

Dutiya Jhāna Pañha Sutta

The Discourse on the Question of the Second Dhyana

Also called (Avitakka) Dutiya Jhāna Sutta = On the Second Dhyana (without initial application)

[How to progress in the second dhyana]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 40.2/4:263 f)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2008

1 Introduction

The first nine suttas of the **Moggallāna Saṃyutta** (S 40.1-9) deals with the nine stages of Moggallāna's meditation leading to his arhathood,¹ thus:

(1) Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha Sutta	S 40.1/4:262 f	SD 24.11
Also called (Savitakka) Paṭhama Jhāna Sutta		
(2) Dutiya Jhāna Pañha Sutta	S 40.2/4:263 f	SD 24.12
Also called (Avitakka) Dutiya Jhāna Sutta		
(3) Tatiya Jhāna Pañha Sutta	S 40.3/4:264 f	SD 24.13
Also called (Sukhena) Tatiya Jhāna Sutta		
(4) Catuttha Jhāna Pañha Sutta	S 40.4/4:265 f	SD 24.14
Also called (Upekkhaka) Catuttha Jhāna Sutta		
(5) Ākāsañāṇc'āyatana Pañha Sutta	S 40.5/4:266	SD 24.15
(6) Viññāṇāṇc'āyatana Pañha Sutta	S 40.6/4:266 f	SD 24.16
(7) Ākiñcaññ'āyatana Pañha Sutta	S 40.7/4:267 f	SD 24.17
(8) N'eva,saññā,nāsaññ'āyatana Pañha Sutta	S 40.8/4:268	SD 24.18
(9) Animitta Ceto,samādhi Pañha Sutta	S 40.9/4:268 f	SD 24.19

In the **Kolita Sutta** (S 21.1), which is also about Moggallāna's attaining the second dhyana, the teaching centres around the "noble silence" (*ariya tuñhī,bhāva*).² "Kolita" is Moggallāna's personal name, while "Moggallāna" is derived from his clan name. As noted by the Sutta's commentary, the Kolita Sutta refers to his week of striving for arhathood (SA 2:233).

2 One-pointedness of mind

With the subsiding of applied and sustained thoughts (thinking and pondering, *vitakka,vicāra*)—that is, freedom from all mental discursiveness—the mind is profoundly still, in a state of one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ekaggatā*). This one-pointedness is emphasized because this is the stage where it is fully present, and remains so that all higher dhyanas are possible. The second dhyana pericope shows how one-pointedness supports zest and happiness:

With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he attains and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness *born of concentration*. [§4]

Zest or joyful interest is such an energizing experience that it propels us to effortlessly remain in the dhyana, enjoying its bliss. Unlike worldly zest (or rapture), spiritual zest has no negative effects. It is thoroughly blissful while we are experiencing it, and even the memory of it has a powerfully stilling effect after that.

¹ For a description of Sāriputta's awakening process, see **Anupāda S** (M 111/3:25-29) = SD 56.4.

² S 21.1/2:273 f = SD 24.20.

3 Zest

Although we speak of “zest and happiness” (*pīti, sukha*), they are not distinguishable in the dhyana itself. It is only in the third dhyana, when we let go of zest that happiness is experience in itself, so that we know what happiness *is*, and what zest *was*. We can simply refer to the dvandva as “bliss,” since they are such a close-knitted pair.³ Bliss first arises with the abandonment of the five mental hindrances; hence, it is said to be “born of solitude” (*viveka, ja*), that is, true mental solitude.⁴

In meditation language, **zest** (*pīti*) is joy “dissociated from sensual desire” or “joyful interest.” It is an exhilarating sense of relief that one has overcome sensual desire with such positive thoughts as “I’ve attained what was to be done!” It is an energizing joyful interest in the pleasant meditative state that arises. As such, zest is the result of “letting go” or renunciation of negative mental states. **The Visuddhi-magga** speaks of five kinds of zest (Vism 143):⁵

1. “Minor zest” (*khuddaka, pīti*) which often causes horripilation (hair-raising or “goose pimples”).
2. “Momentary zest” (*khaṇika, pīti*) because it lasts only a brief moment like lightning flashes at different times.
3. “Flooding zest” (*okkantika, pīti*) because it showers and flows repeatedly throughout the body like waves breaking on the sea-shore.
4. “Uplifting zest” (*ubbega* or *ubbeṅga, pīti*), makes one feel so light that one might actually levitate into the air!
5. “Pervading zest” (*pharaṇa, pīti*), because it floods one’s being like a torrent that fills a mountain cave.

