1. The faculties in detail

1.0 NOTE: Before reading this chapter, it is helpful to first read and understand the (Indriya) Paṭilābha Sutta (S 48.11), SD 56.8.

1.1 The 3 Suttas in detail

1.1.1 This SD chapter, SD 56.10, discusses the following 3 related suttas that list the 5 spiritual faculties (pañc'indriya) in detail (vitthāra), as follows [SD 56.8 (1.1.0.1)]:

(1) (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 1 S 48.15/5:201 the faculties in detail; the arhat, the 5 kinds of non-returners, the learners, and the 2 streamwinners-of-the-path SD 56.10a

(2) (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 2 S 48.16/5:201 the faculties in detail; the arhat, the 5 kinds of non-returners, the learners, and the 2 streamwinners-of-the-path; difference in faculties among persons SD 56.10b

(3) (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 3 S 48.17/5:202 the faculties in detail; the arhat, the 5 kinds of non-returners, the learners, and the 2 streamwinners-of-the-path; the potency of the faculties SD 56.10c

1.1.2 Similarity and difference

1.1.2.1 The structure and contents of these triad of suttas parallel those of the “brief” (saṅkhitta) triad [SD 56.9], except that here the 5 kinds of non-returners are mentioned in §3.2 of each sutta. In fact, all the 3 (Indriya) Vitthāra Suttas (S 48.15-17) are identical, including their respective §4, that each gives the same list of the 5 kinds of non-returners [2.1].

1.1.2.2 While the (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 1 (S 48.15) ends with §3, the other 2 (Indriya) Vitthāra Suttas each conclude with a §4 that are unique to the respective suttas. The closing §4 of both the (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 2+3 parallel exactly with those of the Saṅkhitta Suttas 2+3 respectively, thus:

(Indriya) Saṅkhitta Sutta 1 (S 48.13,4) = (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 1 (S 48.16,4)

This closing verse speaks of the differences in 5 faculties that produce different kinds of noble individuals, thus:

“Thus, bhikshus, due to a difference in the faculties there is a difference in the fruits; due to a difference in the fruits there is a difference among persons.”

(Indriya) Saṅkhitta Sutta 1 (S 48.14,4) = (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 1 (S 48.17,4)

This closing verse speaks of the potency of the 5 faculties that produce, whether they are fully cultivated or partly cultivated, resulting in their appropriate fruition on the path, thus:
“Thus, bhikshus, one who fulfils them fully succeeds fully; one who fulfils them partly succeeds partly. The 5 faculties, bhikshus, are not barren, I say.”

2 The 5 kinds of non-returners

2.1 As already noted, the 3 (Indriya) Vitthāra Suttas (S 48.15-17) are identical in structure and content, differing only in their closing verse (§4). While S 48.16,4 mentions the significance of the differences in faculties, S 48.17,4 mentions the potency of these faculties. [1.1.2.2]

2.2 “The details” (vitthāra), as mentioned in the Sutta titles of S 48.16+17, are found in §3.2, respectively. Each identically lists these 5 kinds of non-returners in the ascending order of the strength of their spiritual faculties, thus:

- an attainer of nirvana in the interval antarā,parinibbāyī
- an attainer of nirvana upon landing upahacca,parinibbāyī
- an attainer of nirvana without exertion asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī
- an attainer of nirvana with exertion sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī
- one who is bound upstream, heading for Akaniṭṭha uddham,soto akaniṭṭha,gāmī

2.3 The 5 non-returners is also listed in a similar manner (in the ascending order), in the following Suttas:¹

Sikkhā Sutta 2 (A 3.86,3.2), SD 80.13 the 4 kinds of streamwinners; the 5 kinds of non-returners; the arhat;
Sikkhā Sutta 3 (A 3.87,3), SD 80.14 the arhat, the 5 kinds of non-returners, the 4 kinds of stream-winners.

“If he does not attain and penetrate this,² with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he is an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state.
If he does not attain and penetrate this, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he is an attainer of nirvana upon landing.
If he does not attain and penetrate this, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he is an attainer of nirvana without exertion.
If he does not attain and penetrate this, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he is an attainer of nirvana with exertion.
If he does not attain and penetrate this, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he is one bound upstream, heading for the Akaniṭṭha realm.”

