

Handbook of Meditation in Society 1+2

Sutta Discovery vol 60.1ab

Themes: Character analysis; and Samatha, Vipassana, Kammatthāna

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60.1ab

Handbook of Meditation in Society 1+2

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SD 60.1a	Character Analysis	SD 60.1d	An Evolutionary Psychology of Mindfulness
SD 60.1b	Samatha, Vipassana, Kammatthana	SD 60.1e	Delusion and Experience
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1a

Handbook of Meditation in Society 1 Character Analysis

A brief comparative study of the Visuddhi,magga ch 3 and the Vimutti,magga ch 6
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1 Meditation and character types

1.0 SD 60.1a and **SD 60.1b** started off as a single paper, SD 60.1, entitled “Mindfulness and lovingkindness.” SD 60.1a has grown into a new title, “Character analysis,” while SD 60.1b continues with “Samatha, Vipassanā, Kammaṭṭhāna.” In the course of writing on the kinds of people and the 4 kinds of meditation [1.1.1], I have consulted **the Visuddhi,magga**, ch 3, which is related to **the Vimutti,magga** ch 6. A study of the 2 chapters grew into a comparative study, which deserves its own SD number, **SD 60.1a**. [1.3.1 n]

SD 60.1a (1.1) should be read as the introduction to SD 60.1b. The rest of SD 60a.1 (1.2 ff) is a comparative study of the character types of Upatissa’s Vimutti,magga (ch 6) and Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhi,magga (ch 3). After a brief study of the 4 kinds of meditation [1.1.1], we will see how Buddhaghosa tried to work out **a psychology of character types** to help meditators choose the best method or object for their practice [1.3]. In the next section, we see how Upatissa presents his own elaborate idea of such a psychology [2.1], and how Buddhaghosa sees and uses Upatissa’s ideas [2.2]. Then, we more closely examine Buddhaghosa’s **6 kinds of temperament** [3].

Further, at the end of ch 3 of the Visuddhi,magga, Buddhaghosa gives a detailed analysis of how to “read” a person’s character type by his external actions and demeanour. This remarkable character typology is, in fact, an early attempt at **body language** reading, which is a notoriously inexact art. It may, however, be usefully studied as idiosyncrasies and variations in culturally conditioned behaviors.

Hence, it will take more than a short essay to usefully discuss Buddhaghosa’s teachings on body language. It deserves a special study so that we may know to what extent it applies to us today, or how it may be helpful in analyzing a person’s character to help him (and us) select a suitable meditation or meditation-object, or give effective advice or learn some personal skills in terms of meditation practice.

1.1 THE 4 MODES OF MEDITATION

1.1.1 The (Yuga,naddha) Paṭipadā Sutta (A 4.170)

1.1.1.1 Before going into the other chapters of this volume, we should be familiar with the early Buddhist teaching on the 4 “modes of progress” (paṭipadā),¹ that is, practice leading to the path of awakening. This important teaching-set is listed in **the (Yuga,naddha) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.170).² The first 3 modes or methods deal with the balancing of samatha and vipassana, while the 4th deals with overcoming mental restlessness. Briefly, these are the 4 modes of meditation progress mentioned in the Sutta, namely:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (1) “insight preceded by calm” | <i>samatha,pubb’āṅgama vipassanā</i> |
| (2) “calm preceded by insight” | <i>vipassanā,pubb’āṅgama samatha</i> |
| (3) “calm coupled with insight” | <i>samatha,vipassanā,yuga.naddha</i> ³ |

¹ On **paṭipadā** (*paṭi*, directional prefix: “towards” + √PAD, “to go”), “(fig) path, way; means of reaching a goal; (mode of) progress, practice” see **(Vitthāra) Paṭipadā S** (A 4.162/2:149 f), SD 18.3.

² A 4.170/2:156 f (SD 41.5). It is helpful to break off here to read this Sutta and its intro nn (SD 41.5).

³ **Yuga,naddha** (*yuga*, “yoke; pair” + *naddha* or *nandha*, “tied, bound, put on”), “putting a yoke, yoke together: Pm 2:92 f; KhpA 27; (adj) congruous, harmonious: UA 153, 398; (neut) congruity, association, common cause”: KhpA 27; Pm 2:98 = Vism 682.

(4) “a mind seized by dharma-restlessness” *dharm’uddhacca, viggahita mānasa*⁴

1.1.1.2 Which of these 4 modes of meditation we should adopt depends on our personality and meditative needs so that “the mental fetters are abandoned and the latent tendencies are destroyed”⁵ with the attainment of arhathood. In fact, Ānanda, the Sutta protagonist, says that all the monks who have declared their arhathood before him, have won full awakening through one of these 4 modes of progress.⁶

1.1.1.3 We may paraphrase the application of **the 4 modes of meditation** [1.1.1.1] as follows:

- (1) first cultivating the stages of inner **calm** (*samatha*) through dhyana (*jhāna*), then working for the path;
- (2) first cultivating **insight** (*vipassanā*), which is then deepened into dhyana, leading to the path;
- (3) cultivating **calm and insight** in unison, leading to the path;
- (4) investigating our “**dharma-restlessness**” (*uddhacca*) [1.1.2] with **insight**, which then leads to **calm** and concentration, ending in the path. (A 4.170), SD 41.5

A salient point that seems to be missed by scholars doing a theoretical study of early Buddhist meditation is that they failed to take into account the defining words in each of these 4 descriptions of the modes of meditation, that is, “preceded” (*pubba*) (in 1 + 2), “coupled” (*yuga, naddha*) in 3, and “seized” (*viggahita*) in 4. These 4 key words show how samatha and vipassana work in tandem with each other! In other words, neither samatha nor vipassana, in practice, works by itself.

Even when samatha or vipassana is mentioned alone in the Buddhist texts or teachings, it is not in an exclusive way, but as a matter of emphasis, implying the other mode, too. Indeed, no trained or experienced meditation teacher would ever teach only samatha or only vipassana, but merely present an easy method to start with in the spirit of understanding the teachings of **A 4.170**. *Buddhist meditation can only fly on its 2 wings of samatha and vipassana*.

1.1.1.4 The term “**path**” (*magga*) broadly signifies the noble eightfold path, but here it specifically refers to the attaining of at least streamwinning, and arhathood itself (as reported in A 4.170) [1.1.1.1]. Of course, while meditating or even after that, we should not be wondering, “Have I attained streamwinning?” (the answer is clearly *no!*). The immediate benefit is likely to be that of a mind of *mental calm and clarity* that helps us better understand the teachings, especially when we study the suttas in keeping with our practice.⁷

1.1.2 “Dharma-restlessness”

1.1.2.1 Teachings and practices related to the first 3 modes of meditation—samatha, vipassana, and samatha-vipassanā—have been discussed elsewhere.⁸ We shall here focus on understanding **the 4th mode** of practice, that is, “**investigating our dharma-restlessness**” (*uddhacca*). Actually, this is neither samatha nor vipassana, but our wrong understanding or troubling reactions during meditation or by way of our negative emotions.

Firstly, we may have mistaken some unwholesome or worldly mental state—especially one of **the 10 impurities of insight** (*vipassanūpakkilesā*), that is: (1)-(3) bad conduct of body, speech and mind; (4) sens-

⁴ See SD 41.5 (5, esp 5.2); see also [1.1.1.3] below.

⁵ A 4.170,3.4+4.3+6.3 (SD 41.5).

⁶ A 4.170,4.1 (SD 41.5).

⁷ A useful supplementary reading is Shaw 2021:212-229.

⁸ See **Samatha and vipassana**, SD 41.1.

ual thoughts, (5) thoughts of ill will, (6) violent thoughts; thoughts about (7) relatives, (8) home country and (9) reputation; and (10) thoughts about higher mental states or the teachings (*dharmā, vitakka*).⁹ The last (10) is especially significant: we have mistaken a thought about Dharma to be an actual meditative attainment.¹⁰

Secondly, it should be noted that **restlessness** (*uddhacca*),¹¹ as a mental fetter (*saṃyojana*), is only overcome in the arhat.¹² For example, when we understand the suttas and teachings very well, in our concern and enthusiasm, we may feel disappointed, dismayed, even angry, at those who are frivolous about the Dharma, fear to study suttas, idol-worship teachers or are superstitious. Or, we wonder, despite all our compassion and diligence, how could we ever really help remove or even lessen the sorrows and sufferings of others. This is sometimes called the “Vimalakirti syndrome.”¹³

Technically, we can overcome this feeling of helplessness by cultivating **equanimity** (*upekkhā*). However, to attain this state of divine abiding effectively, we must first attain lovingkindness-based dhyana, and from there progress through dhyana-based compassion, and through joy-based dhyana, before attaining dhyanic equanimity. Even then, such a state will not be permanent, since we have yet to break the fetter of restlessness (as an arhat has done). In short, this is the burden of compassion we must manage and learn to cope with when we do Dharma-work. One effective way of coping with it is that of feeling the joy (*pīti*) of sutta study and Dharma work.¹⁴

1.1.2.2 Note that the 4th mode of meditation is stated simply as “**a mind seized by dharma-restlessness**” (*dharm’uddhacca, viggahita mānasa*) [1.1.1.1], and has been paraphrased as “investigating our ‘**dharma-restlessness**’ (*uddhacca*) with **insight**, which then leads to **calm** and concentration, ending in the path” [1.1.1.3]. It is a special form of “vipassana” practice to deal with restlessness, thus:

- (1) simply observe it to see what it really is, defining it as part of our understanding of the 1st noble truth;
- (2) mentally investigate why or how it has arisen, in the spirit of the 2nd noble truth;
- (3) seeing it as being conditioned, hence, *mind-made* and *impermanent* as the 3rd noble truth; and
- (4) asserting the effort to let go of the restlessness by not owning it (nonself) in the spirit of the 4th noble truth.

Having done this, which is, as a rule, only a temporary measure, we need to reinforce the mind’s calm and clarity by continuing our practice by way of any or all of the other 3 ways, until we gain the path, when we progress to the supramundane practice (as a streamwinner and so on).

1.1.3 Samatha-vipassana and the 5 spiritual faculties

1.1.3.1 THE 5 SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

⁹ **Paṃsu, dhovaka S** (A 3.100a, 4.1/1:254), SD 19.11. For a comy list of the 10 “impurities of insight” (*vipassan’u-pakkilesa*), see Vism 20.105-128/633-638.

¹⁰ See SD 41.1 (2.2.1.2)(4) n.

¹¹ The adj for this is *uddhatta*: SD 50.12 (2.4.4).

¹² On the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), see **Ajjhatta Bahiddhā Saññojana Sutta** (A 2.4.5) SD 80.5.

¹³ Named after Vimala, kirti, a mythical Indian Buddhist layman in the eponymous Vimala, kirti, nirdeśa (teachings of Vimala, kirti), written c 2nd cent CE. Orig Skt is lost. Tr into Chin by Kumāra, jīva (406) and Xuanzang (650). Taking Buddhist texts as literature, this is Mahāyāna fiction, as in western literature, some of which can be useful in highlighting, even clarifying, the Buddha’s teachings.

¹⁴ On dharma restlessness (*dharm’uddhacca*), see SD 41.5 (5); SD 32.7 (2.1.4, 2.2.3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1). On restlessness and worry, see **Uddhacca, kukkucca**, SD 32.7 (2.1), esp (2.1.4).

(1) In meditation practice, the suitability of the method and the meditation-object are closely related to **the 5 spiritual faculties** (*pañc'indriya*)—faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom—the **faith-inclined** would find it easier to progress with **the 1st mode**, that of calm before insight. Our faith usually makes it easier for us to keep our mind on a certain meditation object, like the breath. Otherwise, we may resort to one of the recollections (*anussati*)—on one of the 3 jewels, or on moral virtue, or on charity.¹⁵ These recollections are only preliminary or helping practices, to gain the momentum with which we move on to gain concentration; then attain calm and go on to insight.

(2) Those strong or skilled in “wisdom” (here a broad term that includes learning), that is, **the intellectually inclined**, are likelier to progress easily with **the 2nd mode**, the insight before calm method. The investigative and analytical penchant is directed towards “naming” the various mental states that arise while we are in meditation. With the arising of different levels of joy after doing so, we deepen our concentration (*samādhi*) (when all thinking and mental talk are suspended).¹⁶

(3) Those with a good or habitual level of **mental concentration** (which may, in fact, be enhanced with strong faith or wisdom, or both) would be comfortable with **the 3rd mode**, the twin practice of calm and insight. Here, we focus on whatever wholesome state that arises—whether it is a Dharma-based mind-object or a sense of calm or joy—and cultivate the calm. Upon emerging from such a practice, still in a profound state of calm and clarity, we go on to reflect on impermanence, or whatever state that has arisen before us, seeing it in terms of impermanence.

(4) **The effort-inclined** are, broadly, those who are either easily drawn into physical activity or work, or readily moved by kindness or compassion to act: for our purposes, we can call this type 1. Also included are those who, by nature, simply busy or active in some way, which may prevent them from being focused on a single task, or they could be so focused on a single task that they seem to forget everything else: this is type 2.

In this case, the effort-inclined person, type 1, those easily moved by kindness or compassion, may try **the 4th mode**, that is, directing his effort into “letting go” or cultivating equanimity. If we are often distracted, we should turn to some cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā, bhāvanā*).¹⁷ In the case of type 2, we would probably find the twin practice suitable, and to resort to breath meditation (*ānāpāna, sati*)¹⁸ when we are distracted.

(5) **The mindfulness-inclined**, on account of a habitually calm and careful mind, should be versatile to work with any of the 4 modes. He should thus choose the best mode that works for him. If he should find himself relatively calm at the start of his sitting, he should build up this calm to gain as deep a level of samadhi as possible. Then, upon emerging from samadhi, still mentally calm and clear, he should direct his mind to insight practice, that is, to see any of the 3 characteristics, especially impermanence, in the present mental object.

Should he see himself deeply absorbed in some vision of dharma-reality (as stated in the 4th satipatthana)¹⁹—*the 5 mental hindrances, the 5 aggregates, the 6 sense-bases, the 7 awakening-factors or the 4*

¹⁵ There are actually 6 such recollections, or “repeated mindfulness” (Shaw 2021:225): *buddhānussati, dhammānussati, saṅghānussati, sīlānussati, cāgānussati* and *devatā'nussati*: (**Chakka**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), SD 15.3; SD 15.7 (1.1.3.1). The last is a special skillful provision taught by the Buddha for those who believe in God or gods, as a launching pad to progressive concentration, calm and insight [SD 15.13].

¹⁶ On whether thinking and knowing occur in dhyana (or meditation), see SD 33.1b (6.2).

¹⁷ On the cultivation of lovingkindness, see **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Kh 9 = Sn 1.8) + SD 38.3 (6). On the importance of lovingkindness, see SD 13.1 (3.7.8).

¹⁸ See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118, 5-7+15-22), SD 7.13.

¹⁹ See **Satipatṭhāna S** (M 10, 36-45) + SD 13.3 (5D).

noble truths—he should let his mind cultivate this insight as far as possible. With the arising of deep joy, his mind would spontaneously switch to samatha mode, as it were. Or, should he emerge from such a state, he should then direct his mind to the calm mode, such as doing some breath meditation, or simply watching inner calm or joy as appropriate.

1.1.3.2 The above analysis of people according to the 5 faculties [1.1.3.1] is, at best, a general guide. The 5 spiritual faculties are, however, a helpful tool for us to decide which mode (samatha or vipassana) to take up as the basis for our own practice. Yet, however certain we may be of our inherent faculty, it is possible that some other faculty may intervene while we are directing our mind into meditation. Hence, it is vital, during the reviewing at the end of our practice, to notice such developments, and make the appropriate adjustments and proper training.

1.1.3.3 Theoretical accounts of meditation should be given a generous allowance for historical and cultural divergences, and personal inclinations, that is, how far such descriptions really apply to our own time and culture, even our own background. As useful as such a typology may be, especially in a theoretical study to understand and identify any of it when it does arise in us, any writing and information about it should, at best, be as interesting, even entertaining as, say, Enneagram,²⁰ the Diamond Approach,²¹ or the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator.²² A disciplined study of personality psychology would surely be a better pursuit of an up-to-date field than to delve in mediaeval Buddhist speculations about personality

In such traditional semblance of “personality psychology,” we should be wary not to see them as defining a person. At best, they are describing mental states, what they portend, and how we can better ourselves by knowing them. After all, our personality and emotional states are, in significant ways, conditioned by others and external circumstances. Hence, we should observe events of the moment and our reactions to them, in real time (at the time of occurrence), or in retrospect, how and why we reacted in those ways, and carefully study their behavioural patterns over time. These same rules apply when we are working with the various types of meditation methods, which are, after all, part of our training for the sake of gaining the path of awakening.

1.2 THE EXISTENTIAL ROOTS OF THE CHARACTER TYPES: CRAVING AND IGNORANCE

1.2.1 Craving encompasses both lust and hate

1.2.1.1 Lust and hate are closely related since they are diametrically opposite the each other; hence, one exists because of the other. As pointed out by Upatissa [2.1.2.2] and echoed by Buddhaghosa [2.1.2.3], *the faithful*, like *the lustful*, may similarly be driven by lust (*taṇhā*): the former by lust for the good, the latter for the bad. Hence, “lust” is used in a general sense here, meaning simply “driving force of attract-

²⁰ Enneagram is a typology system that describes human character as a number of interconnected personality types of 9 (Greek, *ennea*) kinds.

²¹ The Diamond Approach is a spiritual teaching founded by Kuwaiti American, A H Almaas (pen-name of Hameed Ali). It teaches a psychologically grounded spiritual approach to God/Being/Spirit Soul/Self World/Cosmos. Its Church is known as the Ridhwan Foundation, principally based in Berkeley, CA, and Blouder, CO.

²² The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI) is a self-report inventory designed to identify a person's personality type, strengths and preferences. The questionnaire was developed by Isabel Myers and her mother Katherine Briggs based on their work with Carl Jung's theory of personality types. Today, the MBTI is one of the most widely used psychological instruments.

ion.”²³ These forces, however, are still worldly (*lokiya*), in the sense that they are not of the path of awakening; hence, they are still under the influence of the latent tendencies [3.1.2.1].

1.2.1.2 Furthermore, what is driven by **lust**, is also spurred on by its Siamese twin, **hate** (*dosa*). Whether we are lust-driven or faith-moved, we *hate* anyone who threatens or seems to threaten what we lust after or have faith in. For this reason, we see the twinning of covetousness and displeasure (*abhijjhā, -domanassa*) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), for example.²⁴

Further, in the “lower fetters” (*orāma, bhāgiya saṃyojana*)—*self-identity view, doubt, attachment to rituals and vows, sensual lust and repulsion*—the last pair, sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*) and repulsion (*paṭigha*) (respectively synonymous with lust and hate) are overcome as a pair, which also removes all the lower fetters, as in the case of the non-returner.

1.2.2 Craving and view

1.2.2.1 The Commentaries²⁵ mention—probably as an early model for the typology—only a fourfold character typology, based on craving and view²⁶—that is, **the craving-inclined** (*taṇhā, carita*) and **the view-inclined** (*diṭṭhi, carita*), who are further categorized as “dull or slow” (*maṇḍa*) and as “sharp or intelligent” (*tikkha*). In terms of meditation, each of these 4 are then assigned one of the 4 satipaṭṭhanas for their practice, thus:

	<u>faculty</u>	<u>vehicle</u>	<u>satipaṭṭhana</u>
(1) craving-inclined character	dull	calm	contemplation on the body
(2) craving-inclined character	sharp	calm	contemplation on feelings
(3) view-inclined character	dull	insight	contemplation on the mind
(4) view-inclined character	sharp	insight	contemplation on realities

1.2.2.2 The 4 commentarial passages on the fourfold character typology, mentioned above, are practically identical. Since they explain this typology, the representative DA passage is translated in full here:

Now why are (only) 4 focuses of mindfulness stated by the Blessed One, no more, no less? Because of (their) being beneficial to those spiritually ready (*veneyya*). For there are those who have the character of craving, who have the character of views, who have the vehicle of calm, who have the vehicle of insight—each occurring, *on account of their spiritual readiness*,²⁷ in the 2 kinds by way of the dull-witted and the sharp-witted

²³ In this case, a well-known synonym is *chanda*, “desire, wish, zeal, will,” the 1st of the 4 bases of success (*iddhi, -pāda*): SD 10.3 (1.2.2); SD 17.6 (9.4) n; SD 56.17 (9.1.1.1) (1).

²⁴ See M 10,3 (SD 13.3) + SD 13.1 (4.2).

²⁵ Comys to Dīgha, Majjhima, and Dhamma, saṅgāṇī are **Buddhaghosa’s** works [Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b: 120-130]; Paṭisambhidā, magga Comy is attr to **Mahānāma**, written in the Mahāvihāra (Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka), in 516, ie, the 3rd year after the death of king Moggallāna (496-513 CE). See Pm:W 1982:xliv-li; Norman 1983b:132. The commentator should not be confused with the Sinhala king Mahānāma (409-431), also known as Sirinivāsa and Sirikūṭa [Norman 1983b:130].

²⁶ On the twofold *taṇhā, carita* and *diṭṭhi, carita*, see DA 3:754,5-19 = MA 1:239,11-24 fourfold typology; SnA 504,25-31 on *ceto, vimutti* + *paññā, vimutti*. The triad **taṇhā, māna, diṭṭhi** is very common in Comys: **DA** 2:383; **MA** 1:25, 5:82,100, **2:119, 111**, 279, 3:225; **SA** 1:190, 2:240, 248, 262, 270 f, 280, 308, 363 f, 3:112; **AA** 3:152, 2:380, 206 f, 4:120; **SnA** 1:21, 31,19, 76; 2:364, 431, 508; **NmA** 1:90; **NcA** 115; **ThaA** 3:44; **PmA** 3:593; **ApA** 161; **CA** 302, 372; **DhsA** 347; **VbhA** 508, 514. Also common is the form *taṇhā, diṭṭhi, māna*.

²⁷ *Veneyyesu*: only in DA.

(Hence,) for one with **the character of craving** who is dull-witted, the *coarse* contemplation of the body as focus of mindfulness is the path of purity; and for the sharp-witted the *subtle* contemplation of feeling as focus of mindfulness.

For one with the **character of views** who is dull-witted, *the not greatly divided up* contemplation of the mind [thoughts] as focus of mindfulness is the path of purity. And for the sharp-witted, it is *the greatly divided up* contemplation of realities [mind-objects] as focus of mindfulness.

And for one who has **the vehicle of calm** who is dull-witted, the 1st focus of mindfulness is the path of purity. Because the meditation sign is attainable with no trouble, and for the sharp-witted, the 2nd because of his not becoming settled in a coarse object.

Also for one who has **the vehicle of insight** who is dull-witted, the 3rd which is *not greatly divided up* as to object, and for the sharp-witted the 4th, which is *greatly divided up* as to object.

Thus, four are thus stated, no more, no less.

(DA 3:754,5-19 ≈ MA 1:239,11-24 ≈ PmA 3:696,7-19 ≈ VbhA 215,5-28)²⁸

1.2.3 Buddhaghosa clearly knew about this **fourfold character typology** since he wrote on it in his Commentaries,²⁹ as does Mahānāma³⁰ (PmA 3:696), the commentator of the Paṭisambhidā, magga³¹ [1.2.2]. These passages are in almost identical words in all the 4 commentaries [1.2.2]. It is possible that he either borrowed this idea from elsewhere, or expanded on it into the 6-temperament (*cariya*) typology of the Visuddhi, magga [1.2.2] before he completed his commentarial works on the 4 Nikāyas and other texts (which only mention the fourfold typology).

1.3 BUDDHAGHOSA'S PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

1.3.1 Buddhaghosa,³² in chapter 3 of his **Visuddhi, magga** (Vism 3.74-77/101 f), gives a detailed temperament or character typology (*cariya*), a kind of personality psychology, mainly as a guide for assigning the appropriate meditation practices and objects suitable for the meditator's character (*carita*).³³ He lays out a system of **the 6 character types** [3].

Before we look at this sixfold typology, we will attempt to examine how Buddhaghosa arrived at it, that is, the sources or influences on this idea. At the start, we should say that Buddhaghosa probably developed his own typology after studying Upatissa's scheme laid out in some detail in his **Vimutti, magga** (the path of liberation).³⁴

²⁸ DA gives the fullest reading; the other 3 refs have 2-3 words missing; otherwise, the 4 readings are identical. See also VbhA:Ñ 1:271 f for a tr.

²⁹ DA 3:754, MA 1:239, VbhA 215. While scholars accept Buddhaghosa as the compiler of DA and MA, **VbhA** (Sam-moha, vinodanī), the Vibhaṅga Comy is only provisionally attr to him. See Norman 1983b:125.

³⁰ On the commentator Mahānāma, see [3.2.2] n on Commentaries.

³¹ Buddhaghosa (fl c370-450 CE) lived about a century before Mahānāma, compiler of PmA [3.2.2 n]; hence, it is clearly Mahānāma who quoted Buddhaghosa (or an earlier Urtext) on the fourfold character typology.

³² See "Buddhaghosa" in Ency Bsm, Preston Dict of Buddhism (PDB), Routledge Ency of Buddhism (REB) 35 Anuradhapura.

³³ *Carita* (character) should not be confused with *vicarita*, "thought-courses," thinking about oneself in terms of the past, present and future, totalling up to 108 thought-courses (or mental proliferation, *papañca*): (**Catukka**) **Taṇhā S** (S 4.199,5), SD 31.15.

³⁴ Upatissa wrote **Vimutti, magga** (Vimm) sometime before the 5th cent, prob in N India. No longer extant in its Indian recension, it was fully tr into Chin as 解脫道論 *jiětuō dào lùn* (T32.1648.399c10-461c24), *Vimokṣa, mārga Śāstra, by 僧伽婆羅 Sengqiepoluo (Saṅghapāla?, Saṅghavarman?, Saṅghabhadra?) in 505, and portions of it into Tib. Although it is today known by its putative Pali title, its original language is unknown. It is much shorter than

1.3.2 Scholars know that Buddhaghosa was familiar with the Vimutti,magga, and even used it in composing his own Visuddhi,magga, without citing it by name. Buddhaghosa does, however, allude to **Upatissa**, even criticizing his character typology,³⁵ which is more elaborate than the Visuddhi,magga version [2.1]. In fact, Buddhaghosa's ideas and details of the 6 character types are clearly taken from chapter 6 of Upatissa's Vimutti,magga.³⁶

A key reason for Buddhaghosa mentioning neither Upatissa nor his Vimutti,magga was probably because much of the latter's teachings were affiliated with the rival Abhayagiri monastery, or that he viewed the Vimutti,magga as diverging from Theravāda; and Buddhaghosa had to uphold the teachings of the Mahāvihāra wherein he lived.³⁷ For this reason and others, scholars have come to hold various conclusions about Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi,magga.³⁸

2 Character typology: Upatissa and Buddhaghosa

2.1 UPATISSA'S TYPOLOGY (VIMUTTI,MAGGA, CH 6)

2.1.1 The significance of **Chapter 3** of the Visuddhi,magga, especially the sections relating to the 6 character types [3.1], can be better grasped with a comparative study of the related passages in Upatissa's Vimutti,magga, ch 6.³⁹ In fact, **the Vimutti,magga**, ch 6 opens with the "14 kinds of persons," that is, those with the following temperaments (*cariya*), also called character type (*carita*), that is, those dominated respectively by any of the **14 temperaments** [Table 2.1.1].

2.1.2 The 3 basic types and the 7 kinds of persons

2.1.2.1 In Upatissa's typology of 14 kinds of characters or temperaments, the negative ones are all rooted in **the 3 unwholesome roots** (1-3) in differing degrees. These are the negative roots of all our un-

Vism, but both follow the structure of the 3 trainings in moral conduct, concentration and wisdom. Vimm however is more succinct in its wisdom section than Vism. Both often quote the suttas, but Vimm has less illustrative stories. See Vism:Ñ (1979) xxvii f; Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b:113 f; Bapat 1937c; Analayo 2009i.

³⁵ Upatissa gives his character typology in **ch 6** of Vimm, where he gives 14 kinds of persons, which is then summarized to 7, and then to 3. For a tr (from the Chin by Saṅghapāla of Funan*), see *The Path of Freedom*, 1977:54-62. *Funan, the 1st important Indianized SE Asian kingdom, encompassed ancient Cambodia and the Kra Isthmus, centering on the Mekong delta. It arose in the 1st cent and was ceded by Chenla in the 6th cent.

³⁶ Vimm:ESK 58-62.

³⁷ Vimm, eg, says that the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) were "unwholesome," against Theravāda teachings. (Analayo 2009i:3-6.

³⁸ Nagai, "The Vimutti-magga, the 'way to Deliverance,' the Chinese counterpart of the Pāli Visuddhi-magga," says that the Visuddhi,magga "is in reality a revised version of Upatissa's Vimuttimagga" (1919:80). Malalasekera, in his *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, doubted that Visuddhi,magga relied on Vimutti,magga (1928: 86 f); Hazra, *Pali Language and Literature*, views that "it is impossible for us to decide whether he [Buddhaghosa] had some definite work before him, which he merely revised" (1998:539) neither mentioning Vimm in his survey nor in its index. Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, notes that "contrary to the tradition, however, Vism had a predecessor, which is extant only in Chinese and partly in Tibetan translations, the Vimuttimagga by an otherwise unknown Upatissa" (1996:124). Norman, *Pali Literature*, is certain that "there seems no doubt that Buddhaghosa made use of this earlier text [Vimm] when writing his own work" (1983b:120). Analayo 2009:2 f; "Thus the Treatise on the Path to Liberation [Vimm] stands out as a good example for the potential that the Chinese canon has to offer to Buddhist studies" (12). Analayo observes that "however much Buddhaghosa may have been aware of and even relied on the Path to Liberation [Vimm], he also made it a point to present a different perspective on a number of issues" (2009i: 6).

³⁹ For a new and better tr, see Nyanatusita's *The Path to Freedom: Vimuttimagga*, Centre of Buddhist Studies, HK Univ, 2021, 2 vols (921 pp). Glossaries: [PDF](https://www.dhammadownload.com/Buddhadasa/PDF/Vimuttimagga%20Glossaries%202021%20-%20Bhikkhu%20Nyanatusita%20-%20Academia.edu.pdf) [Vimuttimagga Glossaries 2021 | Bhikkhu Nyanatusita - Academia.edu](https://www.dhammadownload.com/Buddhadasa/PDF/Vimuttimagga%20Glossaries%202021%20-%20Bhikkhu%20Nyanatusita%20-%20Academia.edu.pdf).

wholesome actions in thought, speech and body, and the ground for the various characters and temperaments. [Table 2.1.1]

Besides these 3 negative types—those of *lust*, *hate* and *delusion*—are added **3 positive counterparts**: those of *faith*, *intellect* [*wisdom*] and *speculation* [*thought*], in a worldly sense. These 3 are then combined in different ways to produce the 14 types of temperaments, as seen in **Table 2.1.2.1**.

<u>The 14 kinds of person & the 3 kinds</u>		<u>the 7 kinds of person</u> ⁴⁰
(1) the lustful	<i>raga</i>	[1]
(2) the hating	<i>dosa</i>	[2]
(3) the deluded	<i>moha</i>	[3]
(11) the faithful-intellectual	<i>saddhā, buddhi</i>	[4]
(12) the faithful-speculative	<i>saddhā, vitakka</i>	[5]
(13) the intellectual-speculative	<i>buddhi, vitakka</i>	[6]
(14) the faithful-intellectual-speculative	<i>saddhā, buddhi, vitakka</i>	[7]
(4) the faithful	<i>saddhā</i>	[1]
(5) the intellectual [wisdom-inclined]	<i>buddhi</i>	[2]
(6) the speculative [thinking-inclined]	<i>vitakka</i>	[3]
(7) the lustful-hating	<i>raga, dosa</i>	[4]
(8) the lustful-deluded	<i>raga, moha</i>	[5]
(9) the hating-deluded	<i>dosa, moha</i>	[6]
(10) the lustful-hating-deluded	<i>raga, dosa, moha</i>	[7]

Table 2.1.2.1. Upatissa's character typology (14 kinds) (Vimm 6.3; Vimm:Ñ 1:228)

2.1.2.2 The 7 basic temperaments (1-7) [Table 2.1.2.2], combine to form composite character types because the 2 main groupings of these 14: types **1-6** have specific traits and **7-14** have composite traits. Counted in this manner, they are “reduced to” **the 7 kinds of persons**. The components of the composite character types are generally said to be “of one characteristic” (一相 *yìxiàng*). They are similar, even the same, in the way they act when under the power of the other characteristic or characteristics. Hence, each of them may switch between the unwholesome and the wholesome in terms of ethical conduct.

In each of these 7 kinds of persons, either character may change into the other, or one character may arise in the other, in any of these ways (read across the 2 lines):⁴¹

- | | |
|---|---|
| [1] through <u>faith</u> , the lustful seeks moral good,
the lustful does not give up the bad,
both have clinging, seeking the good, non-hate; | through <u>lust</u> , the faithful seeks worldly good;
the faithful does not give up the good; |
| [2] through <u>intellect</u> [wisdom], the hating does good, | through <u>hate</u> , the intellectual does bad; |
| [3] through <u>delusion</u> , the speculative has doubts, | through <u>speculation</u> , the deluded has doubts; |
| [4] the hating does not hold on to good,
the hating finds fault (even in the good), | the intellectual does not hold on to bad;
the intellectual sees faults only formations; |
| [5] when the deluded tries to seek merit or do good, | the intellectual and lack of faith and wisdom; ⁴² |
| [6] the deluded is uncertain because of non-penetration, the speculative is unstable because lightness; ⁴³ | |

⁴⁰ T32.1648.409c6-c29. These staggered numbers within [square parentheses] are best read vertically down as “[1]-[1], [2]-[2],” and so on, showing how they are connected as the 7 kinds of persons. [2.1.2.2]. Thanks to Mr Goh Hian Kooi of Malaysia for this insightful suggestion.

⁴¹ Vimm 6.4 (Vimm:Ñ 1:229-231).

⁴² T1648.32.0409c23-24: 答癡行人爲得善。增長覺行癡。[24] 親觀功德故。信慧動離故。

⁴³ T1648.32.0409c24-25: 復次以二行癡 [25] 覺成一相。“Thus, both the deluded and the speculative are alike.”

[7] the **deluded** is unable to calm himself;
the **deluded** moves, not certain where to go;

the **speculative** is troubled by thoughts;⁴⁴
the **speculative**, lacking calm, is often agitated.⁴⁵

The 14 kinds of person & the 3 kinds

(1) the lustful	<i>raga</i>
(2) the hating	<i>dosa</i>
(3) the deluded	<i>moha</i>
(4) the faithful	<i>saddhā</i>
(5) the intellectual [wisdom-inclined]	<i>buddhi</i>
(6) the speculative [thinking-inclined]	<i>vitakka</i>
(7) the lustful-hating	<i>raga,dosa</i>
(8) the lustful-deluded	<i>raga,moha</i>
(9) the hating-deluded	<i>dosa,moha</i>
(10) the lustful-hating-deluded	<i>raga,dosa,moha</i>
(11) the faithful-intellectual	<i>saddhā,buddhi</i>
(12) the faithful-speculative	<i>saddhā,vitakka</i>
(13) the intellectual-speculative	<i>buddhi,vitakka</i>
(14) the faithful-intellectual-speculative	<i>saddhā,buddhi,vitakka</i>

Upatissa's 7 kinds of person⁴⁶

[1]
[2]
[3]
[1]
[2]
[3]
[4]
[5]
[6]
[7]
[4]
[5]
[6]
[7]

Table 2.1.2.2. Buddhaghosa's character typology (6 types) (Vism 3.74-102/102-110)

2.1.2.3 Buddhaghosa, in chapter 3 of **the Visuddhi,magga**, alludes to Upatissa's 14 kinds of person (without mentioning him), but he uses only the first 6 kinds of person (instead of 7) [Table 2.1.2.2]. In other words, he rejects the overlappings of character as pointed out by Upatissa. Buddhaghosa explains his choice of the sextad as follows:

74 Now, as to the words, suiting one's temperament [§3.28]: there are 6 kinds of temperament, that is, *lustful temperament, hating temperament, deluded temperament, faithful temperament, intellectual temperament, and speculative temperament*.

Some add 4 others by combining and mixing with lust, etc,⁴⁷ with faith, etc.⁴⁸ Thus, together with these 8, they have 14. Stated thus, this combining (*bhede*, "sorting"),⁴⁹ mixing together lust and the rest, faith and the rest, we will get many other kinds of temperament. Therefore, the temperaments should be simply (*saṅkhepena*, "in brief") understood as only 6.

The temperaments, by nature, are numerous, but, in meaning, are (just) one.⁵⁰ Accordingly, they are only **6 kinds of person**, that is, *the greedy temperament, the hating temperament, the deluded temperament, the faithful temperament, the intellectual temperament and the speculative temperament*.

75 Herein, at a time when wholesome states prevail, for the **lustful** temperament becomes strong in **faith** on account of it having qualities close (*āsanna,guṇattā*) to those of lust.

⁴⁴ T1648.32.0409c25-26: …不自定故動故。於是癡安亂故 [26] 不安。覺種種覺憶故成不安

⁴⁵ T1648.32.0409c26-28: 癡無所趣向 [27] 成動。覺輕安故成動。是故癡行及覺行成一 [28] 相。

⁴⁶ T32.1648.409c6-c29. These staggered numbers within [square parentheses] are best read vertically down as "[1]-[1], [2]-[2]," and so on, showing how they are connected as the 7 kinds of persons. [2.1.2.2]

⁴⁷ I.e, lustful/hating, lustful/deluded, hating/deluded, lustful/hating/deluded. [Table 2.1.1]

⁴⁸ I.e, faithful/intellectual, faithful/speculative, faithful/intellectual/speculative. [Table 2.1.1]

⁴⁹ *Bheda*, "sorting." PED: *bheda* (2).

⁵⁰ *Cariyā pakati ussannatā ti atthato ekam*.

On the unwholesome side, **lustful** is charming [smooth], never too crude; and so, too, on the wholesome side, is **faithful**.⁵¹ The **lustful** seeks objects of sense-desires (*vatthu,kāma*), while the **faithful** seeks the moral virtue and so on. Just as the **lustful** does not give up the bad (*ahita*), the **faithful** does not give up the beneficial (*hita*).

Therefore, the **faithful** has something in common with the **lustful**.⁵²

76 On the wholesome side, the **hating** becomes strong in **wisdom** on account of it having qualities close to those of *hate*.

Just as on the unwholesome side [when the unwholesome arises], the **hating** does not hold on to mental objects that are not charming, even so, too, on the wholesome side, the **wise** (*paññā*) [the intellectual] (do not hold on to mental objects).

Just as the **hating** seeks non-existent [unreal] faults, even so, the **wise** seeks real faults.

Just as the **hating** finds cause to blame living beings, even so, the **wise** finds cause to blame formations (*saṅkhārā*).

77 Just as obstructive thoughts—on account of their being characteristically close to **delusion**—are most likely to arise in one of **deluded** temperament when he is striving to bring forth unarisen wholesome states;

just as the **deluded** is confused due to unsteadiness,

even so, too, is the **speculative**, due to thinking about numerous things;

and just as the **deluded** vacillates owing to lack of depth [owing to superficiality],

even so does the **speculative** due to superficial imagining.

(Vism 3.74-77/101 f)

When we compare Buddhaghosa's character analysis with Upatissa's version, the similarities are remarkably close. In fact, the only difference between the two passages is that Buddhaghosa speaks of only the 6 character types, while Upatissa speaks of 7. Indeed, these are **the 6 character types** presented by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhi,magga*, as we shall see. [3]

2.2 BUDDHAGHOSA'S CRITICISM AND ADOPTION OF UPATISSA'S TYPOLOGY IDEAS

2.2.1 Buddhaghosa: The 6 character types and the 3 character types

2.2.1.1 Even as we work to understand Upatissa's typology, and see the close similarities between the 2 systems, we can imagine Buddhaghosa trying to put together a workable character typology for his purpose (that of a character typology for helping to assign a suitable meditation-object or practice to a meditator). Before we discuss how he does this, there is a puzzling passage that we need to examine.

Buddhaghosa continues in chapter 3 of his *Visuddhi,magga*, with this critical observation:

Others say that there are 3 more kinds of temperament, that is to say, with **craving** (*taṇhā*), **conceit** (*māna*) and **views** (*diṭṭhi*). Herein, craving is simply lust (*rāga*); and **conceit** is associated with that. Hence, neither of them exceeds the temperament of lust. And since views have their source in delusion (*moha*), the temperament of views falls within the deluded temperament.⁵³

(Vism 3.78/102; highlights added)

⁵¹ *Yathā hi akusala,pakkhe rāgo siniddho nātilukho. On siniddha,puggala + lūkha,puggala, cf VbhA 282,21+24 (§§1350 f).*

⁵² *Tasmā raga,caritassa saddha,carito sabhāgo.*

⁵³ *Apare taṇhā,māna,diṭṭhi,vasena aparā pi tisso cariyā vadanti. Tattha taṇhā rāgo yeva, māno ca taṃ,sampayut-to ti tad ubhayaṃ raga,cariyaṃ nātivattati. Moha,nidānattā ca diṭṭhiyā diṭṭhi,cariyā moha,cariyaṃ eva anupatati.*

Below, we will see where the Visuddhi,magga Commentary confirms that when he says “*some*” (*ekacce*) [2.2.3], he alludes to Upatissa and the Vimutti,magga (Vimm). If we take “*others*” (*apare*) in the same way, to refer to Upatissa, we still do not find any such reference in the Vimutti,magga. Nowhere in Vimm does Upatissa mention “**craving-conceit-views**” (*taṇhā,māna,diṭṭhi*). The triad mentioned by Upatissa is instead the well-known Buddhist teaching on the 3 unwholesome roots of lust-hate-delusion (*raga,dosa,moha*) [Table 2.1.1].

2.2.1.2 Logically, any of these situations could have happened:

- (1) there was a passage in Upatissa’s Vimm referring to the craving-conceit-view triad but it was lost;
- (2) Buddhaghosa misread and misquoted what Upatissa wrote in Vimm;
- (3) Buddhaghosa is alluding to some other source.

The 3rd situation is the most likely scenario, since we do have such a related mention in **the Yogâcāra,bhūmi,śāstra**, “the stage of meditation practice,”⁵⁴ the main text of the Yogâcāra school of Indian Buddhism. The Yogâcāra school have their own formulation, that is, the 5 kinds of temperament (*pañca carita*)—五行 *wǔxíng*—that are to be overcome, thus:

(1) the lustful temperament	<i>raga,carita</i>	貪行	<i>tānxíng</i>	<i>'dod chags spyod pa</i>
(2) the hating temperament	<i>dveṣa,carita</i> ⁵⁵	瞋行	<i>chēnxíng</i>	<i>zhe sdang spyod pa</i>
(3) the deluded temperament	<i>moha,carita</i>	癡行	<i>chīxíng</i>	<i>gti mug spyod pa</i>
(4) the conceited temperament	<i>māna,carita</i>	慢行	<i>mànxíng</i>	<i>nga rgyal spyod pa</i>
(5) the speculative temperament ⁵⁶	<i>vitarka,carita</i>	尋思行	<i>xúnsī xíng</i>	<i>rnam par rtog pa spyod pa</i>

(T579.30.334a3+12 + 398b29 + 425c5 + 548a29 + 570a6)⁵⁷

However, this pentad does not include *the views temperament* mentioned by Buddhaghosa. We may thus conclude that this is probably a special set belonging to another Indian school that mentions “conceit” (*māna*) as one of the character types. More research needs to be done here.

2.2.2 Elements and humours

2.2.2.1 While Buddhaghosa accepts 6 of the 14 character types found in Upatissa’s Vimutti,magga, he goes on to criticise the latter’s teaching on human character or temperaments “arising from the ele-

⁵⁴ Both the school and its Indic text are now extinct. It was very influential in East Asia and Tibet, and has been preserved in Chin as 瑜伽論 *yúqié lùn* (T579.30.425c5) (tr Xuanzang, 646-648), and in Tib as *nga rgyal spyod pa* (tr c800). It is attr to Asaṅga (c320-c390 CE), the Yogâcāra founder, but in Chin sources, to Maitreya. Its 2 most famous sections are the Śrāvaka,bhūmi (on the stages of the path of early Buddhism) and the Bodhisattva,bhūmi (the most detailed discussion on the Bodhisattva ideal in Indian Buddhism). See PDB: Yogâcārabhūmiśāstra.

⁵⁵ The Skt for “hating” (P *dosa*) is *dveṣa*, not to be confused with *dosa* [222 n].

⁵⁶ One inclined to discursive thoughts or speculative thinking.

⁵⁷ Besides these 5, Asaṅga further mentions 2 more character types: (6) one disposed to all 5 temperaments, and (7) one only weakly disposed to the 5. On these 7 character types, see A B Engle (tr), *The Inner Science of Buddhist Practice*, 2009:154 f.

ments and humours” (*dhātu,dosa,nidāna*),⁵⁸ that is, the 4 elements and the 3 humours (過患 *guò huàn*, Vimm ch 6), [2.2.3], thus:

<u>the 4 elements (<i>dhātu</i>)</u>		<u>the 3 humours (<i>dosa</i>)</u> ⁵⁹	
earth	<i>paṭhavī</i>	bile	<i>pitta</i>
water	<i>āpo</i>	wind	<i>vāta</i>
fire	<i>tejo</i>	phlegm	<i>semha</i>
wind	<i>vāyo</i>		(Vism 3.80/102 f)

Table 2.2.2. The 4 elements and the 3 humours

2.2.2.2 Here, the **Visuddhi,magga** passages relating to the above Table is given in chapter 3, sections 79-82, as follows:

[From Visuddhi,magga ch 6]

79 What are the sources of these temperaments? And how may it be known that this person is of lustful temperament [character type], that this person is of hating temperament and so on? What is suitable for one of what temperament?

80 Here, some⁶⁰ [2.2.3] say that the first 3 kinds of temperament, to begin with, have their source in **previous habits**⁶¹ (*pubb’āciṇṇa,nidāna*); and that they have their source in elements and humours (*dhatu,dosa,nidāna*).⁶²

It is said that one who had in the past habitually engaged in much desirable and pleasurable (*subha*) activities is (here) of **lustful temperament**; also one who is reborn here after falling from a heaven.⁶³

And one who formerly often engaged in cutting, killing, binding or stabbing, habitually hating, is (here) of **hating temperament**; also one who is reborn here after dying from a hellish realm or serpent (*nāga*) world. **[103]**

And one who formerly had taken much intoxicants, neglected learning and questioning, is (here) of **deluded temperament**; also one who is reborn here after dying in the animal realm.

This is how, it is said, they have their sources in previous habits.

81a Now, a person who has an excess of 2 elements, that is **the earth element and the fire element**, is (here) of deluded temperament.

⁵⁸ Both words *dhatu* (elements) and *nidāna* (origin, source) are the same in Skt (tatsama); but *dosa*, “humour,” in Skt is *doṣa*, not *dveṣa* (which means “hate”). In other words, P *dosa* can mean either *doṣa* or *dveṣa* in Skt, depending on the context.

⁵⁹ The 3 humours are mentioned in **Sīvaka S** (S 36.21,4-7), SD 5.6, without mention of *dosa*. The term *dosa* as meaning “humour,” it seems, does not occur in the suttas, but we see it in **Vinaya** in the phrase, *dosābhisanno ... kāyo*, “a disturbance (imbalance) in the humours of (the Buddha’s) body” (V 1:206,26 *chavi,dosābādho*, 278,37 f, 279,4, cf 2:119,21+27 f *abhisanna,kāyā* without mention of *dosa*; DA 1:133,10 f) showing that the idea is early. *Dosa* occurs in Miln 43,28, 172,2; Vism 103,7; VA 213,6 f; DA 98,9; UA 172,17 (treatment); SnA 274,20; ThaA 2:33,19.

⁶⁰ “Some” was said in connection with the elder Upatissa. Hence, it is spoken regarding the Vimutti,magga,” *ekacce ti upatissa,theraṃ sandhāy’āha, tena hi vimutti,magge tathā vuttam* (VismMHT:Be 1:123).

⁶¹ “Habits” (*āciṇṇa*), ie, habitual karma.

⁶² *Tisso cariyā pubb’āciṇṇa,nidānā dhatu,dosa,nidānā cā ti ekacce vadanti* (Vism 102).

⁶³ Ie, one of the sense-world heavens. Those from the form or the formless heavens reborn here are less likely to be so.

When the other 2 elements [**water** and **wind**] are in excess, he is (here) of hating temperament.

And when all (4 elements) are equal, he is of lustful temperament.

[81b] Now, as regards **the humours** (*dosa*), one with an excess of **phlegm** is (here) of lustful temperament.

And one who has an excess of **wind** is of deluded temperament.

Or, one with an excess of **phlegm** is of deluded temperament, and one with an excess of **wind** is of lustful temperament.

This is how, they say, they have their source in the elements and the humours.

[Buddhaghosa's criticism]

82 Now, surely, not all of those who had in the past habitually engaged in much desirable and pleasurable (*subha*) activities, who, having fallen from a heaven, are reborn here, are of lustful temperament. Neither are all the others who are of hating and deluded temperament. Indeed, there is no such law (*niyama*) of the "excess of elements" [Vism 14.43 f] as asserted.

Moreover, in the law of humours, only the pair, lust and delusion, are given. Even then, it subsequently contradicts itself. And not a single source for those with faithful temperament is given at all; and no source for even one among those beginning with one of faithful temperament is given. Therefore, all these definitions must be indefinite.

(Vism 3.79-82/102 f)

2.2.3 "Some" (*ekacce*), in §80 of ch 3 in the Visuddhi,magga⁶⁴ [2.2.2] is especially significant since by this indirect reference, Buddhaghosa is attesting that he knows both Upatissa and his Vimutti,magga. Therein, Upatissa lists in some detail the character types conditioned by past habits (初所造 *chū suǒ zào*),⁶⁵ the elements (行界 *xíng jiè*)⁶⁶ and humours (過患 *guò huàn*).⁶⁷

Dhammapāla in his **Param'attha,mañjūsā**, the Visuddhi,magga commentary,⁶⁸ explains that the reference to "some" refers to Upatissa, and that this position is adopted in the Vimutti,magga [2.2.2.2]. His identification is correct, as these 3 factors as the conditions for character types are indeed listed in the Vimutti,magga.⁶⁹

On the basis of Dhammapāla's commentary, it seems that Buddhaghosa was aware of at least this aspect of the Vimutti,magga. This is rather significant, as it would imply that "the Visuddhimagga, which hitherto has been considered to be entirely [Buddhaghosa's] own work, is in reality a revised version of Upatissa's Vimuttimagma." (Nagai 1919:80) [1.3].

⁶⁴ *Tisso cariyā pubb'āciṇṇa,nidānā dhatu,dosa,nidānā cā ti ekacce vadanti* (Vism 102).

⁶⁵ *Pubb'āciṇṇa* (Tib *sngon byas*), T32.1648.410a12; or 行初所造 *xíng chū suǒ zào* T32.1648.410a13. See Nyanatusita's Glossaries on Vimm (2021).

⁶⁶ 行界 constitutional element(s) of karmic formations (*saṅkhārā*); 行 can also mean action, practice, character etc, depending on its contexts. T32.1648.410a13+21.

⁶⁷ 過患 *guò huàn*, T32.1648.410a13+21+24 etc. See further [http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?90.xml+id\(%27b904e-60a3%27\)](http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?90.xml+id(%27b904e-60a3%27)).

⁶⁸ Since it is a post-canonical work of some significance, it is called a *mahā,ṭīkā*, "a great subcommentary"; hence, its abbrev is **VismMHṬ**. See Vism:Ñ 1956, 4th ed 1979:xxx.

⁶⁹ 答初所造因緣,諸行界為因緣,過患為因緣 (T32.1648.410a12-14). Already noted by Ñāṇatiloka, *Visuddhi-Magga oder der Weg zur Reinheit*, 1931:viii.

3 The 6 character types

3.1 STRUCTURE OF THE 6 CHARACTER TYPES

3.1.1 Teaching connected with the character types

3.1.1.1 Here I have tentatively worked out how **Buddhaghosa**, after examining the *Vimutti,magga*, used its ideas on character typology [1.3, 2], and developed his own typology in his *Visuddhi,magga* known as **the 6 character types** (*cha cariya* or *carita*)⁷⁰ [2.1.2.2], which are summarized as follows:

1	2	3	4	5
<u>temperaments</u> ⁷¹		<u>character types</u> ⁷²	<u>the 6 roots</u> (<i>mūla</i>) ⁷³	<u>the 5 faculties</u> ⁷⁴
(1) the lustful or greedy	<i>rāga,cariya</i>	} <i>taṇhā,carita</i>	<i>greed</i>	} effort
(2) the hating	<i>dosa,cariya</i>		<i>hate</i>	
(3) the deluded	<i>moha,cariya</i>	} (<i>māna,carita</i>)	<i>delusion</i>	} mindfulness
(4) the faithful	<i>saddhā,cariya</i>		charity	
(5) the intellectual	<i>buddhi,cariya</i>	} <i>diṭṭhi,carita</i>	love	} concentration
(6) the speculative	<i>vitakka,cariya</i>		wisdom	

Table 3.1. Temperaments, character types, roots, faculties

3.1.1.2 This set of **6 character types** (used by Upatissa, followed by Buddhaghosa) is not found in the suttas, but *based on sutta teachings*, that is, the 6 roots (the 3 unwholesome roots, *akusala,mūla*; the 3 wholesome roots, *kusala,mūla*, italicized), modified by the 5 faculties (*pañc'indriya*), as shown in **Table 3.1**. Although this sextet is found in other Buddhist sectarian texts [2], it is apparently most developed in Upatissa's *Vimutti,magga*, ch 6. Now we will examine the teachings behind these 6 character types.

3.1.2 An analysis of the character type structure

3.1.2.1 Beginning with the list of **the 6 character types** [column 1], we will see that the 6 are made up of 2 triads. **The 1st triad** comprises the lustful, the hating and the deluded [Pali in column 2], which are directly related to the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*)—greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*)—respectively [column 4]. The Pali triad *lobha-dosa-moha* are unique in that they seem to be used only to describe our intentions on a *preconscious* level, that is, the private mind behind our speech and action.⁷⁵

In the 6 character types, the triad is called ***raga-dosa-moha***, where *raga*, lust (along with *dosa* and *moha*) refer to stronger negative emotions, more deeply rooted, that is, as latent tendencies (*anusaya*).⁷⁶ At this level of behaviour, we are likely to have little control over our actions—unlike on the preconscious level, when we can decide to moderate an action, or even not to act. The latent tendencies act more directly on our conduct here. Our ability to counter, or at least weaken, the effects of these latent tendencies depend on our moral training (keeping the precepts) and mental training (meditation).

⁷⁰ Mahā,niddesa Comy uses *carita* (NmA 2:316).

⁷¹ Vism 3.74-103/101-110.

⁷² In the Commentaries [3.2.2] n.

⁷³ On the 6 roots (3 unwholesome + 3 wholesome), see, eg, (**Kamma**) **Nidāna S** (A 3.33) + SD 4.14 (1).

⁷⁴ On the 5 faculties: [3.3].

⁷⁵ On the preconscious, see SD 17.8b esp (1.1.3; 2.2); SD 7.10 (3.3).

⁷⁶ On the latent tendencies, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

3.1.2.2 The 2nd triad of the 6 character types [column 1] are the faithful, the intellectual and the speculative (*saddhā, carita, buddhi, carita, vitakkā, carita* respectively) [column 2]. How are these related to the 1st triad [3.1.2.1]? In essence, we can summarize their psychological connections in this way:

(1) the lustful	(4) the faithful	the former lusts after bad; the latter, after good
(2) the hating	(5) the intellectual	the former hates good; the latter, hates bad
(3) the deluded	(6) the speculative	the former thinks about bad; the latter, about good

We can thus see how **the 3 unwholesome roots** of greed, hate and delusion underpin all the 3 *unwholesome* character types—the *lustful, the hating and the deluded*—and **the 3 wholesome roots** feed the *wholesome* character types—the *faithful, the intellectual and the speculative*—with charity, love and wisdom, respectively.

It is not difficult to understand how the lustful, the hating and the deluded are driven respectively by **the unwholesome roots** of *greed, hate and delusion*. How the faithful, the intellectual and the speculative are driven respectively by **the wholesome roots**, *non-greed* (charity), *non-hate* (love) and *non-delusion* (wisdom), needs some explanation. For practical purposes, we will discuss them in pairs of counterparts, as follows: the lustful and the faithful [3.2.1], the hating and the intellectual [3.2.2], and the deluded and the speculative [3.1.2.5].

3.2 AN ANALYSIS OF THE 6 CHARACTER TYPES

3.2.1 Lust and faith

3.2.1.1 The first of the 6 character types is **the lustful**, that is, one who is moved by self-interest, even to the point of exploiting others. This means excluding others from any beneficial act, even though they are close to them. The lustful, always wanting *more*, does not know when to stop; hence, he never really enjoys whatever he has. He is caught in this acquisitive mode because he lacks faith both in himself and in others. Due to this profound lack in faith and love, he is driven by the quest to grasp for things, collecting pleasures and people. [3.3.4]

3.2.1.2 The faithful (*saddhā*), on the other hand, is inspired by faith, that is, they are moved by the goodness of the Dhamma to see their own goodness or capacity for goodness. This is expressed as the *opposite* of the root that is *greed*, namely, charity (*cāga*). Hence, the faithful is also a charitable person, one who habitually gives material things, helpful advice, useful help, healing time (listening to others, serving them) and so on. [3.3.7]

3.2.2 Hate and wisdom

3.2.2.1 Like the lustful, **the hating**, too, lacks faith in himself and in others. However, unlike the lustful, he has no interest in others. In fact, he hates them, wishing them harm; even working to be rid of them, so that they cease to be, at least, in his view. While the lustful is self-centred, attention-seeking, often placing himself at the centre of the crowd or before it, dependent on the crowd's attention, the hating has no love for the crowd, except to see their faults, blame them for whatever negative thought that comes to his mind. Unlike the lustful, the is actually mired in self-hate. [3.3.5]

3.2.2.2 The intellectual (*buddhi*) is characterized by a love for wisdom (*paññā*). On the very positive level, this desire to know is that of lovingkindness (*mettā*), accepting others as they are. More often, however, he seeks others merely out of curiosity, that is, ordinary, worldly love (*pema*). In the former case, the

intellectual may also be kind, but in the latter case, he is keener to know things, than to help others. In other words, he simply loves to *know* things, gather *facts*, to know *about* people, than to actually know *people*. Hence, he needs to cultivate lovingkindness. [3.3.8]

3.2.3 Delusion and thinking

3.2.3.1 The deluded (*moha*) is the last of the 3 negative character types, and the 1st of those who are driven by views [3.3.6]. While the faithful sees the goodness of others and often accepts them unconditionally, the deluded sees the good in others simply as being “good luck,” and the bad or lack in others as “bad luck.” Hence, the deluded tends to be very status-conscious, associating almost only with his “peers,” and ignoring the “lowly.”

The deluded tends to regard teachers and individuals with some status, such as charisma, titles and large followings to be “good,” even to be “arhats,” or as being worthy of respect and following. He is also likelier to accept grand statements (common in Mahāyāna texts) without considering their authenticity and usefulness, so long as they suit his purposes.

3.2.3.2 While the intellectual [3.2.2.2] sees others as facts and statistics, **the deluded** sees them as “fixed entities”: they are what they are and will never change, and what will be will be. He thus sees life as “fated”: whatever happens happens for a reason, and there’s nothing we can do about it. **The speculative** wonders about them, even suspicious if they were actually so. [3.3.6]

While the intellectual is curious to know what is “out there”—spoken by others, what’s in the books, or the media, and so on—**the speculative** (*vitakka*) wonders about what he already knows: he suspects, what if this or that were the case or not the case. If the intellectual is lost in what he knows, the speculative is lost in what he does not know. While the intellectual collects facts by listening to others (*suta,-maya paññā*), the deluded *thinks* he knows, that is, his delusions come from his own thoughts (*cintā,-maya paññā*).⁷⁷ [3.3.9]

3.2.4 Craving and views

3.2.4.1 Notice that **column 3** [Table 3.1] separates the 6 character types broadly into 2 categories: those driven by **craving** (*taṇhā*)—the lustful and the hating—and the rest—the deluded, the faithful, the intellectual and the speculative—as being driven by **views** (*diṭṭhi*). There is a 3rd category, that of **conceit** (*māna*), the measuring of self against others as being *inferior to, better than, or same as them*.⁷⁸ This 3rd category underlies all the 6 character types: they each, in their own way, measure themselves against others in some way, both negatively (the first 3) or positively (the last 3). This is the most basic of the categorization of the character typologies.

3.2.4.2 The craving-views dichotomy is actually a simplification of the triad of craving-conceit-views (*taṇhā,māna,diṭṭhi*), which are the 1st 3 of **the 7 latent tendencies**: *sensual lust, aversion, conceit, views, doubt, lust for existence, and ignorance*.⁷⁹ This hints at the fact that the character types are deeply rooted in the latent tendencies.⁸⁰ Hence, we tend to “naturally” fall under their power and would not even know

⁷⁷ The 3 kinds of wisdom (knowledge) are those gained through listening (*suta,maya paññā*), through thinking (*cintā,maya paññā*) and through cultivation or meditation (*bhāvanā,maya paññā*): SD 10.16 (8.2.4).

⁷⁸ On conceit (*māna*), see **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Māna** **Soṇa S** (S 22.49), SD 31.13.

⁷⁹ Respectively, *kāma.rāgānusaya, paṭighānusaya, mānānusaya, diṭṭhānusaya, vicikicchā’nusaya, bhava.rāgānusaya, avijjā’nusaya*: **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

⁸⁰ As already noted, this triad is very common in Comys [3.1.1.1 col 3 n].

it. Only with clear mindfulness rooted in some deep concentration, augmented with wisdom (studying the suttas, etc), will we be able to see them for what they really are, and begin to correct them.

In this way, **the 6 roots**—the 3 unwholesome and the 3 wholesome—form the bases of the 6 character types. Each of the 6 roots respectively feeds each of the 6 character types. As long as we are aware of them, we should avoid them, since they are fed by the unwholesome roots. We should do this by cultivating and strengthening the wholesome roots through keeping the precepts and mental training (mindfulness practice or meditation or both).

Thus, through these pairs of triads of roots—the unwholesome and the wholesome—we have the 6 character types.

3.3 THE 6 CHARACTER TYPES AND THE 5 FACULTIES

3.3.1 While the psychological roots for the character typologies of Upatissa [2.1] and of Buddhaghosa [2.2] are both found in the 6 roots [3.1.2], **the developmental qualities** that positively define us as practitioners are **the 5 faculties** (*pañc'indriya*)⁸¹ [Table 3.1]. In fact, they are the *canonical* bases for the psychology of character types, which is summarized in this 5-faculty diagram:⁸²



Diagram 3.3.1 The 5 faculties

The basic ideas behind the 5 faculties are *harmony and growth* in our empowering qualities (*indriya*) to progress in mental cultivation so that we move closer to the path, that is, attain initial liberation as streamwinners. Before we can empower ourselves for this inner quest, we need to harmonize the faculties, keep them in good balance: this conduces to keeping the mind focused in calm and clarity. Then, these faculties upgrade themselves, as it were, to function as **the 7 awakening-factors** (*satta bojjhaṅga*): (1) mindfulness (*sati*), (2) dharma-investigation (*dhmma,vicaya*), (3) effort (*virīya*), (4) zest (*pīti*), (5) tranquillity (*passaddhi*), (6) concentration (*samādhi*) and (7) equanimity (*upekkhā*).⁸³

3.3.2 To begin with, however, we are each, as individuals, likely to have **a particular faculty in its rough and raw strength**, so to speak. We are likely to be *strong in a single faculty*, that is, to be strongly inclined to *faith*, to *concentration*, to *effort*, or to *wisdom*. It is rare, however, that any of us are likely to

⁸¹ On the 5 faculties, see *Pañc'indriya*, SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).

⁸² On cultivating the 5 faculties, what to avoid, what to associate with, what should be reviewed, see SD 10.4 (Table 1.1.4).

⁸³ On harmonizing the faculties and their development, see Diagram 3.1.2.2 (SD 54.3h).

be naturally inclined to mindfulness, the key faculty, the moderator of the faculties (except perhaps as the fruit of some past good karma). Hence, *mindfulness* is what we must each cultivate in order to harmonize the other 4 faculties so that they function optimally for our meditation progress.

3.3.3 The various **faculties** (*indriya*) that predominate in raw form in each of the 6 character types are summarized in **Table 3.1** (column 5). To correct this one-sided unwholesome propensity, they each should cultivate **the 4 right efforts**: preventing unarisen bad, refraining from arisen bad, cultivating unarisen good, guarding arisen good.⁸⁴ In fact, the 4 right efforts apply to all the other character types, too, each in their own way.

We will now briefly examine how each of the 6 character types may be able to help themselves to be mentally balanced, emotionally healthy and grow spiritually.

3.3.4 Both the lustful and the hating tend to be **energetic** (full of effort): in the former, in running after what they *lust for*, in the latter against what they *hate*. The lustful tends to seek sensual pleasures like a hunter hunting or stalking his prey but does not enjoy the kill. Hence, he is habitually on the prowl, seeking, stalking and gathering.

Hence, **the lustful** has to cultivate himself in the following ways: [3.2.1.1]

- (1) if he has not indulged in watching unseemly shows or mixing with licentious company, he should keep it so;
- (2) if he has been breaking the 3rd precept, he should stop doing so;
- (3) if he has not cultivated mindfulness of bodily impurities,⁸⁵ he should start doing it;
- (4) if he has been listening to sutta teachings (for example), he should keep doing so, and build up his practice.

3.3.5 Already mentioned, like the lustful, **the hating** [3.2.2.1], too, is energetic in thinking, speaking, even acting against what he hates. He tends to project past pains, memories and conditions onto the slightest hints of them in people or situations he meets, thinks or imagines about. Often, he is fault-finding or lacks trust in others, suspecting them in various ways.

The hating should assert effort in the following ways:

- (1) if he has not indulged in discussing topics that would arouse hate in him, he should keep it so;
- (2) if he has been writing hate messages on social media (for example), he should stop doing so;
- (3) if he has not cultivated lovingkindness,⁸⁶ he should start doing it;
- (4) If he has been reflecting on impermanence,⁸⁷ he should keep doing so, and seek to understand non-self (that he only dislikes what is bad and wrong, and not the person).

3.3.6 The deluded [3.2.3.1] tends to be overwhelmed by his own views of his own experiences. In an extreme situation, he believes what is impermanent to be eternal (such as an afterlife eternal consciousness), what is suffering to be pleasurable (such as the nature of the body), what is nonself to be self (such

⁸⁴ On cultivating the 5 faculties, what to avoid, what to associate with, what should be reviewed, see SD 10.4 (Table 1.1.4).

⁸⁵ In the case of monastics, they should practise “cultivating the impurities” (*asubha, bhāvanā*), contemplating suitable levels of bodily decomposition with proper guidance of a meditation teacher, eg M 62,14-30 (SD 3.1); the laity should practise the perception of impurity (*asubha, saññā*) by way of the bodily impurities (of his own and those in others), eg M 62,10 f (SD 3.1).

⁸⁶ On the cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā, bhāvanā*), see Khp 9 = Sn 1.8 + SD 38.3 (6).

⁸⁷ For the reflection on impermanence (*anicca, saññā*), see S 25.1 (SD 16.7).

as the abiding soul). He believes in the occult, magic, good luck and superstitions. Hence, he lives in a self-created virtual world, a private reality.

As a rule, it is very difficult to help the deluded. However, when he realizes his predicament, and seeks help, the following steps in right effort would be helpful and healing:

- (1) he should neither associate with the deluded nor follow strange and bizarre teachings (such as turning away from “Zen talk” that sounds profound but are really empty, at best, a form of rationalization);⁸⁸
- (2) if he is following a cultish or eccentric teacher, he should stop doing so;
- (3) he should reflect on impermanence and cultivate lovingkindness;
- (4) he should calm and clear his mind by studying the suttas & cultivating mindfulness and wisdom.

3.3.7 The faithful [3.2.1.2] tends to admire and associate with monastics and teachers whom they imagine as being of great virtue, or to possess special powers or high attainments. He is likely to exaggerate what he sees as good in others. On the other hand, with proper guidance and spiritual friendship, it is possible to guide him in wholesome practice.

The following efforts should be cultivated by him:

- (1) he should avoid the faithless and the negative so that he is neither disappointed nor misled by them;
- (2) he should associate with the faithful who are wise and compassionate;
- (3) he should be diligent in reflecting on sutta teachings;
- (4) he should practise the inspiring meditations⁸⁹ and the breath meditation.

3.3.8 The intellectual [3.2.2.2] is more interested in knowing than in training himself through learning. He is likely to have an encyclopaedic mind and be caught up in statistics. His interest is in information, and he has almost no interest in people and emotions. Hence, he may also be socially awkward, even a misanthrope. On account of his knowledge, he enjoys anyone, especially a following or crowd that obsequiously listens to him. In this case, he is usually a narcissist.

Hence, it is vital that he keeps up the following efforts:

- (1) avoid those intellectually inclined (like him);
- (2) associate with the wisely compassionate;
- (3) cultivate breath meditation and lovingkindness (at least one of these practices);
- (4) study the suttas, especially those dealing with freeing the mind of thoughts.

3.3.9 The speculative [3.2.3.2] is basically one who has endless questions but with little interest in the answers, no matter how right, true or useful; either he is unable to understand the answers or unwilling to accept them. He often worries about the past, especially what he had done or not done, or wonders about the future and becomes restless.

The speculative should be diligent in cultivating the following:

- (1) avoid other speculative people, listening to talks or reading materials that may arouse speculations;
- (2) associate with the calm and the mindful, and engage in talk about practical moral virtue and mental conduct that are wholesome;
- (3) he should cultivate mindfulness and watching the impermanence of thoughts;

⁸⁸ On rationalization as a psychological defence mechanism, see SD 7.9 (4.3.4); SD 24.10b (2.3.3.2).

⁸⁹ The 6 inspiring meditations are the recollections of: (1) the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) [SD 15.7 f], (2) the Dharma (*dharmānussati*) [SD 15.9], (3) the sangha (*saṅghānussati*) [SD 15.10a f], (4) moral virtue (*sīlānussati*) [SD 15.11], (5) charity (*cāgānussati*) [SD 15.12], and (6) deities (*devatānussati*) [SD 15.13]: SD 15.1 (1.5.6); SD 15.3 (3.3).

- (4) at proper times, he should build his focus and wisdom by asking the wise helpful questions relating to his condition and listening attentively.

4 Conclusion

4.1 In this brief study, we started off by looking at the relationship between **the 4 modes of meditation** and the 5 faculties [1]. We have also tried to trace the evolution of the character typology from the dichotomies of lust and hate [1.2.1], of **craving and view** [1.2.2], and of an early fourfold character typology [1.2.3]. This is followed by a comparative study of **the character typologies** in Upatissa's Vimutti,magga and Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi,magga, I have tried to show how Buddhaghosa was familiar with Upatissa's work [2], and had used it in his own typology of 6 temperaments [3].

4.2 These typologies, whether commentarial [1.2.2.1], Upatissa's [2.1] or Buddhaghosa's [1.3], should not be taken as a coffee-table diversion or "New Age science." They are meant to be tools for the meditation teacher or Dharma counsellor for determining the predominant character or quality of the student or client to help him chose the right meditation object, adjust his practice effectively, or help the client cope with his difficulties with the proper Dharma teachings and training.

More significantly, such a character typology can help us as individual practitioners, to see and know our character better, or to analyse and understand our reactions to situations. We are then in a better position to select suitable and effective teachings and practices for ourself. This is, in fact, one of the useful tools we can use for emotional and mental management in our training for the path.

[221116]

60.1b

Handbook of Meditation in Society 2 **Samatha, Vipassanā, Kammaṭṭhāna**

A brief social history and psychology of meditation teachers and their teachings
A brief study by Piya Tan ©TAN Beng Sin 2022, 3rd rev ed 2023

1 Modern meditation and Burmese Vipassana

1.1 RELIGION AND BUDDHISM

1.1.1 Academic study of religions

1.1.1.1 Compared to the study of Judaism and Christianity—which have their own numerous specialized seminaries and institutions—Buddhist studies has been dominated by “outsiders” to Buddhist culture and tradition, and most of them are not even Buddhist. However, since 2000,¹ a few such scholar-practitioners [3.2.1.2; 6.0] have spent years as Buddhist monastics (often under different teachers and traditions)² or living with them for purposes of first-hand observation/participation studies.³ In recent decades, significant contributions have been made to Buddhist studies by Asian Buddhists themselves, especially in Japanese, Chinese and Korean universities, and from a growing number of Asian migrants to Western countries, and Western converts to Buddhism.

1.1.1.2 The scholarly study of Buddhism has advanced so much today that it is often indispensable in a historical study of early Buddhism, that is, a study of the historical Buddha and his teachings during the 6th or 5th centuries BCE. The scholarly methods have been well applied to the study of early Buddhism by way of its texts, literature, practices, philosophy, anthropology, culture, philology, ethnology, archaeology, arts, historiography,⁴ history, psychology, law and comparative studies (intra-Buddhist and inter-religious), and other subjects related to Buddhism.

Then, there are the interesting and broad terms: Buddhist studies and Buddhology. The 2 terms are often regarded as being synonymous, in that they *both* involve an academic study of Buddhism. However, there are significant differences between them, especially for scholars. An “**academic study of Buddhism**” or simply “Buddhist studies” generally refers to the work of scholars who first specialize themselves in the mastery of the Buddhist languages (Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, and so on) with which they study, edit and interpret Buddhist texts, teachings and developments, writing in various modern languages (especially English).⁵

1.1.2 Academic study of Buddhism

1.1.2.1 The traditional field of **early Buddhist studies**, focuses, as a rule, on the study of Buddhist moral ethics, doctrines and philosophy, and meditation and psychology. In this connection, too, we have individuals and groups who edit the Pali texts, publish them, and translate them for both schol-

¹ Esp with the publication of *Buddhist Theology: Critical reflections by contemporary Buddhist scholars*, edd Roger Jackson & John Makransky, 1999.

² Examples of this are **Jack Kornfield** (1945-), author of *Living Buddhist Masters* (1977); **Robert E Buswell, Jr** (1953-), author of *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea* (1993).

³ Eg, **Jeffrey Samuels** (not to be confused with Geoffrey Samuel, specialist in Tibetan Buddhism), author of *Attracting the Heart: Social relations and the aesthetics of emotion in Sri Lankan monastic culture* (2010).

⁴ Historiography is the study of the writing of history and of written histories, incl the collecting, study and interpretation of ancient Buddhist inscriptions, manuscripts and texts.

⁵ On the social construction of “religion”: SD 60.1d (3).

ars and the general readers. Modern psychology is also experimenting with **Buddhist meditation theory and practice** for their own profession and advancement.

1.1.2.2 The term **Buddhology** was coined in the early 20th century by the Unitarian minister Joseph Estlin Carpenter (1844-1927), which he defined as the “study of Buddhahood, the nature of the Buddha, and doctrines of a Buddha.” However, the terms Buddhology and Buddhist studies are generally synonymous in the contemporary context.

Frank J Hoffman, in his entry on “Buddhology,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, says that in some specific contexts, Buddhology may be viewed as a subset of Buddhist studies, with a focus on Buddhist hermeneutics, exegesis, ontology and the Buddha’s attributes.⁶ In other words, this is a parallel to biblical theology, a term which sits uncomfortably with the study of early Buddhism, but goes well with Mahāyāna studies.

1.1.3 Meditation studies

1.1.3.1 One of the regular Buddhist topics of scholarly contention is that of **meditation**. Since most scholars do not take up meditation as a personal Dharma practice, they only see darkly through their academic lenses at what is actually *the most personal and experiential aspects of Buddhist training*. Such a theoretical, “outsider” observation tends to be aware of only 2 forms of practice: samatha and vipassana.⁷

Why this simplistic dichotomy, especially when the Buddha himself actually speaks of 4 kinds of meditation practice? **The (Yuga,naddha) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.170) speaks of these 4 modes of meditation practice and progress (paṭipadā), namely:⁸

(1) “insight preceded by calm”	<i>samatha,pubb’aṅgama vipassanā</i>
(2) “calm preceded by insight”	<i>vipassanā,pubb’aṅgama samatha</i>
(3) “calm coupled with insight”	<i>samatha,vipassanā,yuga.naddha</i> ⁹
(4) “a mind seized by dharma-restlessness”	<i>dharm’uddhacca,viggahita mānasa</i> ¹⁰

- The 1st is through the cultivation of dhyana and stages of calm, which then leads to liberating insight.
- The 2nd is through a preliminary insight, which is then deepened into dhyana for liberation.
- The 3rd is the both, calm and insight, “yoked together,” working in unison.
- The 4th is described as “*dharmā* restlessness,” an investigation into such a state of mind leading to insight, and then concentration.¹¹

1.1.3.2 Scholars generally tend to over-simplify (1) as “samatha” and (2) as “vipassana,” and dismiss (3) as simply a combination of the 2 categories, samatha and vipassana. In their theoretical studies, they seem to see the first 2 as simply 2 kinds of Buddhist meditation. They either ignore or do not seem to understand that (3) is actually a “path of practice and progress” (*paṭipadā*) of its own.

Most scholars seemingly fail to note the key modifiers in all the 4 descriptions of early Buddhist meditation modes: “preceded (by)” (*pubba*), “coupled (with)” (*yuga,naddha*) and “seized (by)” (*viggahita*). Actually, all the 4 descriptions include both samatha *and* vipassana! Moreover, almost no

⁶ *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, edd W M Johnston & C Kleinhenz, 2015:225 f.

⁷ Earlier scholarly studies tend to be aware of only 2 kinds of Buddhist meditations—samatha and vipassana—as shown in Johannes Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, 1986.

⁸ A 4.170/2:157 (SD 41.5).

⁹ **Yuga,naddha** (*yuga*, “yoke; pair” + *naddha* or *nandha*, “tied, bound, put on”), “putting a yoke, yoke together”: Pm 2:92 f; KhpA 27; (adj) congruous, harmonious: UA 153, 398; (neut) congruity, association, common cause”: KhpA 27; Pm 2:98 = Vism 682.

¹⁰ See SD 41.5 (5, esp 5.2); see also SD 60.1a (1.1.2).

¹¹ This is sometimes associated with modern insight schools.

scholar even mentions (4), which is probably quite beyond most, if not all, non-practitioners. This is understandable since even Buddhist teachers rarely explain what it really is.¹²

1.1.4 Views on meditation: professional and practical

1.1.4.1 Scholars studying meditation who are well aware of the early Buddhist texts and meditation traditions, generally see it in terms of **3 main approaches**: one group considers **insight** (*vipassanā*) to be essential and calmness (*samatha*) to be inessential in the pursuit of nirvana: the vipassana essentialists [1]; the 2nd group follows samatha as its main practice [2]: the samatha essentialists,¹³ and the 3rd group views **both** calm and insight to be essential [3]: the twin approach.

We will here briefly examine all 3 views for a better understanding of why there is such a divergence, and what the suttas and Buddhist meditation teachers actually affirm regarding them. For our purposes, we will use the anglicized¹⁴ terms “samatha” and “vipassana” to refer to its modern usage, and “Samatha” and “Vipassana” (with the initial capitals) as scholarly or sectarian categories; in either case, without the diacritics. [2.2.1.2]

1.1.4.2 **Edward Conze**, for example, explicitly affirms that both samatha and vipassana are necessary in a quest for nirvana, but he also admits that there “is even some tension between the 2 modes of approach” (Conze 1956:17) [4.1.1]. While others like **Paul Griffiths** highlight this “tension” [1.2.1]; yet others, like **Damien Keown**, work to resolve it. Keown is one of the modern British Buddhists for whom Buddhism is embraced as both profession and practice.

Mills, in his 2004 paper, makes an interesting and important comparative study between Griffiths’ scholastic samatha-essentialist views and Damien Keown’s ideas on how a balanced samatha-vipassana practice cultivates moral concern (*sīla*). Since, in this Part 2 of the trilogy (SD 60.1b) we are focusing on how scholars view Buddhism from the outside or who have an “outside” view,¹⁵ we shall examine some of Keown’s ideas and contributions as an “insider,” in Part 4 (SD 60.1d).¹⁶

1.1.4.3 For a broad academic view, Mills’ paper should be read in full before continuing here, where I shall mostly discuss teachings related to Buddhist meditation practice, rather than discuss the differences in scholarly views. My task is not that of proving any scholar wrong (except when his error is clearly against early Buddhism) but of opening a window into seeing how scholars think and work with their subject or “specimen.” We shall then examine how the different Buddhist masters think and teach.

I will quote from relevant and interesting passages from the scholars, or summarize them for our benefit. What better way for us to learn how scholars treat Buddhism than to study the scholars themselves, especially the practitioners or sympathizers of Buddhism by showing how “outsiders” each project his own virtual reality into Buddhism, creating his own virtual Buddhism. This is a fascinating study since we can very well apply such observations to understand, even expose, how Buddhists themselves may have similar wrong views, making themselves “outsiders” to that with which they are supposed to be at home.

1.2 AN OUTSIDER’S VIEW ON BUDDHIST MEDITATION

¹² A study of these 4 modes of meditation is vitally helpful for a better understanding of this study. Please see SD 60.1a (1.1.1); the 4th kind of meditation is explained in (1.1.2).

¹³ See Mills 2004:22.

¹⁴ By “anglicized” we mean not only the English spelling but that such terms are found in the larger modern English dictionaries, such as the Oxford dictionaries and the Merriam-Webster series.

¹⁵ By “outside” I broadly refer to those who see themselves as scholar first, or behave so, ie, the non-practitioner or those Buddhists who tend towards the secular. However, we have included traditional groups committed to their own brand [eg 2.3] for a more comprehensive view of the samatha-vipassana “tension.”

¹⁶ We shall examine Keown’s ideas and contributions in **SD 60.1d** (the 3rd part in this trilogy), under (3.2).

1.2.1 Paul J Griffiths, an English-born US theologian,¹⁷ like many open-minded, learned, ecumenical Christians, started his academic career with a deep interest in Buddhism. **Ethan Mills**, in his delightfully sensitive and incisive paper on “Cultivation of moral concern in Theravāda Buddhism” (2004) shows how Griffiths works with his own theoretical reconstruction of early Buddhist meditation. Most of this section is based on Mills’ paper.

Griffiths’ academic views on Buddhist meditation can be found in his scholarly book, *On Being Mindless* (1986), where he discusses **the state of cessation** (*nirodha, samāpatti*)¹⁸ specifically in relations between samatha and vipassana. Strictly speaking, “cessation” (*nirodha*) is not a meditative state as in one “to be attained” as some goal of meditation: it refers to an aspect of the awakened mind of the Buddha or an arhat, and sometimes that of a non-returner, when he takes nirvana as the object of meditation. Understandably, in such a state *neither perception nor feeling* occurs. Hence, the notions of samatha and vipassana do *not* arise at all in this connection!

1.2.2 Here’s a bit of **academic wry dark humour**: when a non-scholar writes, say, about the Buddha being a “Sun-God,” no scholar is likely to pay any attention to it; but when a renowned French scholar like Emile Senart proposed that the Buddha was a “solar myth,” the idea was eagerly picked up by Dutch scholar Heinrich Kern, and other lesser scholars discussed and argued over it, as if their livelihood mattered; and indeed, they did.¹⁹

In the case of Griffiths, he characterizes samatha as “enstatic” (ecstatic or rapturous in a spiritual sense) and vipassana as “analytic.” He writes, in fascinating and fine scholarly form,

Such analytical meditations are designed, then, to remove standard cognitive and perceptual habit-patterns and to replace them with new ones. Furthermore, these techniques are designed to teach the practitioner something new about the way things are, to inculcate in his consciousness a whole series of knowledges that such-and-such is the case. In contrast, the enstatic meditations are designed to reduce the contents of consciousness, to focus awareness upon a single point and ultimately to bring all mental activity to a halt.

(Griffiths 1986:13; emphases added)

To those personally familiar with early Buddhist teaching and meditation, surely this passage sounds like a fine case of gobbledygook,²⁰ or, more darkly, a shibboleth:²¹ it shows that the writer was an “outsider.” He knew the words, but not their meanings and usages. Griffiths goes on to write of 2 different ways, in his view, that Buddhists view “the basic human problem” and how they each work to solve it:

¹⁷ **Paul J Griffiths** (1955–), English-born US theologian, and Warren Professor of Catholic Thought at Duke Divinity School. His early works incl incisive interpretations of Yogācāra Buddhism, but later converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, and accepted the Schmitt Chair Catholic Studies at Univ of Illinois, Chicago. He resigned from Duke after being reprimanded by its administration for openly questioning the usefulness of diversity training [such as religious openness and tolerance] in his faculty:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20191012023832/https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/duke-professor-resigns-after-facing-discipline-for-challenging-diversity-training/118283>. Biblio: *On Being Mindless: Buddhist meditation and the mind-body problem*, 1986.

¹⁸ Fully, “the cessation of perception and feeling” (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*). It is only experienced by the Buddha, the arhat and, perhaps, a non-returner. Since it is actually an experience of the nirvanic state, it is outside of the usual meditation stages of the unawakened, esp in mundane meditation. See SD 48.7 (3.2); SD 50.7 (1.2).

¹⁹ See SD 59.6 (1.1.2.5).

²⁰ OED: 1944: *American Notes & Queries* Apr 9/1, “Gobbledygook talk: Maury Maverick’s name for the long high-sounding words of Washington’s red-tape language.” Maverick was the Texas Congressman who coined the word to describe the frustrating jargon used by US policymakers. It reminded him of the sound of turkey-cocks gobbling.

²¹ A shibboleth is basically a word special or unique to a group but which wrongly pronounced or used by an outsider, thus revealing his true status. For its origin, see SD 20.1 (2.1.1.1).

“Those who follow and advocate the analytic techniques tend to perceive the basic human problem as one of ignorance, an inaccurate understanding of the way things are” (Griffiths 1986:14). In other words, if the disease is ignorance, the cure must be knowledge.

“In drastic contrast, the practitioners of the enstatic techniques aimed at tranquility tend to perceive the basic human error as one of attitude rather than cognition; the key Buddhist term here is ‘thirst’ (*taṇhā*), a term that denotes all types of passionate desire and attachment” (Griffiths id). When our attitude causes suffering, then we must change that attitude to one that does not cause suffering.

1.2.3 In scholarly analysis, we say that Griffiths has here created a “**tension**,” comprising 2 possible, opposing situations under the roof of the same system. He sees these as 2 completely separate goals each with their differing methods “all jostling about within the same tradition” (Mills 2004:24). This, according to Griffiths, has created numerous philosophical problems:

“Throughout Buddhist history, intellectuals have attempted to reconcile thought-systems which are on the face of it, irreconcilable” (Griffiths 1986:16).²²

We must imagine that Griffiths, whether he was aware of it or not, was thinking with a Christian cap on. If this were Christian theology, it might be irreconcilable. However, amongst Buddhist teachers, views and disagreements prevail as the unawakened norm. This has never been an issue because, as unawakened beings, we have the licence to err (so long as we are ignorant of it).

No right-minded Buddhist teacher would declare that he is the only one who is right, nor that such and such a system is the only right one (although his pupils may proudly claim otherwise). My point is that, as Buddhists, we hold an opinion so long as we think it is right and true. We are often enough, likely to change our views as we mature in our understanding and wisdom.

2 Vipassana

2.1 VIPASSANA SCHOLARS

2.1.1 Scholars’ views on meditation²³

2.1.1.1 Scholars who are neither practitioners nor meditators nor Buddhist, are likely to see early Buddhist meditation as merely the attaining of wisdom, which, after all, is what brings awakening to the Buddha. Hence, they regarded **insight meditation** to be the more important of the two. Even at the start, there is a fundamental problem: informed Buddhist practitioners do not see samatha, “calmness,” and vipassana, “insight meditation,” as exclusive Church-like confessions, but as practical starting-points in their commitment to Buddhist learning, practice, realization and propagation. Often, the terms calm or calmness (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) merely reflect what inspired them to take up Buddhism and meditation in the first place.

We shall here assume, provisionally, that there are **categories** called “calmness meditation” and “insight meditation,” as understood by advocates of such “systems,” and to have some insight into how scholars study them and how teachers teach them. Hence, on the surface, we are likely to perceive that amongst Western Buddhists at least, Vipassana as “insight meditation” predominates in the US [2.3.4], while Samatha as “calmness meditation” is popular in the UK [3.3.2]. It would be insightful for us, as practitioners, to see how such scholars are also practising Buddhists. There is always something valuable to learn from these insights how others see Buddhism or how they are influenced by it. [2.2.1.2]

²² Griffiths’ book is an interesting philosophical diversion for those who depend on an academic career or who enjoy reading. Otherwise, we would miss nothing setting it aside for other related and urgent matters.

²³ This section and parts of the following are inspired by **Ethan Mills’** profoundly insightful paper on the “Cultivation of moral concern in Theravāda Buddhism” (2004).

2.1.1.2 In his 2004 paper, **Ethan Mills** identifies the following scholars and writers as those who “have considered insight meditation to be the more important of the two”: Rahula, King, Gunaratna, Bodhi, Solé-Leris and Griffiths. Bh Bodhi has written a number of papers on Buddhist meditation.²⁴ H Gunaratana is also a well known Buddhist scholar who has written a few popular books on meditation.²⁵ W L King, was a US Methodist minister with an interest in Buddhism.²⁶ W Rahula was a Sinhala secular priest and professional scholar.²⁷ Little is known of Amadeo Solé-Leris, except for his book, *Tranquility and Insight*.²⁸

W Rahula dismisses samatha meditative attainments as “... mystic states ... mind-created, mind-produced, conditioned ... have nothing to do with Reality, Truth, Nirvana ... not purely Buddhist. [The Buddha] therefore discovered *vipassanā*” (Rahula, 1959:68). Bh Bodhi, in the Introduction to his translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, writes “the role of serenity is subordinated to that of insight because the latter is the crucial instrument needed to uproot the ignorance at the bottom of samsaric bondage (1995:38 etc). These non-meditating writers regard samatha either as “subordinate” to vipassana or inessential to Buddhist training, at least, in theory.

2.1.2 We may well ask: **If samatha is inessential, why is it included in Buddhist meditation at all?** The answer, for most scholars of this group, is that samatha techniques can sometimes help develop qualities useful in vipassana meditation. Nonetheless, samatha techniques are not as inherently valuable as vipassana techniques. This does not necessarily mean that these scholars are all saying the same thing. Their views seem similar in at least seeing vipassana as the *superior* form of meditation, and that samatha, no matter how helpful it may be, is ultimately *unnecessary* for the task of reaching the path of nirvana.

2.2 SAMATHA-VIPASSANA TERMINOLOGY

2.2.1 On the terms Samatha and Vipassana

2.2.1.1 Terms like “Vipassana Meditation,” “Samatha Meditation,” “Vipassana school,” and so on don’t really exist as discrete Dharma entities but as social realities constructed by their founders, and popularized by teachers and followers. Thus, these “brand names” usually refer to a teacher-centred system of teachings or methods (usually both).

²⁴ **Bodhi** (Jeffrey Block) (1944–), a renowned scholar and successful translator, by his own admission, said that he is unable to meditate due to years of suffering from an inexplicable “karmic” headache. Among his learned papers are “Two styles of insight meditation,” https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_45.html. His own foundation, Buddhist Global Relief, funds projects to fight hunger and empower women across the world.

²⁵ **Henepola Gunaratana** (1924–) earned his PhD in philosophy (diss: *A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation*) from American Univ, Washington DC, and worked as a salaried lecturer in various univs. He published books on the dhyanas (*jhāna*) based on Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhi, magga, such as *The Path of Serenity and Insight* (1985). Like many of the Sinhala monks, he is better known as a scholar than a meditator. He famously wrote that *thinking occurs during dhyana*! (“Should we come out of jhāna to practice vipassana,” 2007. See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6).

²⁶ **Winston Lee King** (1907-2000), US Methodist minister of New England churches, US Army captain and chaplain, interested in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Wrote on Burmese Buddhism: *Theravāda Meditation: The transformation of Buddhist yoga*, 1980.

²⁷ **Walpola Rahula** (1907-1997), Sinhala Buddhist priest, Prof of History and Religions, Northwestern Univ (1964), 1st Buddhist priest to hold a professional chair in the West. His best-seller is *What the Buddha Taught*, 1959. His *Bhikkhuvakage Urumaya* (2nd ed, 1948), tr as *Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974), was a shrill voice in Sinhala racism and Buddhist nationalism, and significantly accelerated the secularization and decline of Sinhala monastic Buddhism in our time.

²⁸ **Amadeo Solé-Leris**, *Tranquility and Insight: An introduction to the oldest form of Buddhist meditation*, 1986.

Hence, even amongst the various Vipassana schools, there are clear variations in how we should meditate and what to look out for. However, once we are familiar with them, we will notice that, despite their curious or unique views, they invariably revert to sutta teachings for verification in matters beyond their ken.

2.2.1.2 The usages of the terms “samatha” and “vipassana,” and “Samatha” and “Vipassana” have already been mentioned [1.1.4.1]. They are often used by academic scholars and Buddhist sects like jerseys worn by opposing players in a friendly game, or uniform in army units committed to protecting the nation. As their teachings deepen and sittings progress, and as curious members of either group, they (most of them surely) will see that they are actually progressing towards the same thing: to enjoy the game, for the love of the country, for the sake of peace and enlightenment.

2.2.2 What is *vipassana*?

2.2.2.1 Hence, we have “**Vipassana schools**,” those that stress the element of insight (*vipassanā*), a word which literally means “seeing (*passanā*) in many ways (*vi*).” Technically, the “many ways” refers to the *rise and fall*,²⁹ and the unending rapid *changes*, that characterize all experiences and phenomena.³⁰ The former refers mostly to “sense-experiences,” that is, the conscious body, while the latter mostly to “mental phenomena” (the mind’s own experiences of itself, such as emotions, memories, visions and so on); but to the adept these descriptions are interchangeable.

2.2.2.2 Echoing the suttas, Vipassana teachers and their followers interpret *vipassanā* as “seeing things as they are,” that is, as arising from various conditions, and ending when those conditions are not present. Whether we like it, dislike it, or ignore it, these are all the workings of our own mind; those external events are merely correlated to our minding but not its causes. By understanding why we *like*, *dislike* or *ignore* these events, we grow in our own self-understanding. This, they understand to be “right view” (*sammā,diṭṭhi*), the first and foremost limb of wisdom training (*paññā sikkhā*) of the 3 trainings, that is, the noble eightfold path.

The common purpose of the Vipassana meditator is to understand how the mind “sees” things (*rūpa*) and “names” (*nāma*)³¹ them, thus creating “names-and-forms” (*nāma,rūpa*), views and imaginings that cloud up our mind as “(mental) proliferation” (*papañca*), a wild jungle of mental objects and thoughts.³² Our task—the highest of renunciations—is to renounce them.³³

2.2.2.3 The Mahā,nidāna Sutta (D 15), for example, distinguishes between how through “minding,” there is conceptual contact (*adhivacana,samphassa*, labelling or naming) of our mental states, conjuring them into virtual reality. Through “sensing” (experiencing on the physical sense-level), there is sense-contact (*paṭigha,samphassa*), recognizing sense-experiences by *naming* them into virtual reality. Behind both levels of experiences, is, of course, the mind itself; for, without the mind, there will be no sense-experiences whatsoever.³⁴

The Vipassana meditator’s task is to have insight (seeing into and through) these twin processes; hence, freeing himself from their machinations and virtual realities, as if freeing himself from the game-world that is samsara. This is known as “directly experiencing true reality,” which is the hallmark of the awakening experience.

²⁹ For a sutta def, see **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,15), SD 5.10.

³⁰ See eg **Phena,piṇḍa S** (S 22.95), SD 17.12.

³¹ The verb is *namati*, “to bend (by naming),” but this is rarely used in normal instructions. Caus, *nameti* and *vinameti*; from which we get *vipariṇāmeti*, “to change (all around, in diverse ways).”

³² See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14 (2); SD 57.1 (2.4.2.3).

³³ See **Atammayatā** (SD 19.13).

³⁴ D 15,20/2:62 (SD 5.17).

2.2.2.4 Vipassana teachers and their followers—like scholars of Vipassana [2.1.1]—tend to read or interpret suttas in terms of insight, with an important difference: the former are committed to its practice internally; the latter study them as external categories. Nevertheless, they are likely to rely on the same textual sources.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22; M 10) is an old favourite with Vipassana practitioners since it does not seem to address dhyanas (*jhānas*)—the signature *samatha* experience—like in other texts. However, although dhyana is not mentioned in this Sutta, it is well known that it is implied and it clearly prescribes many *samatha* practices.³⁵ [2.2.2.6].

2.2.2.5 Another Vipassana favourite is the late canonical **Ratha, vīnita Sutta** (M 24), which lays out the 7 stages of purification (*satta, visuddhi*) through insight.³⁶ The 7 stages and their respective teachings may be listed as follows:

(1) The purification of virtue (*sīla, visuddhi*)

Fully keeping to the moral precepts and training-rules (explained in the Visuddhi, magga in terms of the monastic “4 purifications of moral virtue” (*catu parisuddhi, sīla*)³⁷

(2) The purification of the mind (*citta, visuddhi*)

Overcoming of the 5 hindrances³⁸ through attaining access concentration and full concentration (ie dhyana)³⁹

(3) The purification of views (*diṭṭhi, visuddhi*)

Understanding the 3 characteristics,⁴⁰ etc, of mental and physical phenomena, especially how the 5 aggregates⁴¹ constitute a living being

(4) The purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhā, vitaraṇī, visuddhi*)

Discernment of conditions for mental and physical phenomena⁴²

(5) The purification by knowledge and vision of the path and the not-path (*maggāmagga, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*)

The correct discrimination between the false path of worldly ecstasy and euphoria, and the true insight into impermanence, suffering and non-self

(6) The purification by knowledge and vision of the path (*paṭipadā, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*)

This is a series of insight-knowledges up to the supramundane paths

(7) The purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*)

Knowledge of the 4 supramundane paths (the 4 levels of sainthood), short of arhathood

2.2.2.6 Buddhaghosa structures his magnum opus, **the Visuddhi, magga** (the path of purification) upon these 7 stages of purification, which are, in turn, summarized as the 3 trainings, that is, moral training (1st purification); concentration training (2nd purification); and wisdom training (3rd-7th purifications). Its **chapters** are arranged as follows [with the purifications listed within square brackets]:⁴³

(1-2) Descriptions of moral virtue and ascetic practices [1. the purification of moral virtue]

³⁵ M 10/1:55-63 (SD 13.3). On dhyana and satipatthana: SD 13.1 (4.3).

³⁶ M 24/1:145-151 (SD 28.3).

³⁷ See Vism 1.42-125/15-44.

³⁸ *Pañca nīvarana*, ie (1) sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*ithīna, middha*), (4) restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca, kukkucca*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*) : see **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/-5:121-126), SD 46.55.

³⁹ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

⁴⁰ The 3 characteristics are impermanence (*aniccatā*), suffering (*sukkhata*) and non-self (*anattatā*): see **Atam, mayatā**, SD 19.13 (1).

⁴¹ “The 5 aggregates” (*pañca-k, khandha*), see SD 17, esp (**Dve**) **Khandhā S** (S 22.48/3:47 f), SD 17.1a.

⁴² Cf (**Kaṅkhā**) **Revata S** (U 5.7/60), SD 25.15.

⁴³ The 7 stages of purification are also the bases for the following modern Buddhist works: Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998:187-194; Nānarāma, *The seven contemplations of insight*, 1997.

- (3-17) Descriptions of meditation, dhyanas, and dhyanic powers [2. The purification of the mind]
- (18) [3. The purification of view]
- (19) [4. The purification by overcoming doubt]
- (20) [5. The knowledge of the purification by knowledge and vision of the path and the not-path]
- (21) [6. The purification by knowledge and vision of the way]
- (22-23) [7. Purification by knowledge and vision]

Despite the 7-purification formula being traditionally taken to epitomize vipassana, Buddhaghosa includes detailed analyses of meditation and **the dhyanas** in chapters 3-11 of his tome. In other words, he includes both *samatha* and *vipassana* in the Visuddhi, magga. [2.1.1.1, 2.2.1.2]

2.2.2.7 In short, a Vipassana teacher, in contrast to a Samatha teacher, may instruct his students to ignore or “let go” of all mental images by simply observing their rise and fall, and sometimes focusing attention on *a particular area of the body*, such as nose-tip or the abdomen. By allowing attention to settle there, it is possible to observe and analyze *the rise and fall* of physical, mental and emotional phenomena. For most Vipassana practices, it is important not to allow the attention to dwell on a feeling, but rather to mindfully “watch” in an analytical manner a sense-impression, an idea or an emotion as they arise, thus attending to a wide range of mental objects.

2.3 BURMESE VIPASSANA

2.3.1 Burmese Buddhism and early Vipassana

2.3.1.1 Burmese Buddhist meditation must have started with the arrival of Buddhism in the country.⁴⁴ But little is known about Burmese Buddhism, especially meditation, before the 10th century, when, apparently, meditation had started to decline and was hardly practised, partly because of social circumstances, fueled by the belief that the Dharma-ending age had arrived. This meant that, for most people, meditation would be difficult and ineffective until the advent of the next Buddha, Metteyya—millennial beliefs fueled by troubled and uncertain times.⁴⁵

One of the earliest challenges against this notion came from **Medawi**, a monk who was said to have taught Vipassana in the late 18th century [2.3.1.3 f]. From such records, we can only be certain of the overlapping theories, but we cannot be sure of whether the Vipassana of that early period was identical, or even similar, to the kinds of Vipassana we see today. Often such practices seem to have been introduced by “wizards or shamans” (*weikza*).⁴⁶ They probably taught and practised a mixture of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna magic.⁴⁷ For this reason, it is wise to define ‘Vipassana’ broadly for our historical survey and analysis. [2.2.1.2]

⁴⁴ Pali chronicles record that Indian emperor Asoka sent 2 Indian monks, Soṇa and Uttara, to Suvaṇṇa, bhūmi, “the land of gold,” in 228 BCE. This may be either Thaton in lower Burma or Nakhorn Pathom (56 km west of Bangkok) in Thailand (Sujato, *Sects and Sectarianism*, 2012:34). See also H G Q Wales 1969:10 f; G H Luce, “The advent of Buddhism to Burma,” 1974:119-138; Smith & Watson 1979:10 f; f r Allchin 1989:1-16, 1990:163-173; Cousins 1997c:186 f; J Stargardt 1990 (rev K R Norman, JRAS 1992).

⁴⁵ On Metteyya and his coming, see **Cakka, vatti Sīha, nāda S** (D 26/3:58-79) + SD 36.10 (4). From mid-16th cent to 1635, much of Burma was unified as the **Pagan** kingdom by the ruling Toungoo (or Taungoo) dynasty, and it included the Shan states (including the Chinese Shan states), Manipur, northern Siam and Lan Xang. This was followed by the Restored Toungoo Dynasty (1635-1752). This was followed by the “3rd Burmese Empire,” under the Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885).

⁴⁶ *Weikza*, Burmese for (P) *vijjā*, “knowledge,” but here with the special sense of “supernatural knowledge, magic.”

⁴⁷ Initially, Burma was dominated by an eclectic Buddhism called Ari Buddhism, which incl Mahayana and Vajrayana elements as well animist practices like nat (tutelary spirits) worship and influences from Brahmanism. G Coedès, *The making of South East Asia*, Univ of California Press, 1956:113; Niharranjan Ray, *Theravada Buddhism in Burma*, 1946:148-150. On nat or spirit worship, see Y Rodriguez, *Nay-Pwe: Burma’s Supernatural Sub-Cul-*

2.3.1.2 One of the earliest accounts we have of **Vipassana** being taught and practised in Burma centred around the figure of the monk—perhaps a shaman (*weikza*), **Waya-zawta**, who lived in the Sagaing Hills in Upper Burma during the reign of king Maha-dhamma-yaza-dipati [Mahā,dhamma,rājā-dhipati] (1714-1754; r 1733-1752), the last king of the declining Nyaung-yan (Restored Toungoo) dynasty. Waya-zawta’s monastery was located just across the Irrawaddy from the royal capital, and there he started a Vipassana movement in the 1720s-30s.