This classification may be problematic in reference to such sutta statements about dhyana, as this one found in **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2): “There is no part of his entire body unpervaded by zest and happiness born of seclusion” [8]. Apparently, only the fifth type of zest applies fully to a dhyana state, while the earlier four types are only weak, momentary, or preliminary experiences of zest.

Many non-Buddhists, even non-religious, worldly, people, too, experience various intensity of zest or “rapture” in their religious practices (such as prayers and rites), or artistic performances (such as music, drama, art, etc). Such rapture arises on its own, as it were. Even the *zest* of the first dhyana is mind-made, temporary and ultimately unsatisfactory, and cannot really be identified with (we cannot own it). For Buddhist practitioners, such intense joy is not the goal of religion, or even of meditation, but only a side-effect of deep faith or profound spiritual practice, even if a pleasant one. A Buddhist practitioner strives even beyond such joys for the higher joy of spiritual liberation!

4 The noble silence

The Saṃyutta Commentary on the Kolita Sutta (S 21.1) says that the second dhyana is called “noble silence” (*ariya tuñhī, bhāva*)⁶ because, it is where thinking and pondering (*vitakka, vicāra*) stops, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (SA 2:233). In other words, the language centre in the brain shuts down when we are in a very mentally concentrated state.

In **the Kāma, bhū Sutta 2** (S 41.6), thinking and pondering are called “verbal formation” (*vacī, sañ-khāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech.⁷ However, the Commentary adds that when the Buddha says, “Either speak on the Dharma or keep noble silence” (eg M 26),⁸ even attention to a meditation object can be considered noble silence (SA 2:233). The Commentary to the Ariyapariyesana Sutta (M 26) similarly says that those who cannot attain dhyana are advised to maintain “noble silence” by attending to their basic meditation subject.⁹

³ See Ajahn Brahm, *Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond*, 2006: 156-161.

⁴ See **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.1) = SD 24.11 Intro (4).

⁵ On the stages of zest, see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.12(9.3).

⁶ AA 4:71; qu at ThaA 3:162.

⁷ S 41.6/4:294.

⁸ See **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 26.4/1:161,32-33) = SD 1.11.

⁹ MA 2:169; qu at MA 2:528, ItA 2:68 & ThaA 2:274; also SA 2:233; cf UA 106.

The Discourse on the Question of the Second Dhyana

(S 40.2/4:263 f)

Theory

3 “‘The second dhyana, the second dhyana,’ it is said. What now is the second dhyana?

4 Then, avuso, this occurred to me:

‘Here, bhikkhu, [264] with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he attains and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness *born of concentration*.¹⁰

This is called the second dhyana.

Practice

5 Then, avuso, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, I attained and dwelled in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.

While I dwelled therein, avuso, perception and attention accompanied by initial application [thinking]¹¹ assailed me.¹²

Realization

6 Then, avuso, the Blessed One approached me by means of psychic power and said this to me:

‘Moggallāna, Moggallāna! Do not be heedless, brahmin, regarding the second dhyana:

steady your mind in the second dhyana,

dutiye jhāne cittaṃ saṅṭhapehi,

unify your mind in the second dhyana,

dutiye jhāne cittaṃ ekodim karohi,

concentrate your mind in the second dhyana,

dutiye jhāne cittaṃ samādaha.’

7 Then, avuso, on another occasion, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, I attained and dwelled in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.

Spiritual friendship

8 Now, avuso, if one speaking rightly were to say, ‘He is a disciple who attained to greatness of direct knowledge with the help of the Teacher,’

it is of me that one speaking rightly would say, ‘He is a disciple who attained to greatness of direct knowledge with the help of the Teacher.’”

— evaṃ —

080922; 081004; 090326

¹⁰ *Idha bhikkhu vitakka, vicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodi, bhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicārāṃ samādhijaṃ pīti, sukkaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.* The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṅhī, bhāva*) because within it applied thought and sustained thought (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (S 2:273); cf. S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie either talk Dharma or meditate).

¹¹ *Vitakka, vicāra*, tr elsewhere as “thinking and pondering.” While in the 1st dhyana, *vitakka, vicāra* is part of the concentration process, it becomes a hindrance to the arising of the 2nd dhyana. At this level, thinking is a distraction that prevents the meditator from progressing to the 2nd dhyana. S:B erroneously tr as “accompanied by thought and examination,” reading it as *vitakka, vicāra, sahaḡatā*, when it should be simply *vitakka, sahaḡatā*. See foll n.

¹² *Tassa mayhaṃ, āvuso, iminā vihārena viharato vitakka, sahaḡatā saññā, manasikārā samudācaranti.* Comy: He was distracted by thinking and pondering.