, but remarkable, suttas with only one message, that is, the reflection of impermanence on:²⁰

(1) the 6 internal senses	(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta	S 25.1/3:225 ²¹	SD 16.7
(2) the 6 external senses	(Anicca) Rūpa Sutta	S 25.2/3:225 f	
(3) the 6 sense-consciousnesses	(Anicca) Viññāṇa Sutta	S 25.3/3:226	
(4) the 6 sense-contacts	(Anicca) Phassa Sutta	S 25.4/3:226	
(5) the 6 feelings	(Anicca) Vedanā Sutta	S 25.5/3:226	SD 17.3(4.5.1)
(6) the 6 perceptions	(Anicca) Saññā Sutta	S 25.6/3:227	SD 25.6(10)
(7) the 6 volitions	(Anicca) Cetanā Sutta	S 25.7/3:227	
(8) the 6 cravings	(Anicca) Taṇhā Sutta	S 25.8/3:227	
(9) the 6 element	(Anicca) Dhātu Sutta	S 25.9/3:227	
(10) the 5 aggregates	(Anicca) Khandha Sutta	S 25.10/3:227 f	SD 25.10

1.1.3.2 All of them lead to, or “descend into” (*okkanti*) [1.6.3.2], streamwinning in this life itself—whether they “have faith, who firmly believe” (*saddahati adhimuccati*) in the impermanence of the 6 senses, etc (that is, as faith-followers, *saddhānusārī*, 信行者 *xìnxíngzhě*), or accept this truth “after pondering over them with some wisdom” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti*) (that is, as truth-followers, *dhammānusārī* 法行者 *fǎxíngzhě*)—they are assured of becoming streamwinners, 預流 *yùliú*. They would not die without having realized the fruit of streamwinning.²²

The faith-follower and the truth-follower are also distinguished in the two **Sarakāni Suttas** (S 55.24-25),²³ though the terms themselves are not used there.

1.2 THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER [§5]

1.2.1 The truth-follower or Dharma-follower (*dhammānusārī*) is a disciple in whom the faculty of wisdom (*paññā'indriya*) is predominant and who develops the noble path led by wisdom; his main practice is the contemplation of non-self; when he attains the fruit he is called “right-view attainer” or “vision attainer” (*ditṭhi-p, patta*).²⁴ **The Kīṭā, giri Sutta** defines a truth-follower as follows:

²⁵Here, bhikkhus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental cankers are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but those truths proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted by him after only some pondering over them with wisdom.

²⁰ For practical details on the perception of impermanence, see **Dīgh'āvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347), SD 23.16.

²¹ This first sutta is here tr in full.

²² On lay followers attaining streamwinning, see **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6, & **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5(3), esp **Sa, upādisesa S** (A 9.12/4:380-382).

²³ S 55.24-25/5:375-380 (SD 3.6).

²⁴ *Ditṭhi-p, patta*, see **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70, 19/1:478, 18-23), SD 11.1; Pug 15/1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

²⁵ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīnā honti. Tathāgata-p, paveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidam saddh'indriyaṃ viriy'indriyaṃ sat'indriyaṃ samādh'indriyaṃ paññ'indriyaṃ.*

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the 5 spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70,20/1:479)

1.2.2 The Sarakāṇi Sutta 1 (S 55.24) lists and defines six noble individuals, beginning with the 4 types of saints (arhat, non-returner, once-returner, streamwinner) [§§7-10], followed by the truth-follower and the faith-follower [§§11-12], both of whom the Sutta describes without specifically mentioning them. Of a truth-follower, the Buddha explains:²⁶

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in the three jewels. He is not one of joyous wisdom, nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has these five things [**the 5 spiritual faculties**]*—the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom.*²⁷ And he accepts the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata only after some pondering over it with wisdom.²⁸

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the preta realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24,11/5:377)

1.3 THE FAITH-FOLLOWER [§4]

1.3.1 The faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) is a disciple in whom the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) is predominant and who develops the noble path led by wise faith; his main practice is the perception of impermanence; when he attains the fruit he is called “faith-freed” (*saddhā,vimutta*).²⁹ According to the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta, both the truth-follower and the faith-follower have reached the plane of the noble ones—technically, they are the “true individuals” (*sappurisa*)—but have not yet realized the fruit of streamwinning, and will do so before they die.³⁰

1.3.2 The faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) is defined in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70) as follows:

³¹Here, bhikkhus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental

²⁶ “Truth-follower,” *dhammānusārī*, alt tr “Dharma-follower.” Although **Sarakāṇi S** does not specifically mention it here, this section describes the truth-follower, while the next section describes the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*). They are defined in **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70,20-21/1:479). According to **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), these 2 types of person have reached the plane of the noble ones but have not yet realized the fruit of streamwinning, but will do so before they die. See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

²⁷ The context here is interesting: it clearly implies that faith as a spiritual faculty can be “unrooted in wisdom,” but only if this faith is in the 3 jewels, or in practical terms, in *impermanence*. It should be noted that there is a very significant difference btw “blind faith” in impermanence and in the God-idea! The former is after the fact (it is taken reality for granted, as it were), but in the latter, it is simply a religious notion at best. For the 5 spiritual faculties, see §§20, 21 & **Sarakāṇi S** (S 55.24), SD 3.6 Intro.

²⁸ *C'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*. I render *mattaso* here as “only ... some.” See S:B 1099 n269.

²⁹ *Saddhā,vimutta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70,20/1:478,29-34), SD 11.1; Pug 15/1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

³⁰ See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

³¹ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīnā honti. Tathāgate c'assa saddhā,mattarā hoti pema,mattarā, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidaṃ saddh'indriyaṃ viriy'indriyaṃ sat'indriyaṃ samādh'indriyaṃ paññ'indriyaṃ.*

cankers are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but he has just a bit of faith in and just a bit of love for the Tathagata.³²

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the 5 spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70,9/1:478 f)

1.3.3 In the **Sarakāṇi Sutta 1** (S 55.24), the Buddha defines the faith-follower to Mahānāma, thus:³³

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha. He is not one of joyous wisdom, nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has *the 5 spiritual faculties*. And he has just a bit of faith in the Tathāgata, just a bit of love for him.³⁴

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the preta realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24,12/5:377)

1.3.4 The 5 faculties, as already mentioned, are those of *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom* [1.2]. In this case, the person is weak in both the faculties of faith and of wisdom. However, he makes some *effort* in *mindfulness* and *concentration*: in other words, he asserts himself in meditating, or at least in being mindful (such as the perception of impermanence). Practising by himself in this way may be difficult, but on account of his mere faith,³⁵ he can be properly guided by a morally virtuous and wise teacher.

1.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER AND FAITH-FOLLOWER

1.4.1 The Majjhima Commentary says that the truth-follower and the faith-follower are individuals cultivating the path (*maggam bhāveti*), so that they are “those *standing* in the path of streamwinning” (*sotāpatti, magga-t, thā*).³⁶ While in **the truth-follower**, faculty of wisdom (*paññ'indriya*) predominates,³⁷ in **the faith-follower**, the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) predominates (MA 3:190). However, as stated in **the Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70), they have both “*not touched the liberations with the body,*” meaning they have

³² *Tathāgatassa c'assa saddhā, mattam hoti pema, mattam*. This stock phrase is found in different contexts in **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22.47/ 1:143), SD 3.13, **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70.21/1:479). Cf **Sarakāṇi S 1** (S 55.24-375=377), SD 3.6, **Sarakāṇi S 2** (S 55.25/4:378-380). Comy on **Bhaddali S** (M65) explains that he keeps himself going by some world faith and worldly love towards the teacher and preceptor. Through the support of other monks, he remains a renunciant and may eventually become a great recluse who has attained the direct knowledges (MA 3:154).

³³ Although not specifically mentioned in the Sutta itself, this section describes the faith-follower.

³⁴ “Mere faith ... mere love,” *saddhā, matam hoti pema, mattam*. The “mere” here emphasizes the quality it qualifies. A similar statement is found in **Alagaddūpamā S** (M 22,4/1:141) & **Bhaddāli S** (M 65,27/1:444): “Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me,” (*yesam mayi saddhā, mattam pema, mattam*). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipassaka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not even streamwinning, but who are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has “mere faith, mere love” in the Buddha are reborn in a heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

³⁵ This means that he might even have *blind faith*, but insofar as he is restrained by the 5 precepts, he will still be a morally virtuous person and progress spiritually. However, since he lacks wisdom, he might easily be exploited by an unscrupulous guru or misled by a foolish teacher.

³⁶ I think this is Comy’s way of saying that they are assured of streamwinning in a matter of time (MA 3:190); see also PugA 194 (on Pug 1.35-36).

³⁷ *Paññā, pubbaṅgamam* (MA 3:190).

not personally tasted moments of spiritual freedom (such as attaining dhyana) through their mindfulness, so that “they *still* have to do their duties with diligence.”³⁸

1.4.2 The ten suttas of the **Okkanta Sāmyutta** (S 25)³⁹ discuss the differences between the truth-follower and the faith-follower. The ten suttas treat the impermanent nature of the senses, their objects, their respective consciousnesses, etc, as something in which the faith-follower “has faith and firmly believes” (*saddahati adhimuccati*),⁴⁰ while the truth-follower “accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*).⁴¹ In other words, while the faith-follower is simply convinced of the truth, the truth-follower accepts the truth of impermanence with wisdom.

