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(Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta

The (Indriya) Discourse on Practising | S 48.18
or, (Bāhira) Paṭipanna Sutta the Discourse on the Practitioner (and the Outsider), SD 47.19

Theme: The 5 faculties and the outsider
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2020

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 The (Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta (S 48.18) is structurally just like any of the (Indriya) Saṅkhitta Suttas (S 48.12-14), SD 56.9, except for §4 (which is absent from the 1st Sutta, S 48.12). In **the (Indriya) Saṅkhitta Sutta 2** (S 48.13), §4 speaks of the differences in faculties bringing about the different fruitions, the different kinds of individuals [SD 56.9b]. In **the (Indriya) Saṅkhitta Sutta 3** (S 48.14), §4 refers to the potency of the faculties, whether in full or in part [SD 56.9c].

1.1.2 The outsider

1.1.2.1 The (Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta (S 48.18), for its part, differs from these 3 (Indriya) Saṅkhitta Suttas in its §4, where the Buddha declares thus:

“But, bhikkhus, that one in whom these 5 faculties are all in all, in every respect, absent is ‘**an outsider**,’ one who stands in the crowd [ranks] of worldlings, I say.”¹ [§4]

He is one who completely lacks any of the 5 faculties—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom—in the cultivation of the path of awakening. He is still caught in “the crowd of worldlings” (*puthujjana, pakkha*), tightly bound by the 3 fetters (*samyojana*). He is *dependent* on the approval of others for his *self-view*; he *doubts* himself; he is fixated to *self-affirming* habits and views.²

1.1.2.2 The Commentary defines “**the outsider**” (*bāhira*) as one who is “outside of” (not one of) the 8 noble individuals (*imehi aṭṭhehi puggalehi bahi, bhūto*, SA 3:237,1).³ These 8 individuals are types of saints in terms of progressive paths and fruitions, thus:

(1) The path of streamwinning,	<i>sotāpatti, magga</i>	
(2) The fruition of streamwinning,	<i>sotāpatti, phala</i>	
(3) The path of once-return,	<i>sākadāgāmi, magga</i>	
(4) The fruition of once-return,	<i>sākadāgāmi, phala</i>	
(5) The path of non-returning,	<i>anāgāmi, magga</i>	
(6) The fruition of non-returning,	<i>anāgāmi, phala</i>	
(7) The path of arhathood [holiness],	<i>arahatta, magga</i>	
(8) The fruition of arhathood [holiness].	<i>arahatta, phala</i>	(M 70,14) + SD 11.1 (1.1.2) ⁴

¹ *Yassa kho bhikkhave imāni pañc’indriyāni sabbena sabbaṃ sabbathā sabbaṃ na’tthi, tam ahaṃ ‘bāhiro puthujjana, pakkhe t̥hito’ti vadāmīti.*

² On the 3 fetters (*samyojana*), see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

³ On the “outsider,” see SD 56.13a (7.1.1).

While these individuals are said to be “**supramundane**” (or supermundane) (*lok’uttara*), the outsider is *mundane*. The 8 individuals are supramundane in that they are on the path *out* of samsara, either heading for awakening (that is, the 1st 7 individuals who are called “learners,” *sekha*) or is fully awakened (as the 8th individual, the “non-learner,” *asekha*, or arhat).

1.2.2.2 The (Indriya) Saṅkhitta Sutta (S 48.18) states that only those who have attained sainthood, at least as streamwinners, are regarded as “practitioners” (*paṭipanna*). Others are still “outsiders” (*bāhira*), as they still have to enter the path. This teaching clearly stresses the urgency of attaining at least streamwinning in this life itself, so that we are not left out of the spiritual life.⁵

2 Interesting Pali terms

2.1 THE “ALL” AND “MANYNESS”

2.1.1 Papañca

2.1.1.1 The message of the **(Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta** (S 48.18) is a remarkably clear one: One who lacks the 5 faculties—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom—is an **outsider** (*bāhira*) [1.1.2], “one who stands in the crowd of worldlings, I say.” (*puṭhujjana, pakkhe ṭhito’ti vadāmīti*). The verb *ṭhito* also means “who remains (in the crowd),” who is stuck with the crowd, who needs and loves the crowd.

2.1.1.2 The crowd out there does not think: it merely moves blindly prodded on by craving—like lemmings into the ocean, like insects into a blazing light. The crowd *inside* us reflects the manyness of our thoughts and views. We are caught in a loop of the mind’s wiles and ways. It’s called **papañca**, literally, “ever more fives.” The five are our physical senses that feed the mind with sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches: our mental proliferation. [2.1.2.2]

2.1.1.3 This is the matter for the mind: the mind collects forms by *naming* them; hence, **name-and-form**. It does this again and again because once is never enough, because there’s really nothing there, but the mind is making it all up, hoping by ritual repetition, it would become real. This is how the mind constructs the virtual reality that is our world of views and vices.

2.1.2 Wordplay on sabba

2.1.2.1 The phrase, “that one in whom these 5 faculties are **all in all, in every respect, absent** is ‘an outsider’” [S4; 1.1.2.1]. The Buddha could have simply said “that one in whom these 5 faculties are ... absent,” and made his point. Why does he add this adverbial phrase, “all in all, in every respect” (*sabbe-na sabbam sabbathā sabbam*)?⁶

This seemingly simple phrase is a wordplay, pointing to a deeper level on how we know things. It respectively means “by all that we *know*, by all that we *can* know.” This understanding is based on the

⁴ See **Aṭṭha Puggala S 2** (A 8.60), SD 15.10a(2).

⁵ S 48.18 (SD 47.19).