Waya-zawta claimed to have attained once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*),⁴⁸ promised that through his meditation method, practitioners could attain streamwinning, once-returning, even non-returning. When he died, however, his movement was suppressed by the king. The scholar-monk **Monywe Sayadaw** (1767-1835) records this a century later:

An elder monk named Waya-zawta, who lived in the village of Watchek, used to preach to followers of his doctrine that they had become *ariya sotāpannas*. Many monks and laymen became his disciples and soon they could be found in every town and village of Upper and Lower Burma declaring, “I have become a *sotāpanna*, I have become a *sakadāgāmi*!” After Waya-zawta died, an investigation was held of monks dwelling at his place who continued to preach his doctrines. When these monks admitted to their teachings, the king had them defrocked and ordered them to shovel elephant and horse manure [in the royal stables].⁴⁹

The reasons for the king’s suppression could not have been religious, since he only made his move after the monk’s death. Moreover, the king did not harass any other monks, such as Medawi, a zealous champion of Vipassana [2.3.1.3]. Clearly, his suppression of Waya-zawta was out of political concerns. The movement had grown large, with numerous people claiming to have attained those high stages. Such people might have considered themselves above the king, and they could have easily attracted supporters to foment an insurrection. Even though the king had claimed Bodhisattva status (a common claim amongst kings), in Theravada, he was still a “worldling” (*puthujjana*), and hence below the saints, who were “nobles” (*ariya*) on a spiritual level. Such notions of superiority above the king were taken to be *lèse-majesté*, especially at a time when the king was threatened from all sides.⁵⁰



Fig 2.3.1 Cover of *Satugiri Shu-bwe kyam*

2.3.1.3 After king Mahā,dhamma,rājādhipati’s suppression of Waya-zawta’s Vipassana movement, there was a civil war that ended the Nyaung-yan dynasty (1599-1752). It was at this time that a young scholar-monk named **Medawi** (lay-name, U Sine, 1728-1816) titled Satu-giri (four mountains) Sayadaw [Sayardaw], that is, **Medawi 1**,⁵¹ began writing Vipassana manuals, based on the Abhidhamma, in vernacular Burmese.⁵² These were probably the earliest known practical Vipassana manuals in Burma. A learned and prolific writer, he completed his first treatise (ရှုဘွယ်ကျမ်း: *shu-bwe kyam*)⁵³ in 1754,

ture, Edinburgh: Kiscadel, 1912; R C Temple, *The Thirty-seven Nats: A phase of spirit worship prevailing in Burma*, London: W Griggs, 1906; M Spiro, *Burmese Suipernaturalism*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

⁴⁸ On once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), see SD 10.16 (12).

⁴⁹ Monywe Sayadaw, *Mahā-yazawingyaw*, c1830:177 f.

⁵⁰ Lieberman 1984:194 f; Pranke 2010:455-457; De La Perrière et al (eds), *Champions of Buddhism*, 2014.

⁵¹ According to Rev Nandacara of Mogok (Myanmar), there were at least 3 Burmese monks of repute named **Medawi**: **Medawi 1** (1728-1806) AKA Satu-giri (four mountains) Sayadaw [Sayardaw]; **Medawi 2** (1788-1863) AKA Pyay Sayadaw, the 9th Nyaung Kan Sayadaw; **Medawi 3** (1864-1933) AKA Nyaung Lun Tawya (Forest) Sayadaw (Houtman, 1990a:291). The monk here is **Medawi 1**. His father became a monk when he was only 2.

⁵² Cf Ledi Sayadaw, who, on U Hpo Hlaing[’s advice, also wrote in vernacular Burmese [2.3.3.4].

⁵³ In Pali, *gantha*, *pakarāṇa*.

when he was only 26, which was the 2nd year of the new Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885).

Medawi 1 wrote a number of other treatises, such as the *Nāma-rūpa-nibbidā Shu-bwe*⁵⁴ (analysis into repulsion towards name-and-form, 1756), wherein he criticizes the defeatist attitude of the general populace of his times regarding the inefficacy of meditation and impossibility of awakening in one's lifetime. He taught that the Dharma-ending occurs only on a personal basis, that is, for those who do not practise.

In his *Satu-giri Shu-bwe Kyam* (the four-mountain treatise), Medawi 1 writes:

Should anyone ever believe, "I am unable to practice even so much as is necessary to attain the path and fruit of stream-entry!" ... and being content with the moral purity so attained, not engage in any further practice, then for that person it can be said that the religion of practice has gone extinct.

(Medawi 1968:59)⁵⁵

2.3.1.4 Medawi wrote over 30 treatises (*shu-bwe kyam*), related to meditation, centering his teachings on the 3 universal characteristics (impermanence, suffering, nonself)⁵⁶ in relation to the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness).⁵⁷ Amongst such treatises were Amatasopāna (the steps to the death-free), Amatadvāra (the door of the death-free), Dhammapiya (loving the Dhamma), Sanātha (with a refuge), Dhammanibbinda (Dhamma for repulsiveness), Rāja-kyaymone (royal mirror), Nāma-Rūpa Nibbinda (repulsiveness of name and form), Namotassa Ganbīra (his last work).⁵⁸

Medawi's teachings on *the possibility and urgency of meditation and awakening in this life* have a positive influence on many in Burmese Buddhism even to this day. On account of his remarkable works and teachings, he may be regarded as the true founder of the Burmese Vipassana tradition. King Bodawpaya (r 1782–1819), the 6th Konbaung king and one of the dynasty's most religiously active and innovative monarchs, conferred on him a royal title, Munindābilaṅkāra Saddhammasāmi Mahā Dhamma Rājaguru, and a monastic endowment for his work on Vipassana.⁵⁹ [2.3.5.2]

2.3.2 Pre-modern Vipassana in Burma

2.3.2.1 Before Medawi's time, meditation was hardly taught, even less practised. It was like tiny puddles of water scattered far and wide in the hot searing sun, with hardly enough water to flow and nourish the land and life (to use Htay Hlaing's rhetoric). After Medawi, there was an encouraging number of meditating monks in every generation. There were, for example, Htuhkaung Sayadaw (1798-1890) and Hpongdawgyi U Thila (1832-1907). Rain, as it were, began to fall, turning the puddles into small channels of water.

Then, from the forests and mountains more water flowed down: Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923), Theichadaung Sayadaw (1871-1931) and Mohnyin Sayadaw (1872-1964). The streams grew into flooded rivers, which then flowed like the Irrawaddy: there were Mingun Zeidawun Sayadaw (1869-1954),⁶⁰

⁵⁴ In Pali, this is *Nāma.rūpa,nibbidā Vipassanā Gantha*.

⁵⁵ As seen in the facsimile of the here

⁵⁶ On the 3 characteristics, (*ti,lakkhaṇa*), see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).

⁵⁷ On the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), see (**Upādāna**) **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56), SD 3.7; SD 3.7 (6+7). For details, SD 17

⁵⁸ I am deeply thankful to Rev Nandacara (of Mogok, Myanmar), currently doing his MA in Buddhist Counseling with Hong Kong University (2022), for providing me with details of Medawi (Satu-giri Sayadaw). See also Houtman 1990:291 f; P A Pranke, "[On saints and wizards](#)," *J of the International Assoc of Buddhist Studies* 33,1-2, 2011:457-459.

⁵⁹ Htay Hlaing 1973:113.

⁶⁰ Or Thaton Zeidawun Sayadaw (1870-1955).

Sunlun Sayadaw (1877-1952), Kanni Sayadaw (1879-1966), Webu Sayadaw (1895-1977), Mogok Sayadaw (1899-1962) and Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982).⁶¹

2.3.2.2 The British annexation of Lower Burma, which began in 1824, started the 3 **Anglo-Burmese Wars** (1824-1855), which culminated in the conquest of Upper Burma in 1885, so ending Burmese imperial rule. The British colonized Burma until she gained independence in 1948. In important ways, colonization helped modernize Burma, and also exposed the British to Burmese culture and Buddhism. Foreign rule also stirred a sense of urgency in some perceptive Burmese that their nation and Buddhism needed to be strengthened; hence, the notion that **“to be Burmese is to be Buddhist.”**⁶²

2.3.3 Ledi Sayadaw’s early years

2.3.3.1 From amongst this constellation of stellar monastics [2.3.2.1], the name of the famous scholar-practitioner monk, **Ledi Sayadaw** (1846-1923),⁶³ shines brightly to this day, guiding us with his reformist ideas and numerous works. He was born 4 decades before the British overran Upper Burma in 1885. His mature formative years as a monk were spent in a colonized country, which ended royal control of the country and patronage of Buddhism.

Ledi was troubled by the British refusal to play the role of sangha patrons and monitors, while subtly privileging missionary Christianity and Western education. This milieu of apprehension and foreign domination, as shown in Erik Braun’s insightful study, *The Birth of Insight* (2013 ch 1), led Ledi to promote widespread study of Buddhist teachings and, eventually, meditation, even amongst the laity, as a means of protecting and propagating Buddhism and the nation.



Ledi Sayadaw

2.3.3.2 One of the cultural factors favouring Ledi’s intellectual mission was the high literacy rate of the people. Even in pre-colonial times, male education was stressed in the traditional monastic system. During colonial administration, the female literacy rate rose dramatically, too, especially with the founding of the Government High School in 1874, which became University College, Rangoon, in 1876. Burma’s current literacy rate is well above 90% (similar to Thailand’s).

Printing was already introduced into Burma before Ledi’s time,⁶⁴ by Catholic priests in 1773. In 1776, the Propaganda de Fide press (Rome), the missionary arm of the Roman Church, published *Alphabetum Barmanum* (on the Burmese alphabet) in preparation to spread the Christian God’s Word in Burmese.⁶⁵

In 1807, the Serampore Mission (a British Baptist mission in West Bengal) extended its work into Burma. The Mission’s press had printed several works in Burmese font, notably Scottish linguist John Leyden’s *A Comparative Vocabulary of the Barma, Malāyu and T’hái Languages* (1810), which features

⁶¹ Htay Hlaing, *Yahanda hnin pouku htu mya*, 1981:33. Houtman, “The Burmese Wipathana meditation tradition selfconscious,” 1985:88. Also: <https://www.vridhamma.org/Ven-Ledi-Sayadaw>.

⁶² *Buddha batha bama lou myo*, lit, “We Burmese are Buddhists.” To be Burman and to be Buddhist was a way of distinguishing the majority of **Burmans** (or Banmar) from other groups along ethnic, religious, and political lines: Mon, Shan, Karen, Kayah, Rakhine (Arakanese), Kachin, Chin, Karenni, Kokang Chinese, and other minority groups. Schober, “To be Burmese is to be Buddhist,” in Schober (ed), *Theravada Buddhism in Colonial Contexts*, 2018: 21-41; Ava Rezai, “To be Burmese is to be Buddhist”: <https://centerforcontemporarybuddhiststudies.wordpress.com/2016/09/19/to-be-burmese-is-to-be-buddhist-the-root-of-buddhist-extremism-among-monks-and-the-laity-in-contemporary-burma/>.

⁶³ His lay name was Maung Tet Khaung, and his monk name was Bhikkhu Ñāṇadhaja. For sources, see Houtman 1990:287-289. Biography: https://host.pariyatti.org/treasures/A_Short_Biography_of_Ledi_Sayadaw.pdf.

⁶⁴ <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-16/issue-2/jul-sep-2020/earlyprinting>.

⁶⁵ <https://welcomecollection.org/works/bdvcpuu4>,

both Burmese and Jawi scripts, and *A Grammar of the Burman Language* (1814) compiled by Felix Carey, the eldest son of the Baptist minister William Carey.⁶⁶

The first American Baptist, Adoniram Judson, arrived in 1813, and set up the American Mission Press in Rangoon: it produced some of the earliest printed works in Burma. The Burma Herald Press, the first commercial press, set up in 1868, made widely available general works, legal texts, moral tracts and popular Burmese plays (*pya-zat*).

In 1868, Philip Rey, born in Burma, started **the Hanthawaddy Press** in Rangoon, which became a leading publishing house in Burma in the early 20th century, known particularly for its publication of Burmese classics and Buddhist texts, including the Tipiṭaka. In 1864, the first royal printing press was set up in Mandalay by king Mindon.⁶⁷

Young Ledi, lay-name Tet Khaung, was only 18 then. Two years later he became a monk, **Ñāṇa-dhaja** (the flag of wisdom), at the prestigious Thanjaun monastery, the country's leading Buddhist institution. His enthusiasm and brilliance quickly caught these senior monks' eyes, and he was given the task of being a teacher. At this time, printed books were just beginning to become widely available in Burma, and he learned to love the books, and read wisely and avidly.

2.3.3.3 Ledi's formative years were the fertile period when Burma's penultimate king, **Mindon** (r 1853-1878), was working hard to modernize the country, at first through Buddhist learning, and then with wider worldly learning, including modernizing the country to counter western hegemony.⁶⁸ At the forefront, with modern ideas of sweeping reforms, was the king's closest confidant, **Hpo Hlaing** (1830-1883),⁶⁹ his minister of interior (Atwinwun) (when he was only 28), deeply learned in politics, mathematics and Buddhist philosophy, and a keen student of western scientific knowledge, with his own sizeable library of Western books.

Exploiting his status as a monk, Ledi repeatedly visited the busy minister until the latter, perhaps exasperatedly, asked why he kept coming. Ledi replied that he wanted to be skilled in literature like the minister.⁷⁰ Since then they became close friends, and Ledi benefitted from modern learning and western culture from the Burmese Renaissance man.

2.3.3.4 Ledi was clearly well aware of Burmese current affairs, foreign threats, and the benefits of modern learning, western science and technology. Two things are especially worth mentioning. Firstly, he gave up writing in the traditional style, dominated by the use of colourful, repetitive and rhyming words for rhetorical effect. Secondly, he used a very readable and well written style clearly stating the related doctrines and suttas so that they are effectively modern Burmese commentaries on the early teachings. It was on Hpo Hlaing's advice that Ledi rejected the old style and wrote in a "succinct and clear" modern (that is, a vernacular) manner.⁷¹ [2.3.5]

2.3.3.5 **Hpo Hlaing** had an Italian textbook on anatomy translated into Burmese: *Anātamī ca so roma nuiṇ' nām*. After a study of this book, Hpo Hlaing reconciled the traditional Buddhist understanding of human anatomy to his new knowledge. He broke down the human body into its component parts as detailed in the suttas and Abhidhamma. He discussed the 28 most basic elements of matter

⁶⁶ <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-16/issue-2/jul-sep-2020/earlyprinting#fn:2>.

⁶⁷ <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-16/issue-2/jul-sep-2020/earlyprinting#fn:7>.

⁶⁸ In many ways, Mindon's contemporary, king Mongkut (r 1851-1868) was more successful in modernizing Siam, so that she was free from colonization, the only SE Asian country to be so.

⁶⁹ For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pho_Hlaing.

⁷⁰ Hla Pain 1967:63 f; Aung Mon 2007:163.

⁷¹ Hla Pain 1967:64-66; Houtman 1993:203; Aung Mon 2007:163 f; Braun 2013:21-23. Cp Buddhadasa's similar style of speaking Dharma [5.6.4].

(*rūpa*) and the 32 body-parts, as well as **the *kalāpa*** (molecular clusters),⁷² the late Abhidhamma concept of atomic particles comprising the 4 elements (*mahā, bhūta, rūpa*). This became his encyclopaedic Vipassana work, *Meditation on the Body* (Kāyanupassanā kyaṃ) (1875).⁷³

Clearly, this book had a profound influence on Ledi, and, surely, on the Burmese Vipassana tradition, too. The *kalāpa* doctrine, explained in Hpo Hlaing's tome, features prominently throughout the various Burmese Vipassana meditation methods even to this day [2.4.2.2].

2.3.4 Ledi Sayadaw's monastic learning

2.3.4.1 Ledi was a precocious child. Even as a novice, he mastered both the brahminical Vedas, and the Dhamma and Abhidhamma. By his 8th monastic year (*vassa*) as a monk, he had passed all the monastic exams and became a Pali teacher in San-Kyaung monastery (Mahā Jotik'ārāma), Mandalay.

After another 8 years, in 1882, when he was 36, he left for Monywa, in Sagaing.⁷⁴ After teaching in the day, he crossed the river to the west bank to spend the night in meditation in a small monastery beside the Lak-pan-taung mountain. It was probably during this period that he mastered Vipassana, focusing on the breath (*ānāpāna*) and feelings (*vedanā*).

2.3.4.2 In 1886 (the year after the British overran Upper Burma), Ledi went into retreat in **the Ledi forest** (hence, his toponym), just north of Monywa. Over time, a growing number of students came to study under him. In due course, the Ledi-tawya monastery was built to house them. He retained his habit of retiring to his small vihara (monastic residence) across the river for his own meditation. [2.3.3.1]

At the turn of the century, the layman **U Po Thet** (1873-1945) came to him and learned Vipassana. Ledi Sayadaw inspired him to work as a lay Dharma, dhuta: he came to be known as Saya Thetgyi⁷⁵ [2.4.6]. He, in turn, taught Vipassana to **U Ba Khin** (1899-1971),⁷⁶ who then taught it to S N Goenka (1924-2013), who popularized it to what it is to this day.⁷⁷

2.3.5 Ledi's writings

2.3.5.1 Ledi Sayadaw wrote a total of **76 manuals** on Dhamma, Abhidhamma and insight meditation,⁷⁸ in Pali and in vernacular Burmese for the benefit of ordinary folks. His best-known manuals (in Pali) are the *Pāramattha Dīpanī* (the manual of ultimate meaning; 1880, 1897)⁷⁹ and the *Ānāpāna*

⁷² *Kalāpa* or *rūpa, kalāpa*. Abhidhammattha, saṅgaha (Abhs) ch 6 compendium of matter (*rūpa, saṅgaha, vibhāga*), esp classification of matter (§§6-8); tr Abhs: BRS 246 + Table 6.3. Also: Y Karunadasa, *The Theravāda Abhidhamma*, HK: Centre of Buddhist Studies, Univ of HK, 2010:205-223 (ch 15).

⁷³ Rangoon: Hamsavati puṃ hnip' tuik', 1956. This work was done at the request of Salin Myosa, the king's daughter. Houtman, *Mental Culture in Burmese Culture Politics*, 1999:201.

⁷⁴ Monywa (also Monywa or Monywa) is the largest city of Sagaing region, on the east (left) bank of the Chindwin river, c 60 km (97 mi) west of Mandalay.

⁷⁵ *Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal*, Igatpuri, 1998:75-86; <https://www.vridhamma.org/Saya-Thetgyi>. Braun 2013: 156 f. Also: https://host.pariyatti.org/treasures/A_Short_Biography_of_Ledi_Sayadaw.pdf.

⁷⁶ See Houtman, "Beyond the Cradle and Past the Grave," in (ed) Schober, *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, 1997:310-344. Braun 2013:157-159.

⁷⁷ Braun 2013:159 f.

⁷⁸ For a list of Ledi Sayadaw's works and downloads: <http://www.aimwell.org/ledi.html>. Biblio without download: https://host.pariyatti.org/treasures/A_Short_Biography_of_Ledi_Sayadaw.pdf. *Manuals of Buddhism* title downloads: <https://terebeess.hu/english/ledi.html>.

⁷⁹ This book is said to contain his answers to the 20 questions set by San-Kyaung Sayadaw during an examination for 2000 students. He was the only one who answered all the questions satisfactorily. It is also a comedy on Abhidhamm'attha, saṅgaha (Abhs), the best known Abhidhamma summary. Braun 2013: 45-62 (Ledi Sayadaw's Abhidhamma controversy).

Dīpanī (the manual of the breath (meditation), 1904).⁸⁰ Ledi Sayadaw's ideas and works are very close to those of the monk Medawi, who must surely have inspired him [2.3.1.3].

Amongst Ledi Sayadaw's vernacular books are **the *Nwa-myitta-sa*** (a poetic prose letter, 1886) and **the *Go-maṁsa-māṭikā***, which urge people to abstain from killing cows and taking beef, and following a vegetarian diet; and **"On the impropriety of wearing shoes on pagoda platforms [ie, in the temples]"**⁸¹ (1917). His works contain many comments which may, even by our standards, be said to be openly critical and remarkably modern for a Buddhist country steeped in tradition, but they inspired the change and growth for Buddhism in Myanmar then.⁸²

2.3.5.2 Ledi Sayadaw, in his explanation of **the *Ānāpāna-sati Sutta*** (M 118) (the discourse on the mindfulness of the breath),⁸³ gives his most detailed meditation teachings on his Vipassana method. Basically, he allows the option of *not gaining dhyana*, but to move on to cultivate insight (such as reflecting on impermanence). It is such simplification of the meditation technique that made Ledi Sayadaw's method very popular.⁸⁴

He describes how this is done in his ***Ānāpāna Dīpanī*** (a manual of breath meditation, 1904), ch 17, thus:

I shall now show concisely the work of the fourth tetrad.

When can one proceed to Vipassanā?

In the *Ānāpāna-sati Sutta* and the Commentary, the order of practice is to undertake the work of the fourth tetrad only after the attainment of the four *jhānas*. If one can adhere strictly to this order it is ideal.

However, if one finds oneself unable to follow this order of practice one may proceed to insight from the third *jhāna*. It is permissible to proceed to insight also from the second *jhāna*, or from the first *jhāna*, or from access-concentration before *jhāna* is attained, or from the connection stage, or even from the counting stage after the wandering tendencies of the mind have been overcome. (Ledi 2021:21, tr U Sein Nyo Tun)⁸⁵

For a better practical understanding of Ledi Sayadaw's insight method of breath meditation, it is best to study his ***Ānāpāna Dīpanī*** carefully and practise accordingly. This would be very easy when we are already familiar with breath meditation. If not, it is wise to be personally coached by an experienced meditation teacher, so that we can fully benefit from this experience, and understand what is really happening here.⁸⁶

Before we survey the other Vipassana teachers, let us recall the 2 key figures who inspired them. If we regard Medhavi as the founder of the Burmese Vipassana tradition, then, Ledi Sayadaw, for all his Dharma efforts and works must be regarded as **the founder of modern Burmese Vipassana**.⁸⁷ [2.3.1.3]

2.4 VIPASSANA, LEDI SAYADAW AND THE "NEW BURMESE MEDITATION"

2.4.1 Vipassana, pure and dry

2.4.1.1 The Vipassana meditation started by **Ledi Sayadaw** at the end of the 19th century, flourished into the 20th century and to this day. Understandably, this was labelled the "**new Burmese**

⁸⁰ Eng tr, <http://www.aimwell.org/anapanasati.html#>.

⁸¹ Maung Maung 1980:21. Schober, "To be Burmese is to be Buddhist," 2018: 30-32.

⁸² Houtman, "Traditions of Buddhist practice in Burma," 1990a:38; Braun 2013:38 f.

⁸³ M 118/3:78-88 (SD 7.13)

⁸⁴ Braun 2013:137-139.

⁸⁵ For another tr, cf Ledi 1995:405 f @ Braun 2013:138.

⁸⁶ On Ledi Sayadaw's popularization of Buddhist meditation, see Braun 2013:101, 121, 123, 147 f, 164-168, 226 n45.

⁸⁷ Braun, *The Birth of Insight*, 2013:138-142.

meditation” by a scholar.⁸⁸ After Ledi Sayadaw, the “new Burmese meditation” was further developed by **Mingun Jetawan**⁸⁹ **Sayadaw** (U Narada, 1868-1955) [2.4.3.2] and by **Mogok Sayadaw** (U Vimala, 1899-1962) [2.4.3.4]. What is unique and encouraging about this new Burmese method is that it was practised and promoted by both monastics and the laity.

In the 20th century, the new Vipassana was popularised by layman **U Ba Khin** (1899-1971), the monk **Mahasi Sayadaw** (1904-1982), Thai layman (ex-monk) **V R [Vicitr Ratna] Dhiravamsa** (1935-2021) and Indian businessman, **S N Goenka** (1924-2013).⁹⁰ While monastics tend to follow the Vipassana as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw, others, especially those new to Buddhism or meditation, followed Goenka’s method. [2.4.2]

2.4.1.2 The new Vipassana stresses on the attaining of **insight** (*vipassanā*) through **satipatthana** (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the focuses on mindfulness, especially by closely observing bodily changes. Hence, its practitioner is said to be “one whose vehicle is insight” (*suddha, vipassana, yānika*) (Vism 18.5/588).⁹¹ Note that this idea is not really new: it is found in Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhi, magga. Its synonym, the “dry insight” (*sukkha, vipassaka*), is even more common, found in most of the Commentaries (but not in any sutta).⁹² [2.4.5.2]

2.4.1.3 A key traditional teaching unique to Vipassana is that of the 10 “**imperfections of insight**” (*vipassan’upakkilesa*). These are mental states (*thāna*) that appear to be uplifting, even liberating, but are actually “traps” of which a Vipassana meditator are often reminded to be wary.⁹³ They are basically our own reactions to a Vipassana experience which we may mistake for final liberation or for some level of attainment.⁹⁴

The 10 imperfections of insights are those of:⁹⁵

(1) vision of radiance (light-forms)	<i>obhāsa</i>
(2) knowledge (theoretical understanding)	<i>ñāṇa</i>
(3) physical zest	<i>pīti</i>
(4) tranquillity	<i>passaddhi</i>
(5) joy	<i>sukha</i>
(6) determination	<i>adhimokkha</i>
(7) energy	<i>paggaha</i>
(8) heightened awareness	<i>upaṭṭhāna</i>
(9) equanimity	<i>upekkhā</i>
(10) attachment [delight]	<i>nikanti</i>

These imperfections arise only in a beginner or one inexperienced in meditation, who has not yet reached the path of awakening. They are said to “defile” the mind, but this term is not used for any of

⁸⁸ Robert Sharf, “Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience,” 1995:263.

⁸⁹ Burmese *zei-da-wun*.

⁹⁰ <https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/index>.

⁹¹ Braun 2013:139, 162.

⁹² V 6:1291; DA 1:4, 2:512, 3:188, 899, 1032; MA 4:54, 67; SA 1:236, 2:127; AA 1:87, 2:127, 134 f, 147, 149, 3:113, 115, 132, 142, 332, 4:3, 137; KhpA 178, 183 SnA 1:278, 2:548; NmA 2:313; ItA 2:89; JA 3:473; DhA 1:12; ThaA 1:207, 3:208 f; PmA 1:194, 310, 319, 3:563, 584; DhsA 228; PugA 179, 191, 244.

⁹³ A *kalāla* is For Ledi’s discussion on the kalāpas, see Ledi 1995:450 f, but he focuses more on the 4 elements (*dhātu*) that comprise the kalāpas. [2.3.3.4]

⁹⁴ SD 56.22 (8.2.5); SD 32.7 (2.1.3.2); SD 32.10 (2.5.3).

⁹⁵ For explanations, see Vism 20.105-130/633-638; also AA 3:143; Pm 2:100. Cf the 11 mental impurities (*cittassa upakkilesa*), see (**Anuruddhā**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,16-27/3:158-160), SD 5.18, addressed to advanced meditators; also 16 mental impurities given in **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,3-4/1:36 f), SD 28.12, addressed to the sangha at large.

the 10 states [above], first mentioned in the 12th book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, **the Patisambhidā-magga**, a late canonical work, where this decad is first mentioned in a verse (Pm 2:102).⁹⁶

There (in Pm), they are simply referred to as “these 10 states” (*imāni dasa ṭhāṇāni*), described as causing us “restlessness” (*uddhacca*) in the sense of being mental hindrances, which may then “distract and defile” us (*vikkhipati c’eva kilissati ca*). Hence, they are called *vipassan’upakkilesa* by Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhi, magga (Vism 20.105-130/634-638). We should simply “disown” them as they arise—“This is not mine; this I am not; this is not myself”⁹⁷—as taught in the suttas (Vism 20.127).

These teachings form the bedrock upon which the various teachers based their Vipassana teachings, each with their variations on the Vipassana theme. In other words, the differences we see in individual Vipassana teachers are often personal biases or preferences. In realistic terms, no matter how authentic or orthodox these teacher’s teachings may seem to be, at the bottom of it all lies their charisma, and organizational and marketing abilities. At least, this is the case for Vipassana methods and groups. Despite such human differences, when it comes to authenticity and orthodoxy, every teacher would usually agree on these early Buddhist teachings without reservation. These are the classic themes on which these maestros play their masterly variations.⁹⁸

2.4.2 Ledi Sayadaw’s influence⁹⁹

2.4.2.1 Ledi Sayadaw’s ideas and teachings continue to influence us to this day through a lineage of saintly and singular Burmese monks and laymen, almost all of whom taught and kept a good balance between theory and practice in Vipassana: between mindfulness (*thati*, P *sati*) and learning (*athi*, wisdom or knowledge). Even the economic slump in colonial Burma in the 1930s¹⁰⁰ did not deter the rise of Vipassana. Indeed, both Vipassana and nationalism rode the crest of the slump waves. Burma gained independence in 1948 [2.3.2.2].

2.4.2.2 The Burmese social contexts and the personalities of the individual Vipassana teachers throughout the generations shaped Buddhist ideas and methods of Vipassana. It continued to light up the faith of the Burmese, inspired by the wisdom, vision and charisma of Ledi Sayadaw. Through him, Vipassana in Burma developed into a tradition of **mass insight meditation**.

During his lifetime, Ledi Sayadaw taught Dharma and Vipassana to numerous people, monastic and lay. We shall here mention those influential and diligent few who practised Ledi Sayadaw’s Vipassana teachings and helped to develop them into such a mass insight meditation. A common trend in all these teachers is their propagation of the same simplified Abhidhamma approach used by Ledi Sayadaw, particularly the practice of observing of the 4 elements.

2.4.2.3 Ledi wrote 2 special manuals to explain **the meditation of the 4 elements**. The 1st, the *Big Book on Meditation Objects* (*Kammaṭṭhān’ kyaṃ’ krī’*), like his earlier works, stresses the focus on the material elements as the basis for practice, devoting its last 2 chapters to their use by people of mid-dling or keen abilities. His subsequent work, the *New Book on the Meditation Object of the Elements* (*Dāt’ kammaṭṭhāna’’ kyaṃ’’ sac’*), highlights the benefits of focusing on the elements. Ledi explains

⁹⁶ Pm:Ñ 295.

⁹⁷ See eg M 22,26 f/1:138 (SD 3.12); S 22.59,12/3:68 n (SD 1.2). For a study of each of these: “**I**” SD 19.1; “**Me**” SD 19.2a; “**Mine**” SD 19.3.

⁹⁸ For a similar sentiment, with more details, see Analayo 2012:30-42 (ii) Insight knowledges; 42-49 (III) Insight in the early discourses.

⁹⁹ A very helpful scholarly work on the development of the Vipassana movement in Burma and beyond is Erik Braun’s *The Birth of Insight*, 2013. The rest of this section is based on the conclusion of Braun’s book (2013:155-160).

¹⁰⁰ The socioeconomic downturn incl a slump in rice prices between 1927 and 1930 [Ian Brown, *A Colonial Economy in Crisis*, 2005]; Indian-Burmese riots, 1930; and the Saya San rebellion, 1930-1931 [R L Solomon, “Saya San and the Burmese rebellion,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 1969:209-223]; see Houtman 1990a:44.

the arising of the “great elements” (*mahā, bhūtas*) of *earth, water, fire, and wind*, and the nature of the 28 kinds of derived elements (*upādāya, rūpa*).¹⁰¹

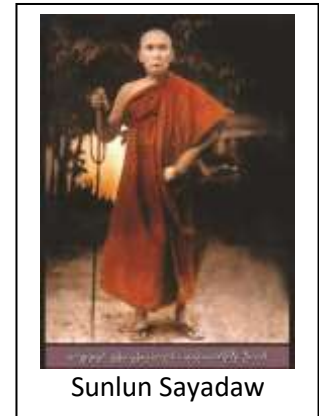
All this formed the basis for his teaching on the *kalāpa*, “molecular clusters,” although he did not make them a part of any meditation. After him, **U Ba Khin** would introduce the practice of scanning the body to observe these basic dynamic units of our being [2.4.8.2]. And then, **Pa-Auk Sayadaw**, in our own time, made it a key practice in his Samatha-Vipassana system [11].

2.4.3 Lone-star Vipassana teachers

2.4.3.1 Ledi Sayadaw may be the brightest star in the Burmese Vipassana constellation. There were a few other bright stars in that very same constellation. One such distant bright star was **Sunlun Sayadaw** (1878-1952), from the cave monasteries of Sunlun village, near Mingyan, middle Burma. He was an unschooled farmer and the fascinating, even macabre, circumstances leading to his renunciation to become a teacher in his own right is recounted by Kornfield.¹⁰²

Sunlun Sayadaw learned—from 2 local friends—the **breath meditation** and to focus on the touch of the breath, and whatever physical action he was doing. On becoming a monk at 30, he retired to meditate in the caves.

He was said to have progressed through all the stages of sainthood over time, and finally attained arhathood itself. Despite his lack of schooling, it is reported that he was able to answer any question related to the Dharma and meditation, and they were always in keeping with sutta teachings.¹⁰³ He was famous for his breath meditation which is described to be strenuous but often bringing quick results.¹⁰⁴



Sunlun Sayadaw



Mingun Jetawana Sayadaw

2.4.3.2 **Mingun Jetawana Sayadaw** (U Narada, 1869-1954) was perhaps the first Burmese monk known to have effected the idea of organizing some kind of group meditation training. He had a colourful ordination history. According to Gustav Houtman, Mingun became a novice at 14 but disrobed at 17 to attend to family affairs. He reordained at 18 (1887), and studied scriptures under a number of monks. After 6 rains (monastic years) he disrobed again. Then, he renounced again at 27 (1896), this time, studying under Aletawya Sayadaw (U Myit-zu-tha). Aletawya’s teacher was **Thi-lon Sayadaw** (U Candima, 1786-1860),¹⁰⁵ whose teacher was **Kintawya Sayadaw** (U Khema).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ledi divides the *Meditation Object of the Elements* into 2 parts. the 1st in Pali and the 2nd in Burmese. In the Pali section, the 1st 3 pages lists the features of each of the 4 elements: (1) *uddesa*, or basic list of the 4 elements; (2) *niddesa* or more detailed description of each element; (3) *paṭiniddesa*, which elaborates on their qualities. The Burmese section contains the *nissaya*, a word-by-word commentary for the Pali. Then follows greater details in Burmese on the elements and how they work together to form physical matter (*rūpa*) [(**Upādāna**) **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56,7), SD 3.7; SD 17.13 (3.3.2.2)]. See Braun 2013: 47 f, 55, 106, 126, 132-136, 207 n91, 216 n19, 220 n64.

¹⁰² Kornfield 1996: ch 6.

¹⁰³ Sunlun Shin Vinaya, *The Yogi and Vipassana* [tr sermons], Rangoon, nd:7; <https://satima.net/buddhist-meditation-the-sunlun-way-by-sunlun-shin-vinaya/> & <http://www.sunlun.com/smme.html>; see Houtman 1985: 104.

¹⁰⁴ Kornfield id; also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunlun_Sayadaw. See esp P P Kyaw, “The sound of the breath,” 2019:1-45.

¹⁰⁵ Houtman 1990:294 f.

¹⁰⁶ Houtman 1990:304.

While training under Aletawya, he developed interest in meditation, especially satipatthana (*tha-di'pathan*).¹⁰⁷ When he was 37 (after 10 rains), he moved not too far away into his own small meditation temple. Mingun became a meditation teacher in 1907, when he was 40.¹⁰⁸ In 1911, with his supporters, he built, in Myo Hla (Shwegu Township, Bhamo Dist, Kachin State), the Myo Hla Bodegon Kamahtan Htana, the first meditation centre for the laity.¹⁰⁹ After teaching there for only 2 rains he left for Thaton, where the Zei-da-wun (Jetawana) was built for him. It was here that he taught Vipassana and wrote about it until his death.

2.4.3.3 Ledi and Mingun were contemporaries: Ledi was 23 when Mingun was born; when Ledi died, Mingun was 54. We have no records (thus far) that they met. However, it is very likely that Mingun who was younger, would have known about the senior Ledi at least by reputation.

Most modern-day Vipassana teachers, especially in Burma, are connected either with the Ledi tradition or the Mingun tradition.¹¹⁰ Mingun was not as charismatic as Ledi, did not write so prolifically, and did not travel as widely as Ledi did. His best-known student, Mahasi Sayadaw [2.4.5], however wrote on Vipassana and made it known worldwide.



Mogok Sayadaw

2.4.3.4 Another lone-star Vipassana teacher, **Mogok Sayadaw U Vimala** (1899–1962), unlike Sunlun, was renowned for his learning, and even put together a meditation method based on a profoundly scholastic analysis of dependent origination. He was deeply learned in the Abhidhamma and even discussed it with U Paduma, one of Ledi's disciples, which means that he had exposure to Ledi Sayadaw's teachings.¹¹¹

Like Mohnyin Sayadaw [2.4.4], he required that his students had sufficient theoretical understanding before going into meditation. His method remained quite popular up to this day in Burma.¹¹²

2.4.3.5 The growing public interest in Burma in Vipassana meditation was evident in the growth in the number of meditation centres in Burma. After independence (1948), with government patronage, Houtman notes that in 1956, the national statistics showed that Mahasi Sayadaw had 216 centres in the country.¹¹³ In the early 1980s, Houtman estimated that the total number of meditation centres of Sunlun Sayadaw, Mogok Sayadaw and Mingun Sayadaw's student, Mahasi Sayadaw [2.4.5] was between 600-700, about half of which was Mahasi's.¹¹⁴

2.4.3.6 In 2005, decades after Mogok Sayadaw's death, a state Tribunal (comprising Sangha elders) decided against some of his teachings as being deviant.¹¹⁵ The Tribunal ruled against some of his meditation teachings. His case was examined by U Visuddha, a State Saṅghamahānāyaka Committee (SSC)¹¹⁶ member. He found 278 occurrences of deviation from canonical norms, mostly related to

¹⁰⁷ Houtman 1990:44.

¹⁰⁸ Houtman 1990:289 f.

¹⁰⁹ Houtman 1985:89; [The Irrawaddy](#) 10,2 Feb 2002:2. (Braun 2013:161 n58 is unclear); this must be Mingun Jetawan Sayadaw (1868-1982), Mahasi's teacher. See Houtman 1985:311.

¹¹⁰ Maung Maing 1980:113 f.

¹¹¹ U The Hluin, *Ra han tā hnañ" pugguil' thū" myā"* [Extraordinary Monks and Lay People], 1993:636.

¹¹² Houtman 1958:203-208, 1990:290; U The Hluin 1993:629-648; Kornfield 1996:209-234.

¹¹³ BSC 1956. *Report on the situation of Buddhism in Burma since January 1955*. Rangoon 1956:17. (BSC = Buddha Sasana Council).

¹¹⁴ Houtman 1985:89 + n12; 1990:259: [NBTA].

¹¹⁵ Mogok Vinicchaya. Tribunal 12, 23 March / 28 May 2005: "The Mogok Judgement" [re minor misinterpretations of the Buddha's teaching in the context of meditation teaching]. Religious Affairs, Board of the State Saṅghamahānāyaka Committee, 2007.

¹¹⁶ For details, see SD 60.1c (1.12.5.1).

incorrect names, place-names and terminology, while some minor errors were in the interpretation of the Buddha's teaching.¹¹⁷

In this case, the SSVC¹¹⁸ (No.12) came to a different kind of verdict, not declaring his teachings as either false doctrine (*adhammavāda*) or genuine doctrine (*dhammavāda*) in the judgement given on 28 May 2005 at Kabar Aye Hill, Yangon. Instead, they stipulated that the headquarters at the Mogok meditation centre should remove and correct the false doctrines from the books and tapes of his teachings.

Also, the headquarters were to prevent any Dharma teacher from using the uncorrected teachings. In other words, rather than declaring the Mogok teachings and movement to be *adhamma*, they allowed them to continue, while requiring significant editing to remove the specific elements they saw as not validated within the Canon.

Perhaps Mogok Sayadaw's extensive national and international following pushed the judges to find a compromise in this particular case. This case has significant implications for meditation centres and movements; for it means that there is a risk of interference from the SSC unless one validates all one's teachings against the Canon, commentaries or the works of established and approved teachers such as Ledi Sayadaw. This adversely affects traditions that are primarily based on practice or experience and forces them to take a more scholastic approach.¹¹⁹

2.4.4 Mohnyin Sayadaw (1872-1964)

2.4.4.1 During the difficult 1930s, Mohnyin Sayadaw stood out as perhaps the most popular monk in Burma. He began his monastic studies and meditative training under Ledi Sayadaw in 1901. During his 10th monastic year (1911), he entered the Mohnyin forest reserve (in Mohnyin district of Kachin State),¹²⁰ from which his toponym title comes.¹²¹ At about 49, he started his meditation practice that went on for 10 years. From 1934 until 1939 (when World War 2 started), he taught every year in Rangoon to crowds of 10-20 thousand people.¹²²



Mohnyin Sayadaw

2.4.4.2 Mohnyin Sayadaw required that his students understand at least some theoretical level of Abhidhamma before allowing them to actually practise Vipassana. This was to ensure that they properly guided themselves in their practice, and also understood as well as possible in theoretical terms what they were experiencing.¹²³ Following Ledi Sayadaw, he also made up simple verses of topics on which he was teaching, making them recite them until they had committed them to memory. In his study notes, he would first list some Abhidhamma theory, and then how to apply it in practice. He often began with what was most obvious: the 4 elements to explain the nature of form, such as the body (*rūpa*).¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ The accuser was U Visuddha (Mandalay). The accused were U Janitālaṅkāra, the head of Mogok meditation centre (Yangon), U Candāvarābhivaṃsa (Yangon) and U Sobhana (Yangon). The 5 members of the SSVC (No. 12) were U Gandhamābhivaṃsa (Thingangyun, Yangon), U Khemindasāmi (Bahan, Yangon), U Obhāsābhivaṃsa (Mandalay), U Sirindābhivaṃsa (Bahan, Yangon) and U Odātasirībhivaṃsa (Religious Affairs 2007).

¹¹⁸ SSVC = State Special Vinicchaya Committee, *naing ngan daw thī: chā: winī: do aphwe*.

¹¹⁹ For details, see Ashin Janaka & K Crosby, "Heresy and monastic malpractice in the Buddhist court cases (*vinicchaya*) of modern Burma (Myanmar)," *Contemporary Buddhism* 18,1, 2017:236-238.

¹²⁰ Kachin is Myanmar's northernmost state, bordered by China to the north (Tibet) and east (Yunnan); Shan State to the south, and Sagaing Region and India (Arunachal Pradesh) to the west.

¹²¹ Hla Pain, (Burmese) *Lay' tī gantha wañ' kyau mya" sa muiñ"*, 1967:341 f.

¹²² Maung Maung 1980:115, 262 n8.

¹²³ Kornfield 1996: ch 11; 2007:199-213.

¹²⁴ Maung Maung 1980:115.

Next, he outlined the 6 kinds of consciousnesses (those of the 5 senses and the mind), that is, in terms of “the mind” (*citta*) how each should be observed for what they really are—very much in the manner that Ledi Sayadaw taught Vipassana.¹²⁵

During the practice itself Mohnyin Sayadaw advised starting with contemplation of the body: “It is through the examination of the body and bodily sensations, especially those involved in various postures, that the yogi can best understand the ultimate Dharma.”¹²⁶ Ledi Sayadaw teaches the observing of physical states changing constantly in one’s movement like a movie frame by frame (in slow motion).¹²⁷

2.4.5 Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982)

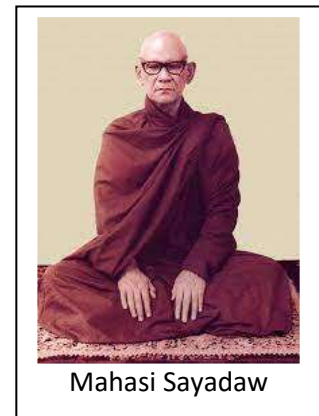
2.4.5.1 Mingun Sayadaw’s most famous student was **Mahasi Sayadaw** (U Sobhana) who became Burma’s best known meditation teacher, largely due to the promotion of his technique by the prime minister U Nu (1960-62). Apparently, Mahasi also studied with Mohnyin Sayadaw¹²⁸ [2.4.4], a student of Ledi Sayadaw, which suggests that Mahasi had direct connections with Ledi. Anyway, it is obvious that he must have himself been familiar with Ledi’s works and methods, too.

In fact, Mahasi, like Ledi, often based his meditation teachings on the Abhidhamma. Although Mahasi put a strict emphasis on a specific technique and included in his introductory teachings, only sparse reference to doctrinal theory (in Dhamma and Abhidhamma), his general approach to teaching the laity was close to that of Ledi’s. **The Mahasi method** is to focus first on observing the breath at the abdomen (on a spot 2-fingers’ breadth above the navel), and then to extend the observation to all the processes of perception through the 6 senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and mind.

Each impingement upon a sense is observed by noting the cognitive event with simple “labelling” before letting it go. Hence, according to Mahasi Vipassana, upon hearing the sound of a door closing, we would simply note “hearing, hearing,” and then let that perception go, and to return to the breath (or move to labeling another perception if one arose immediately). This process is understood to develop a deconstructive moment-by-moment awareness that leads the meditator to directly see into true reality.¹²⁹

2.4.5.2 On the whole, Mahasi’s Vipassana basically follows **the 7 stages of purification** (*satta-visuddhi*) [2.2.2.5] upon which Buddhaghosa structured his Visuddhi, magga in Abhidhamma terms.¹³⁰ The Visuddhi, magga, however, has an important difference. As we have noted [2.2.2.5], Buddhaghosa includes detailed explanations of dhyana cultivation (Vism chs 3-11).

In contrast, the Mahasi Vipassana method is a “**dry insight**” (*sukkha, vipassaka*) or “pure insight” (*suddha, vipassaka*) practice [2.4.1.2] that utilizes only a simple level of momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) [4.1.3.2] as far as samadhi goes. Thus, Mahasi keeps to all the foundational teach-



Mahasi Sayadaw

¹²⁵ Ledi Sayadaw’s teaching on the 6 consciousnesses is found in his Vipassanā Dīpanī (which is not a meditation manual, but a basic handbook of Buddhist mind doctrines) 1915:23 f.

¹²⁶ Kornfield 1996:201.

¹²⁷ See Houtman 1990:290; Braun 2013:6, 84, 142, 147, 156.

¹²⁸ As claimed by Jordt’s informant: “Mass lay meditation and state-society relations in post-independence Burma,” 2007:23.

¹²⁹ Jordt 2007:65.

¹³⁰ For Mahasi’s description of this method, see Mahasi 1979. For 2 compelling personal accounts of the Mahasi method, see E H Shattock, *An Experiment in Mindfulness*, 1958 and Y Rahula, *One Night’s Shelter*, 1985.

ings for the laity as taught by Ledi, keeping to Abhidhamma principles and downplaying concentration, while stressing on observing everyday reality.¹³¹

In fact, the Mahasi Vipassana stresses “**pure insight**” without deep concentration to an even greater degree than Ledi or their contemporary followers did.¹³² Traditional Buddhists see it as gratitude and good taste to keep up with the teachings and practices their predecessors had given. Notwithstanding this, some modern scholars may see that Ledi Sayadaw has profoundly influenced and shaped the Mahasi movement and others who followed.¹³³

Only a modernist Buddhist, conditioned by Western values and categories, would see Mahasi as “lifting” ideas and methods from Ledi Sayadaw. A traditional true-blooded Buddhist would see Mahasi as honouring Ledi by adopting his teachings, just as we follow the Buddha’s teachings. This is not an excuse that “imitation is the best form of flattery,” but rather that of looking up to that teaching as a reflection of the Buddha Dharma that will bring us closer to true reality and real freedom. In this sense, we are taking the teaching above the teacher.¹³⁴

2.4.6 Saya Thetgyi (1873-1945)

2.4.6.1 A direct disciple of Ledi, **U Po Thet**, known as Saya Thetgyi,¹³⁵ is noteworthy because he was one of the earliest examples of a layman empowered by a monk to teach meditation.¹³⁶ It was remarkable that Ledi Sayadaw was willing and able to promote a lay teacher of Vipassana, without being perceived as up-ending the monks. In an important way, he was highlighting the fact that if the laity were willing and able to meditate, even more so should the monks! It also meant that we would have a greater number of teachers—and lay teachers enjoy a greater latitude with the laity than monks do—and would clearly win greater support



Saya Thetgyi

¹³¹ I was fortunate to spend a 3-month Vipassana retreat with Mahasi himself in Dutch architect-artist-philanthropist **Bruno Mertens’** retreat centre (an old orchard), Tidorp (Hogezoom, Burgh-Haamstede), **1979**, when he visited the Netherlands. Sadly, however, in later years, Phra Maha Mettavihari (1942-2007), the charismatic Thai monk who had invited Mahasi for the retreat was expelled from the Waalwijk temple for serial child molestations: <https://www.achtzaamheid.nl/en/vipassana-mahasi-method/culture-of-silence-finally-broken/> [SD 7.9 (4.3.4.1)]. In 1995, Mertens (b 1914) moved with artist Susan Burki to New Zealand to set up Ti Tao (his new centre for art, crafts, healing and meditation) a 6-ha property, in Takou Bay, north of Kerikeri. As I recall, “Ti” is an old Dutch word for “ancient” and “Tao” is Chinese for “path, way” (P *magga*). In the 1930s, he spent 18 months as a monk in Thailand, and since then had never worn shoes, even in the winter snow. In Aug 2008, he donated the property to a Korean nun, Yasala, to turn it into Paññāraṃa (wisdom monastery park) Trust, a centre to teach Vipassana, his one great love. He died on 19 April 2010, aged 96. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/northland/northern-news/8134/Engineer-gifts-property-to-meditation-group>.

¹³² However, differences did rear their ugly heads. Some decades after Ledi’s death (1923), U Ba Khin teachers and Mahasi teachers stopped teaching in the same centre in England mainly because they disagreed on the level or amount of calming practice that students needed to learn (Houtman 1990a:188). The calming prescribed before turning to insight practice in the U Ba Khin/Goenka method is still quite low, usually defined as the ability to keep one’s mind on respiration at the nose-tip for 5 minutes. (Braun 2013:228 n62).

¹³³ On the doctrinal issues relating to Mahasi Vipassana, see Cousin, “The origins of insight meditation,” in *The Buddhist Forum* vol 4, London, 1996c:35-58. On the influence of Mahasi Vipassana in contemporary Thailand, see Cook, *Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life*, Cambridge, 2010; for its influence in Nepal, see LeVine & Gellner, *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal*, Harvard, 2005.

¹³⁴ For sources and details on Mahasi Sayadaw, see Houtman 1990:269 f, 289. On “putting the teaching above the teacher,” see **Puggala-p, pasāda S** (A 5.250), SD 3.14(9).

¹³⁵ Pronounced “saya taji” in Burmese.

¹³⁶ Saya Thetgyi received his first instructions from Theikchadaung Sayadaw, a monk-student of Ledi, but later studied directly under Ledi himself. (Houtman 1990a:284)

from the laity for his reforms and vision of propagating and prolonging the teaching.

As a man of great vision, Ledi clearly understood the problems of a dominant Christianity under British rule. As a perspicacious scholar, he must have known how Buddhism disappeared from India due to the Turkish raids during the 11th century. He must have also known how, ironically, the Jains who upheld non-violence survived the Buddhist holocaust almost unscathed: they had “lay recluses” (*śramaṇôpāsaka*) or lay Dharma teachers who practised and propagated their faith in their own homes.¹³⁷ It is thus not difficult to see why Ledi promoted Thet as a Vipassana teacher.

2.4.6.2 Saya Thetgyi not only taught the laity, but Ledi had him teach the monks, too. He empowered Thet to teach them, saying:

“Take note, all of you. This layman is my great pupil U Po Thet, from Lower Burma. He is capable of teaching meditation like me. Those of you who wish to practice meditation, follow him. Learn the technique from him and practice. You, Dayaka [lay donor] Thet hoist the victory banner of Dhamma in place of me, starting at my monastery.”¹³⁸

By empowering Thet, Ledi was declaring that even the laity can and should meditate. As for the monks, the message was even clearer: since the laity are meditating, monks should do so even more diligently do so. Whether monastic or lay, all should practise so that they attain the path in this life itself. This is **the universal purpose of the simplified Vipassana method**: it is within reach of everyone who is willing and ready to calm and clear his mind for happiness and freedom here and now.

2.4.6.3 However, to this day, no other monk has granted any lay-teacher such a high position—as leader of the lineage—as Ledi. They himself was **a humble and simple teacher**, he never wrote any works on meditation. Upon his appointment by Ledi Sayadaw, Saya Thetgyi responded: “Among your pupils, I am the least learned in the scriptures” (VRI website below), but he was a quick learner, as attested by a biographer:

When he [Thetgyi] died in 1945, he could be confident he had followed Ven. Ledi Sayadaw’s instructions to him. Even though he was not learned in the Pali texts, through his own experience, and with the aid of manuals written by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, he had been able to teach the Dhamma to many. He had thoroughly mastered the texts written by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw and almost knew them by heart. By comparing his own experiences with what was written in them, he had been able to see how he was progressing and teach himself.

(Chit Tin, 1999a; highlights added)

Both Ledi’s teaching and Thetgyi’s training-by-text testify to the power of printed matter and the visual media. We not only have the power of transmitting the Dharma by spoken teaching, that is, by others **hearing** it, but also by personal study of the suttas and by texts written by the meditation teachers for others to follow and practise.¹³⁹

2.4.6.4 This quote [2.4.6.3] highlights the importance of **textual study** as part of Vipassana meditation. Even in the case of Ledi Sayadaw himself, we have seen how the texts—the suttas and the Abhidhamma—acted as teacher. Ledi’s eagerness and ability to learn is, for example, inspiring illustrated by his friendship with Hpo Hlaing [2.3.3.3].

By promoting **textual study** alongside meditation, Ledi Sayadaw was declaring that anyone willing to learn can cultivate his mind and awaken. We are reminded of the young Rāhula, rising in the morning, taking a handful of sand and asseverating: “May I today receive just as much advice from the Buddha, and my preceptor and teachers!”¹⁴⁰ It is on account of such diligence of Rāhula that the

¹³⁷ See SD 36.1 (1.9.2.9).

¹³⁸ See the Vipassanā Research Institute website, <https://www.vridhamma.org/Saya-Thetgyi>. Accessed 14 Jan 2021. In the same website, under “Vipassana meditation” under “The chain of teachers,” we see this listing: “The Buddha, Ven Ledi Sayadaw, U Saya Thetgyi, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, S N Goenka.”

¹³⁹ Braun 2013:22 f, 32 f.

¹⁴⁰ MA 3:134; AA 1:258.

Buddha declared him as the foremost amongst those monks **desirous of training** (*sikkhā,kāmānaṃ*) (A 1:24).¹⁴¹

We should indeed be desirous of learning: the Buddha Dhamma is still with us. When we don't do this, then we are bringing upon us individually our own Dharma-ending. We are effectively throwing away not only our human potential, but relegating ourselves to the subhuman states even in this life itself. Ledi Sayadaw, by his own example, is still guiding us, inspiring, through Saya Thetgyi and Vipassana practice, or any early Buddhist meditation, that awakening awaits us here and now.¹⁴² [2.3.1.1]

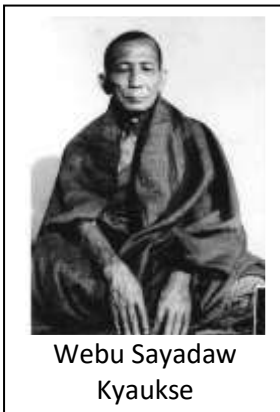
2.4.7 U Ba Khin (1899-1931)

2.4.7.1 U Ba Khin, a layman, began learning from Saya Thetgyi in January, 1937, and became his most famous student.¹⁴³ Both Thetgyi and U Ba Khin were married laymen, each with their own family. Thetgyi, as a **celibate lay renunciant** during his 13-year training with Ledi, lived apart from his family, visiting them only twice during that period.¹⁴⁴ U Ba Khin, however, was a family man with 6 children and working as a government official, going on to become the Accountant General in independent Burma, with a meditation room for workers in his office.¹⁴⁵



U Ba Khin

Like the key actors in this Vipassana saga, U Ba Khin was a man of his times: he worked with the Burmese government in the 1950s with U Nu as the prime minister, when Buddhism and the state were closely linked.¹⁴⁶ In 1952, he set up his own International Meditation Centre, just 2 miles north of the Shwedagon Pagoda.¹⁴⁷ In a significant way, merging his active lay life with regular Vipassana practice made him more “socially engaged” than his teacher Thetgyi, who was a layman fully engaged in meditation practice, teaching and mission.



Webu Sayadaw
Kyaukse

2.4.7.2 U Ba Khin also took instruction from another saintly meditation monk, **Webu Sayadaw Kyaukse** (1896-1977),¹⁴⁸ who was reputed to be an arhat. On account of his humble and reclusive life, fully dedicated to meditation, little is known about him, such as who his teacher was and so on. We do know, however, that his main teaching and practice was breath meditation, which he called “the short-cut to nibbana.”¹⁴⁹

U Ba Khin met him in July 1941. After an interview and meditation sitting, Webu approved of him and instructed him to teach the Dharma. Although Webu is not part of the Ledi Sayadaw lineage, his fame and saintliness added more weight to U Ba Khin's reputation as a teacher familiar with Webu's meditation method.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ SD 3.10 (1.0).

¹⁴² See Houtman 1990:293 f.

¹⁴³ Chit Tin 1999a:18.

¹⁴⁴ Chit Tin 1999a:19.

¹⁴⁵ Chit Tin 2003: 11, 40.

¹⁴⁶ The Burmese government issued a notice on 10 Oct 1950 allowing any government department to set up a Buddhist shrine-room for religious use. (Chit Tin 1999a:49).

¹⁴⁷ Confalonieri, *The Clock of Vipassana Has Struck*, 1999:25.

¹⁴⁸ Kyaukse is his village; his personal monk name was Kumāra,kassapa:

<https://www.vridhamma.org/Venerable-Webu-Sayadaw>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webu_Sayadaw. See Houtman 1990:295.

¹⁴⁹ Bischoff, *Buddhism in Burma*, Kandy: BPS, 2003:4 f

¹⁵⁰ Chit Tin 1999a:32; also <https://www.ubakhin-vipassana-meditation.org/blog/webu-sayadaw-and-sayagyi-u-ba-khin>.

2.4.7.3 Like Ledi Sayadaw before him, U Ba Khin's approach to meditation was very much based on Abhidhamma concepts, and he stressed observation of impermanence in the body. He further simplified the approach and method more than Ledi had done. In U Ba Khin's Vipassana, the focus was on **the kalāpas** rather than the 4 elements, which comprise the kalāpas, an Abhidhamma and commentarial concept not found in the suttas.¹⁵¹ [2.4.2.3]

U Ba Khin taught students to focus on kalāpas because they are evanescent, disappearing almost as soon as they appear, but are understood to be perceivable through meditation. The direct observation of such fleeting states shows that all things are in a constant state of flux. This method is not a dramatic departure from Ledi, but simply a fine-tuning in U Ba Khin's Vipassana.¹⁵²

2.4.8 Ledi Sayadaw and U Ba Khin compared

2.4.8.1 It is interesting to see that although Ledi Sayadaw had given clear and workable teachings on Vipassana, none of the lineage teachers actually followed everything exactly as he had taught them. There was always some variance, even departures or additions, to the method of each subsequent teacher. Yet, such adjustments were actually neither departures from nor disrespect to the founding teacher. They were skillful adjustments of methods and teachings brought to the level of the audience, just as Ledi simplified the Dharma for the benefit of the students of his own days.

2.4.8.2 Hence, there are marked differences between **Ledi Sayadaw and U Ba Khin**, not only in meditation theory, but also in the practice. For example, while Ledi was flexible in his meditation instructions, U Ba Khin—being a civil servant—kept to a rigid timetable for practice throughout the day. As a first-time student or beginner, we were (and still are) required to go through a regimented 10-day retreat where we progressively learn both the more advanced teachings and the meditation method.

At the start, we are to take as many days as we need to be able to do **breath meditation** properly. This is actually simply samatha, based on watching the breath at the nostrils for some inner calm and focus. Then, we go on to **scan the body**,¹⁵³ that is, slowly and attentively sweep over the body bit by bit from head to toes, observing the rise and fall of the kalāpas within it.¹⁵⁴ [2.3.3.4]

This standardized and simplified approach is significantly a technique, diverging from Ledi's combination of textual study with flexible possibilities for practice. Instead, U Ba Khin would say that, through proper practice, the liberating truth of impermanence (*anicca*) "can be developed by persons who have no book-knowledge whatsoever of Buddhism."¹⁵⁵ This is an interesting departure from Ledi Sayadaw's emphasis on textual learning.

2.4.9 A practical Buddhism

2.4.9.1 Unlike Ledi Sayadaw, **U Ba Khin** gave less stress on textual understanding by the laity when doing Vipassana. The emphasis was on the practice rather than on theoretical knowledge. This significantly narrowed down the initial practice in terms of techniques and their application. This theoretical knowledge was the basis for a better understanding of the meditation practice as laid out in the *Manual on Insight Meditation*.

2.4.9.2 On the other hand, this is advantageous for those who are not inclined towards theoretical study or memorizing teachings. The lack of Dharma study may also be less intimidating to non-

¹⁵¹ A *kalāpa* is an Abhidhamma unit of matter, often equated to "a subatomic particle," comprised primarily of the 4 elements. For Ledi's discussion on the kalāpas, see Ledi 1995:450 f, but he focuses more on the 4 elements (*dhātu*) that comprise the kalāpas. [2.4.2.3]

¹⁵² Confalonieri 1999:114. For sources, see Houtman, 1990:284.

¹⁵³ See Analayo, "Buddhist antecedents to the body scan meditation," *Mindfulness* 11 2020:194-202.

¹⁵⁴ For a description of the organization of a 10-day retreat, see Confalonieri 1999:207-218 (ch 8).

¹⁵⁵ See Confalonieri 1999:111.

Buddhists. U Ba Khin felt he had a special mission to reach out to Westerners and others from non-Buddhist parts of the world.¹⁵⁶ For this reason, he called his meditation headquarters **the International Meditation Centre**, and he taught many non-Burmese and non-Buddhists at this centre.

This welcoming of all practitioners regardless of background or beliefs signaled a strict emphasis on practice that downplayed or ignored most aspects of the Theravāda tradition. This strategic openness was a skillful means that U Ba Khin called “**practical Buddhism**” (that is, Buddhism as practice, as meditation, not as beliefs and rituals) which were acceptable and inviting to most people in any religious or cultural context.¹⁵⁷ After all, people were more likely to come with an open mind to him as a layman, rather than if he were a monk. Moreover, a monk was less likely to take such a stand. Anyway, he required that all participants observe the 8 precepts, which helped set and keep the mood of the retreat.¹⁵⁸

2.4.10 S N Goenka (1924-2013)

2.4.10.1 U Ba Khin’s student, **Satya Narayana Goenka** [2.3.4.2; 2.4.1.1], was born in Mandalay, Myanmar, into a conservative Hindu Indian family. He was a successful businessman who suffered periodic migraine since young. In 1955, he suffered severe weekly attacks that left him debilitated.¹⁵⁹ When he failed to find medical relief, a friend suggested he consulted the Vipassana teacher, U Ba Khin. Though initially reluctant, Ba Khin eventually took him in as a student, and Goenka subsequently trained under him for 14 years, that is, until 1969.¹⁶⁰



S N Goenka

2.4.10.2 In 1969, Goenka emigrated to **Mumbai**, India, and began to teach meditation there, first to his family but soon to others who heard about him. His courses, free of charge, were popular with those from other countries, especially young Westerners on the “backpacker trail.”¹⁶¹

He started running the 10-day retreats in India and, with the appointment of overseas teachers, they quickly spread throughout the world with centres in every continent.¹⁶² In 1982, Goenka appointed his first Western-born assistant teachers.

In later years, he himself traveled to Europe and the US to promote his Vipassana meditation. Currently, there are over 120 permanent meditation centers within the Goenka Vipassana network on every continent. Elsewhere, courses were conducted in temporary retreat venues suitable for resident meditators.¹⁶³ [2.4.11]

2.4.10.3 Goenka played down the religious aspects of Vipassana even more drastically than U Ba Khin did. If U Ba Khin’s vision was to reach out to non-Buddhists, Goenka envisioned the whole world as his mission field. Hence, he had to present Vipassana in a manner acceptable, at least non-intimidating, to everyone. In Goenka, we see Vipassana almost as a system in itself, and Buddhism playing only a supporting role, as it were. Perhaps, this is the vision he hoped others would see so that they

¹⁵⁶ Confalonieri 1999:25. No doubt, his being a government official helped in his spreading the message and attracting people to his Centre (Houtman 1997:317).

¹⁵⁷ Chit Tin 1999b:1.

¹⁵⁸ Chit Tin 1993b:53.

¹⁵⁹ “Master of the Dharma: An interview with S N Goenka,” *An Inquiring Mind* 4,1 summer 1987: <http://www.inquiringmind.com/Articles/MasterOfTheDhamma.html>. S N Goenka, *Pioneer of Secular Meditation Movement, Dies at 90*, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, 1 Oct 2013.

¹⁶⁰ “Infinite Devotion towards the Buddha,” *Vipassana Newsletter* (VRI ed) 29,1 21 Jan 2019:2; D M Stuart, *S N Goenka: Emissary of Insight*, 2020.

¹⁶¹ W Cadge, *Heartwood: The first generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*, 2005:35. For descriptions of Goenka retreats among those on the “hippie trail,” see Y Rahula 1985; E Lerner, *Journey Into Insight*, 1977.

¹⁶² Cadge 2005:36.

¹⁶³ See <http://www.dhamma.org/en/alphalist.shtml>. Accessed 15 January 2022.

may practise a **non-religious yet Buddhist meditation**. After all, the test is in the pudding itself: the diner need only to taste it for himself.

2.4.10.4 This is where Goenka was often criticized by traditional Buddhists, especially in the vision of **Buddhism** that he presented to his clients. To him (at least in his words), the Buddha never taught Buddhism or any religion: it was “**an art of living**,” a lifestyle, rooted in the calm and clarity of meditation. This is easy to understand, but when put into words, it can be anything to anyone depending on their biases.

Ledi Sayadaw, in his own time, was one of those to use the term **bokda,batha** (P *buddha,bhāsā*), literally meaning “buddha language,” but which connoted the Buddha religion and culture (like “Christianism” in the West). Ledi spoke of the 4 religions or *batha*: Buddhism, Brahmanism, Christianity and Islam. We must imagine that Goenka was referring to Buddhism as Bokda-batha: we should not impose our culture upon others.¹⁶⁴

In Goenka’s view, then, we should only teach others *how the Buddha himself had lived, meditated and awakened*. In this, Goenka was in total harmony with Ledi’s ideas. And like U Ba Khin before him, Goenka presented Vipassana to the unawakened so that they can meditate and live “like the Buddha,” with physical and psychological wellbeing.¹⁶⁵ One may wonder whether Goenka gave up all his Hindu views [2.4.10.1], or whether they still influenced him and, if so, to what extent? Having lived in Burma and been trained by U Ba Khin, Goenka must surely have a good idea of Buddhism. We must imagine then that he presented Buddhism in the way he understood and accepted it but prioritizing Vipassana in his teaching and courses.

2.4.11 Goenka’s Vipassana rhetoric

2.4.11.1 Celebrity teachers either arise from a **myth** dear to a supportive crowd, or they would weave a myth into the hearts of an admiring crowd. Some become great teachers benefiting practitioners; others rise as Gurus to great heights to fall hard into the very dust they rose from. With the kind of crowd that looked up to Goenka, whatever myth¹⁶⁶ he spun would be readily believed or at least accepted without much thought.

Goenka had created such a myth about the Buddha and his teachings in his Vipassana teachings. He saw himself as the guardian and giver of Vipassana as a “noble heritage” handed down, almost Zen-like, unchanged, yet changing lives, from the Buddha himself:

“Five centuries after the Buddha, the noble heritage of Vipassana had disappeared from India. The purity of the teaching was lost elsewhere as well. In the country of Myanmar, however, it was preserved by a chain of devoted teachers. From generation to generation, over two thousand years, this dedicated lineage transmitted the technique in its pristine purity.”¹⁶⁷

2.4.11.2 Basically, Goenka was stating that the Vipassana (not the Dharma, or even the suttas), as he taught and practised it, went back to the Buddha himself. So far as we know, neither Saya Thetgyi nor U Ba Khin ever made such a claim. It was Goenka’s *own Zen-like transmission, outside the teachings, not dependent on the word, directly pointing to the human mind, seeing one’s own nature*.¹⁶⁸ Clearly, Goenka never had the intention to kill the Buddha. For he (the Buddha) shines peacefully in the hearts of the Vipassana yogis who have benefitted from his teachings and practices in the first place.

¹⁶⁴ On the neologism *bokda,batha* [2.4.10.4], see Houtman 1990b; A Kirichenko 2009:33-36; Braun 2013:85.

¹⁶⁵ W Hart, *The Art of Living*, 1987:18.

¹⁶⁶ “Myth” is here a psychosocial construct by which an individual sees society and history that gives him meaning and purpose in life and his role in society. Indeed, such a vision is what holds a community or society together in an empowering manner. See SD 51.11 (3.1.2).

¹⁶⁷ See <http://www.vri.dhamma.org/general/vipintro.html>.

¹⁶⁸ On how Zen fell victim to its own rhetorical iconoclasm, see SD 40b.5 Transmission outside the scriptures.

It is such a “Zennification” of Vipassana that is said to be “modernist” by way of being “**a rhetoric of meditative experience**.” A scholar would use a word like “rhetoric” here to evoke a polite, perhaps a sarcastic, tone of disapproval. On one extreme, we may muse on this as meaning that Goenka was experimenting with the best strategy of selling Buddhism to the open world; the possibility is that he wasn’t sure how people would react to Buddhism (he saw Buddhism as not immediately appealing to others): hence, when we cannot convert them, let us not confuse them.

To be fair, rhetoric is a wonderful literary weapon, especially when a scholar’s incisive mind is piercingly penned, such as in Robert Sharf’s essay: “Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience” (1995). The sword cuts both ways. The middle way is the joy of inner peace and freedom. It’s one effective way to clear away Buddhism’s thick undergrowth around the Bodhi tree.

2.4.11.3 Clearly then, Goenka’s emphasis was on **method**, not text, and on **authority**, not inquiry: that is, he was in charge. Some may see this as a classic “Indian Guru model.” This is understandable since he was neither a monk nor a cult Guru who would naturally command the respect of his students. Textual study was not encouraged by Goenka probably because he thought this involved reading, thinking and doubting, especially for those new to Buddhism, which would distract them from their practice.

Despite these apprehensions, the Goenka tradition clearly looked up to Ledi as the founding teacher of their lineage, and it often drew from Ledi’s teachings. The method was basically the same as that of U Ba Khin: keeping to a 10-day retreat with progressive instructions and focusing on the kalāpas.¹⁶⁹ [2.5.1.2]

In Goenka’s Vipassana, however, meditation was no longer taught as a “Buddhist” practice, not overtly anyway. Sutta teachings were used by Goenka in his taped lectures during the 10-day retreat, but Buddhism was not mentioned in name. In other words, Goenka was not rejecting the Pali canon altogether, but he was silent on Buddhism as a religion. He was, as it were, going back to the Buddha, giving his Vipassana a non-sectarian tone. In fact, it should be noted that Goenka’s Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) was responsible for the extremely well-done and user-friendly digitization of the Pali canon, the CSCD.¹⁷⁰

2.4.11.4 Goenka’s idea was that Vipassana should be seen as **a universal practice** freely available to everyone, those from all religions or who follow none. He was not preaching to the Buddhists; he was teaching Vipassana to the world, especially to those outside of Buddhism. Indeed, in this he was very successful: his Vipassana centres are now found on every continent [2.4.10.2].

Through Goenka, the Vipassana tradition has grown into a highly influential worldwide movement: Vipassana was even taught in prison programmes.¹⁷¹ Kiran Bedi, India’s inspector-general of Tihar prison (New Delhi), the largest prison complex in Asia, initiated a Vipassana programme for prisoners there, for which she was awarded the Magsaysay Prize¹⁷² in 1994.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ As mentioned, while U Ba Khin highlighted watching the kalāpas, Ledi stressed on the 4 elements [2.4.2.3].

¹⁷⁰ The “Chatṭha Saṅgīti” CD (now in its version 4): <https://www.vridhamma.org/Chattha-Sangayana-Tipitaka-Software>.

¹⁷¹ Vipassana prison missions: <https://prison.dhamma.org/>; <https://www.vridhamma.org/research/Vipassana-in-Prisons>. For a movie based on Goenka’s Vipassana: “Doing Time, Doing Vipassana” (1997): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doing_Time,_Doing_Vipassana. “The Dhamma Brothers” (2007) Prison Vipassana in North America: <https://vimeo.com/386565498>. Prison contemplative programmes: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_contemplative_programs.

¹⁷² Established in 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay Award was founded to preserve former Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay’s example of integrity in governance and idealism in a democratic society. It was funded by the Rockefeller Brothers as trustees with Philippine government’s agreement. <https://www.rmaward.asia/awards>.

¹⁷³ https://www.inquiringmind.com/article/1602_6_bedi-meijer_interview/. Her work inspired the movie: “Doing Time, Doing Vipassana” (1997): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doing_Time,_Doing_Vipassana. “The

2.5 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE VIPASSANA MOVEMENT

2.5.1 Goenka and the IMC teachers

2.5.1.1 Goenka was not the only student of U Ba Khin whom he empowered to teach, or the only teacher to extend the Ba Khin lineage beyond Myanmar. U Ba Khin authorized a number of teachers, including Westerners, such as John Earl Coleman (1930-2012) of the US, Ruth Denison (1922-2015) who ran her centre in the Mojave Desert, California, and Robert Hover of La Mirada, California. In Myanmar, he authorized Daw Mya Thwin (1925-2017), known as Sayamagyi (“revered female teacher”). Sayamagyi went on to teach at **the International Meditation Center, UK**, an affiliate of the original International Meditation Center in Yangon.¹⁷⁴

2.5.1.2 The most successful of these Vipassana teachers clearly was **Goenka**. His method comprised rigorous stay-in retreats of minimum 3 days, most commonly 10 days; in either case, with a minimum of 2 hours sitting daily. For experienced meditators, there are retreats of up to 3 months. The practice focused on the kalāpas [2.3.3.4], alongside progressive instructions. [2.4.11.2]

Courses are free, and donations are accepted. Since, in later years, most of the practitioners are salaried professionals or those with surplus income, and the various centres functioned independently, the movement has had no financial issues. Through Goenka’s efforts, this “Vipassana movement” is now a worldwide network of centres running regular courses with trained teachers and audio-visual instructions by Goenka himself.¹⁷⁵

2.5.1.3 In the early 1980s, Daw Mya Thwin, John Coleman, and other Burmese teachers at the IMC [2.5.1.1], split with Goenka and his followers. The split was, apparently, due to 2 issues. Firstly, Goenka’s refusal to charge for the courses and, secondly, his approval of a newsletter produced by his followers with the statement that meditation was an “art of living.”

Disagreeing with Goenka, the IMC teachers felt that it was acceptable to suggest participants each give a donation. More importantly, they believed the description of meditation as *a way of life*, especially as an ideal way, relegated meditation to be a mundane practice when it is meant to lead beyond this worldly cycle of rebirth.¹⁷⁶

2.5.2 Vipassana in the US

2.5.2.1 In terms of meditation lineages in Myanmar, there are **2 most influential ones**, that is, the Ledi Sayadaw line and the Mingun Jetawana Sayadaw line. Similarly, in the spread of meditation overseas, especially the West, these 2 lineages predominated. However, even as these overseas lineages keep closely to their respective meditation methods, they, especially in the US, largely diverge from, even rejected, the cultural contexts of Myanmar and Theravada.

Scholars of sociology/anthropology of religion tell us that a nation’s or community’s **culture** is neither monolithic or fixed. Culture is about how people live, experience life and make sense of things: we tell stories about our heroes, invent myths about how or why we do things, we celebrate significant events, we communicate our history, ideas, feelings, emotions and thoughts in idiosyncratic ways, and so on.

Understandably, meditators, even Buddhists, in a different culture, are likely to find it meaningless, irrelevant or difficult to adopt the ways native to the Theravada countries. Some cultural features like caste distinction and deva worship in Sri Lankan Buddhism, time-conception and nat-worship in

Dhamma Brothers” (2007) Prison Vipassana in North America: <https://vimeo.com/386565498>. Prison contemplative programmes: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_contemplative_programs.

¹⁷⁴ Chit Tin 1999a:125 f. For a list of teachers authorized by U Ba Khin:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayagyi_U_Ba_Khin.

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/index>.

¹⁷⁶ Mya Thwin, John E Coleman, Tint Yee & Ba Pho. 1982. “A Notice of Clarification.” *Vipassana Newsletter*, IMC-UK spring 1982:1-3.

Burmese Buddhism, and royal language and spirit-worship in Thai Buddhism, power distance in Malaysia,¹⁷⁷ and class-defined status in Singapore,¹⁷⁸ simply would not be acceptable in other Buddhist communities, especially in the West.

2.5.2.2 As Buddhism seeps deep into new communities, especially in the West, the tension between such cultural traditions and idiosyncrasies, and local cultures (such as that of the US, which is itself diverse), needs to be resolved. Western society has for centuries been crushed by Roman dominance, Christian indoctrination and European imperialism; they have fought devastating religious wars, suffered injustices, and laboured with education, science and social justice to enjoy their current freedom.

They would not so quickly and easily accept even the teachings of Ledi Sayadaw and other teachers that Asian Buddhists look up to; they may even reject those Buddhist teachings that we take for granted but which they see as cultural or alien to their culture. We need diligence and dexterity to present such teachings to appeal to both their minds and hearts, and we can best do that with the Buddha's teachings that bring *insight, peace and freedom* to them.¹⁷⁹

2.5.2.3 The most successful Vipassana (or insight meditation) movement in the West centres on **the Insight Meditation Society (IMS)** (Barre, MA, in the USA),¹⁸⁰ which is rooted in the "new Burmese meditation" [2.4] starting with Ledi Sayadaw, and the Thai forest tradition of **Ajahn Chah** [3.3.1] of the famed forest tradition of NE Thailand. The IMS, run fully by lay Buddhists, has grown into a renowned centre for Theravada practice and learning, with regular meditation and Dharma courses run by a wide range of teachers, mostly lay.¹⁸¹

In 1985, a group of meditation students and teachers, including Jack Kornfield, incorporated the Insight Meditation West in Northern California. In 1986, Kornfield and his family moved to San Anselmo, CA, where he gave regular meditation classes. In 1988, an anonymous donation went to the purchase of a 412-acre undeveloped land in the San Geronimo Valley (about an hour north of San Francisco). In 1998, it opened as **the Spirit Rock Meditation Centre** with a residential retreat.¹⁸²

2.5.2.4 The IMS approach, inspired mostly by founder Jack Kornfield's vision, is to "provide a secluded retreat environment for the practice of meditation in the Theravada Buddhist tradition."¹⁸³ More recently, the IMS revised their mission statement to read thus: "We offer meditation retreats and online programs rooted in the **Early Buddhist teachings** of ethics, concentration and wisdom."¹⁸⁴ This shift in emphasis significantly highlights the IMS's focus on Buddhism *as taught by the Buddha himself* without the later additions and cultural baggages.¹⁸⁵

Goldstein explained: "I'm not so concerned with any labels or the cultural forms of the tradition, although I do appreciate the many ways the dharma has evolved in Asian cultures. Instead, what in-

¹⁷⁷ Malaysia, in 2012, had a staggering 104 points on the Hofstede power distance index (PDI), the highest in the world then, an extreme that is traceable to the influence of British colonialism and a legacy of the Malay feudal system.

¹⁷⁸ In Singapore, command of Buddhism is defined by social status, titles (Dr, etc) and wealth (esp amongst the affluent younger generations who distance themselves from those of "lower classes," wealth-wise).

¹⁷⁹ Cadge 2005:11 f.

¹⁸⁰ Founded in 1975 by Jack Kornfield (b 1945), Joseph Goldstein (b 1944) and Sharon Salzberg (b1952) in 1975. IMS premises comprise Retreat Centre (1230 Pleasant St, Barre MA 01005) & Forest Refuge (97 Lockwood Rd, Barre, MA 01005). It also runs IMS online. See IMS setup and activities: <https://www.dharma.org/>; Braun 2013: 162-166. In 1991, Goldstein and Salzberg founded Barre Center for Buddhist Studies (BCBS), focusing on the study aspect of Buddhism. It is located about ½ mi away from IMS at 149 Lockwood Rd, Barre, MA 01005.

¹⁸¹ For refs, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vipassanā>.

¹⁸² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_Rock_Meditation_Center.

¹⁸³ From a 1-pg 1976 flyer: Cadge, *Heartwood: The first generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*, 2005: 29.

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.dharma.org/about-us/mission-and-values/>.

¹⁸⁵ Cadge 2005:29 f; Braun 2013:163.

spires me is the connection with the original teachings of the Buddha—with what, as far we know, he actually taught during his lifetime.”¹⁸⁶ The IMS, above all, prioritizes **meditation** as the heart of the Buddha’s original teachings—often neglected by Asian and ethnic Buddhists who tend to see Buddhism as a calendar of cultural beliefs, religious rituals and church-like socialization.¹⁸⁷

2.5.2.5 The IMS offered teacher-led courses and self-retreats in “**insight meditation**,” that is, Vipassana, in the Burmese tradition of U Ba Khin and Mahasi Sayadaw [2.4.11] and the Thai forest tradition of Ajahn Chah [5.12].¹⁸⁸ Goenka [2.4.10] was conspicuously absent from this list, partly due to his views, partly due to his policies.

Although Goenka claimed not to teach Buddhism but only “pure dhamma,” he assumed a traditional cosmological world-view that included rebirth.¹⁸⁹ Such a teaching is, as a rule, not taught by the IMS to beginners nor to those who are only interested in meditation. Otherwise, the IMS teachers and students generally accept, even favour, sutta teachings presented in a rational and open modern setting.

Perhaps, many American Buddhists—at least, those from the IMS, led by experienced and insightful Buddhists—are concerned that Goenka projected a cult Guru figure, which American New Age latitude and licence tend to attract and favour.¹⁹⁰ Most informed Buddhists would find it simply unjustifiable to accept and preposterous to make the statement that *Vipassana (as a modern construct) goes back to the Buddha himself*, and in the same breath to declare that *we are not teaching Buddhism!*¹⁹¹ [2.4.11.1]

2.5.2.6 If the US is the “land of the free,” we would have expected that Goenka’s Vipassana, so well accepted worldwide, to have been wildly popular there. Perhaps, in this case at least, we may conjecture to say that *freedom does not mean licence*. Clearly, then, we can say that while the IMS is *actually* promoting the Buddha’s teaching, Goenka champions [2.4.11.1] not Buddhism but Vipassana itself. This is like *a doctor peddling a particular medicine or even treatment instead of highlighting good health and the prevention of disease*.

On the other hand, for a professional psychologist like Jon Kabat-Zinn,¹⁹² who created **MBSR** (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction), it was:

never meant to exploit, fragment, or decontextualize the dharma, but rather to *recontextualize* it within the framework of science, medicine (including psychiatry and psychology), and healthcare so that it would be maximally useful to people who could not hear it or enter into it through the more traditional dharma gates. (In J Wilson, *Mindful America*, 2014:91)

After having well tapped Buddhism for his life’s career and success, he openly declares that “**I myself am not a Buddhist**.” In saying this, he is like Cinderella, after marrying Prince Charming (perhaps in decrepit old age),¹⁹³ declares “I’m not royalty, you know!” Sadly, this is what many will see as an ulti-

¹⁸⁶ Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters*, 1997:590; Cadge 2005:29 + n70.

¹⁸⁷ Kornfield, *Living Dharma*, 1996:6; Fronsdal, “Insight Meditation in the United States,” 1998:171.

¹⁸⁸ IMS 1977 brochure (Cadge 2005:225 n56); P K Ling, “The Intensive Buddhist Meditation retreat and the self,” PhD diss, 1981; “Intensive meditation,” Bucksport, ME: Free Press, 18 Sep 1975.

¹⁸⁹ Western Buddhists who have difficulties with the idea of rebirth is prob because (1) their Christian conditioning, (2) rationalist and scientific bias, or (3) it is almost impossible to prove that rebirth exists (like the God-idea!).

¹⁹⁰ The US of the 1970s-90s, eg, was devastated by sexual and money scandals in the Zen community (Richard Baker; Eido Shimano) and the Vajrayana community (Chogyam Trungpa): **Bad friendship** (SD 64.17)

¹⁹¹ See also Braun 2013:159.

¹⁹² Kabat-Zinn was a student of Zen Buddhist luminaries like Philip Kapleau, Thich Nhat Hanh and Seung Sahn, and a founding member of Cambridge Zen Center (Cambridge, MA). However, he did not consider himself as a Buddhist, preferring to “apply mindfulness within a scientific rather than a religious frame” (Wilson 2014:34). See SD 60.1e (1.1.3).

¹⁹³ I have always loved fairy tales: the characters never age, never die. So I joke here, seriously.

mate faux pas which means that he sees mindfulness as being separable from, even unconnected with from Buddhism. Others, with sharper wits, have charged that his posture was due in part to his “self-saving caricature of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism” of Buddhism (Bloom 1997). We might, proposes Wallis, also employ the critical tool of Sigmund Freud’s “narcissism of minor differences” (Freud 1961).¹⁹⁴

2.5.2.7 In the Arahatta Susīma Sutta (S 12.70) records a monk, a renunciant, who eats the country’s almsfood—or a non-renunciant (an ordinary person) who uses Buddhism, benefiting from it—but does not practise the Dharma, is just like **a thief** (*cora*) in the teaching, and he seeks the Buddha’s forgiveness, so that we can and will be a contrite practitioner.¹⁹⁵

The Commentaries add that *a false monk* eats the country’s alms as a thief, while *a good monk*, who eats without properly reflecting on it, is a debtor. *A saint on the path* takes his almsfood as an heir, while *an arhat* is the owner of his almsfood.¹⁹⁶

2.5.2.8 Here is a cheeky way of rewording the sentiments of these words of the professionals: *Of course, we love Cinderella, and will always let her live in the kitchen; we will even let her dress fittingly as a princess, but she shall never marry the Prince since she must be in our perpetual service.*

Buddhism seems indeed a Cinderella in the American context, where “mindfulness”:

can “reinvigorate our traditional, commonly held American values”; and for Goldie Hawn (of all people) and “mindfulness promoter” Elizabeth Thoman, mindfulness is the means of “re-imagining of the American dream” (180). In the hands of Thich Nhat Hanh (169, 182), [Singaporean] Chade-Meng Tan¹⁹⁷ (Google executive and mindfulness author, 159), and especially Democratic congressman Tim Ryan (165-66, 178), mindfulness has been refashioned to save America.

(A Wynne,¹⁹⁸ 2018:53; pages within parentheses refer to Wilson, *Mindful America*, 2014)

The IMS, as a community of serious Buddhist practitioners, clearly wants to have nothing to do with this **Cinderella syndrome**: it aims to awaken us from the “American dream” and live a full Dharma-spirited Buddhist life, calm, clear and free.

We will now examine some of the key individuals who have preserved and propagated the meditations and teachings that reflect what the Buddha teaches. We are going back to the still forest pool.¹⁹⁹
[221121]

¹⁹⁴ For an instructive criticism of Kabat-Zinn, see Glenn Wallis, “Criticism matters: A response to Rick Repetti,” in Purser et al (edd), *Handbook of Mindfulness*, Springer, 2016:501-503.

¹⁹⁵ S 12.70,58-63 (SD 16.8).

¹⁹⁶ MA 5:32; SA 2:199; cf SA 1:100 thieves are those who cause ruin in the world. See also SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2) on almsfood; SD 49.2 (1.1.3) on recluses; SD 54.13 (2.4.2.4).

¹⁹⁷ NY Times 5 July 2013 gives this criticism of M C Tan: “there’s a bit of a disconnect between the (perfectly commendable) pursuit of these benefits and the purpose for which meditation was originally intended. Gaining competitive advantage on exams and increasing creativity in business weren’t of the utmost concern to the Buddha and other early meditation teachers. As Buddha himself said, ‘I teach one thing and one only: that is, suffering and the end of suffering.’ For Buddha, as for many modern spiritual leaders, the goal of meditation was as simple as that. The heightened control of the mind that meditation offers was supposed to help its practitioners see the world in a new and more compassionate way, allowing them to break free from the categorizations (us/them, self/other) that commonly divide people from one another.” See <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/07/opinion/sunday/the-morality-of-meditation.html>. See SD 60.1c (1.9.2).

¹⁹⁸ Alexander Wynne’s “Buddhism without Nirvana, or Nirvana without Buddhism?” (2018)—reviews on Braun, *The Birth of Insight* (2013) and *Mindful America* (2014)—is an incisively insightful paper very relevant to our study. https://www.academia.edu/36634130/Buddhism_without_Nirvana_or_Nirvana_without_Buddhism.

¹⁹⁹ For Christopher Titmuss’ feedback on the Goenka 10-day retreat: <https://www.christophertitmussblog.org/10-day-goenka-courses-in-vipassana-time-to-make-changes-12-firm-proposals>

3 Siamese Kammatthana

3.1 ADAPTING BUDDHISM OR ADAPTING TO BUDDHISM?

3.1.1 Learning from the Burmese Vipassana teachers

3.1.1.1 In our historical survey of **the Burmese Vipassana masters** [2], we notice how visionary monk Ledi Sayadaw [2.3.3-2.4], in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, simplified his writing style and produced numerous manuals on Dharma and Vipassana, and also taught Vipassana in a manner that helped people to adjust themselves to the Buddhism in daily life. Ledi made no adjustments to Buddhism itself, but rather inspired generations of teachers and Buddhists after him to adjust themselves to the Buddha's teaching through Vipassana.

We will see, in this study [3], a similar development in **the Kammatthana tradition** of the Thai (Siamese) forest tradition, too.

3.1.1.2 Over a century after Ledi, in our own time, we see **Goenka** [2.4.10-11] using an approach that is opposite to Ledi's. Although Goenka claimed that Vipassana (or his Vipassana) as referring to the "Buddha's own meditation method," he did not present Buddhism, as it is, openly, to his worldwide network of students. Instead, he downplayed Buddhism by presenting Vipassana as the method in itself, almost without the need of following Buddhist teachings. Vipassana, to Goenka, was *the* "art of living" [2.5.1.3].

In the Thai Kammatthana traditions, we see, without any exception, how the forest monks (at least the key monastic teachers studied here), even with neither scriptural training or knowledge, nor textual Pali grammar, consistently presented early Buddhist teachings, often based on their own meditative lives of ascetic solitude.

3.1.2 Nature of Buddhist meditation practice

3.1.2.1 If we see the development of the Burmese Vipassana tradition as "linear" (or diachronous, cutting across time) beginning, for example, with Ledi Sayadaw, down to this day, as the global Vipassana movement, then, comparatively, **the Thai Kammatthana tradition** is more sporadic, even "atomic" (or synchronous, in its own time). In the latter, although there was some idea of *lineage*, each teacher, due to their charisma and wisdom, was effectively an independent tradition of his own, such as those of Ajahn Mun, Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Buddhadasa, and others.

3.1.2.2 When we hear someone saying that "Teacher A is a Samatha teacher," or "Teacher B is a Vipassana teacher," and so on, this merely reflects the speaker's **bias or perception** regarding that teacher. When we study a teacher or learn under a teacher long enough, we will, as a rule, see that although he may teach some defining ideas and methods (which makes him stand out as unique), he usually also holds some ideas and methods that are common to all teachers of that meditation tradition.

Indeed, it would be foolish for us, as seekers or students, to stay with only one "method." Every method either works or does not—*depending on us*. After all, they are merely **methods** that we use, like the tools of a carpenter or a sculptor at different stages of his working on a project. Hence, when someone says that Method A is "good" or "the best," he invariably means "It works for me." It would be interesting to ask him: "You have tried it, right?" If he answers, No; then, either he is a professional scholar, or simply biased. The former is understandable, the latter does not stand.

When we first begin meditating, or try a new method, we may need to work with a few of them to find one or which combination suits us. As we progress in our meditation practice, we get a better idea of what works for us and what does not. Having mastered the method at some level, we move on to the next. Often, we may need to return to a lower or earlier stage to refine it further, to gain even greater

momentum to progress in our practice. Since we are dealing with mental concentration, this is **samatha**, which is the basis for our going, in due course, into an effective level of vipassana.

Once we are experienced in practising any of these meditation methods, especially the breath meditation, we should be able to work with any other worthwhile method, or at least understand how it works. Whichever method we use then may work as a tool for the arising of **insight** that helps us better understand ourself, and even guide us closer to the path. We have thus journeyed far enough, leaving far behind those who are merely collecting maps and guides, and arguing over them without really making the journey.

3.1.3 Nature of Thai Kammatthana

3.1.3.1 In this chapter—an overview of **the Siamese¹ Kammatṭhāna tradition**—we use the familiar anglicized term, **Kammatthana**² (from the Pali, *kammatṭhāna*, “state or base of (mental) work”) as the Thais themselves generally refer to their meditation tradition. If “Vipassana” is a convenient broad term for the Burmese meditation tradition, then, “Kammatthana” broadly describes the Thai meditation tradition. This is how we will use the 2 terms in this study.

The term *kammatṭhāna* is useful for our study of the Thai meditation tradition because it is broad enough to encompass both (1) the theory of meditation and (2) the practice of meditation:

- (1) *Kammatṭhāna* is broad enough to mean “**the theory** connected with meditation,” that is, samatha, vipassana or both. The term “both” here can mean either:
 - (a) elective (we may choose either teaching, tradition or theory) or
 - (b) exclusive (we may maintain just *one* theory) for the chosen method.
- (2) *Kammatṭhāna* also refers to **the practice** of meditation (either samatha, vipassana or both) as described in 1. In fact, if we need to, we may even use such a phrase such as “samatha kammatṭhāna” or “vipassanā kammatṭhāna,” or “samatha-vipassanā kammatṭhāna,” depending on our practice.

3.1.3.2 The Thai forest monks of the Kammatthana tradition generally are not experts in the Buddhist texts; some of them, in fact, have never been formally trained in any scriptural or theoretical teachings. Their textual knowledge must have come from their own meditation teachers, or from what they had learnt before they renounced. Upon maturing as forest meditators, they speak the language of contemplatives, simple, succinct, even incisive. They speak from their own experience of inner calm and clarity, “from the heart.”

3.1.3.3 By definition (following the Pali canon), the “**forest monks**” are, first of all, basically, “ascetic monks,” often itinerant, especially when they were younger.³ Most of them live “mentally alone,” training to free themselves of *greed, hate and delusion*. Like **the Buddha**, they may live communal lives (to practise themselves, train others, and benefit the laity who visits them). Or, they may, like **Mahā Kassapa**, lead a physically solitary life in the forest, that is, “a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a

¹ I use the term “Siamese” for the same convenience that the term “Burmese” has in our study of the history of Burmese Vipassana. Both terms refer to their premodern roots, and the continuity and trajectories of their developments to this day. “Thai” refers to a political and modern social reality which, in important ways, refers to the stage for the ancient drama still playing before its contemporary Thai audience.

² Note that it has an initial capital, connoting that it has a specialized sense as a cultural or religious construct of a particular teacher or group. We also have the term Vipassana, used in a similar way [2.2.1].

³ OED under “**ascetic**” says its orig Greek means “exercise,” in the sense of abstinence, austerity and training of a monk or hermit. “**Monk**” comes from Gk *monachus*, a religious hermit or solitary. They may be coenobites (who live communal lives (with other monks) or eremites (itinerant or wandering monks), alone or in a small group. These etyms are useful in helping us decide on the proper *usage* of English words, but not to define the Buddhist terms, for which we need to examine the context.

gully [gorge], a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw.”⁴ [4.1.1.2]

While the Buddha often lived as a **coenobite** (community monk) with other coenobites, Mahā Kassa-pa, as a rule, lived as a **forest hermit**,⁵ alone in his own solitary life of practice, going out daily for alms, living on one meal a day, taken only between dawn and noon, and wearing coarse robes. These are only 2 of a total of **13 ascetic rules** (*dhutaṅga*) [3.1.3.4], most of which are optional, but binding once an ascetic monk vows to take them, to should be strictly observed.⁶

3.1.3.4 An ascetic or *dhutaṅga* monk may choose to practise only a few of **the ascetic rules**.⁷ The ascetic practices are all mentioned in the Pali Canon but never together in one place (except in the Parivāra, a late work, an appendix to the Vinaya).⁸ Some of them are given in the Vinaya, the Nikāyas and the Commentaries.⁹ They are discussed in some detail in Buddhaghosa’s **Visuddhi, magga**,¹⁰ which gives the following list of **13 ascetic practices** divided into 4 groups¹¹ (Vism 2/59-83), thus:

A. Connected with robes

- (1) The practice of wearing **dust-heap robes** (*paṃsukūlik’āṅga*), which one takes up with the resolution: *gahapati, cīvaraṃ paṭikkhipāmi, paṃsukūlik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject the householder’s robes; I take upon myself the practice of wearing the dust-heap robes.)
- (2) The practice of wearing (only) **the 3 robes** (*te, cīvarik’āṅga*), which one takes up with this resolution: *catuttha, cīvaraṃ paṭikkhipāmi, tecīvarik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject the 4th robe; I take upon myself the practice of wearing (only) the 3 robes.)

B. Connected with almsfood

- (3) The practice of **the almsfood eater** (*piṇḍapātik’āṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *attireka, lābhaṃ paṭikkhipāmi, piṇḍapātik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject the extra acquisitions; I take upon myself the practice of the almsfood-eater.)
- (4) The practice of **faring house-to-house** (for almsfood) (*sapadāna, cārik’āṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *loluppa, cāraṃ paṭikkhipāmi, sapadāna, cārik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject faring according to what is desired; I take upon myself the practice of the house-to-house farer.)
- (5) The practice of **eating at one sitting** (*ek’āsanik’āṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *nānāsana, bhojanaṃ paṭikkhipāmi, ek’āsanik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject eating at various sittings; I take upon myself the practice of the one-sitting eater.)
- (6) The practice of **eating almsfood from a bowl** (*patta, piṇḍik’āṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *dutiya, bhājanaṃ paṭikkhipāmi, patta, piṇḍik’āṅgaṃ samādiyāmi* (I reject a second vessel; I take upon myself the practice of eating from an almsbowl.)

⁴ This stock phrase of 9 places conducive to meditation are found at D 1:72, 207, 2:242, 3:49; M 1:181, 269, 274, 346, 440, 441, 2:162, 226, 3:3, 35, 115-117; A 2:210, 3:92, 100, 4:436, 5:207; Nm 1:26, 140, 2:341; Miln 369. A shorter list, probably later, is mentioned in **Anāpāna, sati S** (M 118): “the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty place” for meditation and solitary practice (M 118, 17/3:82), SD 7.13. For refs, see **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39, 12.2) n, SD 10.13.

⁵ **Arañña S** (A 4.259/2:252) lists the foll 4 qualities for living a forest life: (1) (one cultivates thoughts of renunciation, (2) goodwill, and (3) non-violence; and (4) one is neither stupid nor dull.

⁶ Such rules as the taking of meals only during the allowable time and having the triple robes, and their allowances, are part of the Vinaya code, which is to be observed as long as a monastic lives.

⁷ These 13 ascetic rules are found in small sets scattered all over the Pali canon, except for one place, **Bhaddiya Kāli, godhā, putta Tha** (Tha 844-861) where all 13 are listed (not 12 *pace* Norman, Tha: N 245 n844-56) are mentioned as a set. All 13, however, are listed at V 5:131, 193.

⁸ V 5:131, 194.

⁹ V 3:15, M 1:30, 3:40 ff (items 1, 3, 5, 8-13); A 3:220 (items 1, 5-7, 9, 10-13), 5:219 (items 1, 5-13); B 1:59; Nm 188 (items 1-4, 7, 8, 12, 13); J 3:342, 4:8; Miln 133, 348, 351; Vism 59, 65, 72, 80; SnA 494; DhA 1:68, 2:32, 4:30.

¹⁰ Vism ch 2/59-83; also Miln ch 6.

¹¹ Vism 2/59-83 (*Dhutaṅga, niddesa*).

- (7) The practice of **refusing further food** (*khalu, pacchā, bhattik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *atiritta, bhojanam paṭikkhipāmi, khalu, pacchā, bhattik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject the extra vessel; I take upon myself the practice of the seconds-refuser.)

C. Connected with dwelling

- (8) The practice of **dwelling in the forest** (*araññik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *gāmanta, sen'āsanam paṭikkhipāmi, araññik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject dwelling on the fringe of a village; I take upon myself the practice of the forest-dweller.)
- (9) The practice of **dwelling at the foot of a tree** (*rukkha, mūlik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *channam paṭikkhipāmi, rukkha, mūlik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject a covered place; I take upon myself the practice of dwelling under a tree.)
- (10) The practice of **dwelling in the open** (*abbhokāsik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *channañ ca rukkha, mūlañ ca paṭikkhipāmi, abbhokāsik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject a closed place and the foot of a tree; I take upon myself the practice of the open-air dweller.)
- (11) The practice of **dwelling in a cemetery** (*sosānik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *asusānam paṭikkhipāmi, sosānik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject what is not a cemetery; I take upon myself the practice of the cemetery-dweller.)
- (12) The practice of being satisfied with **whatever dwelling** (*yathā, santhatik'aṅga*), which is taken up with the resolution: *senāsana, lolupparam paṭikkhipāmi, yathā, santhatik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject dwelling according to what is desired; I take upon myself the practice of being satisfied with any dwelling.)

D. Connected with effort

- (13) The practice of the sleeping (only) in **the sitting posture** (*nesajjik'aṅga*) which is taken up with the resolution: *seyyam paṭikkhipāmi, nesajjik'aṅgam samādiyāmi* (I reject the lying posture; I take upon myself the practice of the sitter.)

SD 3.15 (2)

3.1.3.5 In Thai forest tradition, we will thus see 2 kinds of **forest monks**: the settled communal monks (the coenobites) and the wandering dhutanga monks (the eremites). However, the “wandering” here applies, as a rule, to only the 9 months outside of the 3-month rains-retreat (*vassāvāsa*), when the dhutanga monks would probably stay with one of the community monasteries.¹²

The meditation teachers are, as a rule, communal monks, in the sense that other monks come to them as students for training and to offer them service, and they need to be housed. Another reason for living a settled life is, clearly, *age* and *health*. Elderly monks may be too old or infirm to withstand the rigours of an ascetic life. However, even in the case of the communal life, the coenobite, whether teachers or practitioners, may go into periodic solitary retreats at suitable times whenever they choose to.

3.2 THE RHETORIC OF KAMMATTHANA

3.2.1 Practice-centred meditation

3.2.1.1 Since the Thai Kammatthana monks are not text-based, like the teachers they learned from, they were, as a rule, samatha practitioners (in our view). However, in their teachings or the records of their lives, we are unlikely to see the kind of distinction between samatha and vipassana that scholars claim. Through their profound levels of concentration, these reclusive ascetic monks gained profound level of joyful understanding of the Dharma with which they attracted huge followings, and benefitted others with their teachings to this day.

¹² The dhutanga monks can, of course, observe the rains alone, which means they may have to bear the hardships of the weather even when they resort to protected areas like caves or gullies.

3.2.1.2 As we have stressed in the Introduction to this study of “Samatha and Vipassana,” we have much to gain from the lives, teachings and writings of scholars and teachers who are practising Buddhists [1.1.1.1]. Far from seeing Buddhism merely as a specimen for their passing academic career or interest as outsiders, practitioner scholars see Buddhism as a part of their daily lives.

Practitioner scholars who have special discipline and skills such as philosophy, psychology, language, science, medicine, sociology, law, literature, history and so on, will be able to look deep into the suttas and become more familiar with the language used by the Buddha and the nature of sutta teachings.¹³ Such insights would not only give us a better understanding of the Buddha’s teachings, but inspire a greater relevance of Buddhism to our own times, and beneficially connect Buddhism with many more people.

3.2.1 Meditation-centred network

Another interesting difference between the Burmese Vipassana tradition and the Thai Kammatthana tradition is that the former is very successful in reaching out to non-Buddhists and the laity through the well-publicised success of **Goenka** and his global network of Vipassana meditation centres. The Thai Kammatthana tradition, on the other hand, is quietly growing in its own global network of forest monasteries with monks living simple lives very close to those of the Buddha and the early arhats. These centres are also popular with the laity and non-Buddhists. [5.12.4]

3.2.2 Keeping to the suttas

3.2.2.1 In the study and practice of Buddhism today, we must be able to distinguish between “**academic language**” of the scholars and the “**Dharma language**” of the Buddha’s teaching. The scholars (especially those who are not Buddhist) examine and criticize Buddhism from *the outside* according to their academic conventions, purposes and biases: it’s just a phase in their academic career.¹⁴

Buddhist practitioners use “**Dharma language**,” that is, one that helps to present the Buddha’s teachings the way that the Buddha has taught it, reflecting his own awakening and experiences (and those of the early arhats), giving us a direct “taste” of the freedom of that truth. Our task, as followers of the 3 jewels, is to *study, practise and realize* that truth through the teachings and helpful means so that we are ourselves joyfully freed just like the Buddha, or that we will at least reach the path in this life itself.¹⁵

3.2.2.2 The next section [4] deals with **the samatha aspect** of Buddhist meditation as it has evolved in the recent centuries up to our own time. We will first briefly look at the nature of samatha as found in the early texts, and then see how it has evolved in recent times under various Thai Kammatthana teachers. Our study will show that the Thai teachers do not see Vipassana as a separate development from Samatha, but as linked with Samatha. Hence, even when a Thai teacher speaks of Vipassana, he usually assumes that we should know some Samatha to calm the mind so that it is ready for Vipassana. This may be a key difference between the Thai Kammatthana tradition and the Burmese Vipassana tradition.

