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The Layman and Dhyana

Streamwinning can be won without attaining dhyana

Theme: How to awaken without dhyana

An essay and translations by Piya Tan ©2004, 2010

1 Introduction

In this short study, I have summarized the main points of **Bodhi's** "The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple" (2001)¹ and also given my own responses to them. I have included my own translations of the related suttas and commented where relevant. The central idea of Bodhi's paper is to discuss "the question whether or not *jhāna* is necessary to attain the 'paths and fruits'" (2001:37). In answering the question, Bodhi shows that the spiritual lives and attainments of the lay saints are on par with those of the monastic saints.²

In pursuing this question I intend to pick up an important but generally neglected clue the *suttas* lay at our doorstep. This is the fact that many of the Buddha's followers who attained the first three stages of awakening, from stream-entry through non-returning, were lay people.

(Bodhi 2001:38; cf Schopen 1999:236 f)

Bodhi frames his study around these three specific questions, whose answers I will summarize here as well as provide new angles and references where applicable:³

- (1) Do the texts indicate that a worldling must attain *jhāna* before entering upon the "fixed course of rightness" (*sammatta, niyāma*), the irreversible path to stream-entry [streamwinning]?
- (2) Do the texts typically ascribe the *jhānas* to lay disciples who have attained stream-entry?
- (3) If the texts do not normally attribute the *jhānas* to the stream-enterer, is there any stage in the maturation of the path where their attainment becomes essential? (Bodhi 2001:40)

STREAMWINNING AND DHYANA

2 Is dhyana necessary for streamwinning?

2.1 THE LIMBS FOR STREAMWINNING. When we search the Nikāyas for references regarding the necessity of dhyana for the attainment of sainthood, we would find no direct statement saying whether we need or do not need dhyana for streamwinning. There is certainly no teaching that says that we need dhyana to attain streamwinning. The suttas, however, mention two sets of preconditions in connection with streamwinning. The first is called "the factors for streamwinning" (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*) and the second the four limbs of streamwinning" (*sotāpannassa aṅgāni*).

The first, "the factors for streamwinning," lays down *the preconditions for the attaining of streamwinning*, and its definition is found in **the (Sotāpatti) Phala Sutta** (S 55.55),⁴ as follows:

¹ Bodhi, "The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple," in *Buddhist Studies in honour of Professor Lily de Silva*. Ed PD Premasiri. Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 2001:36-64.

² See also my essay **Layman saints**, SD 8.6.

³ For further answers to these questions, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

Monks, these 4 things when cultivated, often developed, lead to the realization of the fruit of streamwinning. What are the four? **[411]**

Association with true individuals.⁵

Hearing the True Teaching.

Wise attention.

Practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma.

These 4 things when cultivated, often developed, lead to the realization of the fruit of streamwinning. (S 55.55/5:410 f; A 5.246/2:245)

The last item here, that is, the “practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma” (*dhammānu-dhamma,paṭipatti*) is explained in the Suttas and Commentaries as being concerned with “insight meditation” (eg DA 2:556).

Two suttas—the **Dhamma,kathika Sutta** (S 12.16) and the **Naḷa,kalāpiya Sutta** (S 12.67)—define this practice as aimed at the ending of the factors of dependent arising.⁶ **The Kathika Sutta 1** (S 22.115 f) expounds the practice in terms of ending of the five aggregates; and **the Kathika Sutta** (S 35.155) teaches the ending of the six sense-bases.⁷

The Saṃyutta Commentary defines *dhammānudhamma,paṭipanno* (“one who practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma”) as “one practising the way that is the reality in accordance with the supramundane truth that is nirvana”⁸ (SA 2:34). Understandably, dhyana practice would have to be included in the “practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma” but there is no hint of this at all.

Lastly, in **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), the Buddha, after defining the first two kinds of good conduct (in detail)—the good conduct regarding the body and regarding speech—closes with instructions on the qualities of a streamwinner.⁹ The omission of the section on the good conduct of mind is very significant, as the Buddha is clearly alluding to the fact that we do *not* need to attain a high level of mental development (such as dhyana) to become streamwinners.¹⁰

2.2 THE LIMBS OF STREAMWINNING. **The Pañca,bhera,bhaya Sutta** (S 12.41)¹¹ expounds the second set of teachings concerning streamwinning, that is, the 4 limbs of streamwinning or qualities of a streamwinner:

10 What are **the 4 limbs of streamwinning**¹² that he possesses?

11 (1) Here, houselord, a noble disciple possesses wise faith¹³ in the Buddha thus:

⁴ *Sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni*, alt tr “limbs of streamwinning” (D 33.1.11(13)/3:227; Pm 2:189 f). These are preliminary practices that lead to the attainment of streamwinning. In **Paññā,vuḍḍhi S** (A 5.246) these same 4 qualities are called *vuḍḍhi,dhamma*, “virtues conducive to growth” (A 5.246/2:245); cf the 5 factors of noble growth (*ariya,-vuḍḍhi*), A 5.63+64/3:80.

⁵ “True persons,” *sappurisā*, also “virtuous persons,” “ideal persons.” The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at D 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 113; A 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f & at M 110.14-24/3:23 f.

⁶ Respectively, S 12/16/2:18 & S 12.67/2:115.

⁷ Respectively, S 22.115/3:163 f & S 35.155/4:141.

⁸ *Lokuttarassa nibbāna,dhammāssa anudhamma,bhūtarīṇ paṭipadaṇi paṭipanno*.

⁹ A 10.208/5:299-301 = SD 2.10. The omission of the section on good conduct of mind is significant, as the Buddha is alluding to the fact that we do *not* need to attain a high level of mental development (such as dhyana) to become streamwinners.

¹⁰ See **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a(2.3); also **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1(13).