⁶ This is a well known stock, eg: **Mahā Nidāna** (D 15,4/2:57,6), SD 5.17; **Potaliya S** (M 54,14.2/1:364,24, 14.3, 27 +29, 25.1, 25.2, 25.3x2) the “4 alls,” SD 43.8 (only paging for 1st quote given); **(Anattā) Udāyī S** (S 35.193,4.2/167,3, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2), SD 26.4; **(Vaccha,gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna S** (S 44.11/5:402,23), SD 53.23; **(Indriya) Paṭipanna S** (S 48.18,4/4:202,23), SD 56.11; **Puris’indriya,ñāṇa S** (A 6.62/3:407,10 (SD 61.5) only *sabbe-na sabbam*).

teaching of the **Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23).⁷ The Sutta mentions “**the all**” as the 6 internal sense-faculties: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; and their respective sense-objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts.

2.1.2.2 The 6 internal sense-faculties (*ajjhatt’āyatana*) are *all* the “sources” of our knowing, the tools that create knowledge for us. **The 6 external sense-objects** (*bahiddh’āyatana*) are *all* the knowing we can *do*, all the “knowledge” we *have*, all the “known” that we *are*. Altogether, this is *all* that we *can* know, that there *is* to know. It is impossible that we will ever go beyond these limits in terms of knowing.

This is our “inner crowd,” the virtual world that we create for ourself, that defines and limits us. We can only free ourself from this inner crowd by **unknowing**, by freeing ourself from the senses and their activities. We begin doing this by seeing and accepting the internal sense-faculties and their external sense-objects as being conditioned; hence, they are impermanent; they can never satisfy our every need or want; they have no essence of their own. They merely arise and pass away.

2.1.3 Out of the crowd

2.1.3.1 When we see and accept this reality of our senses and their sense-objects [2.1.2.2], we begin to leave, to renounce, our “inner crowd” of thoughts, views, drugs, distractions. We then gradually renounce our mental proliferations (*papañca*) [2.1.1.3]. We think less, mind more; what we mind, we see just as they are, as impermanent, unsatisfactory, non-self. We see this vital teaching in **the Sambādh’okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26), SD 15.6.

The highlight of **the Sambādh’okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26) is Mahā Kaccāna’s exultation, thus: “It is marvelous how the attainment of ‘an opening’ (*okāsa*) in the confined [crowded, *sambādha*] has been discovered by the Blessed One” (A 6.26,2). Simply, this means that the Buddha’s teaching and training give us the opportunity to get out of this “crowdedness” (*sambādha*) on psychological and social levels.

2.1.3.2 Of special significance is the Sutta phrase “**the household life is stifling, a dusty path.**”⁸ The lay life, after all, is a life of pleasure and procreation. This is clearly brought out by **the (Pañcāla,caṇḍa) Sambādha Sutta** (A 9.42), where *sambādha* is defined as the 5 cords of sense-pleasures, that is, the pleasures of the 5 physical senses.⁹ Numerous passages in the Suttas proclaim that the household life is said to be “stifling” (*sambādha*), and the way out is renunciation, thus:

‘The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life completely, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

(D 2,40-41/1:62 f, 11,9-10/1:213; M 100,9/2:211; S 16.11,14/2:219; A 10.99,5/5:204)

2.1.3.3 Just as Siddhattha renounced his palaces of plenty, power and pleasure, we, too, should follow his example when we tire of the plenty, power and pleasure in our own life. **The monastic life**, with its Dharma and Vinaya, is the ideal spiritual life that, honestly and properly followed by way of spiritual renunciation, will bring us to the path of awakening in this life itself.

⁷ SD 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1).

⁸ *Sambādho gharavāso rajā, patho*. There is a wordplay on *sambādha*, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male (V 1:216, 2:134) or female (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). *Rajā, patha*, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (*āgamana, patha*), ie rebirth (DA 1:180,17 = MA 2:179,20; UA 237,27).

⁹ See **(Pañcāla,caṇḍa) Sambādha S** (A 9.42/4:449-451) + SD 33.2 (1.2).

Even as **lay followers**, we can live a Dharma-spirited life, keeping to **the 5 precepts**¹⁰ and practising mindfulness by way of the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*). As we watch the breath, we first notice how we breathe *in*, but no matter how long we hold the breath, we still need to “give it back,” renounce it: breathe *out*. Even the breath that gives us life is not ours. We must **renounce** it.

As the breath slows down, we then notice its rise and fall, its impermanence. As the spaces in between each breath lengthens, we notice the growing peace as it becomes less physical, more mental. We are becoming free of our senses. The freed mind begins to look at itself like two mirrors facing one another.

Whenever we feel a deep space of peace, of profound joy, we simply let it be: just be still with the present moment. At the hint of the slightest thought, just *smile* at it. Stay with the peace and joy as long as possible. We will feel when we are ready to end the meditation.

2.2 LOKIYA AND LOK’UTTARA

2.2.1 The Sutta Commentary notes that the 5 faculties, as laid out in **the (Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta** (S 48.18) are exclusively supramundane, that is, they refer to the attainment of the path (SA 3:237,2). They are the faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom developed by streamwinners and the other noble individuals. Understandably, the suttas would give priority to these “insiders,” rather than the “outsiders,” those lacking the faculties and are still *outside* of the path. [2.1.1.1]

2.2.2 Despite this statement that apparently restricts the faculties to those who have at least attained the path, the Pali tradition, beginning with the Abhidhamma, regards the faculties as generally wholesome features of worldlings, too. This is not a novel idea, but simply a statement of the obvious: that the unawakened outsider—by earnestly cultivating any of these faculties—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom—especially faith or wisdom, will in this life itself reach the path, even awakening.¹¹