¹³ Psychologist R E A Johansson, eg, discovered that the Buddha’s teaching in **Khālūṅka S** (A 8.14), SD 7.9, reflects what we today understand as psychological “ego-defences”: “Defense Mechanisms According to Psychoanalysis and the Pali Nikāyas,” 1983:11-24.

¹⁴ On a light note, a scholar who has no love for Buddhism but merely sees it as a prestigious field to profit from, to be like the Stepmother in Cinderella, who profits from the Prince (Buddhist Studies or the Buddhist audience) with information about her but revealing neither who she really is nor her whereabouts, keeping her locked up in the scullery of her house. The good scholar practitioner is like the Fairy Godmother!

¹⁵ Further, on the 2 kinds of religious language, see **Neyy’attha Nīt’attha S** (A 2.3.5+6), SD 2.6 b.

4 Samatha

4.1 SAMATHA IN EARLY BUDDHISM

4.1.1 Historical trend

4.1.1.1 While Vipassana seems to predominate the Burmese tradition, we see the Samatha tradition as characteristic of the Thai tradition. This is a historical trend set by monastics since the 19th century, going as far back as we can know from available records of Siamese Kammatthana. The general trend of the Siamese meditation tradition was largely *samatha* based, a practice well and widely familiar to both monastics and the laity.

4.1.1.2 One likely explanation for this trend is that the Thai forest monks often wandered about as ascetic (*dhut'aṅga*) monks. They only settled down when age caught up with them, or when they were unable to live up to the rigours of itinerant life, when they felt it was time for them to pass on their knowledge and experience to their followers who had gathered where they resided.

4.1.1.3 Another important point to consider is that these early Siamese forest monks started off as **itinerant contemplatives** without any or much textual training but moved on by the feel for the monastic life of renunciation and inner peace. They all invariably learned to focus their minds, which gave them the joy and peace, empowering their itinerant ascetic lives with meaning and purpose. It was only when they needed to teach their students and followers that they turned to Vipassana, the insight with which they enlightened their congregations. Since the contemplative teachers were very familiar with Samatha they both—monastic and lay—easily progressed into Vipassana.¹⁶ [3.1.3.3]

4.1.2 Early Buddhist trends

4.1.2.1 The traditional Siamese Kammatthana tradition very much reflected the contemplative ways of early Buddhism of the Buddha and the arhats. In early Buddhism, **monastic training** is founded on moral virtue (*sīla*); hence, it is strongly emphasized in the initial and basic training for all monastics. Our moral conduct prepares our body and speech by refining them, so they do not become mental hindrances to distract us.¹⁷

The morally virtuous monastic or layperson is then ready for various **samatha** meditations, especially the breath meditation and the cultivation of lovingkindness. In the case of the latter, we first cultivate lovingkindness as the basis, which is then progressively refined into a dhyanic mind of compassion, of radiant joy, and of profound equanimity. Emerging from such meditations, the practitioners direct that calm clarity towards looking directly into the impermanence, unsatisfactory or nonself of things to attain **insight** (*vipassanā*).¹⁸

4.1.2.2 The suttas have many accounts of such meditation in practice. One of the most famous is that of the Buddha's personal attendant, **Meghiya**, as reported in **the Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 ≈ U 4.1)¹⁹ Meghiya mistakenly starts off on a personal meditation without taking any instructions from the Buddha even though he is with him. Only after he faced various difficulties by way of karmic hindrances, that he seeks the Buddha's guidance. The Sutta records the Buddha's instructions to Meghiya.

¹⁶ See Cousins, 1984b:58-66; Gethin, 1998:174-187.

¹⁷ The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt; see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

¹⁸ Shaw 2006:194-198.

¹⁹ A 4.93/4:354-258; U 31/4.1/34-37 (SD 34.2). The symbol ≈ means "almost equal or identical to."

Both the **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62)²⁰ and the **Cūḷa Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 147)²¹ record the Buddha instructing his own son, **Rāhula**, in meditation. **M 62** records the 18 year-old novice Rāhula being taught to reflect on the body as comprising the 4 elements; then, he is taught to combine lovingkindness with the 4 elements; then, all the 4 divine abodes, the cultivation of foulness, the perception of impermanence, leading into the breath meditation.

In order to effectively reflect on these realities, Rāhula must first have some mental calm and focus, which is *samatha*. But lovingkindness is basically a samatha practice, and thus helps in the focus needed for insight into the 4 elements in the human body. The cultivation of foulness and the perception of impermanence are *vipassana* practices. Yet the main meditation, the mindfulness of the breath begins as a samatha practice, and which we may, at any suitable time, having emerged from samadhi, be directed toward vipassana.

M 147 records the Buddha’s meditation instructions to Rāhula when he is 20: he is taught to reflect the true nature of **the 6 sense-objects** (visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mind-objects) as being impermanent. This is the basis for seeing them as being *unsatisfactory*, and that we do not own them (have no real control over them): nonself. This leads us to naturally renounce (let go of) them. This is classic **vipassanā**.

4.1.2.3 Then, there is the **Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), a classic overview of early Buddhist training, founded on moral training, meditation and wisdom. The Buddha begins by describing in some detail the nature of moral conduct and its “fruits” (benefits). *Moral training* is, essentially, for monastics, sense-restraint, which works to prevent our senses from distracting us, so that we focus our mind to begin concentration training, that is, samatha meditation.

Once the 5 mental hindrances [4.1.2.1] are overcome (at least temporarily), dhyana is attained: this is, of course, samatha. The mind, thus calmed and cleared, can be directed to the cultivation of various psychic powers: these, too, are the benefits of samatha. Finally, when we direct this super calm and clear mind to seeing true reality, we are freed from all our defilements to attain arhathood. This is classic **vipassanā**.²²

4.1.2.4 From this persistent trend in early Buddhist meditation, we must conclude that meditation itself—termed “concentration” (*samādhi*)—refers to **samatha**. **Vipassanā**, on the other hand, is *not* meditation at all, but the *thinking* or *knowing* mind, with mental momentum from the calm and clarity gained from samatha, focusing the mind into directly seeing into the universal reality of impermanence, suffering and nonsself.

The reality is that there is neither thinking nor knowing during dhyana; it is pure bliss! It is something more rapturous than the moment of falling in love and being requited, or an Olympic sportsman breaking a new world record: during such a moment, we can only be *speechless*—and thought-free. That’s the way supreme bliss works even on a mundane level, what more on a spiritual level.²³

Strictly speaking, then, there is *no* such thing as “vipassana” meditation. Hence, we do not really hear of any experienced meditation teacher speaking of “vipassana” meditation as such, certainly not in the Buddha’s time nor in the suttas. When the term “Vipassana meditation” is actually used in our own times, it properly refers to the purpose of the meditation to gain *vipassana*, insight into true reality.

Any distinction in Buddhist meditation, then, is only in *the degree of concentration* that we are capable of attaining for the calm and clarity of our mind (which of course arises from *samatha*). In “Vipassana meditation,” we don’t need to get into dhyana, while in “Samatha meditation,” we may get into dhyana if we are capable enough; either way, the goal is to gain insight into true reality and to be free of suffering, as the Buddha and the arhats have done.

²⁰ M 62/1:420-426 (SD 3.11).

²¹ M 147/3:277-280 (SD 70.7).

²² D 2/1:47-86 (SD 8.10).

²³ On dhyana being thought-free, see SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

4.1.2.5 In our conventional talk about meditation, then, when we speak of “Vipassana meditation,” we are referring to meditation where dhyana is *optional*, but mental calm and clarity are nevertheless *necessary* for insight. When we speak of “Samatha meditation,” we are referring to meditations where mental focus—when its attending joy and peace are celebrated—but the goal is still to gain *insight* into true reality. Hence, any meditation, true to its name, will have both aspects; it is merely the approach and emphasis that differentiate them. [1.1.3.1]

In early Buddhism, in the suttas, there is no mention whatsoever of samatha nor vipassana as meditations. When they are mentioned, they simply mean “mental calm” and “insight” respectively. The usual sutta word for meditation is “**cultivation**” (*bhāvanā*):²⁴ we need to cultivate *both* samatha and vipassana.²⁵ Even then, it is a “holistic” approach to meditation [1.1.3.1]. Broadly, *bhāvanā* refers to the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t, taya*), listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) as the 3 cultivations (*tisso bhāvanā*): body cultivation (*kaya, bhāvanā*), mind cultivation (*citta, bhāvanā*) and wisdom (*paññā, bhāvanā*), that is to say, respectively, moral training, mental (or concentration) training (or meditation), and wisdom training.²⁶

4.1.3 Samatha, samadhi and dhyana

4.1.3.1 Let’s look at **samatha in practice**. Samatha basically works to arouse joyful calm as the basis for deeper meditation. Its simplest benefit is giving us the concentration to focus well in our meditation and reflections. On a deeper level, it brings our mind into samadhi as the basis for **the 1st dhyana**, which arises when all the 5 mental hindrances [4.1.2.1] have been at least temporarily overcome. Once we have mastered the 1st dhyana, we learn to renounce the 5 dhyana-factors [5.8.2.2] in stages to attain the other 3 dhyanas.²⁷ This is how the 4 form-dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*) are attained.²⁸

When we have mastered the 4th form-dhyana, by refining the mind, we may go on to attain, in stages, **the 4 formless attainments** (*arūpa samāpatti*). A dhyana, then, is a meditative state where the mind is fully focused on itself, and progresses with the refinement of the mental object, with the mind fully concentrated. Then there is the so called 9th “dhyana,” which is really where all perceptions and feelings cease, that is, **the cessation of perception and feeling** (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*). It is an attainment that arises only in the Buddha or the arhats, or in some non-returners. This state takes nirvana as its object: it is basically the enjoyment of nirvanic bliss in this life itself. [1.2.1]

4.1.3.2 Even without attaining dhyana, we may attain a simple level of samadhi described in the Commentaries as **access concentration** (*upacāra, samādhi*).²⁹ In practice, it is difficult to distinguish between the two—access concentration and full concentration (*appanā samādhi*): their only difference is in their duration. Access concentration is only *momentary*, while full concentration is *sustained*.

Even this **momentary concentration** (*khaṇika samādhi*)³⁰ [2.4.5.2], arising only momentarily, on and off, can give us clear visions of calm and clarity—like lightning flashing in the dark night sky—we can clearly, even fully, if but briefly, see the true nature of impermanence or of suffering or of nonself. This is truly an epiphany, a sudden but overwhelming vision of true reality that is profoundly joyful and liberating.

4.1.3.3 Broadly speaking, this is what we call “**religious experience**,” which, however, is often interpreted according to our religious or psychological conditioning. Basically, when we still have any self-view

²⁴ Sometimes, the term *jhāna* refers to “meditation,” such as in **Aggañña S** D 27,22/3:94 (SD 2.19): SD 33.1b (44.3); SD 54.2e (2.3.5).

²⁵ D 3:222 f; A 2:44 f.

²⁶ **D 33**,1.10(48)/3:219. Curiously, M Walshe, gives *kaya, bhāvanā* as “development of the emotions” (D:W 486) and criticizes T W Rhys Davids thus: “*Kāya* here means not (as RD) ‘the psycho-physiological mechanism of sense’, but ‘mental (ie, broadly ‘emotional’) body [D:RD 3:213].” (D:W n1051)

²⁷ On the dhyana-factors and how they are renounced, see SD 8.4 (5.1.1).

²⁸ On the 4 form dhyanas, see SD 8.4.

²⁹ On *upacāra samādhi*, see SD 7.13 (6.4.1).

³⁰ On *khaṇika samādhi*, see SD 15.1 (9.4).

(for example, the view that we have some kind of abiding self or soul), then we are likely to project this view onto this epiphany and interpret it as some God or external entity.

Only when we totally surrender to this liberating vision—renounce our self-view completely—that we are liberated. The dhyanas free us from our body; this vision liberates us from our mind. The key difference between the dhyanas in other religions and the Buddha's dhyana is that the former is still seen with a self-view (a wrong view), while the Buddha sees it as it is, selflessly in its fullest sense, with right view.³¹

4.1.4 Meditations leading to dhyana

4.1.4.1 We have noted that when the mind is free from the body—when the mind is no more weighed down or dictated by sense-experiences—it overcomes all the 5 mental hindrances, and attains dhyana [4.1.3.1]. The Buddha teaches numerous ways by which this can be done, and they have been listed into a set of 38-40 methods of meditation (*kammatṭhāna*), classified into 7 groups, as can be seen, for example, in Buddhaghosa's **Visuddhi, magga**, thus:³²

- (1) **The 10 kasinas** (*kaṣiṇa*), a term which means “full, whole, complete,” usually in reference to a disc or a delimited space of a colour or an element (earth, water, fire or wind) serving as the meditation-object. The perceptions of light and of space are also included here. For more experienced meditators, even a field of earth, free-flowing water, a burning fire, the wind in the trees, or even a forest of trees can be used as the preliminary meditation-object. Most of these can lead up to the 4th dhyana.
- (2) **The perception of foulness** (*asubha*), that is, the 31 body-parts (M 62,10-11, SD 3.1), the 9 stages of bodily decomposition (cemetery meditation, M 62,14-30, SD 19.16),³³ or bodily impurity (*asuci*; A 10.60,6, SD 19.16). These can only free the mind up to the 1st dhyana.
- (3) **The perception of the repulsiveness of food** (*āhāre paṭikkūla saññā*), also called the “one perception” (*eka,saññā*), is helpful in bringing us to access concentration [4.1.3.2].
- (4) **The 4 elements** (*catu,dhatu vavatthāna*), that is, the perceptions of earth, water, fire or wind lead to access concentration.
- (5) **The 10 recollections** (*anussati*), that is, those on the Buddha, the Dharma, the noble sangha, charity, moral virtue, devas, the body, death, the breath and peace, can be done by monastics and the laity. Of special importance is the mindfulness of the breath. The first 6 are especially helpful for meditators having difficulties with their usual method, and are thus called the “inspiring meditations.”
- (6) **The 4 divine abodes** (*brahma,viḥāra*), that is, those of lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity are especially helpful for those new to Buddhism but still conditioned by their old religions or views. They are meant to be cultivated to gain the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*). The first 3 abodes can bring us up to the 3rd dhyana, and the 4th abode up to the 4th dhyana.
- (7) **The 4 formless attainments** (*arūpa samāpatti*) or formless spheres (*arūp'āyatana*) are progressive refinements of the 4th dhyana cultivated by those who have mastered the form dhyanas. Since these state lack sufficient consciousness, they have no role in gaining awakening, but are states of profound joy and peace.

³¹ The right view of the Buddha's dhyanas differentiates them from pre-Buddhist and non-Buddhist dhyana: SD 33.1b (5).

³² On the “38 methods” (omits *āloka,saññā*, the perception of light, + *ākāsa,saññā*, the perception of space) of the Vimutti,magga: Vimm:Ñ 241-244; for the “40 methods”: Vism 3.104-116/110-113. On suitability of these methods according to temperament (*carita*) or experience (*cariya*): Nm 360; Vimm ch 6 (Vimm:Ñ 227-240); Vism 3.96-102/-107-110; also Shaw 2006:8-12; K Kim 2018a. Vajirañña 1975:98, 103-112, compiled by a non-meditator modernist priest, should be used with care; for a self-contradicting statement he makes: SD 41.1 (1.4.3). For a list with other details SD 15.1 (Fig 8.1); DEB App 2.

³³ This meditation should only be done with the instructions and supervision of an experienced teacher: Pār 3.1.1 (V 3:68; VA 394); S 54.9/5:320 where *asubha* refers to both the 31 body-parts and the 9 stages of bodily decomposition (SD 62.21); Khantipālo 1980; Shaw 2006:101-108.

4.1.4.2 The above list of meditation methods is neither sequential nor hierarchical. Some will need special guidance from adepts (1, 2, especially on the stages of decomposition, 3, 7). The others (4, 5, 6) are generally safe for anyone after some basic guidance. The breath meditation (*ānāpāna, sati*) is one of the 10 recollections (5), and the cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā, bhāvanā*) is the first of the 4 divine abodes (6).

Technically, all these meditation methods are **samatha**: we practise them to gain mental concentration (*samādhi*) or “one-pointedness” (*ek’aggatā*), so that our minds are calm and clear. The suttas do not list any “vipassana meditation,” but we can use any of these methods suitable for our state and personality to gain some level of concentration. Then, emerging from that calm and clear state, we reflect on impermanence, the first of the 3 universal characteristics, to cultivate vipassanā.

The perception of impermanence is the 1st and most basic of the Vipassana methods. When the occasion is right—such as when we feel profound pain of the loss of someone or something dear to us—we can reflect on **suffering** as the 2nd perception, that of suffering. The 3rd perception, that of **nonself**, is more subtle and difficult to do, but again, with the right conditions and understanding, we can practise it, like reflecting on the nature of water-ripples on the still surface of a lake.³⁴

4.1.4.3 Neither the Pali terms, **samatha** nor **vipassanā**, as used in early Buddhism, refer to any meditation method, but to *aspects* or *functions* of meditation (*bhāvanā, jhāna*) [4.1.2]. **Samatha** (Skt *śamatha*), which comes from √śam, to be quiet, refers to the “quieting or calming” aspect or “even-mindedness” of meditation, when the mind is calm and clear, free from the mental hindrances, especially with the attaining of dhyana, that is, the 1st dhyana.³⁵

Neither thinking nor knowing (as we know them in daily life) occurs in dhyana, that is, there is only subtle verbalization (*vitakka, vicāra*), that we enjoy an exuberant sense of rapture (*pīti*), alongside a bodily sense of profound ease (*sukha*), on account of the mind being free (*viveka*, “solitude”) of the physical senses that hinder mental focus. Yet, this is only the 1st dhyana.

Such an experience of profound bliss and peace is **transformative** in the sense of promoting our mental focus (attention) into seeing our true nature: this guides us in wholesome conduct that promotes our wellbeing. The experience of transcorporeal (beyond the body) *pleasure* means that we are no more drawn to gross bodily pleasure. This empowers us with the joy and love to fully keep to the precepts, enhancing our moral virtue.

Even our dhyanic state is mentally conditioned and thus, *impermanent*: it may weaken, or we can lose it, especially when we allow negative emotions to arise in us.³⁶ This, of course, is not the case with the Buddha or the arhats, who have overcome all their defilements. The Buddha and those who have mastered dhyana are said to be able to live happily and comfortably here and now, even in the harshest of physical or social conditions. Their true happiness is not in the hereafter, but in *the here and now*.³⁷

4.1.4.4 The Pali term **vipassanā** (Skt *vipaśyanā, vidarśana*) comes from the verb *vi-passati*, “to see clearly,” especially the conditionality of true reality. While the prefix **sam-** (together, connection) in *sam-atha* refers to a “connecting together” (*synthetical*) or focusing of the mind, the **vi-** (asunder, separation) of *vipassana* refers to an “*analytical*” vision of true reality, how all the “parts” of formations are “separately” working together, conditioned by causes and effects, arising and passing away.

The early Buddhist texts invariably highlight and describe *vipassanā* as the “**direct seeing**” (*vi-passanā*) into true reality. Such a clear vision occurs personally experienced (“with the body,” *kāyena*), as in the Buddha’s awakening, or, in our own practice, when, having emerged from a dhyana or some level of

³⁴ SD 2.16 (6); SD 17.8b (2.1.3) reflection on water ripples.

³⁵ The dhyanas are attained sequentially, thus, always beginning with the 1st dhyana (*paṭhama jhāna*).

³⁶ As in the case of Devadatta, who, despite having gained the 4th dhyana (which was a mundane dhyana), lost his psychic powers when he harboured unwholesome thoughts towards the Buddha, and even tried to kill him; see A 3.100/3:123. See esp Cv 7.1.6-2.2, when he deluded young Ajātasattu to do his bidding, and he intended to take over the sangha from the Buddha. From that moment on, he “declined in his psychic powers.” (V 2:184,33-185,21).

³⁷ See **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41), SD 24.1; **Venāga, pura S** (A 3.63,5.1), SD 21.1; SD 33.1a (3.2).

samadhi, we direct our calm and clear mind to reflect on impermanence (or on suffering, or on nonself). Having done this, we may refer to the cultivation as *vipassanā*, when we can conveniently say: “I have *done* some Vipassana.” *Bhāvanā*, then, is the cultivation of *both* samatha and vipassanā.

4.1.4.5 The most common and easiest method of attaining **dhyana** or some simple level of samadhi is with **breath meditation** (*ānāpāna,sati*), which is, in fact, the standard method used in both modern Samatha and Vipassana systems. However, although the breath meditation is well described in such ancient texts as **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118) (all the 16 stages), the usual method used is a scaled-down version focusing on only the 1st tetrad, such as that given in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) (only the 1st 4 stages).³⁸

Some teachers prescribe control over the duration or length of each breath to facilitate entry and stay in dhyana, and a safe emergence, back into our normal breath and daily life.³⁹ In the old Burmese tradition, **the Sunlun method** employs strenuous breathing [2.4.3.1]. Clearly, breath meditation is a very flexible practice, which means that we should carefully choose a version that works well for us.⁴⁰

4.1.4.6 The Buddha himself used **the breath meditation** in his struggle for awakening. It is not only a versatile method, but is *the epitome of the Buddha’s teaching*. To begin with, it is the only meditation object that can be *both* physical and mental. We begin by watching the physical breath as a body-based meditation. As we focus our mind and settle it, the breath, too, transforms itself from a physical state into a mental state as a bright mental sign (*nimitta*). [5.6.1.6]

Spiritually, breath meditation is an act of mental renunciation. The more we let go of the breath, the freer it is from the body. It settles down to become a mental sign that brightens even more as it frees itself from the body. When the breath-sign is radiant and blissful, it means that we have attained dhyana, or at least some level of samadhi. We sustain this radiant joy by simply “doing nothing”; perhaps, we may gently *smile* at it should we notice any hint of thought arising. Otherwise, we will be so absorbed in total bliss that there is nothing else that we can do.

4.1.4.7 Upon emerging from such a state, we should reflect on it as being mind-made; hence, it is **conditioned**, like all our experiences. This means that it is impermanent. The joy and peace, too, are impermanent. The more we desire such a state, the less likely we will get it: this will only bring us suffering. All we can do is: let the breath *in*, let the breath *out*. This is our very life, and yet we cannot cling to it: we have to *let it go* so that we will live. This is a reflection on the nonself of renunciation. We can thus see how both samatha (calm) and vipassana (insight) are so intimately interwoven in breath meditation.⁴¹

In this spirit, the ancient teachers were well aware of the right time for teaching and the right time for meditation; a time for samatha, a time for vipassana. We are joyfully reminded by **the Catu Kāla Sutta 2** (A 4.147), where the Buddha speaks of our knowing these 4 right times: “The time for hearing the Dharma; the time for discussing the Dharma; the time for samatha; the time for vipassana” (A 4.147).⁴²

4.1.4.8 This long introductory overview of early Buddhist meditation, shows how samatha works together, hand in glove with vipassana, like the 2 wings of a bird that let it soar into the bright open sky. We then end with a close look at **the breath meditation**, again, noting how samatha and vipassana work together to train us for the path of freedom.

³⁸ As 4-stage exercise: **M 118**/3:78-88 (SD 7.13), **M 62**,26-29/1:425 (SD 3.11 (2)). As 16-stage exercise: **M 10**,4-5/-1:56 (SD 13.3); **D 22**,2/2:291, SD 13.2.

³⁹ Buddhādāsa 1998; Bluck 2008:49-64; Shaw 2012.

⁴⁰ A rule of thumb would be that such a method would not give us any headache or discomfort over a period. In such a case, we should at once stop meditating to try something more suitable, ideally with the guidance of an experienced teacher.

⁴¹ Further see Cousins 1984b; Shaw 2014:172-174.

⁴² A 4?147/2:141 (SD 62.18).

This is, in fact, the background we should be familiar with when we examine the Siamese meditation tradition. I have here used the older name “Siam” and “Siamese” (rather than her modern name, Thailand or Thai) since they reflect the times of the *ancient* meditation tradition which we will be looking at now.

4.2 EARLY HISTORY OF SIAMESE KAMMATTHANA AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

4.2.1 Pre-Siamese Buddhism

4.2.1.1 During the early centuries CE, the Khmer peoples of the Menam Valley came under the influence of Indian culture and Hinduism. There was no country called Siam or Thailand then. Other than the Khmer empire, what is northern Thailand today, comprising small independent city-states (*meung* เมือง), separated by rivers, forests and hills. Such a city-state was a small group of villages that worked and traded in their walled capital, within which they sought protection in times of danger and disasters, or to celebrate some significant event.

4.2.1.2 Around the 6th century, in the region of Lopburi (ancient Lavo, 150 km NE of Bangkok) arose the Mon kingdom of **Dvāravatī**, which was Buddhist. Amongst her great stupas was the Phra Pathom Chedi⁴³ in Nakorn Pathom (50 km west of Bangkok), the largest city of Dvāravatī. It is probably the tallest Buddhist structure in the world, in the oldest city of Thailand, going back even before Dvāravatī, to about 50 BCE.

4.2.1.3 In the 8th century, migrants into the Upper Chao Phraya Valley established the predominantly Buddhist kingdom of **Haripunjaya**, until the 13th century, when it was overrun by the Tai or Shan people from the north. This migration was accelerated by the Mongol conquest of the Tai state of Nanchao (modern Yunnan and southern Szechuan) in 1253. This eventually led to the suppression of the Khmer kingdoms and the rise of Siam, beginning with the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1350.

4.2.2 Sukhothai and Ayutthaya

4.2.2.1 By the time of Pho Khun Ramkamhaeng (b 1237/47, r1279-98), the 3rd king of the Phra Ruang dynasty, ruling **the Sukhothai kingdom** (1238-1584),⁴⁴ forest monasticism was widespread in the land. Ramkamhaeng also invented the Thai script and alphabet (1283), and established Theravada as the state religion of his kingdom.⁴⁵

A Siamese inscription found in Sukhothai's Wat Mahathat (great relic monastery) refers to a monk, Mahāsāmi, who helped Ramkamhaeng's father establish the independent kingdom of Sukhothai. The inscription adds that the monk, a noble, gave up his royal status to ordain to be a forest monk, and “meditated in the middle of the forest and lived on fruits and roots and behaved in every respect after the manner of the monks of Sīhala (then).”⁴⁶

4.2.2.2 The Buddhism of Ramkamhaeng's Sukhothai was predominantly of **the Sinhala forest tradition**.⁴⁷ This evinced the fact that there were Sinhala forest monks who kept closely to the Dharma-Vinaya.

⁴³ Its original name was Phra Thom Chedi (ancient Khmer for “the great stupa”), and is said to be built over an older stupa going back perhaps to the time of Asoka's mission (3rd cent BCE) that had reached the region, but no later than 6th-8th cent CE. Height 120.45 m high, base circumference 235.5 m, 562 m of cloisters perimeter, with 24 belfries between the cloisters and the outer boundary wall. Prince Mongkut discovered the old stupa (1831), and had it renovated and extended in Lankan style, taking 17 years to complete (1853-1870).

⁴⁴ For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukhothai_Kingdom.

⁴⁵ This was also the time when the military aristocracy changed their ethnic name of Tai (who were regarded as serf by their previous lords) to “Thai,” meaning “free.” (Coedès 1968:197, 207 f).

⁴⁶ Hazra, *History of Theravāda Buddhism in South-East Asia*, 1982:151, 1996:168.

⁴⁷ See eg M Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, Delhi: Oxford Univ Press, 1983.

We have no dates for the arrival of Sinhala Buddhism in Sukhothai, but we know that they came from Nakorn Si Thammaraj (south Thailand).

About 50 years after Ramkamhaeng, his grandson, **Phaya Lithai** (b c1300, r1347-1368), became king, titled Maha Thammaracha 1 (P *mahā dhamma, rājā*), clearly showing the influence of Pali and Theravāda.⁴⁸ He was popularly known as **Phra Ruang**, and was the 1st Buddhist philosopher to write in the Thai language. He wrote an ancient classic on Buddhist cosmology called *Traiphum Phra Ruang* (The 3 worlds according to Phra Ruang; c1345), about karma, humanity and kingship.

4.2.3 Sri Lanka: The uses of ordination

4.2.3.1 Ayutthaya, too, had close relationships with the Kandy kingdom in Lanka. When, by the mid-1700s, the Sinhala sangha had diminished so that it was impossible to ordain monks, the Sinhala king sent 2 missions to Ayutthaya (in 1741 and 1747) but both failed.⁴⁹ The 3rd mission succeeded to get help from **King Boromakot** (1733-58) of Ayutthaya, who sent 3 Siamese missions to Kandy to revive the Sinhala sangha.

In the 1st successful mission (1753), Siamese monks, led by **Upāli**, arrived in Kandy during the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-82). They stayed in the Malvatu [Malwatta] Vihara, where, during their 3 years stay, Upāli ordained 3000 novices and 700 monks. Two Siamese monks, who were Borana Kammatthana teachers,⁵⁰ instructed 24 Sinhala monks in this tradition.

The 2nd mission (1755) comprised 64 people, of whom 16 were monks, but 8 of them, including 4 monks, perished when they were shipwrecked off the eastern coast of Lanka. Amongst those who arrived in Lanka were Boran Kammatthana masters. But by the time they arrived (1756), Upāli had already died.

The 3rd mission was around 1760. By then, king Boromakot had died. An Ayutthaya prince, Tep Phiphit came along, with plans to kill the Kandy king and usurp the throne. The attempted coup was discovered, and its perpetrators punished. Fortunately, despite this palace intrigue, the mission was successful. After 12 years of training, and with the king's support, **the Syāmōpāli Nikāya** (or Siam Nikaya for short) was established in Lanka.

4.2.3.2 Sadly, when the Sinhala monks were left on their own, the situation changed for the worse. This was mainly due to the machinations of **the Gaṇinnanse** (secularized priests), who wanted to ensure that the “monastic revival” was to their full advantage. This they shrewdly machinated in 2 ways: by feigning affinity with their local forest monastic tradition and by claiming that, far from importing a foreign tradition, they were simply continuing their old monastic lineage.⁵¹

To this effect, they introduced a new way of preaching and popularized the *paritta* (protective) ritual, along with deity worship and demoniac rites—all this to ensure the support of the masses. Relations between the sect's 2 main chapters, **the Malvatu** [Malwatta] (the *gāma, vāsī*, “village-dwellers”) and **the Asgiri** (*araṇya, vāsī*, “forest dwellers”), soured, resulting in each side having their own ordinations. The animosity prevailed into our times. In 1980, due to personal differences, the Dambulla temple broke away from the Asgiri chapter to operate independently.⁵²

In fact, even in 1764, hardly a few years after the re-establishment of the Sangha in Sri Lanka, a Gaṇinnanse faction of the newly created **Siam Nikaya** succeeded in restricting the sect's higher ordination only to the wealthy and landed Radala and Goyigama castes.⁵³ The Vinaya rules were virtually abandoned and

⁴⁸ It is said that this title was given by the populace for his great piety and contributions to Buddhism (Cœdès 1968:219 f; D G E Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 1955, 4th ed 1981:190 f).

⁴⁹ See Ency Bsm 8:220d.

⁵⁰ The Sinhala sources, however, said that they were Vipassana teachers (Ency Bsm 8:222a).

⁵¹ A Blackburn, 2001; “Localizing lineage,” 2003:131-149.

⁵² Ency Bsm 8:223b.

⁵³ Most of the Sinhala missions in Malaysia and Singapore are from the Siam Nikāya, where the status of Chief High Priest continues to be handed down from uncle to nephew. even today, to ensure continued control of wealth and assets.

Sangha members of Siam Nikāya in Kandy continued, as before, to privately own land, have wives and children, living in their own houses. In short, they wield power and influence on account of their status and wealth to this day.⁵⁴ [6.0 n]

The *Mandarampura Puvata*, an apocryphal Buddhist chronicle from the Kandyan period, relates how when 32 Sinhala monks, objected to the radical changes, pointing out that these changes were not unanimous, they were summarily banished to Jaffna by the sect leader. Meantime, the traditional nobility of the Kandyan kingdom was decimated by continuous wars with the Dutch rulers of the Maritime Provinces. Times were dark for the Sangha and Buddha Dharma; little improved since then. Buddhism has been “modernized” so that many, if not most, of the Sinhala monks are no better than over-dressed laymen with socioreligious privileges [2.1.1.2]. Some even encouraged racial violence. We shall not go into that dark area.⁵⁵ [SD 60.1c: 1.9.4]

4.2.4 The rise of Siam

4.2.4.1 How did the kingdom and nation of Siam arise? The name **Siam** (originally *Syām*), appeared in a Cham inscription of 1050, referring to a group of slaves (probably war captives), and in other Cham, Khmer and Burmese inscriptions of the 11th and 12th centuries. It referred broadly to the people of the lower Chao Phraya Valley and the Isthmus of Kra (north of peninsular Malaysia).

Siamese history began with the immigration (8th-10th centuries) of the Tai⁵⁶ people from their homeland of Guangxi, fleeing from the southward expansion of the Chinese. Mainland SE Asia was then mostly part of the huge Hindu-Buddhist Khmer empire. The Tais formed city-states like Chiangsaen which adopted Theravāda.

4.2.4.2 The Tais continued their slow southward migration until they were independent of the weakened Khmer empire. They established **the Sukhothai kingdom** [4.2.2.1] under King Sri Indraditya in 1238. After King Ramkhamhaeng’s death in 1365, Sukhothai fell into decline, and was subjected to another rising kingdom of Ayutthaya farther south [4.5.1.1]. Another Thai state that coexisted with Sukhothai was the eastern state of **Lan Na**, centred in Chiangmai to the east. Lan Na finally fell to the Burmese in 1558. The kingdom of **Ayutthaya** prospered until 1767, when she, too, was destroyed by the Burmese. [4.5.1]

The old Buddhist religion survived into **the Thonburi period** [4.5.1.2], and then prospered in the following **Rattanakosin era** [4.5.2] down to our own times. In those early times, there were broadly 2 kinds of monks: the communal monks who lived in monasteries near cities and villages, and the forest monks who led reclusive itinerant lives, focused on asceticism and meditation. It is this latter group that practised **the Boran Kammaṭṭhana**.

4.3 BORAN KAMMATTHAN

4.3.1 The “old Siamese meditation”

4.3.1.1 Scholars of Thai Buddhism use the term **borān kammaṭṭhān** (from Pali *porāṇa kammaṭṭhāna*), “the ancient meditation,”⁵⁷ to describe the earliest known meditation tradition in Thai history, that was predominant during the 19th century onwards, but whose roots clearly went back centuries to the advent of Buddhism in mainland SE Asia itself. A close study of a number of their ancient meditation manuals suggests a harmonious overlapping of samatha and vipassana.

Prevalent as this tradition was in its time, it was a part of a broader “**old Siamese meditation**” [4.3.1], in contrast to the “new Burmese meditation” [2.4.1.1]. Their common characteristics were that their

⁵⁴ A Blackburn, 2001; “Localizing lineage,” 2003:131-149.

⁵⁵ But see, eg, H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, Univ of Chicago Press, 1999.

⁵⁶ The Tai or Zhuang-Tai are a branch of the Kra-Dai language family, originating from the S Chinese province of Guangxi.

⁵⁷ Choongpolpaisal & Skilton, 2014, 2015; Crosby 2020:21-26.

teachings were rooted in the suttas, and enriched by allusions to the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. The Boran Kammatṭhāna, for example, included the meditation on the 4 elements, an early Buddhist meditation found in **the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta** [4.1.2.2].⁵⁸ The accounts, narratives and manuals of Thai Kammatṭhāna clearly show a holistic connection between samatha and vipassanā, showing how the practice of calm always leads into the cultivation of insight.

4.3.1.2 In other words, this old Siamese meditation tradition, deeply rooted in early Buddhist teachings, had arisen early in pre-modern Siam/Thailand,⁵⁹ when Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism with their narratives, chants, mantras,⁶⁰ visualizations, amulets⁶¹ and yantras (charms), were believed to have apotropaic, even transformative, powers. This was the popular Buddhism then.⁶²

Sociologically, this ancient Siamese Kammatṭhāna was a **shamanic system** centred on the monk as *shaman*, who was believed, through his prayers, meditations or trances had access to nonhuman beings (spirits and gods). In these premodern times, the shaman⁶³ was usually a forest monk who was accessible to the people who needed his services of healing, warding off bad luck, and other apotropaic blessings.⁶⁴ [4.3.2]

4.3.1.3 In its heyday, this shamanic Boran Kammatṭhāna was well respected by the people who supported its virtuosi in the traditional Buddhist way with the 4 supports (robes, almsfood, shelter and medicines). In due course, the system was infiltrated by false practitioners who accepted money and other worldly benefits, as corrupt practitioners. This is what troubled the king and rulers who feared that their freelance and worldly ways might challenge royal authority [2.3.1.2].

It should, of course, be noted that there were also forest-monk meditators who were *not* shamans (in the negative sense, anyway) and who lived and practised in the true canonical manner, but we know almost nothing about them until the 18th or 19th century. Our study will focus on the lives and works of such monks that we do know about beginning with those times.

4.3.2 Esoteric Theravada

4.3.2.1 L S Cousins, in his “Aspects of Esoteric Southern Buddhism” (1997c) described **the Boran Kammatṭhāna** as an “esoteric Buddhism,” or more specifically, “esoteric Theravāda,” suggesting that it was also found in the Buddhism of South and SE Asia. He describes the Siamese Boran Kammatṭhāna as “tan-tro-kabbalistic,” by which he means:

... a form of mysticism which utilizes a rather elaborate map of correspondences between the human body, the cosmos and some kind of higher reality or knowledge. In the process it draws on the full resources of the widely-dispersed traditions of magic and the occult—letter, sound and

⁵⁸ Choompolpaisal & Skilton, 2014, 2015.

⁵⁹ **The Tai peoples** migrated from SW China to mainland SE Asia in the 11th cent. Their oldest name was the exonym **Siam** (Thai/Skt *syām* สยาม) in the 12th cent, a name used by the Portuguese in the 16th cent, becoming a Western geographical term [4.5.1.2]. It was officially used for the country in Mongkut's reign (1851-68). On 23 June 1939, 5 years after absolute monarchy was constitutionalized, her name was changed to **Thailand**: <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/siam-becomes-thailand>.

⁶⁰ The language of these was predominantly Pali, but also included Buddhist Sanskrit and the local language (Siamese or Sinhala).

⁶¹ This “old” Siamese Buddhism is famous for its amulets (Thai พระเครื่อง; [RTGS phrakhrueang](#)): see eg S J Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 1984.

⁶² “Apotropaic” refers to the warding off and overcoming of evil influences and bad luck. “Transformative” refers to the belief that such monks had the power to guide or empower us towards or on the spiritual path.

⁶³ OED, under “shaman” notes: “Evidence seems wanting for the plausible suggestion that the Mongolian word [Tungusian *samân*] is an adoption of Chinese *sha mên*, an ordained member of the Buddhist fraternity, Skt *śramaṇa*, P *samaṇa*, Buddhist monk or mendicant” (ed).

⁶⁴ Crosby 2013:51-55, 2020.

number symbolism together with the use of structured patterns of shape or spiritual practice of one of the higher religions in a manner which integrates the system of correspondences with a model of the spiritual path and with various modes of spiritual practice. (Cousins 1997c:195)

According to Cousins, “**esoteric Buddhism**” or “tantric Theravāda” might have arisen from any or more of these influences:

- (1) the influence of Mahāyāna;
- (2) the influence of Saivite Hinduism;
- (3) a “home-grown” development within SE Asia (it grew naturally from local conditions);⁶⁵
- (4) a product of the Abhayagiri school (founded 1st century BCE, based in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka; flourished 11th century; opened to Mahāyāna and non-Theravāda influences);
- (5) a product of the Mahāvihāra tradition (built 3rd century BCE in Anuradhapura, the orthodox HQ of Theravada in Sri Lanka; declined after the 9th century).

(Cousins 1997c; summarized in Crosby 2000:188 f)

On account of north Thailand’s proximity to India and Tibet, ancient Siamese Buddhism was open to both (1) Mahayāna (and Tantric) influences from the 2 countries, and also to (2) Śaivite Hinduism (the largest Hindu denomination). In premodern times, there were a significant number of exchanges between Sri Lanka (Kandy) and Siam [4.2.3]. The non-Theravāda elements could have been derived from contacts with Abhayagiri. Buddhaghosa, in his Commentaries, on a few occasions, hinted, in connection with the Mahāvihāra, that “**secret**” (*guḥha*) **teachings** would not be received from a teacher if the student did not show proper deference, without elaborating.⁶⁶ In other words, certain teachings were still in the “teacher’s closed fist”⁶⁷ for students who did not show total allegiance.⁶⁸

4.3.3 The Yogāvacara tradition

4.3.3.1 The Pali term for the Borān Kammaṭṭhāna (simply, Boran Kammaṭṭhana) is **Yogāvacara** (Skt, *yogācāra*; the course of yoga, or meditation sphere). The term technically designates a practice of Theravāda Buddhism that is open to lay and ordained practitioners. Yogāvacara, depending on the context, can also mean simply “meditator.”⁶⁹

Boran Kammaṭṭhana sets out the means and plans for practising meditation as an ethical self-training that incorporates the Buddha’s qualities into the body and applying the merit thus gained to practice al ends, like healing and protection from threats to human life. Buddhaghosa, the 5th-century scholar and Indian Theravāda philosopher working in the Mahāvihāra (Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka), discusses Yogāvacara practices in his Visuddhimagga, a seminal work on meditation.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ In this survey, we shall discuss only this point. For other details, please read Cousins’ article.

⁶⁶ Vism 115; MA 2:264 = AA 5:97. See Cousins 1997c:192 f + n15.

⁶⁷ The Buddha, during his last days, declares that he has no such “Guru’s secret teachings” (*ācariya, muṭṭhi*): **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.25/2:100), SD 9.

⁶⁸ This situation may also explain why Buddhaghosa is reticent or cautious in quoting sources other than those approved of by the Mahāvihāra.

⁶⁹ The Comys def him as one who is dedicated (*yoga*) to the cultivation (*bhāvanā*), that is, the exercises or courses (*avacara*) of the yoking of or yoking to (*yoga*) *samatha* and *vipassana*. **Yogāvacaro ti samatha, yogo, vipassanā, yogo vā avacarati ti yogāvacaro. Avacarati ti pavāsītva carati ti** (PmA 3:547). *Ayaṃ puggalo ti ānāpāna, sati, bhavanam anuyutto va* (PmA 3:512). *Sammā va paṭipannassa yutta, yogassa bhikkhu; ... yogāvacara, bhikkhu so.* (Abhāv 121). *Ādi, bhūtaṃ yoga, kammaṃ ādi, kammaṃ, taṃ etassa atthi ti ādikammiko, pubbe akata, paricayo bhavanam anuyu-ñjanto. Ten’āha yogāvacaro ti* (VismMHT 2:4). For scholarly details on the term *yogāvacara* and *yogacāra*, see Silk 1997, 2000.

⁷⁰ A manuscript fragment of the Yogāvacara meditation manual preserved in the British Museum dates it as “1700-1799”: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/yogavacara-manual>. See also: <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FH009132%2F1> (missing p viii); the missing page is found here: <https://www.bookvoed.ru/files/3515/83/85/1.pdf>.

The best known of the Yogāvacara manuals is clearly the monk Upatissa's **Vimutti,magga** (Vimm) [2.1.1], of which the original is lost. Fortunately, we have a full Chinese translation of it, and a new authoritative English translation by Nyanatusita Bhikkhu (2022).⁷¹ Apparently, in 18th century Sri Lanka, it was known as **the Amat'ākara,vaṇṇanā** (the commentary on the death-free source or store) (Amkv).⁷²

The Vimutti,magga, like Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi,magga (which was based on it), is not a meditation manual (it gives no meditation instructions), but serves as a meditation teacher's teaching guide. In the absence of the Pali canon, such a manual serves as the next best authority in the teaching and meditation. Both Upatissa and Buddhaghosa, who did not belong to the forest tradition, were, however, very familiar with the Pali canon.

4.3.3.2 An extant Yogāvacara text on the Boran Kammatthana well known to the forest tradition was an untitled manuscript discovered by H Dharmapāla (Anagārika Dharmapāla) in the Bambara-galla Wihare in Teldeniya, a town in Kandy district, Sri Lanka in 1893.⁷³ As the manuscript is untitled, T W Rhys Davids (its editor, 1896) named it "**the Yogāvacara's Manual**" because the text is addressed to the "*yogāvacara*" (one whose sphere is "yoga," that is, meditation). It is a Theravāda meditation manual with unique and unorthodox features, such as the use of mental images of the elements, the mantra **Araham**, and the use of a candle for meditation. It has been loosely dated from the 16th to the 17th century.⁷⁴ It has been into English by F L Woodward (1916), which is now badly dated and needs a new annotated translation.

The Yogāvacara's Manual covers Buddhist meditation subjects, as follows:⁷⁵

the 5 kinds of meditative joy	<i>pīti</i>
the 10 recollections	<i>anussati</i>
the 4 formless attainments	<i>arūpa samāpatti</i>
the 4 divine abodes	<i>brahma, vihāra</i>
the 10 insight knowledges	<i>vipassana, ñāṇa</i>
the 9 supramundane states	<i>lok'uttara dhammā</i> .

The Manual teaches a form of breath meditation by focusing at the nose-tip and moving it down the body to the heart and then to the navel.⁷⁶ It also includes many other exercises such as meditation using a candle flame, kasinas and the use of mental images of the 4 elements (*mahā, bhūta*).⁷⁷ The purpose of all these exercises is to give rise to a bright meditation-sign (*nimitta*), and to attain dhyana.⁷⁸

4.3.3.3 In our own time, the Yogāvacara meditation, is found, for example, in **the Dhammakāya Tradition** (Thai "Wiccha Thammakai," P *vijjā dhamma, kāya*), founded by **Sodh Candasaro** (สด จนทสโร 1884-1959), called "Luang Pu (or Luang Phor)"⁷⁹ Sodh Candasaro," with the ecclesiastical title of



Luang Phor Sodh Candasaro

⁷¹ T32.1648.399c-461: Vimm:Ñ 887. For a forgery of its Pali version, see Vimm:Ñ 87-89.

⁷² Somadasa 1987:240 f, 297, 370; Crosby 2005:147, 2020 Figs 1+2 (Correspondence table between Vism and Amkv; Vimm:Ñ 88).

⁷³ It has been identified as the *Mahānuvara Asgiri Aranyavamsāgata Vidarśanā Pota*, "the Vipassana Manual of the Kandy Asgiri Forest Tradition" (or simply, *Bambarangalē Pota*, "the Bambarangale Book," from where the manual was originally located): Vimm:Ñ 2022:88.

⁷⁴ F L Woodward (tr), *Manual of a Mystic* [Yogāvc:W], London: Pali Text Soc, 1916:vi.

⁷⁵ Yogāvc:eRD ix.

⁷⁶ Yogāvc:eRD xii.

⁷⁷ Yogāvc:eRD xiii.

⁷⁸ Talk on the invocation in the Yogāvacara lineage of Buddhist meditation by Paul Dennison (22 Nov 2020): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFNUf-s6jg>.

⁷⁹ "Luang Pu" is colloquial Thai for "Venerable Grandfather," and "Luang Phor" is "Venerable Father," denoting their seniority and venerability.

Phra Mongkoltepmuni, the abbot of Wat Paknam; hence, his toponym is “Luang Phor Wat Paknam” (like in the Burmese sayadaw names).

Sodh’s meditation—known as **the Wat Paknam method**—uses the mental sign (*nimitta*) connected with breath meditation. In other words, it is a samatha practice, that is, so long as we are blissfully absorbed in it. When we cognitively guide our mind, noticing the different parts of the body, or the breath, especially when noting their impermanence, then, technically, it is vipassana. Serious meditators, however, do not really care about this, if they are to really benefit from their meditation. They are focused on directly experiencing their practice.

4.3.3.4 The Dhammakāya Tradition is successfully promoted by **Wat Dhammakāya**, Bangkok,⁸⁰ on account of its great wealth, opulent display of religious structures and symbols of power,⁸¹ and huge crowds of meditation sittings and celebrations. The monastery’s aggressive acquisition of land, expansion and activities have drawn widespread criticism, making the monastery controversial even to this day, quite uncharacteristic of a meditation movement.⁸²

4.3.3.5 The basis of **Wiccha Thammakai** (Dhammakāya tradition or gnosis) is the making of our body’s centre (the inner abdomen on the navel level) as clear as **crystal**. This is done by gradually moving an imagined crystal ball, downward from the upper body to the body’s centre; then, focusing on the centre of crystal ball, mentally deeper and deeper into it.

Properly done, it is said, this will bring the meditator through layers of meditative or astral bodies, of which the 18th—called the “Dhammakāya Arahant” (the Arahant’s Dharma-body)—is the purest of all.⁸³ Sodha claims that this is the mind-made (*mano,māya*) or astral body spoken in the suttas.⁸⁴ However, according to Sodh, this is the “spiritual essence of the Buddha and nibbāna (which) exists as a literal reality within the human body.”⁸⁵ Since this is an innovative belief, unsupported by the suttas, we will leave it at that.⁸⁶

The Wat Phra Dhammakai phenomenon, too, need not concern us here since this is a survey of Siamese meditation, rather than Buddhist sociology, especially the Gospel of prosperity. This Temple famously promoted emphasized values of personal development, prosperity⁸⁷ and modernity, and is promotes social engagement such as blood donations, and well organized management-centred Buddhist courses for both the public and private sectors.⁸⁸

4.3.4 Shamanic meditation mantric formulas

4.3.4.1 In the Boran Kammaṭṭhāna of premodern Siam, Buddhist prayers, chants, mantras and formulas in Pali, and images, visualizations, stories, allegories and methods, weave together to function as a living transformative language, invoking the power of a *spiritual* body of sacred texts to be infused into

⁸⁰ Thai วัดพระธรรมกาย, RTGS *Wat Phra Thammakai*, Pathum Thani province, N of Bangkok, founded in 1970 by Maechi (nun) Chandra Khonnokyoong and Luang Phor Dhammajayo of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, Thonburi province.

⁸¹ Their Stupa was built in the shape of a brightly lit flying saucer. The huge rallies, with numerous impressive pennants and displays, were ominously reminiscent of the World War 2 Nazi military arrays: <https://correspondent.afp.com/sci-fi-bangkok>.

⁸² Rachele M Scott, *Nirvana For Sale?* 2009:136-140.

⁸³ The 18 stages are said to be: (1) our body, (2-9) the 4 dhyanas, crude and refined levels, (10-18) change-of-lineage and the 4 path attainments (sainthood), crude and refined. Harvey 2013:390.

⁸⁴ On the mind-made body (*mano,māyā kāya*), see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,87), SD 8.10, = **Kevalaḍḍha S** (D 11,53.2-54), SD 1.7. Sumi LEE, “The meaning of ‘mind-made body’ (S. *manomaya-kāya*, C. *yisheng shen* 意生身) ...,” 2014.

⁸⁵ R Mackenzie 2007:31.

⁸⁶ For summary and refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhammakaya_meditation.

⁸⁷ P A Jackson 1999:246; Harvey 2013:390 f; Seeger 2006:1, 6.

⁸⁸ J L Taylor 1989; Zehner 2005:2325; Litalien 2010:120.

the *physical* body of the practitioner.⁸⁹ For the true practitioner, this meant the arising of some kind of inner calm and insight; but for others, this had some kind of magical healing or blessing, depending on their needs, views and attitudes.

The best known of these ancient Siamese mantras was that of **A Ra Haṃ** (*arahaṃ*)⁹⁰ [4.3.3.2], which, in conventional language, means “the one worthy of holiness,” that is, an arhat, referring to the Buddha and the fully awakened saints of early Buddhism. On a mystical level (for the practitioner), it is a spiritual acronym: the syllable *A* is the Buddha, *Ra* is the Buddha Dharma, and *Haṃ* is the noble sangha.⁹¹

4.3.4.2 Then, there are the “textual mantras,” or mantric acroyms: *A Pā Ma Cu Pa* and *Di Maṃ Saṃ Aṃ U*. The former, **A Pā Ma Cu Pa**, are the names of the 5 books of Vinaya, that is:⁹²

Ādikamma	accounts of the 1 st perpetrators initiating the introduction of the rule/s
Pārājika	the 4 defeat rules (breaking any of which a monastic automatically falls away)
Mahāvagga	the great chapter (case studies and early historical accounts)
Cullavagga	the lesser chapter (the rules are dealt according to subject-matter; the early councils)
Parivāra	the accessory (appendix to Sutta Vibhaṅga (the first 2), Mahavagga and Cullavagga).

The latter acronym, **Di Maṃ Saṃ Aṃ U**,⁹³ are the names of the 5 collections (*nikāya*) of the Sutta Piṭaka:⁹⁴

Dīgha Nikāya	the collection of long suttas
Majjhima Nikāya	the collection of middle-length suttas
Saṃyutta Nikāya	the collection of connected suttas
Aṅguttara Nikāya	the collection of numerical suttas
Khuddaka Nikāya	the collection of minor suttas (the “5 th collection,” <i>pañcama nikāya</i>)

Then, there is the Abhidhamma meditation mantric acronym: **Sam Vi Dha Pu Ka Ya Pa**. As we recite each syllable, we visualize each of the 7 Abhidhamma texts comprising our own body and mind, thus:⁹⁵

Dhamma, saṅgaṇī	the enumerations of mental states
Vibhaṅga	the analysis (of mental states)
Dhātu, kathā	the discourse on elements
Puggala, paññatti	the description of individuals
Kathā, vatthu	the points of controversy
Yamaka	the pairs (of mental states)
Paṭṭhāna	the conditioned relations (of mental states).

4.3.4.3 The most significant of these meditation mantras is surely the “breath mantric formula,” where the in-breath (*assāsa*) is the Sutta Piṭaka, the out-breath (*passāsa*) the Vinaya Piṭaka, and the

⁸⁹ Crosby, 2013:82-87

⁹⁰ The phrase *Arahaṃ Arahaṃ* opens the “Yogāvacara’s Manual” [4.3.3] (ed T W Rhys Davids, 1986:1).

⁹¹ Cousins quoted the source for these mantras (*arahaṃ* and the breath mantra) as based on some verses mentioned in “Vimuttimaggā” compiled by Ratanajoti & Ratanapala (1963:114), (Cousins 1997c n42). He must have made this n before it became public that these 2 Sinhala priests forged the work (Vimm, tr Nyanatusita 2021:87-89). These verses must have come from an older source yet to be ascertained.

⁹² For details, see Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b:18-29; Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996: §§12-45.

⁹³ This should be **Khu**. Bizot suggests that this anomaly is prob because of the similarity of the 2 syllables in the ancient script [early Lanna?]. “However, it may also have been due to a wish at some point to make the 5 syllables for Vinaya begin with A and the 5 for Suttanta end in U, ie, two of the 3 parts of MA A U” (Cousins 1997c: n36).

⁹⁴ For details, see Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b:30-95; Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996: §§46-128.

⁹⁵ For details, see Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b:96-107; Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996: §§129-155. Further see Bizot 1976; Crosby 2013:46-51.

space in between them (*nissāsa*)⁹⁶ the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. This is a helpful reminder of the vitality of the breath meditation as epitomizing the whole of the Buddha's awakening and teaching. I was told by a student of Webu Sayadaw [2.4.7.2] that he once pointed to his nose and declared to the effect: "The whole of the Buddha's teaching is here in the breath!" This is meditator's talk.

In the textual tradition, these mantras are mnemonic devices for remembering suttas, inserted usually at the end of each sutta chapter. These are called *uddāna*, "mnemonic verses." In the Abhidhamma, these mnemonic lists are called *māṭikā*, "matrix (pl matrices)," which are usually inserted at the start of the collection. Unlike these meditation mantras, however, the *māṭikas* comprise whole words, that is, abbreviated sutta titles or doctrine names (*kusalā dhammā*, *akusalā dhammā*, *avyākātā dhammā* ...).

4.3.4.4 Boran Kammaṭṭhāna flourished in the early days of Siamese Buddhism before the canonical texts were easily available, before the advent of printing⁹⁷ [2.3.3.2]. On account of this textual lack, scriptural learning was mostly dependent on one's teacher's learning. In most cases, the teachers themselves had only some vague textual knowledge, but were more adept in their practical understanding of the mind's working and meditation practice.

Since their knowledge of the early texts was mostly nominal, the meditation teachers taught their students the names of these texts and to embody them in their body and their practice. An experienced meditator knew how *both* body and mind are harmonized during deep meditation, but it all must begin with a mastery of **the body** (*kāya*), that is, through moral conduct, so that we are "morally cultivated" (*bhāvita, kāya*), forming the basis for a "cultivated mind" (*bhāvita, citta*). [4.1.2.1].

Moreover, the early texts often refer to our "conscious body" (*sa, viññāṇaka kāya*).⁹⁸ The meditator is also said to "personally touch" (directly experience) the higher liberative states "with his body" (*kāyena phassati*).⁹⁹ It is through our consciousness—the mind—that we free our body from defilements and suffering. The body, then, is *the physical manifestation of the mind*, and should be protected from the onslaught of defilements. The body can and must be refined through the breath in samadhi [4.3.4.3]. What better way to "sacralize" the body than to visualize or empower it by embodying all that is sacred in our body itself. The body thus supports the mind that is ready for insight. This is the rationale for the practices described thus far¹⁰⁰ [4.3.4.1-3].

4.4 THE OLD SIAMESE MEDITATION

4.4.1 The old Siamese meditation and developments

4.4.1.1 I have used the phrase, "**the old Siamese meditation**" to show how Siamese Buddhist history seemed to develop *in the opposite direction* to the way it did in Burma with the rise of the "new Burmese meditation" [2.4.1.1]: in Siam, the reform was directed to going back to the "old Buddhism," that is, the texts and traditions of early Buddhism. From the nature of the Buddhist forest meditation, it is difficult to imagine it had arose by itself amongst the forest monks. From their own internal characteristics, these meditations clearly that they must have gone back to the earliest Buddhist days, even to the Buddha's time.

⁹⁶ Neither the suttas nor the dictionaries define *assāsa* and *passāsa*, and the usual term is simply *assāsa*, *passāsa* for the "in-and-out breath." *Nissāsa* is rare, and comes from the vb *nissasati* (lit, to breathe down), "to breathe heavily, sigh" (Ap 548,18, 575,9; DA 438,10 = MA 4:170,20). I have given it an idiomatic sense to fit the breath meditation context. Bizot takes *nissāsa* as the absence of breath (1976).

⁹⁷ The 1st printing press in Thailand was set up by Catholic missionaries in 1836. The royal course first made use of it in 1839. On the history of printing in Thailand, see Michael Winship, "Early Thai printing: The beginning to 1851," *Crossroads* 3,1, 700 years of Thai printing, 1986:45-61. See also https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/files/pdf/vol-16/issue-2/v16-issue2_EarlyPrinting.pdf How Christian missionaries brought printing into SE Asia.

⁹⁸ On the conscious body, see SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

⁹⁹ See **Samāṇa-m-ācala S** (A 4.87,3), SD 20.13; SD 4.25 (3.3.1).

¹⁰⁰ Further see Shaw, 2021:229.

The Boran Kammatthana (the ancient meditation tradition)—which was also known as **the Yogâvacara** tradition [4.3.3]—was indeed an old system: an indigenous cult system. In the 18th century, the reforms of **king Mongkut** [4.5.3] endeavoured to return Siamese Buddhism to even older roots, that is, early Buddhism itself. Ironically, this “old Siamese meditation” paralleled the “new Burmese meditation” that grew into the worldwide Vipassana movement of today, that is rooted in Ledi Sayadaw [2.4]. The “old Siamese meditation,” for its part, started with king Mongkut and grew into the worldwide Thai forest monastic network of Samatha centres, rooted in Ajahn Chah [5.12].



King Mongkut of Siam

4.4.1.2 The phrase “**the old Siamese meditation**,” then, is a broad term that encompasses both developments *based on* Boran Kammatthana, and the *reactions to or divergences from it*. Interestingly, the “new Burmese meditation” comprised a significant number of monastic teachers with their distinct teachings and methods. The “old Siamese meditation,” on the other hand, consisted mostly of monastic teachers who were often connected with one another in some way, and whose methods are thus compatible (except perhaps in the case of the Dhammakāya tradition).

4.5 HISTORY AND BUDDHISM, LOST AND FOUND

4.5.1 Burmese-Siamese hostilities [4.2.1]

4.5.1.1 Siamese (Thai) history proper began with **Ayutthaya** (1351-1767), founded by Rāmatibodi centering on a small island encircled by 3 rivers. Her 1st king, U-thong (r 1351-1369), established Theravāda as the official religion (to differentiate his kingdom from the neighbouring Hindu kingdom of Angkor), and compiled the Dharmaśāstra, a legal code based on ancient Indian sources and Thai custom. It was the basis for Siamese law until the late 19th century.

In 1511, the Portuguese, after conquering Malacca, sent an envoy to Ayutthaya, which they knew as “the kingdom of Siam.” Such contact with the West in the 16th century brought Ayutthaya a period of economic growth, making Ayutthaya one of the most prosperous cities in SE Asia, and was probably the largest city in the world in the 1700s, with a population of a million people.¹⁰¹

4.5.1.2 The prosperity of Ayutthaya led to her eventual downfall. Starting in the mid-16th century, **the Burmese** Taungoo kingdom repeatedly tried to overrun Ayutthaya, but she survived all the 4 sieges of the Burmese. However, in 1767, with the fall of Lan Na to the Burmese, when the Konbaung king [2.3.1.3] finally sacked Ayutthaya, burning it to the ground, along with her 400 years of records and artifacts.

Ayutthaya was, in her time, the centre of Siamese Kammatthana. Sadly, the Burmese kings and armies destroyed almost all evidence of a great culture. We know that the Siamese Kammatthana moved on: it was, after all, a forest tradition, and was not in the habit of recording its own history. Yet, the fall of Ayutthaya also marked the rise of Siam late in the 18th century, and the Siamese Kammatthana silently flowed along with it like forest streams.

4.5.1.3 The rise of Siam began in Chanthaburi (to the east bordering Battambang and Pailin in Cambodia), led by **Taksin** (r 1767-1782), a capable military leader of Chinese descent. He pushed back the Burmese and set up his own kingdom in **Thonburi**, on the west bank 20 km from the sea. This period saw mass migration of the Chinese from south China into Siam, providing labour for agriculture, trade and crafts. Taksin, the only king of Thonburi, tragically went mad due to stress and other reasons. He was exe-

¹⁰¹ George Modelski, *World Cities: 3000 to 2000*. Washington DC: FAROS, 2000, 2003.

cuted by his own general, Chakri, in 1782. **General Chakri**,¹⁰² a noble of Mon descent, then, became in 1782 the 1st king of the Chakri dynasty as Rāma I; and so began **the Rattanakosin**¹⁰³ era down to our times.

4.5.2 State and sangha

4.5.2.1 In Thai (modern Siamese) history, the tradition of **royal patronage of Buddhism** (the Theravāda Sangha in particular) historically started 1782 with king Rama I [4.5.1.3] who in the first decade of his reign promulgated 10 edicts declaring to the Siamese nation his intention to purge the Sangha of unworthy members, to purify monastic practice, and to encourage study and meditation. In significant ways, the purity and progress of Siamese Buddhism depended on the king as its exemplar and protector. Broadly speaking, this has continued to be the policy of the Thai royal house to the present day.



King Chulalongkorn

4.5.2.2 The 2 most significant of the Siamese kings, in terms of modernizing Thai Buddhism, were Mongkut's 9th son, Chulalongkorn. **Mongkut** (มงกุฎ, "crown," b 1804; Rama IV, r 1861-68)¹⁰⁴ [4.4.1.1] initiated religious reforms to purify the sangha and Buddhism, such as by upgrading monastic traditional education [4.5.3] and introducing the Sangha Act (law) [SD 90.1c: 9.4]. His successor, **Chulalongkorn** (b 1853; Rama V, r 1868-1910),¹⁰⁵ modernized Siam, including modern academic education for monastics [4.5.4]. We shall briefly look at the significance of the works of these 2 great kings in the light of our study of Siamese Kammaṭṭhāna.¹⁰⁶

4.5.3 Monastic reforms in Siamese Buddhism



Mongkut as a monk

4.5.3.1 Buddhism both in Burma and in Thailand began to change in the 19th century for similar reasons. Both countries were threatened by foreign domination over them, and, in both cases, their king—**Mindon** in the case of Burma [2.3.3.3] and **Mongkut** [4.5.2.2] in the case of Siam were keen in modernizing their respective kingdoms.

In both cases, too, the prevalent Buddhism then was a contemplative ascetic tradition. Their main difference was in how they each developed into a Buddhist system in our own times: it was mainly Vipassana in the case of Myanmar, and mainly Samatha in the case of Thailand. [4.5.3.2]

4.5.3.2 **Mongkut** was a monk (Pali name Vajirañāṇo; Thai Wachirayan) for 27 years (1824-1851) before he became king (r 1851-1868). During those years, he was able to learn first-hand of the corruption and decay that had pervaded the Siamese monastic order. In 1835, he started monastic reforms

¹⁰² Rāma I (b 1737, r 1782-1809; titled Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke), prior to his succession to the throne, for years held the title, Chakri (the wheel wielder), the civil chancellor under king Taksin. He was then an Ayutthaya military leader of Sino-Mon descent. Hence, the name, Chakri dynasty ราชวงศ์จักรี (*ratchawong chakri*). The family has ruled Siam (from 1939, Thailand) since the founding of the Rattanakosin era and city of Bangkok in 1782, following the end of Taksin's reign in Thonburi. (A Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical crossroads*, 2015:215).

¹⁰³ Thai, รัตนโกสินทร์ (Skt *ratana, kos'indra*, Indra's cache of jewels).

¹⁰⁴ Rama IV's reign title is "Phra Chomklao Chaoyuhua" พระจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว; not to be confused with Rama VI (Phra Mongkutklao Chaoyuhua) (1910-1925), known in the west as King Vajiravudh.

¹⁰⁵ Rama V's reign title is "Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua" พระจุลจอมเกล้า.

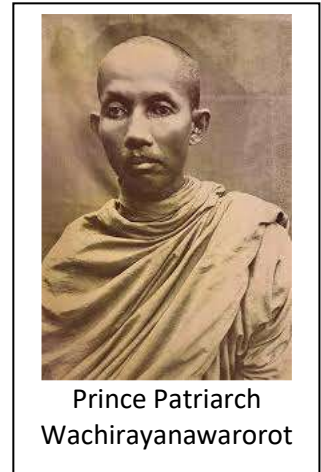
¹⁰⁶ For more details on monastic education reforms in Thai Buddhism, see eg Dhammasami 2004, 2018.

which grew in momentum the following year when he became the 1st abbot of Bowornnivet Wiharn (Wat Boworn for short) in Bangkok, which subsequently became the headquarters of his Thammayut Nikai (Dhammayuttika Nikāya).¹⁰⁷

When Mongkut became king, he became aware of the colonial menace surrounding Siam. To keep Siam safe from being swallowed up by the imperial powers, he had to relate with them as a modern and unified nation. Since religion is one of the powerful forces that could unite (or fragment) the nation, he worked with the idea of undermining the authority of the forest monks (especially the shamanistic ones), who were very popular with the masses. He had to neutralize, at least weaken, their influence so that it would neither be a threat to his power nor fragment the nation into religious factions.

4.5.3.3 In significant ways, Mongkut's reforms were given greater momentum by his 47th child, **Wachirayanawarorot** (P *Vajira,ñāṇa,var'orasa*, "the royal prince with adamant wisdom") (1860-1921), or "Wachirayān" for short (similar to the monastic name of Mongkut as a monk). He was ordained in 1879 by prince abbot Pavaresa, but in 1880, he reordained into the royalist Thammayut sect, on a raft (as the consecrated space), and so began his new monastic life.¹⁰⁸ He went on to become the 10th supreme patriarch (1910-1921), which helped to fully implement his monastic educational reforms.

4.5.3.4 For the education of Buddhists, monastic and lay, he wrote and published the following titles (among others):¹⁰⁹



Publication (BE)¹¹⁰

Nak Tham Tri (1st year Dhamma = 3rd grade or elementary)

(1) <i>Navak'ovāda</i> (advice for novices) ¹¹¹ with (2)	1899 (BE 2442)	1971
(2) <i>Dhamma,vibhāga</i> 1 (anthology of Buddha's numerical sayings)	1917	1968
(3) <i>Vinaya,mukha</i> (Entrance to the Vinaya) vols 1 ¹¹²	1916 (BE 2459)	1969-72
(4) <i>Buddha,sāsana,subhāsita</i> (Buddhist proverbs) vols 1 ¹¹³	1860 (BE 2403-2460)	1953-55 (?)
(5) <i>Phutthaprawat</i> (Life of the Buddha, vols 1-3)	1912	
(6) <i>Paṭhama,sambodhi</i> ปฐมสมโพธิ ("the first awakening")		
(7) <i>Sāsana,vidhi</i> ศาสนาพิธี เล่ม ๑ (Buddhist ceremonies vol 1)	(1999)	

Nak Tham Tho (2nd year Dhamma = 2nd grade or intermediate)

(1) <i>Saṅgīti,kathā</i> 1 (History of the Councils vol 1)	?	
(2) <i>Saṅgīti,kathā</i> 2 (History of the Councils vol 1)	1906	
(3) <i>Dhamma,vibhāga</i> 2 (numerical sayings)	1917	
(4) <i>Anubuddha,pavatti</i> (History of (some of) Buddha's disciples)	1919	
(5) <i>Vinaya,mukha</i> vol 2 ¹¹⁴	1921 (BE 2414)	1973
(6) <i>Buddha,sāsana,subhāsita</i> vol 2	(1958)	
(7) <i>Sāsana,vidhi</i> ศาสนาพิธี เล่ม ๒ (Buddhist ceremonies vol 2)	1960 (BE 2503)	

¹⁰⁷ For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongkut#Monastic_life_and_Thammayut_sect.

¹⁰⁸ S Zack, *Buddhist Education Under Prince Wachirayanawarorot*, 1977 (unpublished diss); also Dhammasami 2004:258-263.

¹⁰⁹ The press was part of the premises of Wat Boworn. The year of the 1st publication, etc, are given in Buddhist Era (BE): minus 543 to get the Common Era (CE).

¹¹⁰ Dates with (brackets) are uncertain.

¹¹¹ See Zack 1977:188-194; <https://archive.org/details/Navakovada>; <https://methika.com/books/navakovada/>.

¹¹² *Vinaya,mukha* vol 1 <https://archive.org/details/VinayamukhaVol1>.

¹¹³ With Mahā Prayong Kittidharo. Vol 1: <https://suvacobhikkhu.wordpress.com/buddhist-proverbs-i-pali-thai-eng/>. Vol 2: <https://sourceoflightmonastery.tripod.com/webonmediacontents/1071498.pdf>. Vol 3 .

¹¹⁴ *Vinaya,mukha* vol 2. <https://archive.org/details/VinayaMukhaVol2MahtimakutRajavidyalaya>.

Nak Tham Ek (3rd year Dhamma = 1st grade or advanced)

(1) <i>Dhamma,,vicāraṇa</i> (Dharma investigations)	1920		
(2) <i>Vinaya,mukha</i> vol 3 ¹¹⁵	1921	(BE 2464)	1983
(3) <i>Buddhānubuddha,pavatti</i> (Life of the Buddha and his disciples)	1892		
(4) <i>Maṅgala,visesa,gāthā</i>	(1910?)		
(5) “Essentials of Samathakammaṭṭhāna”	1912		
(6) “Vipassanā,kammaṭṭhāna”	1900 (?)		
(7) Samatha,kammaṭṭhāna and Vipassanā,kammaṭṭhāna (2 essays) ?			
(8) <i>Buddha,sāsana,subhāsita</i> vol 3	(posthumous)		
(9) <i>Sāsana,vidhi</i> ศาสนาพิธีเล่ม ๓ (Buddhist ceremonies vol 3)	?		

4.5.3.5 Zack notes that in 1914, Wachirayān addressed the **tudong forest monks** of Saraburi, reminding them to live strictly to the *dhutaṅga* rules and not take the robe as “a lifestyle” parasiting on society (1977:220 f). In this connection (Dhamma study), Wachirayān added that the cultivation of **samatha** is vital for a proper understanding of the Pali texts.¹¹⁶

These books were adopted as the texts for the 3-year Nak Tham (nak tham tri; nak tham tho; nak tham ek)¹¹⁷ Dhamma examinations in 1910. With a few additions and further refinements, this is, basically, the Siamese monastic education that has come down to this day with their own examination syndicate, the Sanam Luang.¹¹⁸

4.5.3.6 As this is a survey of *samatha,vipassana* as history and practice, I only briefly mention **monastic Pali education**, especially that of Thailand, which has been summarized elsewhere.¹¹⁹ The Pali exams were carried out orally until the end of King Rama V’s reign. Wachirayān modernized the Pali exams.

A new written exam system, pioneered by Wachirayāna was first used at the Mahāmakut Buddhist University in 1893. The Mahāchulalongkorn Buddhist University had already introduced it in 1889, but it only officially instituted in 1986. Sadly, due to lack of interest, the **Mahamakut system** (as it was called) was cancelled by the Thai Sangha in 1902.

The other traditional system, known as the 9-level (Thai, *prayogi P payoga*, exercise) **Phra Pariyattidham**, however, continues to this day.¹²⁰ Wachirayān revised the old Pali education based on Kaccayāna grammar and Thai tradition. Of special significance are the 6 small textbooks compiled by him that serve as the basis of modern **Pali Grammar** (*Bali Waiyakorn*), as follows:

- (1) *Akkhara,vidhi: Samaññābhidhāna + Sandhi* (the alphabet: sound system and euphonic combination)
- (2) *Vacī,vibhāga 1: Nāma + Avyaya,sadda* (parts of speech 1: nouns and indeclinables)
- (3) *Vacī,vibhāga 2: Ākhyāta and Kitaka* (parts of speech 2: verbs and primary derivation)
- (4) *Vacī,vibhāga 3: Samāsa + Taddhita* (compounds and secondary derivation)
- (5) *Vākya,sambandha 1* (sentence construction: parsing 1)
- (6) *Ubhaya,vākya,parivittana 1+2* (sentence conversion).

A summary of Wachirayān’s *Grammar*, was compiled by Phra Mahā Chamrat Ṭhitajoti (1921).¹²¹

¹¹⁵ *Vimaya,mukha* vols 1-3: <http://www.khmerbuddhism.net/ebooks/english/Vinayamukha.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Wachirayanwarorot, “Hua chai samattha kammathan (The Essentials of Samatha Meditation).” *Tham khadi* (Themes of the Dhamma) [*Thammakhadi*:Dhamma Texts], p179. See Dhammasami 2004:261 f.

¹¹⁷ “Nak Tham Tri” means the Dhammika 3rd grade (1st year Dhamma knowledge); “Nak Tham Tho” is the 2nd grade (2nd year); and “Nak Tham Ek” is 1st grade (3rd year).

¹¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanam_Luang_Dhamma_Studies.

¹¹⁹ See eg <https://atbu.org/node/23> which does not mention the works of Vajirañāṇavaroros.

¹²⁰ See http://tdm.sas.upenn.edu/monastery/life_education.html; <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/ijmmt/article/download/247845/166998>.

¹²¹ Tr as *A Handbook of Pali Grammar* by Piyasilo Bhikkhu (Bangkok, 1973; unpublished).

4.5.4 Modern Siamese monastic education

4.5.4.1 Mongkut was more successful in modernizing Siam than Burma's penultimate king, Mindon, was in reforming his own kingdom [2.3.3.3]. Burma later fell to the British. An important reason for Mongkut's success was that his successor, King **Chulalongkorn**, implemented his father's reforms and was very shrewd in his foreign diplomacy. He not only kept out the colonizers, but also unified Siam into a sovereign state under him. [1.9.6.3]

To unify the Siamese Sangha, he introduced educational reforms for the monks. He founded **the Mahāchulālongkorn Rājavidyālaya** (the Mahachulalongkorn monastic university under royal patronage) [MCU, 1887],¹²² so that the majority of monks, those from the poor sector of society, especially farmers, had (and have) an opportunity for a good academic education rooted in both Buddhism and useful secular subjects.

As a rule, such educated monks, if they remained in robes past 40, they went on to become elders of the Siamese Sangha. Otherwise, they leave the Sangha young enough to earn a living, set up a family, and live a relatively comfortable lay life. Either way, the monks generally contributed to the stability and prosperity of the country, or at least did not bring her any social or political problems, as in Sri Lanka. [SD 60.-1c: 1.8.2]

4.5.4.2 In our own times, the MCU aspires to become an international Buddhist university, and thus places emphasis on the usage of English. Meditation practice is part of the University curriculum, and graduating monks are expected to have done some hours of traditional meditation. The purpose of this is to encourage a good balance of education and meditation in the monastics so that they become good practitioners and better teachers.

In **Myanmar**, however, mainly due to its unstable political situation, and lack of local initiative, education for monastics remain largely parochial. Burmese monks desiring a broader English-based education have to resort to the universities in **Sri Lanka**.¹²³ With a good command of English and some level of academic qualification, such monks hope to be able to work as resident monks in the lay temples¹²⁴ of Malaysia or Singapore, or perhaps start their own missions overseas.

4.6 THE SIAMESE SAMATHA TRADITION

4.6.1 Bangkok was far away

4.6.1.1 The Buddhist reforms of the 2 great kings, Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, were very successful [4.5.4.1], benefitting the monastics and monastic system of Thailand—especially those in the urban monasteries, that is, **the “text-based” (pariyatti) coenobites**. This background is helpful in our understanding of the realities of Thai Buddhism when we discuss the forest tradition, that is, the “old Siamese meditation” [4.3.1].

The reforms of the 3 great Siamese—Mongkut, Chulalongkorn and Wachirayanawarorot—succeeded in cutting down the growth and influence of Boran Kammaṭṭhāna. With the nation's monastics more cen-

¹²² Founded in 1887 by king Chulalongkorn, its main campuses are at Wat Mahathat Yuwarat Rangsarit in Bangkok and at Wang Noi, Ayutthaya province, but has at least 15 extension campuses throughout Thailand. By bills passed in 1997, both Mahachula (in short) and Mahamakut Buddhist Universities became public universities. The former belongs to the Mahanikai sect, the latter to the royalist Thammayut sect.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya_University.

¹²³ The main reasons for Burmese monks resorting to Sri Lanka universities is because of past historical links. The university fees are often quite high for most of the monks.

¹²⁴ “Temple” usu refers to a smaller institution than “monastery,” which, in either case, in Thailand, is always run by monastics, but elsewhere (such as in Malaysia or Singapore) may be run by the laity with resident monks in their employ.

tralized and better educated, it was not difficult to wean them from unorthodox teachings and practices of Boran Kammaṭṭhāna.

4.6.1.2 Yet, the popular subculture never dies, since most people, religious or not, tend to have difficulties living up to the noble virtues and ideals of early Buddhism. In their pursuit of worldly pleasures and gains, they are compelled to externalize their spirituality, and seek it in religious figures to whom they attribute charisma.

Hence, we see the spirit of Boran Kammaṭṭhāna still alive and driving albeit a small, hence, more specialized and privileged class of shamanic monastics and the devoted laity. This should not concern us further since they have practically nothing to do with the meditation tradition of our discussion.¹²⁵

We will instead examine certain teachings and practices of Boran Kammaṭṭhāna that influence the “**new Siamese meditation**” tradition. It focuses, as a rule, on forest monks, whose teachings and practices inspire us to this day. We will now study the best known of them, and also how Boran Kammaṭṭhāna practice still live, at least in spirit, in many of them, the best known of which are the forest monks of NE Thailand.¹²⁶

5 The “new Siamese meditation”

5.1 MASTERS OF SIAMESE KAMMATTHANA

5.1.1 For the remainder of this section, we shall examine the teachings and practices of the leading Siamese Kammaṭṭhāna monks (up to the early 20th century), that is, the “new Siamese meditation.” Here is a summary list of Siamese Kammaṭṭhāna meditation masters up to date:

<u>Mahānikai</u>	<u>Thammayut</u>		
	Ajahn Sao Kantasīlo	(1861-1941)	[5.2.2]
	Ajahn Mun Bhuridatto	(1870-1949)	[5.2]
	Ajahn Lee Dhammaddharo	(1907-1961)	[5.3]
	Ajahn Khamdee	(1902-1984)	[5.4]
	Ajahn Sim Buddhacaro	(1909-1992)	[5.5]
Ajahn Buddhaddāsa		(1906-1993)	[5.6-5.8]
	Ajahn Thate Desarangsi	(1902-1994)	[5.9]
	Ajahn Feuang Jotiko	(1915-1986)	[5.10]
	Maha Bua Ñāṇasampanno	(1913-2011)	[5.11]
Ajahn Chah Subhaddo		(1918-1992)	[5.12]
	Ajahn Suwat Suvaco	(1919-)	[5.13]
	<u>Thānissaro Bhikkhu</u>	(1949-)	
<u>Ajahn Chah’s lineage</u>			
Ajahn Sumedho		(1934-)	
Ajahn Khemadhammo		(1944-)	
Ajahn Viradhammo		(1947-)	
Ajahn Pasanno		(1949-)	
Ajahn Sucitto		(1949-)	
Ajahn Brahmavamsa ¹²⁷		(1951-)	

¹²⁵ See eg S J Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of the Amulet*, 1984.

¹²⁶ Chah 2007; Tiyanich 1997.

¹²⁷ On 1 Nov 2009, the Thai forest monastic Sangha in the Ajahn Chah lineage centred at [Wat Nong Pah Pong](#), Ubon Ratchathani, excommunicated Brahmavamsa from the Ajahn Chah Forest Sangha lineage [SD 1.9 (8-10)]. He is now associated with neither the main monastery in Thailand, Wat Phong, nor with any of the other Western Forest Sangha branch monasteries of the Ajahn Chah tradition. Interestingly, he was ordained not by Ajahn Chah but by

[Ajahn Amaro](#)

(1956-)

[Ajahn Jayasāro](#)

(1958-)

[Ajahn Sujato](#)¹²⁸

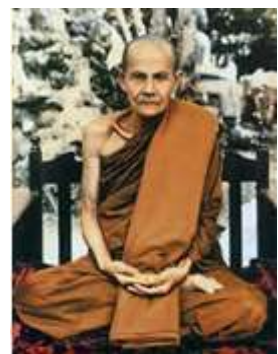
(1966-)

5.1.2 We are now rising into the blissful clouds of **hagiography**, the writings and stories of the lives of saints, a melding of history, metaphor and mythology, through the eyes of the faithful. This is a fascinating area of literature, rivalling the great works of fiction that continue to enrich our lives in every generation ever since they were published.

The purpose of reading such works must clearly be to understand the writer's mind and heart, and how this brings out the wholesome and best in us. The historical aspects of such stories connect us with the subject of this study, the great Siamese Kammatthana monks and practitioners. Yet, it is the mythical and the metaphorical that will deep-dive internally or raise us up to higher levels of seeing our own self. This is the nature of hagiography, sacred stories and legends.

5.2 AJAHN MUN BHURIDATTO (1870-1949)

5.2.1 Ajahn Mun (Thai มั่น; Pali ordination name, Bhūridatto ภุริตตโต) was born in 1870 in Baan Kham Bong (บ้านคำบง), a farming village in Ubon Ratchathani province, NE Thailand. He became a novice at 15 (1885) in the village monastery (Wat Baan Kham Bong) for 2 years. At 22 (1893), he ordained, with his parents' blessings, as a monk under Ajahn Sao Kantasīlo [5.2.2], in Wat Liab, a small monastery outside the capital of Ubol Ratchathani (the province has the same name) in NE Thailand.¹²⁹



Ajahn Mun Bhūridatto

5.2.2 Little is known about **Ajahn Sao Kantasilo** (เสาร์ กนตสีโล 1861-1941), since he left nothing behind by way of meditation manuals or biography.¹³⁰ Ajahn Sao began his monastic life practising a regional pre-Reform Boran Kammatthana *gāthā* (Thai *katha*, “mantra recitation”) meditation, but would later re-ordain in the Thammayut sect.



Ajahn Sao Kantasilo

J L Taylor writes of him:

“Sao typifies the reclusive somewhat introverted loner. Man [Ajahn Mun] was recorded as saying that Sao's gentle personality was an expression of great metta [sic: *mettā*]. He would only speak on occasions and with short pithy utterances.”¹³¹

For the first 3 months that Mun trained under Ajahn Sao, Mun struggled to find a proper meditation subject. He began by contemplating the foul nature of the body, which brought him haunting visions of a corpse being picked at by scavengers. Upon investigating these visions, a translucent disk-sign (*nimitta*) appeared before him mentally. When he focused on the translucent disk, he would be taken on an inner journey of ephemeral visions. After 3 months, he concluded these recurring experiences kept him in a mental bind.¹³²

Phra Bhromgunabhorn (Kiaw Upaseṇo เกี้ยว อุปเสโน) (1928-2013) (later promoted to Somdet Phutthacharn สมเด็จพระพุฒาจารย์ XXII), abbot of Wat Sraek, Bangkok, the same monastery where Piyasīlo (Piya Tan) was ordained by the 17th Supreme Patriarch (Pun [Poon] Puṇṇasiri ปูน ปุณณสิริ, 1896-1973) as preceptor, and spent his 5-rain *nissaya* (1972-76). <https://dokumen.tips/reader/f/somdet-phra-buddhacarya>.

¹²⁸ Sujato sees Brahmavarṇso as his teacher.

¹²⁹ S J Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 1984:82.

http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/acariya-mun.pdf.

¹³⁰ Tambiah 1984:83.

¹³¹ Taylor, *Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand*, 2008:103.

¹³² Maha Bua 2003, repr 2010:8-10.

Mun decided to let go of them and keep to constant **bodily mindfulness**. He kept his attention on various parts of his body by taking full sweeps of it, even when he was walking. He found that this brought him more calm abiding.

5.2.3 Ajahn Sao wandered on tudong (P *dhutanga*; Thai: *thudong*) [3.1.3.4 f] with Ajahn Mun for several years. Ajahn Mun relates how during this period, people in the villages were terrified of tudong monks who wandered the countryside. Of tudong monks, **Ajahn Maha Bua** [Boowa] writes:



Sarika Cave, Nakorn Nayok

“Back then, a *dhutanga* monk, walking in the distance on the far side of a field, was enough to send country folk into a panic. Being fearful, those still close to the village quickly ran home. Those walking near the forest ran into the thick foliage to hide, being too scared to stand their ground or greet the monks. Thus, *dhutanga* monks, wandering in unfamiliar regions during their travels, seldom had a chance to ask the locals for much needed directions.” (Bua 2003:10).

Anthropologist **Tambiah** explains: “Such monks apparently provoked feelings of fear and apprehension among the rural folk. Their strictly controlled behavior and avoidance of unnecessary contact with laymen;

their wearing of yellowish-brown robes dyed with gum extracted from the wood of the Jackfruit tree; their carrying a large umbrella (*klot*) slung over their shoulder, the almsbowl over the other, and a water kettle hanging on the side; and their custom of walking in a single file—all these features inspired awe as much as respect.” (1984:84)

5.2.4 After wandering on tudong for some years, Ajahn Sao told Mun that the latter should go out on his own to progress further. Mun then looked for another teacher who might have attained the path, travelling to Laos, northern Burma and central Thailand. Reaching Bangkok, he consulted his childhood friend, **Chao Khun Upāli** (Jan Siricando, 1856-1932),¹³³ on the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*).

He then left for a period, staying in caves in Lopburi (150 km NE of Bangkok), before returning to Bangkok to consult with Chao Khun Upali one final time. With greater confidence in his own wisdom, Mun left for the mystical **Sarika Cave**, in the Khao Yai mountains of Nakorn Nayok province,¹³⁴ living there for 3 years.¹³⁵

During his stay there, Ajahn Mun was critically ill for several days. When medicines failed to heal him, he ceased to take them, and resolved to rely on the power of his practice. He investigated the nature of the mind and his pain. In due course, his illness abated.¹³⁶

According to forest tradition accounts, after subduing an apparition of a mace-wielding demon, who claimed to be the owner of the cave, and working through subsequent visions, Mun attained the path as a “non-returner” (*anāgāmi*).¹³⁷ He passed away in 1949 at Wat Suddh’āvāsa, Dong Mafai, Sakon Nakhorn province. A hagiographical life-story about Mun was composed by Maha Bua (2003). [5.11]

¹³³ Jan was 14 years (rains) senior to Mun. His ecclesiastical title was Somdet Phra Ubāli Gunupamacharn, P *upāli* *gun’upam’ācariya*. Once, he was temporarily stripped of his title and placed under “monastery arrest” for reportedly criticizing King Rama VI’s request that monks encourage their followers to donate money for a battleship for the Royal Thai Navy. He was also the preceptor and teacher of Somdet Mahawirawong (Tisso Uan) [5.3.3 f]

¹³⁴ In central Thailand, about 130 km north of Bangkok.

¹³⁵ Not too far away is the Province’s most famous Sarika waterfalls (Thai, *namtok sarika*), with its 9-tier cataracts, with a pool on each level. See Thanissaro 2010; Tambiah 1984:86.

¹³⁶ Bua 2003:21-42; Tambiah 1984:87 f.

¹³⁷ Tambiah 2003:88.

5.3 AJAHN LEE DHAMMADHĀRO (1907-1961)¹³⁸

5.3.1 Ajahn Lee Dhammadhāro (Thai สิริธมมธโร 1907-1961) (original name, ชาลี *Chalee*), born in a rural village in Ubon Ratchathani province, NE Thailand,¹³⁹ was a disciple of Ajahn Mun [5.2]. Lee was a leading meditation teacher in the early 20th century, skilled both in teaching and in practice. He was the first to bring the ascetic tradition out of the forests of the Mekong basin into mainstream Thai society in central Thailand.¹⁴⁰ A special feature of his method was a pattern of dhyana, said to lead to the formless attainments.¹⁴¹

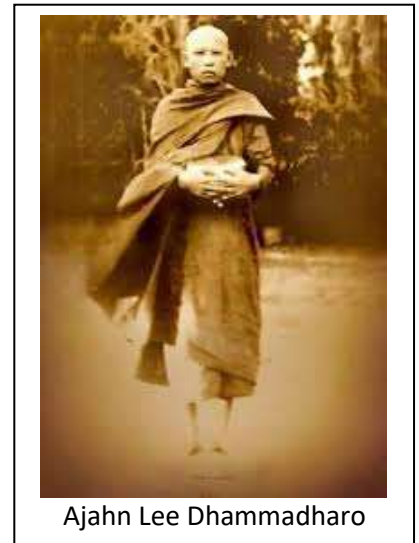
5.3.2 After ordaining as a Maha Nikai monk, he had difficulties keeping the rule about taking meals only between sunrise and noon. He went on to learn that other monks, too, did the same. Furthermore, they played chess and held cock-fights. In due course, upon meeting Ajahn Mun [5.2], Lee reordained under the Thammayut sect and, for a while, lived as an itinerant *tudong* monk, wandering as far south Thailand, Cambodia, Burma and India.¹⁴²

Ajahn Lee founded a number of monasteries in his wanderings. The most famous of these was **Wat Asokārām** (1962), in Samut Prakarn, where he taught meditation, and where his meditation continues to be taught. In recognition of his work, he received the ecclesiastical title: Phra Suddhidhammaraṇsi Gam-bhiramedhacariya (1957).¹⁴³

5.3.3 During the reigns of Siamese kings, Prajadhipok (Rama VII, 1925-1935) and Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII, 1935-1946), there was political tension between the Thammayut [4.5.3.2] hierarchy and the forest tradition. In 1926, the regional Thammayut authority, **Tisso Uan** (ติสโส อ้วน), attempted to drive Ajahn Sing Khantyāgamo (สิงห์ ขนดุยาคโม) of Wat Pah Salawan, Nakorn Rachasima and his following of 50 monks, 100 nuns and laypeople, out of a forest under Uan's jurisdiction.

The authorities suspected that the monks were sympathetic to the Communists hiding in the forests.¹⁴⁴ Uan publicly notified the villagers not to give alms to Ajahn Sing and his monks. Uan even sent a local District Officer to officially instruct Ajahn Sing to leave. Sing replied that he was an Ubon native, and saw no good reason to leave.¹⁴⁵

Although the Thammayut directive was later dropped, this tension persisted for two decades, and Tisso Uan maintained even after Ajahn Mun's death that the latter was unqualified as a Dhamma teacher since he had not undergone formal Pali studies.¹⁴⁶ This is a clear example of effects of Mongkut's reforms to streamline the Sangha to promote educated monks and weaken the influence of the forest monks.



Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo

¹³⁸ Not to be confused with the younger Ajahn Dhammadharo (1913-2005) of Wat Tow Kote, Nakorn Si Thammaraj, S Thailand: Kornfield 2007: ch 14. Kornfield's valuable book introduces the best teachers in recent times, but parts of it are outdated. It also includes one Ajahn Jumien (ch 15), founder of Wat Tham Sua (Krabi Province) who was an "amulets" priest, not a meditation master like the other teachers discussed here.

¹³⁹ Lee 1991:19.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor 1993:37

¹⁴¹ Dhammadharo 1990.

¹⁴² Lee 1991:24; details of his wanderings: 67-90.

¹⁴³ Lee 1991:124.

¹⁴⁴ The situation was complicated since these "Communists" were the local poor, who would not harm the forest monks anyway since, as a rule, the monks were apolitical. Tiyanich 1977:229.

¹⁴⁵ Tiyanich 1997:229.

¹⁴⁶ Taylor 1993:138; Thanissaro 2005:1.

5.3.4 According to **Ajahn Lee's autobiography**, however, the relationship between the Thammayut sect and the Kammaṭṭhāna monks changed in the 1950s. When Tisso Uan become ill, Ajahn Lee went to teach him meditation to help him cope with his illness. Uan eventually recovered, and the new friendship between the two would make Uan to completely change his mind about the Kammaṭṭhāna tradition. Ajahn Lee writes about what Uan said to him:

"People who study and practise the Dhamma get caught up on nothing more than their own opinions, which is why they never get anywhere. If everyone understood things correctly, there wouldn't be anything impossible about practising the Dhamma."¹⁴⁷

Uan would then invite Ajahn Lee to teach in the city. This event marked a positive point in relations between the Thammayut administration and the forest tradition. Thanissaro notes that widespread acceptance from the Thammayut was possible in part because the monks who had been drafted as teachers from the 5th Reign onwards were now being displaced by civilian teaching staff.¹⁴⁸

5.3.5 Mainstream popularity of Kammaṭṭhāna culminated in the 1970s because of the popularity of a cultural fetishism of **amulets** worn as necklace pendants. Busts of popular forest monks were imprinted on them, and they were ritually blessed to allegedly provide some protective charms to the wearer.

Tambiah writes that General Kriangsak Chomanan (Thai PM, 1977-80) distributed such amulets to his troops, and ordered that white "*pha yant*" (cloths with mystical yantra prints), blessed by Luang Pu Waen, to be bound to the Thai National Flag and flown at the top of ships' masts for protection from communist attacks. This is a clear example of the popularity of the Kammaṭṭhāna monks with shamanist inclination.¹⁴⁹



Ajahn Khamdee Pabhāso

5.4 AJAHN KHAMDEE PABHASO (1902-1984)

5.4.1 Ajahn Khamdee Pabhāso (Thai คำดี ปภาโส, 1902-1984) was born into a farming family in Khon Kaen, one of the 4 major NE provinces. When he was 22, he ordained at the local temple in line with Thai custom, but was dissatisfied with the customary practice there.

As a result, in 1928, he reordained in the Thammayut sect, and in the following year, became a student of Ajahn Singh Khantyaṅgamo [5.3.3], a senior disciple of Ajahn Mun. Turning to the wandering life, he sought out quiet places in various parts of NE Thailand, until he found Tham Phaa Puu (ถ้ำผาปู่ Grandfather Cliff Cave) in Loei province, near the Laos border, in 1955.

5.4.2 Finding it an ideal place to practise, he stayed there for almost the remainder of his life. He moved down to the foothill below the cave when he became too old to take the climb.

Well known as a teacher of strong character yet gentle temperament, he attracted a large following, both ordained and lay. By the time of his death, a sizable monastery had grown up around him at the foot of Grandfather Cliff. His teachings, found in *Making the Dhamma Your Own*,¹⁵⁰ has been translated from the Thai by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1999).

5.5 AJAHN SIM BUDDHĀCĀRO (1909-1992)

5.5.1 Ajahn Sim Buddhācāro (Thai สิม พุทธจาโร) was born in Sakon Nakorn Province, NE Thailand. His parents were farmers and dedicated supporters of the local monastery. At the age of 17, Sim became a novice and shortly afterwards became a student of Ajahn Mun and trained in his monastery.

¹⁴⁷ Lee 1991:92.

¹⁴⁸ Thanissaro 2005; Taylor 1993:139.

¹⁴⁹ Tambiah 1984:260 f.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/khamdee/yourown.html>.



Ajahn Sim Buddhācāro

On reaching 20, he was ordained as a monk at Wat Sri Ratanārām (วัดศรีรัตนาราม), Khon Kaen. Later, that same year, on meeting Ajahn Mun and Ajahn Singh, he was very impressed with their demeanour, and decided to reordain into the Thammayut sect under Mun in 1929.

In later years, he was the abbot of a number of monasteries. In 1959, he was acting abbot of Wat Asokārām; that same year, he received the ecclesiastical title of Phrakhrū Santivarañña. In 1965, he was abbot of Wat Pah Suddhāvāsa, and in 1966, of Wat Santitham. In 1967, he founded his own monastery, Wat Tham Pah Plong (วัดถ้ำผาล่อง “crater-shaft cave monastery”) in the remote mountains of Chiang Dao in Chiang Mai province, and lived there until his death in 1992, having been 63 years a monk.

5.5.2 Ajahn Sim’s book, *Simply So*, was translated from the Thai by Jayasaro Bhikkhu (1995). It contains 2 short talks on meditation practice:

The 1st describes the use of the mantra “Buddho” to cultivate mental calm; the 2nd is a reminder of the urgency of meditation practice, and gives instructions on how to resist the mind’s many devious ways of distracting us from practice.

What knows the false conditioned mind, he writes, and what knows the true unconditioned mind? It is just this one single knowing, that which hears the sound of the teaching and meditates on *buddho*. As there is just this single knowing, we must focus our energies and vow to ourself: “I will not indulge the thinking mind. I will gather the mind into itself.” Keeping the mind from wandering makes it stay with *buddho*. All we have to do, then, is to maintain *buddho*.

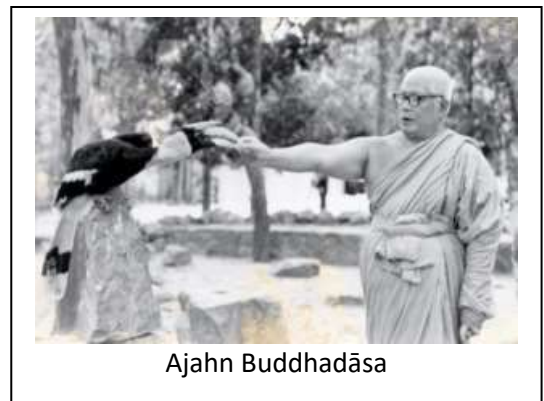
5.6 AJAHN BUDDHADĀSA (1906-1993)

5.6.1 *Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu* (Thai พุทธาส ภิกขุ *Phuttha-that Phikkhu*), lay name, Ngeum Panitch (เงื่อม พานิช,¹⁵¹ of Chinese father and Thai mother, running a family store), ordained name *Indapañño* (อินฺทปญฺโญ) [5.6.4] and ecclesiastical title, Phra Dhammakosācārya (พระธรรมโกศาจารย์ *Phra Thammakosacharn*), was an erudite and influential Thai ascetic-monk philosopher.¹⁵²

5.6.2 Ngeum’s first impression of living Buddhism was perhaps when he was only 6, when, in 1912, the Supreme Patriarch, Wachirayān [4.5.3.3], visited his village on an inspection tour of the temple there. When the young Ngeum saw this remarkable monk, it left an indelible impression on him that set the deep Buddhist tone of his life.

The following year, when only 8, he was apprenticed at the local village temple, Wat Nok (วัดนอกระ; also called Wat Ubon วัดอุบล), as a temple-boy (1914-17), he learned to read and write, and studied Buddhist tradition and Thai culture. When he was 11, he was initiated as a novice (*sāmaṇera*). This was his first taste of the yellow robes and communal living: it was gratifying.¹⁵³

In 1918, when he was 12, he started attending formal elementary school at **Wat Neua** (Wat Bodhārām), where he underwent the new Bangkok curriculum that stressed western learning. In 1921-23, the teenaged Ngeum enrolled for secondary education in Sarapee-Uthit School (โรงเรียน สารภีอุทิศ) in Chaiya, 6 km from **Phum Rieng** พุมเรียง (a *tambon* ตำบล or subdistrict in Chaiya District, Surat Thani, south Thailand).



Ajahn Buddhadasa

¹⁵¹ His father’s original Chinese surname was *Ka*. It was changed to *Panitch*, “merchant,” since his was the only store in the village.

¹⁵² For studies on his life, see P A Jackson 2003; S Payulpitack 1991:ch 3: <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/le/2003/uni-bielefeld/disshabi/2001/0059/chapter3.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Santidhammo 2014: pt 1 (digital p19).

Living with his father who had opened a new store in the town, he continued with the new western style education. During these happy years with his father, he learned to write Thai traditional poetry from him.

At 17, he had to drop out of school to help his father run the Chaiya store. But when his father died the same year (1923), his family closed the store and he happily returned to be with his mother in Phum Rieng. At such a young age, we had become head of the house, caring for his younger brother, since his aged mother was often sick.¹⁵⁴

5.6.3 The reforms of King Chulalongkorn were taking effect. Monks in the region started going to school, and formed groups for Dharma study and discussion in his family provision store, which also sold books. Ngeum was an avid reader, and had the opportunity to read widely, especially critical works on social progress and freedom.

As he listened to the handful of people discussing Buddhism in the family shop, his interest in it grew. Before 19, he had already read all the texts by Wachirayān for the 3-year Nak Tham monastic studies [4.5.3.4]. He was already well read in the demythologized modernist Buddhism taught by Wachirayān even before becoming a monk. His other task, as the eldest son in the family, was helping to run their store, which did very well, too.

5.6.4 In 1926, when he was 20, he decided to ordain for the traditional 3-month rains retreat¹⁵⁵ at Wat Nok. He was given the ordination name (chāyā) of Indapañño, which means either “one who is a leader in wisdom” or “one whose wisdom is like that of Indra (lord of the devas).” For his training, he stayed in Wat Mai Phum Rieng (วัดใหม่ พุมเรียง, one of the 5 monasteries there, which was located in a predominantly Muslim area). He thought that he would remain in robes for only the 3 months of the retreat as a traditional rite-of-passage for young men to be eligible for marriage.¹⁵⁶

Almost at once, he found everything so peaceful and congenial, and went on to sign up for **the Nak Tham class** in Wat Neua (วัดเหนือ, also called Wat Photharām, วัดโพธาราม). After being ordained for only 2 days, the abbot, who had known of Indapañño’s Dharma knowledge even as a layman, invited him to give a public talk. Unlike the old method of preaching, Indapañño’s style was refreshingly simple and captivating with his use of parables and Jātaka stories.¹⁵⁷ His reputation spread and other local temples, too, invited him with a schedule of talks. Even the young enjoyed his talks (he was himself in his 20s) and this pleased the abbot. During this period, despite his teaching duties, Indapañño continued his own Dharma education and studies.

Indapañño had an indomitable curiosity and great love for learning: natural science, photography, typewriter repair. He began to teach himself English, and was particularly drawn to current affairs, and the writings of Thai intellectuals, such as Chaophraya Thammak Montri and Phraya Anuman Rajadon, especially their works on science, world history and Dharma.¹⁵⁸

5.6.5 Indapañño, encouraged by his uncle, **Siang** (who had been a monk in Bangkok but had disrobed, married and settled in Chumphon),¹⁵⁹ moved to **Bangkok** to study monastic Pali at Wat Pathumkongkha (Paduma Gaṅga,



Young Buddhadasa in Wat Pathumkongka, Bangkok, 1928-30

¹⁵⁴ Santidhammo 2014: pt 1 (digital p25).

¹⁵⁵ Ngeum was able to do this because, in 1926, his younger brother Yikoei had returned from Bangkok and took over running the family store.

¹⁵⁶ Pasannadhammo Bhikkhu 1985:38-41; Payulpitack 1991:76 f.

¹⁵⁷ Cp Ledi Sayadaw’s simple style of writing [2.3.3.4].

¹⁵⁸ Pasannadhammo Bhikkhu 1985:113.

¹⁵⁹ Chumphon is a southern Thai province on the narrow Kra Isthmus of the Malay Peninsula. To the west it borders the Myanmar province of Tanintharyi.