¹¹ Uddāna title reads *Saṭṭayham* (?). This sutta reappears at S 55.28/5:387-389 & A 10.92/ 5:182-184.

¹² *Sotāpānassa aṅgāni* (D 33.1.11(14)/3:227), ie the qualities of one who has attained streamwinning. Cf (1) *sotāpatti-y-aṅga* above. For a shorter statement on the limbs of a streamwinner, see **Ogadha S** (S 55.2/5:343 f). On the faith of the streamwinner, see Gethin 2001:116.

“Such is he, the Blessed One, an arhat, the fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.”

12 (2) He possesses wise faith in the Dharma thus:

“Well-taught is the True Teaching of the Blessed One, seen here and now [to be realized in this life], timeless, for one to come and see, accessible [leading onward], to be personally known by the wise.”

13 (3) He possesses wise faith in the Sangha thus:

“Of good conduct is the Blessed One’s community of holy disciples;
of upright conduct is the Blessed One’s community of holy disciples;
of right conduct is the Blessed One’s community of holy disciples;
of proper conduct is the Blessed One’s community of holy disciples.

These four pairs of persons, the eight individuals are this Blessed One’s community of holy disciples:

worthy of offerings,
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of gifts,
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,
an incomparable field of merit for the world.”

14 (4) He possesses virtues dear to the noble ones,¹⁴ unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.¹⁵

These, house-lord, are the four limbs of streamwinning that he possesses. (S 12.41/2:68-70)

It is clear from this passage that the first three limbs here are an expression of wise faith (*avecca-p-pasāda*) and the fourth is the consummate practice of the five precepts, in other words, this entails the respective cultivations of **faith** (*saddhā*) and of **moral virtue** (*sīla*), the first two stages of the graduated teaching.¹⁶

The realization of streamwinning itself is depicted as a cognitive experience, that is, “the gaining of the divine eye” (*dhamma, cakkhu paṭilābha*) (S 2:134-138), “the breakthrough to the Dharma” (*dhammā-bhisamaya*) (S 2:134; Pug 41) and “the realization of the Dharma” (*dhamma, paṭivedha*) (DA 3:723). From

¹³“Wise faith,” *avecca-p-pasāda*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlaka, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlaka* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody ... the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary” (Gethin 2001:107; my emphases). The streamwinner’s faith is defined in **Vīmaṅsaka S** (M 47) as “his faith is strong, supported by reasons, rooted in vision” (*ākāra, vatī saddhā dassana, mūlikā daḷhā*, M 47,16/1:320).

¹⁴“Virtues dear to the noble ones,” *ariya, kantāni sīlāni*. The virtues of the noble one are explained at Vism 221 f. SA says that the noble ones do not violate the Five Precepts; hence, these virtues are dear to them (SA 2:74).

¹⁵“Unbroken,...giving rise to concentration,” *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi viññūpasatṭhehi aparāmatṭhehi samādhi, saṁvattanikehi*. See UA 268. For details, see Vism 1.143 ff/51-58.

¹⁶“Graduated teaching,” *ānupubbi, kathā*. See **The laymen saints**, SD 8.6.

what has been stated so far, it is clear that there is no hint at all of a need for attaining dhyana at the preliminary stage of sainthood, that is, streamwinning.

THE LAY DISCIPLE AND AWAKENING

3 Sa,upādisesa Sutta (A 9.12)

3.1 MORAL VIRTUE. The ultimate purpose of following the Buddha’s Teaching is to awaken to reality (*bujjhati*), to gain enlightenment (*bodhi*), to become an arhat. Becoming an arhat means gaining immediate awakening. However, one has to destroy all the ten mental fetters,¹⁷ which is beyond most worldlings. However, if one becomes merely a streamwinner, it can be regarded as good as having won awakening, that is, one is assured of it within seven lives due to one’s spiritual life-style. It is also clear from the Suttas that one need not even be a good meditator to gain streamwinning: one need only to be “accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom”¹⁸ (A 9.12.8/4:380).

The Sa,upādisesa Sutta (A 9.12) lists nine kinds of noble disciples or saints, showing how they win their sainthood by their level of accomplishment in the three trainings (*sikkhā*)—in moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom—and the level at which they have destroyed the five lower fetters.¹⁹ Such a person is said to be one who dies “with some remnants of the aggregates of attachment” (*sa,upādi,sesa*) but is utterly free from hell; utterly free from the animal kingdom; utterly free from the realm of the departed; utterly free from the plane of misery, the evil destination, the lower realm²⁰ (that is, he is reborn not lower than the human world):

[The 5 kinds of non-returners:]

1. Here, Sāriputta, some person is accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in concentration, but moderately accomplished in wisdom.²¹ He destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes **one who attains final nirvana in the intermediate state** (*antarā,parinibbāyī*).
2. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in concentration, but moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes **an attainer of nirvana upon landing (in the Pure Abodes)**²² (*upahacca,parinibbāyī*).
3. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in concentration, but moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes **an attainer of nirvana without effort** (*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*).²³

¹⁷ **The 10 fetters** are: (1) personality view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 10.13/5:17; Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*).

¹⁸ *Silesu paripūra,kārī hoti, samādhismiṃ mattaso,kārī, paññāya mattaso,kārī*. See below here.

¹⁹ An analysis of the stages of the breaking of all the 10 fetters is found in **Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:69 f). Cf A 7.16/4:14, 7.52/4:70-74; D 3:237.

²⁰ *Puggalo sa,upādi,seso kalāṃ kurumāno parimutto nirayā parimutto tiracchāna,yoniyā parimutto pitti,visayā parimutto apāya,duggati,vinipātā*.

²¹ *Silesu paripūrakārī hoti, samādhismiṃ paripūra,kārī, paññāya mattaso,kārī*. PTS ed & tr have *na paripūra,kārī* instead of *mattaso kārī* throughout; here I follow Be.