3 How we awaken

3.1 Pariyāyena and nipariyāyena

3.1.1 The Buddha’s Dharma themes and variations

3.1.1.1 The Buddha is the fully self-awakened master of the Dharma, true reality as truth and teachings—this is his **wisdom** (*paññā*). Endowed with this wisdom of self-awakening, he teaches it to us so that we, too, will awaken just as he has done—and countless arhats—have done.¹² Or, following the Buddha Dhamma, we will reach the path of awakening as other noble individuals, especially streamwinners, have done. This is Buddha’s **compassion** (*karuṇā*). Hence, he is said to be one “endowed with wisdom and conduct” (*vijjā,carāṇa,sampanna*).¹³

3.1.1.2 Although we see clear patterns in the Buddha’s teachings, we will also notice, upon closer scrutiny, that he often teaches the same Dharma in different ways, or he highlights certain Dharma

¹⁰ **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,13), SD 5.10; **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

¹¹ Some of the other early Buddhist schools held narrower views. For a discussion, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:126-138, esp 132 f.

¹² See **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10.

¹³ This is the 3rd of the Buddha’s 9 worthy virtues (*navāraha,guṇa*): SD 15.7 (3.3).

aspects for the benefit of his listener or audience. Indeed, he is like a musical maestro who has written a great classic which he performs with flair. On another occasion, he plays variations¹⁴ on the same classic with panache—like Chopin playing his “Variations on ‘Là ci darem la mano,’ Opus 2.”¹⁵

3.1.2 The 9 progressive abodes

3.1.2.1 In the 10 suttas of **the Sāmañña Vagga** (the chapter on similarity) (A 9 ch 5)¹⁶ of the Navaka Nipāta (the book of nines) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha is recorded as explaining various terms for spiritually evolved individuals, and contrasting their usage “relatively” (*pariyāyena*) and “non-relatively or specifically” (*nippariyāyena*). From such contrasts, we will have a good idea of the meaning of these 2 important terms.¹⁷

SUTTAS OF THE SĀMAÑÑA VAGGA (S 9.41-51/4:449-454)¹⁸

A 9.42	(Navaka) Sambādha Sutta	the way out of the confined: the arhat ¹⁹	SD 33.2
A 9.43	(Navaka) Kāya,sakkhī Sutta	the body-witness	SD 50.30
A 9.44	(Navaka) Paññā,vimutta Sutta	the wisdom-freed	SD 50.31
A 9.45	(Navaka) Ubhato.bhāga,vimutta Sutta	the one freed both ways	SD 50.32
A 9.46	(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1	the directly visible state	SD 50.25a
A 9.47	(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2	the directly visible nirvana	SD 50.25b
A 9.48	(Navaka) Nibbāna Sutta	nirvana	SD 50.26
A 9.49	(Navaka) Parinibbāna Sutta	parinirvana	SD 50.27
A 9.50	(Navaka) Tad-aṅga Nibbāna Sutta	nirvana “to that extent”	SD 50.28
A 9.51	(Navaka) Diṭṭha,dhamma Nibbāna Sutta	nirvana here and now	SD 50.29

3.1.2.2 The (Navaka) Sambādha Sutta (A 9.42) opens with the elder Udayī reporting to the elder Ānanda the famous *sambādh’okāsa verse* uttered by the young deva Pañcāla,caṇḍa, thus:

In the midst of the confined, the opening	the sage of vast wisdom found—
the Buddha who discovered [awakened to] dhyana:	the lone lordly bull of a sage is he.
A 9.42,1.2 (SD 33.2) = S 2.7,3/1:48 (SD 33.1b(2.1))	

This is a “verse of uplift” (*udāna*) declaring the truth and benefit of the Buddha’s awakening. In **the (Deva,putta) Pañcāla,caṇḍa Sutta** (S 2.7), the Buddha declares that his disciples, too, have found the same “opening” (*okāsa*), that is, meditation (*jhāna*), the mind-training that frees us from the “confined” (*sambādha*), that is samsara, thus:

(O Pañcāla,caṇḍa, said the Blessed One,)	
Even in the midst of the confined, they find it,	the Dharma for the attaining of nirvana—
those who have gained mindfulness,	those who are fully well concentrated.
S 2.7,4/1:48 (SD 33.1b(2.1))	

¹⁴ See *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (ed Maitland), vol 1, 1904:112-118, “Arrangement.”

¹⁵ Chopin was only 17 (1827) when he wrote his 1st piano work with orchestra on the instruction of his music teacher, Elsner, in the Main School of Music, Warsaw. This was his variation of the famous duet between Don Giovanni and Zerlina in Act 1 of Mozart’s opera, Don Giovanni (1787).

¹⁶ A 9.42-51/4:449-454. I follow Be Ce *sāmañña,vagga*, which reflects the chapter’s theme. Ee Se have *pañcāla,vagga*, “the Pañcāla chapter,” foll Pañcāla,caṇḍa, the name of the devaputra, the 1st sutta’s protagonist.

¹⁷ For a discussion on *pariyāyena ... nippariyāyena*, see *Pariyāya nippariyāya*, SD 68.2.

¹⁸ See SD 50.25 (3).

¹⁹ Closely parallels **(Gāthā) Pañcāla,caṇḍa S** (S 2.7/1:48), SD 33.1b(2.1).

3.1.2.3 In the (Navaka) Sambādha Sutta (A 9.42), Ānanda goes on to explain the Buddha’s teaching on 2 levels: their “relative” (*pariyāyena*) and their “specific” (*nippariyāyena*) senses. Essentially, the “relative” teaching shows how we attain a spiritual state, usually in stages, while the “specific” state is the *ultimate* goal of the whole practice.