Here the faith-follower does not merely have faith in the Buddha (as a “person”), but more importantly he is convinced of his teachings. The same is also clear from **the Puggala Paññatti** definition of these two noble disciples. Both are on the path to streamwinning, but while the truth-follower cultivates the noble path by putting wisdom first, taking it as his vehicle (*paññā, vāhiṃ paññā, pubbaṅgamaṃ ariya, maggaṃ bhāveti*), the faith-follower places faith first, taking it as his vehicle (*saddhā, vāhiṃ saddhā, pubbaṅgamaṃ*) (Pug 15).

1.4.3 In five short suttas in **the Indriya Sāmyutta** (S 48.12-17), the two types of practitioners are listed at the end of the usual list of noble disciples, in place of the one practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning. There, the faith-follower is placed *after* the truth-follower since the former’s spiritual faculties are weaker. The faith-follower and the truth-follower differ in their dominant faculty, that is, the faith-follower relies on faith as his mode of spiritual progress while the truth-follower relies on wisdom. On attaining the fruit of streamwinning, the faith-follower becomes “one freed by faith” (*saddhā, vimutti*),⁴² and the truth-follower, “one attained by view” (*ditṭhi-p, patta*).⁴³

What emerges from these different presentations is that though the faith-follower relies on the faculty of faith, he or she nevertheless also needs to develop wisdom, even though this development of wisdom will be to a lesser degree than the Dhamma-follower.

(Analayo 2005:221 at M 1:478)

1.4.4 The Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya,⁴⁴ throwing additional light on the two disciples, says that the truth-follower seeks the truth by himself in a self-reliant manner, guided in his meditation and practice mainly by his own study of scriptures. The faith-follower does the same, but under the guidance of a teacher.⁴⁵

1.4.5 The ancient elders (*porāṇaka therā*), notes the Majjhima Commentary, call such a spiritually developed person a “lesser streamwinner” (*cūla, sotāpanna*) or “maturing streamwinner” (*bāla, sotāpanna*).⁴⁶ This is clearly a term for the “streamwinner of the path” (*sot’āpanna, magga*), that is, a saint who is just a step before becoming a “streamwinner of the fruit” (*sot’āpanna, phala*), a full-fledged streamwinner.⁴⁷

³⁸ See M 70,20-21/1:479 (SD 11.1); also Pug 1.35 f/15; Vism 21.75.

³⁹ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁴⁰ S 25.1/3:225,9.

⁴¹ S 25.1/3:225,16.

⁴² *Saddhā, vimutta*, see **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70,20/1:478,29-34), SD 11.1.

⁴³ *Ditṭhi-p, patta*, see **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70,19/1:478,18-23), SD 11.1.

⁴⁴ Vasubandhu’s auto-commentary on his Abhidharma,kośa (5th cent, NW India).

⁴⁵ Abhk 6.29a-b & 6.63a-c29 = Abhk (ed Pradhan) 353,14; see Abhk:Pr 1989:952, 1016.

⁴⁶ MA 2:120; VbhA 254; cf Vism 605/29.27. See Gethin 2001:136 f.

⁴⁷ But as we shall see below [1.7], it can also refer to one who is *a step away* from becoming a streamwinner of the path.

1.4.6 The Puggala Paññatti calls the streamwinner of the path an “aeon-stopper” (*thita,kappi*): “Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning, and if it were the time for the burning-up of the aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning.” (Pug 1.20/13).⁴⁸ The meaning of this statement is that even when the world is coming to an end, he would surely attain streamwinning just before that, especially when this event is a cosmic manifestation of impermanence!

1.5 AWAKENING IS A GRADUAL PROCESS

1.5.1 The faith-follower and the truth-follower. According to the Theravada Abhidhamma system, the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusāri*) and the truth-follower (*dhammānusāri*) exist for only a mind moment, and the fruit moment follows immediately. They then immediately become “freed by faith” (*saddhā,vimutta*) and “vision-attained” (*ditṭhi-p,atta*), respectively.⁴⁹

The essential difference between them is the faith-follower has weak (*modu*) faculties, while the truth-follower has strong or “sharp” (*tikkha*) faculties.⁵⁰ And from **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and the other suttas of the same Saṃyutta, it is clear that the faith-follower and the truth-follower, although distinguished from the streamwinner, are certainly very close to streamwinning⁵¹ [1.2-1.4; 1.5.2]. Like the streamwinner, they are not liable to be reborn into subhuman states,⁵² and they have passed beyond the level of the worldling. Finally, it is said that they would not pass without realizing the fruit of streamwinning [§§4-5].

1.5.2 The Kīṭa,gi Sutta (M 70) lists the faith-follower and the truth-follower as the last two of the 7 individuals, where they are discussed in detail [1.1.2]. **The truth-follower** is described as “one who accepts the truths proclaimed by the Tathagata only after some pondering over them with wisdom.”⁵³ He is also said to possess the 5 faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.⁵⁴ **The faith-follower**, on the other hand, has only “just a bit of faith in and just a bit of love for the Tathagata”⁵⁵ but he too possesses the 5 faculties.

⁴⁸ Qu at Vism 21.76/659.

⁴⁹ Vism 21.75/659; Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya) (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; Abhidharma,hṛdaya (tr I Armelin, Paris) 1978:73-75. On spiritual faculties and the saints, see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50), SD 10.4 (3.1.1).

⁵⁰ The Sarvāsti,vāda system says that the faith-follower and the truth-follower will last only for 15 mind-moments: Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya) (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; Abhidharma,hṛdaya (tr I Armelin, Paris) 1978:75. The ref to *indriya* as *modu* or *tikkha*, Gethin notes, “is not quite explicit in the Pāli sources, but is clearly enough indicated:” see MA 2:190; SA 3:235; PugA 193 f.

⁵¹ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁵² Anātha,piṇḍika, eg, dies a streamwinner and is reborn amongst the Tusita devas: see **(Sotāpatti) Anātha,piṇḍika S 2** (S 55.27/5:385-387), SD 23.2b.

⁵³ *Tathāgata-p,paveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti* (**Kīṭa,gi S**, M 70,20/1:473; **Sarākāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ'ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379). The abs n for *nijjhānaṃ khamati* is *nijjhāna-k,khanti* (“being convinced after pondering on it”), such as in the term *ditṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*: which see Intro 3.3(5).

⁵⁴ *Api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathādaṃ saddh'indriyaṃ viriy'indriyaṃ sati'indriyaṃ samādh'indriyaṃ paññ'indriyaṃ* (**Kīṭa,gi S**, M 70,20/1:473; **Sarākāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ'ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379).

⁵⁵ *Tathāgatassa c'assa saddhā,mattarāṃ hoti pema,mattarāṃ*. This stock phrase is found in different contexts in **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22,47/ 1:143), SD 3.13, **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭa,gi S** (M 70.21/1:479). Cf **Sarākāṇi S 1** (S 55.24-375=377), SD 3.6, **Sarākāṇi S** (25/4:378-380). Comy on **Bhaddali S** (M65) explains that he keeps himself going by some worldly faith and worldly love towards the teacher and preceptor. Through the support of other monks, he remains a renunciant and may eventually become a great recluse who has attained the direct knowledges (MA 3:154).

Both the truth-follower and the faith-follower see by means of wisdom that their mental influxes (*āsava*)—sense-desire, views, existence, and ignorance—are not yet destroyed.⁵⁶ Of either of them, the Buddha declares, “Seeing this fruit of diligence for such a monk, I say that he still has to do his duties with diligence,”⁵⁷ that is to say:

the venerable one makes use of suitable resting places, and associates with spiritual friends, and balances his spiritual faculties, he may, by realizing for himself, through direct knowledge here and now attain and abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into the homeless life.

(M 70,20+21/1:479 f), SD 11.1

1.5.3 Sustained existence. As the faith-follower and the truth-follower, both of whom “make use of suitable resting places, and associates with spiritual friends, and balances his spiritual faculties, etc,” it is simply inappropriate to speak of either of them as existing only momentarily!⁵⁸ Furthermore, we have an interesting account in **the (Hatthi,gāmaka) Ugga Sutta** (A 8.22), where the master giver **Ugga** speaks of the unbiased open joy in giving:

It is not strange at all, bhante, that when the sangha has been invited by men deities would approach me, saying,

“Houselord,

such and such a monk is freed both ways;

such and such a monk is wisdom-freed;

such and such a monk is a body-witness;

such and such a monk is view-attained;

such and such a monk is one faith-freed;

such and such a monk is a truth-follower;

such and such a monk is a faith-follower;

such and such a monk is morally virtuous good in character;

such and such a monk is immoral bad in character.

ubhato,bhāga,vimutta

paññā,vimutta

kāya,sakkhī

diṭṭhi-p,patta

saddhā,vimutta

dhammānusārī

saddhā’nusārī

sīlavā kalyāṇa,dhamma

dussīla pāpa,dhamma

I do not recall it ever occurring to my mind, thus:

‘Let me give this one little; let me give this one much.’