²² “Pure Abodes,” *suddhāvāsā*, see foll n.

4. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in concentration, but moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes **an attainer of nirvana with effort** (*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*).²⁴

5. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in concentration, but moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes **one bound upstream, heading towards the Akaniṭṭha**²⁵ realm (*uddhamsoto akaniṭṭha,-gāmi*).

[The once-returner:]

6. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, but moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 3 fetters and diminishing greed, hate and delusion, becomes **a once-returner** (*sakadāgāmi*), who returns to this world again only once and makes an end of suffering.

[The 3 kinds of streamwinners]

7. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom.²⁶ He destroys the 3 fetters and becomes **a one-seeder** (*eka,bijī*), and is reborn only once amongst humans, then makes an end of suffering.

8. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished²⁷ in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 3 fetters and becomes **a clan-to-clan-goer** (*kolaṅkola*), running on, wandering on through two or three clans [rebirth in high families], then makes an end of suffering.

9. Furthermore, Sāriputta, here some person is accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom. He destroys the 3 fetters and becomes **a seven-at-most** (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), running on, wandering amongst devas and humans for seven times [lives] at the most, then makes an end of suffering.

(A 9.12.5-10/4:380-382 = SD 3.3(3); A 7.52/4:70-74)

Not only monastics but also lay disciples can become any of these nine kinds of saints, that is, those who keep their precepts well but with different levels of accomplishment in mental development and maturity of higher wisdom. Of these, the three kinds of streamwinners are of special interest here:

7. **The one-seeder streamwinner,...**
8. **The clan-to-clan-goer streamwinner,...**

²³ “The attainer of nirvana without effort” non-returner is the one who attains the four dhyanas (described in stock formula in **Sa,saṅkhāra S**, A 4.169.5/2:156) [11c].

²⁴ “The attainer of nirvana with effort” non-returner practises the more austere meditations, such as the contemplation of the body, the reflection on the repulsiveness of food, the disenchantment with all the world, the perception of impermanence in all formations, and the recollection of death [11c].

²⁵ *Akaniṭṭha*. The *Suddh’āvāsa* or “Pure Abodes” are a group of 5 heavens in the formless realm populated only by non-returners, and where they attain arhathood and nirvana. **The 5 Pure Abodes**, ie their inhabitants and respective lifespans, are: Āviha (“Non-declining”, 1000 MK), Ātappa (“Unworried”, 2000 MK), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”, 4000 MK), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”, 8000 MK) and Akaniṭṭhā (“Highest”, 16000 MK) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). An MK = Mahā Kappa is a full cycle of a world-period or cycle of the universe (V 3:4 = D 3:51, 111 = It 99; D 1:14; A 2:142). For celestial map, see **Kevalāḍḍha S** (SD 1.7); for world cycle, see **Aggañña S** (SD 2.19).

²⁶ *Silesu paripūrakārī hoti, samādhismīni mattaso kārī, paññāya mattaso kārī*. PTS ed & tr have *na paripūra,kārī* instead of *mattaso kārī* throughout; here I follow Be.

²⁷ “Moderately accomplished,” *mattaso,kārī*.

9. **The seven-at-most streamwinner**, accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom.

(A 9.12,8-10/4:380-382; also A 1:233, 5:120; Pug 3, 16, 74)

3.2 MODERATE ACCOMPLISHMENT IN CONCENTRATION. These passages from the Sa,upādisesa Sutta are interesting because of their treatment of the three trainings (*sikkhā*) [3.1]. These types of streamwinners are all “accomplished in moral virtue, but is moderately accomplished in concentration, moderately accomplished in wisdom,”²⁸ that is, their meditative attainment are at best “moderate” (*mattaso kāri*), which the Commentary glosses as “limited, not afully accomplished” (*pamāṇa,kāri na paripūra,kāri*, AA 4:174). This probably means that they are unable to attain full concentration, that is, they are not dhyana-attainers (*jhāyī, jhāna,lābhī*).

It is also possible that the phrase “moderately accomplished in concentration” (*samādhimim mattaso kāri*) refers to the dhyana “with mental influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions [of the aggregates]” (*s’āsavā puñña,bhāgiyā upadhi,vepakkā*) (M 117.7, 13 etc) [4]. In any case, it is clear that one does not need to attain dhyana to become a streamwinner. For this reason, it is said in **the Vimutti,-magga**:

After acknowledging the Path of Freedom, through virtue he transcends the way to the states of regress (*apāya*); through concentration, he transcends the sense plane, through wisdom he transcends all becoming [existence]. If he practises virtue to the full and practises little of concentration and wisdom, he will reach the state of Stream-entrant and stage of Once-returned. If he practises virtue and concentration to the full [but] practises little of wisdom, he will reach the stage of Non-returned. If he practises virtue, concentration and wisdom to the full, he will reach the peerless freedom of the Consummate One. (Vimm:ESK 5; cf A 4:380 f)

As such, it is not really difficult to gain awakening. This generous albeit somewhat enigmatic remark made by the Buddha at the conclusion of the sutta confirms such a facility for awakening:

Not until now, Sāriputta, has this Dharma discourse been declared to the monks, the nuns, the laymen or the laywomen. What is the reason for this? Lest after listening to this Dharma discourse they become heedless! However, Sāriputta, through my being questioned, I have spoken this Dharma discourse. (A 9.12,10/4:381 f)

From a careful analysis of this passage we can deduce two points: (a) that the Buddha encourages his followers to strive for the highest, that is, arhathood, and (b) that it is important for a sufficiently large number of arhats to be teachers and exemplars of the Dharma. The ease with which one could attain to the level of streamwinning might encourage many to be contented to remain at that level without striving for the highest. This is like being contented to finish merely primary school education when one could qualify to finish a university education.²⁹

²⁸ *Sīlesu paripūra,kāri hoti, samādhimim mattaso kāri, paññāya mattaso kāri*. The same is said of monastics in **(Mattaso,kāri) Sikkhā S** (A 3.85/1:231 f). In fact, the teachings of (Mattaso,kāri) Sikkhā S (for monks) is elaborated in **Sa,upādisesa S** (A 9.12) for the benefit of the laity. See Bodhi’s remarks on this, 2001:56 f.