“Ganges lotus”).¹⁶⁰ However, after 2 months there, he was deeply disappointed and unhappy with the rote-learning and over-reliance on post-canonical texts. He had no opportunity to study the primary texts, the Pali canon. He was also disillusioned by monks who merely took monastic life as a springboard for further education, then disrobed for a lay profession and family life. Moreover, he found the city ambience, with its constant noise and worldly crowds, very distracting.¹⁶¹

After a year in Bangkok, Indapañño returned, in 1929, to Chaiya, to teach at a new Nak Tham school at **Wat Phrathat**, built with funds donated by his uncle, Nguan Setthaphakdi of Ban Don.¹⁶² For that occasion, he wrote his first long article, “The Worldling’s Level of Buddhism” (1929), stressing the need for making Buddhism relevant and current, and that nirvana is an urgent attainable goal. This is followed, in the same year, by “The Benefits of Giving” (การทําทาน, *karn tham than*, 1929) for a cremation volume for the late Phrakhrū Sophanacetāsikaram. In it, he states that giving should not be merely a “merit-making” act, but one for the decrease in selfishness.¹⁶³

Indapañño, who loved reading, understandably also loved to write. In due course, he wrote over 2000 titles,¹⁶⁴ and it filled a whole room in the National Library in Bangkok! Indeed, he is the most prolific of Buddhist writers in Thai history.

In 1930, he decided to give another try to the Bangkok curriculum, and returned to Wat Pathumkongkha. This time, he studied with a private tutor. With his command of Pali, he read the Pali canon itself, only to discover that the prevalent learning diverged from it.

5.6.6 The first year that Indapañño took the Pali exams, he scored the highest in the country. In the following year (1931), however, he failed in **his 4th year Pali** (*parien si prayog*), intentionally, because he answered the exam questions *with what he had read in the suttas*! This only confirmed his suspicion that monastic education was simply a tool for clerical mobility in affluence and status.

His vision was that the Sangha should renew itself by returning to the way of early Buddhism, as laid out in the Pali canon. Firm in the understanding that nirvana was possible, he wondered, why the monks were *not* trying to attain it? Why wasn’t it being taught in the monastic university?

In 1932, the 26-year-old Indapañño left Bangkok for good, convinced that “purity is not found in the city,” but to be found in the forest, like the Buddha did. Despite his serious misgiving about mainstream Buddhism, indeed, for that very reason, he wisely felt that he should keep in touch with it. His experience with Bangkok Buddhism was a valuable lesson. He well knew what he did not want, and what he needed to do to improve things. He had to return to the source of Buddha Dharma.¹⁶⁵

5.6.7 With Indapañño’s return to Phum Riāng, his younger brother Yikoei (or Yee-guey) and his Dhammadāna Study Group found a derelict temple, abandoned for over 80 years, called Wat Traphangchik (วัดตระพังจิก) in dense jungle of 28 acres, outside Phum Riāng. In May 1932, Indapañño moved into a small hut (at his own request) built by his brother, and he called the place Suan Mokh Bālārāma (สวนโมกขพลาราม the park-monastery of spiritual power that is the garden of liberation).

It is rare for a temple or monastery in Thailand to be called “garden” (สวน suan). Indapañño was clear about his vision of an ideal Dharma centre. While a traditional “monastery” or wat (วัด) is a conspicuous built-up complex of elaborately structured and decorated buildings, a suan is a more natural place for those seeking inner peace and clarity in a natural environment of trees and nature like in the Buddha’s time.

¹⁶⁰ A class 2 royal monastery, in Bangkok’s busy Chinatown.

¹⁶¹ Santidhammo, *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*, 2014: pt 2 (digital p27).

¹⁶² An ancient monastery going back to the 8th-century Srivijaya empire, when Chaiya was one of its important centres.

¹⁶³ I have here conjectured my own sequence of Buddhadasa’s first 2 writings, which differs from Payulpitack 1991:86 f.

¹⁶⁴ This figure comes from a survey by Louis Gabaude of Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III, 1988.

¹⁶⁵ Payulpitack 1991:85 f, 90 f; Santidhammo 2014: pt 2 (digital p28).

5.6.8 The year 1932 is historically significant for Thais: Siam renounced absolute monarchy for a constitutional monarchy, and, spiritually, 26-year-old Indapañño turned from being an urban monk into a forest recluse. On 28 August that year, he aspired, as noted in his notebook, thus:

I commit this life and body to Lord Buddha. I am the Buddha's slave, the Buddha is my lord. For this reason I am named "**Buddhadāsa**" (literally, "slave of the Buddha").¹⁶⁶

As far as I know, no scholar has rendered ทาส *thaad* (ts *dāsa*) literally as "slave." The term not only reflected Indapañño's faith, humility and dedication, but also the sense of *dāsa* as used in the suttas. He knew the suttas well: While hired workers (*kamma, kara*) were paid for their labour, a "slave" was usually one conquered in battle or were unable to settle significant debts who thus had to work for his creditors. It is clearly stated in **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31), for example, that slaves should be well treated, given various benefits, rest breaks, etc. To Buddhadāsa, we owe the Buddha that debt of freedom on account of his awakening and teaching us to free ourselves. The term is thus used as a deep gesture of gratitude to the Buddha.¹⁶⁷

5.6.9 Over the next 2 years (1933-34), Buddhadāsa spent his time in solitary retreat meditating and studying the suttas. In due course, when he started teaching, more monks came to study under him, and his congregation grew larger. In 1943, he moved Suan Mokh out of the limited premises of Wat Traphang-chik to its present expansive location at **Wat Thaan Nam Lai** วัดธารน้ำไหล (the monastery of flowing stream-water) on 124 acres of hilly land, 5 km SE of Chaitya. This is the new **Suan Mokh**, "the garden of liberation," existing to this day.¹⁶⁸

In 1989, Buddhadāsa built **the International Dharma Hermitage** (IDH), about 1.5 km east of the main monastery. Residential retreats for international participants are held here. Since Buddhadāsa's passing, neither Suan Mokh nor the IDH ordains foreigners, but refers them to Wat Pah Nanachat [5.12.2.3].¹⁶⁹

Buddhadāsa passed away at the age of 87 in **1993**. His final words were: "*Na pathavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo ...*," (No earth, no water, no fire, no wind) which he kept repeating reflectively. He also said, "I don't feel that it's me. There is no gain and no loss. Peace. Well being." He then fell into a coma from which he never regained consciousness. He died consciously reflecting on the Dharma.¹⁷⁰

Thus far I have been able to trace Buddhadāsa's life from his birth to the founding of Suan Mokh, which is sufficient to give us a good understanding of his thinking, and how he became an ascetic monk. A number of detailed academic studies of his life and works have been quoted: these should be referred to for more details of his life.¹⁷¹ We shall end this study of Buddhadāsa by examining his meditation methods and related teachings.¹⁷²

5.7 BUDDHADĀSA'S MEDITATION TEACHINGS¹⁷³

5.7.1 Conditions for good meditation and its healthy habits

¹⁶⁶ Chit Phibanthaen, *Chiiwit lae ngan*, 1977:11.

¹⁶⁷ On the privileges of slaves (*dāsa*) over hired workers, see SD 16.1 (2.2.2); SD 40a.2 (3.2).

¹⁶⁸ See Payulpitack 1991:92. On the arhat ideal in our times, see S J Tambiah, "The Buddhist arahant: Classical paradigm and modern Thai manifestation" (1987:111 f).

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.suanmokkh-idh.org/>.

¹⁷⁰ Santidhammo 2014:pt 4 (digital p54 f)

¹⁷¹ See Jackson 2003; Payulpitack 1991; Santidhammo Bhikkhu 2014.

¹⁷² He recounted in 1943 about his early monastic experiences: *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*, 1990. Tr Mongkol Dejnakintra et al. 2nd ed, 63 p, Dhammadana Foundation, 2005.

¹⁷³ For Buddhadāsa's teaching on breath meditation, I have mainly referred to Buddhadāsa 1997 (tr Santikaro) but which has repetitive typos of Pali terms. Due to difficulties in rendering some of Buddhadāsa's Thai terms, I have tried my best to be as close to his Thai terminology as possible, and give my own translation where I think necessary.

5.7.1.1 Buddhādāsa's key teaching centres on samādhi gained through **the cultivation of the mindfulness with breathing** (*ānāpāna, sati bhāvanā*). Keeping to the sutta tradition, he teaches how calm (*samatha*) is gained through the 1st 3 tetrads of the 16-stage breath meditation, leading to insight (*vipassanā*) attained in the last tetrad (1998). He has given the clearest and fullest explanations of these 16 stages of the breath meditation in modern times.

He sees breath meditation as the complete practice by way of *sikkha-t, taya* (the 3 trainings), that starts with our taking and keeping the 5 precepts or the Vinaya. In the 1st tetrad, we cultivate moral virtue at every stage; in the 2nd and 3rd tetrads, we cultivate samādhi; and in the 4th, wisdom; it covers both samatha and vipassana [4.7.7.5].

5.7.1.2 Buddhādāsa translates *ānāpāna, sati* as “**mindfulness with breathing**” rather than “mindfulness of the breath” to reflect the actual practice, that is, it only *starts* with the breath as “contemplation of the body” but progresses into contemplations of feelings, of the mind and of the Dharma [realities]. The breath is only mindfully watched in the 1st tetrad, acting as a launching-pad into samādhi, even dhyana, in the 2nd tetrad and the 3rd tetrad, and finally attaining insight in the last tetrad. He sees breath meditation as the clearest and most comprehensive of the Buddha's practical teachings.

5.7.1.3 The breath meditation, firstly, features **the “4 comrade dharmas”**: *sati, paññā, sampajaññā* and *samādhi*. When *sati* (mindfulness) is present in sense-contact (in our experiences), we are likely to see things the way they are, which then becomes *paññā* (wisdom). This, in turn, gives us *sampajaññā* (clear knowledge), which in turn brings *samādhi* (concentration) as the basis for *vipassanā* (insight).¹⁷⁴

Secondly, the mindfulness generated by breath meditation allows us to clearly and closely observe *phassa* (sense-contact, experience) so that we can prevent the *paṭicca, samuppāda* (dependent arising) of negative states, even end them in due course.

Thirdly, our understanding of *vedanā* (feeling) in breath meditation forms the basis for understanding **the 4 ariya, sacca** (the 4 noble truth), that is, how suffering arises from feelings, and how it ends with our mastering of *feelings*.

And fourthly, it inspires visions of **the ti, ratana**, the 3 jewels, within us. The Buddha is the first to awaken in this era, and we are practising this very same Dharma he used for his awakening. Those who follow his footsteps will reach the same path of the noble sangha, as he himself has done.

5.7.2 The 8 supports (*paccaya*) of meditation

5.7.2.1 In early Buddhist teachings, the 4 supports of life (*paccaya*) are said to be *food, clothing, shelter* and *health* (medical care).¹⁷⁵ Buddhādāsa says that besides these 4 supports as physical conditions, the 5th support should be a mental support conducive to meditation, that is, *mental concentration, inner peace and insight wisdom*. Altogether, we have the 8 basic supports for practice, that is, meditation, that is: (1) *food*, (2) *clothing*, (3) *shelter*, (4) *health*, (5) *time*, (6) *guidance*, (7) *posture* and (8) *method*.¹⁷⁶

(1) The physical supports for good meditation are food, clothing, shelter and health. We should eat healthily and moderately. This means we should see **food** as contributing to physical health so that we are able to meditate in natural physical comfort. Unhealthy eating means that we have fallen for food as “**bait**,” like fish being hooked and caught by bait on a fishing line.

(2) **Clothing** should be comfortable, loose-fitting and decent. We should not dress to present a negative or animal nature, or that violate cultural norms and human decency.

(3) **Shelter** means the proper place for meditation: as a rule, a quiet spot away from the crowd or any distractions. If we follow the Buddha, then, nature (the outdoors), especially shady trees and safe scenic spots are good places for meditation.

¹⁷⁴ Buddhādāsa thinks that the Pali terms are best used as they are so that, being familiar with them, we at once know what teachings are referred to (1997:25, 103-107).

¹⁷⁵ *Sabb'āsava S* (M 2,13-16), SD 30.3; *Santutṭhi S* (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

¹⁷⁶ Buddhādāsa 1997:40-49.

(4) Physical **health** is vital for mental cultivation. We have already mentioned healthy eating; we also need to have healthy habits. We should not wait until we face the urgency of health problems to follow a simple routine of exercises, recreation and rest—and, of course, healthy social interaction. Too much reading, especially writings on worldly matters, in print, social media and the Internet, will surely disrupt us from our practice.

Worldly people often regard **sex** as a necessity. A healthy human relationship involves both the body and the mind/heart (thinking and feeling). Meditation is a practice in true renunciation, beginning with letting go of the body (the physical senses), and to even the mind (thoughts). As a rule, celibacy (especially during retreats) applies so that we can fully focus on mental cultivation and growth.

These are the physical supports for meditation. We shall now look at the non-physical supports for meditation: time, guidance, posture and method.

5.7.2.2 (5) The best **time** for meditation is right now! There is the meditative mind and the meditative practice. We need to be **mindful**, ideally (something to do with the mind), every waking moment, so that our experiences can properly inform, guide, protect and nurture us as an individual and a social being. This is the meaning of living in the present. This is the right attitude of a true meditator.

Meditation practice is ideally done at the best time available. For the laity (this includes most monastics today!), right living starts with pursuing the right priorities based on keeping at least the 5 precepts. Moral virtue is the basis for proper meditation. Following a right livelihood helps significantly, and also the avoidance of an unwholesome lifestyle (that goes against the precepts). Our first preparation is to set our personal and social life as right as possible so that we are “physically cultivated” (*bhāṇita, kāya*) to fully benefit and support for being **mentally cultivated** (*bhāṇita, citta*).¹⁷⁷

5.7.2.3 (6) There are numerous information and informers of meditation today: it has become such a lucrative commodity: this is commercial meditation, McM mindfulness. When we meditate, we work as an Artist with our own mind—it is like a musician who wants to master his instrument—in both cases, it is mastering our mind and heart. Surely, we should seek an experienced teacher who has mastered meditation and *loves* doing it, as someone who can be our **spiritual friend** (*kalyāṇa, mitta*). Ideally, a meditator relationship with others should be that of spiritual friendship.¹⁷⁸

5.7.2.4 (7) To start with, **posture** is important especially for long sittings and the health of our physical body. Doing some simple Yoga practice helps keep our limbs (especially the legs) supple. Traditionally, we sit on a cushion (zafu) on a soft mat. Adjustments should be made if your limbs are a bit tight. Sitting on an upright chair which comfortably fits the length of your lower legs. Keep the body upright, balanced and relaxed (the centre of gravity should always be within the body).

Most teachers let their students close their eyes during sitting. Buddhadasa, however, advocates keeping our eyes open, which keeps them cool and comfortable, and us awake. We should not look around, especially not at other people, but keep our eye focused on the nose-tip (like in most meditating Buddha images). This will also naturally help us mentally focus. As we gain samadhi, our eye will naturally close.¹⁷⁹

5.7.2.5 (8) The most detailed and complex of the 8 supports of practice [5.7.2.1] is that of **method**. This is not only finding the right meditation for oneself, but also doing it rightly. Basically, we should have at least tried the breath meditation [5.8] and the cultivation of lovingkindness [SD 60.1c]. **Breath meditation** is well known in all Buddhist systems of meditation, but it is differently taught by different teachers. It is vital that we master, become familiar with, at least *one* form or style of breath meditation.

Based on this basic method, we can then try other versions of breath meditation, to see how they work, or which parts work, for us. Our familiarity with the root breath meditation will help us incorporate what is needed and is helpful for our practice. Or, we may adopt the new method wholesale, if necessary.

¹⁷⁷ On *bhāṇita, kāya* and *bhāṇita, citta*, see **Pinḍola Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127,7), SD 27.6a.

¹⁷⁸ See esp **Meghiya S** (A 9.3 ~ U 4.1 (SD 34.2); **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** (SD 34.1); **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness** (8.1).

¹⁷⁹ Buddhadasa 1997:46 f.

Lovingkindness meditation is a good alternative when we have difficulties with breath meditation. In fact, even when we have mastered breath meditation, and have good samadhi with it, having emerged from that calmness, and having cultivated insight (or when we feel the need for lovingkindness), we should cultivate lovingkindness.

In a way, *breath* is good for vipassana; *lovingkindness* is good for samatha. In the long run, they actually benefit one another, and our practice as a harmonious whole.

Then, there is the strategy of **doing these practices rightly**. Here we go into the details: we cannot do this fully here (it's best done with an experienced teacher). In what follows, we will only examine Buddhadasa's teachings on breath. To appreciate this, we should have at least been very familiar with breath meditation as our root practice. The same goes for the cultivation of lovingkindness, which we will examine later [SD 60.1c].

5.7.3 Preliminaries: Chasing the breath, counting the breath

5.7.3.1 Mental noting helps to keep our mindfulness on the breath. We should train ourself to note that we are *about* to breathe in or breathe out. The breath, as a rule, should be left all on its own: breathe naturally, like a happy sleeping baby. This way, it will naturally calm and slow down itself in time. However, there are alternatives to this that may also work for us.

Buddhadasa teaches what he calls “**chasing the breath**” (วิ่งตามลมหายใจ, *wingtaam lom haichai*, “running after the breath”).¹⁸⁰ We start by noting the in-breath at the nostril or nose-tip, then follow it down the thorax and abdomen, ending at the navel. Then, we visualize the out-breath starting at the navel, moving back up the abdomen, the thorax, throat, the head and out through the nose. And so on. This means that we have to slow down the breath consciously but comfortably, almost naturally.

After a while, we begin to notice the breath slowing down, even stopping a moment: we note it all *without missing anything*. Physically, the breath does not move “around” this way: this is merely a mental visualization of the breath doing so. We should also not think about whether the mind is guiding the breath, or the breath is guiding the mind. We simply follow the breath, not by thinking but by feeling it mentally. This may take a couple of days of practice to master: it is a foundation practice before we can go on to the breath meditation itself.¹⁸¹

5.7.3.2 As we “**chase the breath**,” we will notice certain characteristics about it. We not only notice that it is *long* or *short* in terms of duration, but it is also *coarse* or *fine* in quality. We may, in time, even notice that it is *easy* (smooth) or *uneasy* (bumpy). We should also mindfully note our reactions in every variation. Then, we may even go on to notice how they influence our awareness, and the conditions causing them, and so on. We can never ruse any of these processes.

As we have better mastery over these processes, we should then note the effects or “flavours” of the breath: joy, contentment, displeasure, annoyance, suffering. We observe the flavours of the *long* breath and the *short* breath, the *coarse* breath and the *fine* breath, the *easy* breath and the *uneasy* breath. Why are there different flavours?

The first flavour we are likely to notice is probably that of the long breath: it is usually pleasant. Then, we notice that *the short breath* is just the opposite. But we need to experience this for ourself.

5.7.3.3 At this preliminary stage, before we go into the actual 16-stage breath meditation, whenever we have any difficulty focusing, we can try to *regulate* our breath—usually, this means *lengthening*, that is, slowing it down—by “**counting**” it. During an ordinary **inhalation**, in-breath, we only count up to 5 (which also keeps the breath short).¹⁸² We should always count at the same pace, for if we change the counting pace, we will not be able to regulate the breath.

¹⁸⁰ Buddhadasa's talk to Chulalongkorn Univ students on *kāyānussati*, BE 2515 (1975): <https://pagoda.or.th/buddhadasa/2515-1-5.html>.

¹⁸¹ Buddhadasa 1997:47-49.

¹⁸² Buddhadasa actually says we can count as short as 1 to 3; but teachers advise against counting less than 5. Try for yourself to see how this works,

If, by just counting the inhalation, we feel calm and focused with the breath, then stay with it. We will feel whether we need to count **the exhalation**, too. For the exhalation, we can either count it in the same way, for example, 1 to 5, or we may reverse the count, 5 to 1. Either way, keep both the counting at the same relaxed pace.

For example, as we inhale, we count from 1 to 5. To slow the breath down (and keep us focused), we can then count 1-10. (Usually, we do not go beyond 10, as this would be too long.) We should also do this with the same number and at the same pace when we exhale. If this works, then keep doing it until we are focused enough to end counting altogether. This should only be done in the preliminary stage (even then, only when we feel the need to), or when we have been badly distracted and the breathing is short and fast. This will help us get back our focus

5.8 BUDDHADASA’S BREATH MEDITATION TEACHING¹⁸³

Table 5.8. The 16 stages of mindfulness with breath

	the 4 contemplations	the 16 stages of breath meditation	cultivation method
<i>pañānāti</i> , he understands thus:	body	1 <i>knowing</i> long in-breath, long out-breath	<i>samatha</i> (calm)
		2 <i>knowing</i> short in-breath, short out-breath	
		3 experiencing the whole body , breathes in ... out	
		4 calming bodily formations, breathes in ... out	
<i>sikkhati</i> he trains himself thus:	feelings	5 experiencing zest	
		6 experiencing happiness : <u>calming</u> the whole body	
		7 experiencing mental formations	
		8 calming mental formations	
	the mind	9 experiencing the mind	
		10 gladdening the mind	
		11 concentrating the mind	
		12 freeing the mind	
	dharma	13 contemplating impermanence	<i>vipassanā</i> (insight)
		14 contemplating fading away (of lust)	
		15 contemplating cessation (of suffering)	
		16 contemplating letting go (of defilements)	

5.8.1 (1) Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*)

5.8.1.1 The Pali word *kaya* means “body,” which refers to:

- (1) **the flesh body**, that is, our 5 physical senses,¹⁸⁴ or the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, wind)¹⁸⁵ which the physical body comprises, and
- (2) **the breath-body**, comprising the in-breath, the out-breath and the spaces in between.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ For this section [5.8] I have mostly followed Santikaro’s tr, *Mindfulness With Breathing*, 1997. This seems to have been based on Buddhadasa’s lectures. There are at least half a dozen books in Thai on Buddhadasa’s breath meditation. I have consulted a couple of them to check the original Thai for his terminology. Oddly Santikaro’s tr has a number of consistent Pali typos.

¹⁸⁴ On the 5 physical senses (*pañc’indriya*), see SD 17.2a (9.2).

¹⁸⁵ On the 4 elements (*catu mahā, bhūta*), see **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 11,8-11, with §12 on “space”), SD 3.11; **Mahā Hatthi, pādōpama S** (M 28,6), SD 6.16.

¹⁸⁶ Buddhadasa 1997:51-60.

5.8.1.2 (1)¹⁸⁷ THE LONG BREATH. Why does the Buddha start by instructing us to observe, first of all, **the long breath** coming in and going out (*dīghaṃ vā assasanto ... dīghaṃ vā passasanto*)? (Note: In-breath comes first.) The long breath is slow and relaxes us; hence, it is pleasant. This is the best place to start the breath meditation after we have properly gone through the preliminary practice of calming down the ordinary breath [5.7.3].

5.8.1.3 (2) THE SHORT BREATH. Unlike the long breath, which is slow and relaxing, **the short breath**—that is, the short in-breath (*rassaṃ vā assasanto*), the short out-breath (*rassaṃ vā passasanto*)—is usually uneasy, rough, even agitating. With the good feeling from the long breath, it is now easier for us to deal with the short breath. The reality is that the short breath means that we are not “there” yet, or we have taken a wrong turn on the “breath path.”

We have not calmed the breath, but simply turn away from it without noticing how it has settled down. Or, we have let negative emotions colour our breath awareness. We need to let go of these emotions: we do this by simply letting go of the breath itself, not clinging to it, not controlling it.

We must do cycles 1-2 until we master them, meaning, the long breath feels comfortable, and the short breath feels comfortable, too. When we do this comfortably, *both* the long and the short breaths flow smoothly as a *single flow*. We know this because the whole breath becomes more relaxed, and we begin to feel or “see” **the spaces** between the in- and out-breaths.¹⁸⁸ This is the “whole breath,” which signals that we are ready for stage 3.

5.8.1.4 (3) THE WHOLE BREATH. When we look closely at the preceding stage 2, we have already known whether the breath is long or short. To know this, we must know the breath from beginning to end, along with the rests or pauses in between [5.8.1.3]: this is **the whole breath-body** (*sabba, kāyaṃ*). Moreover, *kaya* is here singular, and can only refer to the “breath-body.”¹⁸⁹ Buddhadasa, however, takes “all the body” (*sabba, kāya*) as a collective noun, meaning “all the bodies,” that is, the flesh-body and the breath-body, referring to how they affect one another, as he explains below.¹⁹⁰

This is where we “experience [feel] the whole breath” (*sabba, kaya, paṭisaṃvedī*).¹⁹¹ Now, in the preceding 2 stages, we have watched the breath as *long* and as *short*: we are only watching a part of it, to begin with. Here, we watch **the whole breath-body**, “all” (*sabba*) of it, that is, its beginning, middle and ending.¹⁹² What is the “middle” of the breath?

At this stage, we should have noticed that the breath *rises, pauses, falls*: it is the life of the body. The flesh-body and the breath-body connect both ways. Our body (sense-experiences) supports the breath (giving it movement and expression); our breath feeds our body (gives us life) (the pause). Hence, the breath is still a part of the body and held down by it. The “all” (*sabba*) here refers to the 5 senses (our body) that still weighs down the breath and keeping it “lively,” so to speak¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ This is the first of 16 internal running numbers in §§581-584, referring, respectively, to the 16 stages of breath meditation.

¹⁸⁸ The spaces may not arise evenly, or we may notice it only after the out-breath.

¹⁸⁹ Comys confirms this: *sabba, kaya, paṭisaṃvedī ti sabbassa assāsa, passāsa, kāyassa paṭisaṃvedī* (PmA 1:312; VismMHT:Be 1:321). See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13 (4.4.1.3).

¹⁹⁰ Buddhadasa 1997:57-59.

¹⁹¹ The key word (showing the subject or his action) in all the 16 stages are in either the present continuous (*assa-santo*, “is breathing in”; *passasanto*, “is breathing out”), or *paṭisaṃvedī*, “(one who) experiences” (the experiencer) nom/adj of *paṭisaṃvedeti*, “he experiences, feels.” All this refers to the process of meditating.

¹⁹² Scholars and writers of meditation are often baffled by this stage. They attempt to interpret with some outside views that “the whole body” breathes. How do we watch so many breaths, or spread our attention all over the body? How can we ever free the breath from the body?

¹⁹³ See **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

5.8.1.5 (4) CALMING THE BODILY FORMATIONS. “**Formations**” (*saṅkhārā*) has 3 meanings, reflecting the essence of the teaching of conditionality or conditional relations:¹⁹⁴

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (1) the “ cause ,” that is, | <u>the conditioning state</u> , | <i>paccaya,dhamma</i> |
| (2) the result , that is, | <u>the conditioned state</u> and | <i>paccay’uppanna,dhamma</i> |
| (3) the process , that is, | <u>the conditioning force</u> . | <i>paccaya,satti</i> |

All these 3 processes are happening even during a *single* breath. With mindfulness, we may notice the bodily formations (conditions) of the breath, but the *mental* formations still remain hidden from us.

At this stage, having calmed **the *kāya,saṅkhāra*** (the body-conditioner), only then can we calm (*pas-sambhati*) the whole breath, that is, refine it, so that, as it were, it is *light* enough (in terms of mass and energy) to free itself from the body. When the breath is freed from being weighed down and burdened by the body, it becomes less conditioned by the body; it becomes more mental, radiant. But this can only happen in stages. We must work to further refine the breath before we can effectively contemplate on feelings. We need to know a few more strategies.

5.8.1.6 For **Table 5.8**, it is helpful here to know **the 5 meditation strategies**, which are to be applied *successively*, that is:¹⁹⁵

- (1) **Follow** (“chase”) the breath [5.7.3].
- (2) **Guard** the breath, keep to it at a certain single point (the point of contact, where we *feel* the breath). This may be where we “see” it most clearly, traditionally said to be the upper lip or the nose-tip; or, 2 finger’s breadth above the navel; or, at the solar plexus; otherwise, simply focus on the idea or fact that we know (focus on the knowing) we are breathing.¹⁹⁶
- (3) Watch **the sign** (*nimitta*) when it arises at the guarding-point. This usually occurs as some form of bright mental image.
- (4) **Guard** the sign by keeping focused on it; if you “know” it is there, just *smile* at it.
- (5) When there are a *number* of such **signs**, choose the clearest or most stable one, until the breath becomes truly calm and settled. We refine this sign by *simply* watching it (we are in love with it, so to speak): a *mere white point* or *point of light* will do. This may, however, appear as some remarkably beautiful image (such as a buddha-figure, depending on our temperament). We are beginning to see our own mind: it is mind-made. This is only the key to the path-door; don’t get too excited about it: just smile at it, if you are.¹⁹⁷

5.8.2 (2) Contemplation of feelings (*vedanā’nupassanā*)

5.8.2.1 This 2nd tetrad is about ***vedanā*** (feelings):¹⁹⁸ how we react by *liking*, *disliking* or *ignoring* a mental object through perception or recognizing some past experiences in these present experiences: we are projecting the past into the present. We are enslaved by feelings. They keep us running around after it: we try to run *towards* what we see as pleasant (including meditation!), lust arises; we try to run *away* from what we see as unpleasant: hate arises. When we run into what we see as being *neither pleasant*

¹⁹⁴ See **Nāma,rūpa,pariccheda**, Nāmrp 48; **Abhidhamm’attha,vikāsinī**, Abhvk 226; **Abhidhamm’attha,saṅgaha**, Abhs 8.2 (Abhs:SR 293 f); Karunadasa 2010:265. The explanations varies slightly from Buddhadasa 1997:59.

¹⁹⁵ I have here added on to the basic tips offered by Buddhadasa: 1997:60-62.

¹⁹⁶ The locations are noticeable depending on how we breathe. The easiest to notice is at the nose-tip or upper lip. For “abdominal or belly” breathers (the belly moves most when breathing), it is the spot just above the navel. For the “thoracic or chest” breathers this is on the surface outside the solar plexus (the mind is focused there). A 4th way is simply to focus on the “knowing” that we are breathing. Choose the most effective method for ourself.

¹⁹⁷ Buddhadasa 1997:63 f.

¹⁹⁸ See ***Vedanā***, SD 17.3.

nor unpleasant (something neutral), we do not know what to do, we are likely to *ignore* it: ignorance arises.¹⁹⁹

We have no choice—because of our inherent ignorance—but to suffer these painful onslaughts of feelings, that is, *liking, disliking, ignoring*. Only when we accept them as they are, are we able to be free of them (otherwise, we do not even know *what* we should free ourselves from!). In due course, as we experience the calm and insight of breath meditation, we gain **samādhi** (mental concentration): this is the best of feelings in terms of our practice thus far.

In summary, there are 3 vital things we must know and remember about **feelings**.²⁰⁰

1. we must **know the feelings** themselves, what they are, and how they arise and pass away;
2. feelings are **mind-made**: they arise in our mind, and thus condition the mind by stirring up memories, speech and action;
3. when we **understand** feelings, we master them; then, we *master our own mind*.

5.8.2.2 (5) ZEST. We begin mastering our mind when we have overcome all the 5 mental hindrances [4.1.2.1], which also means that we will attain the 1st dhyana (paṭhama jhāna). This 5th stage of breath meditation deals with one of the 5 dhyana-factors (*jhāna’āṅga*):²⁰¹ **pīti**, which Buddhadasa renders into Thai as ความอิ่มใจ (literally, “fullness”), which normally means “satisfaction, contentment.” The English word, **zest**, gives us a good idea of the exuberant, excitable nature of this meditative delight, the joy of fulfillment of finally getting what we have been pursuing, in this case, the breath. The more worldly meditators may quip that this is even “better” than sex!²⁰²

Zest may arise in us in any of 5 ways: it usually starts off only momentarily, (1) with some hair-standing (horripilation); or, (2) like a lightning flash; or, (3) it thrills us in waves like breakers (sea-waves washing onto the shore); or, (4) we feel light and uplifted into the air (or, we feel like jumping into the air); or, (5) we simply feel full, like having eaten our fill of a favourite dish, or like a fully flooded underground cave.²⁰³

As a serious practitioner, we need to investigate and observe the power of zest over our mind. How does zest influence our thoughts and feelings? When zest arises what is the mind like? What is the mind like when there is *no* zest or only *a bit* of zest? When zest is intense (as in rapture) how does it stimulate the mind? Observe how the coarsest kind of zest differs from the medium kinds, and the finest types. How differently do they affect the mind? Notice the differences in their influences. These exercises are a vital part of our meditation training.

5.8.2.3 (6) HAPPINESS. In this stage of the breath meditation, we “**experience [feel] joy**” (*sukha, paṭi-samvedī*) with every in-breath and every out-breath. We carefully observe how *sukha* arises out of *pīti*. *Pīti* is coarse: it excites us, obscuring *sukha*. When *pīti* has done stimulating the mind, it settles and becomes *sukha*. Notice this tranquil flavour of *sukha* with every in-breath and out-breath.

If we are to progress, and we should, then, notice how *pīti* tries to interfere with *sukha*, overwhelm it. Whenever we are aware of this,²⁰⁴ we should just smile at *pīti*, let it come, let it go; this will free *pīti* and

¹⁹⁹ Buddhadasa 1997:32-35. This is, in fact, how we are directed by our latent tendencies (*anusaya*), and we are *feeding* them. See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (1.1.2).

²⁰⁰ Buddhadasa 1997:36 f.

²⁰¹ Buddhadasa 1997:64 f; SD 8.4 (5.1.1).

²⁰² This is no frivolous statement: the mind is finally free of the body (on which sex is dependent), and is experiencing the profound joy of its own freedom.

²⁰³ The 5 kinds of **zest (pīti)** are: (1) “minor zest” (*khuddaka.pīti*); (2) “momentary zest” (*khaṇika.pīti*); (3) “flooding zest” (*okkantika.pīti*); (4) “uplifting zest” (*ubbega* or *ubbeṅga.pīti*); (5) “pervading zest” (*pharaṇa.pīti*); Vism 4.94 f/143; SD 8.4 (6.3); SD 50.26 (3.1.3.1). Buddhadasa’s tr of *pīti* as ความอิ่มใจ [above] esp reflects this description.

²⁰⁴ When we are in dhyana, or even some deep level of samādhi, our cognitive process is suspended (we stop knowing in the usual sense-based manner). It is a direct process of *feeling*: we don’t “know” it (as an object): we *are*

bring forth *sukha*. This is a very subtle operation, but we get better at it with practice. Now we examine what *sukha* (joy, happiness) is like. How light is it? How heavy? How coarse? How subtle? How does *sukha* affect our mind and experience, our thinking and feeling?

5.8.2.4 (7) EXPERIENCING THE MENTAL FORMATIONS. In stage 7, “**experiencing mental formations**” (*citta-saṅkhāra, paṭisaṁvedī*), we see the effects of the interplay between *pīti* and *sukha* upon the mind [see questions we have been asking in stages 5+6.] Here, we see *pīti* and *sukha* as “mind-conditioners” (*citta-saṅkhārā*): they are feelings (*vedanā*) that condition the mind in the same way that the breath is the “body-conditioner” [5.8.1.4]. *Pīti* feels powerful because it still acts directly on the body (the senses), even when we are not otherwise troubled by them.

Hence, *pīti* is so powerful that it often interferes with *sukha*. We are, as it were, still in the gravitational field of the body, and need to put in a bit more momentum to move away from the pull of *pīti*. That is why when *pīti* is present, the breath seems heavy like the flesh-body.

When, on the other hand, *sukha* is present, the breath is light like the mind itself. They are both joyful, but in opposing senses: *pīti* makes the breath coarse, *sukha* calms it down. *Pīti* dances, *sukha* enjoys watching the dance. *Pīti* holds us, *sukha* frees us. In this sense, the two are “foes”: the former works to bring us back into the flesh-body, the latter keeps us ready to be free from it. The mental formations are still working with the body. We need to calm the formations to free the mind further.

5.8.2.5 (8) CALMING THE MENTAL FORMATIONS. In this stage, “**calming the mental formations**” (*passambhayaṁ citta, saṅkhāraṁ*), we work to pacify the *citta, saṅkhāra* (the mind conditioners), while breathing in, breathing out. Basically, we need to weaken the power of *pīti* [5.8.2.4], and increase the strength of *sukha*: we need to put in more effort to free the mind from the body. There are 2 ways to calm the mind conditioners: (1) by way of *samādhi* (concentration), (2) by *paññā* (wisdom).

(1) **The samadhi method.** The 1st way to weaken *pīti* and strengthen *sukha* is cultivating a higher or deeper level of samadhi. The mind should be deeply focused enough so that *pīti* can no more act on it. Since *pīti* is still allied to the body, we do not need it, but we still need *sukha* to grow out of this stage (the 1st dhyana), or simply to calm the mind down further.

An important technique in this connection is to “take nirvana as the object” in our meditation.²⁰⁵ This is not as difficult as it sounds, that is, when we understand, to some useful level, that nirvana is profound peace (*santi*) or that it is the “deathfree” (*amata*). Ideally, we can work to attain the 2nd dhyana, which naturally frees us from both *vitakka* and *vicāra*. Even if we do not gain any higher samadhi or dhyana, we can still live happily here and now, keeping up our practice: meditation is full of wonderful surprises when we diligently keep it up. It’s a win-win situation.

(2) **The wisdom method.** The other way to weaken *pīti* and strengthen *sukha* (or even weaken both to progress further) is to reflect on *pīti* as being “mind-made” (*mano, mayā*); hence, it is conditioned. What is conditioned is *impermanent, unsatisfactory*. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory is also *nonself*. Since *pīti* is the feeling of being fully satisfied with the bubble of “having got it,” this reality check will burst that bubble, so that we may move on.²⁰⁶

Another wisdom method is to reflect on the *assāda* (gratification) and *ādīnava* (dangers, disadvantages) of *pīti*. *Assāda* refers to the perceived attractive qualities of something that captivates us to it. *Ādīnava* is the negative consequences of this fatal attraction: *pīti* excites and disrupts the mind, driving away tranquillity, and is the foe of insight (*vipassanā*). Once we realize this, *pīti* dissolves away. Thus, we regulate our feelings so that they do not have a hold on our mind preventing its spiritual growth.

it! “Aware” here refers to the moment our cognitive process returns, but is still subtle (this can happen only in the 1st dhyana).

²⁰⁵ This is called “plunging towards nirvana” (*ama’ogadha*), or, for those who succeed in this effort, have “found a firm footing in nirvana.” Both senses apply to the phrase: see eg (**Navaka**) **Samiddhi S** (A 9.14/4:386), SD 57.20a.

²⁰⁶ Buddhadasa 1997:75-77.

5.8.3 (3) Contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*)

5.8.3.1 (9) EXPERIENCING THE MIND (*citta, paṭisaṃvedī*). At this stage, it is important to remind ourselves that *whenever* we sit for the 16-stage breath meditation, we should *start at the very beginning*, with stage 1, and progress sequentially from there. We work to go as far as we can. This is like training for a marathon. We simply need to train from the start for each and every time: we cannot simply jump into our exercises, or forego the warming-up sequence. There will be karmic consequences.

This stage of our breath meditation is the same as that of *cittānupassanā* (the contemplation of the mind), as formulated in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10).²⁰⁷ The Sutta instructs us to examine the nature of our mind in 8 ways, or rather 8 pairs of conditions, often opposite of each other, or closely related. We shall go through each of them in our practice of breath meditation.

5.8.3.2 Firstly, we should recognize and understand whether our mind is filled with **lust** (*rāga*), or is it free from it. Lust ranges from the grossest, that is, sexual lust, to the subtlest, our love for the Dharma. In between, there is a wide range and variety of lust and desire for people, things and conditions as being worthwhile or valuable in themselves.

Lust (in a broad sense) is always some kind of mental measurement of self with other: we see another as “better” than us, and we desire to know or have that person. When we perceive another as being “inferior” to us, we want to avoid that person or treat him in a certain “deserving” manner. When we think of someone as an “equal,” we behave ourselves in a manner “commensurate” with him. Such conduct may be socially acceptable, or dismissed as “a private affair,” but when we are preoccupied with such thoughts, then, it feeds us with *lust* in some form. We are weakened and deluded by it.

5.8.3.3 The subtlest kind of lust is called “**dharma restlessness**” (*dharm’uddhacca*), which is basically a desire to act out of compassion on seeing a lack in others. Even a non-returner has this kind of spiritual lust: it is not harmful but distracting enough to prevent the attaining of arhathood.

We should also note when our mind is **free from lust**.

5.8.3.4 We shall only briefly describe the other 7 mental states, as relevant to your study here.²⁰⁸

Secondly, we should contemplate whether our mind has **dosa** (hate, anger, aversion), which is the other side of the lust coin. When we are unable to get what is desirable (as defined above), we feel a negative sense ranging from *brute violence* to *subtle annoyance or concern*. Note what this is like; how it arises; how it ends; how we let go of it (this is the application of the 4 truths).²⁰⁹

We should also note when our mind is **free from hate**.

5.8.3.5 Thirdly, there is the 3rd unwholesome root, **moha** (delusion), which is a “preconscious” manifestation of the *unconscious* latent tendency (*anusaya*) of ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance is a lack of right understanding that keeps us caught in a sticky net of liking and disliking, and we don’t even know why. Delusion is the belief that drives us with infatuation for someone or something on account of our views, without knowing the true nature of that object. It is often a crowd, herd or swarm mentality: we instinctively fly like insects into the burning flames of status and views.

We should also note when our mind is **free from delusion**.

5.8.3.6 Fourthly, any of these unwholesome roots—greed, hate or delusion—may condition us to grasp at what we like, reject what we do not like, and ignore anything of which we cannot make any sense [5.8.2.1]. Any of these unwholesome roots will give us **saṅkhittam cittam**, “a narrowed mind,” when we are unable to see or accept things just as they are. We courageously note this to reduce them, and subsequently free the mind and keep it open.

²⁰⁷ M 10,34/1:59 (SD 13.3).

²⁰⁸ On *cittānupassanā*, see SD 13.1 (5C).

²⁰⁹ See SD 38.1 (3.1). Another problem-solving set is that of the 4 right efforts: SD 10.2 (1.2).

Otherwise, on account of *a narrow mind*, we also have **vikkhattaṃ cittaṃ**, “a distracted mind,” since we are not focused on something real or true. We are uncertain of our experience, but seeking something that will excite us, or perhaps find entertaining. We are seeking something to thrill us in some way, but we lack the attention span to look close enough or long enough to learn anything. We enjoy being distracted!

5.8.3.7 The last 4 states concern our mind during meditation—continuing in the same list. The 5th pair refers to whether our mind is **mahaggatā**, “gained greatness” or not (**amahaggatā**). In meditation lingo, this means whether it has attained dhyana or not. On a simpler level, we can take this to mean whether our mind is elevated or not, sharper than usual or not, more satisfied than usual or not.

5.8.3.8 The 6th pair of mental states are those of a mind that is **uttaraṃ**, “surpassable,” that is, broken through into a higher state closer to the path, or progressing on the path; or it is “unsurpassable” (**anuttaraṃ**), that is, still stuck where it was before.

5.8.3.9 The 7th pair refers to whether our mind is **samāhitaṃ**, “concentrated,” attained some level of focus on the mental object, or not (**asamāhitaṃ**). Is the mind at least focused on the in-and-out breath or not?

5.8.3.10 Finally, the 8th pair, refers to whether our mind is **vimuttaṃ**, “liberated,” free from all clinging and defilements, or not (**avimuttaṃ**). This last pair is the final check to see if we have made any progress on the path. If not, we must keep up our practice.

5.8.3.11 (10) GLADDENING THE MIND (**abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ**). In the 2nd tetrad, we have freed the mind from being controlled by feelings. This means that the mind has some level of self-control. In this 2nd stage of the 3rd tetrad—that of contemplating of the mind—we want to **gladden** the mind, that is, give it some wholesome delight and pleasure. “Delight” refers to the body feeling satisfied so that it sits very still: in fact, we do not feel it at all, which means we feel no pain. The mind, too, feels pleasure, pleased at the progress so far, which means that we have been keeping to the Dharma. What we have learned about the Dharma and meditation have been effective in bringing us to this level.

5.8.3.12 (11) CONCENTRATING THE MIND (**samādahaṃ cittaṃ**). Having delighted the mind, we now go on to bring it into **samādhi**, mental focus. In fact, we have been putting all our effort into preparing for this moment. In **stage 4**, we have calmed the body-conditioners, freed the breath from the body. In **stage 8**, we have calmed the mind-conditioners, freed the breath from the mind itself. In a sense, the breath has merged with the mind: it is one with the mind.

It is important at this stage to understand our state of mind. We often hear meditation teachers telling us that the body and the mind in dhyana are perfectly still, with neither thinking nor knowing, in the usual sense of the words. At this early stage, before the arising of a higher dhyana, the mind is *samāhita* (focused); hence, it is *parisuddhi* (fully purified) and *kammaniya*, ready to work to free itself from the current stage for the next. Then perhaps, we may see directly into true reality (*samāhito yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti*).²¹⁰

5.8.3.13 (12) FREEING THE MIND (**vimocayaṃ cittaṃ**). We have already noted that the breath meditation is a true act of renunciation [4.1.4.6]: it is a reenactment of the Buddha’s renunciation of the world (the body), discovering his **breath** and samadhi, which brings him awakening. Here, in stage 12, the process of awakening starts. Even if we are not ready for awakening, this process frees us from our present negative states, empowering us to live happy, creative and compassionate lives, refining our wisdom and bringing joy to others, too.

²¹⁰ S 22.5/3:13 (SD 7.16), 35.99/4:80 (SD 93.13), 56.1/5:414; Nett 58; Miln 84.

Of what do we free ourselves? **Clinging** (*upādāna*). We free ourselves of the 4 types of clinging (and to gain and enjoy, respectively, the 4 values (*dhammā*), beginning with life), thus:²¹¹

(1) clinging to material things	<i>kāmūpādāna</i>	when overcome, we see the value of	life
(2) clinging to views	<i>diṭṭhūpādāna</i>	— do —	truth
(3) clinging to rituals and vows	<i>sīla-b, batūpādāna</i>	— do —	freedom
(4) clinging to the self-view	<i>atta, vādūpādāna</i>	— do —	happiness.

5.8.3.14 We began our breath meditation by taking a breath in and letting it go, and so on; in doing so, we have **life**.²¹² The breath, at this early stage, represents the body, that is, our sense-experiences, which are the sum of all material things, for which we ignorantly crave. Hence, we can also translate *kāmūpādāna* as “clinging to sensual pleasures.”

In stage 4, we spoke about “the body-conditioner” (*kāya, saṅkhāra*): these are the views that enslave us to our body; we are conditioned by our senses. In stage 7, we spoke of “the mind-conditioner” (*citta, saṅkhāra*): these are the views that chain us to our thoughts and feelings, our knowledge and emotions. As we progress through breath meditation, our vision of true reality becomes clearer: this is the **truth**.

When we lack this understanding of conditions and impermanence [5.6.1.5], we are then shaped and prodded on by our senses and thoughts, we are drawn to our sense-objects: sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. We see these as “*external*” things we lack and, hence, we crave for. We keep doing the same routine repeatedly, wishing for something, some gain, over and over again. This is called **attachment to ritual and vows** (one of the 3 fetters). We gain **freedom** from this chain of routine by the calm and clarity that breath meditation gives us.

5.8.3.15 Finally, there is the most devious clinging of all: that of **self-view**—everything we think, say or do centres on “I, me, mine,” our notions of self (*attā*), the false notions that we are or have an abiding entity (like a Self or Soul), some kind of eternity, something that does not change. There is no such thing. Even the very breath that gives us life, what we are, comes and goes, impermanently: how can there be a permanent self? We breathe in wisdom, breathe out *self-view*; in doing so, we gain true **happiness**.

The 4 values (that’s what they are)—*life, truth, freedom and happiness*—are no random teachings, but directly connected with the 5 precepts: they are the expressions of these values. The 1st precept (against killing) expresses the value of life; the 2nd precept (against stealing), the value of happiness; the 3rd precept, the value of freedom; the 4th precept, the value of truth; and the 5th precept, the value of wisdom, which is what the last breath tetrad is about²¹³ [5.8.4].

5.8.4 (4) Contemplation of Dharma (*dhammānupassanā*)

5.8.4.1 (13) CONTEMPLATING IMPERMANENCE (*aniccānupassī*). This is the 4th and last tetrad of the breath meditation. The first 3 tetrads build up our *samatha*, inner calm, so that the mind is free of the mental hindrances [4.1.2.1] and is ready to work (*kammaṇīya*) on this final, most vital, stage of our meditation training, that of gaining *vipassana*, insight into true reality. [Table 5.8]

In this 1st stage of the 4th tetrad, we contemplate on impermanence. In fact, we have been doing a lot of this for our training: we have been observing in-depth the impermanence of our breath. It is thus important to understand, we are watching the impermanence that is within us; after all, we are meditating, and while we are focused, our eyes naturally *close* so that we see *more*! We see what the eye fails to see; we notice what is really going on within the mind itself.

²¹¹ See **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15.6), SD 5.17; **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9.34), SD 11.14. On the 4 values (with the 5th value, that of wisdom), see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

²¹² In this section, as in various other sections, we can see how Buddhadasa’s teachings fit like hand in glove with the suttas teachings in the SD translations.

²¹³ On the 5 precepts (*sīla*) and their 5 values (*dhamma*), see SD SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

The mind, too, it should be well noted, is *impermanent*. Indeed, the mind can only work with the language of impermanence for us to understand what impermanence is. Without impermanence, we will not be able to make sense of anything. Our sense-experience can only notice **change**: experience is itself change. Indeed, there is nothing in this world that is not changing. To exist is to change. For this simple reason, the idea of anything permanent or eternal (such as the God-idea, the Soul) will neither make sense nor will it be helpful at all for anyone: it would be contrary to nature and reality. This is actually a profound statement of the 1st noble truth: impermanence. For, what is impermanent is suffering. Look at this passage again, and contemplate on this amazing truth!

5.8.4.2 (14) CONTEMPLATING FADING AWAY (*virāgānupassī*). Our understanding of impermanence is further applied, in this stage, to looking deeper into true reality. Since everything—whether they are sense-experiences or thoughts—they are all *impermanent*. Hence, we cannot, in reality, take hold of, much less own, anything in this world. All that there is within us, without us, is the arising and passing away of things, that is, *physical* states (form, that is, the 4 elements: earth, water, fire, wind) and *mental* states [feelings, perception, formations, consciousness]. Collectively, these are called ***pañca-kkhandha***, “the 5 aggregates.”

“**Fading away**” (*virāga*) means that everything in this world is moving on, led to the slaughter by time. We can try to hold on to something, some belief, some God, but it all just slips away like the fine sand in the hour-glass. We cannot even hold our breath for long, we have to let every breath go: how can we ever hold on to what is not really ours. We can own nothing in this world, nor beyond (which is nirvana).

Even pain fades away; when we don’t notice this, or do not accept this, then, **suffering** overwhelms us. Suffering, too, must fade away: we don’t see this because we are taken for a ride by the notion that it is “bad” not to have what we want, to be separated from what we love. This is the nature of things. Suffering is neither in the “thing” nor in the “separation”: it is in the wanting, the craving. For that reason, **craving** (*taṇhā*) is said to be the cause or arising of suffering: the 2nd noble truth. At this stage, this is what is fading away: craving (the roots of suffering). When we realize this, our insight broadens and deepens significantly.

5.8.4.3 (15) CONTEMPLATING CESSATION (*nirodhānupassī*). In the preceding 2 stages, we see *suffering* and the *arising* of suffering, defined and understood (that’s the way it should be): we have understood the *roots* of suffering. In this 15th stage, we see ***nirodha***, the ending, that is, *the cessation of suffering*. It is a stage by itself because we need to see and understand what it is that is ending, that is, the manifestations of suffering itself. All these have now ended (when we follow all these stages properly, we go on to become arhats).

All that have ended had the characteristics of *impermanence, suffering and nonself*. We have seen impermanence in stage 13 (the 1st stage of the 4th tetrad); here, we will see the ending of ***dukkha***, suffering itself, in all its forms: *birth, decay (including aging), disease, grief (including lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair), being with the unpleasant (the undesirable), being without the pleasant (the desirable), not getting what we want; in short, the 5 aggregates*. This is what is taught in the Buddha’s 1st discourse, **the Dhammacakkka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11).²¹⁴

The 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—too, all end here. The previous list of sufferings is *how* we are; the 5 aggregates are *what* we really are: in the very last stage [5.8.4.4], we will see that there is no *who* “we are.” Of course, we may still notice that all this have *not* ended for us yet. That’s because we are not awakened, not an arhat, yet. This is a vision of the well of water in the distance for the thirsty traveller. We just need to keep moving if we want to get to that well. This is the noble truth of the path that we must take for the ending of suffering.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ S 56.11/5:420-424 = Mv 1.6.16-31 (V 1:10-12) (SD 1.1).

²¹⁵ This noble truth numbering follows the older sequence—1-2-4-3—found in, eg, **Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika S** (M 149, 11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

5.8.4.4 (16) CONTEMPLATING LETTING GO (*paṭinissaggānupassī*). The term *paṭi-nissagga* that defines this 16th and very last stage of the breath meditation is a very curious one. Its main component, *nissagga*, means “subject to forfeiture; required to be surrendered.”²¹⁶ Its verb is *nissajjati*, “to let go, give up; hand over; surrender; let fly, throw.” The prefix *paṭi-* has the senses of “counter, against, back.” The dictionary meaning of *paṭinissagga* is “giving up, letting go, renouncing.”

While the dictionary definition of *paṭinissagga* is, of course, correct, it misses out the powerful spiritual nuance, its literal sense, of “**giving back, throwing back,**” with the sense of urgency found in similar words, such as *saṁvega* (sense of urgency) and *nibbidā* (revulsion).²¹⁷ Thus, *paṭinissagga* actually means to “throw back,” as it were, all that we have thought, spoken, done and taken due to greed, hate, delusion, on account of craving and ignorance.

We have been taking, trying to take, all that is “not ours,” that belongs to the world, that is *worldly*. We have become veritable **thieves**, without even knowing it.²¹⁸ Having reached this stage, we now know that we are *thieves*, and are at once embarrassed, and we see the danger (*ādīnava*) of it all. We at once throw back all the unwholesome roots, defilements and negative emotions back to the world, like throwing back hot burning embers that have been hurled at us!²¹⁹

For **the arhat**, this is the ending of suffering, *nirvana*. In fact, both stages 15+16 address the ending of suffering. Hence, this last tetrad neatly fits into the pattern of the 4 noble truths, which we have used to explain them. We are also reminded of the Buddha’s famous declaration: “**Only one thing do I teach: suffering and the ending of suffering.**”²²⁰

5.8.5 From samatha to vipassana

5.8.5.1 Buddhādāsa shows how the breath meditation in the 1st 3 tetrads enables us to know clearly the characteristics of internal objects to be **samatha** experiences: the breath, feelings and mental states. We thus start to see the relationship between the body and the mind. But in the 4th tetrad, stage 13, we are taught to go through stages 1 to 12 again and see how all the objects we focused on are **impermanent** (*anicca*).

Then, we repeat stages 1-12 a number of times, each time to see these objects as **suffering** (*dukkha*), as **nonself** (*anatta*), as **empty** (*suññata*), as **suchness** [reality] (*tathata*), and in terms of the conditioned principles of **dependent arising** (*idapaccayatā*). The repetition will not work if we take them ritually; each repetition is a reminder of the nature of the breath.²²¹

5.8.5.2 According to Buddhādāsa, once we have completed stages 1-12 of the breath meditation, this constitutes **samatha**, as clear from the “calming” (*passambhayaṃ*) and related experiences of 1st and 2nd tetrads; “concentrating” (*samādhāṃ*) is in the 3rd tetrad; and in the 4th there, with the help of samatha, the “freeing of the mind” (*ceto, vimutti*). [Table 5.8]

In stage 14, we see how impermanence dissolves **attachment** (*upadāna*) through our realizing the suffering of that attachment. Then, we focus on **the fading away** of that suffering. Stage 15 brings us to the uprooting of **selfishness**: the overcoming of greed, hate and delusion, and thus quenching all our experiences of suffering.

²¹⁶ There is a whole set of Vinaya offences called *nissaddiya, pācittiya*, entailing “expiation with forfeiture” (rules 20-49 of the monks’ 227 rules, V 3:195-266).

²¹⁷ On *saṁvega*: SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6). On *nibbidā*: **Nibbidā**, SD 20.1.

²¹⁸ Monastics who do not keep to the Vinaya are said to be “thieves” (*cora*) who rob families and society: **Arahatta** **Susīma S** (S 12.70,58), SD 16.8; SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2) almsfood; SD 49.2 (1.1.3) recluses.

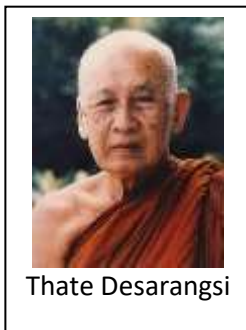
²¹⁹ Buddhādāsa 1997:96 f.

²²⁰ **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,21.2/3:119) = S 44.2/4:384 (SD 21.13); **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,38), SD 3.13; SD 40a.1 (11.1.1). SD 58.1 (1.2.2.2).

²²¹ Buddhādāsa 1997:36 f. For books by Buddhādāsa: <http://www.bia.or.th/en/index.php/teachings-by-buddhadasa-bhikkhu/ebooks/pdf>.

5.8.5.3 The very last stage (the 16th) of breath meditation is called *paṭinissaggānupassī*, “contemplating the letting go (of defilements).” Buddhadasa calls this the “throwing back” stage, that is, we give back everything we have been attached to. They are not ours, never ours, and we neither want them nor need them. We do not want to have anything to do with them any more. This is called *atam, mayatā* (not-that-ness): no more seeing anything as ‘I.’ “me” or “mine.”²²²

We see all these teachings of Buddhadasa on the breath meditation in the *Ānāpāna, sati Sutta* (M 118) plus some additional teachings that are helpful in deepening our understanding and actuating an experience of the Sutta’s teachings in our lives.²²³



Thate Desarangsi

5.9 AJAHN THATE DESARANGSI (1902-1994)

5.9.1 Friendship between Thammayut and the forest monks

5.9.1.1 With the passing of Ajahn Mun [5.2] in 1949, the highly respected meditation teacher, Ajahn **Thate Desarangsi** (เอต เตชะรังสิ)²²⁴ of Wat Hin Mak Peng (วัดหินหมากเป้ง), Nongkhai Province, became the de facto head of the Siamese forest tradition, until his death in 1994. The relationship between the Thammayut and the forest monks had improved in the 1950, when Tisso Uan [5.3.3] fell sick and Ajahn Lee visited him to teach him Dharma, helping him heal [5.3.4].

5.9.1.2 Ajahn Thate, of the Thai *kammaṭṭhāna* tradition, spent over 70 years (rains) as a monk. Besides local students, Thate trained many western followers, and also gave a number of instructive Dharma teachings [Biblio SD 01]. He was born in a village in Udorn Thani Province in NE Thailand to parents who were ordinary paddy farmers.

Since young, he had always shown deep interest and respect for the monastic life. Even as a child, he once asked his father, “If two people go and make merits through good deeds and generosity, and one is ordained as a monk while the other isn’t, which one of them would gain the greater merit?”²²⁵

5.9.1.3 In 1916, a group of forest monks led by **Ajahn Mun’s followers**, Ajahn Singh Khantyāgamo and Ajahn Kham, travelled to Thate’s village and stayed for the rains-retreat. This was the first time forest monks reached the area. Even though Thate was then only 14 years old, he saw the significant differences between these itinerant meditation monks and those of the communal monasteries. He at once felt deep faith and reverence for their simple austere lifestyle.

At the end of the 3 months of the rains-retreat, Thate left home and joined Ajahn Singh’s itinerant community. He received full ordination in 1923 and practised as a student of Ajahn Mun. During his 7 decades as a monk, his wanderings took him all over Thailand, Burma and Laos.

5.9.1.4 Thate had a deep feeling for the forest **tudong** (*dhutāṅga*) practices. Unfortunately, he wrote little on this. However, we know that Ajahn Thate devoted almost his entire monk-life in this practice. His life and practice showed that a *dhutāṅga* monk was the best choice for the development of meditation for the sake of gaining nirvana.

For example, Ajahn Thate taught that when meditators lived in the open, they might feel afraid that snakes would bite them, tigers would eat them or ghosts would haunt them. As a result, they all feared death. Yet none of them had actually seen a tiger eating a human, nor seen a ghost.²²⁶ Their fears were

²²² Buddhadasa 1997:37 f.

²²³ M 118/3:78-88 (SD 7.13).

²²⁴ Also known as เตต เตชัง; his personal name was ทัฬหะ. The variations in his name is prob from its colloquial spelling amongst the farming community. Hence, his Thai name “Thate” can mean either “local or native (son)” or “to teach.”

²²⁵ <https://www.accesstosight.org/lib/thai/thate/thateauto.html>.

²²⁶ Thate 1988:15.

all mind-made: their own imaginations scared them. When they properly followed *dhutāṅga* practices, they would significantly purify their minds.

5.9.1.5 However, Thate warned of the real dangers and difficulties in the forest. He laid down **these 3 rules** for others so that they understand that the forest training is not for the faint-hearted:

1. There should be no complaints about hardships encountered along the way, such as difficulties with the journey, food or shelter. If any of us should fall ill, then we will assist each other to the best of our ability—together to the end.
2. If one of us should become homesick for family or friends, even for our parents, there should be no aiding the others to go back home.
3. We must be resolved to face death, wherever, however it comes.²²⁷



Ajahn Mahā Bua

5.9.1.6 Thate's main method of meditation is called **Buddho**, after the mantra used in it. The method is simple: we simply keep reciting slowly mentally, *buddho buddho buddho*, keeping the mind fully focused on it until we are fully focused at it. Then, with that calm and clear mind, we contemplate *buddho* and *what* (not "who") is saying it. The word will vanish leaving only "what" is making the sound *buddho*. Then, focus on what that is saying *buddho* as our meditation object.²²⁸

5.10 AJAHN FEUANG JOTIKO (1915-1986)



Ajahn Fuang Jotiko

5.10.1 Ajahn **Fuang [Fuang] Jotiko** (อาจารย์เฟื่อง โชติโก) was one of Ajahn Lee's most devoted students, spending some 24 rains retreats in the company of his renowned teacher. After Ajahn Lee's death, Feuang continued his practice at Wat Asokaram, Ajahn Lee's bustling monastery near Bangkok. [5.3.2]

A true forest monk at heart, Ajahn Feuang left Wat Asokaram in 1965 in search of greater solitude that was more conducive for meditation. In due course, he ended up at the remote Wat Dhammasathit (วัดธรรมสถิต), Rayong province (on the east coast of the Gulf of Thailand), where he lived as abbot for the rest of his life.

5.10.2 His works

Some of Ajahn Feuang's teachings have been translated by Thanissaro Bhikku. A few titles of his works and their essence are as follows:

- **Awareness Itself** (1999, 50p). This book is a collection of delightful and inspiring stories retold by an American monk who lived under Ajahn Feuang's tutelage during the last decade of the latter's life. These anecdotes reveal a teaching style that adapted readily to the particular needs of the listener at the moment. Collectively, they bear the unmistakable mark of a masterful teacher with a profound grasp of Dhamma, offering valuable lessons for newcomers and experienced practitioners alike.
- **A Single Mind** (1999; 4p). Encouragement and purpose for those who would rather live a single, celibate life.
- **Timeless and True** (1998, 5p). Advice and support for people getting started in meditation.

²²⁷ Tiyanich, *Forest Recollections*, 1997:145.

²²⁸ <https://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebmed028.htm>.

5.11 AJAHN MAHA BUA ÑĀṆASAMPANNO (1913-2011)

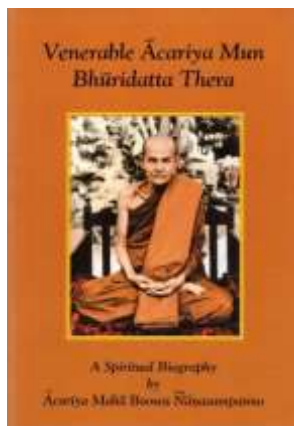
5.11.1 The early years

5.11.1.1 Ajahn Mahā Bua [Boowa] (อาจารย์มหาบัว) Ñāṇasampanno was most unlike any of the other Thai Kammaṭṭhāna monks who studied here. Even as a meditator, he was an outspoken social activist. Born in Baan Taad (บ้านตาด), a village in Udon Thani, NE Thailand (south of Wat Pah Baan Tad), he became a monk in the customary way at the local monastery to learn Pali and the texts.

At the same time, he also started to meditate but had not found a suitable teacher. In due course, he met Ajahn Mun and at once felt that Mun was someone very special who must have attained some spiritual level in Dharma practice.

5.11.2 Upon completing Year 3 of Pali (hence, his title *Mahā*), he left his study monastery to follow Ajahn Mun into the forests of NE Thailand. **Ajahn Mun** understandably told him to put aside his academic learning and focus on meditation.²²⁹ He went into solitary meditation retreat in the jungle and mountains, but always returned to Ajahn Mun for advice and help. He stayed with Ajahn Mun for 7 years, that is, until the latter passed away.

Bua's closeness with Ajahn Mun attracted other monks keen on meditation to come and learn from him. His following grew, culminating in the founding of **Wat Pah Baan Taad** (วัดป่าบ้านตาด) (1955), some 100 acres of forest land near the village where he was born. This allowed his infirm mother to join him as a nun at the monastery.



Hagiography of a forest monk: Is it about Ajahn Mun or Mahā Bua?

5.11.3 Ajahn Maha Boowa is well known for his fluency and skill in his direct and dynamic approach to Dharma instruction. The teachings reflected his own attitude, and the way he practised Dharma. He usually taught in the cool of the evening, with lamps lit, and there was only the sounds of insects and cicadas from the nearby jungle.

He often started off, priming himself, as it were, with a few moments of silence. Then, he quietly began his Dharma talk. As the theme naturally developed, the pace picked up strength and depth. Such talks usually lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. He closed with some general remarks, after which his congregation would disperse to their solitary huts in the jungle to reflect on the day's teaching or continue their practice.²³⁰

5.11.4 Two remarkable aspects of Mahā Bua's life make us wonder about how he thought of his monk status. The first controversy we shall examine is his biography, or better, **hagiography**, of his teacher, Ajahn Mun, entitled ***Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera: A spiritual biography***

(2003).²³¹ Bua claims that it is "a factual account, representing the memories of [Mun's] life as he himself conveyed to us" (2003:1), that is, those who knew Ajahn Mun personally, including, of course, himself.

Especially controversial is the book's chapter 3, where he describes Ajahn Mun's *vimutti* ("freedom"), that is, awakening (158 f). During the night, he writes, terrestrial devas and celestial devas came in groups from almost every direction to see him (159-162).

²²⁹ J L Taylor 1993:157.

²³⁰ See K Tiyanich 1997; J Kornfield 2007:167-190 (ch 9).

²³¹ ประวัติท่านพระอาจารย์มั่น ภูริทัตตเถระ, ปฐกฐาของพระอุปัชฌาย์ฐาน สายท่านพระอาจารย์มั่น ภูริทัตตเถระ *Prawat tahn phra ajahn mun phoorithatta, pattipathaa khong phra tudong kammaṭṭhan saai tahnphra ajahn phoorithattathera*, tr Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, Bangkok, 2003, repr 2005:

http://luangta.eu/site/books/book8_biomun/BioMunAll.zip. For his works (download)
<http://luangta.eu/site/books.php>.

Once the devas had left, he continues, Ajahn Mun went into deep samadhi, and had a vision of his formless “longtime spiritual partner,”²³² with whom he had promised to together meet some future Buddha and gain awakening. After some consoling talk, she leaves and returns as a beautiful Tāvātimsa deva (into which she was reborn) to see Mun again. Again, Mun taught her Dharma. This time, convinced that Mun had given up all worldly ties, she “blissfully floated up into the sky,” never to be seen again (168 f).

Even more remarkable is what Bua relates next: a number of Buddhas [sic], appear before him, some accompanied by tens of thousands of their arhat disciples, some with hundreds of thousands of them, of different ages. They showed their appreciation for his diligence and attainment. Having spoken, they vanished instantly. (170-176)

5.11.5 Narrative rhetoric

5.11.5.1 Maha Bua was a remarkable writer in the style of **the Apadāna** (the 13th book of the Khuddaka Nikāya), relating amazing stories of faith and their fruits with regard to our Buddha in his past lives. Like the narrator in such hagiographical stories, Bua, too, is an “omniscient narrator.”²³³ We have no way of knowing how real was Mun’s story, or if it were meant to be taken literally. Clearly, the extracanonical details were outside influences on his own beliefs. We have no records of Ajahn Mun teaching any of them.

Yet, we should not cavalierly dismiss such stories as “holy fiction” (even if they are): these are valuable documents in the study of **a psychology of the religious mind**,²³⁴ of both the teacher and his faithful audience. Psychologically, it reflects Mahā Bua’s own beliefs in his special religious status as a forest meditation virtuoso. This is the kind of writing that would indirectly attribute **charisma** to him for his special knowledge of a great forest saint.

In fact, we will notice an interesting pattern of “tale-spinning” in celebrity teachers and cult gurus. When there is a believing audience, such tale-spinners are simply compelled to relate edifying stories and make outrageous statements. Miraculous and quixotic quips are what boosts the teacher with charisma so that he projects an avatar that melds with the personalities and passions of an admiring audience.

5.11.5.2 The controversial dhyana teacher, Brahmavamso [5.1.1], notable for his “eccentric”²³⁵ teachings, for example, says that Buddhism is “the only real science”; levitation (during dhyana) is not only possible, but may even be occurring in his monastery in Perth; that to attain streamwinning,²³⁶ we must listen to the Dharma from monks (the enlightened ones are only found in monastic centres); that the Buddha discovered dhyana rather than learning it from his teachers (there was no dhyana then, anyway, he claims);²³⁷ that dhyana is the one and only path to nirvana; and unabashedly sectarian, he calls certain Zen ideas (like postponing enlightenment) “foolish.”²³⁸

5.11.5.3 I suggest we call such speech acts as cases of **narrative rhetoric**,²³⁹ that is, a tendency by charismatic figures to spin edifying and outrageous statements, especially to their ready audience, for empowering themselves and consolidating the faith of followers. As in a psychological defence, the spin-

²³² This reminds us of the Tantric teaching of the *ḍakini*, a female deity personified as our “meditation partner,” a sort of hypostasis of our wisdom.

²³³ See SD 55.8 (1.1.5.3).

²³⁴ For a psychological study of another historical religious figure, cf E Erikson’s *Young Man Luther: A study in psychoanalysis and history* (1958): SD 7.9 (4.3.5.3).

²³⁵ Accessed !0 Feb 2022:

https://www.travelfish.org/sight_profile/thailand/northeast_thailand/ubon_ratchathani/ubon_ratchathani/3341.

²³⁶ On streamwinning, see S 22.109; SD 17.1a(2.3); SD 52.10a (1.2.2.2-1.2.2.3).

²³⁷ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b.

²³⁸ Most of these remarks are found in his *Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond: A meditator’s handbook* (2006). For the sources of the other statements, see Quli 2008;231.

²³⁹ Or simply “tale-spinning.”

ner is, as a rule, not aware of or do not see their statements as being, in any way, outrageous.²⁴⁰ However, whether they are defending their ego from any perceived external threats or not (we can't be certain), intoxicated by over-self-confidence (*adhimāna*),²⁴¹ they simply enjoy spinning tales, especially one that projects them as a "paternal power figure" to the veritable child in their audience.²⁴²

5.11.6 Unlike any other meditation monks in this study, Mahā Bua was not only "socially engaged" where he thought he would make a difference in current affairs, but also openly made acrimonious public statements of his disapproval of some national issue or individuals. Dramatic examples of these powerful emotionally charged remarks were those made in connection with the 1997 Asian financial crisis that substantially depleted Thailand's official foreign exchange reserves. In response to the national crisis, Mahā Bua himself actively helped to raise funds during those difficult years to replenish the country's foreign reserves!²⁴³

At one point, he even threatened suicide should the financial target not be met.²⁴⁴ In 1998, he personally handed over US\$1.2 M and over US\$1 M worth of gold bars raised through his decree. The climax of his dramatic intercession was in 2001, when he ceremoniously handed over 55 gold bars, weighing a total of 687.5 kg (worth over US\$500 M) and a US\$300,000 cheque to the central bank governor. His rationale was that any crisis of such nature threatened the nation, and should the nation fail, so would the Sangha, since the latter could not exist without the former.²⁴⁵

5.11.7 A more troubling development arose in 2005, when the 19th Supreme Patriarch, Ñāṇa,saṃvara (Charoen Suvaḍḍhano) was seriously ill and could not perform his Sangha duties. By the terms of Thailand's religious law—modified in 1991 to take the choice of the patriarch away from the king—Somdet Buddhacarya (Kiaw Upaseno) [5.1.1 n] would automatically become the next Sangharaja.

However, this move was vehemently opposed by Mahā Bua, who intensely disliked Somdet Buddhacarya of Wat Sraket (of the rival Mahanikai sect).²⁴⁶ The controversy worsened when politician Sondhi Limthongkul and his People's Alliance for Democracy used it to criticise the Thaksin Shinawatra government. In 2005, Mahā Bua even petitioned to King Bhumibol to remove all of Somdet Kiaw's royal titles.²⁴⁷

Commenting on Maha Bua's intercession into Thailand's economic problem, A M Weber, concludes, in his review of J L Taylor's *Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand* (2008):

"Tradition and otherwise stern critic of 'bhikkhus of the modern kind' looking for 'burdensome pursuits to take up and get involved in' (167), Ajahn Mahā Bua has in his old age become an overt political and economic power himself and—while helping his country immensely—has further weakened the image of forest monks dedicated to simplicity and 'the direct route'; the very qualities he himself epitomized and became famous for prior to his country's crisis." (2012:171).

²⁴⁰ If they do, then, it is prob a covert act of speaking falsehood. Of course, there is a possibility that they could be misinformed or unaware that what they have said is false or inaccurate or unsubstantiated.

²⁴¹ See SD 31.3 (4.2.2).

²⁴² Since this is the effect of the latent tendency of conceit (*māna*), even arrogance (*atimāna*), we neither know it nor can we control it; unless we are truly mindful of it and wise enough to deal with it. On psychological defence, see SD 7.9 (1.2); SD 24.10b (2)

²⁴³ On monastics should have nothing to do with money or assets, see SD 4.19-23.

²⁴⁴ Suicide is clearly implied in the case-history (*nidāna*) for **the 3rd defeat** (*pārājika*) rule (V 3:73,10-16); so too murder, encouraging, approving or allowing killing (when one has the power to prevent or stop it): Mv 3.1.4 (V 3:-71), 3.5.33 (V 3:86). See Analayo, "Suicide," Ency Bsm 8:161-164.

²⁴⁵ For an overview, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005%E2%80%932006_Thai_political_crisis. For an academic discussion, see J L Taylor 2008 chs 5-7; [for a preview](#).

²⁴⁶ The rancorous succession debate was rooted in long-standing complaints against the amended 1962 Sangha Act (introduced during the military dictatorship of Sarit Thanarat) that defines the structure and governance of the Thai Sangha. The 1962 Act ended democratic reforms that had accompanied King Mongkut's doctrinal and disciplinary reforms. Further, the 1962 Act gave greater power to the Sangharaja, and structured the Sangha along a strict hierarchy that stifled dissent and provided few significant roles for younger monks.

²⁴⁷ ผู้จัดการรายวัน, ถวายฎีกาถอดสมเด็จพระสังฆราช Archived 14/7/2011 at Wayback Machine.

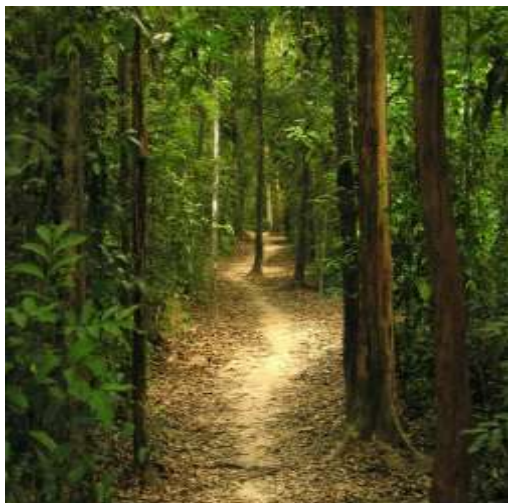
In this connection, too, the Buddha warns us that even great monks can have “wrong view and perverted vision.”²⁴⁸

5.12 AJAHN CHAH SUBHADDO (1918-1992)

5.12.1 Chah’s meditation training

5.12.1.1 Ajahn Chah Subhaddo²⁴⁹ (ชา สุภัทโท 1918-1992) was born in the remote village of Baan Kor (บ้านค้อ) in NE Thailand. He became a novice at a young age and received higher ordination at 20.²⁵⁰ In 1949, he took up the austere forest tradition for years, living in forests and begging for almsfood as he wandered about on tudong. He practised meditation under various teachers, including Ajahn Mun, who had an indelible influence on Chah, giving his meditation direction and clarity.

5.12.1.2 Prior to establishing monasteries, Ajahn Chah wandered on tudong for 7 years (1949-56), practising in the wilderness, caves and cremation grounds. After that period, he settled in a “fever ridden, haunted forest” known as **Pah Phong** (ป่าพง), at Bahn Bung Wai (บ้านบึงหวาย), in Ubol Ratchathani, about 15 km from the capital of the same name, in NE Thailand. In 1975, a monastery was started there, known today as **Wat Nong Pah Phong** (วัดหนองป่าพง the monastery at the swampy jungle thicket; or Wat Pah Phong, for short). Despite its remote location, poor conditions and sparse food, Chah drew a following



Unlike many Thai temples, Wat Nong Pah Pong has kept the concrete to a minimum.
Photo: David Luekens

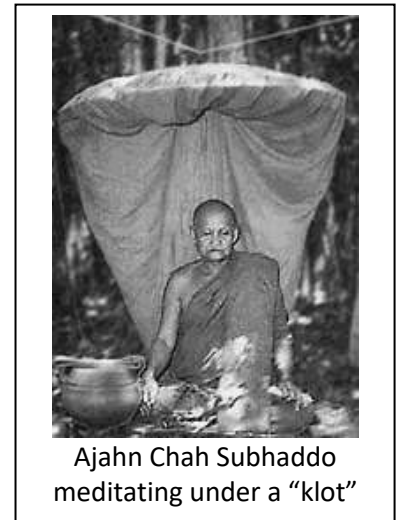
from there. The first Thai monastery run by and for (non-Thai) English-speaking monks began there, and became the rich soil for more delightful forest parks (*ārāma*) to grow beyond Thailand and Asia.

5.12.2 Training western monks

5.12.2.1 Chah later became an accomplished meditation teacher in his own right, and inspired a global network of forest monasteries run by monks upholding the Dharma-Vinaya. The essence of the teaching was simple: *be mindful, don’t cling to anything; let go and surrender to the way things are*. This appealed to Westerners, who started to come to him for training.

This alone, as exemplified in the lives and teachings of Ajahn Chah’s disciples, show that they, above all, have the one same teacher, **the Buddha**, and keep to **the Vinaya** so that **the Dharma** will freely and richly prosper

by their own examples. We see this same fire and light of true faith in the early Burmese monks beginning with Ledi Sayadaw [2.3 f].



Ajahn Chah Subhaddo meditating under a “klot”

²⁴⁸ (Pañcaka) Thera S (A 5.88), SD 40a.16.

²⁴⁹ Chah Subhaddo (Thai, ชา สุภัทโท) was given the royal honorific title Phra Bodhi,ñāṇa Thera (พระโพธิญาณเถร, the venerable elder with knowledge of awakening). Phra is a common Thai prefix used before names of monastics, royals and sacred objects. For overviews: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Tradition_of_Ajahn_Chah; Ajahn Chah web-site: <http://ajahnchah.org/>. Ajahn Chah’s forest tradition (overview, lineage, controversy, etc): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Tradition_of_Ajahn_Chah.

²⁵⁰ Ajahn Chah’s early years: https://www.dhammatalks.net/Books5/Ajahn_Jayasaro_Early_Years_of_Ajahn_Chah.htm.

If we see Goenka's success as a modernist management and marketing of Vipassana as a method good in itself, the monks and teachers true to Ajahn Chah's forest teachings, presented Dharma and meditation as the light of the 3 jewels, inviting the world to "come and see" (*ehi,passika*). And many did, and are still doing so: they see this forest path, naturally beautiful in sound and silence, leading to the still forest pool that has brought the world to the light of Dharma.

5.12.2.2 Ajahn Sumedho (Robert Karr Jackman, b 1934), the seniormost western monk of the forest tradition, found Ajahn Chah by chance. His first contact with Buddhism was a case of "karmic causality [sic]" in Singapore, while he was on a break from his Peace Corps service in Borneo (now Sabah, Malaysia). One morning (probably in 1966), while breakfasting at a sidewalk café, he saw a Buddhist monk walking by, and thought to himself: "This is interesting!"

In 1966, he became a novice in Wat Sri Saket in Nong Khai, bordering Laos, 60 km (37 mi) north of Udorn Thani.²⁵¹ He ordained as a monk the following year. Upon meeting one of Ajahn Chah's monks, he was impressed with him, and visited Wat Pah Phong.

He ended up staying there for the next 10 years (1966-77) [5.12.1.2] training under Ajahn Chah. Since that time, Sumedho has been regarded as Ajahn Chah's most influential Western disciple, presenting the living forest tradition to the world.

5.12.2.3 In 1975, Sumedho helped to establish **Wat Pa Nanachat** (วัดป่านานาชาติ), the International Forest Monastery, located 8 km west of Wat Pah Phong. He became its 1st abbot and there trained non-Thai students following the Chah lineage. The numbers of foreign trainees quickly grew, and many, upon completing their training, returned to their countries or went forth into the world to start their own forest monasteries.

In 1977, on the invitation of **the English Sangha Trust**²⁵² [EST], Ajahn Sumedho accompanied Ajahn Chah on a visit to **England**. Moved by warm local interest in Buddhism among Westerners, Ajahn Chah encouraged Ajahn Sumedho to remain in England to set up a branch monastery there. Chah returned to Britain in 1979, when the Chithurst monastery was being set up. He then went on to the US and Canada on teaching tours.

In 1979, **Cittaviveka Forest Monastery**, was established in West Sussex with Sumedho as abbot (1979-84). Shortly after establishing Cittaviveka, Sumedho was authorised by the Thai Sangha to ordain monks.²⁵³ He then established the 10-precept ordination lineage for women, called **Sīla, dharā**, "precept holders." The idea is that Dharma practice does not depend on status, such as the Nun ordination. So long as we are willing and able to keep the precepts, even the 5 precepts or the 10 precepts, we are capable of attaining the path in this life itself.

5.12.2.4 As the years passed, age weighed down on Ajahn Chah. For some years, spells of dizziness and memory lapses plagued him, and they only worsened after his trip to the West. In 1980 and 1981, Chah spent the rains-retreat quietly away from Wat Pah Pong, since his health was failing due to diabetes. As his illness worsened, he would use his body as a teaching, a living example of the impermanence of all things.

He constantly reminded us to see the true refuge as being within oneself, since he would not be able to teach for very much longer. In 1981, he went for an operation, which eventually rendered him completely bedridden and unable to speak.

²⁵¹ Khon Kaen Province borders to the south, and further south Ubon Ratchathani beyond that. These 4 provinces constitute the Isan (northeast) region: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isan>.

²⁵² The English Sangha Trust (EST) was founded in 1955, mainly the efforts of William August Purfurst (Kapilavaddho Bhikkhu) (known later as Richard Randall, 1906-71) with the purpose of supporting the Buddhist Sangha in the UK. EST sold its London properties in 1979, and today maintains Amaravati and Cittaviveka monasteries [15.12.2.3]. http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/honourfathers.pdf (Kapilavaddho: pp 24-48; English Sangha Trust: pp49-66); <https://www.chezpaul.org.uk/buddhism/articles/kapilvdo.htm>.

²⁵³ Ie, he officially became a preceptor (*upajjhāya*): Ajahn Anando 1992.

This did not stop the growth of monks and laity who came to practise at his monastery, since his teachers and practitioners were always there as their constant guide and inspiration. After a decade of illness, he passed away in 1992.

5.12.3 Ajahn Chah's teachings²⁵⁴

5.12.3.1 Ajahn Chah neither stressed on any special meditation methods nor gave any crash courses to attain quick insights. His usual instruction was that we *sit and watch the breath until the mind is still*, and then go on to *watch the flow of the mind-body process*. The idea is to live simply and naturally so that we are able to focus on watching the mind.

Although he seemed not to have any special meditation technique to his name, he was always ready with inspiring answers and clarifying teaching when approached with a problem. It was to his regular monks and students that he gave long sittings and teachings, sometimes lasting the whole night into the early hours. Often enough, he would simply call out a monk and get him to give a Dharma talk until he told him to stop. In important ways, he was teaching each monk according to his needs.²⁵⁵

5.12.3.2 His Dharma talks were always informal where he explained a wide range of topics which were mostly related to meditation: overcoming the hindrances, concentrating the mind, experiencing dhyana, often from his own experiences. Of special interest was a description of meditation during his 3rd year as a monk, in an article, "Inside you is nothing, nothing at all."²⁵⁶ He described his mind as "turning inward" and "exploding," and his "body broke into fine pieces."²⁵⁷ Most importantly was how he taught us not to make too much of such experiences. Meditation progress is not about strange phenomena; it is about personal growth, transformation and awakening.²⁵⁸

5.12.4 List of Associated Monasteries of the Ajahn Chah lineage²⁵⁹

(Foundation year follows each monastery's link)²⁶⁰

- Thailand (1) <https://www.watnongpahpong.org/> (1954); (2) <https://www.watpahnachachat.org/> (1975);
 (3) watboonyawad.com (2003); (4) [ratanawan](#) (Google search);
 (5) peacebeyondsuffering.org (an online portal with first podcast in 2007);
 UK (6) amaravati.org (1985); (7) cittaviveka.org (1979); (8) ratanagiri.org.uk (1981);
 (9) hartridgemonastery.org (1986); (10) foresthermitage.org.uk (1999);
 (11) [milntuim](#) (newsletter link) (2015);
 USA (12) abhayagiri.org (1996); (13) pacifichermirage.org (2010); (14) forestmonastery.org (2015);
 (15) <https://www.jetagrover.us/> (2015);
 Canada (16) tisarana.ca (2006); (17) arrowriver.ca (1975); (18) birken.ca (2001);
 Switzerland (19) dhammapala.ch (1992);
 Italy (20) santacittarama.org (1990);
 Portugal (21) sumedharama.pt (2018);
 Germany (22) muttodaya.org (2008);
 Norway (23) skiptvet-vihara.weebly.com (2015);
 Australia (24) [buddhabodhivana](#) (Facebook page) (2001); (25) Wat Buddha Dhamma wbd.org.au (1978); (26) dhammagiri.org.au (2009) (27) vimokkharam.org (1998); (28) bodhisaddha.org (2012);

²⁵⁴ For Ajahn Chah's *Collected Teachings* (single vol): <https://birken.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-Collected-Teachings-of-Ajahn-Chah-Single-Volume.pdf>.

²⁵⁵ For Kornfield's experience as a monk with Chah, see 2007:36 f.

²⁵⁶ Chah, *A Still Forest Pool*, 1985:183-186 (esp the last 2 pages).

²⁵⁷ Cp this with Pa-Auk's description of the "crystal body" [12.1.1], and Luang Phor Sodh's version [4.3.3.5].

²⁵⁸ For Ajahn Chah's meditation teachings, see *A Still Forest Pool*, 1985; *The Clarity of Insight*, 2001.

²⁵⁹ <https://forestmonastery.org/links>.

²⁶⁰ My thanks to Rick Foo of Singapore for listing the foundation years of most of these links, and confirming them with the actual links.

New Zealand (29) bodhinyanarama.net.nz (1983); (30) vimutti.org.nz (2004);
 Brazil (31) suddhavari.org (2018).

For other training centres and links, see <https://forestmonastery.org/links>.

5.13 AJAHN SUWAT SUVACO (1919-2002)

5.13.1 Ajahn Suwat Suvaco (สุวัจน์ สุวโจ) ordained in 1939 at the age of 20, and 2-3 years later, became a student of Ajahn Funn Ācāro (ฟื้น อาจาโร 1899-1977).²⁶¹ He also briefly studied under Ajahn Mun [5.2]. After Ajahn Funn's death, Suwat stayed on at the monastery to supervise his teacher's royal funeral and the construction of a monument and museum in his honour.

5.13.2 In the 1980s Ajahn Suwat visited the United States, where he established his 4 monasteries: one near Seattle, Washington; two near Los Angeles; and one in the hills of San Diego County ([Metta Forest Monastery](http://MettaForestMonastery.org)) (1991). Ajahn Ṭhānissaro has been the resident abbot of the Monastery since 1993. Suwat returned to Thailand in 1996, and died in Buriram,²⁶² after a long illness.²⁶³



Ajahn Suwat Suvaco

6 The Samatha Trust

6.0 This section has been inserted here, closing the brief study on Thai Kammatthana history, because it exemplifies over half a century of Samatha in the West in the form of **the Samatha Trust**, its branches and affiliates. Moreover, this movement is rooted in the teachings and practices of an ex-Thai monk, a layman meditation teacher, **Nai Boonman Poonyathiro** [6.1], who successfully introduced it at the request of Western Buddhists, led by **L S Cousins** (1942-2015) [6.2.1.2]. It is also a warm testimony to how local individual Buddhists worked together to form a wholesome Buddhist community without the delusion or trappings of a religious cult [6.4.1].

It is an amazing story about how **Thai Kammatthana tradition** was adopted by local British Buddhists who then grew the Bodhi tree, a living Buddhist spirituality, in their own soil, that is forever Britain. As committed Buddhists, including Buddhist scholars (professional scholars who are Buddhist), they are also open to the good in other Buddhist traditions without being colonised²⁶⁴ or franchised²⁶⁵ by them. In many ways, the Samatha Trust, at the centre of this development, is a Dharma-spirited success story of putting the teaching above the teacher.²⁶⁶ [6.4.2]

²⁶¹ Ajahn Sumedho says in *Now Is The Knowing* that when he walked on tudong in NE Thailand, he often went visited Ajahn Funn and listen to him teach. He mostly taught the *Buddho* meditation [5.5.2] and his approach was simple. He was also one of the teachers to the Royal Family. (1989:6 f).

<https://www.dhammatalks.org/books/ComeAndSee/Section0004.html>. Only Thai-language online info on Funn: http://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/หลวงปู่ฟื้น_อาจาโร

²⁶² Buriram บุรีรัมย์ is the capital of Buriram Provinces, in the Isan (NE Thailand) region, located about 300 km (190 mi) NE of Bangkok.

²⁶³ For Ajahn Suwat's teachings, see *A Fistful of Sand*, tr from the Thai by the Sangha of Thanissari, 1999 (40p): <https://www.accesstinsight.org/lib/thai/suwat/fistful.html>.

²⁶⁴ As in the case of Malaysian and Singaporean Buddhists following the Sinhala missions (mostly high-caste Siyam Nikaya sectarianism): SD 7.9 (4.3-4.4, passim).

²⁶⁵ As in many of the Zen centres, such as those in the US: SD 64.17 (6-7).

²⁶⁶ See eg **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2) SD 12.3.

6.1 BOONMAN POONYATHIRO (บุญมัน ปุณญะทิโร 1932-)²⁶⁷

6.1.1 Youth

6.1.1.1 Boonman Poonyathiro's personal story is a beautiful lesson in self-propelled personal transformation, a personal journey overland and inward, and transformation through a traditional life of monastic renunciation, followed by a lay life of commitment to a Dharma-based life that powerfully inspires others worldwide.

Boonman was born in Thaa Phrik district (ตำบล ท่าพริก) of Traat Province, near the SE tip of Thailand, near the border with Cambodia. His father was Cambodian and mother Thai. The youngest of 3, his mother died soon after his birth.²⁶⁸ Raised by different people, he was then adopted by his uncle, and went to the local Wat Thaa Phrik monastery school until he was 11.

6.1.1.2 According to his autobiography, from very young, he had a deep interest in “mysticism, sorcery and magic spells” (Boonman 2004:8). He grew up unruly and quarrelsome, often casting curses against his opponents. He aspired to be the village gangster, and had Khmer magical characters tattooed on his arm for self-protection, especially in fights. Psychologically, these **aggressive tendencies** might be construed as unconscious defences²⁶⁹ related to the misfortunes of his early childhood.

His life changed one night, when he was 15, he overheard his (maternal) uncle remarking that he did not want Boonman muddying the family name. He decided to get help from a temple: he ended up in **Wat Phailorm**²⁷⁰ (วัดไผ่ล้อม)²⁷¹ in the next province, Chantaburi). There, he became a temple boy, and had the opportunity to study. At 16, to win a prize, he successfully memorized the “Thamma,vibhaak” [*Dhamma,-vibhāga*] a key text for lay people and aspirant monks.²⁷²

6.1.2 Boonman's monkhood

6.1.2.1 The monastery's senior monks and his step-brother, Phra Mahā Phumi, noticed Boonman's spiritual potential, and encouraged him to become a novice. Even though Boonman's uncle did not give his permission, Boonman went on to become a novice. He was 16 when he renounced in the larger Wat Bot Meuang (วัดโบสถ์เมือง) and returned to Wat Pailorm as **Sāmaṇera Boonman Sammā** (using his mother's surname). He started his regular monastic education spending the first 3 years studying Naktham [4.5.3.4].

Outside of studies, even before his ordination, he spent “every spare minute to practise,” that is to meditate, but his motive then was quite worldly:

I discovered that meditation gave me the most peaceful feelings I had ever experienced, and, furthermore, I came to know the way of arousing inner psychic power, and the ability to use this to empower amulets. (Boonman 2004:20)



²⁶⁷ For an account of Boonman Poonyathiro (Puññathiro), see his autobiography, *From One to Nine*, Bangkok, 2004. This section is mainly based on Shaw, “Tradition and experimentation,” 2018:3-7.

²⁶⁸ Shaw 2018:3; Itipiso.org <https://itipiso.org/uk-samatha.html>.

²⁶⁹ On “unconscious defences,” see SD 7.9 (1.2; 3.3).

²⁷⁰ Or “Wat Pailom,” the wat surrounded (ล้อม) by bamboo (ไผ่).

²⁷¹ He chose this temple prob because his stepbrother, Phra Mahā Phum was a monk there (Shaw 2018:4).

²⁷² This is prob a booklet, an anthology on numerical sayings of the Buddha, compiled by Vajiraññavaroros [4.5.3.4, Nak Tham Tri (2)]. Boonman 2004:8; Shaw 2018:3.

At 21, he took his **ordination** as a monk, and was already well respected for his meditation abilities. By 24, he completed 4 years (เปรียญ ๔, *parien si*) of Pali, earning him the title *Mahā*.²⁷³ During this time, he developed his meditation further, learning the basics of dhyana and the formless attainments. Outside of meditation, he wrote plays for a local company, and novels to earn some money for his travel plans.²⁷⁴

6.1.3 As a layman: India and the west

6.1.3.1 Having completed 4 of the 9 years of monastic Pali, Boonman decided he wanted to study in India. He moved to a royal monastery, Wat Chanasongkram (วัดชนะสงคราม), Bangkok, fulfilled all the requirements in Vipassanā stipulated by Wat Maha That for those travelling abroad. With the money from the sales of 2 plays he wrote, he bought a ticket to Varanasi, India, where he spent 5 years at a university, completing a bachelor degree (1958-1962).

Boonman did not want to return to Thailand, as he knew he would not be given permission to travel to the UK as a monk. At that time, no Thai monks were sent abroad to teach meditation. So keen was his desire to go west that he decided to disrobe, having spent half his lifetime, 15 years, as a monk. All his documents were in his monk-name “Phra Mahā Boonman Puññathiro.” Removing the titles, he kept his name, which became: **Nai Boonman Poonyathiro** (นาย “Nai” is Thai for “Mr.”)

He had a friend, Ajahn Vichian, in India, who wanted to go to the US. Leaving India in August 1962, they travelled west on Vichian’s Triumph motorbike. After some adventure journey through Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey, they reached Greece, and from there, hitching hikes, crossed Western Europe and reached Britain. His friend then left for the US, and Boonman started work first as a window cleaner. After some setbacks, he found a job in the local Thai Embassy.²⁷⁵

6.1.3.2 During his last year in India, Boonman met a remarkable young Canadian Theravāda monk Anandabodhi,²⁷⁶ in Sarnath. He invited Boonman to stay with him in London should he ever visit Britain; and Boonman did. In London, Anandabodhi introduced him to Maurice Walshe (1911-1998), the chairman of the English Sangha Trust. Given his background and demeanour, Boonman was invited to be a meditation teacher. [6.2.1]

6.1.4 The Tibetan connection

6.1.4.1 In the early 1960s, **Anandabodhi Bhikkhu** established a meditation centre in Eskdalemuir, near Dumfries, Scotland, named Johnstone House.²⁷⁷ He had by then established close connections with other important Tibetan Gurus: Trungpa (1939-87), Akong (1939/40-2013) and Chime Rimpoches (1941-). Boonman, too, was, for a time, drawn into this circle. Some of Boonman’s first students, especially Lance Cousins and Paul Dennison, both former Chairmen of the Cambridge University Buddhist Society, attended intensive retreats with each of these teachers in the early years at Johnstone House.

²⁷³ Traditionally, a monk automatically gains the *mahā* title on passing Pali 3 (เปรียญ ๓ *parien sam*), ie, 3 years of Pali.

²⁷⁴ Shaw 2018:3 f.

²⁷⁵ Shaw 2018:4 f.

²⁷⁶ Anandabodhi (Leslie George Dawson, 1931-2003; Burmese Theravada, *sāmaṇera pabbajjā* 1956; *bhikkhu upa-sampadā* 1958), a brilliant charismatic monk, studied Vipassana under U Thila Wunta and Mahasi Sayadaw, and then with Phra Rajasiddhimuni (Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok) (the main Vipassana proponent in Thailand). He studied the suttas and Visuddhimagga in Sri Lanka, earning the title *ācariya* (Buddhist teacher). In 1962, he was invited by the English Sangha Trust to teach at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. In 1968, the 16th Karmapa, noticing his great charisma, recognized him as an accomplished teacher and received Vajrayana robes. In 1971, he was enthroned in Canada as Namgyal Rinpoche (incarnation of Mipham Namgyal). He continued to teach both Mahayana and Theravada until his death.

²⁷⁷ Ie, the Johnstone House Contemplative Community.

6.1.4.2 Anandabodhi was a very controversial teacher in the Hippie culture of the 1960s; he was clearly a charismatic facilitator. By the mid-1960s, when Johnstone House did not succeed, he decided to return to Canada. Before departing, in 1965/66, he arranged the transfer of ownership of Johnstone House to Akong and Trungpa²⁷⁸ Rimpoches, who later turned it into the well-known Tibetan centre, Samye Ling.²⁷⁹ For Boonman, Dennison and Cousins, their experiment with Tibetan Buddhism stopped there, and they focused on the Samatha Trust.²⁸⁰

6.2 THE SAMATHA TRUST: EARLY BUDDHISM FOR TODAY

6.2.1 Early history of the Samatha Trust

6.2.1.1 Outside of Southeast Asia, **the Samatha Trust**²⁸¹ teaches traditional Siamese Borān Kammatṭhāna [4.3] methods of breathing mindfulness and dhyana meditations under the tutelage of Boonman Poonyathiro²⁸² [6.1]. While Vipassana is common, even the standard, in Myanmar [2.3-2.5], Samatha is very common in Thailand [4.2-5.13] and mainland SE Asia generally. Karmic connections between the English Sangha Trust, Lance Cousins, Paul Dennison, the Cambridge Buddhist Society, and Boonman Poonyathiro led to the starting and growth of the Samatha Trust.



Lance Selwyn Cousins
(1942-2015)
Founder member,
true paṇḍita

6.2.1.2 The English Sangha Trust [15.12.2.3] members, hearing of Boonman's experience and understanding of Samatha meditation, invited him, in **1963**, to teach at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. Realizing the cultural difficulties of his new role, Boonman decided to adapt the teachings and methods he learned as a Thai monk for British lay people. He did not introduce the 3 refuges or the 5 precepts, teaching only breathing mindfulness as a Samatha practice.

Boonman taught at **the Hampstead Vihara** until May 1964, after which he was invited to give weekly classes (Sundays) at **the Cambridge University Buddhist Society** (CUBS).²⁸³ Christmas Humphreys (1903-1983)²⁸⁴ was chairman of the Cambridge Buddhist Society then, and Boonman became vice-chairman. New students in the Society included Lance Cousins and Paul Dennison, both ex-Chairmen of the Society, and who later founded the Samatha Trust (1973) [6.1.3.2].

6.2.1.3 In **1971**, Boonman led a week's retreat, his first, in Cambridge, with sitting and walking meditation punctuated only by meals, brief walks outside, personal guidance and evening talks. Although the participants were practising meditators, few had ever been on such an intensive retreat, and some found it a powerful experience. Boonman explained he had intended to "test

²⁷⁸ Trungpa quickly came into conflict with both Akong Rinpoche and the House trustees [Anne Bancroft, *Twentieth Century Mystic and Sages*, 1976:194]. He drank heavily and slept with his students. He married one of them, a 15-year-old girl, attracting press attention [Diana Mukpo, Carolyn Rose Gimian, "[Married to the Guru](#)," in Melvin McLeod (ed), *The Best Buddhist Writing 2007*, Shambhala Sun, 2005:216-238]. On Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, see SD 64.17 (5.1).

²⁷⁹ Today called "Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre." It is part of the Rokpa Trust, a registered charity. Chime Rinpoche established his own Centre in Saffron Walden, Essex, England.

²⁸⁰ See <https://itipiso.org/uk-samatha.html>.

²⁸¹ <https://samatha.org/samatha-trust>; <http://www.samatha.org>. See Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 2006:49-64 (ch 4); Shaw, "Tradition and experimentation," 2018; an overview: <https://itipiso.org/uk-samatha.html>.

²⁸² Bluck 2008:49-64; Poonyathiro 2004.

²⁸³ Boonman, 2004:50, 52. CUBS was founded in 1955, and is the 2nd oldest Buddhist Society in the UK. In 1963, **the Cambridge University Samatha Society** was set up, specifically to run Samatha Trust meditation classes: <https://www.cambridgesu.co.uk/organisation/13972/>.

²⁸⁴ Humphreys founded the Buddhist Society in 1924, the oldest in Britain, and one of the oldest in Europe.

how far westerners could experience meditation in one week” and felt the retreat had been successful in showing them both the difficulties and benefits of such a training.²⁸⁵

The classes were well attended, and several students felt particularly drawn to the Samatha meditation that Boonman taught. Eventually, some of the meditators became Buddhist. Boonman himself became a mild cult figure, with a lecturer at King’s College praising him for encouraging so many students to give up taking LSD!²⁸⁶ Remarkably, the Samatha breathing mindfulness classes at the Cambridge University Buddhist Society continued for a period of over 50 years, and is still active today.

6.2.1.4 The Samatha Trust was established in **1973** “to support the teaching of this form of meditation practice in various parts of the country and to establish a national centre” (www.samatha.org). It was set up with 5 trustees: Boonman Poonyathiro, Lance Cousins, Paul Dennison, Chris Gilchrist and Richard T Wallis. Cousins was its founding chairman (1973-99).

By then, Boonman had married, and had a daughter, Rosalyn, but the marriage was unsuccessful. In 1973, he married Aramsri (Dang) Sriuthai, and, after resigning from the Thai Embassy, returned to Thailand in 1974. There, the couple had two daughters, Oranet and Boonyarat. Even after leaving Britain, Boonman remained a trustee of the Samatha Trust.

This was when Boonman made a memorable strategy. He left in the very week that a meditation retreat was to be held. Just before catching his flight, he surprised Paul Dennison and Lance Cousins by asking them to take the retreat themselves. He suggested they continue as teachers for practitioners in the UK in his absence. In vital ways, this injected great confidence and sense of purpose into the 2 people, who themselves continued to recognize more locals as accredited meditation teachers for the Trust.²⁸⁷ This is a good example of a foreign teacher **planting the Bodhi tree locally** so that Buddhism is a home-grown part of their lives.

6.2.1.5 In Boonman’s absence, the Samatha Trust had grown in leaps and bounds, with active groups in London, Cambridge (with Paul Dennison as teacher) and Manchester (led by the late Lance Cousins). **The Manchester Centre**, established in **1977**, was a former Methodist Church, on High Lane, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, which was first rented and then purchased from the City Council. It is the now the major regional centre in the north of England.



The Manchester Centre of Buddhist Meditation
(converted from a disused Methodist Church)

A southern Samatha Meditation Centre located in Great Holm, **Milton Keynes**, has been established to serve London, Oxford, Cambridge, and the south. It started over 40 years ago in the 1980s.