Ānanda explains to the monk Udayī how *the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches*—the activity of the 5 physical senses—are mental restrictions that keep us “**confined**” (*sambādha*), crowding up our life. When we rise above all this confinement, we free the mind so that it attains the 1st **dhyana** (*jhāna*). This is how, Ānanda explains, the Buddha speaks of an “**opening in the confined**” (*sambādh’okāsa*) in a relative manner (*pariyāyena*).

3.1.2.4 Relatively speaking, this “opening in the confined,” that is, **the 1st dhyana** is still “confined, crowded,” that is, initial application and sustained application (*vitakka, vicāra*) are still active therein. When this duo is stilled, there is the *opening* to the 2nd dhyana that is free of even the subtlest mental verbalizing.

The 2nd dhyana, for its part, *relatively speaking*, is still “confined” by zest (*pīti*), exuberant joy. When zest is stilled, we move on into **the 3rd dhyana**, which is profoundly joyful and free in a pervasively calm way. But this, in turn, *pariyāyena*, is a “confinement” that prevents us from rising into the 4th dhyana. When we find the opening in the “confinement” that is *joy*, we attain the total equanimity of the 4th dhyana.

3.1.2.5 The 4th dhyana is still “confined,” on account of being rooted in the “form world” (*rūpa, loka*). When the 4th dhyana is free of all form, it finds an “opening” into **the 1st formless dhyana**, that of the base of infinite space (*ākāsānāñc’āyatana*). This 1st formless dhyana is “confined” by space. When *space* is transcended, we attain **the 2nd formless dhyana**, that of the base of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇāñc’āyatana*). It is itself “confined” by consciousness.

When it is transcended, **the 3rd formless dhyana**, that of the base of nothingness (*ākīñcaññ’āyatana*), is attained. The “confined” here is nothingness itself, which is the meditation object. When nothingness is transcended, **the 4th formless dhyana**, that of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n’eva, -saññā, nāsaññ’āyatana*) is attained. When this subtle sphere itself is transcended, we attain and dwell in **the cessation of perception and feeling**, a state of suspended animation. Since there is no more going beyond this “directly visible nirvana” (*diṭṭha, dhamma nibbāna*), **the final opening in the confined**, this is stating it non-relatively (*nippariyāyena*): it is the ultimate goal of the path of awakening.

The 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas and cessation are collectively known as **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anupubba, vihāra*).²⁰ It is actually a progress chart for the spiritual development of a Dharma practitioner heading for the path of awakening (to become a streamwinner), or on the path itself, heading towards arhathood.

3.1.3 The 7 individuals²¹

3.1.3.1 Besides the 9 progressive abodes [3.1.2], which show how we progress through deep meditation, there is the well known set of **the 8 noble individuals** (*ariya, puggala*) [1.1.2.2], listed according to progressive *paths and fruitions*. Another such list is that of **the 7 individuals** (*satta puggala*), who are listed as follows:

²⁰ On the 9 *anupubba, vihāra*, see SD 50.25 (1.3.2.2). See also **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,34.2-42), SD 1.11; **Jhānā-bhīññā S** (S 16.9), SD 50.7 (1.2.1.2); **(Navaka) Jhāna S** (A 9.36), SD 33.8; SD 1.8 (2.2.3) (3)n; also SD 33.8 (2).

²¹ On the 7 kinds of individuals, see also SD 16.7 (1.1.2).

(1) the one freed both ways (an arhat),	<i>ubhato,bhāga,vimutta</i>
(2) the freed by wisdom (an arhat),	<i>paññā,vimutta</i>
(3) the body-witness (who realizes “with the body”),	<i>kāya,sakkhī</i>
(4) the vision-attainer (who has gained true vision of reality),	<i>diṭṭhi,patta</i>
(5) the faith-freed (who is freed by faith),	<i>saddhā,vimutta</i>
(6) the truth-follower (who sees reality by examining it with wisdom),	<i>dhammānusārī</i>
(7) the faith-follower (who accepts the truth with faith).	<i>saddhā’nusārī</i>

These 7 individuals are discussed in some detail in **the Kīṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70).²²

3.1.3.2 Let us now briefly examine how the nature of the first 5 individuals relate to the definitions of the last two: the truth-follower and the faith-follower. The first 2 individuals—the “**one freed both ways**” and the “**wisdom-freed**”—are both said to awaken by fully destroying the mental influxes²³ (*paññāya assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*). For either of them, since they are awakened, there is *nothing* left to be done by heedfulness (*appamādena karaṇīyam*). They are **arhats**.

The “**body-witness**,” the “**vision-attainer**” and the “**faith-freed**” see true reality by means of wisdom so that *some* of the influxes are fully destroyed (*paññāya assa disvā ekacce āsava parikkhīṇā honti*), so that for them there is still *something* to be done by heedfulness.

Both the “**truth-follower**” (*dhammānusārī*) and the “**faith-follower**” (*saddhā’nusārī*)—despite their names—also see true reality by means of wisdom that their influxes are *not* fully destroyed (*paññāya assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti*) Thus, as with the previous three, for these two there is *still something to be done by heedfulness*: they still need to practise to progress spiritually.

3.1.3.3 Further, the truth-follower, being still unawakened, is described as among those for whom the truths proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted after just some pondering over them with wisdom (*tathagata-p,paveditā assa dhamma paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*).²⁴ This agrees almost exactly with the Saṃyutta definition, as found in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1).²⁵

The Kīṭā,giri Sutta (M 70), however, adds that the truth-follower also possesses *all the 5 faculties* of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*apī c’assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidaṃ saddh’indriyaṃ viriy’indriyaṃ sat’indriyaṃ samādh’indriyaṃ paññ’indriyaṃ*).²⁶ The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta only says that the truth-follower has **wisdom**: it should be understood here that this is the dominant faculty in him. Although the other 4 faculties are not specifically mentioned, they are indeed present in him, too, as in any Dharma practitioner.