²⁹ On the ease of attaining streamwinning here and now, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7), & **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (14).

4 Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta (M 117)

In his discussion on “The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple,” Bodhi (2001:50 & n23) points out that **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117/3:71-78), a study of the noble eightfold path, is “the most prominent” sutta foreshadowing the distinction between two types of path and dhyana (*jhāna*), that is, the mundane: the one “with mental influxes,³⁰ conducive to merit,³¹ ripening in acquisitions³² (of the aggregates)”³³ (*s’āsavā puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, vepakkā*) (M 117.7, 13 etc) and the supramundane, “without mental influxes, supramundane, a path factor” (*ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā magg’āṅgā*) (M 117.8, 14 etc). In the Sutta, the Buddha opens his instruction with these words:

Monks, the noble right concentration with its support thus, with its equipment, thus—this is called the mental unification that is equipped with these seven factors [right view, right intention,³⁴ right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness].

(M 117,3/3:71) [3.2]

Bodhi concludes that

If the latter [“without mental influxes...”] is understood to be supramundane *Jhāna*, then we might suppose the *Jhānas* usually described in the training of the disciple are “connected with taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the aggregates.” The texts never describe the *Jhānas* in quite these terms, but some *suttas* imply their attainment lead only to a higher rebirth without necessarily conducing to deliverance.

(Bodhi 2001:50 n23)

The Commentaries however clearly adopted this distinction as the basis for their entire method of exegesis. Bodhi concludes

Certainly, there is no justification for reading the interpretative concepts of the Commentaries into the canonical texts themselves. But since the Commentaries feel obliged to explain the definition of right concentration as the four *Jhānas* in a way that does not imply all path-

³⁰ “With the influxes,” *s’āsava = sa + āsava*, The term *āsava* (lit “inflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (i.e. either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), influx, or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, 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) [43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict sv *āsava*.

³¹ “Conducive to merit,” *puñña, bhāgiya*, lit “having a share of merit,” or “partaking of merit,” or “concerned with merit” (Gethin 2001: 216).

³² “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, lit “that on which something is laid or rests, basis, foundation, substratum.” Here, as defined in DP, the term means both “worldly possessions or belongings” as well as “attachment to such possessions (forming a basis for rebirth)”. Comys say there are 4 types of *upadhi* (SA 1:31= SnA 1:44 f): (1) the 5 cords of sense-pleasures (*kāma*) (MA 2:170; ItA 1:64); (2) the 5 aggregates (*pañcak, khandha*) (MA 3:171; ItA 1:89); (3) the defilements (*kilesa*) (MA 3:171; SnA 1:45 f; ItA 1:64; Nm 1:103); (4) volitional activities (*abhisankhāra*) (ItA 1:64; Nm 1:103). Often confounded with the near-synonym *upādi* (trace (of clinging), substrate): see **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 22.22/2:314), SD 13.1 n. See foll n.

³³ “With mental influxes,...in the form of acquisitions [of aggregates],” *s’āsavā puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, vepakkā*. This is mundane right view, partaking of merit, and as such does not go beyond the worldly life-cycle. Comy glosses *upadhi, vepakka* as “giving results by way of the acquisitions” (MA 3:141), which Ṭikā explains as the continuity of the 5 aggregates (MṬ:Be 2:306).

³⁴ “Right intention,” *sammā, saṅkappa*, also tr as “right thought.”

attainers possess the form-sphere *Jhānas*, this makes it plain that they did not regard the form-sphere *Jhānas* as a prerequisite for attaining the path of stream-entry. (Bodhi 2001:51)

It is useful here to note that, as Gethin observes, **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, the first book of the Abhidhamma, clearly states that streamwinning and the rest occurs in a state of mind equivalent in some sense to that of the form-realm dhyana (*rūpāvacara-j,jhāna*). “In other words, it makes explicit a point already noted, that ‘awakening’ is itself conceived of as a kind of *jhāna*.” (Gethin 2003:320). The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī introduces the various types of supramundane consciousness (*lok’uttara citta*) with the following formula:

At that time when one cultivates supramundane dhyana, that leads out (of suffering) and brings about dispersal (of rebirth), for the sake of abandoning wrong view and for achieving the first stage [streamwinning], (and when) secluded from sensual desires...one attains and dwells in the first dhyana ... at that time, there is...³⁵ (Dhs §277/60)

In other words, although one need not enter dhyana to attain streamwinning, this experience in itself is a “supramundane dhyana” (*lok’uttara jhāna*), a higher liberating dhyana quite different from the impermanent worldly dhyana.