In **1987** the Trust bought **Greenstreete**, in Llangunllo,²⁸⁸ Powys, 5 miles west of Knighton in Mid Wales. It is a Welsh farm with 88 acres of woods, streams and hills, converted into a residential meditation centre.²⁸⁹ It opened in 1996, offering various residential courses, with guidance from experienced teachers, and is now the National Meditation Centre.²⁹⁰

Boonman returned from Thailand, after 22 years, for its opening, and to a Samatha Trust that has very much grown since he last left it. There were then 19 introductory groups in England and Wales, as well as

²⁸⁵ *One Year After: Reflections on a Meditation Week*, no publisher, 1972:13 (qu in Bluck 2006:207).

²⁸⁶ Shaw 2018: 5 f.

²⁸⁷ Boonman 2004:56; Shaw 2018: 6.

²⁸⁸ Sometimes Llangynllo; pronounced in Borders fashion “Lan.gun.thlow” by its residents.

²⁸⁹ *Buddhist Meditation*, Llangunllo, Powys: Samatha Trust, nd (qu in Bluck 2006:205).

²⁹⁰ “The Samatha Trust,” *The Middle Way* 65,4, 1991:263; Bluck 2006:49. For further developments in the Samatha Trust, see Bluck 2006:50-64.

a programme of weekend and week-long courses for experienced meditators at Greenstreete.²⁹¹ Having been active for over 50 years now, the Samatha Trust, continues to be active, even growing in the US [6.3].

Although not a Thai mission (like the Thai temples overseas), the Samatha Trust maintains strong links with Thailand. Some Samatha Trust members have at different times taken 3-month ordination or longer in Thailand, especially with the Rāma IX Temple (วัดพระราม ๙ กาญจนาภิเษก Wat Phra Ram Kao Kan-
chanābhisek) in Bangkok.²⁹² Both as a community and an organization, the Samatha Trust may thus be seen as an interesting blend of traditional Asian Theravada Buddhism and modern Western ideas.

6.2.2 Samatha Trust meditation

6.2.2.1 As a rule, **the mindfulness of breathing** (*anāpāna,sati*) is common to all Buddhist meditation traditions, whether Samatha or Vipassana. Where they differ, it is mostly a matter of how much emphasis is put on it, and how it is actually done. Those systems that give some importance to the breath meditation, such as the Samatha Trust practice, use techniques to observe the breath to gain some level of concentration (*samādhi*), even the attainment of dhyana (*jhāna*). On a higher level, this entails skills in moving from one dhyana to the next, and then a safe return to the “normal” state.²⁹³

When mindfulness and concentration grow together into a harmonious balance,²⁹⁴ a visual mental sign or image (*nimitta*) arises. When this sign fully steadies itself—often with the help of guidance from the teacher—our mind is unified and becomes steady, too. When this sign is refined and stilled, dhyana is attained; otherwise, we need to retrace our steps to rework the preceding steps or levels.

When dhyana has been attained, or even some level of deep samadhi, this may then be used as a support for further mental focus directed to cultivating the positive emotion of **lovingkindness** (*mettā*). We are then suffused with joy, and radiating joy with a profound sense of emotional resilience. Based on this mind/heart of lovingkindness, we go on to refine it into the positive emotion of **compassion** or ruth (*karuṇā*); then, on to the positive emotion of **joy** (*muditā*); and, finally, to the positive emotion of **equanimity** or inner peace (*upekkhā*). These are the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).²⁹⁵

At any point of these levels of concentration, we may then emerge from it, and direct the mind to seeing true reality, such as the impermanence or constructed nature (“mind-made”) of our experience. In other words, we can now explore and develop **insight**—or, we can refine the practice to move further into the higher dhyanas, even to the formless attainments.²⁹⁶

6.2.2.2 The Samatha Trust **breath meditation** is taught as a series of graduated stages, based on the length of the breath and the way the breath is observed. The 1st stage is that of “**counting**” (*gaṇana*)²⁹⁷ the breath, starting with “the longest comfortable breath without straining” to a count of 9, followed, in turn, by breathing to a count of 6, then 3, then 1 as “the shortest comfortable breath.” **These 4 stages**, known as the “Longest of Counting,” the “Longer of Counting,” the “Shorter of Counting” and the “Shortest of Counting,” in each case involves “tracing the sensations down as you are breathing in, from the nose down to the navel, and on the out-breath from the navel back to the nose.”²⁹⁸

Having done the “counting,” we go on to do “**following**” (*anubandhana*), a more careful continuous mindful tracking of the breath (without counting); and then “**touching**” [contact] (*thapana*), where we direct our attention to the sensation of the breath at the nostrils. Each of these have the 4 lengths of breathing, making 12 stages in all.

²⁹¹ For locations of Buddhist centres in England: <https://meruyama.com/temples/united-kingdom/>. For other ST meditation centres: https://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/country.php?country_id=76&offset=300.

²⁹² A minimalist temple, with religious sculptures, and a peaceful, tree-ringed pond, located in Bangkok, Bangkok.

²⁹³ See eg Buddhadasa 1998; Bluck 2008:50-64; Shaw 2012.

²⁹⁴ This is often explained as the harmonizing of all the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc’indriya*): faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom. See *Pañc’indriya*, SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).

²⁹⁵ See *Brahma, vihāra*, SD 38.5.

²⁹⁶ Cousins 1997b:369-444.

²⁹⁷ This is the 1st of 4 stages laid out by Buddhaghosa in his Visuddhimagga: Vism 8.189/278.

²⁹⁸ Peter Harvey, interviewed by Robert Bluck, Durham, 2003 (Bluck 2006:51).

In his autobiography, Boonman states that although he had been teaching the breath meditation based on traditional method, “the technique of how to know the in-breaths and out-breaths I invented myself, no one had taught the same method before.”²⁹⁹ The 4 stages of this method is, however, found in ancient post-canonical works, especially Upatissa’s **Vimutti,magga** [6.2.2.5], which Buddhaghosa borrowed and included them in his **Visuddhi,magga**. It is also found in other ancient texts of the northern tradition [6.2.2.6].

As we have noted, both counting [5.7.3.3] and “following” (chasing the breath) [5.7.3.1] are also used in Buddhadasa’s method, but in a different way. Since this tetrad of breath-watching is mentioned in the extant ancient texts, surely it is known, in some way, to other teachers of the Kammaṭṭhāna tradition. Boonman was probably unaware of these texts in those days. The fact that he knew and taught them was remarkably intuitive in its own right.

6.2.2.3 Beginners are, of course, guided through these **4 stages**,³⁰⁰ starting with stage 1 for 1-2 weeks, and adding each new stage progressively. For each stage, the process is always the same: *moving from the longest breath, and soon, and then back to the longest again*. While the practice always begins and ends with the Longest of Counting, experienced students will be able to move more directly to more subtle stages. However, all the stages have to be mastered with proper instruction and guidance before we take any “shorts cuts.”

6.2.2.4 Counting prevents us from being distracted, bringing forth mindfulness and concentration, which are then cultivated through following and touching consecutively. The teacher and meditator will then work together to choose the most appropriate shortened path through the 12 stages. Harmonizing mindfulness and concentration, we eventually reach the 4th stage known as “**settling**” (called “observing,” *sallakkhaṇa*, in the *Vimutti,magga*) [6.2.2.5], that is, with the mind settling down, the sign (*nimitta*) begins to arise: we simply observe this. It is typically a mental image of a patch of colour or a simple shape, but it often varies. [4.1.4.6]

An article in *Samatha* journal explains this process:

“Change to the settling. Mindful of the breath, turn the attention to the visual field, gently applying the mind. There is always an object of some kind ... Mindfulness of breathing in the settling sustains something; it’s like a growing medium providing food for seeds to germinate.”³⁰¹

6.2.2.5 [Note] UPATISSA’S 4-STEP METHOD (translated from the Chinese by Nyanatusita, 2021:423-426)

104 Four ways of practice³⁰²

Furthermore, the former teachers taught **4 ways of practising mindfulness of breathing**, namely, counting (*gaṇana*), following (*anubandhana*), establishing (*ṭhapana*), and observing [discerning] (*sallakkhaṇa*).

Q. (1) What is “**counting**”?

A. The beginner meditator counts the breath from 1 to 10; beginning with the out-breath³⁰³ and ending with the in-breath. He does not count beyond 10. It is also said: “He counts from 1 to 5, but not beyond 5.”

He should not let the mind miss [any breath]. When [he misses], he should count [the next breath] until the end of that count. Thus, he mindfully dwells on the object of the in-breaths and the out-breaths—this is called “counting.”

²⁹⁹ Boonman 2004:50.

³⁰⁰ On these 4 stages, see *Vimmi*:Ñ 8.104/425 (T430b18-b29).

³⁰¹ “Practice,” *Samatha* 8, 2002:9-18, esp 16. Bluck 2006:50-64; Shaw 2021:223.

³⁰² For a detailed study, see Dhammajoti, “The doctrine of the six-stage mindfulness of breathing,” 2009a. See also Skilton & Choempolpaisal 2015:215 f, 219-221.

³⁰³ Apparently, when counting, we start with the out-breath; but when simply watching the breath (without the counting)—following the Suttas (eg M 118,18(1)), SD 7.13—we start with the in-breath; also at *Vimmi*:Ñ 418.

(2) **“Following”**: Putting away counting, he uninterruptedly follows the in-breaths and out-breaths with mindfulness—this is called “following.”

(3) **“Establishing”**: He establishes mindfulness and attends to the sign of the mind [*air*] at the place where the in-breaths and out-breaths touch at the tip of the nose or on the [upper] lip—this is called “establishing.”

(4) **“Observing”**: When there is mastering in establishing, he should observe the sign, and he should observe the states of rapture [*pīti*], pleasure [*sukha*], and so on, which arise in dependence on it—this is called “observing.”

“Counting” is for the elimination of thinking and causes one to attain the escape from thinking.

“Following” is for the elimination of coarse thinking and causes uninterrupted mindfulness of breathing.

“Establishing” is for cutting off distraction and making the sign steady.

“Observing” is for retaining the sign in order to experience the higher states.

(T15.1648/430b18-b29). Numerals, (numbering) and [*italicized*] added³⁰⁴

6.2.2.6 This set of “Four ways of practice” is not found in any sutta, and is a commentarial innovation popular with **the northern schools**, as attested by its sources: the Vimutti,magga (Skt **vimukti,mārga*)³⁰⁵ [4.3.3.1]; *Greater Discourses on Breath Mindfulness (1)³⁰⁶ and (2),³⁰⁷ the Yogācāra,bhūmi,³⁰⁸ the Sarvāstivāda,³⁰⁹ and the Mahānāpāna,smṛti Sūtra.³¹⁰ Scholars well know that Buddhaghosa borrowed the “4 ways of practice” from the Vimutti,magga³¹¹ [4.3.3.1]. The set found in his Visuddhi,magga is the earliest extant Theravāda text that mentions the tetrad (as part of his octad).³¹²

The post-canonical traditions were, however, not unanimous in the details of the tetrad. An early Yogācāra teaching, for example, prescribes instead, **a 5-stage practice** (*pañca,vidhaḥ paricayaḥ*), ending with the canonical 16-mode breath meditation: (1) counting (*gaṇana*); (2) penetrating into the 5 aggregates (*skandh’āvatāra*); (3) penetrating into dependent arising (*pratītya,samutpād’āvatāra*); (4) penetrating into the truths (*saty’āvatāra*); (5) the 16-mode practice (*ṣoḍaś’ākāra,paricaya*).³¹³

6.2.3 The Samatha Trust spirit

³⁰⁴ Vimm:Ñ (*The Path to Freedom*, tr Nyanatusita 2021) §104 (pp423-426). Be very careful with *The Path of Freedom*, tr by Ehara, Soma and Kheminda (1961): it is filled with errors.

³⁰⁵ Vimutti,magga: T32.430b 先師說四種念安般: 所謂算隨逐安置隨觀 *xiān shī shuō sì zhǒng niàn ān bān: suǒ wèi suàn suí zhú ān zhì suí guān*.

³⁰⁶ * *Mahānāpāna,smṛti Sūtra* 大安般守意經 *dà pí pó shā lùn*, T602.15, 165a7 ... a9-a10: 有四種安般守意行: ... 一為數, 二為相隨, 三為止, 四為觀 *yǒu sì zhǒng ān bān shǒu yì xíng: ... yī wéi shǔ, èr wéi xiāng suí, sān wéi zhǐ, sì wéi guān*.

³⁰⁷ * *Mahānāpāna,smṛti Sūtra* 大安般守意經 *dà ān bān shǒu yì jīng*, T602.15.165a28-b1 mentions 6 steps: 1. counting, 2. following, 3. stilling, 4. observing, 5. turning, 6. purity.

³⁰⁸ T606.15.182a03: 修行道地經 *xiū xíng dào dì jīng*. [Dhammajoti gives “T15, no 606, 216a.”]

³⁰⁹ Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra (MVŚ), 大毘婆沙論 *dà pí pó shā lùn*, T27 no 1545 134c-135b; Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣyā 339 f; Nyāyānusara 順正理論 *shùn zhèng lǐ lùn*, T29 no 1562, 673c-674a.

³¹⁰ * *Mahānāpāna,smṛti Sūtra* 大安般守意經 *dà ān bān shǒu yì jīng*, T15, no.602, 166a, etc.

³¹¹ Buddhaghosa expanded his set in a set of 8, adding: (5) observing (*sallakkhaṇa*), (6) turning away (*vivaṭṭana*), (7) purification (*parisuddhi*), (8) review (*paṭipassanā*, “looking back (on)”) (Vism 8.189/278): these are actually reducible to 6 stages, or even 4 (Dhammajoti 2009a:641). Buddhaghosa prob could not acknowledge Vimm due to sectarian sensitivities, out of deference for Mahāvihāra orthodoxy.

³¹² Vism Comy explains: *Ṭhapanā ti samādhaham. Taṃ hi sammadeva ārammaṇe cittassa ādhānaṃ ṭhapanam hoti. Tathā hi, samādhi cittassa iṭhiti saṇṭhiti ti niddiṭṭho. Samādhi-p, padhānā pana appanā ti āha ṭhapanā ti appanā ti. Aniccat’ādīnaṃ sallakkhaṇato sallakkhaṇa vipassana. Pavattato nimittato ca vinivṛṭṭanato vivaṭṭanā nāma maggo. Sakala,saṅkilesa,paṭipassaddhi,bhāvato sabbaso suddhī ti pārisuddhi phalaṃ* (VismMHT 1:327).

³¹³ Śrāvaka,bhūmi (ed The Institute of Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taishō Univ, Tokyo), 2007:84.

6.2.3.1 Let us now return to our study of Samatha Trust (ST) **practices**. Although breath meditation is the main practice for ST members, they are open to a wide range of wholesome Buddhist, even extra-Buddhist, teachings and practices that help them better appreciate their root teaching, that is, early Buddhism. Such free healthy choices depend on the needs and interests of individual members. Certain practices, like devotional Pali chanting, for example, are also done at the Manchester Centre. However, unlike the Forest Tradition at Amaravati (for example) that have plainchant puja in English, ST members prefer to chant in **Pali**.

Learning the chants and chanting in Pali, according to ST members, encourages them to “learn the feeling of sound ... rather than the precise translation.”³¹⁴ The way ST members chant Pali has a calming effect, which then instils in them a greater interest in learning its meanings. Experienced meditators will regularly chant the refuges and precepts in Pali before meditating, both individually and in their groups.

6.2.3.2 Courses at Greenstreete are dedicatedly practice-oriented rather than academic. The **teachings** however include such topics as *dukkha*, karma, satipatthana, dependent arising, the 5 aggregates, the 4 divine abodes, the 10 perfections, and the deva realms—this clearly shows a traditional Theravāda emphasis in teaching.

Individual members and groups read **Forest Sangha** publications—such as the works of Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho—but the libraries at Greenstreete and Manchester include material outside Theravāda, ranging from Mahāyāna and Zen to Christianity and other religions.³¹⁵ Although firmly established in the Theravada tradition, ST study groups have looked at other Buddhist schools, the Christian mystics, other spiritual traditions—showing a liberal approach which encourages investigation.³¹⁶

6.2.3.3 ST members also have a healthy interest in **Abhidhamma**. Some study groups generated their own publications, such as *Abhidhamma Papers*, a series of essays and discussions on applying the Abhidhamma texts to meditation and daily life. The Abhidhamma deals with the “4 kinds of realities” (*rūpa, citta, cetasika, nibbana*): the material forms that we are and are conscious of; various impermanent states of mind or consciousness; the mental factors which allow us to experience these states; and nirvana itself which is ineffable, except as “the supreme happiness.”³¹⁷

While the Forest Sangha tends to ignore or downplay the importance of **Theravāda cosmology**, a number of ST members have shown interest in it, with one group studying the deva realms and producing *A Handbook of Devas*.³¹⁸ It is possible that the Forest Sangha, based on Vipassana meditation, tends

to emphasize impermanence and nonself, downplaying the differences between the levels of beings, while ST, based on Samatha meditation, is more interested in the altered states of consciousness, different levels of which are reflected in the deva realms.³¹⁹



Recording EEG of brain-wave activity of a Samatha Trust meditator

6.2.3.4 As a rule, ST members have a deep interest in **the suttas**, which is not surprising since ST has a significant number of accomplished scholars and specialists in Buddhist studies or Pali, teaching in the universities (such as Lance Cousins, Peter Harvey and Rupert Gethin). What is surprising is that there is no emphasis or tendency towards textual excellence.

Sutta groups regularly meet at the Manchester Centre, usually led by a teacher, and occasionally by other groups as well. Sutta study is taken as “investigation into the Dharma” (*dhmma, vicaya*), rather than textual study. Rather than acquiring knowledge, it is part of our spiritual practice,

³¹⁴ Veronica Voels, interviewed by Bluck, Manchester Samatha Centre, 2003. (Bluck 2006:53).

³¹⁵ Pamela Stanier, interviewed by Robert Bluck, by email, 2003. (Bluck 2006:54).

³¹⁶ Ian Rose, interviewed by Robert Bluck, by phone, 2004. (Bluck 2006:54).

³¹⁷ Ed Mark Rowlands, *Abhidhamma Papers*, Manchester Samatha Trust, 1982:11 f. (Bluck 2006:55).

³¹⁸ *A Handbook of Devas*, Llangunllo, Powys: Samatha Trust, nd.

³¹⁹ Peter Harvey, interviewed by Robert Bluck, 2003. (Bluck 2006:55).

to get into the heart of the Dharma through the suttas. In this spirit, new members are instructed to practise for a year before they start using material in the libraries.³²⁰

With their deepening roots in early Buddhism, ST is courageously and curiously open to new learning. During the last couple of decades, experienced ST meditators are discovering elements of ancient Yogāvacara practices, notably the “**wax taper practice**,” while another group has been carrying out detailed EEG studies of brainwave activity of experienced meditators with their results published in the *Samatha* and a scientific journal.³²¹

6.2.4 Meditation teachers and spiritual friendship

6.2.4.1 Paul Dennison explained that Boonman was skilled in “training and encouraging his meditation students themselves to begin to teach meditation as they gained enough experience.”³²² With the passing of Cousins [6.1.5, 6.4.2],³²³ Dennison is now seen as the only “1st generation” teacher. New teachers become “accredited” after being informally examined by 2 existing teachers, perhaps at a Green-streete retreat, who will look in them for an understanding of the teaching, experience of meditation and for “spiritual maturity.”³²⁴

This selection process happens informally, over time, with an experienced meditator perhaps first taking sessions at a retreat and maintaining personal contact with their own teacher. In this way, the senior teacher will be able to see if and when the “apprentice teacher’s” practice and commitment are sufficiently developed. In time, a formal invitation is given, after which the person is authorized to teach as a Samatha Trust teacher. This is, in effect, the kind of lineage transmission, often seen in the traditional monasteries.³²⁵ [6.2.4.2]

6.2.4.2 By 2001, ST has about 50 accredited teachers, with up to 400 members (including Buddhists).³²⁶ In 2002, classes and groups met in 26 towns and cities, usually in two separate groups, for beginners and for more experienced meditators, often led by the same teacher.³²⁷ Although ST has, to date, neither a training programme nor teacher’s manual (though one has been suggested), their approach to Buddhism is systematic and disciplined enough, and **ST teachers** are carefully selected from regular and experienced members. [6.2.4.1]

Members see a teacher as a **spiritual friend**, as “someone who treads the path a bit ahead of you,” rather than an authority figure,³²⁸ or perhaps as a “guide” or a “lead explorer” rather than a teacher (Guru) in the formal sense.³²⁹ Boonman was himself skilled in training British Buddhists in their own terms to be able to work on their own [6.2.1.4]: he could have set up a foreign mission (as is the case with Sin-

³²⁰ Bluck 2006:56.

³²¹ <https://itipiso.org/uk-samatha.html>. On the EEG studies, see *Samatha* 2019: <https://samatha.org/whats-happening-now/samatha-meditation-eeeg-study>; P Dennison, “The human default consciousness and its disruptions: Insights from an EEG study of Buddhist jhāna meditation,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, June 2019: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333730572_The_Human_Default_Consciousness_and_Its_Disruption_In_sights_From_an_EEG_Study_of_Buddhist_Jhana_Meditation; <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2019.00178/full>.

³²² Dennison 2001:46.

³²³ <https://ocbs.org/ocbs-news-june-2015/>; <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/BSR/article/viewFile/28964/pdf>.

³²⁴ Peter Harvey, interviewed by Robert Bluck, 2003. (Bluck 2006:55).

³²⁵ Veronica Voiels, interviewed by Bluck, Manchester Samatha Centre, 2003. (Bluck 2006:53).

³²⁶ Dennison 2001:47 f.

³²⁷ Bluck 2006:49 f.

³²⁸ Veronica Voiels, interviewed by Bluck, Manchester Samatha Centre, 2003. (Bluck 2006:53).

³²⁹ Peter Harvey, interviewed by Robert Bluck, 2003. (Bluck 2006:55).

hala missions in Malaysia and Singapore)³³⁰ or set up some person-centred cult (like the FWBO or the NKT).³³¹

6.3 SAMATHA IN THE US

Since the mid 1990s, there have been groups in San Francisco, taken by Dr Chris Morray-Jones, and in Chicago, taken by Dr Jas Elsner and Dr Tom Lockhart. Other groups are forming in the New York area. Boonman had himself taken courses in the States, and was present for the formation of the USA Samatha Foundation in 2011 at the Bright Dawn Home Spread Centre, near Plymouth, Wisconsin. Samatha meditation classes and courses in North America are offered under the auspices of the Samatha Foundation of North America, a 501(c)(3) religious charity based in Chicago, IL, and is an independent organization, not formally associated with the Samatha Trust.³³²

6.4 REFLECTIONS ON BOONMAN AND SAMATHA TRUST

6.4.1 The ideal lay teacher

6.4.1.1 Ajahn Boonman Poonyathiro [6.1] is clearly a remarkable individual, whose life, personality and spirituality launched one of the most wholesome and successful lay Buddhist organizations in Europe, even the world. His early life is an edifying testimony to serendipity (in the darkness of his life, he always see a path of light) and synchrony (good things happen just at the right time for him). Above all, it is a warm story of personal transformation through Buddhist living. At the height of his childhood delinquency, he heeded a warning voice from his uncle. He turned to the traditional temple life, working his way up from being a humble temple boy to an admirable young monk educated both monastically and academically.

His karmic connections with the UK compelled him to disrobe so that he was able to work his way across South Asia, with a travelling companion, to reach his destination. Along the way, he met just the right people (such as Anandabodhi) who introduced him into the mainstream British Buddhist circle. The UK Buddhists he met saw in him desirable Buddhist qualities of a teacher. When charismatic monks like Sangharakshita and Anandabodhi failed the English Sangha Trust, Boonman, even as a layman, illuminated British Buddhism.

6.4.1.2 Given this opportunity, he swam in it like fish in water, and, with panache, started a remarkable school for local Buddhists. What he taught them was closer in spirit to the Buddha's teaching than most of the institutions and teachers of his time. His personal charisma and teaching skills attracted and held together a loyal community of practitioners and followers in ancient Dharma. His instructions and example rallied and raised them into a world-class community of meditators and teachers who taught from their own experience of Dharma.

With all these amazing opportunities, he could have easily become a Guru parasiting pleasurably on the devotion or naiveté of his admirers and the wealth of nations—like the devious Sangharakshita (1926-2018),³³³ who preyed on youths who came in faith, or the pretentious Yantra Amaro (b 1951),³³⁴ who suc-

³³⁰ For a study of the effects of such missions, see SD 3.9.

³³¹ The FWBO is called the Triratna Buddhist Community. ST members, as well informed Buddhists, remain wary of cults like the FWBO (TBC) and the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) (Bluck 2006:62). See SD 34.5 (1.2.2); SD 7.9 (4.4.3.4-4.4.3.6, 4.5.1). Bluck 2006:56, 61.

³³² For more details about Samatha meditation in North America or the Samatha Foundation of North America, see <https://samathameditation.org> or e-mail samathanorthamerica@gmail.com.

³³³ Like Sangharakshita's (Friends of the) Western Buddhist Order, rebranded as the Triratna Buddhist Community: SD 34.5 (1.2.2); SD 7.9 (4.3.6; 4.4.3.4-4.4.3.6; 4.5.1).

³³⁴ Piyasīlo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h:113-137. <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Charisma-in-Buddhism.-piyasilo.pdf>. https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/charisma6.pdf.

cumbed to the bodies of female admirers. Neither did Boonman build some monumental status-conscious prosperity Church,³³⁵ nor spin tantalizing webs of a dark Guru cult selling salvation.³³⁶

6.4.1.3 Instead of keeping a cult harem, he fell in love and married. It failed, but he married again, and happily this time, now with 3 daughters. Before returning to Thailand, he instructed 2 experienced teachers [6.1.5.1] he had trained to run the meditation classes themselves. In Thailand, he raised his own family, supporting himself with honest work. Two decades passed, and the Samatha Trust he left behind grew handsomely.

When ST started their National Centre, he was invited to return to Britain, and he did. His work was done, but he kept in touch with the British Buddhists because they loved and needed him. They had grown accustomed to his teachings, and many mastered them and taught many more. They did not abandon him, and he kept in touch with them—old friends in the evening of the 1st generation of teachers. He has lived a full life, and brightened up the lives of so many others, all in the name of the 3 jewels. I cannot think of any parallel or better example here.

6.4.2 Samatha Trust as ideal lay Buddhist community

6.4.2.1 The Samatha Trust started because Boonman Poonyathiro met the right people—Lance Cousins and Paul Dennison—but none of them became cult figures. Unlike the Forest Sangha, there is little emphasis on the life and teaching of contemporary figures. Boonman gave them a Buddhist launching pad, and did not build any pedestal for himself. He is highly respected among the ST teachers as the person who first taught Samatha meditation to them.

An issue of the *Samatha Newsletter* detailed his current activities in Thailand and his summer visits to Greenstreete. His autobiographical essay, *From One to Nine* (Boonman, 2004) he recounts his own struggles and life-journey. However, he is seen as neither the founder nor the leader of the Samatha Trust, and most members were initially not even aware of his role.

The only remaining founder member, Paul Denison—Lance Cousins, the other founder member, having passed on in 2015—is a respected senior teacher, who was quoted from time to time, but they are not revered as religious leaders.³³⁷ They instead deeply revere their common teacher, on whose account they gather, that is, **Gotama Buddha**, whose narratives are studied for their implications for practice, rather than from a hallowed mystique of hagiography.

It is indeed significant that **the main Buddha image**, named the Phra Buddha Dhammacakra,³³⁸ in the Greenstreete Shrine Hall is sculpted in the Dharmacakra mudra, the teaching gesture, reminding us of the Buddha's first discourse, and that he is still teaching, rather than a meditating Buddha, as we might have expected from a Samatha tradition.³³⁹ That is what every member does, in keeping with the teaching.

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³³⁵ Like the Soka Gakkai International centred on Daisaku Ikeda: SD 34.5 (1.2.3).

³³⁶ Like Bhagwan ("Lord") Shree Rajneesh, later Osho (1931-90) who made a joke of all that is good and true, or the Maharishi ("great seer") Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008) of TM fame.

³³⁷ Veronica Voiels, interviewed by Bluck, Manchester Samatha Centre, 2003. (Bluck 2006:53).

³³⁸ The name is Thai; hence, the blend of Pali (dhamma) + Skt (cakra), pronounced as "phra' phutthathammachak" in Thai: http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/buddhadhammacakra.pdf.

³³⁹ Dennison 2001:49; Bluck 2006:57.

7 Samatha-vipassana variations

7.1 INSIGHT, “DRY” AND “WET”

7.1.1 “Dry” insight

7.1.1.1 We will now look at some ways where samatha and vipassana can work together, or where one can help the other, and so on. Whenever there seems to be some differences between samatha and vipassana, it is, as a rule, really due to emphasis: which method we choose for our practice. Since neither is, as a matter of fact, a meditation “method,” since both of them actually occur during our meditation. In any meditation, we need to initially focus the mind so that it is **calm** (*samatha*); then, it is able to “**see**” (*vipassanā*) the true nature of the meditation object or at true reality [4.1.4].

7.1.1.2 The suttas only mention, metaphorically, the “**dry insight**” (*sukkha, vipassaka*) meditator, who is, when, with an already focused mind, one directs it into seeing the nature of true reality.¹ Although the Commentaries speak of such a “meditator,” there is *no* such category in the suttas. In practical terms, then, such a meditator easily or naturally attains mental focus so that he only needs to direct his mind, or keep directing his mind (attention), to seeing into the true nature of the meditation or its object.

7.1.1.3 The “dry” approach to vipassana feels “dry” in that it is less directed to cultivating feeling. Instead, it is directed more to how we “see” the meditation object or mind objects. It explores the link between name-and-form (*nāma, rūpa*) (how we experience things) and mental formations (*saṅkhāras*) (how we react to these experiences). Insight overcomes our habit of “naming” or labelling things (“forms”) by projecting our past onto it. Insight exposes this process for what it is, thus undermining “I-making,” conceiving of views and being attached to them. Hence, insight empowers us to let go of the delusion projected into our experiences. To “**let go**” means that there is less need for the arising of feelings.

7.1.1.4 Whether it is “samatha” or “vipassana,” these are skilful strategies differently taught and done by different schools and teachers, depending on the meditation situation. When we are learning skills or crafts like singing, music, dancing, gymnastics, even exercising, cooking or knitting, we take for granted that there are rules and safeguards we need to know to ensure that we are doing it with due care and attention, and doing it rightly for the best results.

The same should be said about practising meditation. As part of the meditation instructions, an experienced teacher from any tradition would advise on certain **checks and balances** for the particular practice. What characterizes or defines the meditation is whether the emphasis is on gaining calm or cultivating insight (or both, for more experienced meditators). This emphasis is what gives that meditation its characteristics and effects on us.²

Whether it is “samatha” or “vipassana” is an elusive debate for those who do not meditate. The test of the pudding is in the tasting.

7.1.2 The “wet” approach

7.1.2.1 In modern Buddhist discourse, we sometimes speak of the “opposite” aspect. Technically, there is no such category, but simply a whimsical way of explaining how meditation actually works, that is, the difference between samatha and vipassana, both in theory and technique. This differentiation is, however, clearly described in the suttas, as what we may characterize, in modern lingo, as a “dry” (*sukkha*) approach to meditation [7.1.1] and a “wet” one.³

¹ SD 50.17 (1.3.1).

² Careful scholars often point this out even in introductory books on Buddhism: Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998:79-84; Harvey, *Introduction to Buddhism*, 2nd ed, 2013:319-321.

³ For details, see eg Cousins, 1984b:56-68, 1996c:35-58.

Generally, the “wet” (*alla*) approach of samatha may be said to be “intuitive and feeling-based.”⁴ I take this to mean resolving all sense-feelings so that they settle, calm down, freeing the mind to work freely. This also means lessening craving (based on sense-restraint), when the mind is able to focus on the meditation object. When this is properly done, the 5 hindrances [11.6.2 (10)] are overcome, and the mind attains the 1st dhyana.⁵

Samatha, in other words, primes the mind for dhyana or some deep level of samadhi. This calm and clear mind is now a tool for vipassana. Usually, it is directed to seeing *impermanence* in the meditation-object, or any mind-object (thought), or any sense-object. This is where Buddhist meditation is versatile, and different teachers will highlight their often exclusive approaches to cultivating insight so that their “system” may appear uniquely efficacious. The real question is whether the method *works for us*.

7.1.2.2 Most teachers, for example, will teach how **walking meditation** complements or helps sitting practice. Teachers of Burmese Vipassana often stress labelling each stage of *lifting, moving, lowering, and pressing* the foot.⁶ A Samatha school, however, may encourage a sense of feeling and the physical sensation of walking on the ground. Boonman, for example, teaches walking practices linked to those on lovingkindness and the breath.⁷ Broad attention or circumspection is a common aspect of both Samatha and Vipassana, but “how broad” depends on the meditator’s circumstances and needs.⁸

A rule of thumb for safe meditation practice is **moderation**. For beginners, there is no fixed rule about the duration for sitting or practice. We should stop when we feel we are unable to continue. Every little effort we make in sitting, even when distracted, will help us in future sittings. Even 5 minutes of sitting for a beginner is much longer than it takes “to milk a cow by a mere tug at the udder-teat” (*gadduhana, mat-ta*), as recommended by the Buddha.⁹ When we learn how to renounce more of our sense-based distractions and thoughts, the better we learn to meditate. This comes with patience and experience.

7.1.2.3 For the meditation to work, it is vital that we use a method that suits us, not because it is popular or taught by a famous teacher. At the same time, we should avoid any method that has not been well-trying by others (no matter how well marketed or how presumably holy). A **“wrong” meditation method** can have serious effects on us, especially when we have underlying psychological problems or some kind of emotional difficulties (not all of which we may be conscious). Our wrong efforts may magnify our underlying tendencies and symptoms, leading to psychological issues, which we mistakenly interpret, in the worst-case scenario, to be some level of attainment, even awakening. [5.11.5]

A **right meditation method** for us is one with check and balances for our temperament and experience. Mixing meditation methods without proper guidance, is like taking a buffet of pills and medicament for oneself without the proper advice from a doctor or qualified carer. For a beginner, an experienced meditation teacher as a “spiritual friend” is vital for our progress and mental safety. [5.7.2.3]

7.2 SAMATHA-BASED VIPASSANA

7.2.1 Vipassana based on the divine abodes

7.2.1.1 Samatha-based vipassana refers to a vipassana practice to cultivate liberating insight for the removal of defilements and for awakening. However, such insight is cultivated with the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) [7.2.1.2] as the basis for instilling calm.¹⁰ Historically, this has usually been taken to mean

⁴ Shaw 2021:220 f.

⁵ We can of course work on the dhyana-factors [*jhān’āṅga*, SD 8.4 (6)] to attain higher dhyana (this would be “samatha” practice). But here, it is sufficient to start with the 1st dhyana for vipassana.

⁶ Dhammasāmi, *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, 1999:33-35

⁷ Samatha Centre, Greenstreete, Llangunllo, Wales, August 2012 (Shaw 2021:221).

⁸ Sumedho, *Mindfulness: The path to the deathless*, Amaravati, 1987:39 f.

⁹ **Okkha S** (S 20.4), SD 2.14; **Cūḷ’accharā S** (A 1.6.5), SD 2.13; **Velāma S** (A 9.20,5.2(10)), SD 16.6.

¹⁰ Cf Shaw, 2014:139-148, where she calls it “samatha within vipassana.”

the practice of attaining dhyana. Most Vipassana schools, such as those of the Burmese movements, place considerable emphasis on the divine abodes from the outset.¹¹

7.2.1.2 It should be noted that the cultivation of **the 4 divine abodes** must be done sequentially, beginning with the 1st abode, that of lovingkindness (*mettā*). This can be done in one of 2 ways. **The first**, the easier method, is to start with **the cultivation of lovingkindness** (*mettā, bhāvanā*) with which we are familiar.¹² Lovingkindness is cultivated until we feel joyful in a boundless way (*appamāṇa*).

For a beginner, it is sufficient to reach a stage where, we feel a deep sense of joy. The moment, we notice this all subverbalization (saying the words under the breath) should stop, so that the joy can grow. This can be helped with **an inner smile** to feel better connected with it. We should stay with this joyful state as long as possible. It helps to be well familiar with this cultivation before going on to the next divine abode.

Once we have learned to stabilize the lovingkindness, we then mentally direct the mind to **the cultivation of compassion** (*karuṇā, bhāvanā*). Here, we again start with cultivating lovingkindness until we reach some level of samadhi. Only then, we go on to fine-tune it (as it were) into compassion. Basically, this is done by first visualizing of some people or beings suffering significant pain or difficulty. We then subverbalize words like: “May they (or this being) be free from suffering!” or something to that effect. We should cultivate this until we feel a deep sense of joy that “silence up” the whole mind. Then, we just keep this state steady for as long as we can (with the inner smile, and so on).

For **the cultivation of joy** (*muditā, bhāvanā*), we start with cultivating lovingkindness; then, cultivating compassion (as in the previous stage). When we feel a sense of pervasive joy, we visualize someone who has done well, or some happy situation. We subverbalise to the effect: “Be completely happy in every way: you well deserve this!” It should get easier by this time, so that we may not even need to subverbalize: we feel that joy for the subject. We build this up to pervasive joy.

When we have mastered the first 3 abodes, the 4th abode, **the cultivation of equanimity** (*upekkhā, bhāvanā*) should not be difficult. Here, there is the idea that no matter what good we do (including keeping the precepts), there will still be numerous people, countless beings, that will still suffer. This is the nature of samsara! This is the working of karma! When the first 3 stages have been well cultivated, we will feel peace here. There is no sadness, but a deep peace, but profoundly joyful. That much we can say aside from the experience itself.

7.2.1.3 The 2nd way of cultivating the 4 divine abodes is to attain at least **the 1st dhyana** with lovingkindness. Then, we progress from there, cultivating each of the other 3 abodes by stages, as we have done before but with dhyana. This will be discussed further in the last part of this study [SD 60.1c].

In either case, once we have attained dhyana, or at least some samadhi, we emerge from it. Our mind then is calm, clear and joyfully “workable” (*kammanīya*). We can easily direct it to see the true nature of impermanence, or even suffering or nonself, depending how well we know the Dharma. This is the insight aspect of the practice.

7.2.1.4 As with most Theravāda meditations, vipassana practitioners, as a rule, recite the 3 refuges and the 5 precepts before beginning their meditation. In traditional Buddhist societies, like those in Myanmar, and Burmese Buddhists overseas, they routinely, recite the Puja, before doing their meditation or other calm recollections, as it is said to arouse peace and happiness in daily life.

Such a Puja (devotion worship) comprises chanting Pali verses, which are used for reflection, for example, on the virtues of the 3 jewels. Other Pali verses may be those reflecting on impermanence or some teachings that the practitioner are drawn to. Although such recollections have a calming effect, they are also used in mindful reflection for insight into the Dharma.

¹¹ Dhammasāmi, 1999:9-19.

¹² On *mettā, bhāvanā*, see **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8) & SD 38.3 (6).

7.3 VIPASSANA-BASED SAMATHA

7.3.1 Watching rise-and-fall

7.3.1.1 In this variation of the combined samatha-vipassana practice, we focus on the states that relate to insight, such as **the rise and fall** (*uppāda,vaya*),¹³ especially of the body, that is, the breath or the abdomen as we breathe. As we have noted, we may notice this sign of impermanence on any of 3 spots on our body depending on how we naturally breathe: the nostrils, the navel or the solar plexus [5.8.1.6 (2)].

The rise-and-fall process can only be watched for a limited duration, so long as the breath is coarse, or not too fine. Once the breath has become refined or settled, we will not be able to notice any rise-and-fall, and don't need to. The mind has become calm and joyful in a focused manner, and we should keep it that way: switch to feeling the calm, holding it as long as we can, so that it may continue to settle and deepen in samadhi, depending on our ability to concentrate.

7.3.1.2 By this time, the initial Vipassana stage is over, as it were. Notice that up to this point, there is only watching the "rise and fall," that is, the wind element. In Vipassana, in contrast to Samatha practice, the teacher may instruct that we ignore all mental images, but focus on "letting go," that is, observing only the "rise and fall" at one of 3 points on the body [7.3.1.1]. In this way, we will notice, with mindfulness, in an analytical manner, whatever that arises and falls: sense-impressions (sensing) and mental impressions (thinking), that is, ideas and emotions, as they arise, and then pass away. Such an exercise keeps us in touch with true reality, and prepares us to approach closer to the path of awakening.

7.3.2 The 3 characteristics

7.3.2.1 Most Samatha schools use the breath as the meditation-object, which not only brings calm, culminating in dhyana, but can also be used for cultivating insight, depending on how we watch the breath [7.3.1.2]. **Insight** (*vipassanā*) is cultivated, strengthened or refined (depending on our level of experience) by starting with observing **impermanence** (*anicca*), the "rise-and-fall" nature in all things, whether sense-based or mind-made.

7.3.2.2 Another variation to the Vipassana practice—as in the case of breath meditation— is to start watching the breath, as in the normal practice. Upon attaining some level of focus or samadhi, we stay with it as long as we like (to keep the experience stable). In due course, we emerge from this calm state, to reflect on it as being "mind-made," hence "conditioned, impermanent," and so on.

If we are familiar with the teaching of **the 3 characteristics** (*ti,lakkhaṇa*), we may go on to reflect that the impermanent is also "unsatisfactory" (*dukkha*). No matter how pleasant the state may be, it does not last, and for many, when this pleasant calm is gone, they would miss it, and so have some negative feelings about it. This is the nature of all worldly experiences, whether sense-based or mind-based.

7.3.2.3 When we are more experienced with such a practice, we may go on to reflect on **nonself** (*anattā*), that is, none of these states—impermanent and unsatisfactory, sense-based or mind-based, past, future or present, existing anywhere¹⁴ [8.2.2.2]—have any abiding entity or eternal essence. They are all conditioned (*saṅkhata*) realities. The constant abiding mindfulness of these 3 characteristics leads

¹³ This teaching is given in **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54), SD 5.10.

¹⁴ This is a simplified stating of the "totality formula" regarding any and all the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) [SD 17], "whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near" ("the totality formula" (*atītānagata,paccupannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷari-karṇ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā*) as having the 3 characteristics: **(Dve) Khandha S** (S 22.48) + SD 17.1a (3); **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17-21), SD 1.2.

us to the path of awakening. Even the constant mindful reflection on impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) is a sure way of attaining the path in this life itself.¹⁵ [8.6.1]

7.4 THE WINGS OF A FLYING BIRD

7.4.1 Space and light

7.4.1.1 Even a casual reading of the preceding section [7.3] on the 2 variations of samatha/vipassana practice, is likely to arouse in us the thought that the 2 terms are actually interchangeable, whether we are describing “samatha-based vipassana” or “vipassana-based samatha.” It is merely a matter of emphasis—whether we are highlighting Samatha or Vipassana—or the sequence of our practice (starting with samatha or with vipassana). In other words, both descriptions refer to the same practice of “samatha-vipassana,” even if omit the titles altogether.

7.4.1.2 The point is that we can talk or write about meditation in different ways, but when we get down to actually *meditating*, we have to decide: Are we able to focus our mind to still the muddy waters of our mind? Are we wisely (rightly) dealing with our sensing and minding (our sense-data and thoughts)?

In other words: Are we practising *samatha* and *vipassana* in the right order and doing each rightly? Samatha creates the peaceful **space** for our mind to grow; vipassana gives us the wisdom that is **the light** we need to grow healthily, and to be free from defilements and suffering; in other words, to become a truly free individual.

7.4.2 The spirit of renunciation

7.4.2.1 A number of key suttas describe the monastic’s life of **renunciation** in these beautiful words, using the imagery of flight and freedom, thus:

“Here, just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings¹⁶ as its only burden; so, too, is he content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to sustain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.”¹⁷

This beautiful pericope (template passage) speaks of the simple joys of a monastic life of renunciation as being free of the world and worldliness (like a bird flying freely in the open sky). The monastic life of renunciation provides the ideal **space** for a peaceful life of cultivating **the light** of insight wisdom so that we are free from defilements and suffering.

7.4.2.2 While going forth as a monastic is conventional renunciation (*nekkhamma*), **meditation** in practice is **the true renunciation**. Through *samatha*, we work to free ourselves from the power of the body of sense-experiences by overcoming the 5 hindrances [4.1.3.1]. Through *vipassana*, we work our way out of the gravity field of self-view, of craving and of ignorance in stages by attaining streamwinning or once-returning, non-returning and arhathood respectively. We need both samatha and vipassana to gain mental freedom and attain spiritual awakening.

7.4.2.3 The imagery of **the 2 wings of a flying bird** [Dh 372] also resonates with the 2 wings of the early Buddhist practice of *samatha-vipassanā*. **Samatha** is the wing of the space of peace and joy that

¹⁵ See esp (*Anicca*) *Cakkhu S* (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

¹⁶ This famous imagery describes the life of a true renunciant: SD 8.10 (3; 6.2.3.5; 7.4).

¹⁷ The flying bird parable: *Sāmañña,phala S* (D 2,66/1:71), SD 8.10; *Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S* (M 38,34/1:268), SD 7.10; *Kandaraka S* (M 51,15/1:346), SD 32.9; *Cha-b,bisodhana S* (M 112,14/3:35), SD 59.7; (*Catukka*) *Attan Tapa S* (A 4.198,10/2:209 f), SD 56.7.

conduces to the cultivation of the light of liberating insight wisdom. With these 2 wings of meditation, we fly freely in the sky of happiness here and now, and to the awakening that awaits us.¹⁸

7.4.3 The 2 hands of meditation

7.4.3.1 The Samatha Trust founding teacher Boonman Poonyathiro, in July 2016, at a *samatha* meditation course at the Greemstreete ST Centre, Greenstreete in Wales, compared the beneficial effect of the 2 kinds of meditation to that of **cleaning a water-tank**: calm practice and the cultivation of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity are like a flow of clean water passing through to remove the bulk of the dirt; but we also need some careful scrubbing to get rid of the ingrained stains, which is the work of insight.

If we miss out the scrubbing of the sides, the tank is not completely clean. If the tank is not refreshed and sluiced with clean water, it does not get washed thoroughly either. The sequence of watering, scrubbing, refreshing and sluicing may differ with different cleaners, or we ourselves (as cleaners) may vary these processes, but they all have to be done properly for a clean tank to contain clean water.¹⁹

7.4.3.2 Ajahn Chah, in his teachings to newly ordained monk during the rains-retreat in 1978, gives a very simple and practical way of practising samatha (calm and focus) and vipassanā (insight or wisdom). He starts explaining **vipassanā** first, by saying that whenever we are mindful (*sati*) (inside or outside of meditation), there is also clear understanding (*sampajañña*). However, when we are not mindful enough, we don't see with this clear knowing. When there are both, we also have wisdom. But this can be just for a brief moment; thus, we need to be mindful.

Be mindful of how we **feel**: sometimes we feel happy, sometimes sad. What we like, we regard as "good"; what we dislike, we regard as "bad." This only keeps us further and further away from Dharma. We should recognize this simply as desire; we don't see this because our mind is all delusion. Yet, all these states are impermanent. This means that we only have to see them as they are, and accept them as they are. This is **wisdom**. [7.4.2.3]

7.4.3.3 Moving on to **samatha**, Ajahn Chah explains that we each need to choose the right kind of meditation that will help still our minds. Some of us can calm our minds by simply reflecting on the fact that we comprise "*head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin*."²⁰ Others, with a lot of lust (or even strong hate or delusion), can try the meditation on *death*. Good or bad, we must die: this is a powerful reflection to arouse dispassion.

Chah then speaks of seeing the breath as "food." When we do not take food for a few minutes, even a few hours, we may be able to endure it. But when we do *not* breathe for a few minutes, we will suffocate and die! When we are mindful of our breath, we thus become mindful of death, too, and become dispassionate. We become so connected with the breath that other things start going farther away.

What is remarkable in his teaching is that neither samatha nor vipassana is taken as a "method" of meditation, but simply as states that free the mind from defilements so that it gains wisdom. Mindfulness needs both of them so that we grow in the Dharma.²¹

7.4.3.4 There is nothing innovative or modernist in Ajahn Chah's presentation of samatha-vipassana. If anything, it reflects the spirit of early Buddhism. The dynamic yet harmonious balance in cultivating *samatha* and *vipassanā* is that of wisely calming the mind so that the *calm* brings us liberating wisdom:

¹⁸ See SD 41.1 (1.4.2).

¹⁹ Qu in Shaw 2021:219 f.

²⁰ This is the 1st meditation, called "the nail pentad" (*taca, pañcaka kammatṭhāna*), formally taught to newly ordained monks: **Mahā Rāhu'ovāda S** (M 61,8/1:421), SD 3.11.

²¹ "Reading the natural mind," in *The Teachings of Ajahn Chah*, 2007:58-75. See also Cousins 1984b.

*N'atthi jhānaṃ apaññassa
paññā n'atthi ajhāyato
yamhi jhānaṃ ca paññā ca
sa ve nibbāna,santike*

There is no (true) meditation without wisdom;
there is no (true) wisdom without meditation.
In whom there are both meditation and wisdom,
he is indeed in nirvana's presence. (Dh 372)

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8 Pa-Auk Sayadaw (1934-)

8.1 LIFE OF PA-AUK SAYADAW

8.1.0 How to read Pa Auk

Pa-Auk Sayadaw has been slotted near the end of our study on the Samatha-Vipassana of Myanmar and of Thailand mainly because he is respected worldwide, and that he teaches meditation that well combines both aspects. His teachings and methods have been well documented by Pa Auk himself¹ and his western students.²

Pa-Auk's teachings as presented here are best read as a remarkable Burmese Buddhist story. He speaks of meditation and dhyana with great ease and ken. We may find much of the teachings given here difficult, even impossible, to attain in this lifetime. The best way to benefit from this survey is to read it as we would read an enjoyable novel by our favourite novelist.

Clearly, this is the way that Pa-Auk envisions how the Buddha's early disciples progressed and attained the path. We, too, must imagine that he is writing in this manner, taking the role of the Buddha or an arhat. In this way, we will see how the teachings and practices connect and progress. We will then find something we can connect with, and this may throw some light on our own practice and spur our own progress.

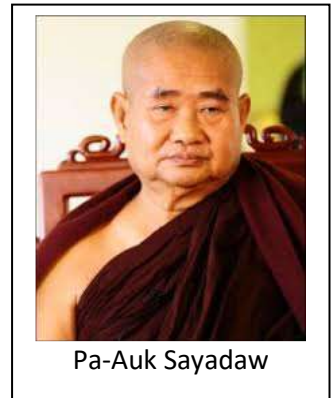
8.1.1 Early life and monkhood

8.1.1.1 Pa-Auk Sayadaw is a Burmese Mon monk who strictly keeps to the Vinaya of early Buddhism; an accomplished meditator and teacher of samatha-vipassanā meditation; and a Buddhist master with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Pali texts, both Sutta and Abhidhamma, and a leading elder of the Shwekyin Nikāya of Myanmar [8.1.2.4]. He is also a world teacher of early Buddhism and meditation with a network of *sīmā* (viharas with consecrated boundaries),³ meditation centres and affiliates all over the world [8.1.2.3].

The Sayadaw's full name, **Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ācinna**, means "the venerable Ācinna, elder of the Pa Auk forest."⁴ He is the abbot (since 1981) and principal teacher of the Pa-Auk Forest Monastery, outside Mawlamyine (formerly Moulmein),⁵ Myanmar, established in 1926. Pa Auk is the best known and most successful of the modern Burmese teachers, and speaks fluent English.

8.1.1.2 The boy Ācinna was initiated as a novice (*sāmaṇera*) at the age of 10. During the following decade, he studied **Pali** and the Pali texts under various well-known teachers of the time, and passed the 3 levels of Pali language examinations (Primary, Intermediate, and Higher levels), while still a novice.

In 1954, at 20, he received his higher ordination as a monk (*bhikkhu*). He passed the prestigious Dhammācariya examination which confers the title of *Dhamma Teacher* in 1956, at the age of 22.



Pa-Auk Sayadaw

¹ See esp Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw, *Knowing and Seeing* [1999], 5th rev ed, 2010.

² A readable attempt at documenting Pa Auk's meditation methods is Shaila Catherine's *Wisdom Wide and Deep: A practical handbook for mastering jhāna and vipassana*, 2011, 456p. Two related but significantly shorter titles are: S Snyder & T Rasmussen, *Practicing the Jhānas: Traditional concentration meditation as presented by the Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw*, 2009, 2011; Hyunsoo Jeon, *Samatha, Jhāna, and Vipassana: Practice at the Pa-Auk Monastery: A mediator's experience*. [Korean] tr HaNul Jun, 2018.

³ *Sīmā* ("monastic borders") referring to an area specially consecrated for ordinations, and demarcating a "parish" for uposatha assemblies and other sangha-acts. Technically, it also means that the Sangha (led by Pa Auk) owns them.

⁴ Pa Auk Tawya is a tropical forest, near the village of Pa Auk, along the Taung Nyo Mountain range, 15 km SE of Mawlamyine.

⁵ Mawlamyine is 301 km (187 mi) SE of Yangon, and the monastery is 15 km (9 mi) SE of Mawlamyine, Myanmar's 4th largest city, located on the south of the Thanlwin estuary. It is the capital and largest city of Mon State, and the main trading centre and seaport in SE Myanmar.

8.1.1.3 Beginning 1964, during his 10th rains-retreat (*vassāvāsa*), Ācīṇṇa began practising **forest dwelling**. While continuing his study of the Pali texts, he trained under various eminent meditation teachers in Myanmar, such as Mahasi Sayadaw [2.4.5] and U Pandita (Shwe Taung Gon Sayadaw). He also studied meditation under Ka-thit-waing Sayadaw (10 days), Than-lyin Sayadaw (the 4 elements meditation, for 6½ months, 1966) and Shwe-thein-daw Sayadaw (Monywa) (the breath meditation, 3½ months, 1967).⁶ Then, he spent 13 rains in Monsein Tawya (a forest at Ah-Sin village, Ye Township).

8.1.2 Pa Auk's teachings

8.1.2.1 From his experience with such teachers, he developed his own set of meditation methods, referred to as **the “Pa-Auk method.”**⁷ Since then, Pa Auk has been practising meditation himself as much as he could while living a simple life of teaching meditation.

8.1.2.2 In 1981, when he was 47 (28 rains), in response to the request by the dying abbot Phelhtaw Sayadaw Aggapaññā, he became the abbot of the **Pa Auk Tawya Monastery** (hence, his toponym, Pa Auk Sayadaw). He subsequently went on to found the Upper Monastery (Cittala-pabbata Vihāra).⁸ It has been the lifelong aim of Pa Auk Sayadaw and Pa-Auk Tawya mission, to practise and propagate the Buddha's teaching in its 3 modes, through study (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*) and realization (*paṭivedha*).

8.1.2.3 Since 1983, both monastics and laity have been coming to **Pa-Auk Tawya** (*tawya* means “forest”; meaning the Pa Auk Forest Monastery, *pa auk tawya kyaung*) to learn his teachings and meditation. Foreign meditators began to arrive at the Monastery in the early 1990's. Some train to become monastics but most study under him as lay Buddhists.

Pa Auk speaks fluent English, and has given many Dharma talks worldwide and, since 1987, a number of them have been published. He has been regularly running meditation retreats overseas, that is, in the following countries:⁹

Taiwan	1998, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2011, 2012
China	1999, 2005, 2013
Malaysia	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014
Singapore	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
Japan	2001, 2003, 2005
USA	2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011 (<i>vassa</i> retreat at IMS, Barre), 2012 (<i>vassa</i>), 2013-14
Sri Lanka	2003, 2005, 2008
England	2005, 2006
South Korea	2005, 2008
Germany	2008, 2009
Indonesia	2009, 2011, 2012, 2014
Latvia	2009
Vietnam	2014-15 (ill health)
Thailand	2014, 2015, 2017

⁶ **Ka-thit-waing** is a town in Bago region, 286 km (178 mi) south of Naypyitaw. **Than-lyin** is a major port city of Myanmar, located across Bago River from the city of Yangon. **Shwe-thein-daw** is about 3.1 km (2 mi) N of Kyaukse, Mandalay Region.

⁷ *“The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ācīṇṇa.”* Ang Thong (Thailand): ศูนย์ปฏิบัติธรรมนานาชาติ-อ่างทอง (International Centre for Dhamma Practice, Ang Thong).

⁸ The Pa Auk Tawya monastery complex comprises 6 monasteries: (1) Thit-thee Kyaung or Zingyan Kyaung (Lower Monastery), (2) Kywe-da-nyin Kyaung (Middle Monastery), (2) the Cittala-pabbata (Upper Monastery), (4) Nigrodha Kyaung, and (6) Gandhayone Kyaung. “Kyaung” means “monastery.”

⁹ This list of places visited by Pa Auk for teachings and retreats are from: *A Brief Biography of Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ācīṇṇa*, Taiwan: Asoka Vihara Taiwan Publish, 2018. Thanks to Thong Jian Jen of Singapore for sending me a PDF of this book: <https://drive.google.com/.../10hqLUVruMVyLA740E1m.../view...> & https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10155439316692233&type=3&comment_id=10155442362592233.

In December 2006, the Sayadaw was in Sri Lanka to undertake a year-long solitary retreat in the Nā-Uyana Forest Monastery, suspending his teaching routine for the year 2007.

In January-June 2010, Pa Auk conducted a 6-month intensive retreat at the Pa Auk Forest Monastery for over 1300 retreatants, monastic and lay from 24 countries. After the retreat that same year, Pa Auk spent the rains in solitary retreat in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, India. In 2012, he conducted a 4-month intensive retreat in the Pa Auk Forest Monastery at Pyin Oo Lwin,¹⁰ Myanmar.

8.1.2.4 In 1997, Pa Auk published his magnum opus, a 5-volume tome titled *Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā* (The Practice that Leads to Nibbāna) in Burmese.¹¹ This has been translated into Sinhala. A number of smaller books by Pa Auk have been published in Burmese. A number of his books have been revised and translated into English.

The Pa Auk Society comprises over 40 branches and associate centres in Myanmar¹² and worldwide.¹³ In public recognition of his achievements, in 1999, the government of the Union of Myanmar awarded Pa Auk the title *Agga Mahā Kammaṭṭhān'ācariya* (Foremost Great Meditation Master).¹⁴ In 2009, Pa Auk was bestowed the title of “Shwekyin Nikāya Rattaññū Mahānāyaka” (eldest great leader of the Shwekyin sect) at the 17th Shwekyin Nikaya Saṅgha Conference in Myanmar.¹⁵

Main website: www.paaukforestmonastery.org

8.1.3 Pa Auk's meditation methods

8.1.3.1 An important reason for Pa Auk's popularity is his comprehensive meditation teaching that combines *both* samatha and vipassana; or, depending on our ability or preference, we may choose either to practise as “samatha yogis” (calm meditation practitioners) or as “vipassana yogis” (insight meditation practitioners). The best, perhaps only, way to know this is to try out the different meditations for ourself.

In this connection, we can summarize Pa Auk's meditation methods as comprising these **2 streams of meditation** (the terms “Samatha Yoga” and “Vipassana Yoga” have been used for convenience) that we can opt for, thus:

(1) Samatha Yoga

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1.1 | breath meditation up to dhyana | [8.4.1] |
| 1.2 | the 4 form dhyanas | [8.4.2-8.4.5] |
| 1.3 | the 32 body-parts | [8.5.1] |
| 1.4 | the skeleton | [8.5.2] |
| 1.5 | white kasina | [8.6.2] |
| 1.6 | the 10 kasinas ¹⁷ | [8.6] |

(2) Vipassana Yoga

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| 2.1 | breath meditation | [8.4.1] |
| 2.2 | the 4 elements (vipassana) ¹⁶ | [11.4] |
| 2.3 | the crystal body | [12.1.1] |
| 2.4 | material clusters (<i>rūpa kalāpa</i>) | [11.2] |
| 2.5 | analyzing the clusters | [12.2] |
| 2.6 | (further practices) | |

¹⁰ A pleasant colonial British hill-station.

¹¹ Only *The Practice Which Leads to Nibbāna* (Part 1) has been tr into English, 1998: <https://www.burmalibrary.org/en/the-practice-which-leads-to-nibbana-part-1>; http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/nibbana1.pdf.

¹² 29 of these are located within Myanmar, incl Thanlyin, Pha-Ann, Mandalay, Dawei (formerly Tavoy), KuMei and Pyin Oo Lwin (or Maymyo). This is the largest network of monasteries in Myanmar. For a list of these monasteries, local and abroad, see *A Brief Biography of Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ācīṇṇa*, Taiwan: Asoka Vihara Taiwan Publish, 2018:269-272.

https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10155439316692233&type=3&comment_id=10155442362592233.

¹³ “Peaceful days in Pa-Auk Tawya Meditation Centre.” *The Myanmar Times*. 26 April 2019.

¹⁴ Sadly, in Myanmar itself, Pa Auk is not as well received as he should be, simply because he belongs to the Mon minority: <https://www.burmalibrary.org/en/category/discrimination-against-the-mon/>.

¹⁵ The Shwegyin Nikāya is the 2nd largest of the 9 sanctioned Burmese sects of monastics (about 5% of Myanmar's monk population). The largest is the Sudhamma Nikāya. Of these sects, the Shwegyin is said to adhere the most strictly to the Vinaya. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shwegyin_Nikaya.

¹⁶ This brings only access concentration [11.4.2.1.1 (1) n].

¹⁷ Colour kasinas (white, nīla, yellow, red); element kasinas (earth, water, fire, wind), light and space.

- 1.7 *the 4 elements* (kasiṇa) [8.7]
- 1.8 *the 2 independent elements* [8.8]
- 1.9 **the 4 formless attainments** [8.9]
- 1.10 the 9 kasinas (omitting space) [8.6]
- 1.11 **the 4 form dhyanas** [8.4.2-8.4.5]
- 1.12 the 4 divine abodes [9]
- 1.13 the 4 protective meditations [10]
- 1.14 **the 4 elements**¹⁸ → **(2) Vipassana Yoga**

Ideally, we start at 1.1 and end with 2.6, that is, the full practice sequence of **the “Pa-Auk method.”** Those who have difficulty with dhyana are usually advised to start with 2.1 (doing only samatha), with some adjustments to the methods or sequence as necessary, with the guidance of experienced teachers.

8.2 MINDFULNESS AND CLEAR COMPREHENSION

8.2.0 In the rest of this section, we will examine Pa Auk’s Dharma teachings and meditation instructions, and how we can apply them in our own meditation, or at least to help us better understand the Buddha’s teachings. This is a practical interpretation and application of his teachings for the informed practitioner (not a theoretical study). We will examine only those teachings which are directly linked with samatha/-vipassana. For other details, refer to any of Pa Auk’s works or modern writings on his methods. [8.1.0]

8.2.1 Mindfulness (*sati*)

The word ***sati***, “mindfulness,” comes from the root √SMṚ, “to remember.” However, as a mental factor (*cetasika*), it signifies the presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than to the faculty of memory regarding the past. Technically, it has the characteristic of “not wobbling” (*apilāpana*),¹⁹ that is, not floating away from the mental object. Its function is the absence of confusion, or non-forgetfulness. It is manifested as guarding, or as the state of confronting an objective field. Its proximate cause is stable perception (*thira,saññā*), that is, as the 4 focuses of mindfulness.²⁰ [8.2.2]

8.2.2 The 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)

8.2.2.0 The phrase ***sati’paṭṭhāna*** is resolved as *sati* [8.2.1] + *upaṭṭhāna* (that is, *paṭṭhāna* in the dual senses of “setting up” and “application”) and “foundations,” that is, of mindfulness (*sati*). The translation “focus of mindfulness” is a colloquial phrase to reflect both these senses, that is, of focusing or directing our mind (the attention) to the mind-object for the setting up or arising of mindfulness, the foundation or basis for mindfulness.²¹

The 4 focuses of mindfulness form a complete system of meditation practice for the cultivation of calm and insight. The method is presented in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), but elaborated with a detailed exposition of the 4 noble truths in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22). The method is also given in a collection of connected suttas, **the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta** (S 47).²²

¹⁸ This brings only access concentration [11.4.2.1.1 (1) n].

¹⁹ (Skt *abilāpana*). Caus of *a-pilāpeti*, “‘not allow any floating,’ not to forget, to call to mind, memorize” (CPD). Comys explain that *sati* keeps the mind as steady as a stone instead of letting it bob about like a pumpkin in water (Miln 37,5-32; MA 1:82,30-83,3; DhsA 121,27; Nett 15, 28m 54; Vism 464). See Levman, “Putting *smṛti* into *sati*,” JOCBS 13, 2017:127.

²⁰ See Abhs 7.24. *Apilāpana* defined: SD 60.1e (1.1.7). *Sati* as “mindfulness,” SD 54.2e (2.3.4); as “memory,” SD 56.17 (3.2.1). Also Abhk 342.

²¹ For details, see SD 13.1 (3.1.2).

²² For a comy, see Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness*, Kandy: BPS, 1981 (dated). The best modern comys are Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, London: Rider, 1962, or U Silananda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, Boston: Wisdom, 1990. In case of any difficulties, refer back to SD 13 (foll n).

The 4 focuses of mindfulness have a single idea and goal, that is, the mindful contemplation of phenomena. They are differentiated only for the purpose of applying mindful contemplation to 4 objects: the body, feelings, the mind (states of consciousness) and dharmas (mental objects and truths). The latter comprises such factors as the 5 hindrances, the 5 aggregates, the 6 sense-bases, the 7 awakening-factors, and the 4 noble truths.²³ The practice of the 4 focuses of mindfulness is the same as **right mindfulness**, that is, the 7th limb of the noble eightfold path.²⁴

8.2.2.1 (1) Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) [5.8.1]. This contemplation consists of the following 6 exercises:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • mindfulness of the in- and out-breath | <i>ānāpāna, sati</i> |
| • minding the 4 postures | <i>iriyā, patha</i> |
| • mindfulness and clear comprehension | <i>sati, sampajañña</i> |
| • reflection on the 32 parts of the body | <i>kāya, gata, sati</i> or <i>asubha</i> (the impurities) |
| • analysis of the 4 primary elements | <i>dhātu, vavatthāna</i> |
| • cemetery meditations. | <i>sīvathikā</i> , ie, the 9 or 10 stages of bodily decomposition. |

Basically, **mindfulness** concerns knowing what we are doing, while **clear comprehension** refers to applying the right attitude or strategy to that doing [8.2.3]. For example, *mindfully* we watch the in-breath, the out-breath, and so on. *Clearly comprehending*, we progressively apply the counting, then end it, then watch the rise and fall of the breath, then switch to watching the mental sign, and so on. [8.2.3]

In this 1st stage of the satipatthana practice, we need to work on focusing the mind so that it is able to settle the body to free itself from the distracting sense-activities (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touch),²⁵ so that it is able to focus on itself. This may be done, for example, by keeping the mind focused on the smooth flow of the breath, until both breath and body merge to become one: this is called mental unification.²⁶ [7.3.1]

8.2.2.2 (2) Contemplation of feelings (*vedananupassanā*) [5.8.2] is the 2nd focus of mindfulness, on our hedonic reactions to various perceptions. As each feeling arises in us, we simply see it as being pleasant or unpleasant, of the body or of the mind, sensual (mundane) or supramundane, or simply neutral.²⁷ “Feeling” is a hedonic impression or affective reaction (*vedanā*), not an emotional reactivity which is called “formations” (*saṅkhārā*). When we are not mindful of the feeling tones, we may grasp what we feel as pleasant (feeding lust), push away what we experience as unpleasant (feeding aversion), or ignore any neutral feeling (feeding ignorance). [7.3.2.3]

The mindfulness of feeling frees us from the measuring or agitation that comes with the pull of lust and push of aversion. An untrained mind reacts for or against the feeling tone, but when mindfulness arises, we will remain present and attentive with any feeling without being compelled by attraction, rejection or ignorance.

When we cultivate mindfulness of feeling, we see it as a mirror-like mind (or heart) that is a calm equanimous presence, free of endlessly reacting to pleasant feelings, avoiding painful ones, ignoring neutral ones. We notice only the *arising* of feelings and their *ending*.²⁸ [5.7.1.3]

²³ On “contemplation of dharmas” (*dharmānupassanā*), see SD 13.1 (5D). On all these teachings constituting the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi, pakkhiya, dhamma*), see SD 10.1.

²⁴ To begin with (if we have not done so), read M 10 (the Sutta first, SD 13.3; then repeat, the Sutta and the nn, SD 13.3). On right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), see SD 10.16 (7).

²⁵ “Touch” (*phoṭṭhabba*) refers to what is tangible, tactile, “touchable”; **feeling** in a cognitive sense, not *conative* (willing) sense of differentiating (pleasant, unpleasant, neither) of hedonic tones (like, disliking, neutral). [Table 12.8]

²⁶ On *kāyānupassanā*, see M 10, A + SD 3.13 (5A). See SD 17.2a (9.6).

²⁷ Catherine is inaccurate here in saying that “feelings” “refers to a bare impression of the pleasantness, unpleasantness, or neutrality of any present experience.” (2011:44).

²⁸ On *vedanā’nupassanā*, M 10, B + SD 3.13 (5B). On feelings, see **Vedanā**, SD 17.3.

8.2.2.3 (3) Contemplation of the mind (*cittânupassanā*) [5.8.3]. The 3rd satipatthana, that of mindfulness of the mind itself or mental states, directs the attention to the mind, examining it as it is coloured by emotions such as love, joy, anger, hatred, interest, boredom, tranquility or fear. We become aware of mental phenomena, but neither indulging nor wallowing in any emotional reactivity.

We do not take any mental state personally, as it were: we only notice what is *present*, what is *absent*. Any time we notice that our attention is entangled in a story, we let go of the thoughts, and notice instead the quality of the mind. Sometimes, we may see restless agitation, and although we try to return to our meditation-object, our attention falls off again.

We keep pulling our attention back, like holding on to the leash of a frisky puppy at its other end. Mindfulness grows with unrelenting practice: the frisky puppy gives in. As mindfulness becomes stronger, we begin to notice the mind's inner workings. We begin to notice *zest, happiness, oneness of the mind, samadhi*.²⁹

8.2.2.4 (4) Contemplation of dhammas (*dhammânupassanā*) [5.8.4]. The 4th focus of mindfulness is when we look into the calm mind and see what it really is: we see its functioning as mental states. We may notice a mental hindrance just as it is; or, how faith keeps harmonizing with wisdom; how effort supports concentration; how craving brings forth pain.

As our application of mindfulness grows beyond the mere ability to return to our meditation-object, we may notice the context, connections, interactions, conditioned links, and functions of mental states. This satipatthana gives us a dynamic vision and understanding of phenomena, how things arise and end, how they prevent or support the mind's development. With this mindfulness comes *clearer* comprehension, *fuller* knowing.³⁰

8.2.3 Clear comprehension

8.2.3.1 We have spoken much about **mindfulness** (*satī*), and now we need to understand its other function or “companion,” **clear comprehension** or fully knowing (*sampajaññā*). With growing *mindfulness*, we a clearer comprehension of the meaning of things, of our present purpose: our efforts are guided by wisdom in 4 ways:

(1) clarity regarding <u>the purpose</u>	<i>sāttaka sampajañña</i>
(2) clarity regarding <u>the suitability</u>	<i>sappāya sampajañña</i>
(3) clarity regarding <u>the proper domain</u>	<i>go, cara sampajañña</i>
(4) clarity regarding <u>non-delusion</u> of the activity concerned	<i>asammoha sampajañña</i>

8.2.3.2 Here's how these 4 modes of **clear comprehension** work. Before we act, speak, or even think, we first consider if our action is aligned with a wholesome purpose or goal: “Will this act support the desirable result?” Here, it is our meditation. We consider whether it will help our concentration and insight, so that suffering is reduced. We are not meditating for some passing pleasure or to gain some personal powers. Our one and only purpose is to realize liberating insight that will transform our suffering into a vision of freedom and happiness. Clear comprehension of **the purpose** is the basis for our making wise choices.

8.2.3.3 Secondly, we become aware of **the broader context** that surrounds an action. “Is the action appropriate for the current conditions?” In the case of meditation, we consider the suitability of **external conditions**, such as timing and environment, and **internal conditions**, such as our health and mental state. For example, it may not be appropriate to continue meditating when the phone is ringing (we should have disconnected it in the first place), or when someone is at the door (we should have put a “do not disturb” sign there), or simply to deny a real painful emotion such as grief (we should have resolved this first in some way).

²⁹ On *cittânupassanā*, M 10,C + SD 3.13 (5C). On the mind, see *Viññāṇa*, SD 17.3 (1).

³⁰ On *dhammânupassanā*, M 10,D + SD 3.13 (5D).

8.2.3.4 Thirdly, we examine **the range** (*go, cara*) of our life-activity (which affects our meditation and mental development). *Go, cara* is a pastoral term referring to a safe pasture where cattle would graze. In Buddhist practice (especially the Vinaya), it refers to unwholesome places that monastics should avoid, or the right time for visiting a place for alms. In meditation, it implies the range of our attention or perception that should be properly focused in our practice and purpose.

How large a field do we give to our attention, and does that range support our aim? For instance, when we are developing dhyana using the breath, we will intentionally restrict our focus to only the breath at the area just outside the nostrils—whenever the mind wanders off, we at once bring the attention back to the breath.

Insight practice³¹ stresses on observing changing phenomena. Although there are many objects for such a meditation, we focus on only a suitable range of formations, and contemplate a set of specific characteristics. The scope of our awareness should support our purpose and be appropriate to the present situation.

8.2.3.5 Catherine, in *Wisdom Wide and Deep* (2011), relates this amusing incident during a Pa Auk meditation retreat she attended that sounds familiar to those who have done retreats. She volunteered to assist the cooks as part of a team of vegetable choppers: they silently washed, peeled and chopped piles of vegetables each morning.

A new participant joined the team and was given his first task of squeezing six lemons. Dedicated to his training, he mindfully and carefully washed, cut, deseeded and squeezed the lemons. After half an hour, *he had only done 3 lemons!* The cooks looked aghast, and had him reassigned to another department. The other volunteers had to work overtime with what remained undone.

That volunteer's *mindfulness* was admirable, but he lacked clear comprehension of the purpose of the task at hand, the proper pace of work, and the field of his attention was limited. He did not see the appropriateness of mindful speed of work. The meditative slowdown was appropriate under ideal retreat conditions, but here is where we are helping others complete some vital task: that of feeding the monks and the retreatants.³²

8.2.3.6 Fourthly, and finally, we need to be clearly certain of what we are doing regarding our meditation. Are we meditating with the right understanding and purpose? Or, are we hoping for some worldly gain or some sense of pride or power over others? Do we pursue meditation with a sense of self-view or conceit?

If we have avoided any such negative ideas about meditation, and our meditation progresses well, we will gain some insight (*Vipassanā*) into the nature of things: we should certainly be able to better understand the nature of life in terms of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness).³³

8.2.4 Concentration (*samādhi*)

8.2.4.1 Simply, concentration is when the mind becomes brightly stable as the meditation-object itself, that is, there is no more distinction between subject and object. The mental factor of one-pointedness (*ek'aggatā*), with its characteristic of non-distraction, is sometimes used synonymously with the term **concentration**. Mental factors, such as one-pointedness, decision, energy and mindfulness, work together to direct attention to the object of meditation, yoke the attention to that object, and consolidate the associated mental factors to arouse the state of "being concentrated."

Concentration, as a mental faculty (*indriya*), is a wholesome state in which many factors link together to create a stable unification of attention with the object of perception. It is not restricted to only dhyanas,

³¹ On the insight meditator, see SD 8.4 (11).

³² Catherine 2011:46.

³³ On the 5 aggregates, see SD 13. On *sampajañña* (adj, *sampajāna*), see SD 13.1 (3.6). See also S:B 1507 f.

but—as stated in the **Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta** (A 4.41)—can refer to any or all of these 4 kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*), that is, those of:³⁴

<u>samadhi that brings about</u>	<u>cultivation (or method)</u>
(1) dwelling happily here and now	the 4 dhyanas
(2) knowledge and vision	the perception of light
(3) mindfulness and clear knowing	the perception of impermanence
(4) the destruction of mental influxes ³⁵	watching the rise and fall of the aggregates. [8.2.3.6]

8.2.4.2 Although we may apply either deep concentration or close examination at different stages in our practice, the calm and concentrated mode of *directly seeing* a meditation-object is vitally linked with the *close investigation* into the true nature of the mind and its objects. The wise mind, turning away from distractions gains calm (*samatha*); the *calm* mind is the tool for gaining insight (*vipassanā*). Hence, the **Mahā Saṅgāyana Sutta** (M 149) records the Buddha as speaking of the true practitioner, that “these 2 states—calm and insight—occur to him as yoked together.”³⁶ [7.4]

In the **Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117), the Buddha declares: “I shall teach you noble right concentration with its supports and requisites,”³⁷ but he does not prescribe any meditation techniques such as counting the breaths or even cultivating lovingkindness. These practical and specific methods which constitute an understanding of how all such states (as samadhi) are linked integrally, first, as the mundane eightfold path. Then, with the attainment of the path, we start on the supramundane path, the *noble* eightfold path of awakening.

In other words, all teachings, both the theory and the practice, have only one “taste” (*rasa*), that of **freedom**, awakening;³⁸ that there is the “only going” (*ekāyana*),³⁹ that is, satipatthana [8.2.2], the focuses of mindfulness, *gaining mindfulness or samadhi for seeing directly into the true nature of the body, feelings, the mind and realities*. In understanding these as they are, we are free of them, and attain awakening, the unconditioned, nirvana.

8.2.4.3 In true and real Buddhist practice, there is neither fragmenting of teachings nor alienating of practices—all teachings are interrelated, all practices interconnected—*there is no samatha without vipassanā, there is no vipassanā without samatha*. We may think that we are doing “samatha” (focusing our mind), or that we are “seeing” into true reality (“this is impermanent”): it is like playing **one-handed arpeggios** on a piano with only our left hand, or only the right hand, for finger strength and dexterity. We also need to sit properly (on a hard cushion) and move only our fingers, not our elbow. Yet, we need *both* hands (and the feet), indeed, the whole body and mind/heart, to play a classic piece beautifully, that is, until there is neither player nor piano, only the beauty of the music. As in music, so in meditation.

³⁴ A 4.41/2:44-46 + SD 24.1 (1).

³⁵ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*, which comes from *ā-savati*, “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsavas*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kāmaśava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhavaśava*), (3) views (*dīṭṭhāśava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāśava*) (D 16, 1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

³⁶ M 149, 10.5 (3:289), SD 41.9.

³⁷ M 117, 2/3:71 (SD 6.10). *Ariyaṃ vo, bhikkhave, sammā, samādhim desessāmi sa, upanisaṃ sa, parikkhāraṃ*. “Requisites,” *sa, parikkhāra*. Comy says that “noble” (*ariya*) here means “supramundane” (*lok’uttara*), ie, the concentration pertaining to the supramundane path. The “supports and requisites” refer to the other 7 right factors [M 117, 3]. (MA 4:130 f)

³⁸ “Just as the ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt—this Dharma-Vinaya has only *one taste*, the taste of freedom”: **Pahārāda S** (A 8.19, 16) + SD 45.18 (2.6).

³⁹ On the “one-going” (*ekāyana*), see SD 3.1 (3.4); SD 13.1 (3.2).

In Buddhist practice, mental focus is not merely a convenient antidote or prescription for the painful patterns of anxiety, distraction and restlessness; it is more than just a stepping-stone for higher states. At any stage in our practice, whenever we *are* practising, we become “unified” not just in samādhi (right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration), but also in moral virtue (right speech, right action, right livelihood) and wisdom (right view, right thought)—it’s all part of the very same path, even on a mundane level.⁴⁰ Otherwise, it is not Dharma-spirited practice.

8.2.5 The nature of dhyana (*jhāna*)

8.2.5.1 Teachers who are unable to attain dhyana (*jhāna*) often declare that it is *impossible* for us to attain them (for whatever reason: so, wait till when the next Buddha comes). On the other extreme are the Cult Gurus and eccentric teachers who will boast that dhyanas are easily attained, often hinting that they have mastered them! However, when we look closely at their conduct (which we rarely do!) we would wisely not take them too seriously!

The real truth avoids both extremes for the middle way: *dhyana is possible but needs effort to attain*. It is a key teaching in early Buddhism, found in many important suttas,⁴¹ and dhyana defines right concentration (*sammā, samādhi*), the 8th and last of the limbs of the eightfold path.⁴² If it is difficult, it means that we have to find out more about it and try harder; or, we can work on a viable alternative, at least for the time being.

8.2.5.2 Pa Auk, in his meditation teachings, clearly instructs us, during breath meditation, to keep focusing on the breath all the way, without any break. As we do this, the breath becomes subtler until it brightens into the breath sign [8.3.1]. Properly done, this is when we cross over into dhyana [8.3.2]. Since this will take some skill and time to occur, we may meantime try a non-dhyanic alternative practice.⁴³ [8.2.4.5]

Theoretically, any mental state can be our meditation-object. A rule of thumb is that, when there are a number of such objects, we should direct our attention to the most prominent one. The 1st dhyana comprises these **5 dhyana-factors** (*jhān’āṅga*):⁴⁴ initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*) and concentration “born of solitude” (*viveka, ja*) [8.2.5.4]. We may, when we are focused and skilled enough, observe *any* of these 5 factors of the 1st dhyana. We are still able to do so because of *vitakka, vicāra* functioning as rudimentary cognitive awareness.

With the right effort, we will be able to observe zest, joy, even our mind that is “born of solitude” (meaning, it is free of the sense-experiences). These are, of course, profoundly blissful mental objects; but that bliss can only be very brief and there is a cost to pay: we will lose the dhyana. For most of us, we would be too blissed out to know this. Without the wise counsel of an experienced teacher, that’s all we will get despite our overinflated notion of some high attainment! Hence, its best to avoid this.

Safe to say, however, it is possible to check on these dhyana-factors without losing the dhyana (that is, *only* in the 1st dhyana). Even then, we may do so *only very briefly*, just a moment’s glance—or we will lose that dhyana. Once one-pointedness of mind has arisen (in the 2nd dhyana upwards), we cannot (without splitting the “one” mind), direct our attention to observe those states! [8.2.5.4]

⁴⁰ On the noble eightfold path (*ariy’atṭhaṅgika magga*), see SD 10.16.

⁴¹ A majority of the 34 Dīgha Nikāya suttas lay out all the 4 form dhyanas (eg **Sāmañña, phala S**, D 2, SD 8.10); the 1st 8 suttas of **Moggallāna Saṃyutta** (S 40.1-8) describe the 4 form dhyanas and 4 formless attainments respectively; then, there is **Jhāna Saṃyutta**, the connected discourses on dhyanas (S ch 9; S 53; totalling 54 suttas). Numerous suttas describing the dhyanas are found elsewhere in the Sutta Piṭaka,

⁴² On right concentration (*sammā, samādhi*), SD 10.16 (8).

⁴³ Technically, to attain **arhathood**, or even non-returning, we need to master dhyana (which means overcoming our emotional dependence on sense-pleasures). However, if we aim to attain **streamwinning** (in this life itself), whether as a monastic or a layperson, we should take this alternative course of mindfulness practice. [8.3.3.3]

⁴⁴ This is the same as saying that the 1st dhyana is defined as a mental aggregate of these 5 factors.

8.2.5.3 Beyond the 1st dhyana, we can only know the dhyana-factors of that specific dhyana, *after* emerging and reviewing that dhyana, that is, when we have attained **the fivefold dhyana mastery** (*pañca-vasī*) or the 5 masteries, that is:

(1) mastery in adverting	<i>āvajjanā,vasī</i>	directing the mind towards dhyana
(2) mastery in attaining	<i>samāpajjanā,vasī</i>	attaining dhyana quickly, whenever we wish to
(3) mastery in resolving	<i>adhiṭṭhāna,vasī</i>	staying in dhyana for a predetermined duration
(4) mastery in emerging	<i>vuṭṭhāna,vasī</i>	easily emerging at the appointed time
(5) mastery in reviewing	<i>paccavekkhaṇā vasī</i>	discerning the dhyana-factors after emerging

(Pm 1.451-460/1:97-100; Vism 4.131/154, 23.27/704)⁴⁵

Notice that mastery 5 is that of **reviewing** (*paccavekkhaṇā*), that is, reflecting on the dhyana-factors *after* we have emerged from dhyana. Anyway, in 2nd dhyana upwards, we will not be able to watch any of the dhyana-factors since we are totally absorbed in an ego-free will-free state. For this reason, too, we must be adept not only in entering dhyana and staying in it, but also in emerging from it. Simply, it is the mental equivalent of a physical workout.

8.2.5.4 At this point, we need to usefully know what **the 5 dhyana-factors** (*jhān'āṅga*) are for the 4 form dhyanas.⁴⁶

	<u>initial</u> <u>application</u>	<u>sustained</u> <u>application</u>	<u>zest</u>	<u>joy</u>	<u>one-pointedness</u> <u>of mind</u>
1 st dhyana	<i>vitakka</i>	<i>vicāra</i>	<i>pīti</i>	<i>sukha</i>	(<i>ek'aggatā</i>) ⁴⁷
2 nd dhyana	...	...	<i>pīti</i>	<i>sukha</i>	<i>ek'aggatā</i>
3 rd dhyana	...	...	...	<i>sukha</i>	<i>ek'aggatā</i>
4 th dhyana	...	...	... ..		<i>ek'aggatā</i>

Table 8.2.5.4. The dhyana-factors [13.1.4.1]

Succinctly explained, **initial application** (*vitakka*), in the meditation context, refers to directing our attention to the object. In breath meditation, it is our effort in returning the attention to the breath whenever it wanders off. **Sustained application** (*vicāra*) keeps up with the initial application, keeping our attention anchored to the object (the whole breath), without drifting away.

Zest (*pīti*) is the joy of the mind fully freed from the senses, occurring at different levels of intensity. At its full force, it is all we feel in a profoundly rapturous way: we are, as it were, everything everywhere [5.8.2.2]. As it settles, we may feel it in our breath. By then, it has resolved itself into **joy** (*sukha*), that is, we feel a total sense of profound comfort that, unlike zest, actually helps us to get back into our meditation, focusing on the object so as to gain samadhi, even dhyana [5.8.2.3].

One-pointedness (*ek'aggatā*) is the singularity of the breath melding with the mind. It is the fruit of total mental renunciation⁴⁸ [8.2.5.6] We have truly given up all the world and feels no need for anything. Suffering arises from a sense of lack, which is its diametrical opposite: *a total absence of lack*. The mind is, as it were, everywhere, everything.

8.2.5.5 Why should we not observe the dhyana-factors (even though we may try to do so in the 1st dhyana) [8.2.5.2]? A preliminary answer is that we must first allow the dhyana to fully blossom. In the 1st

⁴⁵ On the fivefold mastery (*pañca,vasī*), see SD 49.4; SD 24.3 (2); SD 33.1a (2.1.3.2).

⁴⁶ On the 5 dhyana-factors (*jhān'āṅga*) in the 1st dhyana, see SD 8.4 (5.1.1). Beyond the 1st dhyana, the 5th factor (apparent or implied) is “one-pointedness (of mind)” (*ek'aggatā*): SD 8.4 (6).

⁴⁷ On “one-pointedness” (*ek'aggatā*) in the 1st dhyana, see SD 8.4 (5.1.2, 6.5).

⁴⁸ Vimm 8.5 (Vimm:Ñ 262-264).

dhyana, the mind is just beginning to free itself from sense-input; in other words, it has overcome the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*), but barely so. Hence, once “we” direct the mind at any object, even a dhyana-factor, we have sent our attention “out” with a wish, on a worldly quest. The mind is no more “itself,” but acting on a wish for what is views as something external.

A more detailed answer to the preceding question—why should we not observe the dhyana-factors? [8.2.5.4]—is because they work to keep out, even overcome, the mental hindrances. Each of **the dhyana-factors** counters one of the hindrances, in the following manner, as described in, for example, **the (Bojjh-aṅga) Āhāra Sutta** (S 46.51).⁴⁹

		“starves” the mental hindrances	“feeds” the awakening-factors of
1. initial application	<i>vitakka</i>	sense desire	mindfulness
2. sustained application	<i>vicāra</i>	ill will (aversion)	effort
3. zest	<i>pīti</i>	sloth and torpor	zest
4. joy	<i>sukha</i>	restlessness and worry	tranquillity
5. one-pointedness	<i>ekaggatā</i>	doubt	concentration

8.2.5.6 How do we arouse the awakening-factors to overcome the mental hindrances? We simply do *nothing*, but keep watching the breath, in the different ways we are taught by different teachers, using the method that works best for us. When we have truly renounced the breath [8.2.5.4]; then, the awakening-factors arise, *all at once*, and rout the hindrances. With the mind free from hindrances, the 1st dhyana arises.

Then, we need to apply our dhyana mastery [8.2.5.3] to **the 2nd dhyana**. Once again, we learn to master *renunciation*, this time, directing the mind to renounce *vitakka, vicāra* [Table 8.2.5.4], get into that dhyana, stay in it as predetermined, emerge as predetermined, and then discern the dhyana-factors—until we are really good at it for this dhyana. As a rule, we will need weeks for this, even longer. In this way, we go on to master the other dhyanas in stages.

The wholesome understanding is that we should *not* want to “attain” any dhyana but simply work on focusing our breath so that we learn what **true renunciation** really is: our karmic fruit is *dhyana*.

In the next section, we will study how to gain the path without attaining dhyana, that is, using only *mindfulness* [8.3], which should work for most of us who are unable to attain dhyana. We will then follow with a study of the progress of dhyana attainment [8.4+8.5].

8.3 SAMADHI WITHOUT DHYANA

8.3.0 The 3 kinds of samadhi

8.3.0.1 People who are “word-heavy” are fettered by the notion that a word, every word, has a fixed sense: that we are “it.” This is actually a form of “self-view.” The reality is that, like everything else in the world, words are conditioned realities. Just as *we are what we do*, a **word is what it does**. What does the word, “concentration” *do*? By itself it does not do anything: it all depends on its context, how we use it; and *we give it its context*. That context here is meditation.⁵⁰

In early Buddhist meditation, **samādhi** is a natural quality of the mind to *settle and still* itself when it is not stimulated by sense-experiences, which are what we do: we see, hear, smell, taste and touch. As we direct our mind to the breath and keep it there, we do not have to process these sense-data, there is nothing to do, except *keep our attention right there*.

⁴⁹ S 46.51/5:102-107 (SD 7.15).

⁵⁰ On words and meaning, see SD 17.4 (2.3.2); SD 50.2 (1.1.2). See **Samādhi**, SD 33.1a.

Thus, by being mindful of the breath, it calms itself, and the mind calms itself, too. When both breath and mind are still, they are no more different. Breath is moving air, but it is now still; the mind is objective consciousness, but there is no more object. Calm breath, still mind —this is *samādhī*.

8.3.0.2 In meditation, all we need to “do” is to apply our attention to the meditation object, to keep doing so repeatedly, moment after moment, hour after hour: concentration then naturally arises. It is just like growing a plant. First, we sow a good seed, give it enough water, enough sun; then, we diligently clear the weeds, remove the bugs, and check the soil. When we do all this right, the plant grows by itself; it branches, flowers and fruits. We have attended rightly, given the right attention, to the plant.

In the *Kasi Bhāra, dvāja Sutta* (S 1.4), the Buddha puts this poetically to Bhāra, dvāja the ploughman, thus:

Faith is the seed, discipline the rain,	wisdom is my yoke and plough,
moral shame the pole, the mind my yoke’s tie, ⁵¹	mindfulness the ploughshare and goad. ⁵²

(Sn 1.4/14 = SD 77), SD 69.6

8.3.0.3 In samatha practice, our efforts in keeping our attention in the right place brings about **concentration** (*samādhī*). More exactly, we build up our concentration gradually: it starts off as episodes of momentary concentration; grows into access concentration; and fully blossoms as attainment concentration. These 3 stages or kinds of concentration are defined by the kind of **mental sign or image** (*nimitta*) that arises in them, thus:⁵³

beginning practice		preparatory sign	<i>parikamma nimitta</i>	[8.3.1.1]
1. momentary concentration	<i>khaṇika samādhī</i>	acquired sign	<i>uggaha nimitta</i>	[8.3.1]
2. access concentration ⁵⁴	<i>upacāra samādhī</i>	counter-sign	<i>paṭibhāga nimitta</i>	[8.3.2]
3. attainment concentration ⁵⁵	<i>appanā samādhī</i>	(full sign or image)		[8.3.3]

These levels of concentrations are the degrees or strength of our concentration; hence, they are closely related to one another, especially by way of the nature of the meditation images or signs. While the concentration is a mental state of focus, the sign is its defining feature in the form of mental visions of lights.

8.3.1 Momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhī*)

8.3.1.1 Beginners should know that there are **2 types** of momentary concentration that can occur during meditation. In **samatha** practice, we keep our focus on an object long enough without being distracted, that object become a “preparatory sign” (*parikamma nimitta*).⁵⁶ When we are also able to *grasp* that object, it becomes an “acquired sign” (*uggaha nimitta*), which gives rise to only *a brief moment of focus*: this is a case of momentary concentration.

Pa Auk Sayadaw sometimes refers to this type of momentary concentration as “preparatory” concentration, because it *prepares* our mind for concentration and precedes access concentration (the 2nd level of concentration) [8.3.2]. Since the object in samatha practice is consistent (not shifting all the time, as in vipassana practice) [8.3.1.2], sustained focus on it leads to mental calm and purification, at least momentarily.

⁵¹ “Yoke’s tie,” *yotta* (Skt *yoktra*), any instrument for tying or fastening, ie, a rope, a thong, halter; the thongs by which an animal is attached to the pole of a plough or a carriage.

⁵² On the plough and tillage, see <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x5672e/x5672e0a.htm>. Video of Indian man ploughing with farm bullocks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwUS7qpr8UA>.

⁵³ See SD 54.13 (3.1.8). See also **Nimitta**, SD 19.7 (3). See also Vimm 8.12 (Vimm:Ñ 273). For these terms applied to meditation leading to path attainment, see Abhs:BRS 331 f.

⁵⁴ Also called “neighbourhood concentration.”

⁵⁵ Also called “full concentration” or “absorption concentration,” since it leads to absorption or dhyana (*jhāna*).

⁵⁶ This can be the “breath-sign”: SD 7.13 (6.1).

8.3.1.2 In **vipassana** practice, on the other hand, the object is *the present moment itself*, which often changes; in fact, it *is* change itself. We observe what is *right here and now*, which is clearly momentary. Hence, the term “momentary” concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) is more common in vipassana practice than in samatha.

However, we often hear of it in other kinds of meditations, especially where the sitting is not prolonged or not as long as samatha sittings. Hence, we often hear of momentary concentration in Tibetan *dzog-chen rigpa* practice and in Zen *shikantaza* (“just sitting”) practice. Pa Auk Sayadaw presents **the 4 elements meditation** as bringing momentary concentration and only access concentration,⁵⁷ either of which can serve as the entry point into the vipassanā practices. [8.10.4; 4.1.3.2]

8.3.2 Access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*)

8.3.2.1 Meditators can eventually attain access concentration using either type of momentary concentration practice—samatha or vipassanā. However, **samatha practices** are more likely to lead to access concentration because of their more stable nature. Access concentration is characterized by the significant reduction or complete overcoming of the 5 hindrances [8.2.5.5] and the arising and stabilizing of the dhyana-factors [8.2.5.5]. Most of us would need a period of intensive practice to gain access concentration.

It is not always easy to differentiate between momentary concentration and access concentration. We are likely to simply feel that we are either concentrating or not. We may, however, notice some helpful characteristics. For example, with access concentration, we sustain *unbroken and stable focus on the object much longer*. Also, we will notice that the object in access concentration is much more vibrant, that is, “radiant.”

8.3.2.2 Similarly, as we progress in our meditation, our focus is likely to get stronger and become **access concentration** but we are not yet fully concentrated. We are then likely to confuse it with attainment (or absorption) concentration. While the dhyana-factors may be present, they are still not strong enough to support dhyana. Hence, the difference is a matter of degree or intensity, and we will only be able to distinguish them with experience. [8.3.3]

Access concentration is very useful as we progress through dhyana or emerge from it. As a rule, it is with the help of access concentration that we work to renounce the dhyana-factors in stages to progress to the next dhyana. Also, on emerging from dhyana, it is with access concentration that we cultivate vipassana. Hence, access concentration is like an “in between” or “linking” concentration between dhyanas so that we make a smooth transition into the next dhyana.⁵⁸

8.3.3 Attainment concentration (absorption concentration, full samadhi) (*appanā samādhi*)

8.3.3.1 The **Visuddhi, magga** shows the difference between these 2 kinds of concentration using the analogy of **walking**. Access concentration is like a toddler learning to walk. It takes a few steps but repeatedly falls down. In contrast, attainment concentration is like an adult who is able to stand and walk for the whole day without falling down.⁵⁹ Another apt metaphor is that of a **spinning top**, whose gyroscopic effect keeps it spinning; it may sometimes wobble [8.2.2.1], but keeps on spinning so long as the gyroscopic effect lasts.

While in the 1st dhyana, we *may* momentarily observe the dhyana-factors [8.2.5.2]; but, as a rule, we can only properly do so upon emerging from dhyana, while in access concentration. In the higher dhyanas, there is no more sense of “I or me”: there is only awareness that is fully absorbed in the object. We neither see nor hear anything; yet, we are “conscious and awake” (*saññī samāno jagaro*), as stated in by the Buddha of his “Ātumā experience,” as recorded in **the Mahā, parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16).⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Vism 3.106/111.

⁵⁸ See Snyder & Rasmussen 2009:29 f.

⁵⁹ Vism 4.33/126.

⁶⁰ D 16,4.32/2:132 (SD 9).

In this sense, we call dhyana an “**absorption**.” In other words, none of the 5 sense-faculties function during dhyana. There is also neither thinking nor knowing in the ordinary sense; hence, there is also no decision-making. We only fully “sense” or experience the counter image (*paṭibhāga, nimitta*), a pervasive radiance, and know nothing else, without interruption.⁶¹

8.3.3.2 It is vital for beginners and those unfamiliar with Buddhist meditation to understand that when they notice any thinking or sense-input, it simply means it is *not* dhyana, or at best it is the 1st dhyana which they will at once lose! We have already highlighted how meditation should be understood as an act of **true renunciation** [8.2.5.6]. Hence, to expedite attaining dhyana, we should simply *renounce* all thoughts and views, and surrender ourselves to the mental object, as it were.

Once dhyana is attained, it calms and clears the mind, and primes it for vipassana. Upon emerging from dhyana, while the mind is still in access concentration (when thinking is possible), we are able to prime the mind to directly see true reality and gain insight. In fact, this is what we will be seeing in the description of some of the practices below [8.4.5].

8.3.3.3 When we have yet to attain the path (as a streamwinner and so on), the dhyana we gain is still mundane (that is, worldly), meaning that we can easily lose it when the defilements arise again in sufficient strength. Hence, it is vital to live a morally virtuous life, keeping to the precepts and so on. However, even the 1st dhyana or attainment concentration is a mentally and spiritually powerful experience.

Our mind is so refined during absorption concentration, that we often feel extremely jarring after emerging from dhyana, especially during the first time. We may not feel this so much in the ideal conditions of a retreat. However, at the end of the retreat, when we sink back into the samsaric world, we often feel this jarring and maddening effect.

We also begin to notice how our senses have now tuned itself onto a more refined level that we have not experienced before. We are also likely to have a clearer mind, thinking and creativity. However, our daily interactions with the world will surely and slowly wear down the dhyanic effect in time, especially when we do not keep up a Dharma-spirited life.⁶²

8.4 BREATH MEDITATION UP TO DHYANA

8.4.0 The easiest way to start meditation—especially when we are unsure of which method suits us best—is to try **the breath meditation**. It is the method that the Buddha himself used as a child of 7,⁶³ and over 20 years later, while sitting under the Bodhi tree, again meditated on the breath meditation to awaken to liberating wisdom.⁶⁴ In fact, experience with breath meditation, as a rule, forms the foundation for understanding other meditations, and to do them properly and profitably. Even when we find breath meditation difficult, some experience of how it works facilitates our practice with other methods, especially for the attaining of dhyana.

8.4.1 What to focus on: The breath

8.4.1.1 If the suttas reinforce our memory and understanding of its teachings by constant repetition, meditation, too, keeps us ready to progress by **proper repetition**. This meditative repetition is like a sculptor patiently and skillfully chipping away and smoothing those parts as he works at his masterpiece. Once we have stilled the breath, it merges with the mind, and dhyana arises.

This repetition works very well when we are cultivating concentration through mindfulness with the breath (*ānāpānasati samādhi*); hence, it is often recommended for beginners. According to Buddhaghosa, it is considered to be “the foremost among the various meditation objects of all buddhas, pratyeka-bud-

⁶¹ Pa-Auk 2019:98 f. On the absence of thinking in dhyana (except in the 1st dhyana), see 33.1b (6.2.2).

⁶² On what happens when we attain dhyana: SD 8.4 (7).

⁶³ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31/1:246), SD 49.4.

⁶⁴ See esp **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118/3:78-88), SD 7.13.

dhas and (many) of the Buddha's disciples for the attaining distinction and in abiding in bliss here and now."⁶⁵

8.4.1.2 We are breathing right now. We should direct our attention to feel the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils. Focus the attention at the area between the nostrils and upper lip where we *feel* the breath. This keeps our attention anchored to *the knowing* that we are breathing. Only when this does not seem to work, or for the sake of a helpful variety, we may turn to feeling the rising and falling, the expansion and contraction of the breathing body. Our object, in short, should be the breath itself. When we do this, all other experiences, as it were, will recede into the background.

Some students, however, may find breath meditation difficult, and may suffer from headaches, or find that the focus on breathing brings on symptoms of pre-existing respiratory ailments such as asthma, so that the mind easily slips into anxiety. Such meditators may benefit by resorting to recollections of the Buddha [10.2], or moral virtue [8.4.18], or cultivating lovingkindness [9], or cultivating dispassion through the meditations on the body [10.3], or on death [10.4], just before going into breath meditation. Others may find greater tranquility with the expanded concepts of a colour [8.6.1] or an element [8.7] through kasiṇa practice .

8.4.1.3 Unlike Buddhadasa, Pa-Auk does *not* prescribe following the breath down to the navel.⁶⁶ We should simply observe the in-breath, the out-breath, long breath, short breath. Even when the breath begins to brighten, we should only "guard" it by not being distracted in any way.⁶⁷ we simply watch the breath as it is. Only when the brightness covers the whole of our mind, do we then take it as the meditation object [8.4.1.8]

Since our present task is to attain dhyana, we should not watch it in a vipassana manner. For example, we should not pay any attention to the breath noting: "In-out impermanent," or "in-out suffering," or "in-out nonself." Simply be aware of the in-and-out breath as a concept,⁶⁸ in other words, simply know that we are breathing, and focus on that *knowing*.

Counting is only used when we have difficulty watching the breath at the very start. In other words, it should only be used before we start on the 16 stages of the breath meditation⁶⁹ [8.4.1.4].

8.4.1.4 COUNTING THE BREATH. A traditional metaphor suggests that we observe the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils, without concern for any other phenomena, just the way **a gatekeeper** posted at the city-gate observes all that enters and exits through that gate, but does not leave his post to follow any of them into the marketplace or to travel out with caravans to the next village.⁷⁰ We should keep our attention exclusively on the steady awareness of the whole breath that is "before us" (*parimukha*).⁷¹

This can be a very challenging exercise at first. We may find that the mind is led away by stray thoughts. If it is, we should redirect our attention back to the breath, again and again. We can add **a mental count** to each breath to help maintain the focus. Breathe in knowing the inhalation, breathe out knowing the exhalation, count "1." Breathe in knowing the inhalation, breathe out knowing the exhalation, count "2." Breathe in knowing the inhalation, breathe out knowing the exhalation, and add the number. When we return to the count of 1, start again counting forward up to 8 or 10, and then backward to the count of 1 for several cycles. Then, observe the breath without the counting.⁷²

⁶⁵ Vism 8.155/269. "Attaining distinction" (*visesādhigama*) refers to reaching the path, ie, streamwinning and so on.

⁶⁶ On Buddhadasa's method of following the breath: [5.7.3]. If we are new to meditation, we should *not* mix the methods, buffet-style (there will be consequences). Keep to the method we have been taught, and consult experienced meditation teachers.

⁶⁷ Vism 8.220 f/286.

⁶⁸ Pa-Auk 2019:33 f.

⁶⁹ Pa-Auk 2019:34.

⁷⁰ Vism 8.200/281.

⁷¹ See **Mahā Rāhu'ovāda S** (M 62,4+25) + SD 3.11 (3); **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,17) + SD 7.13 (2.4); **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,4), SD 4.17.

⁷² See Pa-Auk 2019:34.