Both these Suttas close in the same way declaring thus:

“Thus, bhikshus, those who train partially gain partial results, those who train fully gain full results. These training-rules are not fruitless, I say!”³

In the (Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 3 (S 48.17,4) closing, it is the faculties that are declared not to be “fruitless” (avañjhāni).

¹ The 5 kinds of non-returners are also listed in Eka,bījī S (S 48.24) + SD 56.15 (1.2.2).
² If he does not attain arhathood. Taṁ vā pana anabhisambhavaṁ appatīvijjhāṁ. Comy: “if he does not reach and penetrate that arhathood” (taṁ arahattam appāpuṇanto appatīvijjhanta) (AA 2:351,21-23).
³ Avajjhāni tv-evāham bhikkhave sikkhāpadaṁ vadāmīti.
SD 56.10a

(Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 1
The 1st Discourse (on the Faculties) in Detail
S 48.15/5:201 (The 5 kinds of non-returners)

2 “Bhikshus, there are these 5 faculties. What are the five?

(1) The faculty of faith.
(2) The faculty of energy.
(3) The faculty of mindfulness.
(4) The faculty of concentration.
(5) The faculty of wisdom.

These are the 5 faculties.

3 One who has completed and fulfilled these 5 faculties is an arhat.

3.2 THE 5 KINDS OF NON-RETURNERS
If they are weaker than that, one is an attainer of nirvana in the interval; if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana upon landing; if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana without exertion; if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana with exertion; if still weaker, one who is bound upstream, heading for Akaniṭṭha;

3.3 INDIVIDUALS WHO PROGRESSIVELY DEVELOP ON THE PATH
if still weaker, a once-returner;
if still weaker, a streamwinner;
if still weaker, a truth-follower;
if still weaker, a faith-follower.”

evaṁ

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4 On these 5 kinds of non-returners, see Niṭṭha S (A 10.63,3), SD 3.3(1.2); SD 2.17 (4-5).
(Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 2

The 2nd Discourse (on the Faculties) in Detail

S 48.16/5:201 (Differences in faculties)

2 "Bhikshus, there are these 5 faculties. What are the five?

(1) The faculty of faith.
(2) The faculty of energy.
(3) The faculty of mindfulness.
(4) The faculty of concentration.
(5) The faculty of wisdom.

These are the 5 faculties.

3 One who has completed and fulfilled these 5 faculties is an arhat;

3.2 THE 5 KINDS OF NON-RETURNERS

if they are weaker than that, one is an attainer of nirvana in the interval;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana upon landing;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana without exertion;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana with exertion;
if still weaker, one who is bound upstream, heading for Akaniṭṭha;

3.3 THE INDIVIDUALS WHO PROGRESSIVELY DEVELOP IN THE PATH

if still weaker, a once-returner;
if still weaker, a streamwinner;
if still weaker, a truth-follower;
if still weaker, a faith-follower.

4 Thus, bhikshus, due to a difference in the faculties there is a difference in the fruits; due to a difference in the fruits there is a difference among persons."5 [202]

evaṁ

5 As in (Indriya) Saṅkhitta S 2 (S 48.13,4), SD 56.9b. [SD 56.10 (1.1.2.2)]
SD 56.10c

(Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta 3
The 3rd Discourse (on the Faculties) in Detail
S 48.17/5:202 (Fulfilment of faculties)

2 “Bhikshus, there are these 5 faculties. What are the five?

(1) The faculty of faith.
(2) The faculty of energy.
(3) The faculty of mindfulness.
(4) The faculty of concentration.
(5) The faculty of wisdom.

These are the 5 faculties.

3 One who has completed and fulfilled these 5 faculties is an arhat.

3.2 THE 5 KINDS OF NON-RETURNERS
If they are weaker than that, one is an attainer of nirvana in the interval;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana upon landing;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana without exertion;
if still weaker, an attainer of nirvana with exertion;
if still weaker, one who is bound upstream, heading for Akaniṭṭha;
3.3
if still weaker, a once-returner;
if still weaker, a streamwinner;
if still weaker, a truth-follower;
if still weaker, a faith-follower.

4 Thus, bhikshus, one who fulfils them fully succeeds fully; one who fulfils them partly succeeds partly. The 5 faculties, bhikshus, are not barren [not fruitless], I say.”

evaṁ

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6 As in (Indriya) Saṅkhitta S 3 (S 48.14,4), SD 56.9c.