SAINTHOOD WITHOUT DHYANA

5 Streamwinners without dhyana

5.1 Although the suttas do not directly state that there is no need for dhyana to attain streamwinning, it is apparent that dhyana is needed for higher attainment. In **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 14), for example, the layman Mahānāma, a once-returner,³⁶ complains to the Buddha that he (Mahānāma) still has defiled mental states, especially lustful thoughts, despite understanding the nature of the three unwholesome roots. The Buddha explains the reason for this is that Mahānāma still enjoys sensual desires (*kāma*)³⁷ and that he would not be able to transcend sensual desires unless he has experienced “zest and joy (*pīti,sukha*) that are apart from sensual pleasures or something more peaceful than that,”³⁸ that is, the mental pleasures of dhyana (*jhāna*).³⁹

5.2 The “zest and joy that are apart from sensual desires” (*aññatr’eva kāmehi...pīti,sukham*) here refers to the *pīti* and *sukha* of the first and second dhyanas. “Something more peaceful than that” (*santatarām*) refers to the higher dhyanas and the paths (MA 2:63). “From this passage it seems that a disciple may

³⁵ *Yasmīṃ samaye lok’uttarāṃ jhānaṃ bhāveti niyyānikaṃ apacaya,gāmiṃ diṭṭhi,gatānaṃ pahānāya paṭhamāya bhummiyā pattiya vivicc’eva kāmehi...pe...paṭhamāṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati...tasmiṃ samaye hoti...*

³⁶ Comy says that Mahānāma had long ago attained the fruit of once-return, which only weakens lust, hate and delusion, but does not eradicate them. He had the mistaken notion that lust, hate and delusion were eradicated by the path of once-return. Thus, when he saw that they were not abandoned and asked the Buddha the cause of their arising. Even noble saints (short of arhats) can be mistaken about which defilements are abandoned by which path (MA 2:61).

³⁷ It should be noted here that *kāma* as used in this sutta has a broad sense, that is, both as the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or “sensual desire” and as the object of desire (*vatthu*) or “(objects of) sensual pleasure” (Nm 1,1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f). See Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:192 f.

³⁸ *Aññatr’eva kāmehi...pīti,sukhaṃ adhicchatī aññāṇ [vā] tato santatarāṃ.*

³⁹ M 14/1:91-95 = SD 4.7. On the importance of zest and joy (*pīti,sukha*) in meditation and *jhāna* in general, see esp Brahmavamso, *The Jhānas*, 2003.

attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna” (M:ÑB 1201 n208). According to Bodhi,

The first part of this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a “noble disciple” (*ariya-sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in a loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression “seeing with perfect wisdom” seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first Jhāna, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks [“zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that”] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first *Jhāna*. The state “more peaceful than that” [*santatarām*] would, of course, be the higher *Jhānas*.”
(Bodhi 2001:52, emphasis added)

This is one of the passages that Bodhi quotes as “instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of *Jhānas*” (2001:51 f).

5.3 Let us turn to another text for similar evidence. **The (Anātha,piṇḍika) Gaha,pati Sutta** (A 5.179) records the Buddha as giving a teaching to Anātha,piṇḍika on “the four pleasant dwellings here and now pertaining to the higher mind” (*cattāro ābhicetasikā diṭṭha, dhamma.sukha, vihārī*) in connection with “the white-clad lay follower” (*gihi odāta, vasana*). In the Nikāyas, when this expression is used in with *monastics*, it invariably refers to the four dhyanas (*jhāna*).⁴⁰ The Buddha, however, uses this same expression in connection to *the laity* (as in the *Gaha,pati Sutta* here) to refer to their possession of the 4 limbs of streamwinning (*sotāpannassa aṅgāni*), namely, wise faith in the Buddha, in the Dharma, in the Sangha, and “the virtues dear to the noble ones.”⁴¹

If it were considered commonplace or even paradigmatic, for a lay noble disciple to attain the four *Jhānas*, one would expect the Buddha to explain the above expression in the same way as he does for the monks. But he does not.... This difference in explanation has important ramifications and is indicative of major differences in expectations regarding lay followers and monks.

(Bodhi 2001:52)

6 (Agāta,phala) Mahānāma Sutta (A 6.10)

6.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

6.1.1 The (Agāta,phala) Mahānāma Sutta (A 6.10)⁴² records another visit by the lay disciple Mahā, nāma the Sakya to the Buddha. This time he asks the Buddha about the training practice (*nissaya, vihāra*) of “a noble disciple who has reached the fruit and understood the teaching” (*ariya, sāvako āgata, phalo viññāta, sāsano*). Clearly the description here refers to a lay follower who has attained to streamwinning or higher.

⁴⁰ A 5.179/ 3:211-214. See also D 3:113 = M 1:33 = 354 = 356 = 357 = 3:11 = 97 = S 2:278 = A 2:23 = 36 = 3:114 = 131 = 195 = 212 = 262 = 4:140 = 5:132 = V 5:135.

⁴¹ “Virtues dear to the noble ones,” *ariya, kantāni sīlāni*. See (2b) above.

⁴² A 6.10/3:284-288 @ SD 15.3.

6.1.2 The Buddha goes on to speak on how the noble disciple should practise the recollections (*anussati*) of the Buddha, of the Dharma, of the Sangha, of moral virtue, or generosity, and of the devas. At the end of each exposition, the refrain runs thus:

This, Mahānāma, is called the noble disciple who dwells righteous amongst an unrighteous generation, who dwells unafflicted amongst an afflicted generation, *who has entered the Dharma stream*,⁴³ and cultivates the recollection of the Buddha, ... [and so on for each of the recollections.]⁴⁴ (A 6.10,2/3:285), SD 15.3

6.1.3 As the lay disciple cultivates each of the recollections, his mind is not seized by lust, hatred or delusion, but becomes upright or straight (*uju,gata*), that is, it focuses directly on the meditation object:

With a straight mind, he gains the inspiration of the goal, the inspiration of the Dharma, gladness (*pāmuja*) connected with the Dharma.

When he is gladdened, zest (*pīti*) arises, his body becomes tranquil, and he experiences happiness.

For one who is happy, the mind becomes concentrated.⁴⁵ (A 6.10,2/3:285), SD 15.3

6.1.4 As this passage shows, reflection on the Buddha and the other meditation objects culminates in mental concentration, yet the nature of this concentration is not stated by way of the dhyana formula. In the Nikāyas, such recollection practices are *never shown to have the efficacy of inducing dhyana*. The Commentaries clearly say that because such meditation objects involve intense use of discursive thought (*vicāra*), they can lead only as far as access concentration (*upacāra,samādhi*).⁴⁶

It thus seems that the type of concentration typically available to a lay noble disciple at the stage of stream-entry or once-returning is access concentration. This, of course, does not mean that stream-enterers and once-returners don't attain the *Jhānas*, but only that the standard doctrinal structure does not ascribe the *Jhānas* to them as essential equipment.