Rather, bhante, I give with just the same heart.⁵⁹

(A 8.22,10/4:215), SD 45.15

Obviously, if a faith-follower or a truth-follower can have his almsfood in an alms-giving in a devotee’s house, he could *not* be existing for only a mind-moment!

⁵⁶ *Paññāya assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti* (M 70,15-19/1:477-480), SD 11.1.

⁵⁷ M 70,20-21/1:479 (SD 11.1).

⁵⁸ This equally applies to all the other 5 of the 7 individuals who “still have to do his duties with diligence”—all of which the Abhidhamma tradition says, are of momentary existence [§1.5.1 here]. See also Gethin 2001:131-133.

⁵⁹ Here, Ugga is giving to all the monks as a sangha (A 8.22,10/4:215), SD 45.15, which is also characteristic of “the true individual’s giving”: see **Sappurisa,dāna S** (A 5.148/3:172 f @ SD 22.15 (2)). Elsewhere, the disciple is admonished to practise “discriminate giving” (*viceyya,dāna*), ie, giving to the giftworthy first: see eg **Sādhu S** (S 1.33/1:20-22), SD 22.10c; **(Dāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (A 3.57/1:160-162 @ SD 22.12 (2)); **Āditta J** (J 424), SD 22.10a (1.3).

1.5.4 Gradual change

1.5.4.1 All this goes to show the change from the faith-follower and the truth-follower—from the path to its fruition—is not a sudden flash but a gradual process (or perhaps a gradual process ending in a sudden flash). The observation of careful scholars like **Rupert Gethin** is instructive:

The *suttas* of the Nikāyas are presented in the first place as the prescriptions of the Buddha applicable to particular occasions. They characteristically progress from their particular starting points via a particular course of practice or teaching towards the final goal of complete awakening. To this extent the Nikāyas can be seen as drawing attention to the gradual stage by stage nature of the process to awakening. (2001:133)

1.5.4.2 Finally, we have the Buddha Word on the gradual path:

Bhikkhus, I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress.⁶⁰

And how, bhikkhus, is final knowledge achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress? [The 12-stage training then follows.]⁶¹ (M 70,22-23/1:479 f), SD 11.1

1.6 THE LESSER STREAMWINNER AND THE SURE WAY

1.6.1 The lesser streamwinner and the 4th purification. The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta contains a term—*sammatta,niyāma* [§§4-5]—that needs some explanation. The Sutta Commentary glosses this term as “the noble path” (*ariya,magga*) (*okkanto sammatta,niyāman ti pavitṭho ariya,maggam*, SA 2:346).⁶² On the clause, “he is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning,” SA says that once the path has arisen there can be no obstruction to the fruit. It quotes **the Puggala Paññatti**, where such a saint is called an “aeon-stopper” (*ṭhita,kappī*): “Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning, and it were the time for the burning-up of the aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning.” (Pug 1.20/13). Previously, we have noted that this refers to the “streamwinner of the path” (who is not yet a full-fledged streamwinner), called a “lesser streamwinner” by the Ancients [1.4].

But who really is **the lesser streamwinner** (*cūḷa,sotāpanna* or *cullaka sotāpanna*)? Both Buddhaghosa’s **Visuddhi,magga** (Vism) and Dhammapāla’s **Abhidhammāvatāra** (Abhdv) mention the lesser streamwinner at the conclusion of the “purification by passing beyond doubt” (*kaṅkhā,vitarāṇa,visuddhi*). In the scheme of the 7 purifications (*satta,visuddhi*), it is the fulfillment of the fourth purification.⁶³

⁶⁰ This whole para: *Nāhaṃ bhikkhave ādiken’eva aññ’ārādhanaṃ vadāmi, api na bhikkhave anupubba,sikkhā anupubba,kiriya anupubba,paṭipadā aññ’ārādhanā hoti.*

⁶¹ The 12-stage learning process is also found in **Caṅkī S** (M 95), SD 21.15, first in the normal sequence (M 95,20/-2:173) and then in the reverse (M 95,21.2/2:174). Cf A 4:336, 5:154. Further see SD 45.15 (3) The path is gradual.

⁶² See also PmA 3:697 f.

⁶³ The 7 purifications (*satta,visuddhi*) are: (1) purification of moral virtue (*sīla,visuddhi*); (2) purification of mind (*citta,visuddhi*); (3) purification of view (*diṭṭhi,visuddhi*); (4) purification by crossing over doubt (*kaṅkhā,vitarāṇa,visuddhi*); (5) purification by the knowledge and vision of the path and the not-path (*maggāmagga,ñāṇa,dassana,visuddhi*); (6) purification by the knowledge and vision of progress (*paṭipadā,ñāṇa,dassana,visuddhi*); (7) purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa.dassana,visuddhi*) (**Ratha,vinīta S**, M 24.8-15/1:147-149; Vism 1-710). For details, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1(11);

Now one of insight possessed of this knowledge (of the passing beyond doubt) is one who has found solace in the Buddha's teaching, who has a footing, whose destiny is sure—he is called a lesser streamwinner. (Vism 19.27/605; cf Abhdv 119)

1.6.2 The lesser streamwinner and the spiritual faculties

1.6.2.1 The Nikāyas often associate the overcoming of doubt (*vicikicchā*) and the possession of wise faith (*saddhā*) with streamwinning.⁶⁴ The Commentators further state that the lesser streamwinner is one whose destiny is sure. All this is reminiscent of the Nikāya definition of the faith-follower and the truth-follower. However, according to the Abhidhamma tradition, both of them have *not* fulfilled the 4th purification (that of overcoming doubt), and have not totally abandoned the 3 fetters,⁶⁵ especially doubt (*vicikicchā*). **Gethin**, however, notes that, “Possibly in this context *kaṅkhā* should be understood as doubt in its grosser manifestations and *vicikicchā* as rather more subtle doubt” (2001:137 n138).

Apparently, in the scheme of the 7 purifications, the fulfillment of the 4th stage—the overcoming of doubt—marks the beginning of the process culminating in the supramundane path of streamwinning proper. **The lesser streamwinner** (*cūḷa sotāpanna*) refers here, I think, to the practitioner who is purified (on a mundane level) with regards to his moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, which are, in fact, the first three purifications. The path of streamwinning then follows, as noted by Gethin, thus:

One might then put it that, loosely speaking, the path of stream-attainment extends from the conclusion of the fourth purification (ie the acquisition of the knowledge that causes one to pass beyond doubt) up to the seventh purification (“by knowledge and seeing”). (2001:137)

1.6.2.2 In the light of what has been discussed so far, let me venture to say that the lesser streamwinner [1.6.2.1] is still a worldling (*puthujjana*), but he is a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), that is,

one who dwells practising in full accordance with the Dharma, accomplished in moral virtue, with sense-doors guarded, moderate in food, devoted to watchfulness night after night, devoted to the cultivation of the states of the limbs of awakening, thinking, “I will attain one or other of the fruits of recluseship today or tomorrow.” (MA 1:40; ItA 1:61)

1.6.2.3 Now both the faith-follower and the truth-follower have all the 5 faculties (*indriya*).⁶⁶ However, it has been stated that the worldling does not have them, and **the Paṭipanna Sutta** (S 47.18) says that

The one who is in every way and everywhere wholly without these 5 faculties, him I declare an outsider, one who stands in the ranks of the worldling. (S 47.18,4/5:202)

Here, in the Paṭipanna Sutta, the faculties are exclusively supramundane, where “worldling” probably means “blind worldling” (*andha puthujjana*), one who lacks moral fibre, mental calm and spiritual vision. As noted by **Bodhi**,

⁶⁴ See eg **Caṇḍāla S** (A 5.175/3:206); **(Upāsaka) Parābhava S** (A 5.176/4:26); **Kiñci Saṅkhāra S** (A 6.93/3:439), SD 12.14; **(Sotāpanna) Ānisaṁsa S** (A 6.97/3:441), SD 3.3(4.4); **Parihāna S** (A 7.27/4:25), also called Hani S. See also SD 8.6 14.2; SD 12.14 (2).

⁶⁵ That is, self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rules and rituals (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*) (S 5:61; A 5.13; Vbh 377). See **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (12).

⁶⁶ The 5 faculties (*pañc'indriya*) are: (1) faith, (2) energy, (3) mindfulness, (4) concentration and (5) wisdom; see **Pañc'indriya**, SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3).