The counting anchors the mind to the breath by keeping out other thoughts or distractions. After a while, we will notice that the counting itself seems to feel “distracting.” It has done its job: stop the counting.⁷³ Practise the breath meditation in this way daily for at least 5 minutes. Do not think about the duration for meditation: just sit. In time, we will find that we are able to sit for 40 minutes or even longer. This is the first and most basic meditation that teachers usually teach before going on to other methods. [5.7.3]

8.4.1.5 LONG BREATH, SHORT BREATH. After we have observed the breath at the nostrils for some time [8.4.1.4], we will notice that some breaths are long, some are short. Observe each in-breath and each out-breath as they naturally occur; watch if each half-breath (either in inhalation or the exhalation) is long or short. In order to determine if it is long or short, we must focus on the beginning and then ending of each half-breath.

At first, we may need to mentally verbalize the words *long* or *short*. As we become more familiar with it, we will be able just to “feel” it. There is also no need to know the precise length of each breath. Pa-Auk advises against altering the length of the breath. Just let the breath arise naturally and quietly. Audible breathing usually indicates excessive control (as in the Sunlun method) [2.4.3.1].

Observe the breath itself—neither the feeling on the skin nor the sound of its passage. Simply register the length to sustain our attention from the beginning to the end of each breath. If the breath seems to disappear (which it does in time), patiently keep our attention at the spot it last appeared or just smile at that peaceful space that has arisen. This is a sign our breath is settling down.

Do not try to make the breath coarse in order to observe it. In fact, as we become more focused, our mindfulness too will refine itself to be able to sense the subtle breath. This is how we still the mind in breath meditation.⁷⁴

8.4.1.6 THE WHOLE BREATH. If we are new meditation, in our daily sitting, we should keep our attention *only* on the breath, the whole breath, and nothing else. Observe the breath from the very beginning of the in-breath, through its middle, right to its end; watch the out-breath in just the same way. Direct our attention to see the breath at the spot between the nostrils and upper lip. *Relaxed relentless routine*: this is how we still the breath.

The Paṭisambhidā, magga illustrates this strategy with **the parable of the carpenter’s saw**:

“Just as a tree [tree-trunk] were placed on level ground and a man were to cut it with a saw—the man’s mindfulness is fixed on the saw’s teeth where they touch the tree, without giving his attention to the saw’s teeth as they come and go”⁷⁵ (Pm 1:171)

As our attention dwells with the breath for some time without distraction, certain experiences associated with concentration begin to arise. When the breath is uninterruptedly known for a long time, the mind becomes light, buoyant and bright. Our feeling about the size and shape of our body may seem to change. Feelings of joy, happiness and contentment may start to brighten our mind.

Do not react to any of these passing states, no matter how pleasant they are. They will change and fade away. If we attend to any of them, we have broken our attention to the breath, and when that pleasant feeling fades away, we will lose our concentration, too.

The mind can comfortably take only *one* object at a time. We should always keep our attention *only* on the breath, distracted by neither hindrance nor pleasure that arises with the stilling mind. Better is yet to come.

8.4.1.7 THE BREATH AS MEDITATION OBJECT. As we sustain our attention on the breath, our mind naturally grows in concentration, and the dhyana-factors will arise. They may appear softly and subtly, or quite dramatically. As we have noted, each of these dhyana-factors overpowers a particular hindrance, and the development of all 5 factors prepares the mind for dhyana.⁷⁶ [8.2.5.4]

⁷³ For various methods of counting, see Vism 8.190-196/278-280.

⁷⁴ For Pa-Auk’s instruction on the 16 stages of breath meditation, see 2019:34-36. Cf Buddhadasa’s method [5.8].

⁷⁵ *Seyyathāpi rukkhō same bhūmi, bhāge nikkhitto, tam enaṃ puriso kakacena chindeyya, rukkhe phuṭṭha, kakaca, dantānaṃ vasena purisassa sati upaṭṭhitā hoti, na āgate vā gate vā kakaca, dante manasikaroti.* (Pm 1:171, 7-10)

⁷⁶ See the parables of the chariot and the army: Vimm 8.25 (Vimm:Ñ 299).

A skillful meditator will never allow the blossoming of the dhyana-factors to distract him from focusing on the breath. As the factors develop, the breath becomes an increasingly refined and brighter meditation-object. While we continue to anchor our attention on the breath, these dhyana-factors are flowering in the background.

8.4.1.8 MENTAL SIGN (*NIMITTA*). What is a “meditation sign” (*nimitta*)?

At some point, as we work to direct and keep our attention to the breath, it brightens up, appearing as a pin of light, a glowing image or a dramatic light display. This is usually a sign of the start of a significant development in our meditation: it often means that our image of the breath is becoming more refined as a meditation sign. Meditators often first see some strange pattern, some gray smoky shape, that gradually brightens up into a stable, whitish hue like cotton-wool or brilliant light that pervades the whole of space. [8.3.0.3]

The Buddhist Commentaries often speak of the meditation sign as occurring in different people in different ways; some may be quite dramatic. **The Visuddhi, magga** quotes the Commentaries: “It is to some like the delightful touch of cotton-wool, silk-cotton, a starry shower ... to some it looks like a star, a small gem, a small pearl ... to some like the rough touch of cotton-seed, a needle of heartwood; to some like a long braid string,⁷⁷ a wreath of flowers, the crest of smoke; to some like a stretched-out cobweb, a film of cloud, a lotus flower, a chariot-wheel, the moon’s orb, the sun’s orb ... ”⁷⁸

The meditation sign is a mentally perceived reality, but it is not imagined. However, there are false meditation signs we should watch out for. According to Buddhaghosa, the sign arises in the area where the breath enters and exits the body: that is where we must “look for the in-breaths and out-breaths, nowhere else than the space normally touched (*pakaṭṭi, phoṭṭh’okāsā*) by them.”⁷⁹

8.4.1.9 The full-fledged stable meditation sign is called a “counterpart sign” (*paṭibhāga, nimitta*). It’s like a beautiful rainbow we can only watch from afar. But it is extremely sensitive to any kind of fuss. It’s like we are silently watching wild animals from a tree-top forest-hide deep in the jungle. During twilight, all kinds of remarkable and rare animals will shyly come to the edge of the forest pool to drink. We can only see them when we are perfectly silent and still. Even an involuntary “Ah!” will at once make them vanish into the jungle.

All we can do is be like a silent flower facing the sunlight, absorbing the radiance. If we notice we are sliding away from access concentration, we may gently smile at it, go back to the breath if we notice it. The self is trying to creep back into centrestage: just keep the stage-doors locked by doing nothing. If we keep losing this sign, then, after the meditation, we need to examine if there are any moral lapses that we have to correct, or recollect our moral virtue to recharge ourself in order to prime the mind again for deep concentration.⁸⁰

8.4.1.10 MENTAL BRIGHTNESS. Is the *nimitta* necessary? Some meditation teachers reject the whole idea of the mental sign (*nimitta*); others teach that dhyana is impossible without it. This is a matter of perception. A simple but dramatic example is how we perceive this page itself right now. The reality is that our **eye**—being a biological camera or camera obscura—actually sees the images in 2 dimensions and upside down!⁸¹ As we mature as babies, we learn to adjust everything “right side up.” The mental sign works in a similar way, but for our benefit, it is useful to understand what it is and what to do with it for proper pro-

⁷⁷ *Dighapāmaṇasuttam*, “a long braid string” (Vism:Ñ 307): a difficult cpd.

⁷⁸ “... *kassaci tāra, rūpaṃ viya, maṇi, guḷikā viya, muttā, guḷikā viya ca ... kassaci khara, samphassaṃ hutvā kappā-s’atṭhi viya, dāru, sāra, sūci viya ca; kassaci dīgha, pāmaṇa, suttam viya, kusuma, dāmaṃ viya, dhūma, sikhā viya ca; kassaci vitthataṃ makkāṭa, suttam viya, valāhaka, paṭalaṃ viya, paduma, pupphaṃ viya, ratha, cakkaṃ viya, canda, maṇḍalaṃ viya, suriya, maṇḍalaṃ viya ...*,” Vism 8.214 f, also 216/285; PmA 2:500; VA 2:427.

⁷⁹ Vism 8.212 f/285.

⁸⁰ On the recollection of moral virtue, see *Sīlānussati* (SD 15.11 (2.2)).

⁸¹ See SD 60.1d (7.2.4.2); SD 60.1e (12.3.2).

gress in our practice. We may not notice it, but it is working in the background when we are mentally concentrated.

Sometimes, the bright sign may arise surprisingly early in a beginner meditator (especially in the ideal conditions of a retreat). The meditation sign brightens up but, without proper instructions, we are not sure what it is, and do not know what to do with it. This is where the experienced instructor, **the spiritual friend**, plays a vital role in explaining to us the nature of *nimitta*, and what we should do with it. [5.7.2.3]

As we have often been advised: *do not be distracted by any kind of emergent state during our meditation*. This is **the rule of thumb** in meditation.⁸²

8.4.2 How to practise: From sitting to dhyana

8.4.2.0 The 8 markers from 1st sitting to 1st dhyana. Most serious meditators who undertake samatha as concentration meditation spend a lot of time working at their practice before the 1st dhyana, striving to attain it. Thus, it helps to understand the following **8 “mind-markers”** between the 1st sitting period and gaining attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*), that is, the 1st dhyana:⁸³

1. 1st sitting
2. the sign (*nimitta*) arises
3. the sign grows
4. the sign stabilizes
5. the sign solidifies and energizes (brightens up)
6. the sign moves to merge with the breath spot
7. the sign and the breath-spot merge to become the “breath sign”
8. the breath-sign draws the mind into 1st dhyana

8.4.2.1 (1) THE 1st sitting. For a serious mediator, the duration between 1 and 2 can be quite long. For many of us, a whole retreat or many retreats may pass without our seeing the meditation sign. Good meditation teachers will always remind us that *every sitting is worth it*: there is no such thing as a “bad” meditation. It’s like our regular health work-out. It is not a matter of “achieving” something: as long as we work out, we will stay healthy.

Every meditation sitting is an experience of the peace we are capable of attaining, or that we are simply working with the mind as it is right now. When we think that “nothing is happening” during our meditation, it means that we are, to that extent, doing fine! When something does “happen,” it means that we have to deal with it. Even now, as we sit, we are preparing for greater peace of mind.⁸⁴

8.4.2.2 (2) Nimitta arises. The meditation sign (*nimitta*) is an important feature of meditation practice: it is a sign of good and strong concentration. It arises in access concentration [8.3.2] as a sign that the mind is unifying, that is, the breath is melding with the mind.⁸⁵

The sign usually starts as a faint but clear flicker. It may also start as a smoky vision of the breath, like when we exhale into the cold air. We may also perceive it as a disc of light, like the headlight of a train or a truck on a dark night. The nimitta can appear in a variety of colours and shapes. Sometimes it appears at a distance.

The sign is a light seen in the mind’s eye, not light seen with our eyes. It arises on its own as a product of the natural unification of mind that develops with concentration. We cannot make it arise, but when we

⁸² For Pa-Auk teachings on the breath meditation, see Pa-Auk, *Knowing And Seeing*, 5th ed, 2019:21-55 (talk 1).

⁸³ See Snyder & Rasmussen 2009: ch 4.

⁸⁴ If we are totally new to the Pa-Auk meditation method, we should start by reading his *Knowing And Seeing*, 5th ed 2019:29-55 (ch 1).

⁸⁵ For Dipa Ma’s description of how light appears in her meditation, see Amy Schmidt, *Knee Deep in Grace: The extraordinary life and teaching of Dipa Ma*. Lake Junaluska, NC: Present Perfect Books, 2003.

have gained some level of the fivefold mastery [8.2.5.3], we will be able to “invite” the sign to arise and grow, which also means that we are attaining dhyana.

Meantime, we should attach no importance whatsoever to the sign (or the idea of it), but keep our mind exclusively on the meditation object (such as the breath). When the sign first arises, don’t pay any attention to it, but keep our focus on the breath. When we react in excitement (this often happens!) we are simply trying to grasp a cloud with our fist! We will lose our concentration on the breath, too, and will have to start all over again.

When we try too hard to “see” the sign that has not arisen, we are likely to suffer its painful effects: stress, headache, eyestrain. We are often reminded that the sign can neither be seen with the eye nor be made to arise. We are not meditating but allowing our lust to have the better of us. The sign is the result of our *renouncing* all attachment to the senses, especially the desire for the sign!

The *Vimutti, magga* likens the arising of access concentration to a sutta-reciter who had stopped reciting for a long time and so forgets and falters, as compared to a sutta-reciter who “persistently repeats and does not forget.”⁸⁶ Similarly, prior to the full concentration into dhyana, we will periodically struggle with various mental hindrance. Understanding this process, we will attain dhyana, and our meditation will progress more smoothly.

8.4.2.3 (3) The nimitta grows. Meditation is not about getting a meditation sign; the sign naturally arises as a result of good meditation. When the sign arises, it continues to grow so long as we keep focused on the meditation object. Hence, it is wise during a retreat not to take too long a break, but to keep up the continuity of practice to deepen it.

Ideally, we should be doing some kind of meditation—or at least mindfulness—while sitting, walking, standing and reclining (these are the 4 normal human postures). When the mind is engaged with itself, away from the world (that is, processing sense-data), it is very likely that the sign will arise. With the mind well focused, such a sign will continue to remain stable in our mind no matter what posture we are in (except when we are asleep).

8.4.2.4 (4) The nimitta stabilizes. The nimitta eventually becomes very stable. Even when we close our eyes, the sign is present. It is best to restrict all outflows of attention and energy, keeping our eyes downcast and being mindful of our movements, and refraining from chatting, inner or outer. The sign will keep growing when we are anchored to the breath. When, for any reason, the sign deteriorates and break up, we simply direct our attention back to the breath, and let the sign arise again naturally.

8.4.2.5 (5) The nimitta solidifies and energizes. As the sign becomes more solid and apparent, it will charge itself up with energy. Conceptually, the difference between a solid sign and an energized sign is very much like a neon sign. When turned off, the sign is still be readable in the daylight, but less so at night. This is due to the lack of inherent energy flowing through the sign.

When the sign is energized, the energy field containing the sign becomes crisp and bright. The energized sign points to the deepening of access concentration. Here we usually experience the dhyana-factors quite strongly; we feel very relaxed but highly energized. Anchoring the mind to the object takes less effort.

Again, we may be strongly wanting to chase the sign and turn it into the object, or try to merge it with the breath. Doing so will only weaken the sign and our concentration. The hindrance of **sensual desire** is at work here! We simply need to get back to renunciation mode by anchoring the mind to the breath.

8.4.2.6 (6) The nimitta moves to merge. When we stay with the breath crossing the breath spot, and not chase the energized sign, it moves closer to the breath spot. Without our making any effort, the sign is drawn to the breath at the breath spot. As the sign gets closer to the breath, we should simply ignore the sign and stay with the breath. To expedite the merger between the sign and the breath, we simply keep

⁸⁶ Vimm 8.22 (Vimm:Ñ 273). See Dh 241a = A 8.15/4:195: *asajjhāya, malā mantā* [SD 58.1 (4.2.6.6)]; A 5:115, *asajjhāya, kiriya bahu, saccassa paripantho*; cf S 46.55/5:121 (SD 3.12).

the mind anchored to the breath. When we stay with the breath, and do not chase the sign, the two will eventually merge with a sudden snap.

When the hindrances are absent and dhyana-factors are well developed, concentration becomes noticeably stable. With a bit more focus, it becomes “access concentration” (*upacāra samādhi*), that is, a concentration that is close to or neighbouring dhyana. It is known by its counter-sign (or counterpart sign). When we keep up our focus on the breath, it remains so until dhyana is attained.⁸⁷

8.4.2.7 (7) The breath sign (*ānāpāna nimitta*). As we keep focused on the breath, when the time is right, the breath and the sign merge into one. Now this is a beautiful new stage in our meditation, when the sign combines with the breath, and we have the “breath/sign” spot as our new focus. We can call this the **breath-sign** (*ānāpāna nimitta*). The name reflects how this sign has arisen, but it is simply the meditation sign that arises in breath meditation. Nevertheless, it takes a lot of meditative patience to reach this beautiful stable stage.

If we are too excited about the change, we will lose it. The sign will weaken and disappear. This often happens with inexperienced meditators. Then, we have to bear with it by going back to keeping the mind anchored on the breath. The breath-sign will arise again. It’s wise to spend some time getting used to the new state. Meantime, our mind is being purified and primed for entering the 1st dhyana.

8.4.2.8 (8) 1st dhyana arises. It’s just a matter of time before we attain the 1st dhyana. Once we have attained the 1st dhyana, we should spend as much time as needed to be fully familiar with it. We may adjust the duration to remain in the 1st dhyana. Practising this skill is useful, since we will need to use it again in the subsequent dhyanas, so that we can stay longer in the higher dhyanas, especially the 4th dhyana, and even in the 4 formless attainments.

8.4.2.9 Under retreat conditions, we may go through the entire sequence of routine practice as our morning “warm up” meditation. In the succeeding session/s, we should work to effectively intensify our concentration, stability and mental brightness. Upon attaining **the 1st dhyana**, we should aspire to stay with it as long as possible, at least an hour or so. In other words, we have to master the 1st dhyana by way of the fivefold mastery [8.2.5.3].

If we have not mastered the 1st dhyana and try to go to the 2nd dhyana, we will both *not* attain the 2nd dhyana *and* also lose the 1st dhyana! **The Pabbateyya Gāvī Sutta** (A 9.35) says that this would be a foolish mountain cow that has not properly placed her front hoof firmly, lifts her hind hoof; she will only hurt herself, and still unable to go to the pasture.⁸⁸

Even with the 1st dhyana, we will enjoy its restorative power, which will enhance our mental flexibility and agility that can develop in quick progressions. As we become proficient in the 1st dhyana with the fivefold mastery, we apply them to the 2nd dhyana in due course. In this way, we properly spend time knowing the dhyanas in the fruitful exploration of our own mind. The rule of thumb is: stabilize the lower dhyanas before moving on to the higher dhyanas or the attainments.

8.4.3 Getting into dhyana

8.4.3.1 Pa Auk encourages meditators to work on **the breath-sign** (*ānāpāna nimitta*) [8.4.2.7] and keep it stable for at least 30 minutes. The longer we hold this sign, the more stable and focused the concentration will be. We may then make a resolve to enter 1st dhyana [8.4.2.8]. If the resolve feels like a distraction and we want to avoid this, we can just let the concentration build its strength so that dhyana will arise on its own.

Regardless of whether we make a resolve or not, the 1st dhyana will only arise when concentration is strong enough. When dhyana does arise, we may feel as if we are being physically “grabbed by the lapels

⁸⁷ See Abhs:BRS 331.

⁸⁸ A 9.35/4:418-422
(SD 24.3).

and pulled face-first” into it. It is very distinct and unmistakable, very different from access concentration [8.3.0.3]. If we repeatedly resolve to enter the 1st dhyana before the right time, our concentration will wane, and we will remain in access concentration. Although not dhyana, access concentration is very peaceful and pleasant, since all the dhyana-factors are present except that the mind is not yet fully unified.

8.4.3.2 The progress and success of our meditation depends on how well we understand **mental effort** and how to properly exert that effort. Those of us used to urban life and work understand the nature of “proactive” effort. In our modern fast-paced routine life and society, we each, more or less, know our roles or tasks. Using the various skills we have and means at our disposal, we accomplish them and feel duly rewarded (or not).

Basically, this means we know what to do, and we do it. We have a good idea of the benefits we will get for such actions, or the consequences when we don’t. However, this dynamic out-going approach is only one aspect of our human life. Not all the vital things in our lives can be fulfilled or gained in this way. In fact, one of the powerful side-effects of such an attitude is mental and physical stress.

We also need to make similar efforts in accepting things the way they are, especially when they do not seem to work our way. Being *proactive* is when we “put in” effort to get things done; we also need to be skilled in accepting not doing it—we are openly *receptive* of others and the situation as they are. Since we need to *do* this just as much as being *proactive*, this is called receptive effort.

Both these kinds of effort apply in meditation, too. Often, at the start of our practice, we need to put in a lot of **proactive effort**, especially that of directing the mind to the meditation object. As our practice progresses, and the different aspects of the meditative mind unfolds, we often need just as much **receptive effort**, to accept those emergent states by simply *doing nothing*, or simply keeping the mind anchored to the breath or the breath-sign, depending on how deep we are in meditation. A skillful negotiation of these two kinds of effort gives us safe and smooth passage in our cultivation of samatha.⁸⁹

8.4.4 Remaining in dhyana

8.4.4.1 Having entered dhyana, we now need the skill to **stay** there, to let it grow. We would naturally *enjoy* being there, continuously anchored to the meditation object, without a hint of wavering for a long time (at least an hour at first). Now that we have mastered the skill in adverting the mind towards dhyana, and attaining it, we must be skilled in **remaining** blissfully in it. [8.2.5.3].

At different stages of dhyana, beautiful and powerful wholesome states arise before us. If we lack moral virtue (gained from keeping the precepts and living rightly in Dharma) or wisdom (gained from familiarity with the suttas and the Dharma), we may not know what these are. Hence, we may simply ignore them, or worse, fear them; and so we lose our dhyanic state.

8.4.4.2 Just as we need eat healthily, have enough rest, train rightly and well, to keep ourself physically fit and dexterous, the same applies to our meditative life. We need to be *proactive* in cultivating moral virtue, understanding the Dharma and keeping up our practice with *receptive skills*. [8.4.3.2]. It is often difficult to get dhyana in the rush and din of worldly life, but as meditators, we “rush mindfully,” well aware of our limits, the situation and our purpose in life. With such wholesome habits, we are likely to be surprised by dhyana even in our daily lives, since we have been cultivating that inner calm all our waking life.

8.4.5 Emerging from dhyana

8.4.5.1 Once we are able to enter dhyana and remaining in it, we need to be skilled in emerging from it. Although we may imagine dhyana functions like the way we sleep, it is, in fact, a very wakeful state that is even more restful than our best sleep. This means that with regular dhyana, we actually need less sleep in the normal sense, and we are also more alert and creative mindfully.

⁸⁹ Further see Snyder & Rasmussen 2006: ch 5+6.

The point, however, remains that we need to be skilled in *emerging* from dhyana. To do so, we need to resolve at the start of our sitting, before getting into dhyana, that we will be in that dhyana for a specified suitable duration. As a rule, we start off sitting for an hour. As we get used to this, we may then increase the time progressively, up to even 4 hours at a stretch, perhaps even longer in a retreat situation.

8.4.5.2 When we are skilled in emergence from dhyana, we will exit from it at a predetermined time. At the start, this may not occur on the dot (but a few minutes' difference does not really matter). To practise, we resolve how long we want to remain in dhyana, and then notice the duration upon emerging. If we emerge a little later, it may be that we are able to sit longer! Perhaps, we may resolve to sit just a bit longer the next time.

However, when we emerge from meditation too early, it is possible that we need to work on some aspects of our life, moral and social. In either case, we need to examine whether we have been able to overcome, or at least suppress, the mental hindrances of *sensual desire, anger, slothfulness, impatience, or self-interest*. These are the tenacious tentacles of our latent tendencies (*anusaya*)⁹⁰ sneaking into our meditation in its weaker moments. We need to remedy these accordingly, such as by doing specific meditations that will correct these weaknesses.

8.4.5.3 A further vital skill we must develop is that of **discerning the dhyana-factors** upon emerging. This is like recognizing old friends when we leave home. Upon emerging from dhyana, we need to discern the absence or the presence of the dhyana-factors. This knowledge empowers us to properly move from one dhyana to another. We identify the dhyana by their dhyana-factors [8.2.5.4].

Dhyana teachers often advise us to improve our ability to discern the presence or absence of dhyana-factors by directing our attention to the mind-door upon emerging from a dhyana. Often, we will encounter the very same factors that we expect. Be happy to meet old friends! Be amazed at how our mind functions in a wholesome familiar way. Our practice has attained a certain level of familiarity.

8.5 ATTAINING DHYANA WITH OTHER METHODS⁹¹

8.5.0 We have already discussed how to practise the breath meditation up to attaining dhyana [8.4]. In this section, we will discuss attaining dhyana by using other methods, such as the 32 body-parts, followed by explanations on the 10 kasinas [6].

8.5.1 The 32 body-parts meditation

I. skin pentad	II. kidney pentad	III. lungs pentad	IV. brain pentad
1. head hair	6. flesh	11. heart	16. intestines
2. body hair	7. sinews	12. liver	17. mesentery ⁹³
3. nails	8. bones	13. membrane ⁹²	18. gorge ⁹⁴
4. teeth	9. bone marrow	14. spleen	19. faeces
5. skin	10. kidneys	15. lungs	20. brain

Table 8.5.1.1a The earth-element body-parts

8.5.1.1 Pa-Auk teaches how to meditate on the 32 body-parts (*dva-t, tiṃs'ākāra*).⁹⁵ He recommends that we master the 4 form dhyanas first, and attain the radiant sign (*nimitta*) of the 4th dhyana. We then

⁹⁰ See *Anusaya*, SD 31.3.

⁹¹ See Pa-Auk 2019: ch 2.

⁹² "Membrane" is the white, net-like membrane that separates the different sections of flesh throughout the body.

⁹³ "Mesentery" is the fastening of the bowels.

⁹⁴ "Gorge" is the undigested food, contents of the stomach.

⁹⁵ Kh 3/2 (Kh:Ñ 2); Comy: KhpA 37-79 (KhA:Ñ 37-83).

use the light of this sign to discern the 32 body-parts, one at a time. The 32 parts comprise 20 predominantly of the earth element, and 12 parts predominantly of water element.

The parts with the earth element parts should be discerned in 4 sets of 5, as shown in **Table 8.5.1.1.a**. The 12 water-element parts should be discerned in 2 sets of 6, thus:

V. fat sestad		VI. urine sestad	
21. bile	24. blood	27. tears	30. snot
22. phlegm	25. sweat	28. grease	31. synovia ⁹⁶
23. pus	26. fat	29. saliva	32. urine

Table 8.5.1.1b The water-element body-parts

8.5.1.2 Discern the parts in the given order, one set at a time (there are 6 sets). Try to see each part as distinctly as we would see our face in a clear mirror. If, while doing this, the light of concentration should fade, and the part of the body being discerned becomes unclear, we should re-establish the 4th dhyana, so the light is again bright and strong. Then, return to discerning the body-parts. Do this whenever the light of concentration fades.

Practise discerning from head-hair down to urine, or from urine back to head-hair, so that we are able to see each one clearly and with penetrating knowledge. Keep practising until we become skilled at it. Then, again using the light of concentration and with our eyes still closed, we should try to discern these body-parts in another being close by.

It is especially beneficial to discern someone in front of us. Discern the 32 body-parts in that person or being, from head-hair down to urine, and from urine back to head-hair. Discern the 32 parts forwards and backwards in this manner many times. When we have succeeded, discern the 32 parts once internally, that is, in our own body, and once externally, that is, in another person's body. Do this many times, again and again until we are naturally skilled at it.

8.5.1.3 When we are able to discern the 32 parts thus internally and externally, our meditative power will increase significantly. We should thus gradually extend our field of discernment bit by bit, from near to far. Do not think that we cannot discern beings far away. In the radiance of the 4th dhyana,⁹⁷ we can easily see beings far away, not with the naked eye, but with the wisdom eye. We should be able to extend our field of discernment in all 10 directions: above, below, east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, north, northeast. Take whomever we see, be they human, animal or other beings, in those 10 directions, and discern the 32 parts, once internally and once externally, one person or being at a time.

When we no longer see men, women, devas, or buffaloes, cows and other animals as such, but see only groups of 32 parts, whenever and wherever we look, internally or externally, then we can be said to be adept in discerning the 32 body-parts.⁹⁸

8.5.1.4 Let us now look at what are called the 3 entrances to nirvana, a commentarial teaching based on the suttas. In **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10),⁹⁹ the Buddha teaches that the mastery of the 4 focuses of mindfulness is the “only” way to nirvana: but this one-going path (*ek’āyana*) has 3 lanes. **The Attha,sālinī** (Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Commentary) explains the 3 entrances to the nirvana in terms of the 3 characteristics (*ti lakkaṇa*), functioning as follows:

- (1) the samatha subjects of the colour kasinas (*vaṇṇa kasiṇa*),
- (2) repulsiveness (*paṭikkūla manasikāra*), and

⁹⁶ “Synovia,” oil (unctuous fluid) in the joints.

⁹⁷ While attaining the 4th dhyana is ideal here, we can also discern the 32 parts quite effectively even after emerging from the 1st dhyana. See VbhA §1156/251,33-252,2.

⁹⁸ Pa-Auk 2019:57-59.

⁹⁹ M 10/1:10, (SD 13.3)

(3) voidness of self (*suññatā*), which is a 4-element meditation.¹⁰⁰ (DhsA 221-223, 290)¹⁰¹

Buddhaghosa adds that **these 3 contemplations that are the entrances to freedom** (*ti anupassanā vimokkha, mukhā*; based on the Paṭisambhidā, magga) lead us out of the world to:

- (1) the seeing of all *formations* as limited and circumscribed and to the entering of consciousness into the signless element (*animitta dhātu*);
- (2) the stirring up of the mind with respect to all *formations* and to the entering of consciousness into the desireless element (*appaṇihita dhātu*);
- (3) the seeing of all *things* (*dhamma*) as alien and to the entering of consciousness into the voidness element (*suññata dhātu*).

(Vism 21.67/657 + 70/658)¹⁰²

8.5.1.5 When insight fully blossoms, it settles down in one of these 3 contemplations (VismMṭ 844). In terms of faculty (*indriya*) (personal spiritual strength):

<u>faith</u>	is strong in one who contemplates much in impermanence ;
<u>concentration</u>	is strong in one who contemplates much in suffering ;
<u>wisdom</u>	is strong in one who contemplates much in nonself . (VismMṭ 844; Vism:Ñ 767 n32)

Therefore, when a person has become proficient in discerning the 32 parts of the body, internally and externally, he can choose to develop any of those 3 entrances.

The first entrance we shall discuss is repulsiveness meditation.

8.5.2 The skeleton meditation

8.5.2.1 To cultivate **meditation on repulsiveness** (*paṭikkūla manasikāra*), we take as object either all 32 body-parts or only one part. Let us look at how to meditate on, for example, the skeleton, the bones, which is one of the 32 body-parts. We should first get into the 4th dhyana to get the mental radiance¹⁰³ for discerning the 32 body-parts in our own body, and then in a being nearby. We should discern thus internally and externally once or twice.

Then, take our internal skeleton as a whole, and discern it with wisdom. When the whole skeleton is clear, take the *repulsiveness* of the skeleton as object, that is, the concept, and note it again and again, as either: “Repulsive, repulsive”; or “Skeleton, skeleton”; or “Repulsive skeleton, repulsive skeleton.” Note it in a language we are familiar with.

We should try to keep our mind calmly concentrated on the object of repulsiveness of the skeleton for one or two hours. Carefully note the colour, shape, position and delimitation (outline) of the skeleton, so that its repulsive nature can arise.

Ideally, we should get into the 4th dhyana, and emerge with the strength and momentum of the 4th-dhyana concentration (based on the mindfulness of breathing). In this way, we will be able to arouse, sustain and develop the perception and knowledge of repulsiveness in the body-parts. Otherwise, says the Visuddhi, magga, even the 1st dhyana concentration suffices for this practice.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ The entrance of colour kasinas is mentioned in these suttas: **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.24-32/2:110 f), SD 9; (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Abhibh'āyatana S** (A 8.65/4:305 f), SD 49.5b, and Abhibh'āyatana Kathā (DhsA 187-190). The entrances of repulsiveness, in the “9 charnel-ground meditations,” **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,7-10/2:295-298, SD 13.2), **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,14-31/1:57-59, SD 13.3; and voidness (of self: the 4 elements), **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,6/2:294 f, SD 13.2), **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,12/1:57, SD 13.3). Further on the perception of voidness, see Pa-Auk 2019:27 + Q&A 5.9 2019: 181.

¹⁰¹ Tr: Dhs:P 299-301, 381 f.

¹⁰² Pm 2:48; cf Dh 277-279 [**Dhamma Niyama S**, A 3.134, SD 26.8].

¹⁰³ This “mental radiance” refers to our calm and clear mind upon emerging from dhyana, even from a good samādhi, with which we can properly see directly into true reality, or start with some new meditation.

¹⁰⁴ Vism 8.141-143/265 f.

8.5.2.2 Once our concentration on the repulsiveness of the skeleton is established, we should drop the perception of “skeleton,” and just be mindful of the repulsiveness. According to the Visuddhi, magga seeing the colour, shape, position, and delimitation of a part is seeing the acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*) [8.3.0.3]. Seeing and discerning the repulsiveness of that body-part is seeing the counter-sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). By concentrating on the counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton, we can attain the 1st dhyana, at which time the 5 dhyana-factors will be present [8.2.5.4].

In this practice, **the dhyana-factors** arise as follows:

- (1) initial application: directing the mind to grasp the counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton
- (2) sustained application: keeping the mind on the counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton
- (3) zest: joy arising from the counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton
- (4) joy: happiness connected with the counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton
- (5) one-pointedness: the unified mind attending counter-sign of the repulsiveness of the skeleton.

8.5.2.3 We may wonder: “How can zest (*pīti*) and joy (*sukha*) arise with the repulsiveness of the skeleton as object?” The answer: Although we are concentrating on the repulsiveness of the skeleton, and experience it as really repulsive, there is happiness (*pīti, sukha*) because we have undertaken this meditation and understood its benefits, that it will eventually bring us freedom from decay, disease, death. **Repulsion** (*nibbidā*) is that wisdom of suffering: we know fire burns and we will never put our bare hand into it. Moreover, our mind has been cleared of the 5 hindrances: we are no more being pushed or pulled around with desire or ill will and their various negative forms.

It’s like a sick person who finally vomits out the toxins that have been causing him suffering, or has purged them all out. He is free of those toxins, and is now careful never to take any kind of food that has such toxins.

8.5.2.4 The Vibhaṅga Commentary explains that when we have attained the 1st dhyana by way of the repulsiveness of the skeleton, we should go on to develop **the 5 masteries** [8.2.5.3] of the 1st dhyana. After that, we should direct the dhyana light of our practice to the nearest person or being, especially someone in front of us as the skeleton object.

We should concentrate on it as being repulsive (*paṭikkūla*), and cultivate this until the dhyana-factors become prominent. Even though they are prominent, according to the Commentary, there is neither access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) nor attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*), because the object is living.¹⁰⁵ If, however, we concentrate on the external skeleton as being dead, we can, according to the Vibhaṅga Root Sub-commentary (VbhMṬ), attain only access concentration.¹⁰⁶

When the dhyana-factors are clear, we should again concentrate on the internal skeleton as repulsive. Do this alternately, once internally then once externally, again and again. When we have meditated like this on the repulsiveness of the skeleton, and it has become deep and fully developed, we should extend our field of discernment in all 10 directions. [8.5.1.3]

Taking one direction at a time, wherever our dhyana light reaches, develop each direction in the same way. We should apply our penetrating knowledge both near and far, in all directions, once internally and once externally. Practise until wherever we look in the 10 directions, we see only skeletons. Once we have succeeded, we are ready to develop the white kasiṇa meditation.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ VbhA §1198/261,1-6.

¹⁰⁶ VbhMṬ (?). Pa-Auk 2019:61 simply states “VbhṬ ibid,” but I cannot find any reference. Despite Pa-Auk 2019 having gone into its 5th rev ed, the referencing problem still remains. Here, eg, I’m unable to locate the VbhMṬ ref despite looking into the Burmese textual sources (Ṭikā). Similar difficulties occur elsewhere in the book: either Pa-Auk or his editors is unfamiliar with modern Pali referencing.

¹⁰⁷ Pa-Auk 2019:59-61.

8.6 THE 10 KASINAS

8.6.1 The 4 colour kasinas

There are **4 colours** used for kasiṇa¹⁰⁸ meditation: blue (*nīla*), yellow, red, and white.¹⁰⁹ The Pali/Sanskrit *nīla* refers to a range of colours “like a rain-cloud” or collyrium, that is, it is polysemous, meaning “grey, black, brown, blue, blue-grey, greenish blue.”¹¹⁰ All 4 kasiṇas can be developed up to the 4th dhyana by using as object the colours of different parts of the body or of natural objects, such as flowers.

According to the *Abhidhamma Commentary*, head hair, body hair and irises of the eyes can be used for the nīla kasiṇa up to the 4th dhyana; fat and urine can be used for the yellow kasiṇa; blood and flesh can be used for the red kasiṇa; and the white parts, bones, teeth, and nails can be used for the white kasiṇa.¹¹¹

8.6.2 The white kasina

8.6.2.1 The suttas say that **the white kasiṇa** is the best of the 4 colour kasiṇas, because it makes the mind clear and bright.¹¹² For that reason, we will here discuss how to cultivate the white kasiṇa. We should first re-establish the 4th dhyana, for that powerful mental radiance [8.5.2.1] after we emerge from it. We should then use this light to discern the 32 body-parts internally and then externally in a being nearby. When we do this, we are to discern them as being *repulsive* [8.5.2.4].

Otherwise, simply discern the external skeleton. Select the whitest area in that skeleton, such as the back of the skull; or, if the whole skeleton is white, focus on the whole skeleton, discerning: “White, white.” Alternatively, if our concentration is really good and sharp, we can, we have again seen the internal skeleton as repulsive. Take the skeleton as white, and use that as our preliminary object, until we attain at least the 1st dhyana.

We may also discern first the repulsiveness in an external skeleton, and make that perception stable and firm, highlighting the white of the skeleton. Then, we switch to the perception of it to: “White, white,” to cultivate the white kasiṇa. Holding the white of the external skeleton as object, we should be able to keep the mind concentrated for one or two hours.

8.6.2.2 Because of the strength and momentum of the 4th-dhyana concentration based on breath meditation, our mind will stay calmly concentrated on the object of **white**. When we are able to concentrate on the white for one or two hours, the skeleton disappears and only a white circle remains.

When this white circle is white like pure cotton wool, it becomes the acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*). When it is bright and clear like the morning star, it is the counter-sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). Before the acquired sign arises, the skeleton-sign from which it arises is the preparatory sign (*parikamma nimitta*).

We should continue to note the kasiṇa as “White, white” until it becomes the counter-sign. Continue concentrating on this counter-sign till we enter the 1st dhyana. We will find, however, that this concentration is not very stable and does not last long. We need **to extend the sign** in order to make it more stable and stay longer.

8.6.2.3 To extend the whiteness, we should concentrate on the white counter-sign for one or two hours. Then, determine to extend the white circle by 1, 2, 3, or 4 inches, depending on our ability. We should *only* try to extend the white circle by first determining its limit, that is, gradually from 1-4 inches.

While expanding the white circle, we may find that it becomes unstable. Whenever this happens, return to noting it as “White, white” to make it stable. As our concentration grows, so will the sign. When the first extended sign has become stable, repeat the process, that is, again determine to extend it by a

¹⁰⁸ On *kasiṇa*, see SD 15.1 (9.2).

¹⁰⁹ See MA 3:257.

¹¹⁰ Vism 5.13/173. On the ancient Indian perception of *nīla*, see SD 15.1 (9.2.2).

¹¹¹ VbhA §§1153 f/250 f.

¹¹² **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29,7/5:62 f), SD 16.15.

couple more inches. This way, we extend the sign in stages, until it is one yard in diameter, then 2 yards, and so on.

Do this until it extends in all 10 directions *around* us, without limit, so that wherever we look, we see only white. Do this until we see no more trace of materiality, whether internal or external. If we have cultivated the white kasiṇa in a past life, especially during the time of our Buddha or some past buddha—that is, we have “white kasiṇa mastery (*pāramī*).” Then, we will not need any effort in extending the counter-sign: as we concentrate on it, it will automatically extend in all the 10 directions.

8.6.2.4 In either case—whether we had past mastery of the kasina or present attainment—we should now keep our mind calmly concentrated on the extended white kasiṇa. When it is stable—just as if we were to hang a hat on a hook in a wall—put our mind in one place in that white kasiṇa. Keep our mind there, and continue to note “White, white.”

When our mind is calm and stable, the white kasiṇa will also be calm and stable. It will be exquisitely white, bright, and clear. This is the counter image created by extending the original white kasiṇa counter image. We must continue meditating fully focused on the white kasina counter image for one or two hours. We should do this until all the 5 dhyana-factors arise prominently, thus:

- (1) initial application: directing the mind to grasp the counter-sign of the white kasina
- (2) sustained application: keeping the mind on the counter-sign of the white kasina
- (3) zest: joy arising from the counter-sign of the white kasina
- (4) joy: happiness connected with the counter-sign of the white kasina
- (5) one-pointedness: the unified mind attending counter-sign of the white kasina.

These are also the dhyana-factors of the 1st dhyana. We have also attained the 5 masteries¹¹³ [8.2.5.3] of the white kasiṇa 1st dhyana. Then, we go on to cultivate the 2nd, the 3rd and the 4th dhyanas, and the masteries of them, too.¹¹⁴

8.6.3 The other colour kasinas¹¹⁵

8.6.3.1 If we have developed the white kasiṇa meditation up to the 4th dhyana using the white of an external skeleton, then, we will also be able to develop nīla kasiṇa using external head hair, the yellow kasiṇa using external fat or urine, and the red kasiṇa using external blood, and so on. We can also use those parts in our own body when they are expedient.

8.6.3.2 Once we are familiar with the colour kasiṇas, we can use the colours of flowers or any suitable external objects. Indeed, flowers with hues of brown, blue, greenish blue or blue-grey, are inviting us to cultivate the nīla kasiṇa [8.6.1]. All **yellow** flowers are inviting us to cultivate the yellow kasiṇa. All **red** flowers are inviting us to cultivate the red kasiṇa. All **white** flowers are inviting us to cultivate the white kasiṇa. A skilled meditator can use so many colours to cultivate kasiṇa concentration, even vipassana, using an object, animate or inanimate, internal or external.

8.7 THE 4 ELEMENTS (KASIṆA)

8.7.0 The element kasinas with dhyana

8.7.0.1 While the 4-element meditations bring only *access concentration* at best [8.3.1.2], **the 4 element-kasina meditations**—the earth kasiṇa, water kasiṇa, fire kasiṇa, wind kasiṇa—*can* bring us all 4 dhyanas (or 5 dhyanas according to Abhidhamma).¹¹⁶ To expedite the practice, we should first do a medita-

¹¹³ See Pa-Auk 2019:44.

¹¹⁴ See Pa-Auk 2019:62-64.

¹¹⁵ On the kasinas, see Pa-Auk 2019:64-66.

¹¹⁶ The Abhidhamma 5-dhyana system differs from the sutta 4-dhyana system in only 1 way: former add another dhyana after the 2nd that has only *sukha* (no *pīti*, but with the other factors): see SD 46.6 (2).

tion we have mastered, such as the breath meditation or the white kasina. Preferably, in keeping with the Pa-Auk tradition, we have mastered the 4 dhyanas; if not, we can start with the 1st dhyana. In each case, as before, we carefully examine the various dhyana-factors, on their advantages and disadvantages. [8.2.5]

8.7.0.2 Having emerged from that dhyana, we then, in our dhyanic mental radiance, bring to mind **the earth kasina**, the mental image of the earth-circle. Focused on it, we note: “Earth, earth” As we do so, we will see the image growing clearer and brighter. When it appears steady, we may (when we are ready) extend the circle in the manner of the colour kasinas [8.6.1]. Mentally, we extend this image all around us until it covers the whole universe, that is, the totality (*kaṣiṇa*) of our consciousness.¹¹⁷

8.7.1 The earth element (*paṭhavī dhātu*)

8.7.1.1 Besides the 4 colour kaṣiṇas [8.6.2], the Pali canon lists a further **6 kaṣiṇas**: those of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and light kasinas.¹¹⁸ The first 4 are, of course, the 4 elements (which, by themselves, do not bring dhyana, only access concentration) [8.6.5.1], and the last 2 are independent but useful kasinas. We shall now continue with the 4 elements meditations.

To cultivate **an element kaṣiṇa**, we begin by quickly reviewing all our previous meditation-subjects. For some meditators, this may include the 4 dhyanas based on the breath, the 32 body-parts [8.5.1], repulsive skeleton [8.5.2], the 4 white-kaṣiṇa dhyanas [8.6.2], the 4 *nīla* kaṣiṇa dhyanas [8.6.1], the 4 yellow kaṣiṇa dhyanas, and the 4 red kaṣiṇa dhyanas. Reading about this review of practices may seem more tedious, but a seasoned meditator will breeze through these practices that they have mastered, like a maestro mentally reviewing a symphony he has to conduct.

8.7.1.2 To develop **the earth kaṣiṇa**, we should find a plot of plain earth, preferably ruddy brown like laterite, potter’s clay or the sky at dawn, and free from sticks, leaves, stones, gravel or debris. Otherwise, some gray, brown or dark ground will do, but its colour should not be confused with that of the *nīla* colour kaṣiṇa [8.6.1].

The location may be in a garden, by the side of a quiet path or in an open field. Then, with a stick or some device, draw a circle about 2-3 feet in diameter.¹¹⁹ Smooth it out, remove as much imperfections as possible. Then, sit comfortably and gaze at the circle of earth before us. This is our meditation object: an earth kasina.

8.7.1.3 Concentrate on it for a while with our eyes open, and **subverbalize** “Earth, earth” This action is also known as “labelling.” Then, close the eyes and visualize the earth kaṣiṇa. We should concentrate neither on the colour of the earth sign, nor the characteristics of hardness, roughness, etc. of the earth element. Instead, we concentrate only on the concept of earth.

It is important neither to hurry nor skip the subverbalizing. This repetitive minding conditions our mind to remember the concept, *earth*, in eidetic or photographic form. This has to be done in as often as possible and many sittings as it takes. It also helps to keep the mind relaxed and thought-free, and focus fully and directly on the object of earth. This is the nature of kasina meditation.

8.7.1.4 Then, leave the physical earth circle and return to the meditation hall or our quarters to sit re-collecting the mental sign, which is now our **earth kaṣiṇa**. Keep focusing only on the bare concept: “Earth, earth.” The earth kaṣiṇa, in time, becomes an acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*) or learning image of the material quality that we call earth.

¹¹⁷ It is odd that Pa Auk, having stated that **the element meditations** can bring us up to only access concentration (Pa-Auk 2019:116, 122, 135, 150 f dhyana cannot be attained with any of the 4 elements, 163) [8.3.1.2], then instruct us here to go on to cultivate up to the 4th dhyana (2019:65).

¹¹⁸ See Pa-Auk 2019:44.

¹¹⁹ Thitapuñño, a forest monk of Ajahn Chah tradition suggests the size of the kasina circle as between 1.5-2 m (5-6.5 ft) in front of us on the ground. See SD 15.1 (9.2).

If we are adept in dhyanas, we should start the earth kasina meditation by first getting to the 4th white-kasina dhyana. Then, having emerged, use the meditation light of that dhyana to look at the earth kasina. When we visualize the earth sign as clearly as we were looking at it with our eyes open, it becomes an acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*), we can then cultivate anywhere else that is suitable.

8.7.1.5 It is vital to visualize a clear image to focus upon. If the image is unclear or fades away, go back to the place of the material-earth kasina, and look at it again as before. The counter-sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) then arises as a clear and steady image in our mind, which will progressively but quickly expand as in a colour kasina [8.6.1].

It will become totally smooth, blemish-free, purified of all imperfections such as spots, sand, ripples, stones or debris. When the *concept* of “earth” is well held in the mind, it should appear as a smooth, luminous and stable disc, with a hint of an earth tone before our mind. Continue to cultivate this acquired image until it becomes pure and clear, and turns into the counter-sign. We should then extend the counter-sign a bit at a time, in all 10 directions. Try your best to cultivate this up to the 4th dhyana.¹²⁰

8.7.1.6 We may then focus on a small spot that is mentally before us, or we can rest in a spacious vision of the fully spread-out earth kasina. Wherever we rest our attention, the mind will remain unmoved, like placing an object on a shelf and coming back later to find it exactly where we have left it. This deep stability is the acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*) of **momentary concentration** (*khaṇika samādhi*).

As we continue to concentrate deeper into the earth element (or any of the other 3 elements), and approach “access concentration” (*upacāra samādhi*) [8.7.0.1], we will see different kinds of lights, such as a smoky grey light. If we continue to concentrate on the element in that grey light, it grows whiter, the colour of cotton wool; then, a bright white, like clouds, and our whole body will appear as a white form. As we continue in our concentration in this way, the mental image of our body eventually becomes translucent (*paṇḍara*) like a block of ice or lightly frosted glass. [11.2.3.3]

8.7.1.7 It should be remembered that, in Pa-Auk’s system, the elements meditation is mainly used in the vipassana practice to gain insight into **the material clusters** (or simply, clusters) [11.2]. This is one of the most interesting and beneficial aspects of his meditation teachings, even though we may not gain dhyana. It is a vital practice for those who, for any reason, do *not* attain dhyana in their practice. This is also significant in highlighting the fact that we do not need dhyana to attain the path by way of **insight practice**, and can use it to reflect impermanence for attaining streamwinning at least.

8.7.2 The water element (*āpo dhātu*)

8.7.2.1 The other elements—water, fire, wind, light and space—are cultivated as kasinas in a very similar way as described for the earth kasina [8.7.1]. The only difference is in the presentation of the initial object. To perceive **the water kasina**, find a dark bowl or bucket, without any decoration, and fill it to the brim with water. A dark vessel reveals the water-surface more clearly than a white or colored bowl, which may then be confused with the white or coloured kasinas. We may use a shallow open well of pure, clear water whose surface can be clearly seen. Concentrate on the *concept* of water as “Water, water” until we get the counter-sign, and then cultivate it as we did the earth kasina.

8.7.2.2 Alternatively, we can sit on the edge of a natural body of water, such as a still pond or lake. Observe the water-surface and contemplate the *concept* of “water.” Disregard the characteristics of coldness, wetness, bubbles, ripples, surface reflections, fish, water-plants, algae or any scientific notions about H₂O. Do not think about things that are conventionally related to water, such as wondering about washing oneself; how much water we drank today; or thinking of how thirsty we are.

¹²⁰ See PA-Auk 2019:64 f.

Just gaze at the water-surface until the image remains clear when we close our eyes. Then, progress as we have done with the other elements. It helps to subverbalize: “Water, water ...,” a few times to direct our attention to just *water* until a shimmering, whitish disc appears as the counter-sign of water. [8.7.1.3]

The rest of the method—including for those adept in dhyanas—is basically the same as for the earth kasina [8.7.1].

8.7.3 The fire element (*tejo dhātu*)

8.7.3.1 For the fire kasina, its ideal basis is a wood fire, since wood burns with a memorable ruddy flame. Even if we are unable to build such a fire for our meditation, we can just as well visualize fire that we have seen, say, a wood-burning stove, a bonfire, a campfire, or a bonfire. To help our recall such a fire, we may glance at a burning candle or the pilot light on a stove.

If we are unable to visualize the fire, then, can make a screen with a circular hole in it about one foot across. Put the screen in front of (not too near) a wood-fire or grass-fire, so we see only the flames through the hole. Ignore the smoke and burning parts, and focus on the concept of fire as “Fire, fire” until we get the acquired sign, and then cultivate it as for the earth kasina. [8.7.1]

8.7.3.2 Focus on the part of the flame that is ruddy-orange and relatively steady. Don’t look at the ashes, smoke or blue spots, nor analyze the kind of fuel that is burning, such as wood, paper, oil, wax and so on. Also, do not highlight any aspects of its colour.

It helps to subverbalize: “Fire, fire ...,” a few times to direct our attention to the basic *concept* of fire, until we perceive a ruddy-orange disc [8.7.1.3]. Fully focus on that fire kasina. Cultivate and expand the counter-sign of fire in the usual way [8.7.1] until it becomes a steady support for concentration.

The rest of the method—including for those adept in dhyanas—is basically the same as for the earth kasina [8.7.1].

8.7.4 The wind element (*vāyo dhātu*)

8.7.4.1 The wind kasina cannot be seen directly, but is known through the sense of sight or touch,¹²¹ that is, through its *effects*, such as seeing swaying branches, moving grasses, or feeling a draft entering through a crack in a door, its touch on our skin, or our hair moved by its flow. We should concentrate on the wind coming in through a window or door, touching the body; or the sight of leaves, branches or debris moving in the wind.

Concentrate on the concept as “Wind, wind” or “Air, air,” until we get the acquired image, that is, as a soft white disk, like the hue of steam wafting off a pot of boiling milk or hot milk-rice.

8.7.4.2 If we are adept in the dhyanas, we can discern the wind sign by attaining the 4th dhyana with another kasina object, especially the 4th white kasina dhyana, and using the light of that dhyana, see this movement externally

The rest of the method—including for those adept in dhyanas—is basically the same as for the earth kasina [8.7.1].

8.8 THE 2 INDEPENDENT “ELEMENTS”

8.8.1 The perception of light (*āloka saññā*)

8.8.1.1 The perception of light, as done with the light kasina, begins with a perception of an indirect light, such as rays of light streaming into the room through a crack in the wall, and falling on the floor; or sunrays beaming through the foliage and falling onto the ground, or rays of light streaming into a room through a crack in the wall and falling onto the floor, or we look up through an opening in the tree foliage

¹²¹ Vimm 8.54 (Vimm:Ñ 1:360).

at the light in the sky above. It is important to sit comfortably and not strain the neck when doing this; hence, preferably, the light should be just before us in plain sight.

Alternatively, we may also focus on shafts of light falling on a wall, or floodlights illuminating a parking lot, or stage lights spotlighting a theatrical performance. Some lights may have a coloured cast; others may reflect the colors of nearby objects. Do not be concerned with the shape of the light that is cast, the object it illuminates, its degree of brightness, or the contours of shadows, or any other thoughts connected with it. Stay with only the concept of “Light, light ...”

We may notice a beam of light coming through the window at such an angle that it reveals thousands of dust particles. Don’t be distracted by the particles; keep our attention to the perception of light. Focus on the idea of light, rather than on its effects.

If we are unable to visualize it, we can put a candle or lamp inside an earthen pot, and place the pot in such a way that light-rays shine out of the opening of the pot, and fall upon the wall or the floor, where it can be clearly and comfortably seen. Concentrate on the circle of light as a concept, as “Light, light” till we get the acquired sign, and then cultivate as for the earth kasina. [8.7.1]

8.8.1.2 Subverbalize, “Light, light ...,” to keep our attention on just this concept, until the sign (*nimitta*) appears as a field of whitish light. Hold the sign until it becomes stable, and then extend the circle so our concentration deepens, using the same method described for the earth element [8.7.1]. The light kasina appears as a field of whitish light, but it is the aspect of light itself, not the hue of whiteness, that grips perception. [8.7.1.3]

8.8.2 The perception of space (*ākāsa saññā*)

8.8.2.1 To develop the perception of space—more exactly, the limited-space kasina—look at the space in a small doorway, a window, a hole in the wall, or even a keyhole. We perceive the space delimited by its environment, not the environment itself. Feel the space and subverbalize: “Space, space ...” [8.7.1.3] mindfully perceiving the space with eyes open at first. After a while, close our eyes to visualize that space.

Go on doing this: periodically, seeing the space with *open* eyes, and, periodically, with *closed* eyes, until it is experienced mentally as a disc of white light (which is usually less intense than the white kasina, neither as bright as the light kasina, nor as soft as the wind kasina. There is also a *feeling* that we are bodyless and spacious like that space we have perceived.

8.8.2.2 Pa-Auk used a piece of black cardboard with a circle about a foot in diameter cut into it. He held the cardboard at arm’s length before an area of the sky clear of clouds, tree-tops, roof-tops, only the clear sky, and recited the words, “Space, space ...”¹²² Such a kasina device can be fixed to a suitable stand placed strategically before us so that we can see space in the manner described.

8.8.2.3 If this still does not work, a simple alternative is to sit on some safe vantage point where we can see **open space** before us, such as above the sea, looking at the clear sky. Perceive the space as an idea, “Space, space ...,” and *feel* the spaciousness (with eyes closed). Go on doing this as described earlier [8.8.2.1].

This, technically, is not “limited-space kasina,” but, properly done, it can arouse dhyana in us. Even merely perceiving such space can “free” our meditation when we are bogged down by some mental hindrance. Properly done, this perception may assist in overcoming the fear of close spaces (claustrophobia).

¹²² Catherine 2011:128.

8.9 THE 4 FORMLESS ATTAINMENTS (*SAMĀPATTI*)

8.9.0 Pa-Auk explains the 4 formless attainments and how to progress through them in *Knowing And Seeing* (2019:66-69). They are also described at some length in Snyder & Rasmussen, *Practising Jhānas* (2009: chs 5 + 6).

Once we have attained the 4 dhyanas with each of the 10 kasiṇas, we can proceed to cultivate the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*), also called “the 4 immaterial states” (*ārūppa*), which are:

(1) the base of boundless space	<i>ākāsānañc’āyatana</i>
(2) the base of boundless consciousness	<i>viññānāñc’āyatana</i>
(3) the base of nothingness	<i>ākīñcaññ’āyatana</i>
(4) the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception	<i>n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana</i>

We can cultivate these formless attainments with any of the kasiṇas except the space kasiṇa. Since space is not form (materiality), the space kasiṇa cannot be used to surmount the kasiṇa materiality to attain a formless (immaterial) dhyana.

8.9.1 The base of boundless space (*ākāsānañc’āyatana*)

8.9.1.1 To cultivate the 4 formless attainments, we should first reflect upon the **disadvantages of materiality** or form. The human body produced by the sperm and egg of our parents is called the “created body” (*karaja,kāya*) or “karma-born body.”¹²³ Since we have a karmic body, we are open to assault with weapons such as knives, spears and bullets; to being hit, beaten and tortured; and to decay, disease, death. So we should consider with wisdom that because we have a created body made of materiality, we are subject to various kinds of suffering, and that if we can be free of that materiality, we can also be free of suffering.

Even though the 4th formless attainment surpasses gross physical materiality, it is still based on it: all the 4 formless attainments are progressively refined forms of the 4th form dhyana. Hence, we need to surmount kasiṇa materiality. Having considered thus, and having no desire for kasiṇa materiality, we should attain the 4th dhyana with one of the 9 kasiṇas (that is, omitting the space kasiṇa). We may, for example, use the earth kasiṇa to attain dhyana, emerge from it, and reflect on its disadvantages: it is based on materiality, which we no longer desire; it has joy of the 3rd dhyana as its near enemy; and it is grosser than the 4 formless attainments.

8.9.1.2 However, we do not need to reflect on the **disadvantages of the mental formations** (the 2 dhyana-factors) in the 4th dhyana, because they are the same as those in the formless attainments. With no desire now for the 4th form dhyana, we should also reflect on the more peaceful nature of the formless attainments.

Then, we extend our meditation sign, say, of the earth kasiṇa, so that it is *boundless*, or as much as we wish, and replace the kasiṇa materiality with **the space** it occupies, by concentrating on the concept of space as “Space, space” or “Boundless space, boundless space.” What remains is the boundless space formerly occupied by the kasiṇa.

If we are unable to do this, we should discern and concentrate on the space of one place in the earth-kasiṇa sign, and then extend it up to the infinite universe. As a result, the entire earth-kasiṇa sign is replaced by boundless space. We continue to concentrate on the boundless space sign, until we reach dhyana, and then cultivate the 5 masteries [8.2.5.3]. This is the 1st formless attainment (*arūpa samāpatti*), also called the base of boundless space.¹²⁴

¹²³ *Karaja,kāya Brahma,viḥāra S* (A 10.208), SD 2.10 (title n).

¹²⁴ See *Ākāsānañc’āyatana Pañha S* (S 40.5), SD 24.15.

8.9.2 The base of boundless consciousness (*viññānāñc'āyatana*)

8.9.2.1 The 2nd formless attainment, also called **the base of boundless consciousness**, has as its object the base-of-boundless-space consciousness, which has boundless space as its meditation object. To cultivate the base of boundless consciousness, we should reflect on the disadvantages of the base of boundless space: it has the 4th form dhyana as its near enemy, and is not as peaceful as the base of boundless consciousness.

8.9.2.2 With no desire now for *the base of boundless space*, we should also reflect on the more peaceful nature of **the base of boundless consciousness**. We then concentrate again and again on the consciousness that has boundless space as its object, and note it as “Boundless consciousness, boundless consciousness” or simply, “Consciousness, consciousness”

We continue to concentrate on the boundless-consciousness sign, until we reach dhyana, and then cultivate the 5 masteries [8.2.5.3]. This then is the 2nd formless attainment, also called the base of boundless consciousness.¹²⁵

8.9.3 The base of nothingness (*ākāṅkṣāññ'āyatana*)

8.9.3.1 The 3rd formless attainment, also called **the base of nothingness**, has as its object the absence of the consciousness that had boundless space as its object, and which was itself the object of the base of boundless consciousness. To cultivate the base of nothingness, we should reflect on the disadvantages of the base of boundless consciousness: it has *the base of boundless space* as its near enemy¹²⁶ but is not as peaceful as *the base of nothingness*.

8.9.3.2 With no desire now for *the base of boundless consciousness*, we should also reflect on the more peaceful nature of **the base of nothingness**. Then, we concentrate on the absence of the consciousness that had boundless space as its object. There were 2 dhyana consciousnesses: first, the consciousness of base of boundless space, and then that of the base of boundless consciousness.

Two consciousnesses cannot arise in one and the same mind-moment.¹²⁷ When the consciousness of the base of boundless space was present, the other consciousness could not be present, too, and vice versa. So, we take the absence of the consciousness of the base of boundless-space as object, and note it as “Nothingness, nothingness” or “Absence, absence.”

We continue to concentrate on that sign, until we reach dhyana, and cultivate the 5 masteries [8.2.5.3] for this state. This then is the 3rd formless attainment, also called the base of nothingness.¹²⁸

8.9.4 The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva,saññā,nāsaññ'āyatana*)

8.9.4.1 The 4th formless attainment is also called **the base of neither perception nor non-perception**. That is because the perception in this dhyana is extremely subtle. In fact, all the mental formations in this dhyana are so subtle that there is neither feeling nor non-feeling, neither consciousness nor non-consciousness, neither contact nor non-contact, etc, the dhyana is explained in terms of perception, since it had as its object the consciousness of the base of nothingness.¹²⁹

8.9.4.2 To cultivate the base of neither perception nor non-perception, we should reflect on the disadvantages of the base of nothingness: it has *the base of boundless consciousness* as its near enemy, and

¹²⁵ See *Viññānāñc'āyatana Pañha S* (S 40.6), SD 24.16.

¹²⁶ Meaning that the base of nothingness is more refined the preceding base, but not as refined as the next one.

¹²⁷ “Mind-moment” (*citta-k,khaṇa*) is a more convenient term than “consciousness-moment,” which Pa-Auk uses in his book (2019). We have used the former through this study.

¹²⁸ See *Ākāṅkṣāññ'āyatana Pañha S* (S 40.7), SD 24.17.

¹²⁹ For a discussion also with different signs in mindfulness of breath, see Pa-Auk 2019:38.

is not as peaceful as the base of *neither perception nor non-perception*. Furthermore, perception is a disease, a boil and a dart. With no desire now for the base of nothingness, we should also reflect on the more peaceful nature of the base of neither perception nor non-perception.

Then concentrate again and again on the consciousness of the base of nothingness as “Peaceful, peaceful.” Continue to concentrate on the “Peaceful, peaceful” sign until we reach the next attainment, and, then, refining the 5 masteries all over again. This then is the 4th formless attainment, also called the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.¹³⁰

9 The 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*)

9.0 Developing deep concentration enables us to see directly into true reality, but we may lose this ability or we may develop a lop-sided “wisdom” attitude with neither positive emotions nor even humanity. We must protect this wisdom by harmonizing it with **the 4 divine abodes** (*cattāro brahma, vihārā*) and the 4 protective meditations (*catur-ārakkhā bhāvanā*) [10].

In this section, we will learn how to cultivate **the 4 divine abodes**, which are:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| (1) lovingkindness | (love) ¹³¹ | <i>mettā</i> |
| (2) compassion | (ruth) | <i>karuṇā</i> |
| (3) joy | (joy) | <i>muditā</i> |
| (4) equanimity | (peace) | <i>upekkhā</i> |

9.1 CULTIVATION OF LOVINGKINDNESS

9.1.1 How to cultivate lovingkindness

9.1.1.1 In the traditional practice, the people to whom we should cultivate **lovingkindness** are as follows:

- (1) *ourselves* (*attā*);
- (2) a dear person: someone whom we like and respect (*piya puggala*);
- (3) a neutral [indifferent] person: someone for whom we have no feelings (*majjhata puggala*);
- (4) someone we dislike (a hated person) (*appiya puggala*).

Note that the first subject of our lovingkindness is ourselves. To cultivate **lovingkindness** (*mettā*), we must ensure that we do *ourselves* have lovingkindness, that we are capable of generating this unconditional acceptance of others, including ourselves. In other words, we should begin with ourselves, ensuring that we are not burdened or overshadowed by any sense of self-hate, guilt, fear or any other negative emotions, especially from religious conditioning or emotional trauma.

9.1.1.2 Just as charity begins at home, lovingkindness begins with “**unconditional self-love**.” Notice that if we say “self-love,” it sounds rather self-centred or selfish. But it is unconditional, in the sense that there are no conditions attached: “I love and accept myself just as I am,” “I forgive myself for all that I have done which I should *not* have done,” “I forgive myself for not doing what I should *have* done,” and so on.

This cultivation (like any of the others in this divine abode) may be done with mental words (subverbalization) or visualization of happy memories, or both. The subverbalization [8.7.1.3] should be done slowly, mindfully, repeating just 1-2 short sentences (as above) a couple of times; then, feel the sentiments of those words; smile within. [8.7.1.3]

¹³⁰ See **N’eva, saññā, nāsaññā’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.8), SD 24.18.

¹³¹ On the usage of “love, ruth, joy, peace,” see SD 38.5 (2.3.2.1); SD 48.1 (5.2.1.3).

If, for any reason, we are unable to begin with showing lovingkindness to ourselves, we should begin with the 2nd stage, that is, to the dear person. Then, near the end of the session, or in place of the “disliked person,” we should direct lovingkindness to ourselves. In time, we should work to uncover and heal our inability to show unconditional self-love. Indeed, our meditation may even help us discover the conditions that bring this about, and deal with them.

9.1.1.3 The 2nd stage of our lovingkindness cultivation is to a **dear person**. It is vital to understand that we should not try to direct lovingkindness to someone we may be sensually or sexually drawn to (whether of the opposite sex or the same sex), or to someone we are emotionally attached to or involved with. We would be arousing lust and blissfully wallowing in it without realizing that it is *not* lovingkindness.

Nor should we direct our lovingkindness to a dead person, since that person is no more around. Directing lovingkindness to a dead person may also arouse *fear* or *doubt*, especially when we feel guilty towards that person for any reason, or are superstitious. Hence, we cannot attain dhyana with a dead person as the meditation object.

For a dead person, it is proper to dedicate merits to them at the end of our meditation. For those who have attained nirvana, like the Buddha and the arhats, it is proper that we practise the recollection of the Buddha or of the sangha.

We may, however, cultivate lovingkindness toward persons of the opposite sex (or the same sex) after we have attained dhyana (when we have no lustful feelings, at least temporarily). We may also show them lovingkindness as a group: “May all women be happy,” “May all men be happy.”

9.1.1.4 At the start, we should cultivate lovingkindness towards only the first two: ourselves and the person we like or respect. This means that at the start, we should *not* direct lovingkindness towards a person we do not like or hate, one very dear to us, or one we are indifferent to/hate. By staying focused with just the first 2 persons, it will be easier for us to concentrate on cultivating lovingkindness.

Beginners will find it difficult to cultivate lovingkindness to a **neutral person**, especially when we have no connection with that person. The 4th person—**someone we dislike**—who may have hurt or harm us or those near and dear to us. Hence, thinking of this kind of person, anger may arise instead.

9.1.1.5 Interestingly, we cannot attain dhyana using ourselves as the object, no matter how long we do this. Why then do we start the cultivation of lovingkindness with ourselves? The idea is to be familiar with the wholesome emotion of lovingkindness, “May I be happy,” which is, normally, very easy seeing oneself positively. Then, we are able to identify with others: just as we want to be well and happy, so do they, too. Just as we want to live long and not die, so do they. This is called **the golden rule** (that of wholesome reciprocity), which is also the universal basis for the morality of keeping the precepts.¹³²

When we cultivate lovingkindness to ourselves, we also arouse **joy** in us which makes it easier for us to keep the moral precepts and to meditate. Hence, we should begin our lovingkindness meditation with these 4 thoughts:¹³³

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (1) May I be free from danger. | <i>aham̐ avero homi</i> |
| (2) May I be free from suffering [mental pain]. ¹³⁴ | <i>abyāpajjo¹³⁵ homi</i> |
| (3) May I be free from misery [physical pain]. | <i>anīgho homi</i> |
| (4) May I be well and happy. | <i>sukhī attānaṃ pariharāmi</i> |

Once our mind or heart is radiantly joyful with love, kindness, and empathy, we are ready to cultivate lovingkindness to others, too.¹³⁶

¹³² See **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,6-12), SD 1.5; Dh 129 f.

¹³³ From *imā sattā averā avyāpajjhā anīghā sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu*, **Sā;eyyaka S** (M 41,14/1:288,27), SD 5.7).

¹³⁴ The words in [square brackets] here and the foll are Pa Auk’s tr. The words *avyāpajja* [Be *abyāpajja*] and *anīgha* are polysemous: see the 2 prec nn.

¹³⁵ On *abyāpajja* or *abyāpajjha* (also *avyāpajja*, *avyāpajjha*), “non-ill will,” see **(Iti) Vitakka S** (It 38,3), SD 55.9.

¹³⁶ See Pa-Auk 2019:81-83.

9.1.2 Cultivating lovingkindness by person

9.1.2.1 When we have attained the 4th dhyana, especially through the white kasina-dhyana [8.6.2], we should be able to emerge from it with mental radiance, and go on to cultivate lovingkindness up to dhyana with ease.¹³⁷ With 4th-dhyana concentration, the mind is temporarily purified of greed, hatred, delusion, and other defilements.

Having just emerged from dhyana, the mind is pliant, workable, pure and radiant, and because of this, we will quickly arouse perfect lovingkindness to whomever we wish, even those we have not liked, what more those who are dear and respected by us. We should visualize this last person as standing or sitting a few yards before us, and we direct these 4 thoughts to that image:

- (1) May this good person be free from danger.
- (2) May this good person be free from suffering [mental pain].
- (3) May this good person be free from misery [physical pain].
- (4) May this good person be well and happy.

9.1.2.2 We may, of course, begin with attaining **the 1st dhyana**, or even some pre-dhyana level of concentration, with a calmly focused mind, radiate our lovingkindness with those 4 sentences [9.1.2.1], slowly repeating each 3-4 times each time. Then, choose the one that we like best, for example, “May this good person be free from danger.” Then, with a new image of that person, in this case *free from danger*, direct lovingkindness using that same sentence, repeating it again and again: “May this person be free from danger”

Keep up the focused repetition until the mind is steadily fixed on the object, and we are able to discern the dhyana-factors [8.2.5.4]. Once we have attained the 1st dhyana, stay with it long enough to be familiar with it. We should keep on attaining the dhyana for a few months to be sure we are good at it. Then, when we feel ready, go on to master the 2nd dhyana in the same manner. Then, the 3rd dhyana, and then the 4th dhyana in the same way. Each time, we cultivate lovingkindness in the very same manner, and working on the 5 masteries [8.2.5.3] each time.

9.1.2.3 When we have succeeded with a person we like and respect, we do it again with another person of our own sex whom we **like and respect**. Try doing this with about 10 people of the same type, until we can reach the 3rd dhyana using any of them. By this stage, we can safely go on to other people, still of our own sex, who are **very dear to us** (*atippiya sahāyaka*), such as our partners, spouses, parents or children.

Take about 10 people of that type, and cultivate lovingkindness towards them one by one, in the same way, until the 3rd dhyana. Then, we can also take about 10 people of our own sex whom we are **indifferent** to, and in the same way develop lovingkindness towards them until the 3rd dhyana.

We will by now have mastered the lovingkindness dhyana to such an extent that we can, in the same way, cultivate it towards about 10 people of our own sex whom we **hate**.

Cultivating lovingkindness in this way, that is, by gaining concentration up to the 3rd dhyana on each type of people, progressively from one to the next, from the easiest to the more difficult, we make our mind increasingly soft, pliant, workable, radiant, until we are finally able to attain dhyana on any of the 4 types: those we like and respect, those very dear to us, those we are indifferent to, and those we hate.

9.1.3 Breaking the barriers

9.1.3.1 As we continue to thus cultivate lovingkindness, we will find that our **lovingkindness** towards those people we *like and respect*, and those *very dear* to us, becomes even the other kinds of people. We may take them to be the same kind of people to us. We are left with the original 4 types of person, that is:

- (1) *ourselves*

¹³⁷ See also Pa-Auk 2019:72-77 Q&A 2.2.

- (2) a dear person: someone whom we like and respect
- (3) a neutral [indifferent] person: someone for whom we have no feelings
- (4) someone we dislike (a hated person). [9.1.1.1]

We must continue cultivating lovingkindness towards these 4 kinds of people until it feels balanced and without distinctions. Even though we cannot attain lovingkindness dhyana with ourself as meditation object, we still need to include ourself in order to balance the 4 types. To do this, we need to re-establish the 4th dhyana, especially the white-kasiṇa 4th dhyana. [8.6.2]

9.1.3.2 Otherwise, the 1st dhyana, or at least some level of concentration will do, to start with. On emerging from dhyana, with our mental radiance, direct the lovingkindness to ourself for about a minute; then, towards someone we like; then, to someone we feel indifferent to; and then someone we hate—each one up to the 3rd dhyana.

Then, briefly direct to ourself again, and the other 3 types with a different person or persons in each case. Remember to cultivate thus with each of the 4 phrases, “May this good person be free from danger,” and so on, each up to the 3rd dhyana.

Thus, each time, we should direct lovingkindness to a different person in each of the 3 types: a person we like, one we are indifferent to, and one we hate. Do this again and again, with different groups of four, many times, so that our mind is continuously cultivating lovingkindness without interruption, without distinctions. When we are able to cultivate lovingkindness dhyana towards any of the 3 persons without distinction, we will have achieved what is called “**breaking down the barriers**” (*bheda*).¹³⁸

9.1.4 The categories of beings

9.1.4.1 Once we have mastered cultivating lovingkindness to all the 5 levels—to ourself, a dear person, a neutral person, someone we hate, and breaking the barriers—we can go on to further develop our lovingkindness with the method taught by the arhat Sāriputta as recorded in **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**.¹³⁹ His method comprises **22 categories** by which we extend our lovingkindness, that is: 5 unspecified categories (*anodhiso pharaṇā*), 7 specified categories (*odhiso pharaṇā*) and 10 directional categories (*pharaṇā*). Instead of the word “cultivation” (*bhāvanā*), the term “radiation” (*disā pharaṇā*) is used here.

(1) The 5 unspecified categories (*anodhiso pharaṇā*) or method of mettā radiation are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (1) all beings | <i>sabbe sattā</i> |
| (2) all life [breathe] | <i>sabbe pāṇā</i> |
| (3) all creatures | <i>sabbe bhūtā</i> |
| (4) all people | <i>sabbe puggalā</i> |
| (5) all that have a personality | <i>sabbe atta, bhava, pariyāpannā</i> |

(2) The 7 specified categories (*odhiso pharaṇā*) are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| (6) all women | <i>sabbā itthiyo</i> |
| (7) all men | <i>sabbe purisā</i> |
| (8) all noble ones | <i>sabbe ariyā</i> |
| (9) all who are not noble ones | <i>sabbe anariyā</i> |
| (10) all devas | <i>sabbe devā</i> |

¹³⁸ On breaking the barriers, see SD 38.5 (7.2.2).

¹³⁹ Pm 14/2:130-139, *Metta Kathā* (Pm:Ñ 317-323). Qu at Vism 9.49-58/309-311. For a sutta analysis and an Abhidhamma analysis of the 4 divine abodes, see Vbh ch 13/272-284 *Appamañña Vibhaṅga*.

(3) The 10 directional categories (*disā pharaṇā*) are:¹⁴⁰

(13) in the eastern quarter	<i>puratthimāya disāya</i>
(14) in the western quarter	<i>pacchimāya disāya</i>
(15) in the northern quarter	<i>uttarāya disāya</i>
(16) in the southern quarter	<i>dakkhiṇāya disāya</i>
(17) in the southeastern direction	<i>puratthimāya anudisāya</i> ¹⁴¹
(18) in the northeastern direction	<i>pacchimāya anudisāya</i>
(19) in the northwestern direction	<i>uttarāya anudisāya</i>
(20) in the southwestern direction	<i>dakkhiṇāya anudisāya</i>
(21) in the quarter below	<i>heṭṭhimāya disāya</i>
(22) in the quarter above	<i>uparimāya disāya</i>

9.1.4.2 To cultivate lovingkindness in these ways, we should, as before, first attain the white-kasina 4th dhyana [8.6.2]. Then, we cultivate lovingkindness towards ourself, a person we respect or who is dear to us, one we are indifferent to, and one we hate, until there are no barriers between them and us. Then, we use the meditative radiance to see all the beings in the building or vicinity, to cover as large an area as we can visualize. Once the beings are clearly seen, we can cultivate lovingkindness towards them according to **the 5 unspecified categories**, and **the 7 specified categories** (that is, the 12 categories of beings).

For each category, we should radiate lovingkindness in the usual 4 ways:

- (1) May **they** be free from danger.
- (2) May **they** be free from suffering [mental pain].
- (3) May **they** be free from misery [physical pain].
- (4) May **they** be well and happy.

“They” is, in each case, *one* of our 12 categories: all beings, all life, etc. Thus, we will be radiating lovingkindness in a total of 48 ways:

(5 specified categories + 7 unspecified categories) x 4 radiations = **48 ways**.

9.1.4.3 At this stage, Pa-Auk says that the beings in each of these categories should be clearly seen in the meditative radiance of our mind. For example, when we extend lovingkindness to all **women**, we should actually see (visualize) them within that area. We should also be able to see **the men, devas, beings in lower realms**, etc, in the determined area.

This is usually impossible for any ordinary person, but Pa-Auk is referring to someone who has attained the 4th dhyana or at least the 1st dhyana, and is cultivating the next 3 dhyanas.¹⁴² These dhyanas have to be well developed before we can master the radiation of lovingkindness in all 48 ways.¹⁴³

Once we are proficient in this way, we should expand the determined area to include the whole monastery, the whole village, the whole township, the whole state, the whole country, the whole world, the

¹⁴⁰ Cf *catasso disā ca catasso anudisā ca heṭṭhā uparī ti dasa pi disā anuviloketvā*, “having surveyed the 10 directions, that is, the 4 quarters, the 4 intermediate directions, the nadir and the zenith” (J 1:53,14; cf D 1:222 = A 3:368; D 1:259 f; S 1:122 = 3:124; A 4:167,9; Vbh 272; MA 1:261,29; DA 1:194,3 UA 178,20).

¹⁴¹ This and the next 3 phrases, lit tr: *puratthimāya anudisāya*, “eastern intermediate direction”; *pacchimāya anudisāya*, “western intermediate direction”; *uttarāya anudisāya*, “northern intermediate direction”; *dakkhiṇāya anudisāya*, “southern intermediate direction.”

¹⁴² Pa-Auk’s instructions on these dhyanas in connection with the meditations described in his book, *Knowing And Seeing* (2019) is not always clear or consistent. For example, the meditator is said to have attained the 4th dhyana; then, he is said to start with the 1st dhyana (eg pp 59 f).

¹⁴³ “This does not mean that the yogi can actually see every single woman, man, deva etc, within the determined area: it means that the yogi should extend loving-kindness with the intention that it is for every single woman, man, deva etc, and that insofar as he can, he should see them all.” (2019:87 n166)

whole solar system, the whole galaxy, and the whole of the infinite universe. Develop each of the expanded areas in the 48 ways up to the 3rd dhyana.

9.1.5 Cultivating lovingkindness in the 10 directions

9.1.5.1 The suttas teach us the cultivation of lovingkindness in 2 ways: **the personal method** [9.1.2-9.1.4] and **the directional method**, which we will now examine. The “**directions**” (*disa*) refers to the 10 directions—the 4 cardinal quarters, the 4 intermediate directions, the nadir and the zenith.¹⁴⁴ Technically, they refer to the 48 categories in each of the 10 directions. According to Pa-Auk, we “should see all beings in the whole of the infinite universe” in each of the 10 directions in the 48 ways.

That way, we now get $10 \times 48 = 480$ categories of beings. When we add the original 48 categories of pervasion, we get a total of $480 + 48 = 528$ ways of categories of beings to direct our lovingkindness to! This is the kind of fact or statement that would move crowds and attract a huge following, and is an excellent teaching and religious strategy in Abhidhamma imagination. Clearly here, we are following Pa-Auk’s teaching, as his students would clearly say.

9.1.5.2 In contrast, we are reminded of the Buddha’s encouragement in **the Okkha Sutta** (S 20.4) that when we cultivate lovingkindness “even for a moment that it takes to milk a cow by a pull at the udder-teat,” is better than giving a hundred pots of food morning, noon and evening;¹⁴⁵ and in **the Cūḷ’accharā Sutta** (A 1.6.3-5) that when a monk cultivates a thought of lovingkindness “for the moment of a finger-snap,” he acts in keeping with the Teacher’s teaching, and eats not the country’s alms in vain.¹⁴⁶

9.2 CULTIVATION OF COMPASSION

9.2.1 Cultivating compassion to the suffering

9.2.1.1 Once we have cultivated lovingkindness as described [9.1], it should not be difficult to cultivate the divine abode of **compassion** (*karuṇā*). To cultivate compassion, we should first select a living person of our own sex who is suffering. We should arouse compassion for him by reflecting on his suffering.

Then, attain the 4th dhyana with the white kasiṇa, to emerge with the clear radiance and use it to see that person. Then, cultivate lovingkindness up to the 3rd dhyana; emerge from it, cultivate compassion towards that suffering person with the thought, “May this good person be released from suffering” (*ayaṃ sappuriso dukkha muccatu*).

9.2.1.2 Do this as many times as possible until we attain the 1st, 2nd and 3rd dhyanas, and duly cultivate the 5 masteries [8.2.5.3] of each. After that, we should cultivate compassion as we did lovingkindness, that is, towards a person we like, to one we are indifferent to, to one we hate, and *finally to ourself*.¹⁴⁷ With each of the first 3 persons, we cultivate compassion up to the 3rd dhyana, until all barriers have been broken down.

9.2.2 Cultivating compassion to the unseen sufferer

9.2.2.1 To cultivate compassion towards beings who are **not suffering in an apparent way**, that is, suffering unseen, we should reflect on the fact that all unawakened beings are liable to feeling the effects of

¹⁴⁴ The term “quarters” actually covers the intermediate zones, too, but is added clearly with the understanding that the directional spaces get progressively vaster in the outer perimeters. The terms “nadir” (lowest point) and “zenith” (highest point) are here used for brevity: they refer to the quarter below and the quarter above respectively.

¹⁴⁵ **Okkha S** (S 20.4), SD 2.14.

¹⁴⁶ **Cūḷ’accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5), SD 2.13. On a moment’s practice, see SD 38.5 (2.2).

¹⁴⁷ Pa-Auk does not include this last person. On the significance of the 1st subject of compassion (which is *not* ourself), see SD 38.5 (4).

what they have done in this endless rounds of rebirths. For example, all unawakened beings who have not gained the path are liable to be reborn in the lower realms. Hence, every being is worthy of compassion, because they are not free from the suffering of *decay, disease and death*.

9.2.2.2 After reflecting thus, we should once again start with cultivating lovingkindness; then, cultivate compassion as before [9.2.1] towards the usual 3 types of persons, and *finally to oneself*. With each of the first 3 persons, we cultivate compassion up to the 3rd dhyana, until the barriers have been broken down.

After that, we should cultivate compassion in the same 132 ways we cultivated lovingkindness, namely: 5 unspecified categories, 7 specified categories, and 120 directional categories: $5 + 7 + (10 \times 12) = 132$.

9.3 CULTIVATION OF JOY

9.3.1 To cultivate the divine abode of **joy** (*muditā*), we should select a living person of our own sex who is happy, the sight of whom makes us happy, and whom we are very fond of and friendly with. Then, work to gain the 4th dhyana with the white kasiṇa. Emerge from it, and direct the brilliant mental radiance to see that person, and then cultivate the 3rd lovingkindness dhyana.

Emerge from it and cultivate compassion dhyana. Emerge from that, and cultivate joy towards the happy person with the thought: “May this good person not be separated from the prosperity he has attained.” As with the cultivation of compassion, we put *ourselves* as the last person.¹⁴⁸

9.3.2 Do this many times, again and again, until we attain the 1st, then the 2nd, and then the 3rd dhyanas, and the 5 masteries for each of them. Then, cultivate the joy-dhyana towards the usual 3 types of person with *ourselves* last [9.3.1]: and with those first 3 persons, we cultivate joy up to the 3rd dhyana, until the barriers have been broken down.

Finally, cultivate joy towards all beings in the whole universe in the 132 ways. [9.2.2.2]

9.4 CULTIVATION OF EQUANIMITY

9.4.1 To cultivate the divine abode of **equanimity** (*upekkhā*), we should first attain the 4th dhyana with the white kasiṇa. Then, emerging from it, in the mental radiance, choose a living person of our own sex, towards whom we are indifferent, and cultivate lovingkindness, then compassion, and then joy, each up to the 3rd dhyana. Then, emerge from the 3rd dhyana and reflect on the disadvantages of those 3 divine abodes, namely, their closeness to affection, to like and dislike, and to joy and happiness.

Later, reflect on the 4th dhyana based on equanimity as being peaceful. Then, cultivate equanimity towards a person we are indifferent with, thinking: “This good person is the owner of his own karma.” Do this many times, again and again, until we attain the 4th dhyana and the 5 masteries of it.

9.4.2 With the support of the 3rd dhyana of lovingkindness, then of compassion, and then of joy, it should not take long for us to cultivate the 4th dhyana of equanimity. Afterwards, cultivate it towards a person whom we respect or who is *dear* to us, to an *indifferent* person, to one we *hate*, and finally, to *ourselves*.

Then, again, cultivate equanimity towards the first 3 kinds of person, and finally ourselves, until we have broken down the barriers between us. Finally, cultivate equanimity towards all beings in the whole universe in the 132 ways.

This completes the cultivation of the 4 divine abodes.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ See SD 38.5 (5.2).

¹⁴⁹ See *Brahma, vihāra*, SD 38.5.

10 The 4 protective meditations (*catur-ārakkhā bhāvanā*)

10.1 WHY THE 4 PROTECTIVE MEDITATIONS

10.1.1 Protect what from what?

As noted earlier [9.0], developing deep concentration enables us to see directly into true reality, but we may lose this ability or we may develop a lop-sided “wisdom” attitude without positive emotions, or at least humanity. We need to protect this deep concentration [9.0]. Furthermore, we must protect ourselves and our meditation with **the 4 protective meditations** (*catur-ārakkhā bhāvanā*) on the level of access concentration and in all the dhyanas.

10.1.2 The 4 protective meditations

The 4 protective meditations are:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| (1) the cultivation of lovingkindness | <i>mettā bhāvanā</i> | [9] |
| (2) recollection of the Buddha | <i>buddhānussati</i> | [10.2] |
| (3) perception of foulness | <i>asubha saññā</i> | [10.3] |
| (4) recollection of death | <i>marañānussati</i> | [10.4] |

They are said to be “protective” because they guard the meditator from various dangers, especially those arising from a lack of joy (the protection is that of arousing mental joy), or from lack of insight (the protection is by reflecting on the 5 aggregates); and for correcting our wrong goals and priorities in meditation.¹⁵⁰ Hence, it is vital that we learn these methods before going on to cultivate **vipassanā**.

Since we have already discussed how to cultivate **lovingkindness** [9], we need only to learn how to cultivate the other 3 protective meditations, beginning with the recollection of the Buddha.

10.2 RECOLLECTION OF THE BUDDHA

10.2.1 The 9 virtues of the Buddha

10.2.1.1 The recollection of the Buddha is traditionally done by reflecting on **the 9 virtues of the Buddha**, using the well-known *Iti pi so gāthā* (the verse beginning with “So, too, is he ...” or “He is such ...”), thus:¹⁵¹

<i>Iti pi so bhagavā</i>	Thus is he the Blessed One. ¹⁵²
(1) <i>araham</i>	arhat [worthy]
(2) <i>sammā,sambuddho</i>	fully self-awakened one
(3) <i>vijjā,carāṇa,sampanno</i>	accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
(4) <i>sugato</i>	well-farer [his actions are only beneficial for others]
(5) <i>loka,vidū</i>	knower of worlds
(6) <i>anuttaro purisa,damma,sarathī</i>	peerless guide of persons to be tamed
(7) <i>satthā deva,manussānam</i>	teacher of gods and humans
(8) <i>buddho</i>	awakened
(9) <i>bhagavā'ti</i>	blessed [happy benefactor of the fruits of his past good karma]

¹⁵⁰ *Citta,sampahāṇsan'atthañ c'eva vipassan'atthañ ca* (AA 2:20). See SD 15.7 (1.1.2.3).

¹⁵¹ **Pāṭika S** (D 24,1.6/3:6), SD 63.3; **Dhajagga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5 (2); **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41,11), SD 3.3 (4.2); **Vinaya** Verañja Kaṇḍa (Pār 1.1.1, V 3:1,13-16); **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (3); Vism 7.2-67/198-213.

¹⁵² See **Dhaj'agga S** (S 11.3,11), SD 15.5.

There are 9 qualities here; hence, they are called “the 9 worthy virtues” (*navâraha,guṇa*),¹⁵³ that is, the Buddha’s qualities (*buddha,guṇa*). Each of these gives the essential meaning of his virtue to help us remember them.

10.2.1.2 The 9 virtues of the Buddha have been detailed elsewhere,¹⁵⁴ and Pa-Auk only focuses on the 1st virtue, *araham*, showing how this can be used for meditation to bring on dhyana. The Pali term *araham* has these 5 definitions:

- (1) Since the Buddha has totally removed, without remainder, all defilements and latent tendencies, and has thereby distanced himself from them, he is worthy:¹⁵⁵ *araham*.
- (2) Since the Buddha has cut off all defilements with the sword of the arhat path, he is a worthy one: *araham*.
- (3) Since the Buddha has broken and destroyed the spokes of the wheel of dependent arising, led by ignorance and craving, he is worthy: *araham*.
- (4) Since the Buddha’s moral virtue, concentration and wisdom are unsurpassed, he is deeply revered with the highest reverence by humans, devas and brahmas: hence, he is worthy: *araham*.
- (5) Since the Buddha does no evil, even in seclusion and unseen, by body, speech or mind, he is worthy: *araham*.

10.2.1.3 To cultivate this meditation, we should memorize these 5 definitions well enough to recite them. Then, we attain the 4th dhyana or white-kasina dhyana [8.6.2], and mental radiance arises. Then, emerging from dhyana, we use the light to visualize a buddha-image or buddha-figure we remember, love and respect. When it is clear, we see it as the living Buddha, and concentrate on it as such.

If we were, in a past life, fortunate enough to have met the Buddha, his *real* image may re-appear. If so, we should continue to concentrate on his qualities, not just his image. If the image of the real Buddha does not appear, then, continue to see the visualized image as the real Buddha, and recollect his qualities.

We can choose the definition of *araham* that we like most, take its meaning as object, and recollect it again and again as “*Araham, Araham*.” As our concentration grows stronger, the Buddha’s image will disappear, and we then continue to concentrate on that chosen quality. Continue to do so until as many dhyana-factors as possible arise; otherwise, practise until we get at least **access concentration**.

We can then go on to concentrate on the remaining qualities of the Buddha.

10.3 THE PERCEPTION OF FOULNESS

10.3.1 Arousing the sign

The 3rd protective meditation is that of **the perception of foulness** of a decomposing corpse. Before cultivating it, we should attain the 4th dhyana or white-kasina dhyana [8.6.2], to gain the mental radiance [8.5.2.1]. Then, use the light to visualize the foulest corpse of our own sex that we remember seeing.

Use the light to see the corpse exactly as it was when we had seen it. When it is clear, see it as being repulsive. Concentrate on it, and note it as, “**Repulsive, repulsive**” (*paṭikkūla, paṭikkūla*).¹⁵⁶ Concentrate on the repulsiveness of the corpse as object until the acquired sign becomes the counter-sign. [8.3.0.3]

10.3.2 The nature of the sign

The acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*) is the image of the corpse as we really saw it in the past, and is an ugly and frightening sight, but **the counter-sign** (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) is like a man with large limbs, lying

¹⁵³ Fully, *satthu navâraha,guṇa* (the Teacher’s 9 worthy virtues): see foll n.

¹⁵⁴ For more details on each of these 9 virtues, see SD 15.7 (2.2; 3).

¹⁵⁵ He is worthy of full awakening, as the embodiment of the true Dharma, as our only teacher, and of our respect and emulation.

¹⁵⁶ Here, *asubha* (foul, impure) and *paṭikkūla* (repulsive) are synonymous.

down after having eaten his fill. Continue to concentrate on that sign, until we reach the 1st dhyana, and then cultivate the 5 masteries. [8.2.5.3]

10.4 THE RECOLLECTION OF DEATH

10.4.1 Attaining the 1st dhyana

The 4th protective meditation is that of **the recollection of death** (*marañānussati*). According to **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10)¹⁵⁷ and **the Visuddhi, magga**,¹⁵⁸ death recollection, too, can be cultivated using a corpse we recall having seen. Here, we can start by attaining the 1st dhyana with the repulsiveness of a corpse, and with that external corpse as object, reflect: “This body of mine is of the nature to die. Indeed, it will die just like this one. It cannot avoid becoming like this.”

10.4.2 A sense of urgency

By keeping the mind concentrated on our own mortality, or mindful of it, we will also find that **a sense of urgency** (*saṃvega*) will arise. With that knowledge, we will probably see our own body as a repulsive corpse. Perceiving that the life-faculty in that image has been cut off, we should concentrate on the absence of life with one of these thoughts that we can best relate to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) My death is certain; my life is uncertain | <i>marañam me dhuvam; jīvitam me adhuvam</i> |
| (2) I shall certainly die | <i>marañam me bhavissati</i> |
| (3) My life will end in death | <i>marāṇa, pariyosānam me jīvitam</i> |
| (4) Death, death | <i>marañam marañam</i> |

Choose one of these sentences and note it in the best language we understand. Continue to concentrate on the image of the absence of the life-faculty in our own corpse, until we attain access concentration (which is the limit of this meditation).

11 Discerning materiality in Vipassana

11.1 BUDDHIST ATOMISM [SD 26.2]

11.1.1 Developments in the *kalāpa* theory

11.1.1.1 Buddhist atomism is, to be exact, **a theory of material clusters** (ts, *rūpa, kalāpa* or simply *kalāpa*). Although the canonical Abhidhamma is apparently acquainted with the nature of matter (*rūpa*), it did not present any idea of atomism, which arose in the Pali subcommentaries and the Abhidhamma compendia.¹⁵⁹ The idea was found both in the scholastic Theravāda Abhidhamma as well as the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. It is, however, not found in the suttas or early Buddhism.

11.1.1.2 Although “**atomism**” is a convenient term, Buddhist proponents of this idea do not take it as some “final state of matter,” or some sort of “atomic atman” or essential self. It is merely an Abhidhamma conceptual tool to help us “see” that even at the deepest level of our experience—on a molecular¹⁶⁰ level—everything is *conditioned, changing, impermanent and without any self*.

¹⁵⁷ **Abhiṇha Paccavekkhitabba Ṭhāna S** (A 5.57,5), SD 5.12.

¹⁵⁸ Vism 8.6-41/230-239 *Maraṇānussati Kathā*.

¹⁵⁹ Eg Abhidhamm’attha, saṅgaha: Abhs 6.16 *kalāpa, yojana* (Abhs:BRS 252-258).

¹⁶⁰ I have tr *kalāpa* as “molecular cluster,” partly because of its older usage by Buddhaghosa, and also not to confuse this pre-scientific scholasticism with any scientific notion. See SD 26.2 (2.3).

11.1.2 The material clusters (*kalāpa*) in vipassana

11.1.2.1 Pa-Auk Sayadaw teaches the observing of these molecular clusters and gaining insight in doing so, but he neither discovered nor invented this novel method of vipassana. Even before Pa-Auk, in Burmese Vipassana, the layman teacher, **U Ba Khin**, had been teaching his students how to scan the body and observe the rise and fall of the clusters (*kalāpa*) that compose it¹⁶¹ [2.4.8.2].

11.1.2.2 U Ba Khin learned about *kalāpa* (“material cluster”) from the teachings of the great Burmese master, **Ledi Sayadaw**. Apparently, up to Ledi’s time, the *kalāpa* teaching was just that: a fascinating innovative aspect of late Abhidhamma teachings. Ledi, in his younger days of seeking new learning to modernize Buddhism, learned about the *kalāpa* theory from the remarkable royal minister, **Hpo Hlaing**, who wrote about it in his encyclopaedic Vipassana work, *Meditation on the Body* [2.3.3.4].

The *kalāpa* theory is thus a well-known teaching amongst Burmese Vipassana teachers and their students going back to the time of Ledi Sayadaw. After his time, U Ba Khin taught it, but his student, Goenka, seemed to have downplayed it in his popular Vipassana method, on account of the difficulty of its practice.¹⁶² In the 1980s, Mahasi Sayadaw, too, expressed his belief that *kalāpas* play a role in decay (ageing), death and rebirth.¹⁶³ It is Pa-Auk who highlighted the *kalāpas* in his teachings and practices.

11.1.2.3 A fundamental principle that forms the basis for the Buddhist **atomic theory** is found in the Abhidhamma teaching of **conditioned relations** (*paṭṭhāna*). Basically, this is the principle that nothing can arise as a single cause nor produce a single effect.¹⁶⁴ In other words, there are only a plurality of causes, that is, **conditions** (*paccaya*) and a plurality of effects, that is, **the conditioned** (*paccay’uppanna*). What all this means is that all dharmas (states), mental as well as material, arise and cease, not as isolated phenomena but as clusters or groups (*kalāpa*).

11.1.2.4 The size of a *kalāpa* or molecular material cluster is tens of thousands of times smaller than a particle of dust. Each of these molecular clusters [11.1.2] exists for only a moment, but there are a trillion such moments in the wink of an eye! These clusters are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. A trained and experienced student of Vipassana meditation may see them, and feel them as a stream of energy.¹⁶⁵ The living human body is not a fixed entity, but a continuum of an aggregate of these material clusters. Seeing these molecular clusters with our “wisdom eye” is looking into our material make-up at its fundamental level.¹⁶⁶ [Table 12.2.2]

11.2 THE 3 TYPES OF MATERIAL CLUSTERS

11.2.1 Our 5-facultied existence

11.2.1.1 Our human existence is said to be “5-constituent” or “5-facultied” (*pañca, vokāra*), that is, we have all the 5 aggregates: *form* (a body), *feeling*, *perception*, *formations* and *consciousness*.¹⁶⁷ The last 4

¹⁶¹ Kornfield, 1977, 1996:246.

¹⁶² However, see Goenka, *The Discourse Summaries*, Vipassana Research Publications, where he claimed that the Buddha himself discovered and taught the “attha kalapa” [sic] (the 8 material clusters) (2000: 13 f).

¹⁶³ On Buddhist atomism, see Y Karunadasa, *The Theravāda Abhidhamma*. 2010:205-223 (ch 15) The material clusters; *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*, 1967:141-164 (ch 8), 2015:147-152.

¹⁶⁴ The notion that things can arise from a single cause (*eka, kāraṇa, vāda*, DhsA 59,30) and that a thing can produce a single effect (*ekass’eva dhammassa uppatti paṭisedhitā hoti*) are both rejected in the Abhidhamma (DhsA 61,13 f). Abhidhamma Mūla,ṭīkā (AbhMT) 46 says that here the term refers either to Sāṃkhya philosophy or the theory of divine creation (*eka, karaṇa, vādo ti pakati, kāraṇa, vādo issara, kāraṇa, vādo vā*). Cf *Ekassa ca dhammassa añño bhava, - saṅkhāto dhammo n’atthi* (PmA 3:634); *Aññathā hi eko dhammo ekassa dhammassa paccayo nāma n’atthi* (Pañcap-AT:Be 318).

¹⁶⁵ R Shankman, *The Experience of Samadhi*, 2008:178 (Interview with Pa-Auk).

¹⁶⁶ Kornfield, *Living Buddhist Masters*, 1996:316, epub 289.

¹⁶⁷ A peculiarly Abhidhamma term: Kvu 261; Vbh 137; Tikap 32, 36 f; Vism 17.258/573; KhpA 245; SnA 19, 158.

aggregates can together simply be called mentality (*nāma*). In such an existence, the mind depends on the **materiality** (*rūpa*), form, or simply, the body, comprising our 5 sense-faculties (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body). This means that consciousness arises at each of these “doors” (*dvāra*) or “bases” (*vatthu*).¹⁶⁸

Thus, **eye-consciousness** arises dependent on the materiality that is the eye-door or eye-base;¹⁶⁹ and so on with the other physical senses. Mind-consciousness, however, arises only at the mind-door (*mano-dvāra*), that is, the life-continuum (*bhav'āṅga*)¹⁷⁰—this constitutes **mentality**. The suttas do not locate the mind or mind-door anywhere (that is, it is all over the body, our whole being). The Abhidhamma, however, locates the mind in the heart's cavity, known as the “**heart-base**” (*hadaya, vatthu*).

11.2.1.2 We cannot see any mentality since it is all non-physical and invisible; but we can see the activities of materiality since they are, after all, physical. We see them working on a molecular level as “material clusters” (*rūpa, kalāpa*). In fact, they are nothing except these molecular particles [11.1.1.3]. They are said to be “ultimate materiality” (*param'attha rūpa*), that is, only “conventional reality” (*vijjamāna paññatti*): they are *not* ultimate reality (*param'attha sacca*), merely the *physical* manifestation of mental reality [11.1.1.2]. To penetrate ultimate reality, we need to see how the individual components of the cluster make up **the elements** (*dhātu*).¹⁷¹ [8.7]

11.2.2 The materiality of the 3 types of kalāpa

11.2.2.1 We already know how the cluster (*kalāpa*) principle works in terms of the mind as groupings of mental factors attending many kinds of consciousness. **Matter** works in a similar way dictated by the principle of “positional inseparability” (*padesato avinibhogatā*).¹⁷² Following this principle, says the Abhidhamm'attha, saṅgaha, **an octad**—the 4 great elements and 4 of the dependent or derived materiality, namely, *colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence*—are necessarily co-existent in the sense that they arise together, exist together and cease together, being *positionally inseparable*, that is, they cannot be separated from one another.¹⁷³

11.2.2.2 Our physical being, **materiality**, is nothing but these material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*), of which there are basically 3 types, classified in the following ways:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| (1) octad-clusters | <i>aṭṭhaka kalāpa</i> | a molecule of 8 types of materiality |
| (2) nonad-clusters | <i>navaka kalāpa</i> | a molecule of 8 types of materiality + 9 th type |
| (3) decad-clusters | <i>dasaka kalāpa</i> | a molecule of 9 types of materiality + 10 th type |

The materiality of our body is composed of a different mix of these 3 types of material clusters. This is only briefly explained here since the details have been given elsewhere.

[For details on **the 7 types of decad clusters**, see SD 26.2 esp (3).]

¹⁶⁸ **Āyatana** means “sphere” in the sense of “sense-base, faculty,” but may also refer to a “base, realm” of existence (*avacara*) [cf “stations of consciousness,” *viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti*, SD 23.14]. **Vatthu** [SD 26.2 (3.1.3.6) n], in terms of our senses, refers only to a “sense-organ.” Hence, the mind (*man'āyatana*) has no “organ” (*vatthu*): it is not located anywhere [SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4)]. Only in Abhidhamma, it is located in the heart-cavity.

¹⁶⁹ This is not the physical sense-organ, but the “eye-sensitivity” (*cakkhu, pasāda*) [12.3.1.2].

¹⁷⁰ See SD 17.8a (6.1); SD 32.1 (3.8); SD 48.1 (9.2.1.3).

¹⁷¹ For a canonical basis and explanation for discerning these different types of materiality, see, eg, **Mahā Gopālaka S** (M 33), SD 52.6. On the fact that the elements cannot be analysed further, see, eg, **Bahu Dhātuka S** (M 115), SD 29.1a. They are called “elements” (*dhātu*) because they have their “own-nature” (*attano sabhāvaṃ dhārentī ti dhatu-ya*, Vism 15.21/485).

¹⁷² Viśuddhi, mārga, sannaya (Vśms 389); Karunadasa 2010:44, 206.

¹⁷³ See Abhs 6.7, 14 (Abhs:BRS 245 f, 251).

11.2.3 Sensitive matter (*pasāda*)

11.2.3.1 In the forefront of all this materiality are **the 5 physical sense-faculties**: the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. As we have noted, we are referring not to the 5 sense-organs but rather the 5 sense-faculties [11.2.1.1], that is, the materiality functioning in tandem with the mentality of our being. Another way of putting this is that we are dealing with *the cognitive functions of senses*, or simply, how we *sense* things.