(Bodhi 2001:53 f)

⁴³ On the "stream of the Dharma," see **Miga,sālā S** (A 6.44/3:347-351, 10.75/5:137-144).

⁴⁴ *Ayaṃ vuccati Mahānāma ariya,sāvako visama,gatāya pajāya samappatto viharati, sa,vyāpajjhāya pajāya avyāpajjho viharati, dhamma,sotaṃ samāpanno buddhānussatiṃ bhāveti.*

⁴⁵ *Uju,gata,citto kho pana Mahānāma ariya,sāvako labhati attha,vedaṃ, labhati dhamma,vedaṃ, labhati dhammūpasāṃhitāṃ pāmujaṃ, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pīti,manassa kāyo passambhati, passaddha,kāyo sukhaṃ vediyati, sukhiṃ cittaṃ samādhīyati.*

⁴⁶ Comys speak of 3 kinds of "concentration" (*samādhi*) or "cultivation" (*bhāvanā*) in connection with 3 kinds of "sign" or "image" (*nimitta*). Here, *nimitta* refers to a mental image or mental reflex obtained in meditation. The meditation object perceived at the beginning of meditation is called the "preparatory image" or "counterpart sign" (*parikamma nimitta*). At a preliminary level of concentration, the mind sees an unsteady and unclear image, called the "acquired image" (*uggaha nimitta*). With a higher degree of concentration, the "counter-image" (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) appears. As soon as this arises, in certain meditation, one is said to have attained "access (or neighbourhood) concentration" (*upacāra samādhi*), which is also called "access cultivation" (*upacāra bhāvanā*), so called because it is approaching but not yet attained the first dhyana. The mental focus present during dhyana is called "attainment concentration" (*appanā samādhi*). **The 3 kinds of "sign" (*nimitta*)** are: (1) preliminary sign (*parikamma nimitta*); (2) acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*); and (3) counter-image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) (Abhs 9.5/197; Vism 125). **The 3 kinds of concentration or samadhi** are: (1) momentary Samadhi (*khaṇika samādhi*), (2) access samadhi (*upacāra samādhi*), and (3) attainment samadhi (*appanā samādhi*) (DhsA 117; Vism 144). **The 3 kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*)**—preparatory cultivation (*parikamma bhāvanā*), access cultivation (*upacāra bhāvanā*) and attainment (or absorption) cultivation (*appanā bhāvanā*)—are given at Abhs 9.4/197.

6.2 The (**Agāta,phala**) **Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10) must not be misread as saying that the streamwinner should remain content with access concentration and that he is unable to gain insight wisdom. On the contrary, **the Ariya,vaḍḍha Sutta** (A 5.64/3:80), for example, lists the following virtues for “noble growth” of a spiritual person: faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Sometimes “learning” (here referring to a theoretical knowledge of the Dharma) is omitted since it is usually subsumed under “wisdom.”

This wisdom is defined in exactly the same way as that of the “trainer” (*sekha*), that is, one of the saints, short of the arhat. It is “the wisdom that sees the rise and fall of things, that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.”⁴⁷

6.3 In several suttas of **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta**, generosity and wisdom even replace moral virtue as the fourth factor of streamwinning, and faith restated as “wise faith” (*avecca-p, pasāda*) in the 3 jewels.⁴⁸ There is also no mention of concentration (*samādhi*) or dhyana (*jhāna*), even implicitly.

Since the lay stream-enterer or once-returner is thus well equipped with the wisdom of insight but is not typically described as a *Jhāna* attainer, this implies that attainment of *Jhāna* is not normally expected or required of him. From this we can also conclude that at these early stages of the path liberative wisdom does not depend on a supporting base of *Jhāna*. (Bodhi 2001:54)

We now turn to a sutta for evidence to this effect.

7 Beyond streamwinning

7.1 In **the (Sotāpanna) Nandiya Sutta** (S 55.40), Nandiya the Sakya asks the Buddha about streamwinning, thus:

“Bhante, when the 4 limbs of streamwinning⁴⁹ are completely and totally non-existent in a noble disciple, would that noble disciple be one who dwells diligently?”

The Buddha answers that such a person is “an outsider, one who stands on the worldling’s side,”⁵⁰ and goes on to explain the difference between a noble disciple who is negligent and the one who is diligent. [Note here that the reference is to “a noble disciple who is negligent,” not to a worldling.]

“And how, Nandiya, is a noble disciple one who dwells negligently?”

Here, Nandiya, a noble disciple has wise faith in the Buddha,... Content with that wise faith, he makes no further effort in solitude by day nor in seclusion by night.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Udaya-t,tha,gāminiyā paññāya samannāgato ariyāya nibbedhikāya sammā,dukkha-k,khaya,gāmaniyā* (D 3:237; M 1:356; S 5:197; A 3:2; Nm 40).

⁴⁸ S 55.32/5:391 f, 55.33/5 :392, 55.42/5:401, 55.43/5:401 f.

⁴⁹ *Sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni*. Here these “factors for streamwinning” refers to the state before one is a streamwinner [2a]. What is then listed in the Sutta itself are the 4 “factors of streaming” (*sotāpannessa aṅgāni*), ie wise faith in the three jewels and immaculate moral virtue [2b]. There is a possibility that *sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni* and *sotāpannessa aṅgāni* are synonymous, at least as used here.