Despite the statement here restricting the faculties to those at the minimum level of path-attainer, the Pāli tradition, beginning with the Abhidhamma, regards the faculties as general wholesome capacities also possessed by worldlings. Some of the other early Buddhist schools were more stringent. (S:B 1932 n202)

In other words, we can say that the lesser streamwinner *does* have some level of the 5 faculties, although they may not be fully developed, but certainly he is unlike the blind worldling, who lacks all the faculties.⁶⁷ As such, with sustained practice, the lesser streamwinner is well on the way to gain stream-winning in this life itself, as guaranteed by **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and the other nine suttas of the same Saṃyutta.⁶⁸

1.6.2.4 The Vibhaṅga Commentary, on the other hand, describes a lesser streamwinner in Abhidhamma terms, as one who understands that name-and-form is not produced without causes and conditions. He goes on to ask what these causes and conditions are, and defines it thus: “With ignorance as condition, craving as condition, karma as condition, food as condition.”⁶⁹ And he is without doubt that these are conditions that arise interdependently in the past, in the future, and even now. Beyond that there is no being or person, but only a heap of formations. This insight is called “the full understanding of the known” (*ñāta,pariññā*).⁷⁰ And under the right conditions, he would be able, in one session, to attain arhathood—by applying the 3 characteristics and comprehending the formations with a series of insights. (VbhA 1173 f/254)

1.6.3 The sure way

1.6.3.1 Bodhi translates *okkanto sammatta,niyāmaṃ* as “(one who) has entered the certainty of rightness” [§§4-5].⁷¹ **Agga,citta** (the abbot of Sasanarakkha Sanctuary, Malaysia) rightly thinks that Bodhi’s translation of *sammatta,niyāma* here as “the fixed course of rightness” (S:B 1005) (which the Commentary glosses as “the noble path”) is “self-contradictory,” since to say that the faith-follower and the truth-follower have “entered the fixed course of rightness” means that they *are* already streamwinners, but they are *not*. Hence, he suggests translating *sammatta,niyāma* as “the fixed course to rightness” (2007), so that the translation reads “the faith-follower and the truth-follower have entered the fixed course to rightness.”

The problem is rooted in how we see “rightness” (*sammatta*)—whether as the path itself or as the goal of the path, nirvana. Rightness is here a term for the supramundane path itself, that is, the 4 kinds of saints

⁶⁷ On the faculties (*indriya*), see Gethin 2001:126-138.

⁶⁸ S 25.1-10/3:225-228 (SD 16.7).

⁶⁹ Pm 1.286/1:55.

⁷⁰ *Ñāta,pariññā* is one of the 3 kinds of mundane (*lokiya*) full understanding (**pariññā**): (1) the full understanding of the known (*ñāta,pariññā*); (2) the full understanding as investigating (*tīraṇa,pariññā*); and (3) the full understanding as overcoming (*pahāna,pariññā*) (Nm 53; Pm 1.87). They are defined by **Buddhaghosa** as follows: (1) “the full understanding of the known” is the knowledge regarding the discernment of specific characteristics of phenomena, such as: “*Form* has the characteristic of being molested (*ruppana*); *feeling* has the characteristic of being felt.” (2) “The full understanding as investigating” is the insight with the general characteristics (impermanence, suffering, non-self) as its object regarding those same phenomena, beginning thus: “*Form* is impermanent; *feeling* is impermanent.” (3) “The full understanding as abandoning” is the insight with the characteristics as its object that occurs as the *abandoning* of the perception of permanence, etc, regarding the same phenomena. (Vism 20.3/606 f). In simple terms: (1) is the observing of the *external* characteristics of things and events; (2) is a deeper examining of the *inner* aspects of these same things and events; and (3) is the *letting go* of them through noticing their true nature.

⁷¹ **F L Woodward** has conflated his tr, combining the two separate passages on the faith-follower and the truth-follower, and renders the phrase as “one who enters on the assurance of perfection” (S:W 3:177).

or sainthood: streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and arhathood. In this case, the translation, “the path of rightness” is of course the *noble* eightfold path itself, not nirvana. The “path to rightness” emphasizes nirvana; hence, it is more exclusive. Moreover, nirvana is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), beyond wrongness (*micchatta*) and rightness (*sammatta*)—it is when the whole journey is done, as it were. Hence, I see *sammatta,niyama* as the “fixed course of rightness,” it is the *path* that is right: it leads *not* “to” rightness but to nirvana.

The translation, “the fixed course to rightness” would, in fact, be self-contradictory. The path does not lead anywhere but refers to the abandoning of the 10 fetters. When these fetters are all broken, *that* is nirvana. The path itself, so to speak, is the goal. This is one—even the most important—sense of Buddhaghosa’s statement, “There is the path, there is no one who goes (on it)” (*maggam atthi, gamako na vijjati*) (Vism 16.90d/513,3 f).⁷²

1.6.3.2 I think the real problem here lies not with the translation of *sammatta,niyāma*, but with the meaning of *okkanta*, which is the past participle of *okkamati* (“he descends into,” as into a boat by the river). *Okkamati* and its various forms are often used in connection with the attainment of streamwinning —as in embarking a boat on the river of rightness that goes upstream to the ancient city of nirvana. There is a whole Sāmyutta chapter entitled **the Okkanta Sāmyutta** (S 25),⁷³ dealing with the attainment of streamwinning in this life itself.

Although *okkanta* is a past participle,⁷⁴ in the early texts, the semantics or sense of a word is often *contextual* rather than technical. Take, for example, the common stock phrase, *ekam samayam bhagavā sāvattiyam viharati*: it literally translates “the Blessed One resides near (or at) Sāvattī,” but the usual idiomatic translation is “the Blessed One was residing near Sāvattī.”

Although the present participle of *okkamati* is *okkamanta*, “is descending (into, upon),” we can, at least in the case in question, take *okkanta* (a past participle) as being in the present participle sense as “(is) descending (into, upon).” In fact, the Pali-English Dictionary defines *okkanta* as “coming on, approaching, taking place.” Now the reading makes perfect sense, solving the problem that troubled Aggacitta.

1.6.3.3 Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower are described as “descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course of rightness], descending into the plane of true individuals, (but) *gone be-*

⁷² For the full verse, see SD 2.16 (17).

⁷³ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁷⁴ **CPD: o-kkanta**, mfn [pp of ¹okkamati; cf *avakkanta*; Skt *avakrānta*], **1** (a) descended, come down, transmitted; (b) descended into, esp with *kucchiṃ*, ie attained rebirth; gone, come into; entered (a place or country); (c) passed into (a state): (i) with *niddaṃ*, ie fallen asleep; (ii) with *middha*, ie become drowsy; (iii) with *lajji,dhammaṃ*, ie become ashamed; (iv) with *sārajjam* (with genitive of agent), ie become dejected, despondent; (d) entered upon— **1** (a) *eso dhammo daṇḍānaṃ ~o purāṇo ahū*, Sn 312 (~o *ahū pavatto āsi*, SnA 324,9); — **1** (b) *yadā bodhisatto,mātu kucchiṃ ~o hoti* (D 2:12,22 f = M 3:120,22 f; *Sāmo .. .kumāro ... Parikāya tāpasīyā kucchiṃ ~o* (Miln 129,27); *ye keci sattā mātu,gabbhaṃ ~ā*, Miln 25,26 (ad Miln 127,31); *deva,manussesu ariyabhūmiṃ ~esu* (J 4:187,4 = DhA 3:178,5; *te jānanti aññe ... bhikkhū antosīmaṃ ~ā ti*, V 1:132,10 ≈ 132,12 ≈ 132,14; *te na jāniṃsū ti sīmaṃ ~ā ti vā okkamantī ti vā na jāniṃsu*, VA 1064,24 (ad V 1:128,36); *~am taṃ tato Laṅke ... mahīpati abhisecayī*, Mahv 22.22; *tādise araññe ~e*, VA 913,1; — **1** (c) (i) *āsanasālāya...nisinno bhikkhu niddaṃ ~o hoti*, VA 846,21; *keci niddaṃ ~ā*, J 6:446,21; MA 3:354,9; — (ii) *~e middhe ... supinaṃ passati*, Miln 299,13; — (iii) *lajji,dhammaṃ ~o*, VA 314,10 ≈ 314,12 (~*ena*); — (iv) *amhākaṃ sārajjam ~an ti*, A 3:195,8 (*sārajjam ~an ti domanassam anupaviṭṭhaṃ*, AA 3:299,11; — **1** (d) *ayam vuccati... ~o sammatta,niyāmaṃ sappurisa,bhūmiṃ ~o*, S 2:225,10-11 ≈ 225,17-18 ≈ 226,2-3 (~o *sammatta,niyāman ti paviṭṭho ariya,maggam*, SA 2:346,18); *sammatta,niyāmaṃ okkamati ti magga-k,khaṇe okkamati, phala-k,khaṇe pana ~o nāma hoti*, PmA 699,30 (ad Pm 2:238,19); *anariya,kammam ~am*, J 4:4:57,3* (*anariyānaṃ ... kammaṃ otaritvā ṭhitam*, 57,31’); *tathā koci ekam dassanaṃ okkamati, koci dve, koci tīṇi ... ekasmiṃ ~e pi, dvīsu, tīsu ~esu pi, niyata,micchā,ditthiko va hoti*, DA 166,31-167,1 (ad D 1:52,2 f).

yond the plane of the worldlings”⁷⁵ [§§4-5].⁷⁶ They are *nearing* or approaching those states, but not exactly there yet.

They *have*, however, “gone beyond” (*vīti,vatto*) being worldlings (*puthujjanā*). **Vīti,vatta** is derived from *vīti* (“gone beyond”) + *vatta* (“that which has happened”) (past participle of *vattati*, “it happens”). The faith-follower and the truth-follower are, in other words, no more worldlings—specifically, not *blind* worldlings—still not yet streamwinners, but are moving in that *right* direction.