3.1.3.4 The faith-follower (*saddhā’nusārī*), however, “has faith thus” (*evaṃ saddahati*),²⁷ and “some love” (*pema,mattaṃ hoti*), too, for the Tathāgata.²⁸ **Faith** is his dominant faculty, but he also has *all* the other 4 faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. The question now is: What is it that is left for him to do by heedfulness?

²² See **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70) + SD 11.1 (5.2).

²³ The mental influxes (*āsava*) are those of (1) sensual desire (*kām’āsava*); (2) existence (*bhav’āsava*); (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*) and (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*). They are also called the “floods” (*ogha*) or the “bonds” (*yoga*). See D 16,10.4 n (SD 9); SD 70.18 (1.4.1 n).

²⁴ M 70,20/1:479 (SD 11.1).

²⁵ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1,5/3:225), SD 16.7, or any of the Suttas in Okkanta Saṃyutta (S 25).

²⁶ M 70,20/1:479 (SD 11.1)

²⁷ **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1,4.1), SD 16.7.

²⁸ **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70,21.1), SD 11.1.

When the venerable one makes use of a suitable dwelling, and associates with spiritual friends, and harmonizes his spiritual faculties, he would, by realizing for himself, through direct knowledge here and now attain and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into the homeless life. [§20.4]
Seeing this fruit of diligence for such a monk, I say that he still has to do his task with diligence.²⁹
(M 70,21.4+5/1:479), SD 11.1.

In fact, basically the same is said—that they each “still has to do his task with diligence”—in the cases of all the last 5 individuals, except for the first 2 (who are arhats). In other words, the spiritual task only ends with the attainment of arhathood.³⁰

3.2 THE PATH TO AWAKENING: MOMENTS, GRADUALNESS

3.2.1 Are the paths and fruitions only moments?

3.2.1.1 According to the Abhidhamma and the Commentaries, the supramundane path is said to last only a thought-moment (*lok’uttara,magga-k,khaṇe*, MA 1:109). **The Abhidhamm’attha,saṅgaha**,³¹ for example, lists “the path-consciousness” of streamwinning, of once-returning, of non-returning, and of arhathood,³² and “the fruition consciousness” of these states³³ as if they are each a single-mind-moment. Its commentary then explains that each of these path-consciousness and fruition-consciousness “arises only once, and endures for only one mind-moment,” and never repeats in the mind-continuum of the person who attains it.³⁴

From the start, it helps to understand that **the language of Abhidhamma** is technical, that is, *non-relative* (*nippariyāyena*). While the kind of language we normally speak in daily life is said to be colloquial or “conventional” (*sammuti*), Abhidhamma language is said to be “ultimate” (*param’attha*), referring directly to true reality.

It is as if we are describing the very moment down to the nanosecond when an Olympic athlete breaks a record. This happens only once: we speak of that athlete as having won that championship. It is a *non-relative* way of speaking. [3.2.2.3]

3.2.1.2 Now, we have a number of suttas that clearly describe all **the 7 individuals** [3.1.3.1] as going about and doing tasks that would engage the faith-follower and the truth-follower in what would take more than a momentary existence. Take, for example, this well known passage that is Uggā’s feedback to the Buddha of his own experience in offering alms to the sangha, as recorded in **the (Hatthi,gāmaka) Uggā Sutta** (A 8.22), thus:

“It is not strange at all, bhante, that when the sangha has been invited by me, deities would approach me, saying, ‘Houselord,³⁵

²⁹ On the faith-follower, see SD 3.6 (4.3.2).

³⁰ See Gethin 2001:129 f.

³¹ Prob an early 11th century work of Anuruddhas, a Sinhala monk of Polonnaruva.

³² Respectively, *sotāpatti magga.cittāṃ, sakadāgāmi,magga.cittāṃ, anāgāmi,magga.cittāṃ, arahatta,magga.-cittāṃ*. (Abhs 1.8), Abhs:BRS 65.

³³ Respectively, *sotāpatti phala.cittāṃ, sakadāgāmi, phala.cittāṃ, anāgāmi, phala.cittāṃ, arahatta, phala.cittāṃ*. (Abhs 1.8), Abhs:BRS 65.

³⁴ Abhs:BRS 66-68.

³⁵ On these 7 kinds of saints, see SD 45.15 (3.1.2).

such and such a monk is liberated both ways;	<i>ubhato, bhāga, vimutta</i>
such and such a monk is wisdom-liberated;	<i>paññā, vimutta</i>
such and such a monk is a body-witness;	<i>kāya, sakkhī</i>
such and such a monk is vision-attained;	<i>diṭṭhi-p, patta</i>
such and such a monk is one faith-liberated;	<i>saddhā, vimutta</i>
such and such a monk is a truth-follower;	<i>dhammānusārī</i>
such and such a monk is a faith-follower;	<i>saddhā'nusārī</i>
such and such a monk is morally virtuous and good in character;	<i>sīlavā kalyāṇa, dhamma</i>
such and such a monk is immoral and bad in character.	<i>dussīla pāpa, dhamma</i>

Yet, when I'm serving **the sangha**,

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

'Let me give this one little; let me give this one much.'

Rather, bhante, I give with just the same heart.³⁶ (A 8.22,10/4:215) + SD 45.15 (3.2.2)³⁷

This passage highlights a situation when any of these individuals, even as they mindfully partake of their meals, certainly would take *a considerable time*. They surely cannot exist for “just a moment” to do so. Clearly, the Abhidhamma statement that *the path-moment* and *the fruition-moment* does not refer to the physical existence of these individuals but only to their existential being, their *soteriological transformation*, awakening from their old state into that of the path or its fruition [3.2.1.1].