⁵⁰ *Bahiro puthujjana,pakkhe ṭhito*. In **Paṭipanna S** (S 48.18/5:202), the same is said of one who lacks the 5 faculties (*pañc’indriya*): faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

⁵¹ *So tena Buddhhe avecca-p,pasādena santuṭṭho na uttariṃ vāyamati divā pavivekāya rattiṃ paṭisallānāya*. In other word, he does not spend time in solitary reflection and meditation.

When he thus dwells negligently, there is	no gladness (<i>pāmuja</i>). ⁵²
When there is no gladness, there is	no zest (<i>pīti</i>).
When there is no zest, there is	no tranquillity (<i>passaddhi</i>).
When there is no tranquillity, he dwells	in suffering.

The mind of one who suffers does not attain samadhi. When the mind is not concentrated, there is no occurrence of phenomena.⁵³

Because there is no occurrence of phenomena, he is regarded as ‘one who dwells negligently.’

Furthermore, Nandiya, a noble disciple has wise faith in the Dharma...

Furthermore, Nandiya, a noble disciple has wise faith in the Sangha...

Furthermore, Nandiya, a noble disciple has virtues dear to the noble ones,⁵⁴ unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.⁵⁵

Content with those virtues..., he makes no further effort for solitude by day nor for seclusion by night. When he thus dwells negligently, there is no gladness.

When there is no gladness, there is no zest.

When there is no zest, there is no tranquillity.

When there is no tranquillity, he dwells in suffering.

The mind of one who suffers does not become concentrated. When the mind is not concentrated, there is no occurrence of phenomena.

Because phenomena do not occur, he is regarded as ‘one who dwells negligently (*pamāda,-vihārī*).’

(S 55.40,13/5:398), SD 47.1

7.2 The Buddha then goes on to say how **the diligent noble disciple** not only has the 4 limbs of streamwinning but also “makes further effort in solitude by day and in seclusion by night”—such a noble disciple is one who dwells diligently (*ariya,sāvako appamāda,vihārī*)” (S 55.40/5:398).

7.3 The phrase “occurrence of phenomena” (*dhammānaṃ pātubhāva*) here refers to the rise and fall of the 5 aggregates, the six sense-bases and so on, that should be watched skillfully. In other words, the exhortation here is for the disciple to proceed from calm and concentration to insight,

but it does not describe this concentration in terms suggesting [that] it occurs at the level of *Jhāna*, it seems that the concentration attained will be tantamount to access concentration, not *Jhāna*, yet even this suffices to support the arising of insight. (Bodhi 2001:55)

⁵² From here on, and also the section on living diligently, as in **Pamāda,vihārī S** (S 35.97/4:78 f).

⁵³ *Dhammā na pātubhavanti*. Comy here (SA 3:289) and to **Pamāda,vihārī S** (SA 2:385 ad S 35.97/4:78 f) explain this sentence as meaning that the states of calm and insight (*samatha,vipassanā dhammā*) do not appear. Bodhi, however, “think[s] the point is that the internal and external sense bases (the *dhammā*) do not appear as impermanent, suffering, and non-self” (S:B 1411). This interpretation is supported by the stock passage, “Such is form... feeling... perception... formations ...consciousness; such is its passing away”: see the 2 **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22,14/-2:301 f; M 10,38/1:61), (**Khandha**) **Samādhi S** (S 22.5/3:13f), (**Saḷāyatana**) **Samādhi S** (S 35.99/4:80) & also **Dasa,-bala S 1** (S 12.21/2:27 f), **Dasa,bala S 2** (S 12.23/2:29-32), **Sīha S** (S 22.78/3:84-86), **Khemaka S** (S 22.89/3:126-132) and **Nāva S** (S 22.101/3:152-155). The origin and passing away of the aggregates are explained in **Paṭisallāna S** (S 22.6/3:15) by way of diachronic conditionality, and in **Upādāna Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56/3:58-61 = SD 3.7) & **Satta-ṭṭhāna S** (S 22.57/3:61-65) by way of synchronic conditionality. See S:B 743 n58.

⁵⁴ “Virtues dear to the noble ones,” *ariya,kantāni silāni*. See [2b] above.

⁵⁵ “Unbroken, ... giving rise to concentration,” *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi viññūpa-saṭṭhehi aparāmaṭṭhehi samādhi,saiivattanikehi*. See [2b] above & UA 268.

SAINTHOOD AND DHYANA

8 Laymen attaining the 4 dhyanas

8.1 CITTA & ACELA KASSAPA. There is no text or passage in the Nikāyas that says a lay saint must possess dhyana. However, there are at least two suttas that clearly ascribe all the 4 dhyanas to certain house-holders. One is **the Acela (Kassapa) Sutta** (S 41.9), where Acela Kassapa (the naked ascetic) tells his friend Citta the houselord⁵⁶ that in his 30 years as a naked ascetic—wandering about naked, shaven-headed, and plucking out his hair—he has not gained any “superhuman distinction in the knowledge and vision befitting the noble ones.”⁵⁷ Citta the houselord, however, replies that in his 30 years as a lay disciple, he is able to enter into the 4 dhyanas, described by way of a stock passage,

“... or to whatever extent I wish, bhante, quite detached from sense-objects⁵⁸ [5.1.1.1], detached from unwholesome mental states, a monk enters and dwells in **the 1st dhyana**, accompanied by *initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy, born of solitude*.⁵⁹

Then, to whatever extent I wish, bhante, with the stilling of applied thought and sustained thought, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, I enter and dwell in **the 2nd dhyana**, free from applied thought and sustained thought, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.⁶⁰

Then, to whatever extent I wish, bhante, with the fading away of zest, I remain equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experience happiness with the body. I enter and dwell in **the 3rd dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’⁶¹

Then, to whatever extent I wish, bhante, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier disappearance of happiness and grief—I enter and dwell in **the 4th dhyana**, that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.⁶²

Furthermore, bhante, if I were to die before the Blessed One does, it would not be surprising if the Blessed One were to declare of me:

‘There is no fetter by which Citta the houselord could be bound by which he would return to this world.’⁶³ (S 41.9,9/4:301), SD 45.14

⁵⁶ Citta the houselord is foremost amongst the laymen who are Dharma teachers. See **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (9).