1.6.3.4 The ancient elders (***porāṇakā therā***), the Majjhima Commentary notes, call such a spiritually developing person (who is “descending into the certainty of rightness”) a “lesser streamwinner” (*cūla,-sotāpanna*) or “maturing streamwinner” (*bāla,sotāpanna*).⁷⁷ This is a late technical term for one who, in the spirit of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25),⁷⁸ properly practising the perception of impermanence, is assured of attaining streamwinning within this life itself.

1.6.3.5 The lesser streamwinner—clearly here a reference to either the faith-follower or the truth-follower—is said to be descending on the course of “rightness” (*sammattā*), which here refers to the supramundane eightfold path, that of the saints. These two individuals are spiritual attainers who are *not* yet aryas, as suggested by **the Sammatta Niyāma Suttas 1-3** (A 5.151-153).⁷⁹ These three Suttas, I think, describe the training of the faith-follower and the truth-follower, that is, the lesser streamwinners. This training expedites their attaining streamwinning in this life itself.

1.7 PRACTISING AS A STREAMWINNER

1.7.1 Teaching on the streamwinner’s life. In terms of practice, the simple but effective perception of impermanence is laid out in ten difference ways in suttas of the Okkanta Saṃyutta (S 25) [1.0]. For theoretical details and inspiring examples of various streamwinners, we should carefully study and reflect on the 74 suttas of **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55).⁸⁰ Of special significance are these suttas dealing with the lay once-returner, Mahānāma, and the streamwinner, Sarakāni, which we could begin studying in this chapter, and then work our way through the others. These basic suttas are as follows:

- **Kaṅkheyya (or Sakambhiya) Sutta** (S 54.12/5:327 f), on the difference between the trainee (*sekha*) and the Buddha, and on the benefits of breath meditation;
- **Mahānāma Suttas 1+2, Godha Sutta, and Sarakāni Suttas 1+2** of the Sarakāni chapter in the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta (S 55.21-25/5:369-380)—all concerning streamwinning;
- **(Upāsaka) Mahānāma Sutta 2** (S 55.37/5:395), on the qualities of a lay follower;
- **(Sotāpanna) Mahānāma Sutta** (S 55.49/5:403), on the qualities of a streamwinner;
- **(Mahānāma) Gilāyana Sutta** (S 55.54/5:408-410), on how to die as a saint (this Sutta).

1.7.2 A streamwinner still has some mental defilements

⁷⁵ *Okkanto sammatta,niyāmaṃ sappurisa,bhūmiṃ okkanto vīti,vatto puthujjana,bhūmiṃ.*

⁷⁶ We see this sense of an intermediate state in such expressions as *niddaṃ okkantaṃ* (“falling asleep”) (SA 1:239; J 1:333, 399) and *niddaṃ okkanta,kāle* (“at the time of falling asleep”) (DA 2:385; MA 5:10; J 2:247, 3:449, 5:438), both of which expresses a situation between being awake and being asleep. Similarly, *okkanta* here can express a sense of the faith-follower or the truth-follower leaving behind the state of being a worldling but not yet attaining the state of an arya (streamwinning).

⁷⁷ MA 2:120; VbhA 254; cf Vism 605/29.27. See Gethin 2001:136 f.

⁷⁸ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁷⁹ A 5.151-153/3:174-176 (SD 4.2-4). On *sammatta* (rightness), see **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117,34), SD 6.10.

⁸⁰ S 55/5:342-413.

1.7.2.1 MAHĀNĀMA'S CASE. In **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 14), the once-returned Mahānāma complains to the Buddha that despite his understanding the 3 unwholesome roots, greed, hate and delusion, his mind is still filled with defilements. The Buddha consoles Mahānāma by explaining to him that although he is a once-returned, he still has sensual lust. The Buddha's explanation is central to our understanding of sainthood and renunciation.

Mahānāma, even if a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-desires bring little solace [gratification], but much suffering, much despair, more danger here,⁸¹ so long, as he does not gain zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that, he would not be able to be unaffected by sense-pleasures.⁸²

But, Mahānāma, when a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is with right wisdom that sense-pleasures bring little solace, but much suffering, much despair, more danger here, and *he gains zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that,*⁸³ then he would be able to be unaffected by sense-desires.

(M 14,4/1:91), SD 4.7

By this statement, it is meant that the unawakened are overwhelmed by sense-desire and sense-pleasures, on account of which they are unable to fully enjoy the power of the mind. The grip of sensuality can only be effectively loosened by the personal and total experience of dhyana, that is, the mind fully freed from the body so that it is pure consciousness, so to speak. Only when the mind is utterly undefiled by the body can it really bring forth divine bliss that can serve as the basis for liberating wisdom.

1.7.2.2 BREAKING THE 3 FETTERS. Hence, only by the power of dhyana and wisdom can sensuality be uprooted so that we attain either through non-returning (if there is still some spiritual defilement left) or arhathood (if we are fully purified of sensuality). In other words, only the non-returned or the arhat does not feel any defilement related to sensuality, as happens in the case of Mahānāma, who is only a once-returned at that time.

However, even if we are still trailed by sensuality, we are still capable of awakening, or more correctly, of beginning our journey on the path to awakening, or boarding the boat on the stream to awakening. We

⁸¹ See V 4:134.

⁸² The whole para: *App'assādā kāmā bahu,dukkhā bah'upāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo'ti—iti ce'pi, mahā,nāma, ariya,sāvakassa yathā,bhūtaṃ samma-p,paññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññātr'eva kāmehi aññātra akusalehi dhammehi pīti,suchaṃ nādhigacchati, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ, atha kho so n'eva tāva anāvaṭṭi kāmesu hoti.* The “zest and joy that are apart from sense-desires” here refers to the pīti and sukha of the first and second dhyanas. “Something more peaceful than that” refers to the higher dhyanas. “From this passage it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna” (M:NB 1201 n208). **Bodhi:** “The first part of this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya,-sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression ‘[has clearly seen with right] wisdom’ seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first Jhāna, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks [“zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that”] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first Jhāna. The state “more peaceful than that” [*santataraṃ*] would, of course, be the higher Jhānas” (2001:52). This is one of the passages that Bodhi quotes as “instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of Jhānas” (2001:51 f).

⁸³ “Something more peaceful than that,” *tato santataraṃ*. Comy explains that while zest and joy (*pīti,sukha*) pertain to the first 2 dhyanas, “something higher” is connected with the 3rd and 4th dhyanas (MA 2:63). On dhyana, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,75-82/1:73-76), SD 8.10.

need to at least break **the 3 fetters** of self-identity view, attachment to rituals and vows, and doubt. In simple terms,⁸⁴

- (1) we should understand and accept that our body is impermanent, and as such suffering and unsatisfactory; [5.1]
- (2) we should not look for answers outside of ourselves through reifying or thingifying what are really mental states, but look for the answers within our own mind through self-effort;
- (3) we should not doubt our capability for self-salvation (such as by seeking an external saviour), and we should abandon ideas of self-worthlessness.⁸⁵

Or, even more briefly, we should realize that the body is really impermanent, not be superstitious and be spiritually self-reliant.

1.7.3 A streamwinner would not lapse morally

1.7.3.1 IMMACULATE MORAL VIRTUE. A number of suttas in the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta (S 55) say that a streamwinner has wise faith in the three jewels and is immaculate in his moral virtue.⁸⁶ This fourth virtue is fully defined as “He is accomplished with moral virtue dear to the noble ones,⁸⁷ unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.⁸⁸

Such a person, with these 4 qualities—wise faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and immaculate moral virtue—is said to be truly wealthy with great assets.⁸⁹ In **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and throughout **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55), we see the streamwinner being defined as one who is “no longer bound for the lower world,⁹⁰ surely going over to self-awakening”⁹¹ [§6].

⁸⁴ For details on the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁸⁵ **The 10 fetters** are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rituals (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*kāma, rāga*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The total abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*) (see **Ānāpāna, sati S**, M 118.10 = 7.13), SD 7.13.

⁸⁶ S 55.46+46+47+48+49/5:403 f. These are said to be “the 4 limbs of a streamwinner” (*sot’āpannassa aṅga*, D 33.1.11(14)/3:227). Cf (1) *sot’āpatti-y-aṅga* above. For a shorter statement on the limbs of a streamwinner, see **Ogadha S** (S 55.2/5:343 f). For the streamwinner’s practice, see **(Agata, phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.40/3:284–288), SD 15.3. On the faith of the streamwinner, see Gethin 2001:116.

⁸⁷ “Moral virtue dear to the noble ones,” *ariya, kantāni sīlāni*. The noble one’s moral virtue is explained at Vism 7.101–106/221 f. SA says that the noble ones do not violate the 5 precepts; hence, this virtue is dear to them (SA 2:74).

⁸⁸ “Unbroken, ... giving rise to concentration,” *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi viññūpa-satṭhehi aparāmaṭṭhehi samādhi, saṃvattanakehi*. See also **Cundī S** (A 5.32/3:36). Cf UA 268. For details, see Vism 1.143–161/51–58, 7.101–106/221 f.

⁸⁹ S 55.44+45/5:402.

⁹⁰ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”: see translation, **S 25.1, 6 n** below.