The suttas generally distinguish between our sense-organs (*indriya*) and our sense-faculties (*āyatana*). As a rule, it is the latter that is addressed in the suttas. This distinction becomes even more pronounced in the Abhidhamma, where each sense-organ consists of 2 parts: the composite or peripheral organ (*sa,sam-bhāra*) and the sentient faculty (*pasāda*).¹⁷⁴ The former is what we ordinarily mean by the physical organ: *eye, ear, nose, tongue and body*; and the latter is the actual sense-faculties and they each have the former as their respective bases (*vatthu*). The terms *pasāda* and *pasāda,rūpa* clearly show the functions of the sense-faculties¹⁷⁵ (DhsA 306 f), as we shall see.

11.2.3.2 In late Abhidhamma,¹⁷⁶ the term *pasāda,rūpa*, “sensitive matter,” refers to the sensing parts of the 5 physical sense-faculties: those of sight (*cakkhu*), hearing (*sota*), smell (*ghāna*), taste (*jivhā*) and touch (*kāya*). This term—as a descriptive term for the material sense-faculties—is not found in the suttas, which, however, very often refer to those functions. The suttas’ purpose is not to describe their nature as a species of matter, but to highlight their role in the conditionality of sense-perception and in the gratification of sensual pleasures.¹⁷⁷ The Abhidhamma, on the other hand, depicts them as a species of matter, as we shall see here.

11.2.3.3 *Pasāda* literally means “clearness, brightness; serenity; faith”; but it is used in a technical sense in the Abhidhamma, as noted by Mrs Rhys Davids: “Taken causatively it may conceivably have meant either that which makes clear, a revealer as it were [... cf *prasādana*], or that which gratifies or satisfies, both meanings emphasizing psychological *process*, rather than ‘product’ or ‘seat.’”¹⁷⁸ *Pasāda*, in fact, gives both meanings: the first indicates their receptivity and reactivity to external sense-data; the second brings into focus, their role in the gratification of sensual pleasure.

In Sanskrit Buddhism, too, we find the term *prasāda* used in the same sense. **The Abhidharma,kośa** says that the sense-faculties are said to be suprasensible (*atīndriya*) and transparent/translucent/translucid (*accha*)¹⁷⁹ [11.2.3.4]. Because of their translucence,¹⁸⁰ like the luminosity of a gem (*maṇi,prabhāvat*), they cannot be burned or weighed.¹⁸¹ Nor can they be cut or split up. When a part of the body is lopped off, the body sensitivity (*rūpa,prasāda*) that part does not thereby multiply itself. The part that is cut off is devoid of body sensitivity. This is inferred from the fact that on the basis of the part that is separated, tactile sensation does not arise.¹⁸² [12.1.1.1]

¹⁷⁴ *Maṃsa,cakkhu pi sa,sambhāra,cakkhu pasāda,cakkhū ti duvidham hoti* (DhsA 306,23).

¹⁷⁵ For detailed study on “derived material qualities,” see **DhsA** §§613-685/305,30-343,25 (DhsA:P 402-445, ch III).

¹⁷⁶ Eg Abhs 8.24 (Abhs:BRS 320).

¹⁷⁷ Eg **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,15-18/1:111 f), SD 6.14; **Mahā Hatthi,paḍōpama S** (M 128,27/1:190), SD 6.16; **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,8-14/1:259 f), SD 7.10; **(Loka) Samiddhi S** (S 35.68/4:39 f), SD 20.11; **Dvaya S 2** (S 35.93/-4:67 f).

¹⁷⁸ C A F Rhys Davids (tr), *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics* [Dhs:F], 3rd ed, 1974:175 n.

¹⁷⁹ This seems to be the aspect highlighted by Pa-Auk in his using “translucent, translucence,” etc [11.2.3.4] (Abhk:Pr 1:136 n41). However, *accha* can also be tr as “luminous” (*bhāsvara*) (Abhk:Pr 1:330 n74). See foll n.

¹⁸⁰ See prec n. Pa-Auk, in *Knowing And Seeing*, originally tr *pasāda* (sensitivity) as “transparent,” but in the 5th ed (2019), changed it to “translucent.”¹⁸⁰ *Pasāda,rūpa* is thus tr as “transparent materiality,” then “translucent materiality,” and so on. *Pasāda*, however, has broader senses than this, esp as used in ref to the sense-faculties. Pa-Auk is aware of *pasāda* as meaning “sensitivity” (2019:122 n226).

¹⁸¹ Abhk 1.9c-d/24 (Abhk:Pr 1:63 f + n41).

¹⁸² Abhk 1.35d-36c-d/68 (Abhk:Pr 1:101 f).

11.2.3.4 The idea of “translucent matter” is clearly an Abhidhamma innovation, related to the idea of the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*). The **undisturbed *bhavaṅga*** is said to be clear or translucent (*paṇḍara*). The earliest mention of such an idea is found in the canonical commentary, the Mahā, niddesa; and it is often mentioned in the Commentaries.¹⁸³

The closest canonical teaching we can relate the idea of “translucent matter” is perhaps that of **the radiant mind** (*pabhassara*), as briefly described in **the Pabhassara Sutta** (A 1.6.1-2), where the Buddha states that “the mind is radiant” (*pabhassara, citta*), but it is clouded up by “adventitious impurities (that arrive at the sense-doors). The practical idea here is that in meditation, when we properly clear up the mind, we will see this radiance in our concentrated mind, especially in dhyana.”¹⁸⁴

11.3 THE 4 ORIGINS OF MATERIALITY

11.3.0 How materiality arises¹⁸⁵

Now that we have some idea of the basic structures of ultimate materiality, we may go on to examine the arising of materiality, that is, **the 4 generative conditions of matter**, which we need to discern during 4-element meditation [8.7]. Materiality arises in any of these 4 ways, that is, we have **4 kinds of materiality**, thus:¹⁸⁶

(1) karma-born materiality	<i>kammaja rūpa</i>	[11.3.1]
(2) consciousness ¹⁸⁷ -born materiality	<i>cittaja rūpa</i>	[11.3.2]
(3) temperature-born materiality	<i>utuja rūpa</i>	[11.3.3]
(4) nutriment-born materiality	<i>āhāraja rūpa</i>	[11.3.4]

We have already discussed how the materiality of our body is nothing but *rūpa, kalāpas*; and that all the material clusters have at least the basic 8 types of materiality: earth, water, fire, wind, colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence [1.1.2.2]. The 8th, *nutritive essence*, sustains materiality; when there is no nutritive essence, materiality disintegrates.

11.3.1 Karma-born materiality

11.3.1.1 Karma-born materiality comprises life the nonad-clusters and the decad-clusters: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, heart- and sex decad clusters (each of these material clusters has 10 characteristics) [11.2.2]. Their nutritive essence (*ojā*), what sustains the clusters, is the fruits of our past karma; hence, it is said to be karma-born nutriment (*kammaja oja*). It is in karma-born materiality that we see some of the realities of the 2nd noble truth, that of the arising of suffering. Karma-born materiality is materiality with the life-faculty, which arises at rebirth, the 1st noble truth.

As explained by the Buddha in the suttas,¹⁸⁸ rebirth (suffering) arises because of craving, and craving arises in anything that is *agreeable or pleasant*: a sight through the eye, striking upon eye-door (the sensi-

¹⁸³ Nm 1:3,5; NmA 1:22,18; DhSA 140,24-29, 262,24 f, 308,29-31. Cf MA 1:167; AA 1:60 f; DhA 1:23; Pm 1:80; PmA 1:293 f. See also SD 19.14 (4.2.1.6).

¹⁸⁴ A 1.6.1-2/1:10; also 1.5.9-10; MA 1:167: SD 8.3 (6). See SD 19.14 (4.2.1.6).

¹⁸⁵ See SD 17.2a (10.2).

¹⁸⁶ **Visuddhi, magga**, in its “comprehension of materiality” (*rūpa, sammasana*), lists these 4 generative conditions of materiality as (1) karma, (2) consciousness, (3) nutriment and (4) temperature (Vism 20.22-42/613-617). Cf AbhsMhT 112: *kamm’ādīhi paccaeyehi nipphannattanipphanna, rūpaṃ nāma*; also AbhvK 291. In some sources, 4 and 4 are switched around: The order here is that of Vism, used by Pa-Auk in his teachings.

¹⁸⁷ In Pali usage, *citta*, usu tr as “mind,” can also refer to “consciousness” (*viññāṇa*); in other words, their senses overlap. It is however vital for us to remember the context of such terms. On *citta*, *mano* and *viññāṇa* as synonyms, see **Assutavā S 1** (S 12.61,4), SD 20.2.

¹⁸⁸ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,19 detailed), SD 13.2; **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,21 more briefly), SD 11.11, Vism 14.33-80/443-452.

tive materiality of eye decad-clusters) and the mind-door (the life-continuum, *bhav'aṅga*); and so on. The sensitive materiality that is the 5 sense doors or bases, and the materiality that is the heart-base exist because of craving for pleasant and agreeable *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mind-objects*.

11.3.1.2 The Buddha also explains that the direct cause for rebirth is **karma**, and that its fruits arise whenever the conditions are right; even then, suffering only arises on account of our ignorance and craving.¹⁸⁹ Although the karma that produces the materiality at a human rebirth¹⁹⁰ is wholesome, rebirth itself occurs because of clinging, which is conditioned by craving, which is conditioned by ignorance (not understanding the 4 noble truths).

Karma-born materiality arises all the time. It is the basis for all other materiality. Each mind-moment (*citta-k, khaṇa*) (of the 17 that are materiality's life-span) has 3 phases (3 submoments): arising (*uppāda*), standing (*ṭhiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*). At each *phase*, new karma-born materiality is arising, which means that during a single 5-door process, countless karma-born material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*) arise at each of the 51 sub-moments (17 mind-moments x 3 phases). Their temperature produces temperature-born material clusters and their nutritive-essence produces new nutriment-born material clusters; and the temperature and nutritive-essence of these material clusters further produce their own clusters, and so on, exponentially.¹⁹¹

11.3.2 Consciousness-born materiality

11.3.2.1 Consciousness-born materiality comprises octad-clusters. Their nutritive essence (*ojā*) is consciousness-born, and is produced only by consciousnesses that arise dependent on the heart-base, not the consciousnesses of the 5 sense-doors. Simply put, they are all mind-made, not sense-created. Apart from the rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi, citta*), all consciousnesses that arise dependent on the heart-base produce consciousness-born materiality.

11.3.2.2 An example is anger and worry. They are both rooted in hatred (*dosa*), and a consciousness of hatred produces consciousness-born materiality with predominant fire-element. That is why, when we are angry or worried, we feel hot.

Another example is bodily movement: moving the limbs and torso about. When we are walking, the mind directs itself at the legs and feet, and also throughout the body. Since it is movement, the wind element is predominant. Just as wind carries objects around, so too the wind-element carries the limbs and body along.

The movement is a long series of different consciousness-born material clusters being produced in different places in the body. The consciousness-born clusters that arise at the lifting of a foot are different from the consciousness-born clusters that arise at the lowering of that foot. Each cluster arises and passes away in the same place, and new clusters arise elsewhere and cease there. They all occur concurrently.

A 3rd example is that of samatha-vipassana consciousnesses, and path-and-fruit consciousnesses. Such consciousnesses are very pure, very powerful and superior, because there are no impurities or imperfections (*upakkilesa*) (imperfections) present. That means these consciousnesses produce very many generations of pure and superior consciousness-born materiality of which the earth-, wind- and fire elements are very soft and subtle. When those soft and subtle material clusters touch the body-door (the 10th type of materiality in the body decad-clusters) the meditator experiences great bodily comfort and lightness, that is, without any heaviness (the earth element).

¹⁸⁹ This is not stated in Pa-Auk's *Knowing And Seeing*, but see his *The Workings of Kamma*, 2nd ed, 2012, esp 15 f.

¹⁹⁰ At the conception of human rebirth, the very first materiality is only heart, body and sex decad-kalāpas, all karma-born.

¹⁹¹ For details on how this occurs: the 5-door cognitive process (*pañca, dvāra citta, vīthi*), see Table 1c (Pa-Auk 2019: 168); also SD 19.14 (2-3); SD 47.19 (3.2.2.3).

11.3.2.3 Since, as already noted, the fire element, of all material clusters, produces temperature-born clusters, the fire element in those superior consciousness-born clusters produces numerous temperature-born clusters inside and outside the body. The radiance that arises with those superior consciousnesses is that of the colour materiality of the consciousness- and temperature-born materiality.¹⁹²

This, too, accounts for the clear and bright skin and faculties of meditators who cultivate these superior consciousnesses.¹⁹³ The materiality born, for example, of the elder Anuruddha's divine-eye consciousnesses (*dibba, cakkhu abhiññāṇa*)¹⁹⁴ pervades a thousand world-systems: they were lit up by the superior consciousness-born materiality and became visible to him.¹⁹⁵ Pa-Auk tells us that we, too, if we develop sufficiently concentrated and pure consciousness, may be able to see other realms of existence, etc (2019:113).

11.3.3 Temperature-born materiality

11.3.3.1 Temperature-born materiality comprises octad-clusters (*dasaka kalāpa*). Their nutritive essence is temperature-born (*utuja*), which comes from the fire element, *tejo*, the 3rd element of all material clusters.¹⁹⁶ The fire element of all material clusters produces temperature-born clusters, which themselves have the fire element that produces temperature-born clusters, which themselves have fire element, and so on.¹⁹⁷ This is an interesting explanation of how heat is generated through meditation exponentially by the fire element.

All inanimate materiality is born of temperature (heat) and sustained by it. A good example is that of **plants**. They comprise temperature-born materiality and is born of the fire-element originally in the seed. Their growth is simply the continued production of temperature-born materiality (heat) through many generations. It occurs with the help of the fire-element from the soil, the sun (heat) and water (cold). The fire element in the soil, stones, metals, minerals and its own hardwood is very powerful, and produces numerous generations of materiality.

11.3.3.2 That is why temperature-born materiality can last so long. However, the fire element in, for example, softwood, tender plants (along with their fibres, tissues, food and water) is very weak, with not very many generations of materiality produced, and their materiality quickly falls apart; these plants die.

When materiality breaks up, it is because the fire-element no longer produces new materiality but consumes itself: the materiality breaks up and dissolves, the plant rots. When materiality is consumed by fire, such as when wood is burning, it is because the fire-element of the external materiality (the flames that touches and consumes the wood) supports the fire element of the internal materiality (the wood), and a huge blaze of fire-element bursts forth, which means the fire-element becomes predominant and materiality is consumed.

11.3.4 Nutriment-born materiality

11.3.4.1 Nutriment-born materiality also comprises octad-clusters with nutriment-born nutritive essence (*āhāraja oj'atṭhamaka kalāpa*): the materiality with nutriment-born essence as the 8th component. It is born of the food and drink that we consume. The food on the table, the food in the alimentary canal

¹⁹² For a sutta description of this light, see Pa-Auk 2019:13; for details, see 2019:156 Q&A 4.10.

¹⁹³ **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 26) records the naked ascetic, Upaka, remarking to the Buddha, soon after the great awakening, thus: "Serene are our senses, avuso! Clear and bright is your complexion." (M 26,25.2), SD 1.11. **Ghaṭa S** (S 21.3): Sāriputta says this to Moggallāna (SD 64.4); **Avitakka S** (S 28.2): Ānanda says this to the elder Sāriputta; **Amba, pāli, vana S** (S 52.9): Sāriputta says this to the elder Anuruddha.

¹⁹⁴ *Abhiññāṇa*, "remembrance, recollection; sign token (as a means of identifying or recognizing)" is commentarial (Pa-Auk 2019:113). The term used here is usually *abhiññā*, "superknowledge."

¹⁹⁵ Comy on (**Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka S** (A 8.30), SD 19.5:AA 4:118,3-6.

¹⁹⁶ *Tejo* (fire element) and *utu* (temperature) refer to the same phenomenon (Pa Auk 2019:113 n213).

¹⁹⁷ The fire element (*tejo*) of a karma-born *rūpa, kalāpa* (material clusters) produces temperature-born (*utuja*) clusters through 5 generations: *kammaja* → *utuja* 1 → *utuja* 2 → *utuja* 3 → *utuju* 4 → *utuja* 5. (Pa-Auk 2019:133 n251).

(the food in the mouth, the just eaten undigested food in the stomach, half-digested food in the intestines), faeces, urine, blood and pus are all of the same materiality: the temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters.¹⁹⁸

11.3.4.2 The digestive heat is the fire element of life nonad-clusters (*navaka kalāpa*), which are karma-born [11.3.1]. When the digestive heat meets with the nutritive essence of the temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters (*utuja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa*) of the undigested and semi-digested food, further nutritive-essence octad-clusters are produced: they are nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters, with nutriment-born nutritive-essence) as the 8th component.

Again, when that nutritive-essence meets the (karma-born) digestive heat, it reproduces many more generations of nutritive-essence octad-clusters. And it supports also the nutritive essence in karma-, consciousness- and temperature-born material clusters, and the existing nutriment-born clusters.

11.3.4.3 The nutriment of food taken in 1 day may reproduce in this way for up to 7 days, although the number of generations produced depends on the quality of the food. Divine nutriment, the “ambrosia” of the devas, is the most superior, and may reproduce this way for up to 1-2 months.

Since life nonad-clusters are found throughout the body, the process of digestion found in the alimentary canal is found to a weaker degree throughout the body. That is why, for example, when medicinal oil is applied to the skin, or an injection of medicine is made under the skin, the medicine spreads throughout the body (to be “digested”). But if too much oil is applied, the weakness of the subcutaneous “digestion” may mean it takes a longer to be absorbed.

11.3.5 Materiality in contemporary language

11.3.5.1 Unless we have an open investigative mind, or at least some level of healthy curiosity, over how the modern masters of Buddhist meditation see the early teachings, we will see all this as merely religious jargon and scholastic gibberish. On the other hand, when we allow all this amazing learning to sink into our mind and heart to speak for themselves, we will discover new ways of looking at things we have not realized before.

We have examined how the Abhidhamma scholastics, familiar with early Buddhism, now examining the nature of mind and matter parallel to the way the scientific pioneers have thought of science in their own times. The suttas speak volumes on mentality (knowing, training and freeing the mind), Abhidhamma now looks at **materiality**—a conscious materiality of the conscious body (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*),¹⁹⁹ to be exact—how our materiality arises from karma (*kammaja*), from consciousness (*cittaja*), from temperature (*utuja*) and from nutriment (*āhāraja*) [11.2.1.3; 13.1.3].

In contemporary terms, we can almost at once, see how we are talking about our mind-body being is born both of **nature** (karma) and **nurture** (the mind). Through our past karma, we now have a human body, and with parental nurture and human socializing, we have a human **mind**. We are then sustained by **food** (nutriment)—material food, sense-contact (sense-experiences), mental volition (karma) and consciousness (the mind)²⁰⁰—with which we grow, learn, change, and many of us become wiser, as a result. Yet, we are ourselves consumed by “fire” (*utu*) of change and decay. There’s nothing exotic or mythical in all this: we have better understood our true nature: now we must let that truth free us.

11.3.5.2 In the language of Pa-Auk’s meditation training, ideally, we should at every sitting attain **the 4th dhyana**. We then emerge with the dhyanic radiance with which we examine the 4 elements down into their very roots. We are looking into true reality with the inner eye. We have here used **samatha yoga** (calm meditation) to gain vipassana. [8.1.3.1]

¹⁹⁸ Pa-Auk says that “blood” here refers to any blood in the stomach (such as in internal bleeding), not the blood in the blood-vessels and the heart. (2019:114 n215).

¹⁹⁹ On *sa,viññāṇaka kāya*, see SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

²⁰⁰ On these 4 kinds of food (*āhāra*), see (**Nīvaraṇa Bojjaṅga**) **Āhāra S** (S 46.51), SD 7.15.

If, for any reason, we would rather go straight into vipassana without any dhyana, we have the option of taking up **vipassana yoga** (insight meditation), which (like samatha yoga) starts with the breath meditation. Then, as in samatha yoga, we go into the 4-element meditation. We are taught how to look into our material body to analyse the material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*), and gain insight from there.

11.3.5.3 This much explanation should suffice as a preparation for our meditation on the 4 elements. This is the kind of practical explanation we need to see materiality as it really is, not merely as a concept, if we are to attain the path to nirvana.²⁰¹ To prepare for this journey, we start by understanding how to see that **materiality** (*rūpa*) actually consists of clusters (*kalāpa*).

With this vision, we can then penetrate the delusion of **compactness** of individual manifestations of materiality comprising the individual material clusters. We are then seeing ultimate materiality of materiality, but this is *not* yet true reality.

We need to analyse further this materiality: see their different types, their arising and ceasing, and how they function. This is when we go on with **the 4-element meditation**, so that we are better familiar with the 4 primary elements that comprise materiality (or matter): earth-element, water-element, fire-element and wind element.

We have described the 4-element meditation along with the perceptions of light and of space earlier on [8.8] as part of the samatha practice. These same methods also apply to vipassana practice.

11.4 THE 4 ELEMENTS (VIPASSANA)

11.4.1 The element *kaṣiṇa*s

We have noted how the 4 elements can be used in ***kaṣiṇa* meditation**—as earth *kaṣiṇa*, water *kaṣiṇa*, fire *kaṣiṇa*, wind *kaṣiṇa*—for the attaining of dhyana [8.7]. Here, we will examine how to practise the 4 elements simply as **samatha** (that is, *without* dhyana). However, the practice of the 4 elements as samatha can only bring us to **access concentration** (*upacāra samādhi*) [8.3.2].

11.4.2 Why the 4 elements meditation do *not* bring dhyana

11.4.2.1 Dhammapāla, the compiler of the Visuddhi, magga Mahā, ṭīkā, points out an important technicality in Buddhaghosa's explanation (Vism 11.43 f/352) which we will examine later [11.5.1.2]. The momentary concentration mentioned above is specifically a samatha concentration that takes a counter-sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) as object, like the breath counter-sign (*ānāpāna paṭibhāga nimitta*). It is actually a concentration before access concentration, which is suitable for a samatha practitioner.

There is different type of momentary concentration for a **pure vipassana practitioner**, that is, one who begins with the 4-element meditation in order to attain momentary concentration or access concentration. He then goes on to observe the material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*), and the 4 elements in one of the clusters. The Visuddhi, magga says that is *access concentration*. Dhammapāla's Sub-commentary, however, says that the "access concentration" here is merely figurative or metaphorical (*ruḥhī, vasena*), not a real access concentration, because real access concentration is very close to dhyana concentration.²⁰²

Dhyana cannot be attained through any of the 4-element meditation, but is attainable with any of **the 4 element *kaṣiṇa* meditations** [8.7]. Having attained dhyana during *kaṣiṇa* practice, we emerge from it and, in the dhyanic light, will be able to see the 4 elements in individual material clusters. Even so, we cannot attain dhyana using them as object. There are 2 reasons for this:

²⁰¹ For sutta teachings on this, see **Mahā Gopālaka S** (M 33), SD 52.6. [11.2.1.2 n]

²⁰² VismMṬ:Be 1:436,6. Technically, access concentration is the 3 impulsion consciousness that follow the mind-door adverting consciousness and precede the Change-of-lineage to the dhyana process (see Table 1a, The Absorption Process, Pa-Auk 2019:46 + nn).

- (1) To see the 4 elements in individual material clusters is to see ultimate materiality, and to see ultimate materiality is itself a profound experience. We cannot attain dhyana with such an ultimate reality as object.²⁰³
- (2) Even though our concentration while analysing the material clusters is deep, it cannot become as deep as absorption (jhāna) concentration. Why? Because material clusters cease as soon as they arise. That means the object is always changing. We cannot attain dhyana with an object that is always changing.²⁰⁴

11.4.2.2 If we are new to meditation, or to **the 4-element meditation**, we should start with the breath meditation [8.4.1] to gain a good level of concentration. Ideally, we should sit long enough (we cannot rush this)—we may take days, weeks, even months—to gain the mental brightness [8.4.1.10] we need to discern the characteristics of the elements as will be described.

11.5 DISCERNING THE 4 ELEMENTS (DHĀTU VAVATTHĀNA)

11.5.1 Sutta teachings on the 4 elements

11.5.1.1 The Buddha gives 2 kinds of teachings of **the 4-element meditation**: a brief one in the Sati-patthāna Sutta (M 10) for those with *quick* understanding. For those who are *slower* in learning, he gives an explanation of the meditation in some detail, such as in **the Mahā Rāḥul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62).

The brief teaching on the 4 elements, given in **the Satipatthāna Sutta** (M 10), is as follows:

... a monk reviews this body, however it may be placed or disposed, in terms of **the elements**:

“There are in this body

- (1) the earth-element,
- (2) the water-element,
- (3) the fire-element,
- (4) the air-element.”

(M 10,12/1:57), SD 13.3²⁰⁵

Buddhaghosa explains this passage as follows:

“He should attend to the 4 elements in this way:

‘The earth element’: what are its characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*), function (*rasa*), manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*)?”

The earth element has the characteristic of hardness.

Its function is to act as a foundation [support].

It is manifested as receiving.

The water element²⁰⁶ has the characteristic of flowing.

Its function is to intensify.

It is manifested as holding together [cohesion].

The fire element has the characteristic of heat.

Its function is that of bringing to full maturity.

It is manifested as bringing about softness.

kakkhaḷatā
paṭiṭṭhāna
sampaṭichanna
paggharaṇa
brūhana
saṅgaha
uṇha
paripācana
maddavānuppadāna

²⁰³ Buddhaghosa explains that since the 4-element meditation has object phenomena with natural characteristics (*sabhāva, dhamm’ārammaṇattā*), we reach only access concentration [figuratively speaking], not dhyana. However, because of the preceding practice leading to the supramundane and 2nd and 4th formless attainments, even though their object is also a phenomenon with natural characteristics, their concentration is nonetheless (regarded as) dhyana. See Pa-Auk 2019:204 n389.

²⁰⁴ Pa-Auk 2019:150 f.

²⁰⁵ See also **Mahā Rāḥul’ovāda S** (M 62,8-12/1:421-423), SD 3.11.

²⁰⁶ Cf DhsA 332-335.

The wind element has the characteristic of distending.

Its function is that of motion.

It is manifested as conveying.

vitthambhana

samudīraṇa

abhinīhāra

(Vism 11.93/365)²⁰⁷

11.5.1.2 Buddhaghosa then explains, in brief, the discerning of the elements (as a meditation), thus:

41 “So, firstly, one of quick understanding who wants to cultivate this meditation-subject [the elements] should go into solitary retreat. Then, he should advert to his own entire material body and discern the elements in brief, thus:

‘In this body:

what is firm or solid is

the earth element,

what is cohesion or fluidity [352] is

the water element,

what is maturing (ripening) or warmth is

the fire element,

what is distension or movement is

the wind element.’

And he should advert, give attention to it, review it again and again as ‘earth element, water element ... ,’ that is to say, as mere elements, not a living being, not a soul (*jīva*).

42 As he endeavours in this way, it is not long before concentration arises in him, which is reinforced by understanding that illuminates the classification of the elements, and which is only access concentration and does not reach absorption because it has states with individual essences as its object.

43 Or alternatively, there are these 4 [bodily] parts mentioned by the General of the Dharma [the elder Sāriputta] for the purpose of showing the absence of any living being in the 4 great primary elements, thus:

‘... **when a space is enclosed with bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it is reckoned as “form” (*rupa*)**.²⁰⁸ And he should resolve each of these [individually], separating them out by the hand of knowledge, and then discern them in the way already stated, thus:

‘In these what is firm or solid is the earth element’

And he should advert, give attention to it, review it again and again as ‘earth element, water element

... ,’ that is to say, as mere elements, not a living being, not a soul.

44 As he endeavours in this way, it is not long before concentration arises in him, which is reinforced by understanding that illuminates the classification of the elements, and which is only access concentration and does not reach absorption because it has states with individual essences as its object.

This is the method of cultivation when the discernment of the elements is given in brief.”

(Vism 11.41-44/352)

11.5.2 The 12 characteristics of the 4 elements

11.5.2.1 Further, we should discern the 4 elements in our whole body as these **12 characteristics**, as given in **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, thus:²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ See Abhs §3 + Table 6.1 (Abhs:BRS 234-242).

²⁰⁸ **Mahā Hatthi, padôpama S** (M 28,26/1:190), SD 6.16.

²⁰⁹ Se Pa-Auk 2019:117.

earth		water	fire	wind
1. hardness	4. softness	7. flowing	9. heat	11. supporting
2. roughness	5. smoothness	8. cohesion	10. cold	12. pushing
3. heaviness	6. lightness			

Table 11.5.2. The 12 characteristics of the 4 elements²¹⁰

To cultivate this meditation, we should learn how to discern each of the 12 characteristics of the 4 elements, one at a time. Usually, the beginner is first taught the characteristics that are easier to discern, followed by the more difficult ones. The 12 characteristics are usually taught in this order by **Pa-Auk**, thus:²¹¹

pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, cold, cohesion, flowing.

11.5.2.2 Alternatively, we can memorize the 12 characteristics in this **paired sequence**, thus:

<i>hardness</i>	<i>roughness</i>	<i>heaviness</i>	<i>flowing</i>	<i>heat</i>	<i>supporting</i>
<i>softness</i>	<i>smoothness</i>	<i>lightness</i>	<i>cohesion</i>	<i>cold</i>	<i>pushing</i>

To facilitate memorization, we begin by reciting the first stacked pair on the far left, “hardness | softness,” and then proceed rightwise with the other stacked pairs. As we do this, we should reflect or visualize how each characterizes the element.

Each characteristic should be firstly discerned in one place in the body, and then throughout the body.

11.5.2.3 In the simplified explanations below, the specific characteristic is given in the 1st paragraph followed by the general characteristic in the following paragraph/s.

(1) Pushing

As we breathe in, *feel* how air in our lungs pushes our chest-wall (around the solar plexus) outwards. We can also see how our breath pushes the belly (just above the navel) outwards as we breathe in. Sometimes as we work out or assert ourself, we can see how our blood pushes itself in certain parts of our body. Choose one of these pushing feeling and observe it carefully. Note this as “Wind, wind” Do this mindfully without haste, over and over.

When we are familiar with the *specific* pushing phenomenon through the sense of touch, try to feel this **pushing** elsewhere in our body: in the head, the neck, torso, the arms, the legs and the feet. Whenever we have any difficulty, feel the pulse, how this reflects the pushing of the blood-circulation all over our body. Then, go back to that spot we missed. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over.

(2) Hardness

When we are satisfied with *pushing*, we go on to discern hardness. Start with using the tongue-tip to feel the hardness of the back of the top row of teeth. Or, bite the teeth just hard enough; then relax and note: “Earth, earth”

When we can feel this well enough, try to discern *hardness* throughout the body progressively from head to foot, as for discerning *pushing*. Do not tense the body in any way. When we can discern *hardness* throughout the body, again go back to noting pushing throughout the body.

²¹⁰ Dhs §§962-966/177.

²¹¹ For Pa-Auk’s reason for this arrangement: [11.5.2.4].

Alternate between ***pushing and hardness***, again and again, discerning each throughout the body, from head to foot. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(3) Roughness

Discern roughness by using the tongue-tip and feel the edge of the top row of teeth. Or, brush the hand over our clothing, or the skin of the arm: “Earth, earth” Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

Now try to discern roughness throughout the body progressively as before, this time by visualizing it. If we cannot feel roughness, return to *pushing and hardness*, and try to discern roughness with them.

When we can discern roughness, go back to discern **the 3**, *pushing, hardness, roughness*, one at a time, again and again, throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(4) Heaviness

To discern heaviness, (when we are seated cross-legged,) with both hands under the shank (lower leg) try to lift it. Hold it still and note: “Earth, earth” When sitting on a chair, place both hands under one of our legs under the thigh just behind the knee, and try to lift it up. Hold still for a moment, noting “Earth, earth” Feel the heaviness of the head by bending it forward in the same way.

Then, progressively, discern heaviness throughout the body. When we can discern heaviness clearly, try to feel **the 4 characteristics**: *pushing, hardness, roughness, and heaviness*, in turn, throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(5) Supporting

To discern supporting, relax the back and slowly let our upper body lean forward. Then, straighten it, and keep it so in a relaxed manner. The force that keeps the body straight is *supporting*. Put our right hand in the left palm (or the left hand in the right palm): feel how the lower hand is *supporting* the upper hand. Note the supporting as “Wind, wind”

Progressively try to discern *supporting* throughout our body. If this is still difficult, try to discern it together with hardness: feel the *supporting* effect of hardness. Once we can discern it, try to feel the 5: *pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness and supporting* throughout the body.

Then, when we can discern supporting easily try to find **the 5 characteristics**, *pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, and supporting* throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(6) Softness

To discern softness, gently press our lips together, but without the upper and lower rows of teeth touching. Gently close our jaw just a bit to feel *softness* of the lips. Or use the tongue-tip to gently push the lower lip to feel its *softness*.

Then, relax the body, and progressively feel *softness* in different parts until we can easily feel it throughout the body. Now try to discern **the 6 characteristics**: *pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, and softness* throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(7) Smoothness

To discern smoothness, wet our lips and rub the tongue-tip over them gently from side to side.

Keep doing this until we can discern smoothness throughout the body.

Then, try to discern all **7 characteristics**—*pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness and smoothness* throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(8) Lightness

To discern lightness, wag or wiggle a finger up and down, and feel its *lightness*. If we cannot feel it, try to discern heaviness again. When we can feel *heaviness* of the whole body, then again wag a finger up and down and feel its *lightness*.

Practise until we can discern lightness throughout the body.

Then, try to find all **8 characteristics**—*pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness* and *lightness* throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(9) Heat

To discern heat or warmth feel it in between our folded hands, the out-breath in our palm, in the armpits, or under our seat.

Then, feel *heat* throughout the body. Start with where we can feel *heat* clearly through the sense of touch.

Then, try to find all **9 characteristics**—*pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness* and *heat*—throughout the body. Do this mindfully, without haste, over and over, until we are well familiar with it.

(10) Cold [coolness]

To discern cold, feel the coolness of the breath as it enters the nostrils. Otherwise, notice it when we gently breathe in through the mouth; or, when cold air or something cold touches our skin.

Progressively discern cold throughout the body.

Now we discern **the 10 characteristics**—*pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat* and *cold*—throughout the body.

(11) Cohesion

To discern cohesion, be aware of how the body is held together by *the skin, flesh and sinews*. The *blood* is held inside by the skin, like water in a balloon. Without cohesion, the body would fall apart into pieces and particles. The force of gravity that keeps the body down to the earth: this is also *cohesion*.

If this is not clear, discern all **11 characteristics**—*pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, cold* and *cohesion*—again and again, one at a time, throughout the body. When we are skilled in it, we will find that the quality of cohesion also becomes clear.

If it is still unclear, discern just the characteristic of *pushing* and *hardness* again and again. Then we should feel as if our whole body is wound up in rope, held together like a bunch of stick. Discern this as *cohesion*, and cultivate it as we have done for the other characteristics.

(12) Flowing

To discern flowing, be aware of the saliva flowing in the mouth, the blood flowing through its vessels, the air flowing in and out of the lungs, or heat transfer in body (how we feel warm from outside, how we lose heat to the environment).

If this is not clear, look at flowing together with *cold, heat, or pushing*, and we may discern *flowing*.

The first 10 characteristics above are all discerned directly through the sense of touch, but the last two—cohesion and flowing—can only be inferred from these 10 characteristics. That is why, Pa-Auk explains, he teaches them last, that is, in the above sequence.

11.5.2.4 When we can discern **all 12 characteristics** clearly throughout the body, from head to foot, we should discern them again and again in this order. When satisfied, we should rearrange into the original order as in **Table 11.5.2**, that is: *hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness; flowing, cohesion; heat, cold, supporting, and pushing*.

In that order, try to discern each characteristic one at a time from head to foot. We should try to cultivate this until we can do it quite quickly, at least 3 rounds a minute. While practising in this way, the ele-

ments may, for some of us, become unbalanced: Some elements may become excessive and even unbearable, especially *hardness*, *heat* and *pushing*.

When this happens, we should direct our mind to its opposite characteristic, and continue to build our concentration in that way. For example, when flowing is in excess, concentrate more on *cohesion*, or when supporting is in excess, concentrate more on *pushing*. For this purpose, I have listed **the paired sequence**, thus [1.1.5.2]:

<i>hardness</i>	<i>roughness</i>	<i>heaviness</i>	<i>flowing</i>	<i>heat</i>	<i>supporting</i>
<i>softness</i>	<i>smoothness</i>	<i>lightness</i>	<i>cohesion</i>	<i>cold</i>	<i>pushing</i>

It is for the sake of **balancing the elements** that 12 characteristics are taught in the first place. When the elements are balanced, it is easier to attain concentration.

11.5.2.5 Having now become skilled in the discernment of the 12 characteristics in *the whole body*, we have a better understanding of them, so that we can easily discern the first 6 (first 3 pairs) immediately as **the earth element**; the next pair, as **the water element**; the next pair as **the fire element**; and the last pair as **the wind element**.

We should thus continue discerning earth, water, fire and wind for stilling the mind and gaining concentration. We should keep practising this discerning again and again, countless times, even a million times, says Pa-Auk!

Once we have mastered this practice, without having to move our focus around the body, but discern the body *as a whole*, we can easily keep **the mind** still and concentrated. This “body overview” is best done as if we are looking from behind our shoulders or from above our head down. This latter manner, however, may bring about tension and imbalance of the elements. We should then either correct this, or resort to the former body overview.

11.6 MEDITATING ON MATERIALITY

11.6.1 The 10 ways of developing our concentration

Dhammapāla, in his **Param’attha,mañjusā**, “great subcommentary” (*mahā,ṭīkā*) to Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhi,magga, gives **10 tips on how to develop our concentration**, especially in the discerning of the 4 elements,²¹² that is, it should be done in the following ways:

(1) in gradual sequence (*anupubbato*)

The phrase *anupubbato* (adverb) has 2 important senses: (1) gradual, and (2) keeping to the proper sequence, both of which apply here. The “gradual training, gradual practice, gradual progress” (*anupubba,-sikkhā anupubba,kiriyā anupubba,paṭipadā*) is explained by the Buddha in **the Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 107).²¹³ In the case of the 4 elements meditation, we should cultivate it in the proper sequence as given by the Buddha, thus: *earth, water, fire and wind*. Moreover, this meditation (like any taught by the Buddha) should be done diligently and patiently, as an act of renunciation [8.2.5.6]. Any adjustments, if necessary, may be made only after we have understood and mastered the practice.

(2) not too fast (*nâtisīghato*)

When we try to discern the 4 elements *too fast*, we do not see the elements clearly, we will miss out many vital details and not experience what is really going on. The idea behind our meditation is not the attaining of any state, but that of seeing our defilements, *overcoming* the hindrances. Based on a “cultivated body” (*bhāvita,kāya*) of moral virtue, we purify the mind, and keep it so (*bhāvita,citta*).²¹⁴

²¹² VismMṬ:Be 1:434 f.

²¹³ See **Gaṇaka Moggallāna S** (M 107,3-11) + SD 56.3 (1.1.3).

²¹⁴ On *bhāvita,kāya* and *bhāvita,citta*, see **Pinḍola Bhāra,dvāja S** (S 35,127,7), SD 27.6a.

(3) **not too slow** (*nâtisaṇikato*)

It is proper that when we work mindfully in our meditation, we proceed carefully and slowly as a steady learning process. “Not too slow” means we are not distracted in anyway, or, we will not progress or we may blunder in our practice. Hence, when we discern the 4 elements *too slowly*, we will not be able to see the true reality behind them.

(4) **warding off distractions** (*vikkhepa, pāṭibahanato*)

Nothing should distract us from keeping our mind on the object of meditation, the 4 elements, and we should not let it wander away from them. Or worse, we could be careless or forgetful, even stop practising, and fall back into worldly ways. If this should happen, we should be determined to get back to our practice, even if we have to start all over again from the beginning. In this sense, there is no such thing as “failure” in meditation, but only our weaknesses and strengths, and we should know what they are, lessening the former, increasing the latter.

(5) **going beyond concepts** (*paññatti, samatikkamanato*)

We should not only mentally note, “earth ... , water ... , fire ... , wind ... ,” but also be aware of the actual concepts, what they point to: *hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, cold, supporting, pushing* [11.5.2]. This also means that we should *not think* about them, but rather *feel* (*paṭisaṃvedeti*) *hardness, roughness*, etc, and *understand* (*pajānāti*) them. They are like windows we look through into the free space of the beautiful Dharma garden outside.

(6) **discarding what is unclear** (*anupaṭṭhāna, muñcanato*)

Once we can discern all 12 characteristics, we may temporarily omit characteristics that are unclear. However, we should neither add, omit nor change anything in our practice, especially when it brings about pain or tension, because of an imbalance in the elements. We should train to keep at least one characteristic for each of the 4 elements. We cannot work on just one, two or even three elements. It is best that we master all the 12 characteristics clearly, leaving nothing out. This is the complete practice.

(7) **discerning the characteristics** (*lakkhāṇato*)

At the start of our practice, even when we think we are good at it, the characteristics²¹⁵ of each element are often not yet clear. We can then concentrate on their function or manifestation [11.5.11]. These are explained in **the Visuddhi, magga** (Vism 11.93) with details in **Table 11.5.2**.

As our concentration improves, we should concentrate on only **the natural characteristics**: the hardness, roughness, etc, of the earth element; the flowing and cohesion of the water element; the heat and cold of the fire element; and the supporting of the wind element. At this point, we will see only **elements**, not see them as a person or self. [11.5.2]

The Subcommentary further recommends that we cultivate our concentration in keeping with the teachings of these 3 suttas:

(8) **The Adhicitta Sutta** (the higher mind discourse) (A 3.100b)²¹⁶

This Sutta is better known as **the Nimitta Sutta** (the sign discourse), where the term *nimitta* connotes “causes” (*kāraṇa*), that is, either progress or failure in the meditation. The 3 signs or “causes or grounds”—*concentration, effort and mindfulness*—must be well harmonized in our meditation by way of **the 5 spiritual faculties** (*pañc’indriya*): *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom*. The 3 signs are, then, a

²¹⁵ Natural characteristics (*sabhāva lakkhāṇa*) are those peculiar to one type of ultimate reality, be it materiality or mentality; it is also called “individual characteristics” (*paccatta lakkhāṇa*); general characteristics (*sāmañña lakkhāṇa*) or “universal characteristics”—impermanence (*aniccatā*), suffering (*dukkhata*), nonself (*anattatā*)—are the 3 characteristics common to all formations, be they material or mental. “Nonself,” however, encompasses all states; neither incl nirvana. See SD 1.2 (2) *sāmañña lakkhāṇa* 3 (comy); SD 18.2 (2.2); also **Dhamma, niyāma S** (A 3.134) SD 26.8.

²¹⁶ A 3.100b/1:256-258 (SD 19.12); Burmese version is A:Be 3:102.

shorthand for the 5 faculties. In short, our meditation practice should be wholesomely balanced for spiritual growth.²¹⁷

(9) **The (Anuttara) Sīti,bhāva Sutta** (the discourse on the supreme cool state) (A 6.85)²¹⁸

This Sutta is about 6 things that a meditator should do to attain nirvana, the supreme “cool” state, where the fires of *lust, revulsion and ignorance* are extinguished. Such a monk possesses these 6 qualities:

1. he suppresses the mind when it should be suppressed;
2. he exerts the mind when it should be exerted;
3. he encourages the mind when it should be encouraged; and
4. he looks on at the mind with equanimity when it should look on with equanimity;
5. he is of superior disposition, and
6. he takes delight in nirvana.

In short, our practice should be proactively directed to the goal of self-awakening or nirvana.

(10) **The Bojjh’aṅga Sutta** (the awakening-factors discourse) (S 46.53)²¹⁹

This Sutta, also called **the (Bojjh’aṅga) Aggi Sutta** (the fire discourse on the awakening-factors), is about overcoming the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*)²²⁰—*sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*—and cultivating the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*):²²¹ *mindfulness, dharma-investigation, effort, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity*.²²²

Since the practitioner is one with great moral virtue and faith, the focus here (as in **S 46.53**) is of overcoming the problem of being “stuck” in meditation due to sloth and torpor, and overcoming the “restless” mind due to restlessness and worry.

In short, in our meditation practice, we should be driven by both physical and mental effort—moral virtue and the spiritual faculties—so that we gain awakening, or at least reach the path in this lifetime.

12 Discerning materiality (*rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*)

12.1 SEEING BODY TRANSLUCENCE AS A BLOCK

12.1.1 The 4 kinds of compactness

12.1.1.1 As we continue to cultivate concentration on the 4 elements, and approach access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), we will see different kinds of **lights**. It may be a smoky grey light. If we keep concentrating on the 4 elements in this grey light, it will become *white* like cotton-wool; then, bright-white like clouds, and our whole body will appear as *a white form*. As we continue to concentrate on the 4 elements in the white form, it eventually becomes translucent like a block of ice or frosted glass [11.2.3.3]. This is the famous “**crystal body**” of samatha meditation.²²³

At this point, we are instructed to look for the space element in this crystal body. As this practice progresses, the crystal body can suddenly break up into small particles, called “material clusters” (*rūpa kalāpa*) [11.2]. This vision can be profoundly transformative: we virtually see how our “solid” body disintegrates into countless particles that arise and cease only momentarily, like a sky of myriad stars twinkling, but each time the stars are new and different.²²⁴

²¹⁷ See Pa-Auk 2019:39-42.

²¹⁸ A 6.85/3:435 (SD 60.85).

²¹⁹ S 46.53/5:112-115 (SD 51.13).

²²⁰ On the 5 hindrances, see *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

²²¹ On the 7 awakening-factors, see **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15.

²²² See Pa-Auk 2019:42 f.

²²³ In the Dhammakai meditation, a similar crystal or astral body is seen as the embodiment of the Buddha and nirvana [4.2.2.5].

²²⁴ For a personal account of this experience, see Snyder & Rasmussen, 2009:125-127 (ch 8). Cp Aj Chah’s account of his “exploding body” [5.12.3.2].

The appearance of the crystal body marks the end of the samatha stage, and the beginning of vipassana practice, as taught by Pa-Auk.²²⁵

12.1.1.2 What we are really seeing is sensitive materiality, that is, **the 5 sensitivities** (*pasāda*) or faculties: the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- and body-sensitivity. The body sensitivity is found throughout the body, in all the 6 sense-bases, which is why *our whole body appears translucent, crystal-like*. We tend to see the translucence as a single crystal form or block because we have not yet seen through **the 4 kinds of compactness** (*ghana*): the compactness of continuity (*santati,ghana*), of group (*samūha,ghana*), of function (*kicca,ghana*) and of subject (*ārammaṇa,ghana*).²²⁶

These are the 4 ways by which we are deluded into thinking that our material or physical being is actually “compact,” in some way solid and durable, reinforced through our mental processes. We need to work to clear up this delusion through insight knowledge, that is, to directly experience the true reality of our materiality.

12.1.2 Seeing through compactness

12.1.2.1 CONTINUITY COMPACTNESS (*santati ghana*)

We know things through memory (*sati*) and seeing a sense of continuity (*continuity*) in phenomena (the states and events in our life). Our mental processes—as part of a stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa-sota*)—construct ideas of the past and project them into our present experiences. As a result, we imagine a mentality (mental experience) that seems to be **a compact continuity**, a single flow, a continuous solid whole.

We then think that this is the same mind that cognizes objects through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Philosophically, we even argue we must be the “same” person who has done something in the past, and now we must be accountable for it and be rewarded or punished for it. Like Sati, in **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), we even think it is the *same* self, the *same* mind, the *same* consciousness,²²⁷ that moves from life to life, that is reborn into different bodies, or that gains eternal life, or eternal damnation in hell, and so on.²²⁸

In this life itself, we may imagine that our mind or “soul” wanders outside the body, and so on. To correct and prevent this delusion, we need to see through the seeming compactness of the mind. We need to understand how cognition occurs as mental processes that arise and cease. In this way, we see how the mind has no real continuity: one thought-moment arises, and at once ceases.

There is no time for consciousness to go anywhere, not from life to life, not even from second to second. These mind-moments are like the single frames (amongst millions) that seamlessly connect together as a movie film that, when played on a projector onto a cinema screen, gives us animated pictures and stories. But nothing is really moving, and we are making sense of it all in our own mind. But we should *not* even take this example of the movie as something real: it’s only a metaphor.

12.1.2.2 GROUP COMPACTNESS (*samūha ghana*)

Continuity compactness is the delusion of some kind of individual unity over time, a *diachronic* delusion of *past, present and future* as our being. On the other hand, we may see our present interconnectedness, interbeing, as a *synchronic* delusion that everyone else and everything else constitute our “being”: this is a notion of **group or synthetic compactness**. Group compactness or synthetic compactness refers to the way we think that our mind and mental experiences are a continuous whole, or a part of a continuous whole. As a result, we may even imagine it to be some kind of a *synthetic* whole, comprising our memories and ideas. We may even imagine that some kind of pure consciousness cognizes the object; and *that*, we conclude, must be our self or soul.

²²⁵ See Pa-Auk 2019:115 f.

²²⁶ Vism 11.30/348. VismMṬ:Be 21.739/2:437; also 1:80 f, 2:417,4 f, 437, 509,19. DhsṬ:Be 59.

²²⁷ M 38,2/2:256 + SD 7.10 (2).

²²⁸ On the problem of such an idea and that of personal responsibility, see SD 26.9 (1.7).

This is a powerful delusion, and we need some really wise effort to see right through this seeming compactness of an apparently individual consciousness. We need to analyse our consciousness, the mind, with which we think, how we (our mind) process our experiences. That way, we see that what we call “**mind**” actually comprises only consciousness (*citta*) and its mental factors (*cesatika*), such as feeling, perception, and volition; thinking and pondering, or initial application and sustained application; emotions like greed, hatred, delusion, wrong view, conceit and doubt; or non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion, happiness, mindfulness, faith and right view. None of this individually or all of them together, form any synthetic whole that is the mind.

Our mentality is *not a* synthetic whole: it is a process, a flow of consciousness, that arises and immediately ceases. We may see this as a fast flowing stream; we can only take one step into it each time, then the water is gone!

12.1.2.3 FUNCTION COMPACTNESS (*kicca ghana*)

Simply put, **function compactness** refers to the way our mind works, how we *think*. We are suffering because we got it all wrong. Everything, we think or are told, is already right there deep in our own being, even before we were born; it’s our Original Nature. We only need to get back to that Original Face, Higher Reality, Absolute Mind, and so on. So we think.

Not understanding the true nature of our mentality, we think that it rests upon a self, like seeds producing plants, rooted in earth; a self rooted in a Self that is the Ground of Being, and so on. We are sweetly deluded by the clever words we use. We make statements and fancy that we have *defined* something into being: the fact remains that all just *states* of change. That’s *all* that we can know; that’s all that there *is*.

To overcome our blinding delusion, we need to see that each consciousness and mental factor has its own *characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause* [8.2.2.1]. It does not depend on any external agency such as a self, soul, God, divine essence, universal reality, interbeing.

The true reality is that everything is **conditioned**, rising and ceasing: it is all impermanent, changing, becoming other. Hence, we can try to run after things out there and grasp them, but once we do that, we find that they are not what we expected them to be (this is unsatisfactoriness). We are thus caught in the eternal quest for whatever we think is the best for us. We think that it’s “out there” or “in here”: we try to locate it, but we always fall in between.²²⁹

We seek the secret of life, the essence of things. We project what we lack (or *think* what we lack) onto some Self-notion, God-figure: we become food for Gurus peddling Self-views. The reality is that there is only **nonself**. This is our true security.

12.1.2.4 SUBJECT COMPACTNESS (*ārammaṇa ghana*)

Having intellectually penetrated the previous 3 kinds of compactness, we may think, for example, “I have seen ultimate materiality and mentality,” or, “the True Self” has seen ultimate materiality and mentality. Others may proclaim: The Knower knows, The Doer does, That which knows knows, or that Reality changes, but the True Mind does not, and so on; clever but empty prattle, pure Zen talk: a beautifully wrapped present with nothing inside. We play with words but the words outplay us.

To overcome this devious delusion, we need to resolve the 3 types of compactness by understanding our mental processes based on insight or direct understanding. We need to see that the mentality that is the object of our Insight Knowledge is also its subject: it penetrates the 3 types of compactness of mentality that also was a subject with an object.

How, then, do we break down the cyclic compactness of **mentality**? Take, for example, a mind-door process of access concentration that has the breath counter-image (*ānāpāna paṭibhāga, nimitta*) as object. Such a mental process has one mind-door adverting consciousness and 7 impulsion-consciousnesses (*javanna*). In the mind-door adverting mind-moment, there are 12 mental formations, and in each impulsion moment there are 34 mental formations.

²²⁹ For a sutta on this, see **the Bāhiya teaching: (Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10,15-17) + SD 33.7 (1).

If we break down the 4 types of compactness of mentality this way, we will see only *the rapid arising and ceasing of consciousnesses and their associated mental factors*. With that perception of impermanence, we can no longer think that our consciousness is our soul, because with the perception of impermanence comes the perception of **nonself**. The most basic truth of reality is in how we experience life itself, in how we know things; when we truly see that and fully accept it, we free ourselves from the burden of our ignorance of true reality.

The meaning of life is **change**; the purpose of life is **to change**.

As the Buddha declares in **the Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 ≈ U 4.1):

For, one who perceives **impermanence**, Meghiya, establishes **the perception of nonself**.

One who perceives **nonself** eliminates the 'I am' conceit.²³⁰ He attains **nirvana** here and now.

(A 9.3,17.2 ≈ U 4.1) + SD 34.2 (2.5)

12.1.3 How to see the material clusters

12.1.3.1 Pa-Auk's key teaching and practice are that of **meditation**—using samatha [8.1.3(1)] or vipassana [8.1.3(2)]—to be able to see into the true nature of materiality as being composed of **material clusters** (*rūpa kalāpa*) that are all momentary phenomena at its fundamental level. In either approach [11.1.2], the key practice to develop is the 4-element meditation, vipassana style. This section continues from the practice of the 4 elements meditation (vipassana) [11.4].

12.1.3.2 When we continue to discern the 4 elements in the translucent form or block, it will emit light and sparkle. When we are able concentrate on the 4 elements in this form continuously for at least half an hour, we have then reached access concentration [8.3.0.3]. With the light, we discern the space element in the translucent form, by looking for small spaces in it.

We will now find that the translucent form breaks down into small particles, called "**material clusters**" (*rūpa, kalāpas*) [11]. Having reached this stage, which is "mental purification" or consciousness purification, we now proceed to cultivate **view purification**, that is, straightening our view of reality, by analysing the material clusters. This is the beginning of the cultivation of **vipassana** or "vipassana meditation." [12.2.2.4]

12.1.4 Benefits of concentration

12.1.4.1 Before explaining how to cultivate **vipassana** (insight) [2.2], let us look at a practical benefit that is to be gained from both the access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) that a pure-vipassana meditator has attained, and the dhyana (*jhāna*) of a samatha meditator. Often, in vipassana meditation, there is much to discern; hence, tiredness arises. When this happens, it is good to switch to a more relaxed meditation, like walking meditation, or simply take a break. Or, we could turn to doing samatha and attain dhyana.

12.1.4.2 There is a battle parable in the commentary to **the Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta** (M 19), which explains how a meditator *rests* while practising dhyana. When, during a battle, warriors are tired, and the enemy is strong, with many arrows flying about, the warriors retreat into their fortress. Within the fortress, they are safe from the enemy's arrows and can refresh and feed themselves, and simply rest. Then, when they ready to fight again, they leave the fortress and return to the battle-field.

Dhyana is like a fortress, and can be used as a space for rest and recovery during vipassana practice. Pure-vipassana meditators, who have no dhyana, and have started directly with the 4-element meditation, may use their access concentration as a fortress to rest in. In both cases, the meditator can then return to the battle-field of vipassana clear-minded and energized. Such a resting-place is greatly beneficial for the meditator.²³¹

²³⁰ The import is that the true realization of impermanence is the basis for the realization of the other two characteristics in due course: see [2.5.1].

²³¹ MA 2:83,21-84,9.

12.2 ANALYSING THE MATERIAL CLUSTERS

12.2.1 The elements: sensitive and non-sensitive

There are 2 groups of material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*): the sensitive and the non-sensitive material clusters. Material clusters that include one of the 5 sensitivities (eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- or body sensitivity) are **the sensitive material clusters** (*pasāda rūpa kalāpa*). All the others are the non-sensitive material clusters.

12.2.2 How we see the 4 elements

12.2.2.1 We should first discern the 4 elements, *the earth, water, fire and wind* of individual sensitive and non-sensitive material clusters. Now, the material clusters arise and cease very rapidly, and we will not be able to analyse them, because we still see them only as tiny particles. Unless we break through the 4 kinds of compactness [12.1.1], we are still fettered by **concepts** (*paññatti*), and conceiving (*maññānā*),²³² and have not realized true reality.²³³

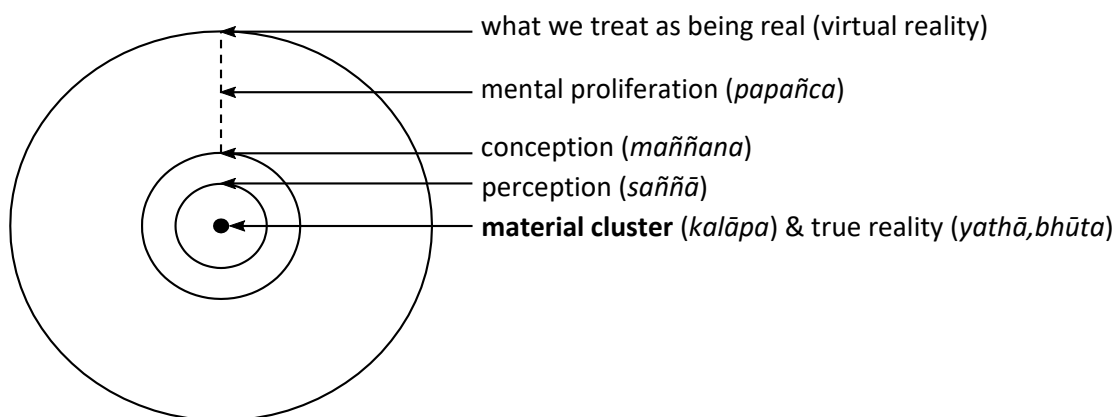


Table 12.2.2 Reality circles

“Perceiving” recognizes things. “Conceiving” imagines a relationship between the thing and a “Self.” “Mental proliferation” creates associations. All of these influence what we regard as being real. (Based on Robert Moul, 2019:164 Fig 90)

It is because we have not seen through the concepts and percepts of groups and shapes that matter appears to us as *particles*, small lumps. We need to look deeper, with insight (*vipassana*), by contemplating *the arising and ceasing* of these particles—the material clusters (*rūpa, kalāpa*)—we will then see more than merely *concepts*. We, however, need to analyse these material clusters themselves until we see **the elements** in single particles; then, we will see true reality.²³⁴

12.2.2.2 Since the material clusters arise and cease very rapidly, we are unable to discern the 4 elements in the single clusters; then, we should ignore their arising and ceasing. This is like meeting someone we do not want to meet, we would try not to notice him. We should, in the same way, take *no* notice of the arising and ceasing of the material clusters, and concentrate on *only* the 4 elements in them. With proper concentration, we will be able to do this.

If we are still unable to observe the clusters, we should start by concentrating first on the earth element alternately in the *whole* body at once and in a *single*-cluster. And then do the same with the water-,

²³² On *maññānā*, see **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 1,3) n, SD 11.8; **Ejā S 1** (S 35.90). SD 29.10 (3); SD 31.10 (2.6).

²³³ For an insight into concepts, see Pa-Auk 2019:8-11.

²³⁴ Pa-Auk’s *Knowing And Seeing* (2019) uses the terms “translucent” and “untranslucent” respectively [11.2.3].

fire-, and wind elements. We need to discern the 4 elements in a single sensitive material cluster and a single non-sensitive one.²³⁵

12.2.2.3 This is how Pa-Auk teaches: we are to discern the 4 elements one-by-one. The texts often report that we should discern all the elements at once, but often only skilled meditators can do this. Discerning the elements of materiality is very difficult for the beginner whose insight (*vipassanā*) is usually not yet strong enough for them to see *all* the elements, not to say *all the characteristics* of the elements, at once.

We thus should first learn to discern the elements one-by-one, base-by-base, from the easiest to the more difficult. Then, when we have become very skilled in the practice, we can see all 4 elements (with their 8 characteristics) in a single-cluster, all at once, as each rapidly arises and ceases.²³⁶

12.2.2.4 When we have seen the 4 elements *in a single sensitive cluster and a single non-sensitive cluster*, it is **the end of our samatha practice**, the end of mental purification (*citta visuddhi*), and the beginning of our **vipassana practice**, beginning of view purification (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*): we have begun the discernment of ultimate mentality-materiality (*nāma,rūpa pariggaha*) and the analysis of ultimate mentality-materiality (*nāma,rūpa pariccheda*). That is how 4-element meditation comprises *both* samatha and vipassana.

When we have succeeded, discern the 4 elements in a number of sensitive and non-sensitive clusters of the 6 sense bases: *the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and heart-base* in turn. As mentioned before, sensitive and non-sensitive material clusters each comprises a basic set of 8 types of materiality. Once we are skilled in discerning the first 4 (earth, water, fire, wind), we then go on to discern the remaining 4: *colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence*. [12.3.3.1]

12.2.2.5 However, before that, let us first discuss **the general method** for discerning the first 4 elements by noting this salient remark from **the Sammoha,vinodanī** (the Vibhaṅga Commentary):

All phenomena are known by the mind-door impulsion (*javana*) alone.²³⁷

(*Sabbo'pi pan'esa pabhedo mano,dvārika javane-yeva labbhati*, VbhA §766/16.1/406,10)

The earth, water, fire and wind elements of a material cluster we know with the mind consciousness alone. We can also know, for example, the colour, smell and taste of a cluster the same way. However, although we can easily see colour with mind-consciousness alone, it is impossible to see smell and taste that way. **The Uṇṇābha Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (S 48.42) records the Buddha as declaring of our 5 sense-faculties:

“... these 5 faculties have 5 different ranges, 5 different fields. *They do not experience each others' range or field.*

... they have the mind as resort, and the mind experiences *their* range and field.”

(S 48.42,3+4/5:217 f), SD 29.3

Moreover, these material clusters are tiny, microscopic, molecular: we cannot see, smell or taste them with the ordinary senses. In fact, this is a meditative experience, a direct mental seeing into the true nature of the clusters. In other words, we must strengthen and deepen our concentration before we can directly discern them mentally.

²³⁵ Although we have discerned 12 characteristics [11.5.2], we can discern only 8 of them in a given material cluster: (1) hardness, (2) roughness, (3) heaviness; *or*, (1) softness, (2) smoothness, (3) lightness; then, (4) flowing, (5) cohesion, (6) heat (or cold), (7) supporting, (8) pushing. There are no opposing characteristics within one material cluster.

²³⁶ See precision on discerning only 8 characteristics each time.

²³⁷ Actual knowing of an object is done by 7 *javana*-consciousnesses in the mind-door process, regardless of the sense-door through which the object has arrived. See Pa-Auk 2019:8, 166 Table 1b the mind-door process (details at Avhs:BRS §12/163-166). For a simplified diagram (complete-door cognitive process): SD 19.14 (2).

Having explained the 2 ways of discerning an object, we now look at how we discern *the colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence* in material clusters

12.2.3 How we see colour and smell of materiality

12.2.3.1 Colour (*vaṇṇa*), the 5th type of materiality to be discerned, is ordinarily the object of sight (*rūp'ārammaṇa*), and is found in all material clusters. It is very easily known with mind-consciousness alone, because by *seeing* the clusters, we are really seeing *colour*. We can only see a material form as colour: it is always a colour of some form, that is, the 4 elements.²³⁸

12.2.3.2 Smell or odour (*gandha*), the 6th type of materiality to be discerned, is the olfactory object (*gandh'ārammaṇa*, “smell as object’). It is also found in all material clusters. We naturally know what smell is, but now we need to understand that it only works (we can only smell) *when there is also mind-consciousness*—as stated in **the Uṇṇābha Sutta** (S 48.42) [12.2.2.5].

Hence, we must first discern the materiality that the 2 types of consciousness depend on, namely, the nose sensitivity and the “heart materiality.” Now, **the nose sensitivity** is the 10th type of materiality of a nose decad-cluster, and **the heart materiality** is the 10th type of materiality of a heart decad-cluster. To find the nose sensitivity, we must first discern the 4 elements in the nose, but be sure to look at a decad-cluster in the nose that is of **the nose-base**, not of the body-base. Only nose decad-clusters have the nose sensitivity.

12.2.3.3 Next, we look for **the heart materiality**,²³⁹ when we need to discern the bright, luminous mind-door (the life-continuum, *bhavaṅga*).²⁴⁰ It should be easy to do because we have already discerned the 4 elements in the sensitive and non-sensitive material clusters of the 6 sense-bases. Having now discerned the nose sensitivity (the nose-door) and the mind-door (*bhavaṅga*), we can go on to discern the smell of a material cluster near the nose decad-cluster where we discerned the sensitivity. We will see that the smell impinges on the nose door and mind door at the same time.

12.2.3.4 A NOTE ON BHAV'ĀṄGA. This important and interesting psychological Abhidhamma term is mentioned in the Pali canon in the 7th and last book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, **the Paṭṭhāna**.²⁴¹ Pa-Auk thinks that it cannot correspond with either the subconscious or the unconscious of psychodynamics (the system going back to Sigmund Freud). The reason, according to him, is that “two consciousnesses cannot arise at the same time” (2019:104 n187).

The life-continuum consciousness is a flow of resultant consciousnesses, maintained by the karma that matured at the time of death in the previous life (in our case). It maintains the continuum of mentality (the mind between mental processes). It functions also as the mind-door (*mano,dvāra*). Once the karma that produces this life comes to an end, the life-continuum consciousness of this life ceases. In the non-arhat, a new life-continuum consciousness, with a new object, arises after the 1st consciousness of the new life, that is, after the rebirth-linking consciousness, there arise 16 life-continuum consciousnesses.

²³⁸ Even when we “see” the sensitivity of glass, light is reflected from the glass (the 4 elements); hence, the glass comprises the elements, and they are what we are really seeing. See Pa-Auk 2019:126 n236.

²³⁹ Or “heart-base” (*hadaya,vatthu*), where according to Abhidhamma, the mind, as a sense, is located: SD 26.2 (3.1.3.6); SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4).

²⁴⁰ Speaking of the *bhavaṅga*’s “luminosity” is simply a metaphor, because the luminosity of the material clusters is, in fact, produced by the *bhavaṅga*: consciousness-born material clusters, the temperature of which produces further bright material clusters. A samatha-vipassana mind produces particularly bright material clusters because there are no imperfections (*upakkilesa*). See Consciousness-born materiality [1.1.3.2] & Pa-Auk 2019:112.

²⁴¹ The Paṭṭhāna refs are numerous enough: use the wildcard “bhavaṅg*” to search the CSCD. On the origins of the term *bhavaṅga*, see L S Cousins, 1981:23-25.

PREVIOUS LIFE							PRESENT LIFE	
MIND- MOMENT <i>citta-k,khaṇa</i>	final consciousness of near-death process <i>maraṇā saññā vīthi</i>					→	1 st consciousness	16 life-continuum consciousnesses
	→	→	→	→	→		1 →	2 → . . . 17 →
OBJECT <i>ārammaṇa</i>	near-death object (karma/karma-sign/destination-sign)					previous life's near-death object	previous life's near-death object	
CONSCIOUSNESS <i>citta</i>	1 st impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓	2 nd impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓	3 rd impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓	4 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓	5 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓	death <i>cuti</i> ↑|↓	rebirth-linking <i>paṭisandhi</i> ↑|↓	life-continuum <i>bhavaṅga</i> ↑|↓

MIND-MOMENT <i>citta-k,khaṇa</i>	PRESENT LIFE'S 1 ST COGNITIVE PROCESS (a mind-door process)								(after the cognitive process)									
	1 →		2 →		3 →		4 →		5 →		6 →		7 →		8 →		→→→→→→→→→→	
OBJECT <i>ārammaṇa</i>	new aggregates (for a deva, a human, an animal, a ghost, and a hell-being, it is 5 aggregates)																	previous life's near- death object
CONSCIOUSNESS <i>citta</i>	Mind-door adverting <i>Mano dvār'āvajjana</i> ↑|↓		1 st impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		2 nd impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		3 rd impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		4 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		5 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		6 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		7 th impulsion <i>javana</i> ↑|↓		life-continuum <i>bhavaṅga</i> ↑|↓	

Table 12.2.3.4 Death and rebirth processes (Pa-Auk 2019:188 Table 1d)

Being produced by the same karma that produces the rebirth-linking consciousness, the new life-continuum consciousness takes the same object [Table 12.2.3.4]. Hence, the life-continuum is not a “subconscious undercurrent” operating “below” the mental processes of the 6 doors. As we can see in the 5-door process [Table 13.2.3], prior to the arising of a 5-door process, the flow of life-continuum consciousnesses is arrested (it is said to subside “below” the mind-door process that has taken over; it does not arise).

The life-continuum consciousness resumes once the 5-door process is complete [Table 13.2.3]. The life-continuum always cognizes the same object, which is independent of the objects that enter the 6 doors: that is why it is called “process-free” (*vīthi,mutta*).²⁴² [13]

12.2.4 How we “see” the taste of materiality

Taste (*rasa*), the 7th type of materiality to discern, is the gustatory object (*ras’ārammaṇa*, “taste as object”), and is also found in all material clusters. As with the nose, we will, as a start, need tongue consciousness to help us know *taste* with mind consciousness. Here, too, we need first to discern the materiality that the 2 types of consciousness depend on: the tongue-sensitivity and heart materiality. Having done that, we then discern *the taste* of a material cluster. We can taste the material cluster from the saliva on our tongue.

12.2.5 How we “see” nutritive essence

Nutritive essence (*ojā*), the 8th type of materiality to discern, is also found in all material clusters, that is, all the 4 kinds of materiality already discussed [11.3.0]. Thus, we have these 4 kinds of nutritive essence:

(1) karma-born nutritive-essence	<i>kammaja ojā</i>
(2) consciousness-born nutritive-essence	<i>cittaja ojā</i>
(3) temperature-born nutritive-essence	<i>utuja ojā</i>
(4) nutriment-born nutritive-essence	<i>āhāraja ojā</i>

When we examine any material cluster, we will find nutritive essence from which the clusters are seen to multiply again and again. Having now discerned the 8 basic types of materiality that are found in all material clusters, we should try to discern the remaining 3 basic types of materiality found in specific material clusters: the life-faculty-materiality, sex-materiality, and heart-materiality.

12.2.6 How we “see” the life-faculty and the sex-faculty

12.2.6.1 The life-faculty (*jīvit’indriya*) materiality sustains only karma-born materiality, which means that it is found only there. Since all sensitive material clusters are karma-born [11.3.1], it is easiest for us to discern the life-faculty first in a sensitive material cluster. Discern an eye decad-cluster,²⁴³ and see that the life-faculty sustains the materiality of only its own material cluster, not the materiality of others. Then, we need also try to discern life-faculty in a non-sensitive material cluster.

²⁴² On the SD usage of “consciousness, preconscious, subconscious and unconscious,” see SD 17.8b (1). On the “subconscious” as rebirth consciousness, see SD 17.8b (6). On Buddhist psychological terms and modern psychology: SD 26.11 (3.3.2).

²⁴³ An eye decad cluster comprises the basic 8 elements + 2 others: (1) earth, (2) water, (3) fire, (4) wind, (5) colour, (6) smell, (7) taste, (8) nutritive essence; plus (9) life-faculty, (10) eye-sensitivity. See Pa-Auk 2019:138 Table 2b.

12.2.6.2 The body has 3 types of non-sensitive material cluster with life-faculty materiality:

- (1) the heart decad-clusters:²⁴⁴ found only in the heart.
- (2) the sex decad-clusters:²⁴⁵ found throughout the body.
- (3) the life nonad-clusters:²⁴⁶ found throughout the body.

It is easiest to first discern the life-faculty of either a life nonad-cluster or a sex decad-cluster. To tell apart these 2 kinds of material clusters, we look for the sex materiality (which the former lacks).

12.2.6.3 Just now we discerned the life-faculty in a sensitive material cluster of the eye, so look again in the eye and discern a non-sensitive material cluster with the life-faculty. Since life nonad-clusters and sex decad-clusters are found in all 6 sense-organs, it will be either one. If it has the sex materiality, it is a sex decad-cluster; if not, it is a life nonad-cluster. In that case, discern another non-sensitive material cluster until we discern the sex materiality, and then try to find it in a material cluster of also the ear, nose, tongue, body and heart.

12.2.7 How we “see” the heart materiality

12.2.7.1 To discern a non-sensitive material cluster of **the heart** (the mind-base), we concentrate again on the bright mind-door (*bhavaṅga*). To see it clearly, wiggle our finger, and see the consciousness that wants to wiggle the finger. Then, try to discern how the *bhavaṅga* arises dependent on the heart-base: the non-sensitive heart decad-clusters. We should be able to find them in the lower part of the *bhavaṅga*.²⁴⁷

12.2.7.2 With this, we have completed the discernment of all the types of materiality in material clusters: *earth, water, fire, wind, colour, smell, taste, nutritive essence, life-faculty, sex-materiality and heart-materiality*. And we have discerned them in the appropriate sensitive and non-sensitive material clusters in all 6 sense-organs. The next stage in discerning materiality is to analyse the materiality of each of the 6 sense-organs:²⁴⁸ *the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart*, and see the different types of material clusters there. We start by analysing just the 2 types of sensitivity.

12.3 ANALYZING THE SENSE-FACULTIES

12.3.1 How we analyse the sensitivities

12.3.1.1 Each sense-organ has several kinds of material clusters mixed together. The eye, ear, nose and tongue have, for example, 2 types of sensitive materiality mixed together like rice-flour and wheat flour: the sensitive material clusters of the respective organs and sensitive material clusters of the body.

²⁴⁴ A heart decad cluster comprises the basic 8 elements + 2 others: (1) earth, (2) water, (3) fire, (4) wind, (5) colour, (6) smell, (7) taste, (8) nutritive essence; plus (9) life-faculty, (10) heart element. See Pa-Auk 2019:140 Table 2d.

²⁴⁵ A sex decad cluster comprises the basic 8 elements + 2 others: (1) earth, (2) water, (3) fire, (4) wind, (5) colour, (6) smell, (7) taste, (8) nutritive essence; plus (9) life-faculty, (10) sex materiality. See Pa-Auk 2019:132 Table 2c.

²⁴⁶ A life nonad cluster comprises the basic 8 elements + 1 other: (1) earth, (2) water, (3) fire, (4) wind, (5) colour, (6) smell, (7) taste, (8) nutritive essence; plus (9) life-faculty. See Pa-Auk 2019:139 Table 2c.

²⁴⁷ See Pa-Auk 2019:140 Table 2d.

²⁴⁸ Usually we speak of the “6 sense-faculties.” Since the bases have already been explained as being, in fact, only the 10th element in the appropriate material cluster, it is better to say “**sense-organs**” here, referring to the actual organs: the eye-ball, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the heart (not the brain!). On the heart as the mind-base [11.2.1.1 n]. See Pa-Auk 2019:138 Table 2b.

The 2 types of sensitive material clusters of, for example, **the eye**, are:

- 1) the eye decad-cluster (*cakkhu dasaka kalāpa*) : its 10th type of materiality is the eye sensitivity.
- 2) the body decad-cluster (*kāya dasaka kalāpa*): its 10th type of materiality is the body sensitivity.

Body decad-clusters are found throughout the 6 sense-organs (eye, ear, nose-, tongue, body and heart), mixed with the respective types of decad-clusters there: in the eye mixed with the eye decad-clusters (*cakkhu dasaka kalāpa*), in the ear mixed with the ear decad-clusters (*sota dasaka kalāpa*), and so on. To see this, we need to analyse the sensitive material clusters in the 5 sense-organs, and identify the sensitivity of each (the eye-, ear-, nose- and tongue-sensitivity) as well as the body-sensitivity there.

12.3.1.2 Let us begin with the eye-sensitivity.

(1) **The eye sensitivity** (*cakkhu pasāda*): it is sensitive to colour, whereas the body-sensitivity is sensitive to touch (tangible objects). This difference allows us to differentiate them.

First, discern the 4 elements in the eye to discern a sensitive material cluster, and discern the material cluster's sensitivity. Then, look at the colour of a group of material clusters some distance away from the eye. If it impinges on the sensitivity, that sensitivity is an eye-sensitivity (of an eye decad-cluster). Otherwise, it is a body sensitivity (of a body decad-cluster).

(2) **The body sensitivity** (*kāya pasāda*): it is sensitive to touch, to tangible objects. Tangible objects are the earth, fire and wind elements.

Again, discern a sensitivity in the eye. Then, look at the earth-, fire- or wind element of a group of material clusters nearby. If it impinges on the sensitivity, that sensitivity is a body-sensitivity (of a body decad-cluster). Now that we have discerned both the eye-sensitivity in the eye, and the body-sensitivity in the eye, we then follow the same procedure for the remaining organs: now, continue with the ear.

(3) **The ear sensitivity** (*sota pasāda*): it is sensitive to sound. Discern a sensitivity in the ear. Then, listen: if a sound impinges on the sensitivity, that is an ear sensitivity (of an ear decad-cluster). Then, discern the body sensitivity as we did with the eye in 1 above.

(4) **The nose sensitivity** (*ghāna pasāda*): it is sensitive to smell. Discern a sensitivity in the nose. Then, smell the odour of a group of material clusters nearby. If it impinges on the sensitivity, that sensitivity is a nose sensitivity (of a nose decad-cluster). Discern the body decad-cluster as we have done for the eye and for the ear.

(5) **The tongue sensitivity** (*jivhā pasāda*): it is sensitive to taste. Discern a sensitivity in the tongue. Then, taste the flavour of a group of material clusters nearby. If it impinges on the sensitivity, that sensitivity is a tongue-sensitivity (of a tongue decad-cluster). Discern the body decad-cluster as we have done for the eye, ear and nose.

Once we have analysed the 2 types of sensitivity in each of the 4 other sense-organs, we need also to see that the body-sensitivity (in the body decad-clusters) is also found in the heart. Having done that, we have analysed all 5 types of sensitive materiality.

12.3.2 How we analyse sex materiality

Sex decad-clusters, too, are found throughout the 6 sense-organs, and are also mixed with the sensitive material clusters. A sex decad cluster comprises these 10 elements: (8) *the basic 8 elements* + (9) *life faculty* + (10) *sex materiality*. We discerned sex decad-clusters when we discerned *life-faculty*. Now we have discerned them in all the 6 sense-organs.

12.3.3 The 54 types of materiality of the eye

12.3.3.1 So far, we have discussed 3 basic types of material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*):

- (1) the decad-clusters of each of the 6 sense-organs (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart),
- (2) the life nonad-clusters, and
- (3) the octad-clusters.

The eye, ear, nose, tongue, and heart comprise, as we have seen, **7 types of material clusters**, with altogether 63 types of materiality. Take **the eye**, for example:

(1) eye decad-clusters	10 types of materiality
(2) body decad-clusters	10 types
(3) sex decad-clusters	10 types
(4) life nonad-clusters	9 types
(5) consciousness-born octad-clusters	8 types
(6) temperature-born octad-clusters	8 types
(7) nutriment-born octad-clusters	8 types.

Thus, we have: $10 + 10 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 63$. The same equation applies respectively for *the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the heart* (the mind-base).

Since **the body** has only its own type of decad-clusters and sex decad-clusters, it has in all only 53 types of materiality, thus: $10 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 53$.

12.3.3.2 However, when analysing **the materiality of each sense-organ**, Buddhaghosa (in the *Visuddhi, magga*) says that we should look at only 6 types of material clusters (that is, omit the life nonad-clusters). We should concentrate on only **54 types of materiality** ($63 - 9 = 54$).²⁴⁹ As for the life nonad-clusters, we will discern in another way later. Since one of the 6 types of material cluster is (as we have just seen) the body decad-cluster, when we analyse the materiality of the body itself (outside the eye, ear, nose, tongue and heart), we can analyse only 5 types of material clusters, only 44 types of materiality.

Let us then look at the said 54 types of materiality of, for example, the eye. The 6 types of material clusters in *the eye* are first the 3 types of material clusters we have just discerned and analysed, totalling 30 types of materiality, as follows:

- (1) the eye decad-cluster [12.2.6.1 n]: it is sensitive to colour, has eye-sensitivity, and is karma-born.
- (2) the body decad-cluster:²⁵⁰ it is sensitive to tangible objects (earth, fire and wind elements), has body-sensitivity, and is karma-born. [12.3.1.1]
- (3) The sex decad-cluster [12.3.2]: it is non-sensitive, and karma-born.

12.3.3.3 And then there are 3 more types of material cluster, with 8 types of materiality each, totalling 24 ($3 \times 8 = 24$). They are the 3 types of nutritive-essence octad-cluster, which are non-sensitive:

(1) The consciousness-born nutritive-essence octad-cluster	<i>cittaja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa</i>
(2) The temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-cluster	<i>utuja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa</i>
(3) The nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-cluster	<i>āhāraja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa</i>

²⁴⁹ The life nonad-clusters are included in only the analysis of what is called the 42 parts of the body, ie, 32 body-parts + 4 modes of fire + 6 modes of wind (*Vism* 18.6 f/588). Only then, Pa-Auk (keeping to the texts) teaches the meditator to discern the life nonad-clusters. Even then, we may, if we wish, include them at this point.

²⁵⁰ The body decad cluster comprises (8) the basic 8 elements + (9) life faculty + (10) body sensitivity.

The first 3 types of material cluster (the decad-clusters) are karma-born, whereas the last 3 types of material cluster (the octad-clusters) are either temperature-born, consciousness-born, or nutriment-born. As we have earlier discussed, there are 4 arisings of materiality [11.3.0]. Since we have by now discerned the karma-born material clusters, we will discuss how to discern the types of octad-clusters. [13.3.1.3]

12.4 HOW WE SEE CONSCIOUSNESS-BORN MATERIALITY²⁵¹

12.4.1 As already mentioned [11.3.2], every single **consciousness** that arises dependent on heart-materiality (apart from the rebirth-linking consciousness) produces a great number of consciousness-born nutritive essence octad-clusters (*cittaja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa*). They are non-sensitive clusters that pervade the whole body.

12.4.2 That is why, if we concentrate on the *bhavaṅga* [12.2.3.3], we will see many consciousnesses dependent on heart-materiality producing material clusters. If this is not clear, concentrate again on the *bhavaṅga*, and again wiggle one of our fingers [12.4.2]. We will then see a large number of material clusters being produced because the mind wants to wiggle the finger. And we will see that such material clusters can arise anywhere in the body.

12.5 HOW WE SEE TEMPERATURE-BORN MATERIALITY

12.5.1 As already mentioned [11.3.3], the fire element (*tejo*) is also called temperature (*utu*), and is found in all material clusters. The fire element of all material clusters produces temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters (*utuja oj'aṭṭhamaka kalāpa*). They themselves contain the fire element, which produces further temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters. We need to see that this process takes place in all the types of material cluster in each sense-organ.

12.5.2 First, discern **the fire element** in, for example, an eye decad-cluster. Then, see that it produces temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters: that is **the 1st generation**. Then, discern the fire element in a material cluster of that 1st generation of temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters, and see that it, too, reproduces: that is, **the 2nd generation**. In this way, see that the fire element in the eye decad-cluster (which is itself karma-born) [11.3.1] reproduces through 4 or 5 generations, depending on the strength of the food and the power of the karma. [11.3.3.1]

We need to see that this process takes place for each type of material cluster in each sense-organ, and must ourselves see how many generations of temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters each type of material clusters produces.

12.6 HOW WE SEE NUTRIMENT-BORN MATERIALITY

12.6.1 Nutriment and clusters

12.6.1.1 As already mentioned [11.3.4], those parts of our body, namely, food in the mouth, undigested food, digested food (chyme), faeces, urine, blood and pus, are nothing but inanimate temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters. The body's digestive heat (which is most active in the alimentary canal) is just **the fire element** of life nonad-clusters (*jīvita navaka kalāpa*), which are karma-born. [11.3.1]

12.6.1.2 When the nutritive essence of the temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters meets with the digestive heat, further materiality is produced, namely, nutriment-born nutritive-

²⁵¹ Pa-Auk 2019:112-116.

essence octad-clusters (*āhāraja oj'atṭhamaka kalāpa*). They themselves have nutriment-born nutritive essence (*āhāraja ojā*) which reproduces in the same way through many generations.

12.6.1.3 Nutriment taken in one day reproduces like this for up to a week, during which time it also supports the nutritive essence in karma-born, consciousness-born and temperature-born material clusters, as well as preceding nutriment-born material clusters [11.3.1]. Divine nutriment (of the sense-world devas), it is said, reproduces for up to 1-2 months. [11.3.4.3]

12.6.2 Eating and clusters

12.6.2.1 In order to see nutriment clusters, we need to meditate while eating, that is, having emerged from deep meditation we chew some food during access concentration. Of course, some food should be ready for us, safely stored in a covered bowl before us. Once we are ready, we mindfully chew the food.

We will then see the nutriment-born material clusters spreading throughout the body, pervading from the entire alimentary canal: the mouth, the throat, the stomach and the intestines. First, we discern the 4 elements in the newly chewed food in those places, and see the material clusters there.

We go on visualizing them, until we see that when the digestive heat (the fire element of the life nonad-clusters) meets the nutritive essence of the newly eaten food (temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters), many generations of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters are produced, which spread throughout the body.

Notice that they are non-sensitive, and contain the 8 types of materiality. We can also see these things after we have eaten, in which case we analyse the undigested food in the stomach and intestines.

12.6.2.2 Then, see what happens when it meets the karma-born nutritive essence of **the eye decad-clusters**. Together with the digestive heat, it causes the nutritive essence of the eye decad-clusters to produce 4 or 5 generations of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters.²⁵² The number of generations produced depends on the strength of both kinds of the nutritive essences.

Again, in those 4 or 5 generations of material clusters, there is temperature. Try again to discern that at its standing phase, it too reproduces through many generations.

Try also to discern that when the nutriment-born nutritive essence meets the nutritive essence of the eye's karma-born body- and sex decad-clusters, 4 or 5 generations of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters are produced. In these many generations, too, the temperature reproduces through many generations.

12.6.2.3 Furthermore, when the nutriment-born nutritive essence meets the nutritive essence of **the eye's consciousness-born nutritive-essence octad-cluster** 2 or 3 generations of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters are produced, and in also these generations, the temperature reproduces through many generations.

And again, there are 2 types of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-cluster: preceding and succeeding. When the preceding nutriment-born nutritive-essence meets the succeeding nutritive-essence of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters and the digestive heat, 10 to 12 generations of nutriment-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters are produced: the temperature there, too, reproduces over many generations. In every case, the nutritive essence of any material cluster (born of either karma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment) reproduces only when it is supported by digestive heat.

²⁵² The nutriment-born nutritive-essence and digestive heat are the supporting cause, and the nutritive-essence of the eye decad clusters is the generating cause.

Having discerned all the types of nutritive-essence octad-clusters in the eye, how they reproduce, and how the materiality of the material clusters that they produce also reproduce, we will have discerned all **54 types of materiality in the eye** [12.3.3].

We should then do the same for all the types of materiality in the remaining 5 sense-organs: the ear, nose, tongue, body and heart.

12.7 OVERVIEW

12.7.1 The full practice

12.7.1.1 Thus far, we have briefly discussed how to analyse material clusters, but the actual practice entails much more. For example, in the full practice, we analyse all **the 42 parts of the body** mentioned in **the Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140): 20 earth-, 12 water-, 4 fire- and 6 wind-element parts, thus:²⁵³

- earth 20 the skin pentad, the kidney pentad, the lungs pentad, the dung pentad
- water 12 fat sestad, urine sestad
- fire 4 warming heat, maturing heat, burning heat, digestive heat
- wind 6 up-going wind, down-going wind, stomach wind, gut winds, limb winds, in-and-out-breaths

This full practice needs the proper guidance of an experienced meditation teacher.

12.7.1.2 By diligent and systematic practice, we will progress to become proficient in the discernment of material clusters, born of the 4 causes: *karma, consciousness, temperature, and nutriment*. With the full discernment of materiality, we have only studied the 1st part of **the 1st Vipassana Knowledge**, that of Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*nāma,rūpa pariccheda,ñāṇa*), that is, defining name and form.²⁵⁴

A most comprehensive Abhidhamma list is that of **the 16 Insight Knowledges** (*soḷasa vipassana ñāṇa*):²⁵⁵

(1) Knowledge of the Definition of Mentality and Materiality	<i>nāma,rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa</i>
(2) Knowledge of Discernment of Conditions	<i>paccaya pariggaha ñāṇa</i>
(3) Knowledge that is Comprehension (of the 5 aggregates)	<i>sammasana ñāṇa</i>
(4) Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing (of formations)	<i>udaya-b,baya ñāṇa</i>
(5) Knowledge of the Dissolution (of formations)	<i>bhaṅga ñāṇa</i>
(6) Knowledge of the Fearful (viz, the dissolving states)	<i>bhaya ñāṇa</i>
(7) Knowledge of Dangers (viz, the fearful states)	<i>ādīnava ñāṇa</i>
(8) Knowledge that is Revulsion (with all formations)	<i>nibbidā ñāṇa</i>
(9) Knowledge that is the Desire for Freedom	<i>muñcitu,kamyatā ñāṇa</i>
(10) Knowledge that is Reflective Contemplation	<i>paṭisaṅkha ñāṇa</i>
(11) Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations	<i>saṅkhār'upekkhā ñāṇa</i>
(12) Conformity Knowledge	<i>anuloma ñāṇa</i>
(13) Knowledge that is the Change of Lineage	<i>gotra,bhū ñāṇa</i>
(14) Path Knowledge	<i>magga ñāṇa</i>
(15) Fruition Knowledge	<i>phala ñāṇa</i>
(16) Review Knowledge	<i>paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa</i>

²⁵³ M 140,16 f/3:241 (SD 4.17).

²⁵⁴ According to Abhidhamma, there are altogether 16 Vipassana Knowledges

²⁵⁵ An early set of 9 knowledges is given in Pm 1:1. A set of 11 knowledges is found at Vism 20.93-21.136/630-671. **Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha** list 11 knowledges (Abhs 9.25; Abhs:BRS 344-347, 351-356; Abhs:SR 210 f; Abhs:WG 346). **Paṭisambhidā,magga**, incorporating the 8 knowledges, gives a more comprehensive list of 16 knowledges (*soḷasa,ñāṇa*) (Pm 1; Vism 18.1-22.31/587-678).

12.7.1.3 Brief explanations of the 16 Insight Knowledges²⁵⁶

(1) The Knowledge of the Definition of Mentality and Materiality, says the Anguttara Commentary, is the 1st 7 Knowledges beginning with “the Knowledge and Vision of True Reality” (*yathā, bhūta, ñāṇa, dassana*), that is, a “tender” (or nascent) insight (*taruṇa, vipassanā*). In “revulsion and dispassion” (*nibbidā, virāga*), revulsion is “strong insight” (*balava, vipassanā*) and dispassion the path. “Knowledge and vision of freedom” (*vimutti, ñāṇa, dassana*) are respectively the freedom of fruition and review Knowledge. (AA 3:229)

(2) The Knowledge of Discernment of Conditions is basically a good understanding that nothing happens from a single cause (definitely *not* a “1st cause”), nor by accident, nor by predetermination, but by way of conditionality (*paccayatā*), that is, how all states (*dhamma*) relate to one another, with multiple conditions causing multiple effects, which, in turn, become causes, and so on. This causes-effects connection happens in any of 3 ways. The first is the conditioning state (*paccaya, dhamma*); the second, the conditioned state (*paccay’uppanna, dhamma*); the third the conditioning force (*paccaya, satti*).²⁵⁷

(3) The Knowledge that is Comprehension is a full knowledge of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) by way of the 3 characteristics (impermanence, suffering and nonself).²⁵⁸ The 10 Knowledges beginning with this (3-12) form the “10 Insight Knowledges” (*dasa vipassana ñāṇa*) in the Abhidhammattha, saṅgaha.²⁵⁹

(4) The Knowledge of Rise and Fall (of Formations) is the Knowledge that precedes the imperfections of insight. When the imperfections have been removed, insight now grows in strength and clarity. This Knowledge occurs in 2 phases. During the 1st, the “tender” Knowledge of rise and fall, as the process of contemplation gains momentum, 10 “imperfections of insight” (*vipassan’upakkilesa*) arise in us, the meditator. We may see an aura (*obhāsa*) emanating from our body. We feel great zest (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*) and happiness (*sukha*). Our resolution (*adhimokkha*) grows; we make a great exertion (*paggaha*); our Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) ripens; there is steady mindfulness (*upaṭṭhāna*); and we develop unshakable equanimity (*upekkhā*). But underlying all these experiences, there is a subtle attachment (*nikanti*): we enjoy them and cling to them.

(5) The Knowledge of the Dissolution arises when our understanding grows, and we no longer attend to the arising and ceasing of formations, but attend only to their cessation.

(6) The Knowledge of the Fearful arises when we extend our understanding of dissolution to all the 3 periods of time, and realizes all this dissolving occurs in all the realms of this universe, even the highest: this is fearful!

(7) The Knowledge of Dangers arises from seeing these fearful dissolving states as utterly destitute of any essence or satisfaction, as being nothing but dangerous. There is only security in what is free from arising and ceasing, that is, the unconditioned.

(8) The Knowledge that is Revulsion arises when we are shocked and would have nothing to do (*atammaya*) with any of these dangerous states, that is, the formations.

(9) The Knowledge that is the Desire for Freedom is the ensuing desire for being free from all this world of formations, of escaping from them all.

(10) The Knowledge that is Reflective Contemplation is when we re-examine these formations, seeing their true nature of *impermanence, suffering, nonself* in various ways—like knowing the enemies so that we are far out of their range.

²⁵⁶ On how the insight knowledges are related to “purification” (*visuddhi*), see SD 28.3 (1.3). Abhs:BRS 346 f, 353-356. See also BDict: visuddhi.

²⁵⁷ Vism 19.1-13/598-600. Karunadasa 2010:265.

²⁵⁸ Pm 1:53 f, qu at Vism 20.6-20/607 f.

²⁵⁹ The 10 knowledges beginning with this (3-12) form the “10 insight knowledges” (*dasa vipassana ñāṇa*) in Abhs9.25 (Abhd:BRS 346 f).

(11) The Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations is when we, having reflected, see nothing in the formations to be taken as “I, me, mine,” so that both fear and delight are abandoned; we simply look on with a calm steady even mind.

(12) The Conformity Knowledge (also rendered as “adaptation”) arises in the sense-sphere consciousness preceding the “change of lineage” consciousness in the cognitive process of the supra-mundane path. It *conforms* to the functions of truth both in the preceding 8 kinds of Insight Knowledge and in the path attainment to follow.²⁶⁰

(13) The Knowledge that is the Change of Lineage arises at the moment of breakthrough into the path (viz, streamwinning).²⁶¹ This consciousness, taking nirvana as its object, breaks us out of the class of worldlings awakening us into the lineage of the noble path.

(14) The Path Knowledge arises immediately following the change of lineage (streamwinning), when we fully understand the truth that is *suffering*, abandoning its *arising* (craving), realizing its *ceasing* (nirvana), and entering into the cognitive process of dhyana.

(15) The Fruition Knowledge is the awareness that, following the preceding, 2-3 moments of fruition consciousness arise and cease. Then there is subsidence into the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*).

(16) The Review Knowledge occurs for each of the paths as it arises, when we review the path, fruition and nirvana. Usually (not invariably) we also review the defilements abandoned and the defilements remaining. Thus, there are a maximum of 19 kinds of Review Knowledge: 5 each for the first 3 paths, and only 4 for the final path (since the arhat, full liberated, has no more defilements remaining to be reviewed).

12.7.2 Discernment of materiality: overview

12.7.2.1 Let us now summarize **the discernment of materiality** (*rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*):

- To see the material clusters (*rūpa kalāpa*), we develop concentration up to at least **access concentration** by concentrating on the 4 elements: *earth, water, fire, and wind*. [12.1]
- When we can see **the material clusters**, we analyse them to see all the different types of materiality in single material clusters, for example, in one eye decad-cluster, we must see *earth, water, fire, wind, colour, smell, taste, nutritive-essence, life-faculty, and eye sensitivity*. [12.2]
- With **the brief method**, we discern the different types of materiality in one sense-organ, and then do the same for *the remaining 5 sense-organs*. [12.3]
- With **the detailed method**, we discern all the types of materiality in all 42 parts of the body. [12.7.1]

When we have completed the discernment of materiality, we will be skillful enough to see *all the elements* of all the 6 sense-organs at once, and see also all the 42 parts of the body [12.7.1.1] at once. This was what we were aiming at as we progressed through the meditation, going from element to element, and then from sense-organ to sense-organ: from the easier practice to the more difficult one.

12.7.2.2 There are 2 ways in which we look at the elements: We may look at them individually, as one, two, three, four, and so on, up to ten, or we may look at all 10 at once, at a glance. Take a rainbow, for example, with bands of *red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet*. We may look at the individual colours, or we may view the entire rainbow with all its colours. When we are able to see all the elements at a glance, they become our object for vipassana: we see all the elements as *impermanent, suffering and nonself*.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ See SD 28.3 (1.4).

²⁶¹ Technically, the moment of entry into dhyana or breakthrough into the path (viz, streamwinning). While the former is temporary, the latter is transformative.

²⁶² For details, see Pa-Auk: 2019:209-240 Talk 7, How to develop the Vipassana Knowledges to see nibbana.

But if, even after completing **the discernment of materiality**, we are still unable to see them all at once, we see them individually, one-by-one, in sequence, do it again and again, and then try to see them all at a glance. In other words, there are 2 ways of discerning: as a group (*kalāpa sammā-sana*) (Vism 20.1) and as a natural sequence (*anupada*) (**Anupada Sutta**, M 111).²⁶³

This completes our discussion of the materiality meditation-subject (*rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*). In the next section, we will go on to discuss the mentality meditation subject (*nāma kammaṭṭhāna*).

12.8 MATERIALITY AND MENTALITY: AN OVERVIEW

12.8.1 The 5 aggregates as materiality and mentality

12.8.1.1 Having completed a study on how to discern materiality (*rūpa*), we are now ready to discern **mentality** (*nāma*). At this point, it is helpful to see how both materiality and mentality are intimately related in a teaching with which we are very familiar, **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-k,khandha*): *form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*. The “aggregates analysis” in the Abhidhamma is as follows.²⁶⁴

- (1) **the aggregate of form** (*rupa-k,khandha*) is broken down into 28 material dhammas (*rūpa dhamma*) or types of materiality. [Table 12.8; Abhs ch 6]
- (2-4) **the aggregates of feeling, perception and formations** are together arranged into 52 mental factors (*cetasika*): hence, with 1 consciousness + 52 mental factors = 53 types of mentality. [Table 13; Abhs ch 2]
- (5) **consciousness** is counted as 1 item with 89 varieties, and is referred to as “mind” or “consciousness” (*citta*).²⁶⁵ [13.1.1.3; Abhs ch 1]

12.8.1.2 Numbering of teachings are common to both canonical Buddhism as well as in Abhidhamma scholasticism. While in the suttas, such numbers tend to be significantly smaller and incidental, the Abhidhamma numberings tend to be larger and more frequent. It’s not easy remembering such numbers and what they represent—but that is not their purpose.

We should begin by remembering sets of *teachings* rather than the numbers of this or that. When we see how these teaching sets relate to one another, their contexts help us to better remember what they are and how they function. Making some short clear notes on the lists themselves are likely to help us remember them better, too. The idea is not to merely remember lists, but rather to understand their contexts, how they connect with other teachings and work together.

12.8.2 No “radical pluralism”

12.8.2.1 One of the most interesting aspects of our study of the Pa-Auk method is his explanation of **the material clusters** (*kalāpa*). However, this should *not* give us the wrong impression that “ultimate reality” is made up of so many parts—nothing is farther from the truth. The “parts” are our own *concepts* for understanding that ultimate reality. This is simply viewing reality by way of analysis (*bhedā*).

A common misunderstanding of the *dhamma* theory of the Theravāda Abhidhamma is that it comes to some kind of “radical pluralism.” Nyanaponika, in his *Abhidhamma Studies*, warns that, “... it has been a regular occurrence in the history of physics, metaphysics and psychology that when a Whole has been successfully dissolved by analysis, the resultant ‘parts’ themselves come again to be regarded as little ‘Wholes’” (1976:71), that this can and has happened in Buddhism, even today.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Vism 2.01/606; M 111/3:25-29 (SD 56.4). Both are mentioned in Subcomy (DhsMT:Be 109). See also Pa-Auk 2019:149-154 Q&A 4.6.

²⁶⁴ Karunadasa 2010:19.

²⁶⁵ Dhs 5 f (*mātikā*), 209 (Dhs:F 295).

²⁶⁶ See Karunadasa 2010:19 f.

Pa-Auk himself reminds us that these material clusters themselves are *not* the ultimate reality. We need to look deeper *through* these clusters into the nature of the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, wind) acting on this clusters. The ultimate reality is *the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self* that we see in them, and in all conditioned things. [11.2.1.2; 12.2.2.1]

Table 12.8 The 28 types of materiality (Pa-Auk 2019:137 Table 2a)

THE 4 GREAT ESSENTIALS		<i>mahā,bhūta:</i> ²⁶⁷ .	
Concrete materiality		<i>nipphanna,rūpa</i> ²⁶⁸	
(1) earth element		<i>pathavī,dhātu</i>	
(2) water element		<i>āpo,dhātu</i>	
(3) fire element		<i>tejo,dhatū</i>	
(4) wind element		<i>vāyo,dhatu</i>	
⇓			
24 TYPES OF DERIVED MATERIALITY (<i>upādāya,rūpa</i>)			
concrete materiality (<i>nipphanna,rūpa</i>) ²⁶⁹ [*]			
<u>field materiality</u> (<i>gocara,rūpa</i>) (objective materiality)		<u>sensitive materiality</u> (<i>pasāda,rūpa</i>) (subjective materiality)	
(1) colour	<i>vaṇṇa</i>	(1) eye sensitivity	<i>cakkhu,pasāda</i>
(2) sound	<i>sadda</i>	(2) ear sensitivity	<i>sota,pasāda</i>
(3) smell	<i>gandha</i>	(3) nose sensitivity	<i>ghāna,pasāda</i>
(4) taste	<i>rasa</i>	(4) tongue sensitivity	<i>jivhā,pasāda</i>
<u>(touch phoṭṭhabba):*</u>		(5) body sensitivity	<i>kāya,pasāda</i>
(1) nutritive essence*	<i>ojā</i>	<u>sex materiality</u> (<i>bhava-rūpa</i>):*	
(2) life faculty*	<i>jīvit'indriya</i>	(1) male sex-materiality	<i>purisa,bhāva,rūpa</i>
(3) heart materiality*	<i>hadaya,rūpa</i>	(2) female sex-materiality	<i>itthi,bhāva,rūpa</i>
non-concrete materiality (<i>anipphanna,rūpa</i>) ²⁷⁰ [**]			
(1) space element**	<i>ākāsa,dhātu</i>	(6) wieldiness**	<i>kammaññatā</i>
(2) bodily intimation	<i>kāya,viññatti</i>	(7) generation**	<i>upacaya</i>
(3) verbal intimation	<i>vacī,viññatti</i>	(8) continuity**	<i>santati</i>
(4) lightness**	<i>lahutā</i>	(9) decay	<i>jaratā</i>
(5) softness	<i>mudutā</i>	(10) impermanence**	<i>aniccatā</i>

²⁶⁷ At the end of discerning materiality, the meditator will have examined all types of concrete materiality (the 4 great elements + 1st 14 types of derived materiality), and time of the 10 types of non-concrete materiality ["generality"].

²⁶⁸ *Nipphanna*, lit, "concretely produced." See Karunadasa 2010:160.

²⁶⁹ [*] TOUCH: the object of body-consciousness is not an element on its own, but comprises 3 of the 4 great elements: earth-, water-, fire- and wind-element. NUTRITIVE ESSENCE is also called nutriment materiality (*āhāra, rūpa*). LIFE FACULTY, also called life materiality (*jīvita, rūpa*). HEART MATERIALITY, also called heart base (*hadaya, vatthu*). SEX MATERIALITY, also called sex faculty (*indriya*). This list of alternate names is not exhaustive.

²⁷⁰ [**] *Anipphanna*, lit, "non-concretely produced." SPACE ELEMENT: delimitation, boundary of *rūpa, kalāpa*, separating one from the other. LIGHTNESS/SOFTNESS/WIELDINESS: exist only in consciousness-, temperature-, and nutriment-born materiality. GENERATION: generation of the foetus' physical faculties: discerned only when discerning dependent arising [1.4.2.2]. CONTINUITY: generation of materiality thereafter; IMPERMANENCE: the dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of materiality.