3.2.1.3 Now, both the faith-follower and the truth-follower **see, by means of wisdom, that their influxes are not destroyed** (*paññāya assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti*), as with the previous 3 individuals (that is, except for the first 2) [3.1.3.1]: for these 5, there is *still something to be done by heedfulness*: they still need to progress on the path. Hence, it is said of the faith-follower or the truth-follower that he “makes use of a suitable dwelling, and associates with spiritual friends, and harmonizes his spiritual faculties” [3.1.3.4].

Clearly such a person cannot be said to be existing *only momentarily*. Moreover, since the phrase is equally applied to all the last 5 individuals—the body-witness, the vision-attainer, the faith-freed, the truth-follower and the faith-follower [3.1.3.1]—all “for whom there is something left to be done”—that is, they have yet to destroy *all* the influxes—it means that both the faith-follower and the truth-follower, are not unique in having to be diligent in destroying the influxes.

In fact, certain sutta passages tell us that the faith-follower and the truth-follower are persons *close to or approaching streamwinning*. **The (Tad-ad') Uposatha Sutta** (A 3.70), for example, highlights the fact that faith (*saddhā*) is associated with streamwinning: a streamwinner has wise faith in the 3 jewels.³⁸ This gives added weight to the association of the faith-follower with *streamwinning*.

³⁶ *Anacchariyaṃ kho pana me bhante saṅghe nimantite devatā upasamkamitvā drocenti asuko gahapati bhikkhu ubhato, bhāga, vimutto asuko paññā, vimutto asuko diṭṭhi, patta asuko saddhā, vimutto asuko dhammānusārī asuko saddhā'inusārī asuko sīlavā kalyāṇa, dhammo asuko dussīlo papa, dhammo'ti, saṅghaṃ kho paṇḍhaṃ bhante parivisanto nābhijānāmi evaṃ cittaṃ uppādentō imassa vā thokaṃ demi imassa vā bahukaṃ'ti, atha kvāhaṃ bhante sama, citto va demi* (A 8.22,10/4:215), SD 45.15; cf **Bhaddāli S** (M 65/1:439 f), SD 56.2; **Parisā S 7** (A 2.47/1:73 f). See also **Kheminda Thera**, *Path, Fruit and Nibbāna*, Colombo, 1965:37-39, 1992:28 f (digital).

³⁷ In one case, the Commentary to **the Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 7/139 f) seems to acknowledge a discrepancy; in the Sutta by stating: “With regard to the words beginning ‘one freed both ways,’ *dhammānusārī* and *saddhā'nusārī* are 2 types of persons in possession of the path who exist for one thought-moment. But then it is not possible for all 7 noble individuals to be so commanded by the Blessed One, for when the Blessed One has commanded it is not possible for them to act accordingly. However, assuming the impossibility of the conditions this is said in order to indicate that noble individuals are easy to talk to and that the elder Bhaddāli is difficult to talk to.” (MA 3:151 f).

³⁸ A 3.70,4-7, (SD 4.18). See also **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,10-14), SD 3.3(4.2).

It is difficult to satisfactorily apply the narrow technicality of the Abhidhamma language of “**momentariness**” to the suttas here. Gethin observes: “In this instance the clothes of the Abhidhamma seem to hang a little awkwardly upon the Nikayas—though precisely where they do not fit is not so easy to determine.” It is likeliest to be the Abhidhamma conception of a momentary path followed by fruition.

Hence, Gethin concludes, while we must assume some kind of gap to exist between the Nikāyas’ and early Abhidhamma’s respective usages of the terms “truth-follower” (*dhammānusārī*) and “faith-follower” (*saddhā’nusārī*) along with their conceptions of path and fruit, we have no reason to presume that the gap is such that a vast and elaborate construction is needed to bridge it. On the contrary the shift in meaning appears to be of quite a subtle nature.³⁹

3.2.2 Why path and fruition?

3.2.2.1 Let us now ask a fundamental question: **Why are there the path and the fruition?** The whole Buddhist teaching and practice are embodied in **the 4 noble truths**: suffering, its arising, its ending, and the path to its ending. While the meaning of life is defined by the first 2 truths, the purpose of life is the last 2 truths. This is the overarching meaning and purpose—both words in Pali are the same: *attha*—of the Dharma-spirited life.

The idea of “**path**” (*magga*) and “**fruition**” (*phala*) is based on the 3rd and the 4th noble truths respectively, that is, the purpose of the Dhamma life: to traverse the noble path and attain awakening and nirvana.⁴⁰ Since the Buddha’s teaching is a *path*, we who follow it must traverse that path; we must take that inner journey to find the true self, as it were, and so free ourselves. This final freedom is the fruition of our spiritual life, awakening as an arhat, just like the Buddha himself.

3.2.2.2 The next fundamental question is this: **What is the purpose of the moment by moment analysis** of the process that leads to the arising of the supramundane path, as envisioned in the Abhidhamma systems of the various early schools? Most of the early Abhidhamma—like the sutta teachings that it tries to systematize—is analytical by nature.⁴¹

An interesting feature of the Abhidhamma texts is its progressively finer analysis of mental states and processes. Naturally, such an analysis envisions mental events as occurring in a highly refined sense of **time**. In absolute terms, all mental events are thus seen as radically momentary. Abhidhamma analyses, then, conceive of an absolute and instantaneous nature of event transition (or, in simple terms, change).

3.2.2.3 In such Abhidhamma terms, then, it may be asked, for example, either one is a streamwinner or not; if so, at what precise moment does one become a streamwinner? When exactly does a person change from one who can die without realizing the path to one who is assured of the fruit of streamwinning?