⁹¹ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinīpāta, dhammo niyato sambodhi, parāyano ti*. “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [streamwinner] differs from those on the way to streamwinning. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati*.” (S:B 1099 n270)

1.7.3.2 NOT FALLING BELOW HUMANITY. The phrase “**no longer bound for the lower world**” describes the streamwinner’s special quality rooted in his moral virtue and spirituality. Firstly, his moral virtue is so immaculate that he is incapable of breaking any of the 5 precepts.⁹² Spiritually, he is free from the 3 fetters [1.7.2.2]. What does this mean?

The 5 precepts define humanity. In abstaining from killing, the streamwinner respects *life*, and shows lovingkindness to all beings. In abstaining from stealing, he respects what *supports* this life and the *happiness* that attends it, showing others great compassion and generosity. In abstaining from sexual misconduct, he respects the *freedom* that keeps life happy and purposeful, and he himself lives a life of exemplary contentment. In abstaining from falsehood, he is guided by *truth*, and inspires others to seek this liberating truth for themselves; hence, it promotes wisdom in the world. In abstaining from intoxication and heedlessness, he prepares himself for *higher wisdom and awakening*.

A streamwinner is so noble (in a spiritual sense) that his actions are habitually moral and beneficent. His charity assures him of rebirth in a prosperous family that is Dharma-grounded.⁹³ His moral virtues assure him of divine rebirths.⁹⁴ When the karma of his heavenly life is exhausted, he is reborn in a good human family.⁹⁵ As such, he will never be reborn in any subhuman state, that is, he is “no longer bound for the lower world” (*avinipāta*).

The opposite of *avinipāta* is *vinipāta*, “the lower world” or “the suffering states,” which is a name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), namely, the hell-beings, the animals, the pretas (departed ones) and the asuras.⁹⁶ Sometimes, the 5 courses (*pañca,gati*) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal kingdom (*tirachāna,yoni*), the preta realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa,-loka*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,-kāya*) as the fourth woeful course.⁹⁷ The remaining two are said to be “happy courses” (*sugati*). Streamwinners are reborn only in the happy courses. This is the result of his habitual spirituality.

1.7.3.3 SURE OF AWAKENING. The phrase “**surely going over to self-awakening**” means that the streamwinner would be able to awaken (attain arhathood or nirvana)⁹⁸ in the very next life, or within a couple of lives, or within seven lives at the most. **The (Uddesa) Sekha Sutta 2** (A 3.87), **the Sa,upādisesa Sutta** (A 9.12) and **the Puggala Paññatti** (Pug1.37-39/16) give the following details of the 3 kinds of streamwinners:

(1) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters [1.7.2.2], he is a **single-seeder** (*eka,bījī*), having taken only one more human birth, **[381]** makes an end of suffering.

(2) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters, he is a **clan-to-clan-goer** (*kolam,kola*), having re-arisen and wandered amongst two or three families, makes an end of suffering.

(3) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3

⁹² On the 5 precepts, see SD 37.8 (2.2).

⁹³ On the necessity of both charity and moral virtue for a good rebirth, see **(Saddha) Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 10.177/5:269-273), SD 2.6a.

⁹⁴ On the possibility of choosing our own rebirth, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41/1:285-290), SD 5.7.

⁹⁵ On when the good karma of heavenly beings is exhausted, they are reborn straight into suffering states, see **(Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123/2:126-128), SD 23/8a.

⁹⁶ Vism 13.92 f/427.

⁹⁷ D 33,2.1/3:234; A 11.68.

⁹⁸ VbhA 430.

lower fetters, he is a **seven-at-most** (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), having re-arisen and wandered amongst devas and humans for seven lives at the most, makes an end of suffering.

A 3.87/1:232-234 (SD 80.13) & **A 9.12,8-10/4:380-382** + SD 3.3(3) (refrain omitted)⁹⁹

Of special interest here is the expression, “**7 lives**,” or more technically, “seven-at-most” (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), when he may be reborn in the heavens or amongst humans (but never in a lower or sub-human world). Neither the suttas nor commentaries¹⁰⁰ give any detail regarding its duration. Basically, I think that the number is “symbolic,” meaning something like “in a short time,” in cosmic terms.¹⁰¹

However, it should be noted that if a streamwinner is reborn amongst the gods, especially those of the form realms (if the streamwinner is a dhyana meditator), his life-span would be very long indeed, lasting many celestial years, or a world-cycle, or even up to 500 world-cycles!¹⁰² As for the streamwinner in his seventh life, says the Vibhaṅga Commentary, no matter how he dies, whether as Sakra, king of the gods, or as a human, or were murdered or even hit by lightning, he would experience no rebirth (VbhA 430).

1.7.3.4 COMPASSION AND ENGAGEMENT. A streamwinner is not only a morally virtuous and emotionally independent individual,¹⁰³ but according to **the (Upāsaka) Mahānāma Sutta 1** (A 8.25), he is also a truly compassionate and “socially-engaged” lay follower. Such an individual is one who has gone for refuge in the 3 jewels and keeps to the 5 precepts.

Furthermore, he not only has wise faith, is morally virtuous, is generous, visits virtuous monastics, listens to the Dharma, remembers it, and investigates it, but he *also inspires others to do the same*. Thus, the streamwinner is one committed *to the propagation of the Dharma*.¹⁰⁴ He is truly a Dharmafarer, a practitioner and a missionary of the true teaching.

A briefer list of such qualities—known as “the limbs [factors] for streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-āṅga*)—is found in **the (Sotāpatti-y-) Āṅga Sutta** (S 55.50).¹⁰⁵ In short, these are the qualities of faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), charity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*), which are also the qualities of a true individual (*sappurisa*).¹⁰⁶

1.7.3.5 THE POSSIBILITY OF AWAKENING. **The Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12) is a short but remarkable text that gives a full list of 9 kinds of saints (except the arhat). What is of special interest here is that after list-

⁹⁹ See also **Purisa,gati S** (A 7.52/4:70-74), SD 82.10 & **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5 (3).

¹⁰⁰ See eg SA 3:238-240; KhpA 182, 186 f; ItA 1:85, 2:124; SnA 1:278; VbhA 430; PugA 196 f.

¹⁰¹ This is confirmed by various meditation monks I have chance to consult.

¹⁰² The 500 world-cycles (*kappa*) constitute the life-span of the Veha-p,phala devas and the Asañña,satta (non-conscious beings), the highest of the form-realms just below the Pure Abodes of the non-returners (who live btw 1000 to 16,000 world-cycles). On the 31 planes and the relative life-spans of each, see SD 1.7 (Table 1.7). It is also possible that if the streamwinner is capable of attaining dhyana, then he could go on to become a once-returner or beyond, ie, even attain arhathood.

¹⁰³ See n on “independent of others,” in **Nakula S** (A 6.16,4/3:298), SD 5.2.

¹⁰⁴ A 8.25/4:220-222 (SD 6.3).

¹⁰⁵ These same 4 factors appear in **(Sotāpatti) Phala S** (S 55.55/5:410 f; A 5.246/2:245), SD 3.3(4.1), where they are called “the limbs for streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-āṅga*); **Paññā,vuddhi S** (A 5.246a/2:245 (A:B A 2:248), where they are said to “promote wisdom” (*paññā,vuddhiyā*) & **(Manussa) Bahu,kāra S** (A 5.246/2:245 = A:B 2:249), where they are said to be of great help to a human being (*manussa,bhūtassa bahu,kāra*). Cf the 4 “limbs of a streamwinner” (*sotāpannassa āṅgāni*), see **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70), SD 3.3(4.2); **Ogadha S** (S 55.2/5:343 f). For the streamwinner’s practice, see **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.40/3:284-288), SD 15.3. See also D 33,1.11(14)/3:227,

¹⁰⁶ **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45), SD 29.6. The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at **D 33,2.2(6)/3:252**, **34,1.8(7)/3:283**; **M 110,14-24/3:23 f**; **A 7.64/4:113**, **8.38/4:144**. For other details on the streamwinner, see S:B 1517-1520 (Intro to S 55).

ing the various kinds of saints, especially the 3 kinds of streamwinners [1.7.3.3]—that is, the avenues for our awakening in this life itself—the Buddha declares:

Not until now, Sāriputta, has this Dharma discourse been declared to bhikshus, nuns, laymen or laywomen. What is the reason for this?

So that after hearing this Dharma discourse, *they do not bring heedlessness upon themselves!* Moreover, Sāriputta, this Dharma discourse has been given by me *simply because of my being questioned.* (A 9.12/4:381 f), SD 3.3(3)

2 Attha,veda and dhamma,veda

2.1 The remarkable (**Agata,phala**) **Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10) is about the well known 6 recollections—on each of the 3 jewels, on moral virtue, on charity, and on devas—any of which, when practised by a noble disciple (take, for example, a streamwinner),¹⁰⁷ will bring this result:

... his mind is not obsessed by lust, not obsessed by hate, not obsessed by delusion. At that time, his mind is straight,¹⁰⁸ ever focused on *the object of recollection*.¹⁰⁹

Mahānāma, a noble disciple whose mind is straight
gains **inspired knowledge in the goal** (*attha,veda*),
gains **inspired knowledge in the Dharma** (*dhamma,veda*),
gains gladness connected with Dharma;
when he is gladdened, zest is born;
when the mind is zestful, the body is tranquil;
the tranquil body feels happy;
when one is happy the mind becomes concentrated.