12.8.2.2 While it is true that all the first 6 books of the canonical Abhidhamma, beginning with **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, deal with reality from the analytical viewpoint, the teaching of the *dhmma* theory also applies the method of **synthesis** (*saṅgaha*), which is characterized by **the Paṭṭhāna**, the 7th and last book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

In our study of the Pa-Auk method, too, we have been studying, in some detail, how to train ourselves to analyse both materiality (*rūpa*) and mentality (*nāma*) into material clusters. Towards the end of the study, we also look into how ultimate reality can be studied and seen through synthesis, by way of conditioned relations of the dharmas. We will then have applied the methods of *both* analysis and synthesis.

13 Discerning mentality (*nāma kammaṭṭhāna*)

13.0 MENTAL FACTORS (*CETASIKA*)

13.0.1 The term ***cetasika***, “mental, related to the mind,” appears as an adjective in the suttas. In the Abhidhamma, it takes the sense of the noun, **mental factors** (*cetasika*) which are mental concomitants that accompany, in various combinations, the mind and its 6 sense-consciousnesses²⁷¹ [4.3.2.1].

In terms of the “mind-body” (*nāma,rūpa*) process, the mind is “name (naming process)” (*nāma*) and our physical “body” (that is, the 5 physical senses) is *rūpa*.²⁷² In the Abhidhamma, the former is called “mentality” (*nāma*), the latter “materiality” (*rūpa*).

13.0.2 According to the Pāli **Abhidhamma**, there are **52 mental factors**, of which 25 are either karmically wholesome or neutral, 14 are karmically unwholesome, and 13 are simply neutral. Out of the 52 types of mental factors, 7 are invariably associated with all moments of consciousness—consciousness cannot arise without these 7 all being present: (1) sensory contact (*phassa*), (2) feeling (*vedanā*), (3) perception (*saññā*), (4) volition (*cetanā*), (5) concentration (*samādhi*), (6) vitality (*jīvitā*), and (7) attention (*manasikāra*), constituting **the advertence** of the mind toward an object.²⁷³

13.1 THE 4 ASPECTS OF MENTALITY

13.1.1 Consciousness and mental factors

13.1.1.1 We have thus far learned about the 4-element meditation [8.7] and also how to analyse the material clusters (*rūpa,kalāpa*) [12.2]. In other words, we have learned meditation in terms of **discerning materiality** (*rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*). Here, we shall briefly discuss **how to discern mentality** (*nāma kammaṭṭhāna*), which is the next stage in vipassana meditation.²⁷⁴

To begin with, we need to know, in simple terms, how Abhidhamma views **the mind** before we learn how to discern mentality. Abhidhamma, traditionally uses ***citta***—which usually means “mind” in the suttas—to refer to “consciousness” (which is usually *viññāṇa* in the suttas). According to the Abhidhamma, consciousness knows its object, and its **mental factors** (*cetasika*) that arise with that consciousness.

13.1.1.2 There are **52 mental factors** [13.0], for example: contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), one-pointedness (*ek’aggatā*), life-faculty (*jīvit’indriya*), and attention

²⁷¹ On the 6 senses, see **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:216-222), SD 29.5.

²⁷² On the physical body, see ***Rūpa***, SD 17.2a.

²⁷³ On the 52 mental factors (*cetasika*): SD 17.1a (4.3); also Abhs ch 2 (tr Abhs:BRS 76-110)

²⁷⁴ Technically, “vipassana,” esp in its modern scholastic sectarian sense can refer to *all* the 16 insight knowledges. However, in terms of study or theory, any or all of the first 3, being broad concepts, are what we are dealing with. [12.7.1.2]

(*manasikāra*).²⁷⁵ There are even more consciousnesses: a total of 89 types of consciousness²⁷⁶ [13.1.1.3], and they can be classified according to whether they are *wholesome*, *unwholesome* or

Table 13.1.1 The 52 mental factors (Abhs:BRS 79 Table 2.1; details 77-91) [SD 17.2a (Table 10)]

ETHICALLY VARIABLES (<i>añña,samāna,cetasika</i>)—13		BEAUTIFUL FACTORS—25 beautiful universals (<i>sobhana,sādhāraṇa</i>)—19	
universals (<i>sabba,citta,sādhāraṇa</i>)—7		(28) faith	<i>saddhā</i>
(1) contact	<i>phassa</i>	(29) mindfulness	<i>sati</i>
(2) feeling	<i>vedanā</i>	(30) moral shame	<i>hiri</i>
(3) perception	<i>saññā</i>	(31) moral fear	<i>ottappa</i>
(4) volition	<i>cetanā</i>	(32) non-greed	<i>alobha</i>
(5) one-pointedness	<i>ekaggatā</i>	(33) non-hatred	<i>adosa</i>
(6) life faculty	<i>jīvit'indriya</i>	(34) neutrality of mind	<i>tatra,majjhataṭṭā</i>
(7) attention	<i>manasikāra</i>	(35) tranquillity of mental body	<i>kaya,passaddhi</i>
occasionals (<i>pakiṇṇaka</i>)—6		(36) tranquillity of consciousness	<i>citta,passaddhi</i>
(8) initial application	<i>vitakka</i>	(37) lightness of mental body	<i>kaya,lahutā</i>
(9) sustained application	<i>vicāra</i>	(38) lightness of consciousness	<i>citta,lahutā</i>
(10) decision	<i>adhimokkha</i>	(39) malleability of mental body	<i>kaya,mudutā</i>
(11) energy	<i>viriya</i>	(40) malleability of consciousness	<i>citta,mudutā</i>
(12) zest	<i>pīti</i>	(41) wieldiness of mental body	<i>kāya,kammaññatā</i>
(13) desire	<i>chanda</i>	(42) wieldiness of consciousness	<i>citta,kammaññatā</i>
UNWHOLESOME FACTORS (<i>akusala,cetasika</i>)—14		(43) proficiency of mental body	<i>kaya,pāguññatā</i>
unwholesome universals—4		(44) proficiency of consciousness	<i>citta,pāguññatā</i>
(14) delusion	<i>moha</i>	(45) rectitude of mental body	<i>kāy'ujjukatā</i>
(15) shamelessness	<i>ahirika</i>	(46) rectitude of consciousness	<i>citt'ujjukatā</i>
(16) lack of moral fear	<i>anottappa</i>	abstinences (<i>virati</i>)—3	
(17) restlessness	<i>uddhacca</i>	(47) right speech	<i>sammā,vācā</i>
unwholesome occasionals—10		(48) right action	<i>sammā,kammanta</i>
(18) greed	<i>lobha</i>	(49) right livelihood	<i>sammā ājīva</i>
(19) (wrong) view	<i>diṭṭhi</i>	illimitables (<i>appamaññā</i>)—2	
(20) conceit	<i>māna</i>	(50) compassion	<i>karuṇā</i>
(21) hatred	<i>dosa</i>	(51) mental joy	<i>muditā</i>
(22) envy	<i>issā</i>	non-delusion (<i>amoha</i>)—1	
(23) avarice	<i>macchariya</i>	(52) wisdom faculty	<i>paññ'indriya</i>
(24) worry	<i>kukkucca</i>		
(25) sloth	<i>thīna</i>		
(26) torpor	<i>middha</i>		
(27) doubt	<i>vicikicchā</i>		

²⁷⁵ Abhidhamma is characteristically numerical; hence, we speak of 1 consciousness (*citta*) + 52 mental factors (*cetasika*) = 53 types of mentality (*nāma*).

²⁷⁶ For these 89 types of consciousness, see Pa-Auk 2019:9 f.

indeterminate; according to their sphere of existence, *the sense-sphere, the form sphere, the formless sphere*; and according to whether they are *mundane* or *supramundane*.²⁷⁷

We may, however, speak of just 2 basic types of consciousness.²⁷⁸

- (1) the consciousness of the mental process, and
- (2) the “process-free” consciousness [12.2.3.4] outside the mental process: those at death, rebirth, and of the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*).

13.1.1.3 The 89 consciousnesses

If we understand the suttas as defining **the 1st noble truth** in terms of the 8 kinds of suffering,²⁷⁹ then, the Abhidhamma defines it as all the kinds of consciousness there are, all 89 of them. Now, in the 5 physical sense-bases, there arises the 2 types of consciousness (the wholesome and the unwholesome), “2 x 5 consciousnesses” (*dve pañca viññāṇa*):

- (1) wholesome resultant consciousnesses (*kusala vipāka viññāṇa*): eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- and body consciousness: the 1st 5 types of consciousness.
- (2) unwholesome resultant consciousnesses (*akusala vipāka viññāṇa*): eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- and body consciousness: the 2nd 5 types of consciousness.

This gives us a total of 10 types of consciousness. In the heart-base arise all other types of consciousness:

- **12 types of unwholesome consciousness** (*akusala citta*): 8 greed-rooted, 2 hate-rooted, and 2 delusion-rooted.
- **8 types of rootless consciousness** (*ahetuka citta*): the 2 types of receiving consciousness, the 3 types of investigating consciousness, the 5-door adverting consciousness, the mind-door adverting consciousness, and the arhat’s smile-producing consciousness. (Together with the 10 “2 x 5 consciousnesses” just mentioned, there are in total 18 types of rootless consciousness.)
- **24 types of sense-sphere beautiful consciousness** (*kāmāvacara sobhana citta*): that is, 8 types of sense-sphere wholesome consciousness, 8 types of sense-sphere resultant consciousness, and the arhat’s 8 types of sense-sphere functional consciousness.
- **15 types of form-sphere consciousness** (*rūpāvacara citta*): that is, 5 types of dhyana wholesome consciousness, the 5 types of dhyana resultant consciousness, and the arhat’s 5 types of dhyana functional consciousness.
- **12 types of formless-sphere consciousness** (*arūpāvacara citta*): that is, the 4 types of formless-dhyana wholesome consciousness, the 4 types of formless-dhyana resultant consciousness, and the arhat’s 4 types of formless-dhyana functional consciousness.
- **8 types of supramundane consciousness**: that is, the 4 types of path-consciousness and 4 types of fruition consciousness.

This gives **89 types of consciousnesses**; and whenever any of these types of consciousness arises, there also arise their 52 mental factors. Mentality thus comprises 89 types of consciousness and 52 types of mental factors. They are, along with materiality (form or the body), included in the noble truth of suffering.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ **The 3 spheres:** (1) the sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*): comprises devas, humans, animals, pretas and hells; (2) the form (or fine-material) sphere (*rūpāvacara*): brahma-worlds with only subtle materiality (radiance); (3) the formless (or immaterial) sphere (*arūpāvacara*): no materiality, only mentality.

²⁷⁸ For details regarding these consciousnesses, see (12.2.3.4) + Table. On the *bhavaṅga*: 104 (Q&A 3.12) + n187.

²⁷⁹ **Dhammacakkha Pavattana S** (S 56.11,5/5:421) SD 1.1.

²⁸⁰ For further details on the 89 consciousnesses, see Abhs ch 1 (Abhs:BRS 23-75; on the 52 mental factors, Abhs ch 2 (Abhs:BRS 76-113).

13.1.2 Mental processes

13.1.2.1 There are 6 types of **mental processes**. The first 5 are the those of the eye-door, ear-door, nose-door, tongue-door and body-door, whose respective objects are visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. They are together called the “5-door process” (*pañca,dvāra vīthi*) [13.2.3]. The 6th type of process has any of the 6 sense-objects²⁸¹ as its object, and is called the “mind-door process” [13.1.5]. Each mental process comprises a series of different types of consciousnesses at work.

The consciousnesses in any mental process occur according to its own natural law (*citta,niyama*).²⁸² If we want to discern mentality, we must see them as they occur following this natural law. To do so, we must first have developed concentration with either the breath meditation, some other samatha meditation subject, or the 4-element meditation.

If we are a pure-vipassana-vehicle meditator, we must also have completed the discernment of materiality *before* we start on **the discernment of mentality**. As a samatha-vehicle meditator, however, we can choose: we may first discern *materiality*, or first discern the *mentality* of the form dhyanas and formless attainments²⁸³ we have entered. However, to discern sense-world mentality, we must have first completed *the discernment of materiality*.²⁸⁴

13.1.3 Discerning name and form (nāma,rūpa)

13.1.3.1 **Mentality** is discerned in 4 stages:

- (1) discerning all the types of consciousness (*citta*) that occur internally;
- (2) discerning *all* mental formations associated with all the types of consciousness we are able to discern;
- (3) discerning the sequences of consciousnesses, that is, the mental processes (*vīthi*) that occur at the 6 sense-doors (*dvārā*);
- (4) discerning external mentality (*bahiddhā*) generally.

In both the suttas and the Abhidhamma, all that we discern or can discern are **the 5 aggregates**, that is, *form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*. “Form” constitutes materiality, such as our physical body, and the other 4 aggregates constitute **mentality**. In our sense-sphere existence, we are all dependent on the 5 physical senses, which, however, only work with **the mind**; hence, we have this “**body along with its consciousness**” (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*).²⁸⁵ This is axiomatic to our Abhidhamma training in discerning materiality and mentality: the 2 are closely related (in our existence). What we are discerning is our *mind-body existence*.

13.1.3.2 When we discern our materiality/mentality, our body-mind existence, what do we discern? The 5 aggregates. **The (Dve) Khandha Sutta** (S 22.48) famously defines the 5 aggregates using a list of 11 categories in this **totality formula** pericope, thus:

²⁸¹ For the mind-faculty’s taking of all objects, see **Uṇṇābha Brāhmaṇa S** (S 48.42), SD 29.3 [12.2.2.5].

²⁸² This is one of the 5 “natural laws” (*pañca,niyāma*) or natural orders; those of; (1) heat or energy (*utu,niyāma*), (2) of seeds or heredity (*bīja,niyāma*), (3) of karma (*kamma,niyāma*), (4) of mental processes or consciousness (*citta,niyāma*), and (5) of nature (*dhamma,niyāma*): SD 5.6 (2).

²⁸³ I.e., the 1st 3 formless attainments, but not the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (Vism 18.3 f/587).

²⁸⁴ VismMṬ:Be 18.364.

²⁸⁵ See SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

And what, bhikshus, are **the 5 aggregates of clinging** (*pañc'upādāna-k, khandha*)?

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **form**²⁸⁶ there is, whether:

(1-3) past, present, future; ²⁸⁷	<i>ātītānāgata, paccuppanna</i>
(4-5) internal or external;	<i>ajjhattarūpā vā bahiddhā vā</i>
(6-7) gross or subtle;	<i>olārikaṃ va sukhumarūpā vā</i>
(8-9) inferior or superior;	<i>hīnarūpā vā paṇītarūpā vā</i>
(10-11) far or near;	<i>yaṃ dūre vā santike vā</i>
with mental influxes (<i>sāsava</i>), ²⁸⁸ subject to clinging (<i>upādāniya</i>). ²⁸⁹	

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **feeling ... perception ... formations ...**

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **consciousness** there is, whether:

past, present, future; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near, with mental influxes, subject to clinging: this is called the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

These, bhikshus, are called the 5 aggregates of clinging. (S 22.48/3:47 f), SD 17.1a

We have already noted that the Abhidhamma defines **the 1st noble truth** as the 89 kinds of consciousnesses [13.1.1.3]. Here, it defines the same 1st noble truth, as in the suttas, but more broadly, as these 11 categories of materiality (*rūpa*), and the 4 kinds of mentality (*nāma*): *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*.

13.1.4 How to discern dhyana mental processes

13.1.4.1 Ideally, we should have attained dhyana, say, with breath meditation, before we start to discern mentality, that is, we have already discerned dhyana-consciousnesses and their mental factors. There are 2 reasons for this. The 1st reason is that having attained dhyana, we have experience in discerning the 5 dhyana-factors (in the case of the 1st dhyana). The 2nd reason is that the dhyana impulsion-consciousnesses (*jhāna javana citta*) occur many times in succession, and are therefore prominent and easy to discern.

This is in contrast to **a sense-sphere process**, in which impulsion (*javana*) occurs only 7 times before a new mental process occurs.²⁹⁰ Thus, to discern the mentality of dhyana, we should begin by getting into the 1st dhyana with, for example, breath meditation until the mental light is bright enough. Emerge from it, we then discern the mind-door (*bhavaṅga*), together with the counter-sign (*paṭibhāga, nimitta*). When the sign appears at the mind-door, discern the mental formations that are **the 5 dhyana-factors** according to their natural characteristics [8.5.2.2; Table 8.2.5.4 f].

Practise until we can discern all 5 dhyana-factors all at once in each 1st-dhyana impulsion consciousness. Then, proceed to discern all 34 mental formations [Table 13.1.4]. We begin with either consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*) or feeling (*vedanā*), whichever is most prominent.

²⁸⁶ The suttas further define **form** (*rūpa*) in 2 ways: objectively, as the 4 elements (*dhatu*: earth, water, fire, wind) [11.5]; subjectively, as the 5 physical sense-faculties (*pañc'indriya*: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body). As full sets, the former become the 6 elements (*cha dhātu*): the 4 elements, space and consciousness [M 117,13-19 (SD 4.17)]; the latter, the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*): the 5 sense + the mind [S 35.23 (SD 7.1)].

²⁸⁷ The 3 times are here listed in its natural sequence, rather than the Pali grammatical sequence that follows "**the waxing compound rule**," ie, in a compound, shorter components are listed first. See SD 55.7 (1.2.3.3) n.

²⁸⁸ "Mental influxes," *āsava*. See 8.2.4.1 n.

²⁸⁹ "That is tainted, that can be clung to," *sāsavarūpā upādāniyārūpā*.

²⁹⁰ Dhyana-processes are mental processes of the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*) or the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*).

(1) consciousness (<i>citta</i>)			
MENTAL FACTORS (<i>cetasika</i>)			
7 universals (<i>sabba citta sādharmaṇa</i>)		6 occasionals (<i>pakiṇṇaka</i>)	
(1) contact	<i>phassa</i>	(1) initial application	<i>vitakka</i>
(2) feeling	<i>vedanā</i>	(2) sustained application	<i>vicāra</i>
(3) perception	<i>saññā</i>	(3) decision	<i>adhimokkha</i>
(4) volition	<i>cetanā</i>	(4) effort (energy)	<i>virīya</i>
(5) one-pointedness	<i>ekaggatā</i>	(5) zest (joy)	<i>pīti</i>
(6) life faculty	<i>jīvit'indriya</i>	(6) desire	<i>chanda</i>
(7) attention	<i>manasikāra</i>		
19 beautiful universals (<i>sobhana sādharmaṇa</i>)			
(1) faith	<i>saddhā</i>	(11) lightness of mind	<i>citta lahutā</i>
(2) mindfulness	<i>sati</i>	(12) flexibility of [mental] body	<i>kāya mudutā</i>
(3) moral shame	<i>hiri</i>	(13) flexibility of mind	<i>citta mudutā</i>
(4) moral fear	<i>ottapa</i>	(14) wieldiness of (mental) body	<i>kāya kammaññatā</i>
(5) non-greed	<i>alobha</i>	(15) wieldiness of mind	<i>citta kammaññatā</i>
(6) non-hatred	<i>adosa</i>	(16) proficiency of (mental) body	<i>kāya pāguññatā</i>
(7) even-mindedness	<i>tatra majjhataṭṭa</i>	(17) proficiency of mind	<i>citta pāguññatā</i>
(8) tranquillity of [mental] body ²⁹¹	<i>kāya passaddhi</i>	(18) rectitude of [mental] body	<i>kāy'ujukatā</i>
(9) tranquillity of mind ²⁹²	<i>citta passaddhi</i>	(19) rectitude of mind	<i>citt'ujukatā</i>
(10) lightness of (mental) body	<i>kāya lahutā</i>		
(1) non-delusion (<i>amoha</i>): wisdom faculty (<i>paññ'indriya</i>)			

Table 13.1.4 The 34 mental formations of the 1st dhyana

13.1.4.2 Then, add one mental formation at a time: discern first 1 type, then add one more; so, we discern 2 types of mental formations; then, add another, so we see 3; add one more, we see 4, and so on, until eventually we see all 34 types of mental formations in each 1st-dhyana impulsion consciousness. They are depicted in **Table 13.1.4**.²⁹³

13.1.5 The mind-door process

13.1.5.1 After this, discern all the types of mental formations in the sequence of the 6 types of consciousness that comprises a **mind-door process** of the 1st dhyana, thus:²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ "(Mental) body" (*kāya*) refers to the physical *during* meditation and for a limited duration thereafter.

²⁹² I have used "mind" (the usual tr) rather than "consciousness" since this is a broad of *physical* wellbeing or *functionality* rather than any traditional Abhidhamma mental state or process.

²⁹³ For technical details on the dhyana mental process or "process of absorption jhanas in the mind-door" (*appanā, javana mano, dvāra, vīthi*), see Abhs 4.14-23 (Abhs:BRS 167-178).

²⁹⁴ For technical details of the mind-door process, see Pa-Auk 2019:46 Table 1a The Jhāna-attainment Process; also Abhs 4.12 (Abhs:BRS 163-167. On the mind-door cognitive process (details), see SD 19.14 (3+4).

(1) a mind-door adverting consciousness	<i>mano, dvār'āvajjana</i>	12 mental formations
(2) a preparatory consciousness	<i>parikamma</i>	34 mental formations
(3) an access consciousness	<i>upacāra</i>	34 mental formations
(4) a conformity consciousness	<i>anuloma</i>	34 mental formations
(5) a change-of-lineage consciousness	<i>gotrabhū</i>	34 mental formations
(6) an uninterrupted sequence of dhyana impulsion-consciousnesses which we have by now already discerned.	<i>jhāna javana citta</i>	34 mental formations

To discern all these mental formations, we must (as before) attain the 1st dhyana, such as through breath meditation, emerge from it, and again discern *both* the mind-door (*bhav'āṅga*) and the counter-sign (*paṭibhāga, nimitta*). When the sign appears in the mind-door, discern the dhyana mind-door process that has just occurred. We then discern each of the different consciousnesses in the 1st dhyana mind-door process, and their 12 or 34 types of mental formations. [Table 13.1.4]

13.1.5.2 After this, to have an understanding of mentality as a whole, we discern the characteristic common to all mentality (*nāma*), to all mental formations, that is, the characteristic of **naming** (*namana*, “bending towards) and holding on to the object, in this case, the counter-sign.

We need, in the same way, to discern and analyse the mentality of also the 2nd, the 3rd and the 4th dhyanas as well as any other dhyanas of other meditation-subjects that we have attained; for example, with the perception of foulness dhyana [10.3], the white-kasiṇa dhyana [8.6.2], or lovingkindness dhyana [9].

13.1.5.3 If, however, we have *only access concentration*, with the 4-element meditation, we must begin our discernment of mentality there: we cannot discern the mentality of a dhyana-consciousness without dhyana. In that case, we must use the 4-element meditation to re-establish access concentration, where our translucent crystal body [12.1.1] sparkles and emits light. After remaining there for some time, we turn to vipassana with a refreshed and clear mind, and discern the mentality of that access concentration.

Having now discerned the different mental processes in all our previous samatha practice, be it access or dhyana concentration, we then move on to discern the different mental formations of a sense-sphere process (*kāmāvacara vīthi*).

13.2 HOW TO DISCERN SENSE-SPHERE PROCESSES

13.2.1 Wise attention, unwise attention

13.2.1.1 A dhyana-attainment process (which is a mind-door process of either the form sphere or the formless sphere) is always *wholesome*: it can never be unwholesome. But **a sense-sphere process** (either a 5-door-process or a mind-door process) is *either* wholesome or unwholesome: it depends on whether we applied **wise attention** (*yoniso manasikāra*) or unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Our attention determines whether a sense-sphere process is wholesome or unwholesome.

13.2.1.2 If we look at an object and know it as materiality, mentality, cause or effect, impermanence, suffering, nonself, or repulsiveness, then our attention is **wise attention**, and the impulsion consciousness is *wholesome*.

If we look at an object and see it as a concept, such as a person, man, woman, being, gold, silver, or see it as permanence, happiness or self, then our attention is **unwise attention**, and the impulsion consciousness is *unwholesome*.

In exceptional cases, however, an impulsion consciousness connected with **a concept** may be *wholesome*, for example, when practising lovingkindness or mindfully making offerings at a shrine. We will see the difference when we discern these mental processes.

Table 13.2.2 The mind-door process (with a form²⁹⁵ object as example) (Pa-Auk 2019:166 Table 1b)

MIND-MOMENT <i>citta, k-khaṇa</i>	before the mental process →→ ... →→	1 →	2 →	3 →	4 →	5 →	6 →	7 →	8 →	9 →	10 →	after the mental process →→...→→
OBJECT <i>ārammaṇa</i>	previous life's near-death object	form objects <i>rup'ārammaṇa</i>										previous life's near-death object
CONSCIOUSNESS <i>citta</i>	life-continuum <i>bhav'āṅga</i>	mind-door adverting <i>mano-dvār'- āvajjana</i>	impulsion <i>javana</i>							registration <i>tad-ārammaṇa</i>		life-continuum <i>bhav'āṅga</i>
	↑|↓	↑|↓	1 st ↑|↓	2 nd ↑|↓	3 rd ↑|↓	4 th ↑|↓	5 th ↑|↓	6 th ↑|↓	7 th ↑|↓	1 st ↑|↓	2 nd ↑|↓	↑|↓
	resultant <i>vipāka</i>	functional <i>kiriya</i>	karma <i>kamma</i>							resultant <i>vipāka</i>		resultant <i>vipāka</i>

Sources: DhsA 87 f (*kāmāvacara kusala pada, bhājanīyaṃ*); DhsA:P 116 f; Abhs 4.17 (Abhs:BRS 163-167); details SD 19.14 (3-4).

- one “consciousness” lasts 1 mind-moment (*citta-k, khaṇa*) with a 3 stage-cycle, thus ↑|↓ where ↑ means *arising*, | *presence*, and ↓ *ceasing*,
- in between each mental process arises a number of life-continuum consciousnesses (*bhav'āṅga citta*) [Table 12.2.3.4]
- before the mind-door process, there is a 5-door process or some other mind-door process

²⁹⁵ Pa-Auk renders *rūpa* here as “colour” rather than “form.”

13.2.2 How to discern the mind-door process

13.2.2.1 To discern any of the sense-sphere processes, we should begin at a **mind-door process** (*mano, dvāra vīthi*), because they have fewer types of consciousness. We may start with a wholesome mind-door process. Such a process of the sense-sphere consists of a sequence of 3 types of consciousness:²⁹⁶

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) a mind-door adverting consciousness | <i>mano, dvār'āvajjana</i> | 12 mental formations |
| (2) 7-impulsion consciousnesses: ²⁹⁷ | <i>javana, citta</i> | |
| if unwholesome, | | 16/18/19/20/21/22 mental formations |
| if wholesome | | 32/33/34/35 mental formations |
| (3) 2 registration consciousnesses ²⁹⁸ | <i>tad-ārammaṇa, citta</i> | 34/33/32/12/11 mental formations. |

13.2.2.2 First, we discern the mind-door (*bhavaṅga*), and then the eye-sensitivity in a material cluster in **the eye**.²⁹⁹ When it appears in the mind-door, we cognize it with *wise attention*, thus: “This is eye-sensitivity,” “This is materiality,” “This is impermanent,” “This is suffering,” “This is nonself,” or “This is repulsive.” And there will arise a sense-sphere mind-door process.

Then, to discern the different types of mental formations of that mind-door process’ consciousnesses, we proceed as we did with *the dhyana mind-door process* [13.2.1.1]: begin with either consciousness, feeling or contact: whichever is most prominent.

Then, add 1 mental formation at a time: discern first 1 type; then, add another, discern 2 types of mental formation; add still another, so we see 3; add one more, so we see 4, and so on; until eventually we see all 34, 33 or 32 types of mental formations of each consciousness of a sense-sphere wholesome mind-door process.

We should do this again and again until we are satisfied. We thus need to discern the mind-door processes that arise when we look at each type of materiality that we examined when we discerned materiality (*rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*).³⁰⁰

13.2.3 The 5-door process

13.2.3.0 Once we have completed discerning *the mind-door processes*, we should go on to discern **the 5-door processes**, starting with the eye-door process.³⁰¹ **Table 13.2.3** gives a simplified representation of the 5-door cognitive process for the eye. This applies mutatis mutandis to a cognitive process of any of the 5 sense-doors, that is, the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- or body-door.

13.2.3.1 To discern the mental formations of each consciousness in **an eye-door process**, we cause an eye-door process to occur. First, we first discern the eye-sensitivity (eye-door), then the mind door (*bhavaṅga*), and then both at once. Then, concentrate on the colour of a nearby group of material clusters as it appears at *both* doors, and cognize it with wise attention as “This is colour,” etc.

²⁹⁶ For further details on the mind-door process (*citta, vīthi*), see Abhs 4.12-23 (Abhs:BRS 163-178).

²⁹⁷ On the procedure of javana (*javana, niyama*), see Abhs 4.21-23 (Abhs:BRS 175-178).

²⁹⁸ On “the procedure of registration” (*tad-ārammaṇa, niyama*), see Abhs 4.17-20 (Abhs:BRS 175).

²⁹⁹ In worldly language: We observe sense-stimulus (interaction of eye-faculty + form + attention), and then the arising of eye-impression (or “contact”) with all its attendant features.

³⁰⁰ When discerning materiality (*rūpa*), all types of materiality need to be discerned, but when practising **vipassana** (discerning their impermanence, suffering and nonself nature), only *concrete materiality* is examined. See Pa-Auk 2019:137 **Table 2a** The Twenty-eight Types of Materiality, for a list of all the different types of materiality. On discerning materiality in vipassana: [11].

³⁰¹ For further details on the 5-door processes, see Abhs 4.6-11 (Abhs:BRS 153-162).

← The 14 instants of process consciousness →

B	1 P	2 V	3 A	4 F	5 E	6 Rc	7 I	8 D	9 J	10 J	11 J	12 J	13 J	14 J	15 J	16 Rg	17 Rg	B
***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Stream of bhavaṅga	Past bhavaṅga	Vibrating bhavaṅga	Arrest bhavaṅga	Five-door adverting	Eye-consciousness	Receiving	Investigating	Determining	<div style="text-align: center;"> ← Javana Impulsion → </div>							Registration	Registration	Stream of bhavaṅga

Table 13.2.3 The 5-door process (basic) for the eye (after Abhs:BRS 1999:155)

See Pa-Auk 2019:168; SD 19.14 (2-3); details: SD 19.14 (2); SD 47.19 (3.2.2.3).

The triple asterisks (***) near the top, beneath the numbers, represent the 3 submoments of each mind-moment: arising, presence and ceasing.

There will then first occur **an eye-door process**, and then (in accordance with the natural law of consciousness) many mind-door processes, all with the same object. The eye-door process is a sequence of 7 types of consciousness:

(1) a 5-door adverting consciousness	<i>pañca, dvar'āvajjana</i>	11 mental formations
(2) an eye consciousness ³⁰²	<i>cakkhu, viññāṇa</i>	8 mental formations
(3) a receiving consciousness	<i>sampaṭicchana</i>	11 mental formations
(4) an investigating consciousness	<i>santīraṇa</i>	11/12 mental formations
(5) a determining consciousness	<i>voṭṭhapana</i>	12 mental formations
(6) 7 impulsion consciousnesses	<i>javana, citta</i>	
if unwholesome		16/18/19/20/21/22 mental formations
if wholesome		32/33/34/35 mental formations
(7) 2 registration consciousnesses	<i>tad-ārammaṇa, citta</i>	11/12/32/33/34 mental formations

13.2.3.2 This is followed by a sequence of **mind-door consciousnesses**, and then the 3 types of consciousness of the mind-door process, as described before:

- (1) a mind-door adverting consciousness
- (2) 7 impulsion consciousnesses
- (3) 2 registration consciousnesses

To discern the different types of mental formation of the consciousnesses of those processes (the eye-door and subsequent mind-door processes that take the same object), we do as before: begin with either consciousness, feeling or contact: whichever is most prominent [Tables 13.2.2, 13.2.3].

Then, as before, add 1 at a time, until we see all the different types of mental formations of each consciousness. As we did for the eye door, we then discern the mental processes of the other 4 doors: the ear, nose, tongue and body.

13.2.3.3 By this stage, we will have developed the ability to discern mentality associated with wholesome consciousnesses, and now need to discern mentality associated with also **unwholesome consciousnesses**. To do this, we simply take the same objects as we did for the wholesome consciousnesses, only here we direct *unwise attention* to them. This is merely a brief explanation, but the examples given here should be sufficient for us to at least to understand what is involved in discerning mentality internally.

In summary, we have so far completed the first 3 stages of discerning mentality:

- (1) We have discerned all the types of consciousness (citta) that occur internally.³⁰³
- (2) We have discerned each and every mental formation in all the types of consciousness.
- (3) We have discerned the sequences of consciousnesses, that is, the mental processes (vīthi) that occur at the 6 sense-doors.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a 4th stage to discerning mentality, that is, to discern mentality also externally.

13.3 MENTALITY, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

13.3.0 How to discern external mentality

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) states:

³⁰² This odd sentence refers to a "mind-moment" (citta-k, khaṇa) of eye-consciousness; hence, the article *a*, rather than simply "consciousness," which would usually be the case.

³⁰³ At this stage, it is understood that the supramundane consciousnesses have not yet been attained.

- (1) “contemplating body in the body internally,³⁰⁴
 (2) or, contemplating body in the body externally,
 (3) or, contemplating body in the body both internally and externally ... ”
 (M 10,5/1:56), SD 13.3

This is not a case of using any psychic power of mind-reading (*ceto pariya ñāṇa*), but simply that of vipassana, Insight Knowledge. Hence, it is usually *not* possible to discern external mentality in detail. In fact, **to discern mentality externally**, we need to always *first* to discern materiality externally.

13.3.1 First, discern *materiality* internally/externally

13.3.1.1 We begin by discerning the 4 elements internally, and then externally in the clothes we are wearing. We will see that our clothes break down into material clusters, and that we are able to discern the 8 types of **materiality** in each cluster. They are temperature-born nutritive-essence octad-clusters (*utuja oj’atṭhamaka kalāpa*), and the temperature they arise from is the temperature in material clusters [11.3.1].

We should alternate between the internal and the external materiality 3-4 times, and then with the light of concentration [8.7.0.2], discern **external materiality** a little farther away, such as the floor. We will also be able to discern the 8 types of materiality in each material cluster, and should again alternate between the internal and external 3-4 times.

13.3.1.2 In this way, we gradually expand our field of discernment to the materiality in the building where we are, the area around it, including the trees, other buildings, etc, until we discern **all inanimate materiality externally**. While doing this, we will see also materiality *endowed with consciousness* (translucent materiality, etc) [11.2.3.3] in the inanimate objects: it is the insects, bugs and other small animals in the buildings, the trees, the ground, and all around.

13.3.1.3 Once we have discerned all inanimate materiality externally, we now go on to discern **the materiality of other living beings**, external materiality, that is *endowed with consciousness* (*sa, viññāṇaka*) [11.3.5]. We discern *only* their materiality, and see that they are not a man, a woman, a person, or a being: **only materiality**. Discern all external materiality at once, then all the different types of materiality both internally and externally.

To do this, we should first see the 6 basic types of material clusters³⁰⁵ in our own **eye**, and then in an external eye, another being’s eye. As we thus analyse materiality, discern the 54 types of materiality, but now do it *both internally and externally*.³⁰⁶

Do the same for the remaining 5 sense-bases, and the remaining types of materiality.

13.3.2 Second, discern *mentality* internally/externally

13.3.2.1 Having fully discerned materiality, we proceed to discern **mentality internally and externally**. We discern mentality internally by again starting with the mind-door, and then 5-door processes, discerning all their wholesome and unwholesome mental formations. To do this externally, do as we did *internally*, but discern the eye-door and mind-door (*bhavaṅga*) of other beings in general.

Then, when the colour of a group of material clusters appears at both doors, discern here the eye-door process that occurs, and the many mind-door processes that arise, all with the same object.

³⁰⁴ “Internally ... ” see SD 13.1 (3.7).

³⁰⁵ The 6 basic types of material clusters: (1) eye decad clusters, (2) body decad clusters, (3) sex decad clusters, (4) consciousness-born octad clusters, (5) temperature-born octad clusters, (6) nutriment-born octad clusters. [12.3.3.2]

³⁰⁶ Although we have, in fact, discerned 63 types of materiality, we actually here discern only 54. [12.3.3.2]

13.3.2.2 We should do this again and again, *internally and externally*, and again for each of the other 4 sense-doors, until we are satisfied. If we have **dhyana**, we should also discern *external dhyana mind-door processes*. That may be in another meditator, although **jhāna concentration is now very rare in the human world**.³⁰⁷ But there are dhyanic beings in the form brahma-worlds.³⁰⁸

Following the same procedure as before, we should gradually extend our range of discernment until we can see materiality throughout the *whole* universe, and also see mentality throughout the *whole* universe. Then, we should discern them together throughout the whole universe.

13.3.2.3 Lastly, we define all that mentality and materiality with **wisdom** to see neither beings nor men nor women, *only mentality and materiality* throughout the whole universe. That concludes the discernment of mentality (*nāma kammaṭṭhāna*). Having reached this stage in our meditation, we will have developed concentration, and will have used it to discern all 28 kinds of materiality [Table 12.8], and all 53 kinds of mentality throughout the universe [12.3.3.1]. We have thus completed the 1st Vipassana Knowledge, that of Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*nāma,rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa*). Our journey towards the path has begun in earnest. [12.7.1.2]

14 Discerning the links of dependent arising

14.1 METHODS OF DISCERNING DEPENDENT ARISING

14.1.1 How *nāma,rūpa* arises

Thus far, we have discussed how to discern materiality (*rūpa*) [11] and then how to discern mentality (*nāma*) [13]. Having come this far (even if our understanding is still a bit hazy), our diligence and patience have prepared us to discern *their causes*: how materiality-mentality (*nāma,rūpa*) arise. This refers to the discerning of **dependent arising** (*paṭicca,samuppāda*), that is, about how causes and effects conditionally operate in our lives over *the 3 periods of past, present and future*.

14.1.2 The 2 methods

14.1.2.1 The Buddha teaches 4 methods of discerning **dependent arising**,³⁰⁹ depending on the readiness of his listeners, but there is a 5th method taught by the elder Sāriputta, recorded in **the Paṭi-sambhidā,magga**.³¹⁰ It would take some time to explain all these methods in detail: we will examine only the 2 methods that are often used by meditators following the Pa-Auk method.

14.1.2.2 We will examine only what Pa Auk calls “**the 1st method**,” taught by the Buddha in, for example, the **Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15),³¹¹ and “**Sāriputta’s 5th method**.” Both these methods involve discerning the 5 aggregates (*khandha*) [12.8.1] of the present, the past and the future,³¹² discerning

³⁰⁷ Pa-Auk 2019:172.

³⁰⁸ It is possible that *some* sense-world devas may be able to attain dhyana, on account of their past karmic conditioning or present spiritual learning. This statement stands in strong contrast against how Pa-Auk, as a rule, shows how easily dhyana can or should be attained throughout this study!

³⁰⁹ See **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16.

³¹⁰ “Explanation on the knowledge of presence [conditioned relationship] of states” (*dharmma-t,ṭhiti ñāṇa niddesa*), Pm 1.271/50-52 (Pm:Ñ 1.50-53); also Vism 17.284-298/578-581.

³¹¹ D 15,2-22/2:55-64 (SD 5.17).

³¹² Pa-Auk states that he is teaching, *not* about “psychic power,” but about **vipassana power**, in the spirit of **Khajjanīya S** (S 22.79/3:86-91), SD 17.9. According to him, recollection of past lives (*pubbe,nivāsānussati ñāṇa*) enables us to see: (1) the aggregates (4 or 5 of the brahmas; 5 of sense-world beings) of their supramundane states (*lok’uttara dhamma*), esp of those beings who have attained the 4 path-consciousnesses and 4 fruition-consciousnesses; (2) the clinging aggregates (*upādāna-k,khandha*); (3) clan, appearance, food, pleasure, pain etc; (4) concepts, such as names and race. (2019: 183 n155).

which of them is cause and which is effect. Once we understand these processes, we also have a good idea how to discern dependent arising in the other ways taught in the suttas and Commentaries.

We will start with **Sāriputta's 5th method** [14.2], since this is the shorter one with the 3 cycles, and then examine **the Buddha's 1st method** [14.3].

14.2 THE 5TH METHOD OF DISCERNING DEPENDENT ARISING (SĀRIPUTTA)

14.2.1 The 10 links and 3 cycles

Sāriputta's method (the 5th method) comprises **3 cycles** (*vaṭṭa*), that is, 2 cycles of causes (5 causes), and 1 cycle of results (5 results).³¹³ [14.1.2.2]

(1) The defilement cycle	<i>kilesa,vaṭṭa:</i>
(i) ignorance	<i>avijjā</i>
(ii) craving	<i>taṇhā</i>
(iii) clinging	<i>upādāna</i>
(2) The karma cycle	<i>kamma,vaṭṭa:</i>
(iv) volitional formations	<i>saṅkhārā</i>
(v) karma-cycle existence	<i>bhava</i>
(3) The fruition cycle	<i>vipāka,vaṭṭa:</i>
(vi) consciousness	<i>viññāṇa</i>
(vii) name-and-form [mentality-materiality]	<i>nāma,rūpa</i>
(viii) the 6 sense-bases	<i>saḷ-āyatana</i>
(ix) contact	<i>phassa</i>
(x) feeling	<i>vedanā</i>

Table 14.2.1 Dependent arising (10 links) [SD 5.16 (Table 8.3a)]

The defilement cycle (*kilesa,vaṭṭā*) is the cause for the karma cycle (*kamma,vaṭṭa*), which is then the cause for the fruition cycle (*vipāka,vaṭṭa*), which comprises *birt and decay-and-death* (the 11th and 12th links). The discernment of dependent arising involves seeing this sequence of cycles, and starts with the discernment of the past.

14.2.2 How to discern our past lives

14.2.2.1 To discern **the past**, we begin by making an offering of either candles, flowers or incense at a pagoda or to a Buddha shrine. We should make a wish for a wholesome rebirth we desire, for example, to become a monk, nun, man, woman, or deva.

Afterwards, we should sit in meditation and enter the 4th jhāna, until the dhyana light shines brightly. Having emerged, discern internal and external mentality-materiality (*nāma,rūpa*) as many times as possible. This is necessary, because if we are unable to discern external mentality-materiality, we will have great difficulty discerning past mentality-materiality. The discernment of past mentality-materiality is similar to the discernment of *external* mentality-materiality.

14.2.2.2 Then, we should discern the mentality-materiality that occurred when we made the offering at the pagoda or the Buddha shrine, as if they were external objects. When doing this, an image of ourself at the time of offering will appear: we should discern the 4 elements in that image.

When the image breaks up into material clusters, discern all the different types of materiality of the 6 doors, especially the 54 types of materiality of the heart-base [12]. We will then be able to dis-

³¹³ See Pa-Auk 2019:184, 192 Table 3a.

cern the mind-door consciousnesses (*bhavaṅga*), and the many mind-door processes that arise in between.

We should look among those many mind-door processes, searching backwards and forwards, until we find the defilement cycle (*kilesā,vaṭṭa*) mind-door process with 20 *mental formations* in each impulsion mind-moment, and the karma-cycle (*kamma,vaṭṭa*) mind-door process with 34 *mental formations* in each impulsion mind-moment. [Table 13.1.4]

14.2.2.3 This can be illustrated with a practical example: the case of making an offering of candles, flowers, or incense to a Buddha shrine, and making a wish to be reborn to become, say, *a monk*. In this case:

- (1) ignorance is the deluded thought that “a monk” really exists;
- (2) craving is the longing for life as a monk; and
- (3) clinging is the attachment to that idea or status of a monk.³¹⁴

These 3 states or links—*ignorance, craving and clinging*—are all found in the consciousnesses that make up **the defilements cycle**. If we had instead made a wish to be reborn. Say, as *a woman*, then:

- (1) ignorance is the deluded notion that “a woman” really exists;
- (2) craving is the longing for life as a woman; and
- (3) clinging is the attachment to the idea or state of a woman.

14.2.2.4 In these examples, volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*) are the wholesome intentions (*kusala cetanā*) of the offering, and karma is their karmic potency. Both are found in the consciousnesses that make up **the karma cycle** (*kamma,vaṭṭa*) of dependent arising.

When we are thus able to discern the mentality-materiality of the defilements cycle and the karma cycle of the recent past, we should go back to the more distant past, to some time before to the offering, and in the same way discern that mentality-materiality. Then, go back still a little further, and repeat the process.

In this way, we discern the mentality-materiality of one day ago, one week ago, one month ago, one year ago, 2 years ago, 3 years ago and so on. Eventually, we will be able to discern right back to the mentality-materiality of the rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi citta*) that arose at the conception of our present life, that is, this present “5-constituent” existence [2.1.1].

14.2.2.5 When looking for the causes of conception, we go back even further, and see either the mentality-materiality of the time near death in our previous life, or the object of the near-death impulsion consciousness (*maran’āsanna javana,citta*).³¹⁵

There are 3 possible objects for the near-death impulsion consciousness:

(1) Karma (*kamma*). The mental formations of a karma we performed earlier in this life or a previous life: for example, we may recollect the hatred associated with slaughtering animals, happiness associated with offering food to monks, or joyful peace associated with meditation.

(2) Karma sign (*kamma nimitta*). An image associated with a karma we performed earlier in this life or a previous life. A butcher may see a butcher’s knife or hear the screams of animals about to be slaughtered, a doctor may see patients, a devotee of the 3 jewels may see a monk, a pagoda, a Buddha image, flowers, an object offered; a meditator may see the counter-sign (*paṭibhāga-nimittail*) of his meditation-subject.

³¹⁴ This is not saying that the desire to be a monk, or monkhood itself, is “clinging”; rather, we see monkhood as some kind of position of respect, power, wealth and other benefits. Instead, we should see monkhood as simply renunciation and live that life rightly and diligently.

³¹⁵ See SD 58.2 (1.1.2.3); SD 13.1 (3.1.4 (6)) also Pa-Auk 2019:188 Table 1d.

(3) Destination sign (*gati nimitta*). A vision of our destination, where we are about to be reborn. For rebirth in hell, we may see fire; for a human rebirth, our future mother's womb (usually like a red carpet), for an animal rebirth, forests, undergrowth or fields; for a deva-rebirth, deva-mansions.

The object appears because of the karmic potency that produced the rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi, citta*).³¹⁶ When we discern this, we will be able to discern also the volitional formations and karma that produced the resultant (*vipāka*) aggregates of this life,³¹⁷ and the preceding ignorance, craving, and clinging. We will then discern also the other mental formations of that karma cycle and defilements cycle.

14.2.3 Case study 1: A female meditator

For clarification, here is an example of what one meditator was able to discern. When she discerned the mentality-materiality at the time near-death, she saw the karma of a woman offering fruit to a Buddhist monk.

Then, beginning with the 4 elements, she examined further the mentality-materiality of that woman. She found that the woman was a very poor, unschooled villager, who had reflected on her state of suffering, and had made an offering to the monk, with the wish for the next life as an educated woman in a large town.

In this case:

- (1) the deluded thought that an educated woman in a large town really exists is ignorance (*avijjā*);
- (2) the longing for life as an educated woman is craving (*taṇhā*);
- (3) the attachment to life as an educated woman is clinging (*upādāna*);
- (4) the wholesome act of offering fruit to a Buddhist monk is volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*), and
- (5) the karma is her karmic potency.

In this life, the meditator is an educated woman in a large town in Myanmar. She was able (with right view) to discern directly how the karmic potency of offering fruit in her past life produced the resultant 5 aggregates of this life. The ability to discern causes and effects in this way is called the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*paccaya pariggaha ñāṇa*).

14.2.4 Case study 2: A male meditator

Here is a slightly different example. When a male meditator discerned the mentality-materiality at the time near death, he discerned 4 competing karmas. One was the karma of teaching suttas, another teaching Dharma, another practising meditation, and finally one teaching meditation.

When he investigated which of the 4 karmas had produced the resultant 5 aggregates of this life, he found it was the karma of practising meditation. When he investigated further (to discern which meditation subject had been practised, he saw that it was vipassana meditation, seeing the 3 characteristics, *impermanence, suffering and nonself* in mentality-materiality.

With further investigation, he saw that before and after each meditation sitting, he had made the wish to be reborn as a human male, to become a monk, and be a monk who spreads the Dharma.

In this case:

- (1) the deluded thought of a man, a monk, or a Dharma missionary monk is rooted in ignorance;
- (2) the longing for life as a man, a monk or a Dharma missionary monk is craving (*taṇhā*);
- (3) the attachment to life as a man, a monk, or a missionary monk is clinging (*upādāna*);
- (4) the wholesome act of practising vipassanā meditation is volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*);
- (5) the karma is his karmic potency.

³¹⁶ See Pa-Auk 2019:104 Q&A 3.13.

³¹⁷ There are also so-called "non-resultant" (*avipāka*) aggregates. They are the karmic result (*phala*) of a karmic cause (*hetu*), as in, eg, consciousness-born materiality that is not ready for karmic fruition.

14.2.5 How to discern more past lives

When we are able to discern our immediate past life in this way, and are able to see the 5 causes in **the past life** (ignorance, craving, clinging, volitional formations, and karma), and their 5 results in **the present life** (the rebirth-linking consciousness, mentality-materiality, the 6 sense bases, contact and feeling), we need in the same way to discern progressively back to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and as many lives back as we can.

Should we discern a past- or future life in the form-dhyana brahma world, we will see **only 3 sense-bases** (eye-, ear- and heart-base), in contrast to the 6 sense-bases that we see in the human-world and sense-world deva realms.

14.2.6 Discerning the future

14.2.6.1 Once the power of Vipassana Knowledge has been developed (by discerning the causes and effects through past lives), we can, in the same way, discern the causes and effects in **future lives**. The future we will see, but which may still change, is the result of both past and present causes, one of which is the meditation we are doing. [12.2.6.4]

To discern the future, we begin by discerning the present mentality-materiality, and then look into the future until the time of death in this life. Then, either the karma, karma-sign or rebirth-sign will appear, because of the potency of a particular karma we have performed in this life. We will then be able to discern the rebirth-linking mentality-materiality that will be arise in the future life.

14.2.6.2 We must discern as many lives into the future as it takes until ignorance ceases without remainder. This happens with the attainment of the arhat path, that is, our own attainment of arhat-hood. We should then continue discerning into the future, until we see that the 5 aggregates, mentality-materiality, cease without remainder, that is, at the end of the arhat-life, at our own parinirvana. We will thus have seen that, with the cessation of ignorance, mentality-materiality cease. We will have seen the complete cessation of phenomena (*dhmma*), that is, no further rebirth.

Discerning, in this way, the 5 aggregates of the past, present and future, and also discerning their conditioned relation, is what we call the 5th method, taught by the elder Sāriputta. Having completed it, we can now learn what we call the 1st method, the one taught by the Buddha.

Even if we do know our future rebirths (assuming we are right about this), at best, these are *projections* based on our present circumstances. In other words, we have to keep up or life of constant *moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom*, so that we are progressing towards the path.

14.2.6.3 So long as we have not gain the path as at least a streamwinner, we will be reborn back into the samsaric cycle, caught in our old ways, living subhuman lives even while having a human body, and after that falling into the subhuman planes of existence according to our karma. As streamwinners or once-returners, however, we are sure of awakening, but again, without liberating wisdom, it will take us as many as 7 more lives (for a streamwinner), but when we are into the deva world, this may take thousands of lives more; or when we become brahmas, this will take thousands of world-cycles. For this reason, the Buddha often declares that we diligently work out our salvation, our awakening.

14.2.6.4 Rebirth (*jāti*; *punabbhava*, *ponobbhava*) is the manifestation of the aggregates (*khandha*), which are our mind (*citta*) and body (*kāya*), mentality (*nāma*) and materiality (*rūpa*). In the sense-world (including the lower devas, humans and subhumans), we have the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness—form is **our body**, that is, the 5 senses, all made up of the 4 elements; the other 4 aggregates make up **our mind**. In the formless realms, the brahmas have only 4 aggregates, that is, without *form*.³¹⁸ [13.1.3]

³¹⁸ For other details (the aggregates and various beings in the 31 planes), in this connection, see *Viññāṇa-t,thiti* (SD 23.14, esp Table 3).

Hence, to understand rebirth means that we must understand **the 5 aggregates**. We may want to know our future lives, the coming rebirths; but this is of little benefit since it is *only* our desire, that is, **craving** (*taṇhā*), that is at work. Even if we do know our future rebirths (assuming we are right about this), at best, these are *projections* based on our present circumstances.

What if, in this life itself, we fail to continue our practice, or our life takes a different course that is not Dharma-spirited; then, our future rebirths, too, will be re-projected accordingly! In other words, we can never be certain of our future rebirths: we only have the here and now to work with: this is our island, on which we must build our raft and use it right away to cross the waters of samsara. [14.3.1.1]

14.3 THE 1ST METHOD OF DISCERNING DEPENDENT ARISING (THE BUDDHA)

14.3.1 Dependent arising of the 18 elements

14.3.1.1 To know and see **mentality-materiality** (*nāma,rūpa*), as they really are, we need to know and see how they are interlinked, that is, how, in our 5-constituent existence (*pañca,vokāra bhava*) [2.1.1] of the 5 aggregates, *mentality depends on materiality* [14.2.6.4]. A simple way of remembering that this **materiality** (*rūpa*), our conscious body (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*) [13.1.3.1], comprises the 6 internal sense-bases (*ajjhātṭāyatana*)—*the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind*—that work in dependence with the 6 external sense-objects (*bahiddhāyatana*)—*sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, thoughts*—hence, they are called **the 12 sense-bases** (*dvādasā saḷ-āyatana*), as taught in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23).³¹⁹

Now, each of the internal sense-bases (of our conscious body) comprises the sense-bases and their respective sense-consciousnesses. Now we have **the 18 elements** (*aṭṭhārasa dhatu*), that is, the 6 sense-faculties (*saḷāyatana*) + 6 sense-objects (*dhamma*) + 6 sense-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), as taught in **the Bahu,dhātuka S** (M 115,4).³²⁰

14.3.1.2 In **the (Nidāna) Loka Sutta** (S 12.44), the discourse on the world,³²¹ the Buddha explains how our 5-constituent existence [2.1.1] is our self-created “world” of the 5 aggregates. Here, he shows the “arising and ending of the world” by way of **the dependent arising** of our mentality-materiality as the 18 elements [14.3.1.1], thus:³²²

And what, bhikshus, is **the arising of the world**?

(1) Bhikshus, dependent on **the eye** and forms, *eye-consciousness* arises.

The meeting of the three is

contact.³²³

With contact as condition, there is

feeling.³²⁴

³¹⁹ **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15) SD 7.1; with further teachings: **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,4+5), SD 29.5; SD 26.1 (3.2); SD 56.11 (2.1.2).

³²⁰ M 115/3:61-67 (SD 29.1a); also SD 17.13 (3.3.3).

³²¹ There are 3 kinds of “world,” ie, those of: (1) space (*okāsa,loka*); (2) of beings (*satta,loka*); (3) of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*) (SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2))); SD 17.6 (3.1.3.2). Here the 3rd is meant.

³²² The Buddha is here speaking of **the 18 elements** (*dhātu*) of the “world” of formations (*saṅkhārā*), as the 16 kinds of subtle materiality and their mental factors. In other contexts (the Abhidhamma), he speaks of dharmas (*dhamma*), referring to *all objects*, incl concepts (*paññatti*) and nirvana, but these latter are *not* the world (they are neither mentality nor materiality); therefore, they are neither the 1st nor the 2nd noble truths, and not included in **Loka S**. Nirvana is, of course, the 3rd noble truth. See Pa-Auk 2019:5 f.

³²³ *Tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 f f.

³²⁴ From hereon, **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,16) continues: “What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation (*papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*) impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.” (M 18,16/1:112 f). See SD 6.13. A passage similar to this section (the preceding three sentences) is found in **Pariññā S** (S 35.60) where, however, the learned noble disciple becomes disillusioned (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object

with feeling as condition, there is
 with craving as condition, there is
 with clinging as condition, there is
 with existence as condition, there is
 with birth as condition there arise

**craving;
 clinging;
 existence;
 birth;
 decay and death, sorrow, lamentation,
 physical pain, mental pain and despair.**

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| (2) Bhikshus, dependent on | the ear and | <u>sound</u> , | ear-consciousness arises. ... ³²⁵ |
| (3) Bhikshus, dependent on | the nose and | <u>smell</u> , | nose-consciousness arises. ... |
| (4) Bhikshus, dependent on | the tongue and | <u>taste</u> , | tongue-consciousness arises. ... |
| (5) Bhikshus, dependent on | the body and | <u>touch</u> , | body-consciousness arises. ... |
| (6) Bhikshus, dependent on | the mind and | <u>dhammas</u> , | mind-consciousness arises. ... |

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(S 12.44/2:72 f), SD 7.5

14.3.1.3 From this Sutta teachings [14.3.1.2], we learn that to know and see mentality-materiality, we must know and see:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| (1) the sense-doors | <i>āyatana, dvāra</i> |
| (2) the sense-objects that arise at the sense-doors | <i>dhamma</i> |
| (3) the arisen consciousnesses (and mental factors) | <i>viññāṇa</i> (and <i>cetasika</i>) |

Of the 6 sense-doors (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), the first 5 are materiality (*rūpa*), and therefore not the same as the 5 sense-organs or “bases” (*vatthu*).³²⁶ Only the 6th sense-door, the mind-door—the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), in Abhidhamma—is mentality (*nāma*), and depends on the 6th material base, the heart-base (*hadaya, vatthu*).³²⁷

14.3.2 The 3-life dependent arising

14.3.2.1 The 1st method³²⁸ of discerning dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) [14.2.6.2], the best known of the dependent arising models is that of **the Buddha’s**, which is also the oldest formula. The Buddha teaches in 2 ways: in conventional terms (*voḥāra, desanā*), and according to ultimate truth (*param’attha desanā*). Of the 12 links of dependent arising, birth/decay and death are aspects of conventional teaching (they keep us in samsara). The 5-factored consciousness/mentality-materiality/the 6 sense-bases/contact/feeling, are according to those aspects relating to the ultimate truth (they free us from samsara).

14.3.2.2 The Buddha’s method of dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) explains how it progresses over 3 consecutive lives (past, present and future) and in forward order. The fullest expression of the Buddha’s model of dependent arising consists of these 12 links, as laid out in **the Mahā, nidāna**

and sense-consciousness (also using the sentence, *tinnam saṅgati phasso*), thereby “becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is freed (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, ‘Clinging has been fully understood by me.’” (S 35.60/4:32 f).

³²⁵ For each of these “3 dots” (ellipses) read the passage in **bold italics**.

³²⁶ **Sense-bases** (*vatthu*): the 5 physical sense-bases are called *āyatana* in the suttas, and *vatthu* in Abhidhamma. This latter is what we understand as “sense-organ,” which rarely feature in the suttas, but are highlighted in Abhidhamma. The 6th sense-base (the immaterial mind-base) is called only *āyatana*; but Abhidhamma locates the “physical base” (*vatthu*), the 6th base (the “mind”) in the “heart-base” (*hadaya, vatthu*), ie, the heart cavity itself [12.2.3.3]. All the 6 sense-bases are also called the “6 elements” (*cha dhātu*): **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,7+14-19), SD 4.17.

³²⁷ We have already noted how each of these material sense-doors take only their own material objects: **Uṇṇābha S** (S 48.42) [12.2.2.5].

³²⁸ See **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15,3/2:57 f), SD 5.17.

Sutta (D 15) [14.1.2.2], the (Nidāna) Vibhaṅga Sutta (S 12.2)³²⁹ and **the Titt'hāyatana Sutta (A 3.61)**,³³⁰ thus:³³¹

- (1) ignorance → (2) volitional formations →
 (3) consciousness → (4) name-and-form → (5) the 6 sense-bases → (6) contact → (7) feeling →
 (8) craving → (9) clinging → (10) existence →
 (11) birth → (12) decay-and-death (sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, despair).

Links 1-2 (past) with 8-10 (present) form the karma cycle, that is, the 5 karmic causes of rebirth.
 Links 3-7 (present) with 11-12 (future) form the rebirth cycle, that is, the 5 karmic results.

In the Buddha's model, dependent arising begins with the causes in the past (including past lives), that is, *ignorance and volitional formations*. They cause the results in the present life: the resultant *consciousnesses* (beginning with the rebirth-linking consciousness),³³² *name-and-form* (mentality-mat-eriality), *the 6 sense bases, contact, and feeling*. Then, there are the causes in this life, *craving, clinging, and existence*, which cause the results of *birth, ageing, death*, and all forms of *suffering* in the future and future lives.

Table 14.3.2³³³

PAST EXISTENCE	1. ignorance 2. volitional formations	karma cycle (<i>kamma,bhava</i>) 5 past causes: 1,2,8,9,10
PRESENT EXISTENCE	3. consciousness 4. name-and-form (mental and physical existence) 5. the 6 sense-bases 6. contact 7. feeling	rebirth cycle (<i>upapatti,bhava</i>) 5 present results: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
	8. craving 9. clinging 10. existence	karma cycle (<i>kamma,bhava</i>) 5 present causes: 8, 9, 10, 1, 2
FUTURE EXISTENCE	11. birth 12. decay-and-death	rebirth cycle (<i>upapatti,bhava</i>) 5 future results: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Links 1-2, together with 8-10, represent the Karma cycle, containing the 5 karmic causes of rebirth.
 Links 3-7, together with 11-12, represent the Rebirth cycle, containing the 5 karmic results.

³²⁹ S 12.2,3/2:2 (SD 5.15).

³³⁰ A 3.61,11/1:177 (SD 6.8).

³³¹ On the defs of the 12 links: SD 5.16 (1.4).

³³² Such as the Buddha's back-pain, ie, pain associated with body-consciousness (*dukkha,sahagata kāya,viññāṇa*), which comes from past unwholesome karma. See Pa-Auk 1029:193 n373, 241.

³³³ For further details, see SD 59.12, Table 3.1.2.

14.3.2.3 So long as we are unawakened, a non-arhat, we are driven by **ignorance**. Hence, we have ignorance-rooted feelings. When we have such feelings, there are craving and clinging, owing to which there we are defined and directed by karma, the fruits of our past, and by karmic formations, the present conditions in our life. This means there is, at death, the arising of a rebirth-consciousness for us.

The process going from life to life (termed “existence,” *bhava*) is explained by the Buddha to Ānanda in **the Bhava Suttas 1+2** (A 3.76 f), as follows:

1.2 “Now, Ānanda, if there were no karma ripening in **the sense-world** (*kāma,dhātu*),
... **the form-world** (*rūpa,dhātu*),
... **the formless world** (*arūpa,dhātu*),
would there appear any **sense existence** (*kāma,bhava*)?
... any **form existence** (*rūpa,bhava*)?
... any **formless existence** (*arūpa,bhava*)?

“No indeed, bhante.”

“Thus, too, Ānanda,

<u>karma</u> is	the field,
<u>consciousness</u> is	the seed,
craving is	the moisture,

for **the consciousness** of beings, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, that is established in a **low realm**. ... a **middling realm**. ... a **subtle realm**.

Even so, Ānanda, there is further rebirth. Even so, Ānanda, there is existence.

2 Now, Ānanda, if there were no karma ripening in the form-realm, would there appear any form-realm existence?

“No indeed, bhante.” ...

Even so, Ānanda, there is rebirth. Even so, Ānanda, there is existence.”

(A 3.77/1:223 f), SD 23.13 = SD 18.11a(3.3)

We must thus work to understand *ignorance, craving and clinging* in the defilement cycle, see how it causes **the karma cycle**, and how this karmic potency in turn causes **the aggregates of clinging** at conception, and in the *samsaric cycle of existences*.

This concludes our brief study of how to discern dependent arising according to the so called the 5th and the 1st methods—respectively, those of Sāriputta’s and the Buddha’s. There are many more details that we can learn by practising with a proper teacher. The idea of this study is to encourage us to make some practical effort to **master** the early Buddhist teachings, and to build up that practice so that we will reach the path in this life itself.

15 Cultivating vipassana

15.1 VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE³³⁴

15.1.0 Introduction

We will here look at **Vipassana Knowledge** (*pariccheda ñāṇa*) and how to develop them to see nirvana. There are 16 Vipassana Knowledges that we should progressively cultivate. The 1st Vipassana Knowledge is the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*nāma,rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa*). This Knowledge was explained when we discussed how to discern mentality and materiality [12+13]. The 2nd Vipassana Knowledge is the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*paccaya pariṇṇhāna ñāṇa*), which was

³³⁴ See Pa-Auk 2019 ch 7.

explained in last section, when we discussed how to discern the conditioned relationship between mentality-materiality of the past, present and future, which is to discern dependent arising [14].

When cultivating these 2 Knowledges, we should make sure that they are *complete*, by again discerning all mentality, all materiality, and all the links of dependent arising, according to their individual characteristic,³³⁵ function, manifestation and proximate cause [8.2.2.1; 11.5.11]. This cannot be briefly explained, and it is best fully learned as we see and understand them during our practice.

Let us now look briefly at the remaining Knowledges.

15.1.1 How to cultivate Comprehension Knowledge

15.1.1.1 The 3rd Vipassana Knowledge is **Comprehension Knowledge** (*sammasana ñāṇa*), that is, to comprehend formations by categories: to see the 3 characteristics—*impermanence, suffering and nonself*—in formations according to different categories, thus:³³⁶

2 categories, as	mentality and materiality [name-and-form]	<i>nāma, rūpa</i>	[13.01]
5 categories, as	the 5 aggregates	<i>pañca-k, khandha</i>	[12.8.1]
12 categories, as	the 12 bases	<i>saḷ-āyatana</i>	[14.3.1.1]
12 categories, as	the 12 links of dependent arising	<i>paṭicca, samuppāda</i>	[14, esp 14.3.2]
18 categories, as	the 18 elements	<i>aṭṭhārasa dhatu</i>	[14.3.1.1]

15.1.1.2 For example, in the case of the 5 categories, the Buddha teaches in **the Anatta, lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59)³³⁷ to discern the 5 aggregates—*form* (all materiality), *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—with right view in 3 ways, as: “This is not mine” (*n’etaṃ mama*), “This I am not” (*n’eso’ham asmi*), and “This is not my self” (*na m’eso attā*).³³⁸

In **S 22.59**, the Buddha then continues by stating that each of the 5 aggregates, that is, all form (materiality) and name (mentality), are, in every way—**past, future, and present; internal and external; gross and subtle; inferior and superior; far and near**³³⁹ [13.1.3.2]—*nonself*. The totality formula is also given in **the (Dve) Khandha Sutta** (S 22.48).³⁴⁰

15.1.1.3 To develop **Comprehension Knowledge** [15.1.1.1], we first attain the 4th dhyana to obtain mental radiance [8.5.2.1]. If we are a pure-vipassana practitioner, we may have cultivated only the 4-element meditation; then, we must work at mental concentration until the light is bright and strong. In either case, we take **materiality** as our 1st category. That is, we discern concrete materiality [Table 12.8] of each of the 6 sense doors [12.7.2.2], see its arising and ceasing, and know it as being impermanent. We need to do this internally and externally, alternately, again and again. While doing this externally, we should gradually extend our range of perception from near to far, and to the whole universe.

Then, following the same procedure, see *the pain and suffering* that we have to constantly experience because of that materiality’s arising and ceasing, and know it as **suffering**. Lastly, see the materiality as devoid of a permanent self, and know it as **nonself**.

The next category in which we need to see *impermanence, suffering and nonself* is **mentality**. First discern all the mentality at the 6 sense-doors that we discerned before: that is, the consciousness and the mental factors in each mind-moment of each sense-door process (*vīthi*), and the mind-door

³³⁵ On individual (or natural) characteristics, see (11.6.2 (7) n).

³³⁶ Vism 20.9/608. VismMṬ:Be ch 14 *Paññā, kathā*.

³³⁷ S 22.59, 12-16/3:67 f (SD 1.2).

³³⁸ These 3 statements reflect, respectively, overcoming the power of the 3 graspings (*gaha*), ie, those of craving (*taṇhā*) (SD 19.3), of conceit (*māna*) (SD 19.2a) and of views (*diṭṭhi*) (SD 19.1).

³³⁹ S 22.59, 17-21/3:68 (SD 1.2). This set of 11 categories is the “totality formula” on the nature of each of the 5 aggregates [13.1.3.2].

³⁴⁰ S 22.48/3:47 f (SD 17.1a).

(*bhavaṅga*) consciousnesses that occur between them. Then, follow the same procedure as with materiality.

15.1.1.4 Having seen these 2 categories (the materiality and mentality of the 6 sense-doors of the present), we need now to see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the materiality and mentality of this life that we discerned, from the rebirth-linking consciousness up to the death-consciousness. Here again, we see **the 3 characteristics** one at a time, again and again, both internally and externally.

After completing for this life, we need to see *the impermanence, suffering, and nonself* of **the past, present and future lives** that we discerned for dependent arising. Here too, we see the 3 characteristics one at a time, internally and externally, again and again, in all the materiality and mentality that we discerned of the past, present and future.

Then, we need also to see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the links of dependent arising for the past, present and future, according to **the 1st method** of dependent arising [14.3], one at a time, again and again, internally and externally.

At this stage, we may find that we are cultivating the higher Vipassana Knowledges quickly, stage by stage, even up to the attainment of arhathood. Otherwise, we should use other exercises (several of them) to develop our vipassana.

15.2 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE BY OTHER MEANS: THE 40 PERCEPTIONS

15.2.1 The 40 perceptions

15.2.1.1 The 10 perceptions of *impermanence*

The 40 modes of contemplations (*cattārīs'ākāra anupassanā*) are to see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of mentality and materiality, internally and externally, in the past, the present and the future. In Pali, they all end with the suffix **-to** (that is, the ablative *-ato*), translated idiomatically “as impermanence,” and so on: hence, we shall call them **the “40 -to’s.”**

There are 10 perceptions of **impermanence**, that is, in terms of:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) impermanence | <i>aniccato</i> |
| (2) the disintegrating. | <i>palokato</i> |
| (3) the fickle | <i>calato</i> |
| (4) the perishable | <i>pabhaṅgato</i> |
| (5) the unenduring | <i>addhuvato</i> |
| (6) a changeable nature | <i>vipariṇāma, dhammato</i> |
| (7) the essenceless [coreless] | <i>asārakato</i> |
| (8) the extinguishable | <i>vibhavato</i> |
| (9) of a mortal nature | <i>maraṇa, dhammato</i> |
| (10) the conditioned [the formed] | <i>saṅkhatato</i> |

15.2.1.2 The 25 perceptions of *suffering*

There are 25 perceptions of **suffering**, that is, in terms of:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| (11) suffering | <i>dukkhato</i> |
| (12) a disease | <i>rogato</i> |
| (13) misery | <i>aghatato</i> |
| (14) a tumour | <i>gaṇḍato</i> |
| (15) a dart | <i>sallato</i> |
| (16) an affliction | <i>ābādhato</i> |
| (17) a disaster | <i>upaddavato</i> |
| (18) a fearsome thing | <i>bhayato</i> |

(19) a plague	<i>ītito</i>
(20) a menace	<i>upasaggato</i>
(21) no protection	<i>atāṇato</i>
(22) no shelter	<i>aleṇato</i>
(23) no refuge	<i>saraṇato</i>
(24) murderous	<i>vadhakato</i>
(25) the root of calamity	<i>agha,mūlato</i>
(26) a danger	<i>ādīnavato</i>
(27) the tainted	<i>s'āsavato</i>
(28) Mara's bait	<i>mār'āmisato</i>
(29) of a born nature	<i>jāti,dhammato</i>
(30) of an ageing nature	<i>jarā,dhammato</i>
(31) of an ailing nature	<i>vyādhi,dhammato</i>
(32) of a sorrowful nature	<i>soka,dhammato</i>
(33) of a lamentable nature	<i>parideva,dhammato</i>
(34) of a despairing nature	<i>upayāsa,dhammato</i>
(35) of a defiled nature	<i>saṅkilesika,dhammato</i>

15.2.1.3 The 5 perceptions of nonself

There are 5 perceptions of **nonself**, that is, in terms of:

(36) nonself	<i>anattato</i>
(37) void	<i>suññato</i>
(38) alien	<i>parato</i>
(39) empty	<i>rittato</i>
(40) vain	<i>tucchato</i>

The suttas have mentioned that some, while seeing one of the 40 -to's in mentality and materiality, internally and externally, in the past, present and future, progressed in their insight (*vipassana*) to attain arhathood. For others, there are the exercises called the 7 ways for materiality (*rūpa,sattaka*) and the 7 ways for mentality (*arūpa,sattaka*).³⁴¹

15.3 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: THE 7 WAYS OF REFLECTING ON MATERIALITY

We have examined materiality according to the 4 ways it arises, that is, *the karma-born, the temperature-born, the consciousness-born and the nutriment-born materiality*) [11.3] Now, we discern materiality in 7 ways, that is, in terms of **their universal characteristics** (being impermanent, suffering and nonself), as follows.

(1) In the 1st of the 7 ways of discerning materiality, we see **the impermanence, suffering and non-self** of the materiality of this entire lifetime, from rebirth-linking to death, both internally and externally.

(2) In the 2nd way of discerning materiality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the materiality of **different periods in this lifetime, both internally and externally**. We consider this lifetime to be 100 years, and divide it into 3 periods of 33 years each. Then, we see that the materiality in one period arises and ceases there, and does not pass on to the next period, which means it is impermanent, suffering and nonself.

We then divide this lifetime into progressively smaller periods, and do the same. Divide the 100 years of this lifetime into: 10 periods of 10 years, 20 periods of 5 years, 25 periods of 4 years, 33 periods of 3 years, 50 periods of 2 years, and 100 periods of 1 year; then 300 periods of 4 months, 600

³⁴¹ Vism 20.46-75/618-626 + 76-88/626-629, respectively.

periods of 2 months, and 2,400 periods of half-a-month; and finally divide **each day** into 2 periods (night and day), and then into 6 periods or “watches” (*yāma*) of 4 hours each.³⁴²

If this timing schemes seem somewhat overwhelming, we may just reflect on the impermanence of the day in 2 or in 6 periods. In each case, we see that the materiality in one period *arises and ceases there*, and does not pass on to the next period, which means it is impermanent, suffering and nonself.

We reduce the periods further to the duration of **each of the 6 movements of the body**: the moments of *going forth and going back, looking ahead and looking aside, and bending a limb and stretching a limb*.³⁴³ Then, we similarly divide each footstep into 6 phases: lifting, raising, moving forward, lowering, placing and pressing.³⁴⁴ Again, see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* in the materiality of each period in this 100-year lifetime.

(3) In the 3rd way of discerning materiality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of **nutriment-born materiality**.³⁴⁵ That is, we see them in the materiality of *the periods when hungry, when satisfied*, and see that it does not pass on from a period of hunger to a period of satiety (and vice versa), every day in this 100-year lifetime.

(4) In the 4th way of discerning materiality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of **temperature-born materiality**. That is, we see them in the materiality of the periods when *hot*, when *cold*, and see that it does not pass on from a period of feeling hot to a period of feeling cold (and vice versa), every day in this 100-year lifetime.

(5) In the 5th way of discerning materiality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of **karma-born materiality**. That is, we see that the materiality of each of the 6 sense-doors arises and ceases there, and does not pass on to another door, every day in this 100-year lifetime.

(6) In the 6th way of discerning materiality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of **consciousness-born materiality**. That is, we see them in the materiality of the periods when *happy* and *pleased*, when *unhappy* and *sad*, every day in this 100-year lifetime.

(7) In the 7th way of discerning materiality, we see the impermanence, suffering and nonself of **present inanimate materiality**. Materiality is inanimate when it is *without* karma-born materiality such as the life-faculty and the 5 sensitivities. That is, for example, iron, steel, copper, gold, silver, plastic, pearls, gemstones, shells, marble, coral, soil, rocks, concrete and plants. Such materiality is found only externally.

These are the 7 ways of discerning materiality according their characteristics.

15.4 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: THE 7 WAYS OF REFLECTING ON MENTALITY

In the 7 ways of discerning mentality, we see the impermanence, suffering and nonself of the vipassana-minds (the mentality) that saw these 3 characteristics in the 7 ways for materiality (see fol-

³⁴² Traditionally, in India of the Buddha’s time, the “24-hour” day was divided into 4 parts: the day into forenoon (*pubb’aṇha*) and afternoon (*apar’aṇha*); and the night into 3 watch(es) (of the night): the 1st watch (6-10 pm) (*paṭhama,yāma* or *purima,yāma*), the 2nd or “middle” watch (10 pm-2 am) (*majjhima,yāma*), 3rd or “last” watch (2-6 am) (*pacchima,yāma*). See D 16,4.38 n (SD 9); SD 25.3 (4.1); SD 32.13 (1.1).

³⁴³ These actions are found in the section on “clear knowing” (*sampajañña*) of **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,8/1:57), SD 13.3.

³⁴⁴ On walking meditation, see SD 17.2a (11.2) Diagram 6.

³⁴⁵ This means that we discern all the 4 types of materiality that have arisen owing to the support of nutriment-born materiality. This principle applies to the discernment of karma-born, consciousness-born and temperature-born materiality.

lowing). This means our object is, in each case, a vipassana-mind which we see with a subsequent vipassana-mind.³⁴⁶

(1) In the first of the 7 ways of discerning mentality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself of the materiality* by way of a group (*kalāpa*) each time. We then see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself of the mentality* that sees this. That means that we see the grouped materiality as being impermanent, and then see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of that vipassana-mind itself with, in each case, a subsequent vipassana-mind. We do the same with the grouped materiality seen as *suffering and nonself*.

(2) In the 2nd way of discerning mentality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the mentality for each of the 7 ways for materiality. That means, we see again the materiality in each of the 7 ways for materiality as being *impermanent*, and then see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of that vipassana-mind itself with, in each case, a subsequent vipassana-mind. We do the same with the materiality seen as *suffering and nonself*.

(3) In the 3rd way of discerning mentality, we see again *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the mentality for each of the 7 ways for materiality, but do so 4 times in succession. That means, we see again the materiality in each of the 7 ways for materiality as being *impermanent*, and then see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of that 1st vipassana-mind with a 2nd vipassana-mind, and a 2nd with a 3rd, and so on, until we see a 5th vipassana-mind sees *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the 4th vipassana-mind.

We do the same with the materiality seen as *suffering* and as *nonself*.

(4) In the 4th way of discerning mentality we do as before, but continue until we have an 11th vipassana-mind seeing *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the 10th vipassana-mind.

(5) In the 5th way of discerning mentality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of mentality for **the removal of views** (*ditṭhi*). Here again, we see the vipassana-minds of the 7 ways for materiality. Then, once the perceptions of *impermanence* and *suffering* have become strong, we intensify the perception of *nonself*. With the support of the other 2 perceptions, the intensified perception of nonself removes views, especially the view of **self**.

(6) In the 6th way of discerning mentality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of mentality for the removal of **conceit** (*māna*). Again, we see the vipassana-minds of the 7 ways for materiality. Then, once the perceptions of *suffering* and *nonself* have become strong and powerful, we intensify the perception of impermanence. With the support of the other 2 perceptions, the intensified perception of impermanence removes **conceit**.

(7) In the 7th way of discerning mentality, we see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* of mentality for the removal of **attachment** (*nikanti*). Again, we see the vipassana-minds of the 7 ways for materiality.

Then, once the perceptions of *impermanence* and of *nonself* have become strong, we intensify the perception of suffering. With the support of the other 2 perceptions, the intensified perception of suffering removes **attachment**.

³⁴⁶ **Vipassana-mind.** The vipassana mind-door process is a one mind-door advertent consciousness and 7 impulsions, sometimes followed by 2 registering consciousnesses. In the mind-door advertent consciousness, there are 12 mental formations, and in each impulsion consciousness, there are 34, 33 or 32 mental formations. See also Table 13.2.2 The mind-door process.

These are **the 7 ways for mentality**. It is best, although not strictly necessary, to have done these exercises for the materiality and mentality of *the present, past and future, internally and externally*. With the exercises completed, materiality and mentality will have become very clear to us.

The explanation of how to cultivate the Knowledge of Formations in categories is now complete; let us go on to discuss how to cultivate the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing.

15.5 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: KNOWLEDGE OF ARISING AND CEASING

15.5.0 Introduction

15.5.0.1 The Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing (or of Rise and Fall)³⁴⁷ is to know the arising and ceasing of formations: mentality-materiality, the 5 aggregates, the 12 bases, the 18 elements, the 4 noble truths, and dependent arising, *internally and externally, in the present, past and future*.³⁴⁸ Simply, it is knowing true reality.

This knowledge comprises 2 kinds:

- (1) Knowledge of the condition (*paccayato*): the *conditioned* arising and ceasing of formations
- (2) Knowledge of the momentary (*khanato*): the *momentary* arising and ceasing of formations

We can see **the conditioned arising and ceasing of formations**, for example, using the 5th method of dependent arising [14.1.2]. To see **the momentary arising and ceasing of formations**, we see how the 5 aggregates arise and cease in every mind-moment of the mental processes, in daily life, from rebirth to death of every life, that we have discerned.

15.5.0.2 There are 2 methods for cultivating the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing: **the brief method** (seeing only the *momentary* nature of formations), and **the detailed method** (seeing both the *conditioned* and the *momentary* nature of formations). We shall examine only the detailed method.

The detailed method of cultivating the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing is done in 3 stages, that is, we see:

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| (1) only <u>the arising</u> (<i>udaya</i>) | the conditioned and momentary <i>arising</i> of formations | [15.5.1] |
| (2) only <u>the ceasing</u> (<i>vaya</i>) | the conditioned and momentary <i>ceasing</i> of formations | [15.5.2] |
| (3) both <u>the arising and ceasing</u> | both the conditioned and the momentary <i>arising and ceasing</i> of formations | [15.5.3.] |

15.5.1 Detailed discerning the nature of arising: The 5th method dependent arising

15.5.1.1 To begin **a detailed discerning of formations** for cultivating the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing, we should carefully see, again and again, the conditioned and the momentary **arising** of formations. This is the contemplation of the nature of arising (*samudaya dhammānupassanā*); for example, we see the conditioned arising of materiality according to the 5th method of dependent arising, as already described [14.2].

This means that we look back again to the near-death moments of our past life, to see the 5 past conditions (of dependent arising) that caused the arising (*udaya*), in this life, of karma-born materiality [11.3.1]. One by one, we see the arising of: (1) ignorance, (2) craving, (3) clinging, (4) volitional formations, and (5) karma, each conditioning, in this life, the arising of *karma-born materiality*.

15.5.1.2 We then see the *momentary* arising of karma-born materiality in every mind-moment of the mental processes that we have discerned, from rebirth to death. This means that we see the 5

³⁴⁷ "Arising and ceasing" (*udaya-b, baya* = *udaya* + *vaya*); "ceasing" (*vaya*) is the same as "ending" (*nirodha*).

³⁴⁸ Vism 20.93-104/629-633.

aggregates at the arising (*udaya*) of **the process-free consciousnesses** (*vīthi, mutta citta*),³⁴⁹ and at the arising of each mind-moment in all the intervening **6 sense-door processes** (*vīthi*) that we have discerned. We see this in every past life that we have discerned, and will discern in all our future lives up to our parinirvana.³⁵⁰

We must then see, one after the other, the conditioned arising of *temperature-born, of consciousness-born, and of nutriment-born materiality* [11.3]. We will then see how:

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|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • consciousness | conditions the arising of | consciousness-born materiality |
| • temperature | conditions the arising of | temperature-born materiality |
| • nutriment | conditions the arising of | nutriment-born materiality |

In each case, we see also the *momentary* arising of the particular type of *materiality*.

After this, we must see, in the same way, both the conditioned and the momentary arising of mentality, and see the arising of *both* materiality and mentality in all the mental processes that we have discerned, in all the past and future lives that we have discerned. It would, however, take some time to list the details, so we shall pass them over, and in each case explain the details for only materiality.

15.5.2 Discerning the nature of ceasing

15.5.2.1 After seeing the conditioned and the momentary arising (*udaya*) of both materiality and mentality, we now see again and again *only* their ceasing (*vaya*). This is **the Contemplation of the Nature of Ceasing**. The *ceasing* of ignorance, craving, clinging, volitional formations and karmic potency³⁵¹ occurs when we attain arhathood, and the cessation of the 5 aggregates takes place at our parinirvana.

Whereas the conditioned arising is the individual type of ignorance, craving, clinging, volitional formation and karmic potency that we discern at each life where it takes place, the cessation is always in the same life: when the 5 aggregates at parinirvana no longer arise. But actual nirvana and the arhat-path is not evident to us because we have not yet realized the 4 Path Knowledges (*magga, ñāṇa*) and 4 Fruition Knowledges (*phala, ñāṇa*): we understand that our parinirvana has taken place because there is no more arising of the aggregates.

15.5.2.2 For example, we see the cessation (*nirodha*) of materiality, again, according to the 5th method of dependent arising [14.2.6]. This is when we look forward to the time when we become an arhat, and see that when we attain the arhat-path (*arahatta, magga*) and arhat-fruition (*arahatta, phala*), all defilements cease, and that, at the end of that life, all formations cease, too: it is directly seeing our parinirvana, after which neither new materiality nor new mentality arises or passes away.

Should we attain arhathood in this very life, all formations cease when our life ends: should we attain arhathood in one of our future lives, the same will happen, unless we attain arhathood upon dying.³⁵² One by one, we see that the cessation (*nirodha*) of: (1) ignorance, (2) craving, (3) clinging, (4) volitional formations and (5) karma, respectively, each bringing the cessation of karma-born materiality.

³⁴⁹ **Process-free consciousnesses** (*vīthi, mutta, citta*): the rebirth-relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi, citta*); *bhav'āṅga* consciousness and death-consciousness (*cuti, citta*). See (12.2.3.4) + Table 12.2.3.4; (13) Discerning mentality.

³⁵⁰ Discerning the 6 sense-door processes means that we are examining the present life, which means we will be able to discern out immediate past life, and then those before that [14.2.2]. Then, we go on to discern future lives (which will be tricky) [SD 142.6].

³⁵¹ There is still, however, the karmic potency from the past volitional formations (before arhathood) that manifests as pleasure and pain. There is, however, *no* karmic potency in the present volitional formations to bear *new* results, as such. Cf Pa-Auk 2019:22 f.

³⁵² The former is "the nirvana of the defilements" (*kilesa, nibbāna*), when there is no more clinging to the 5 aggregates, and no new karma is created; the latter is "the nirvana of the aggregates" (*khandha, nibbāna*), when even the remaining 5 aggregates cease altogether: SD 45.18 (2.5.2.4). Also called, respectively, the nirvana-

15.5.2.3 Having, in that way, seen the conditioned cessation of karma-born materiality, we now see only its *momentary* ceasing. In due course, we see the momentary ceasing of karma-born materiality in every mind-moment of the mental processes that we have discerned, from rebirth to death, in every past and future life that we have discerned [12.2.3.4 + Table].

This means that we again see the 5 aggregates at the cessation (*vaya*) of the process-free consciousnesses, and at the *cessation* of each mind-moment in all the intervening 6 sense-door processes (*vīthi*) that we have discerned. [Table 12.2.3.4]

15.5.2.4 We must then see, one after the other, the conditioned cessation of consciousness-born, of temperature-born, and of nutriment-born materiality. We see how the cessation of consciousness causes the cessation of consciousness-born materiality.

The cessation of temperature [heat] causes the cessation of temperature-born materiality.

The cessation of nutriment causes the cessation of nutriment-born materiality.

In each case, we see also the momentary ceasing of that particular type of materiality.

15.5.3 Discerning the nature of arising and ceasing

15.5.3.1 Once we have seen conditioned cessation of both materiality *and* mentality, we now see again and again both their arising and ceasing. This is the Contemplation of the Nature of Arising and Ceasing (*samudaya, vaya dhammānupassanā*). It involves seeing first their conditioned arising and ceasing, and then their momentary arising and ceasing. We see each one in 3 successive ways, thus:

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| (1) the <u>arising</u> | of the cause and its result; |
| (2) the <u>ceasing</u> | of the cause and its result; |
| (3) the <u>impermanence</u> | of the cause and its result. |

15.5.3.2 For example, we see, one by one, how:

- (1) the arising of each cause (1. ignorance; 2. craving; 3. clinging; 4. volitional formations; 5. karma) causes the arising of karma-born materiality;
- (2) the cessation of each condition causes the cessation of karma-born materiality;
- (3) each cause and the materiality it produced is impermanent.

Likewise, we see, one by one, how:

- 1) consciousness causes the arising of consciousness-born materiality;
- 2) the cessation of consciousness causes the cessation of consciousness-born materiality;
- 3) consciousness is impermanent, and consciousness-born materiality is impermanent.

15.5.3.3 We see the same cessation cycle for temperature-born and nutriment-born materiality. This is how we see both the conditioned and the momentary arising and ceasing of **materiality**. After that, we have to see the conditioned and the momentary arising and ceasing of **mentality**.

In the way just outlined, we see the conditioned and momentary arising and ceasing of also the 5 aggregates, and see the 3 characteristics of *impermanence, suffering and nonself* in them. We should do this for the 5 internal aggregates, the 5 external aggregates, and the 5 aggregates of the past, present and future.

element with substrates remaining (*sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna, dhatu*) and the nirvana-element without substrates remaining (*anupādi, sesa nibbāna, dhatu*): SD 45.18 (2.5).

15.5.4 Cultivating the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing: The 1st method of dependent arising

15.5.4.1 Next, we cultivate the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing with the 1st method of dependent arising [14.3]. In this case, to see the conditioned arising of formations, we see the links of dependent arising one-by-one in the *forward* order, thus:³⁵³

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|--|--|
| (1) dependent on ignorance (<i>avijjā</i>), | formations (<i>saṅkhārā</i>) arise; |
| (2) dependent on formations , | consciousness (<i>viññāṇa</i>) arises; |
| (3) dependent on consciousness , | name-and-form [mentality-materiality] (<i>nāma,rūpa</i>) arises; |
| (4) dependent on name-and-form , | the 6 sense-bases (<i>saḷ-āyatana</i>) arise; |
| (5) dependent on the 6 sense-bases , | contact (<i>phassa</i>) arises; |
| (6) dependent on contact , | feeling (<i>vedanā</i>) arises; |
| (7) dependent on feeling , | craving (<i>taṇhā</i>) arises; |
| (8) dependent on craving , | clinging (<i>upādāna</i>) arises; |
| (9) dependent on clinging , | existence (<i>bhava</i>) arises; |
| (10) dependent on existence , | birth (<i>jāti</i>) arises; |
| (11) dependent on birth , | |
| (12) decay-and-death (<i>jarā,maraṇa</i>), sorrow (<i>soka</i>), lamentation (<i>parideva</i>), physical pain (<i>dukkha</i>), mental pain (<i>domanassa</i>) and despair (<i>upāyāsā</i>) arise. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. | |

15.5.4.2 To see the **conditioned cessation** of formations at arhathood, and the resultant parinirvana, we see the links of dependent cessation one-by-one in forward order, thus:³⁵⁴

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| (1) with the remainderless fading away and ending of ignorance , | volitional formations cease; |
| (2) with the ceasing of volitional formations , | consciousness ceases; |
| (3) with the ceasing of consciousness , | name-and-form ceases; |
| (4) with the ceasing of name-and-form , | the 6 sense-bases cease; |
| (5) with the ceasing of the 6 sense-bases , | contact ceases; |
| (6) with the ceasing of contact , | feeling ceases; |
| (7) with the ceasing of feeling , | craving ceases; |
| (8) with the ceasing of craving , | clinging ceases; |
| (9) with the ceasing of clinging , | existence ceases; |
| (10) with the ceasing of existence , | birth ceases; |
| (11) with the ceasing of birth , | |
| (12) decay-and-death , sorrow, lamentation, mental pain, physical pain and despair cease. | |
- Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

As before, we see both the conditioned and the momentary arising and ceasing of formations. We see the links of dependent arising and cessation one-by-one in forward order.

For example, in the case of ignorance, we see:

- (1) ignorance conditions the arising of volitional formations;
- (2) with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease;
- (3) ignorance is impermanent, volitional formations are *impermanent*.

³⁵³ For these 12 links (arising), see **(Nidāna) Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2,3-16/2:2-4), SD 5.15. The shorter cycle (6-12) is found in **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,30/1:267), SD 7.10.

³⁵⁴ For these 12 links (ending), see **(Nidāna) Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2,16.2/2:4), SD 5.15. The shorter cycle (6-12) is found in **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,40/1:270), SD 7.10.

We see each of the links of dependent arising in the same way, internally and externally, in the past, present and future.

This is, very briefly, how we cultivate the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing of formations.

15.6 CULTIVATING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: OVERCOMING THE 20 IMPERFECTIONS OF INSIGHT

15.6.1 As we assert ourself in meditation and our insight (*vipassanā*) grows stronger, any or all of the 10 imperfections of insight (*vipassan'upakkilesa*) may arise in us. This list of imperfections is found in the **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, the Visuddhi, magga and the Commentaries.³⁵⁵

Buddhaghosa explains how we may experience **light** such as never experienced before; the Knowledge of Mentality-Materiality has never been so clear that we are overwhelmed in our **exertion**; established **mental presence**; stable **equanimity**; and a deep **attachment** to insight.

These are not, in themselves, impurities or imperfections; they are so when we mistake them as some kind of attainment, even as that of the path and its fruition. We then develop wrong view, and think that we have attained some very high levels: we project conceit onto others. In this way, we have turned them into “imperfections” for ourself.

15.6.2 The 10 imperfections of vipassana (*dasa vipassan'upakkilesa*) are as follows:

(1) light	<i>obhāsa</i>
(2) knowledge	<i>ñāṇa</i>
(3) joy	<i>pīti</i>
(4) tranquillity	<i>passaddhi</i>
(5) happiness	<i>sukha</i>
(6) confidence	<i>adhimokkha</i>
(7) exertion	<i>paggaha</i>
(8) mental presence	<i>upaṭṭhāna</i>
(9) equanimity	<i>upekkhā</i>
(10) attachment	<i>nikanti</i>

With the exception of light and attachment, the imperfections are actually *wholesome* states, and are, as such, not, in themselves, imperfections. But they can become the objects for unwholesome states when we become attached to them. We should simply regard them as being “mind-made” and conditioned; hence, they are *impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself*. Or, simply disregard them and go on with our practice.

15.7 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: THE KNOWLEDGE OF DISSOLUTION

15.7.1 After we have developed the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing, our insight into formations is steady and pure. Then, we have to cultivate **the Knowledge of Dissolution** (*bhaṅga, ñāṇa*). To do this, we concentrate only on the momentary ceasing (*vaya*) and dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of formations.

We see neither the arising (*uppāda*) nor the standing (*ṭhiti*) of formations, nor the signs (*nimitta*) of individual formations, nor the conditioned occurrence (*pavatta*) of formations. Using the power of our Vipassana Knowledge, we see only the dissolution of formations, and perceive them as impermanence, suffering and nonself.

- (1) We see the cessation, fall and dissolution of formations, to see their **impermanence**.
- (2) We see the continuous dissolution of formations as *fearful*, to see the **suffering** in them.
- (3) We see the absence of any permanent essence in formations, to see their **nonself** nature.

³⁵⁵ Pm 2:100-103; Vism 20.107-130/633-638; AA 3:143. See SD 32.7 (2.1.3.2); 32.10 (2.5.3); SD 56.22 (8.2.5).

15.7.2 We have to see *the impermanence, suffering and nonself* in not only the dissolution of mentality-materiality, but also in **the dissolution of those vipassana-minds** that saw this. That means that we see the dissolution of materiality and know that it is impermanent. This is our 1st vipassana mind. Then, with a 2nd vipassana-mind, we see the dissolution of the 1st vipassana-mind, and thus know it, too, is impermanent.

We do the same for **mentality**, and then again for *materiality and mentality* to know them as suffering and nonself. We do these exercises again and again, alternating between internal and external, materiality and mentality, conditioned formations and resultant formations: past, present and future.

As we continue to discern the ceasing and dissolution of formations in this way, our strong vipassana will progress through the next 6 Vipassana Knowledges.

15.8 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: THE 1ST 11 KNOWLEDGES

15.8.1 At this stage, we will have developed the first 11 of the 16 Vipassana Knowledges. The first 5 Knowledges that we have already developed are: [12.7.1.2]

(1) Knowledge of the Definition of Mentality-Materiality	<i>nāma,rūpa pariccheda ñāṇai</i> [11; 13]
(2) Knowledge of Cause-apprehending Knowledge	<i>paccaya,pariggaha ñāṇa</i> [14]
(3) Comprehension Knowledge	<i>sammasana ñāṇa</i> [15.1.1]
(4) Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing	<i>udaya-b,baya ñāṇa</i> [15.5]
(5) Knowledge of Dissolution	<i>bhaṅga ñāṇa</i> [15.7]

15.8.2 And the next 6 Knowledges that we will progress through are:

(6) Knowledge of the Fearful (viz, the dissolving states)	<i>bhaya ñāṇa</i>
(7) Knowledge of Dangers (viz, the fearful states)	<i>ādīnava ñāṇa</i>
(8) Knowledge that is Revulsion (with all formations)	<i>nibbidā ñāṇa</i>
(9) Knowledge that is the Desire for Freedom	<i>muñcitu,kamyatā ñāṇa</i>
(10) Knowledge that is Reflective Contemplation	<i>paṭisaṅkha ñāṇa</i>
(11) Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations	<i>saṅkhār'upekkhā ñāṇa</i>

15.8.3 When we developed the first 5 Vipassana Knowledges thoroughly, these 6 Knowledges will develop quickly. These Knowledges have been described earlier [12.7.1.3], where we should read them, even look them up in the Visuddhi,magga and the Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha in the references given there.

15.9 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: KNOWING AND SEEING NIRVANA

15.9.1 After gaining these Knowledges, as we continue to see the ceasing and dissolution of each formation, with a wish for release from them, we will find that eventually all formations cease. Our mind knows and sees nirvana directly: it is fully aware of the unconditioned state, nirvana, as object.

This takes place with the arising of the Path-process: for this, we go through the remaining 5 Knowledges. They are: [12.7.1.2]

(12) Conformity Knowledge	<i>anuloma ñāṇa</i>
(13) Knowledge that is the Change of Lineage	<i>gotra,bhū ñāṇa</i>
(14) Path Knowledge	<i>magga ñāṇa</i>
(15) Fruition Knowledge	<i>phala ñāṇa</i>
(16) Review Knowledge	<i>paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa</i>

15.9.2 The last 5 Knowledges [15.9.1] arise with the Path Process, consisting of a sequence of 7 types of consciousness:

- (1) A mind-door adverting consciousness arises that sees formations as *impermanence, suffering or nonself*, depending on how the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations [12.7.1.3 (11)] arose. Afterwards, there arise 3 preparatory impulsion consciousnesses (*javana*) which see formations in the same way.
- (2) Preparation *parikamma*³⁵⁶
- (3) Access *upacāra*
- (4) Conformity *anuloma*

15.9.3 These 3 impulsion consciousnesses comprise, in fact, the 12th Knowledge: **the Conformity Knowledge**. Conformity to what? To what came before, and to what will come after. Thus, they may be said to function as *preparation for, access to and conformity with* the Change of Lineage. Their repetition prepares the way for transition from the 8 Insight Knowledges that came before (from the Knowledge of Arising and Ceasing to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge) with the formed as object to the 37 dhammas³⁵⁷ of the Path and Fruition Knowledges with the Unconditioned (nirvana) as object. The Conformity Knowledge is the last Knowledge that has formations as its object.

- (5) A 4th impulsion consciousness arises, with nirvana as object.

This is **the 13th Knowledge**: Change-of-Lineage Knowledge. Although this consciousness knows the unconditioned, nirvana, it does not destroy the defilements: its function is to change the lineage from ordinary (worldly) person to the noble (saint); specifically, this refers to streamwinning, that is, the very 1st path.

- (6) A 5th impulsion consciousness arises, with nirvana as object. This is **the 14th Knowledge**, which destroys the appropriate defilements.³⁵⁸ this is Path Knowledge .
- (7) A 6th and 7th impulsion consciousness arises,³⁵⁹ with nirvana as object. They **are the 15th Knowledge**: this is Fruition Knowledge (*phala, ñāṇa*).

15.10 DEVELOPING VIPASSANA KNOWLEDGE: REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

15.10.1 After this follows the last and 16th Knowledge, **the Reviewing Knowledge** (*paccavekkhaṇa, - ñāṇa*). It comprises 5 separate reviewings (after attaining them):

- (1) reviewing the Path Knowledge;
- (2) reviewing the Fruition Knowledge;
- (3) reviewing the defilements that have been destroyed;

³⁵⁶ When the meditator's vipassana is very strong, this consciousness does not arise; the 1st impulsion consciousness is access (*upacāra*), which, in this case, is number 3. See Table 13.3.3.

³⁵⁷ Simply put, this refers to the totality of the Buddha's teachings. Conventionally, they are listed as the "7 sets" totalling 37 teachings, viz, **the 37 dhammas that are the limbs of awakening** (*bodhi, pakkhiya dhamma*) or, simply, "the limbs of awakening," ie: (1) the 4 focuses of mindfulness, (2) the 4 right efforts, (3) the 4 paths to success, (4) the 5 faculties, (5) the 5 powers, (6) the 7 awakening-factors, and (7) the noble eightfold path. See Vism 22.32-43/678-681; for details, see SD 10.1.

³⁵⁸ Eg, streamwinning destroys the first 3 fetters (*saṃyojana*): (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) doubt about the 3 jewels (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to vows and rituals (*sīla-b, bata parāmāsa*)—which empowers us to keep the 5 precepts so that we would never be reborn into any state lower than a human one. Complete destruction of the defilements is attained only at arhathood.

³⁵⁹ If no "preliminary work" (*parikamma*) consciousness arises, these consciousnesses will be a 5th, 6th and 7th (three) to complete the necessary 7 impulsion consciousnesses. See **Table 13.2.2** the mind-door process.

- (4) reviewing the defilements that have yet to be destroyed;
- (5) reviewing nirvana.

Review knowledge 1+2 will arise automatically. However, for 3+4, we need some skill with some proper understanding of the Dharma.

15.10.2 Then, we will have attained true knowledge of the 4 noble truths, and will have realized nirvana for ourselves. With this realization, our mind will have become purified and free from wrong views. We go on to attain arhathood and parinirvana.

There are many other details about this development of vipassana; this is just a brief mention. The best way to learn this practice is by undertaking a meditation course with an experienced teacher, because then we can learn in a systematic way, step by step.

15.11 THE ESSENCE OF SAMATHA-VIPASSANA

5.11.1 We have been taking a remarkable meditative journey, experiencing the profound panorama of samatha and vipassana: this is like the ancient Greeks listening the bard **Homer** (c 8th cent BCE) reciting the great epic poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey,³⁶⁰ which continue to inspire western and global learning, literature, music art and film.

Although Homer's epics are based on historical events, they are related as human drama, highlighting the human spirit in the face of loss, tragedy and great challenges to life, and surviving it all the wiser. Above all, they celebrate the power of Homer's great memory and remarkable genius in storytelling. They are **epic**, not only in terms of narrative, but in their truth and timelessness in our social life and culture.

Pa-Auk's great memory and remarkable understanding of the Buddha Dharma has given us an epic rendition of the Buddha Dharma, weaving together the canonical teachings, elaborating them with Abhidhamma and commentarial details to move us into Dharma practice, as has been the tradition in Myanmar for generations.

5.11.2 Pa-Auk has here laid down in great practical detail how the ancient practitioners have progressed to reach the path and going on to attain nirvana. Just as Weubū Sayadaw once famously pointed to his nose and declared that the Buddha's teaching is all *there*, in the breath; in Pa-Auk's teachings, we may see that singular truth and its path in **renunciation**.

To truly succeed in meditation, we use both samatha and vipassana *to know, tame and free the mind*, just as the Buddha himself did, beginning with his great renunciation. We, too, must begin our journey of true **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*). After all, breath meditation is what brought awakening to the Buddha himself. Practising meditation, with this Dharma-spirited understanding of renunciation, we will attain what the Buddha and the early arhats have attained: awakening and liberation.

This is our highest aspiration—for awakening and liberation—gained through direct insight, rather than seeking the powers or pleasures of meditation, or being blinded by a teacher's learning and fame. This is the effort to let go of the world: there's nothing in it that is ours nor anything worth seeking. We should not only be *disenchanted* with the world; we should be revulsed at it, for having entrapped us in its web of ignorance and craving for so very long. Meditation, with or without dhyana, can bring us the wisdom of non-identifying with the world (*atam, mayatā*), thus awakening ourselves.

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³⁶⁰ While the Iliad is a poetic narrative set in the last few weeks of the Trojan War; the Odyssey recounts the 10-year voyage home of Odysseus (Latin, Ulysses), king of Ithaca, after the fall of Troy.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY for *Meditation in Society* (SD 60ab)

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