What the suttas take pains to describe in repetitive, often tedious, detail—like the arduous training of an Olympian athlete—see its scholastic expression in the Abhidhamma vision of **momentariness** of the path and its fruition [3.2.1.1]. While the sutta teaching is the conventional progress of a pilgrimage, the Abhidhamma teaching of momentariness sees itself as the final arrival at the sacred shrine, the goal of the pilgrimage.

³⁹ See also Gethin 2001:130-132. See also P Harvey, “The nature of the eight-factored *ariya, lokuttara magga* in the suttas compared to the Pali commentarial idea of it as momentary,” *Religions of South Asia* 8,1 2014:31-52.

⁴⁰ See **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,7 f) + SD 1.1 (4.0.1).

⁴¹ All the 7 books of the Pali Abhidhamma—except for the voluminous Paṭṭhāna—is *analytical* by nature. The Paṭṭhāna is basically *synthetical* in approach. See PDB: Paṭṭhāna.

3.2.3 Awakening: sudden or gradual?

3.2.3.1 The suttas often speak of spiritual progress on the path in relative (*pariyāyena*) terms, but the Abhidhamma vision of the path and its fruition is *the final stage* of the process; hence, it is in non-relative (*nippariyāyena*) language [3.1]. When the nature of the twin principles of Dharma teaching is missed, then, we may see the sutta teaching and its Abhidhamma vision as contradictory.

Indeed, it is probably just this oversight—a lack of misunderstanding of the application of the *pariyāyena nippariyāyena* principles—that later stirred up the debate among Chinese Buddhists concerning **gradual and sudden awakening**.⁴² The debate, in short, was fomented by the failure to appreciate the flexibility and versatility of the early Buddhist nature of language.⁴³

3.2.3.2 The advocates of **sudden awakening** might be characterized as taking an absolute standpoint: it must be, they argue, that one is either awakened or not, either one sees it or one does not. The awakening experience is, as it were, of the nature of a sudden, instantaneous breakthrough. There is no progression in between path and fruition—which effectively means that there is neither path nor fruition!

According to the standpoint of **gradual awakening**, this may all seem very well, but in practice, such an absolute distinction is not always appropriate; that is, it is often more useful, even realistic, to look at it in a non-absolute way. The real issue here is *not* that of the path and the fruition, or the process of awakening. Rather, it is **a problem of language**, of expressing in a manner that we can appreciate it.⁴⁴

It is the state that should be defined or described, not merely the proposal of a statement, even an absolute one. It is ironic when those who, in the first place, reject the very idea of path and fruition, claim that *these* are instantaneous. Clearly, they are not referring to the early Buddhist teachings, but their own dogma of enlightenment! The point must be made: the statement is not the state.⁴⁵

3.2.3.3 Interestingly, the Abhidhamma, too, is making a **statement** of the state of awakening experience of the Buddha and the arhats. We must assume that these Abhidhamma scholastics have themselves attained awakening, or are at least well informed and sympathetic of it: that they accept the teachings of early Buddhism (unlike the later scholastics who reject early Buddhism, or its teaching on the path and awakening).

The point then is not that the idea of **gradual awakening** cannot be expressed in terms of Abhidhamma. On the contrary, it is, in some ways, enhanced by Abhidhamma. However, “in so far as the Abhidhamma is carried to its conclusion the method of giving a final and full expression of Buddhist teaching in absolute and universally applicable terms, it tends to focus the mind first of all on the absolute and instantaneous nature of the transition from, say, the ‘ordinary’ (*lokiya*) to the ‘transcendent’ (*lok’uttara*).”⁴⁶

Yet, at the same time, the Abhidhamma also highlights a similarity or relationship that exists between the ordinary *lokiya* wholesome mind and the *lok’uttara* transcendent mind. The mental factors (*cetasika*) that are present in the two kinds of mind may be nearly identical—this is clear in **the Dhamma, saṅgāṇī**.⁴⁷ Once again, we see that the Abhidhamma is only highlighting the goal—the athlete touching the winning

⁴² On gradual or sudden awakening in Chinese Buddhism, see SD 40b (2.2.3 f; 4.1.2; 5.5.2.2); For a brief account of this debate, see Kenneth K S Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton, 1964:119 f.

⁴³ On the problem of language in Buddhism, see SD 17.4 (2-6).

⁴⁴ On the problem of “sudden awakening,” see SD 50.13 (2.2.4.2 f).

⁴⁵ See SD 10.16 (1.3.2.3); SD 49.5b (4.6.4.2). Cf “the word is *not* the thing”: SD 26.3 (5.1.2.5); SD 44.1 (5.4).

⁴⁶ Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:132 f.

⁴⁷ Dhs §§3, 18, 152.

tape—which seems “sudden,” but it is only a matter of language [3.2.3.2] describing what really is a natural process of awakening repeatedly taught in the suttas.⁴⁸

3.2.3.4 The suttas, as a rule, carefully describe the awakening process, such as that of the elder Sāriputta in **the Anupada Sutta** (M 111).⁴⁹ This is not *a sweeping statement*, much less a parochial dogma of a school or sect that is focused on some other religious or theological notion. The sutta descriptions of the awakening process are, in the first place, the Buddha’s own prescriptions as well as descriptions of actual occasions of awakening, or the path (at least) that we can actually aspire to and attain in this life itself.

When we embark on such a path, we characteristically progress from where we are through our practice towards awakening. We often see in the suttas such a gradual stage by stage progress towards the path of awakening and on the path itself. Yet, there are occasions when we do see accounts of those who, upon listening to the Buddha’s teaching, gaining arhathood. Such is the case of **Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya**.⁵⁰

Hence, even in the suttas, we see a certain tension between more figurative and particular accounts of the gradual progress of awakening on the one hand, and a more direct and absolute immediate experience of awakening on the other. In either case, of course, these are actual states of awakening, not merely theoretical statements of doctrine or dogma.