This, Mahānāma, is called a noble disciple:

he dwells impartial (*sama-p,patta*) amongst partial [vicious] people;
he dwells unafflicted (*avyāpajjha*) amongst afflicted people.

As one who has entered upon the Dharma stream,¹¹⁰ he cultivates the recollection

(A 6.10/3:284-288), SD 15.3

Here, **attha,veda** refers to the clear understanding of the *attha*—the purpose and the benefit—of the spiritual life, an understanding resulting from a “straight mind” (*uju,gata,citta*), that is, one easily directed to the meditation object and a mindfulness trained on the path towards liberation. All this generates an unshakable faith rooted in some level of direct seeing of reality, and as such describes the main quality of a faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*).

2.2 In the same context, we see **dhamma,veda** as referring to a deep understanding of the Dharma as wisdom (seeing the true nature of existence). While *attha* here refers to a faithful's vision and discovery of the path towards liberation, feeling quite content just to begin journeying on it, the *dhamma* refers to

¹⁰⁷ “Noble saint” refers to any of the 4 kinds of aryas, viz, the streamwinner (*sot'āpanna*), the once-returned (*sākadāgāmi*), the non-returned (*anāgāmi*) and the arhat. Here the streamwinner is meant. On the saints, See **Kiṭṭhā-giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5).

¹⁰⁸ “His mind is straight” (*uju,gata,cittam*), ie “his mind goes directly (*ujukam eva*) to the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha” (AA 3:337).

¹⁰⁹ That is, recollecting the virtues of one of the three jewels, or his own moral virtue.

¹¹⁰ “The Dharma stream,” *dhamma,sota*. Obviously here, the Buddha is referring either to streamwinning or one on the way to becoming one. For details, see SD 3.2 (A 5.202) n + SD 3.14 (A 6.44) n.

our careful examining and analysis of the terrain and structure of this path, even mapping it. Hence, *dhamma,veda* refers to the main quality of a wisdom follower (*dhammānusārī*).

2.3 Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower, however, are not yet aryas, that is, saints of the path, but are declared in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (A 25.1) to have “entered the plane of true individuals, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings” (*sappurisa,bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana,bhūmiṃ*).¹¹¹ That is to say, they are both no more worldlings (*puthujjana*) but still not yet noble saints (*ariya*), and are abiding in an intermediate state that will ripen into streamwinning in this life itself, if not surely at the moment of dying (*id*).¹¹²

3 The Abhidhamma view

3.1 The Abhidhamma tradition generally regards the supramundane path as lasting only a single mind-moment. As such, both the faith-follower and the truth-follower should technically (according to the Abhidhamma system), last only the mind-moment of the path.¹¹³ “This interpretation, however,” notes **Bodhi**, “though advocated by the commentaries, is difficult to reconcile with the Nikāyas.” (S:B 1099 n268).

3.2 Rupert Gethin similarly thinks that “the strict Abhidhamma understanding [in terms of momentariness of the path-attainment] is not altogether satisfactory for the Nikāyas here.” (2001:131)

... a number of Nikāya passages seem to quite clearly envisage all seven of these persons as walking about and performing tasks that would seem to involve the *saddhānusārin* and *dhammānusārin* in something rather more than momentary existence. A case in point is the following Aṅguttara-nikāya passage:

It is wonderful that when the Saṅgha has been invited by me [for a meal], *devatās* approach and announce, “Houselord, this *bhikkhu* is *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*, this one is *paññā,vimutta*, this one is *kāya-sakkhin*, this one is *diṭṭhi-patta*, this one is *saddhā,vimutta*, this one is *dhammānusārin*, [this one is *saddhā’nusārī*, this one is virtuous, of good *dhamma*,]¹¹⁴ this one is unvirtuous, of bad *dhamma*.” Yet when I am serving food to the Saṅgha, I do not find that the thought arises, “I shall give a little to this one or I shall give a lot to this one.” Rather I give with an even mind.

(A 4:215,10; cf M 1:439 f; A 1:73f)¹¹⁵

4 Sarakāni

4.1 The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta should be studied with the two **Sarakāni Suttas**,¹¹⁶ which describes how an erstwhile drunk dies a streamwinner through keeping to the spiritual training at the time of his death. The Buddha explains to Mahānāma how Sarakāni dies a saint:

Mahānāma, when a layman has gone for refuge over a long time to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, how could he go to a lower world? Mahānāma, Sarakāni the Sakya had for a long

¹¹¹ A 25.1/3:225.

¹¹² Below, we shall examine the nature of the “lesser streamwinner” as a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), as a state just before the faith-follower and the truth-follower [1.7.1].

¹¹³ Eg MA 3:151 f ad M 1:439 f.

¹¹⁴ Omitted in Gethin’s text.

¹¹⁵ Gethin 2001:131 n122; see esp pp129-133.

¹¹⁶ S 55.24-25/5:375-380. See also S 55.24 (SD 3.6).

time gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, so how could he go to a lower world? (S 55.24,10/5:375)

4.2 In fact, it is clear from the Sarakāni Suttas, that Sarakāni is either a truth-follower or a faith-follower, as **Analayo** explains:

Since S 5:379 [**Sarakāni Sutta 2**]¹¹⁷ has the same set of terms used in the definition of the “Dhamma-follower” (*dhammānusārī*) and the “faith-follower” (*saddhā’nusārī*) at M 1:479 [**Kiṭṭā-giri Sutta**],¹¹⁸ it seems possible that he has been such a “follower” and was thus bound to realize stream-entry latest at death (cf S 3:225 [**Cakkhu Sutta**]¹¹⁹ which states that it is impossible for a *Dhamma*-follower or a faith-follower to pass away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry). (2003 255 n22; normalized and annotated)

5 The perception of impermanence

5.1 The most universal spiritual exercise in early Buddhism is the perception of impermanence, traditionally called ***anicca saññā***. The briefest and most famous definition of this is: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that has the nature to end” (*yaṃ kiñci samudaya,dhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodha,dhammaṃ*),¹²⁰ which is sometimes known as the “one-factored dependent arising.”¹²¹

Such a key practice, which is also the basis for streamwinning, the first step towards awakening, can take many forms of spiritual exercise. Two such exercises are described in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**¹²² in parts (4)-(6) of its “satipatthana refrain,”¹²³ which runs thus:

So he dwells

- (1) observing *the body in the body* internally,
- (2) or, observing *the body in the body* externally,
- (3) or, observing *the body in the body* both internally and externally;
- (4) or, he dwells observing states that arise in *the body*,
- (5) or, he dwells observing states that pass away in *the body*,
- (6) or, he dwells observing states that arise and pass away in *the body*.

Or else, he maintains the mindfulness that ‘There is *a body*,’ merely for knowing and awareness.

And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.

And that, bhikshus, is how a monk [a meditator] dwells observing *the body in the body*.

(M 10,5+7+9+11+13+15+25+31; mutatis mutandis¹²⁴ at 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 45), SD 13.3

Thus he observes “the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.”¹²⁵ In the course of watching the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas, the practitioner goes on to watch the

¹¹⁷ S 55.25.10-11/5:379.

¹¹⁸ M 70.18-19/1:479 (SD 11.1).

¹¹⁹ S 25.1/3:115.

¹²⁰ V 1:11; D 1:110, M 3:280; S 4:47, 214, 330, 5:423; A 4:143 f.

¹²¹ See **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16 (2.1).

¹²² D 22; M 10; see SD 13 see esp SD 13.1 (3.8).

¹²³ See SD 13.1 (3.7).

¹²⁴ “With the appropriate changes” in ref to “feelings,” to “mind,” and to “dharmas” [phenomena].

¹²⁵ Colloquially, this is often spoken of as “Watching the nature of rising, of falling (away), and of rising and falling (away).”

“nature of arising” (*samudaya,dhamma*), the “nature of passing away” (*vaya,dhamma*), and the “nature of (both) arising and passing away” (*samudaya,vaya,dhamma*).¹²⁶

5.2 The Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1¹²⁷ is a reflection on the impermanence of the 5 aggregates. It should also be noted that the Sutta defines “ignorance” (*avijjā*) as not knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away; and “true knowledge” as truly knowing that the 5 aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.

5.3 The Avijjā Sutta 1¹²⁸ has instructions for another exercise in the perception of impermanence by way of noting that the senses, sense-objects and feelings that arise on account of the senses (whether pleasant, painful or neutral) are all impermanent—knowing this, one abandons ignorance, and true knowledge arises in one.

While **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**¹²⁹ shows how the mind is freed through seeing the 6 senses as impermanent, its parallel, **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 2**,¹³⁰ shows how the mind is freed through seeing the six sense-objects as impermanent. Another parallel sutta, **the (Khandha) Nandi-k,-khaya Sutta 1**,¹³¹ on the other hand, shows how the reflection on the aggregates as being impermanent liberates our mind.