3.2.4 The 5 spiritual faculties: Supramundane or ordinary?

3.2.4.1 Our final fundamental question is this: What is the principle behind the question of whether or not **the 5 spiritual faculties** should be regarded as exclusively supramundane (*lok’uttara*) as distinct from being ordinary *faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration* and *wisdom*? At the heart of all these questions is a concern with the nature of the relationship of the ordinary *lokiya* mind to the transcendent *lok’uttara* mind: How does the transition from the *lokiya* to the *lok’uttara* occur? We are not concerned here with abstruse points of scholastic theory, but with matters of a quite definite practical and experiential import to the meditator who understands himself as poised to make that breakthrough.

3.2.4.2 The Vibhaṅga, in its Abhidhamma analysis (*abhidhamma, bhājanīya*) for the faculties (*indriya, vibhaṅga*)⁵¹ simply lists **the 22 faculties** (*bā, viśat’indriyāni*) in 22 registers defining each of them. The registers given for the 5 spiritual faculties agree exactly with those given for the corresponding terms in the word-analysis for the 1st kind of consciousness (*citta*) treated in the Dhamma, saṅgāṇī.

Thus, we have the following correspondences:

	faculty (<i>indriya</i>)		power (<i>bala</i>)		limb (<i>aṅga</i>)
faith	<i>saddh’indriya</i>	is related to	<i>saddhā, bala;</i>		
energy	<i>viriy’indriya</i>	is related to	<i>viriya, bala</i> and		<i>sammā, vāyāma</i>
mindfulness	<i>sat’indriya</i>	is related to	<i>sati, bala</i> and		<i>sammā, sati</i>
concentration	<i>samādh’indriya</i>	is related to	<i>samādhi, bala</i> and		<i>sammā, samādhi</i>
wisdom	<i>paññ’indriya</i>	is related to	<i>paññā, bala, dhamma, vicaya</i> and		<i>sammā, diṭṭhi</i>

⁴⁸ For a discussion on gradual or sudden awakening, see Gethin, op cit, 2001:126-138, esp 132 f.

⁴⁹ M 111/3:25-28 (SD 56.4).

⁵⁰ (Arahatta) Bāhiya S (U 1.10), SD 33.7.

⁵¹ Vibh 5.1-22/122-124, comy at VbhA 578-592/1:125-128; also Vism 16.1-12/491-93. On the 22 faculties), see SD 10.4 (4); SD 101.7 (1.2.3).

The Vibhaṅga’s “interrogation” section (*pañhā,pucchaka*) here shows that the 5 spiritual faculties are not understood in their exclusively supramundane (*lok’uttara*) sense or even in their wholesome aspect. As in the Dhamma,saṅgāṇī, they are seen as faculties in their general aspect, whether wholesome, unwholesome or undetermined.⁵²

3.2.4.3 Another significant point is that the Vibhaṅga neither lists nor mentions **the 5 powers** (*pañca,bala*), as we would expect of an Abhidhamma work. We may construe this omission, along with our earlier understanding of the 5 faculties [3.2.4.2], to mean that the Vibhaṅga (at least) sees the faculties in themselves as embodying both functions, that is, as the mundane (*lokiya*) qualities of the worldly and the supramundane (*lok’uttara*) qualities of the noble individuals, or as the *faculties* of the worldly and the *powers* of the noble individuals.⁵³

Clearly, whatever our state of mind, negative or positive, we begin our spiritual quest with some **faith** (*saddhā*). This consoling or inspiring feeling in something we see as beneficial gives us spiritual **energy** (*virīya*) to discipline our actions and speech, our moral virtue, as the basis for cultivating **mindfulness** (*satī*). As we better understand our mind, we are also better prepared to renounce all distractions from our sense-experiences—this leads to the attaining of **concentration** (*samādhi*), even dhyana. Relying on this inner calm and clarity, we directly see true reality and examine it so that **wisdom** (*paññā*) arises in us.

Such a habitual act or practice will bring us closer to the path even in this life itself. Even if we do not attain the path of streamwinning in this life itself, we will gain it at the moment of dying. In fact, this is the least that we should do as Dharma practitioners while we are still in touch with the Buddha Dharma in human form, which is, in fact, the ideal state for spiritual practice.⁵⁴

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⁵² See Gethin op cit 2001:322.

⁵³ On the 5 powers (*pañca,bala*), see SD 10.5; SD 56.4 (3.1.2.4).

⁵⁴ On the benefits of being a human, see SD 37.8 (6.3.4.3).

(Indriya) Paṭipanna Sutta

The (Indriya) Discourse on Practising

S 48.18/5:202

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

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

These are the 5 faculties.

<p>3 One who has completed and fulfilled these 5 faculties is an arhat. if they are weaker than that, one is</p>	<p><u>practising</u> for the realization of the fruit of arhathood;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p>a non-returner;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p><u>practising</u> for the realization of the fruit of non-returning;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p>a once-returner;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p><u>practising</u> for the realization of the fruit of once-returning;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p>a streamwinner;</p>
<p>if still weaker, one is</p>	<p><u>practising</u> for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning.</p>

4 But, bhikshus, that one in whom these 5 faculties are all in all, in every respect, absent is ‘**an outsider**,’ one who stands in the crowd [ranks] of worldlings, I say.”⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ *Yassa kho bhikkhave imāni pañc’indriyāni sabbena sabbam sabbathā sabbam n’atthi, tam aham ‘bāhiro puthujjana,-pakkhe thito’ti vadāmīti: [2].*