5.4 As we have noted above [1], the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta states that one who investigates the nature of impermanence (the truth-follower), even when one merely has faith in the fact of impermanence (which is clearly evident in daily life) (the faith-follower),¹³² will become a streamwinner, that is, enter the path to awakening and end suffering in this life itself: “He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.”¹³³

5.5 The (Ānisaṃsa) Anicca Saññā Sutta (A 6.102) mentions 6 advantages of the perception of impermanence, as follows:

- (1) All formations will appear uncertain [non-lasting] to me (*sabba,sāṅkhārā ca me anavaṭṭhito khāyissanti*).
- (2) My mind will not delight in all the world [or in the world of the all, that is, the six sense-experiences] (*sabba,loke ca me mano nābhiramissati*).
- (3) My mind will rise above all the world (*sabba,lokā ca me mano vuṭṭhahissati*).
- (4) My mind will tend towards nirvana (*nibbāṇa,poṇaṇī ca me mānasam bhavissati*).
- (5) The mental fetters will be broken by me (*saṃyojanā ca me pahānaṃ gacchanti*).

¹²⁶ See Gethin 2001:53 & Analayo 2003: 102 f. Cf AK Warder 1971b:282 f on this usage of *–dhamma* in the Nikāyas. The Comys, however, take *dhamma* as indicating the conditions for the arising and fall of the body, etc (see DA 3:765, 768, 769; MA 1:249 f), although the Subcomys also allow that *dhamma* can have the sense of “nature” here (DAṬ 2:381; MAPṬ:Be 1:350: *pakati,vācī vā dhamma,saddo*). In the end the point would seem to make little difference to the general purport of the expression: the *bhikkhu* sees how body, etc, arise and fall away. (Gethin’s fn; normalized)

¹²⁷ S 22.126/3:170-172 (SD 12.5).

¹²⁸ S 35.79/4:50 (SD 12.6).

¹²⁹ S 35.155/142 (SD 12.7).

¹³⁰ S 35.156/142 (SD 12.8).

¹³¹ S 22.51/3:51 (SD 12.9).

¹³² There is a very clear difference between self-verifiable faith in impermanence (which is true reality) and self-constructed faith in a God-notion (or similar constructs) reinforced through dogmas, psychological means (eg fear) social control, and mistaken perception. We may or must deny God, but we cannot deny impermanence.

¹³³ See also S:B 1098 nn268-269.

- (6) And I shall attain to the supreme recluseship (that is, the benefits of the holy life) (*paramena ca sāmāññaena samannāgato bhavissāmî ti*). (A 6.102/3:443), SD 93.7

The main benefit here would of course be number (6), that is, the attainment of spiritual liberation itself, or awakening through the attaining of streamwinning, as stated in suttas such as the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) here.¹³⁴

5.6 A compact teaching on the practice of the perception of impermanence would surely be that applied to the 5 aggregates, since all sentient beings are comprised of them. The Buddha’s teaching to Rādha on the 5 aggregates is recorded in a succinct discourse:

SD 16.7(5.7)

(Rādha) Sot’āpanna Sutta

The Discourse on the Streamwinner (to Rādha) | S 23.7/3:192 f¹³⁵

Traditional: S 3.2.1.7 = Saṃyutta 3, Khandha Vagga 2, Rādha Saṃyutta 1, Paṭhama Māra Vagga 7

Theme: Understanding the aggregates leads to streamwinning

1-2 At Sāvattihî.

3 To Rādha who was sitting down at one side, the Blessed One said this:

4 Rādha, there are these 5 aggregates of clinging.

What are the five?

4 They are, namely,

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| (1) the form aggregate of clinging, | <i>rūp’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (2) the feeling aggregate of clinging | <i>vedan’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (3) the perception aggregate of clinging | <i>saññ’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (4) the formations aggregate of clinging | <i>saṅkhār’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (5) the consciousness aggregate of clinging | <i>viññāṇ’upādāna khandha</i> [193] |

5 When, Rādha, a noble disciple understands, as they really are,

the arising,	<i>samudaya</i>	
the ending,	<i>attha,gama</i>	[161]
the gratification,	<i>assāda</i>	
the dangers [disadvantages],	<i>ādīnava</i>	
the escape,	<i>nissaraṇa</i>	

regarding these 5 aggregates of clinging,

that noble disciple, Rādha, is called a streamwinner, no longer bound for the lower world,¹³⁶ surely going over to self-awakening.

— evaṃ —

¹³⁴ See further **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

¹³⁵ This sutta’s teaching is identical to that in **(Khandha) Sotāpanna S** (S 22.109/3:160 f).

¹³⁶ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f) [1.7.3.2]. See SID: avinīpāta.

5.7 One of the best evidence we have for the efficacy of the perception of impermanence in the attaining of streamwinning is found in **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 72), where the Buddha exhorts Rāhula thus:

Rāhula, cultivate the perception of impermanence. For when you cultivate the perception of impermanence, the conceit I-am (*asmi,māna*) will be abandoned. (M 72,23/1:424 f)

“The conceit ‘I-am’” ranges from the grossest form of pride to a subtle feeling of our special abilities or attainment, that is, a sense of superiority. This latter case—conceit—forms the 8th spiritual fetter,¹³⁷ broken only by the arhat. However, in its less unwholesome form—as self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*)—it is overcome by proper practice of the perception of impermanence.¹³⁸

— — —

(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse

S 25.1

- 1 At Sāvatti.
- 2 There the Blessed One said:

The 6 senses are impermanent

- 3 “Bhikshus,
the eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;¹³⁹
the ear is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
the nose is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
the tongue is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
the body is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
the mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The faith-follower

4 ¹⁴⁰Bhikshus, one who has faith thus, who firmly believes these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called a **faith-follower**.

4.2 ¹⁴¹He is descending¹⁴² into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness],¹⁴³ descending into the plane of true individuals;¹⁴⁴ he has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ The 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*): see Intro (1.1.1) n on “the 3 fetters.”

¹³⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see “I”: **The nature of identity**, SD 19.1.

¹³⁹ *Aniccāṃ vipariṇāmiṃ aññathā, bhāvī*.

¹⁴⁰ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayaṃ vuccati saddhā’nusārī okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ*. The operative verbs here are *saddahati* (“he has faith (in)”) and *adhimuccati* (“he resolves, adheres to, is sure of”). I have rendered *adhimuccati* here as “(he) firmly believes ...”. On the streamwinner’s faith, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3 (5).

¹⁴¹ *Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ*. On how this should be tr, see Intro (1.6.3).

4.3 He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of stream-winning.¹⁴⁶

The truth-follower

5 Bhikshus, one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus,¹⁴⁷ is called a **truth-follower**.

5.2 He is descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness], descending into the plane of true individuals; he has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

5.3 He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of stream-winning.

The streamwinner

6 One who knows and sees these truths thus is called a **streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁴⁸ surely going over to self-awakening.¹⁴⁹

— evaṃ —

¹⁴² *Okkanto*. The proper tr of this word seems to elude previous translators: see (1.6.3).

¹⁴³ *Sammatta, niyāmaṃ*. See (1.5).

¹⁴⁴ “True individuals,” *sappurisa*, also “superior persons,” “virtuous person,” “ideal person”; often syn with “noble disciple,” *ariya, sāvaka*, but here clearly includes those, although not yet on the path, but is assured of it, viz the faith-follower and the truth-follower. The qualities of the *sappurisa* are given in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45), SD 29.6; see also **D 33, 2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 110, 14-24/3:23 f; A 7.64/4:113, 8.38/4:144.**

¹⁴⁵ “Worldling,” *puthujjano*, ie “born of the crowd”; more fully called “untutored worldling,” one unskilled (*akovidā*)-having little theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, undisciplined (*avinīta*), and lacking practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya, dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true individuals” (*sappurisa*) are synonymous. See also MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354.

¹⁴⁶ *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna, yoniṃ vā petti, visayaṃ vā uppajjeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti, phalaṃ sacchikaroti*. This is the Sutta’s key statement and clearly refers to what, after the Buddha’s time, is referred to as a “lesser streamwinner” (*culla, sotāpanna, cullaka, sotāpanna*). See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(6).

¹⁴⁷ *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*.

¹⁴⁸ *Avinīpāta, dhammo*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca, gati*) (D 33, 2.1/3:234; A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tiracchāna, yoni*), the preta realm (*pitti, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāya*) as the 4th woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). [1.7.3.2]. For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

¹⁴⁹ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinīpāta, dhammo niyato sambodhi, parāyano ti*. “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [streamwinner] differs from those on the way to streamwinning. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati*.” (S:B 1099 n270). [1.7.3]. Further see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

Bibliography

Aggacitto Bhikkhu

- 2007 "Is enlightenment achievable in this lifetime?" Taiping (Malaysia): Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, 2007. <http://sasanarakkha.org/articles/2007/10/is-enlightenment-achievable-in-this.html>.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu

- 2003 "Musīla and Nārada revisited: Seeking the key to interpretation." In *Approaching the Dharma: Buddhist texts and practice in South and Southeast Asia*, (edd) Anne M Blackburn & Jeffrey Samuels, Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2003:47-68.

Gethin, Rupert M L

- 2001 *The Buddhist Path to Awakening: A study of the Bodhi-pakkhiyā Dhammā*. [Leiden: Brill, 1992.] 2nd ed Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001.

Sharma, Arvind

- 1979 "Anicca." In *Pali Buddhist Review* 4,1-2 1979:16-24.

050802 rev061003 071216 081222 091216 100626 111125 121221 131205 140408 150526 160923 170807 180705
180822