⁵⁷ *Uttari, manussa, dhammā alam ariya, ñāṇa, dassana, vīsesa.*

⁵⁸ See SD 8.4 (5.1.1.1).

⁵⁹ *Vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa, vitakkaṃ sa, vicāraṃ viveka, jaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ paṭhama-j, jhānaṃ*

⁶⁰ *Vitakka, vicāraṇaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasadānaṃ cetaso ekodi, bhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhī. jaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ dutiya-j, jhānaṃ.* The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṇhī, 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 factor 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” (i.e. either talk Dharma or meditate).

⁶¹ *Pītiyā ca virāgā ca upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti, “upekkhako satimā sukha, viharī”ti tatiya-j, jhānaṃ.*

⁶² *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe’va somanassa, domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkham asukhaṃ upekkhā, sati, parisuddhiṃ catuttha-j, jhānaṃ.*

The last paragraph in the quote means that Citta is a non-returner, and also a non-returner who has access to the 4 dhyanas.

8.2 UTTARĀ NANDA, MĀTĀ. The other sutta that clearly ascribes all the four dhyanas to a householder is **the Nanda, mātā Sutta** (A 7.40), where Uttarā Nanda, mātā declares to Sāriputta the seven marvels⁶⁴ that comprise her spiritual attainments. Of these, the last two are most significant, namely, that she could abide in the 4 dhyanas for as long as she wishes, and that she has overcome the 5 lower fetters,⁶⁵ that is, she is a non-returner (A 7.50.6-7/4:66 f).

The Mahā Sudassana Sutta (D 17) relates how the king Mahā Sudassana, a layman, is accomplished in the 4 dhyanas. He even build an immense hall just for ideal dhyana meditation hall (or rather a “meditation palace”), well-stocked with all kinds of meditation cushions, and surrounded by a beautiful garden full of beautiful and bejewelled trees, and lotus lakes. We can take this Sutta as an exhortation and inspiration for the laity who are inclined to the contemplative life to cultivate dhyana properly and effectively for their liberation and the benefit of others.⁶⁶

9 When dhyana is necessary

9.1 Before examining when and whether dhyana is necessary for sainthood, let us examine **the (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta** (A 3.85)⁶⁷ and compare it to **the Sa, upādisesa Sutta** (A 9.12/4:378-382) [3]. **The (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta** is here abridged:

Monks, the more than 150 training-rules that come up for recitation every fortnight, in which young men of family desiring the goal [nirvana] train themselves, are all contained in the three trainings. What are the three?

The training in the higher virtue, the training in the higher mind, the training in the higher wisdom.

1. Here, monks, a monk is one fully accomplished in moral virtue, but only moderately accomplished in concentration and wisdom.⁶⁸ He breaks some of the lesser and minor training-

⁶³ This is stock: D 22,21/2:314 f, M 141,31/3:252; also D 2,75-81/1:73-75, M 27,19-22/1:181 f. See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (4).

⁶⁴ The 7 marvels of Uttarā Nanda, mātā are:

- (1) that she could communicate with powerful devas (such as Vessavaṇa);
- (2) that she remain mentally undisturbed when the king slew her only son Nanda;
- (3) that when her late husband reborn as a yaksha appeared in true form before her and she remained mentally undisturbed;
- (4) that from the day she married her husband she had no evil thought against him, much less evil deeds;
- (5) that from the day she professed to be a lay disciple, she has never intentionally broken any precept;
- (6) that she could abide in the 4 dhyanas for as long as she wishes;
- (7) that she has overcome the 5 lower fetters [5n], ie she has become a non-returner: cf Uggā [11] & in **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6(5).

SnA also says that she kept a daily fast and knew the Piṭakas (collection of teachings) by heart (SnA 1:370).

⁶⁵ The 10 fetters, see (3.1) n above.

⁶⁶ **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17), SD 36.12: see esp §§2.2-2.4..

⁶⁷ Also called **(Mattaso, kārī) Sikkhā S**.

⁶⁸ “Fully accomplished...concentration and wisdom,” *sīlesu paripūra, kārī hoti samādhimim mattaso, kārī paññā-ya mattaso, kārī*.

rules⁶⁹ and rehabilitates himself. Why is that? Because, monks, this is not said to be impossible for him.⁷⁰

But as to those training-rules that are fundamental to the holy life, in conformity with the holy life, in these his virtue is stable and steady, and he trains himself in the training he has undertaken.⁷¹

*With the utter destruction of the three fetters,*⁷² he becomes a **streamwinner**, one no longer bound for the lower world,⁷³ sure of going over to self-awakening.

2. Furthermore, monks, here a monk is one fully accomplished in moral virtue, but only moderately accomplished in concentration and wisdom. He breaks some of the lesser and minor training-rules and rehabilitates himself...and he trains himself in the training he has undertaken.

With the utter destruction of the three fetters and *the diminishing of greed, hate and delusion*, he becomes a **once-returner**, who returns to this world only once more and then makes an end to suffering.

3. Furthermore, monks, here a monk is one fully accomplished in moral virtue and concentration, but only moderately accomplished in wisdom. He breaks some of the lesser and minor training-rules and rehabilitates himself...and he trains himself in the training he has undertaken.

With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, he becomes **one due to be reborn spontaneously** (in the Pure Abodes) [as a non-returner], and there to attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

4. Furthermore, monks, here a monk is one fully accomplished in moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom. He breaks some of the lesser and minor training-rules and rehabilitates himself ... and he trains himself in the training he has undertaken.

⁶⁹ Comy says that apart from the 4 rules entailing defeat (*pārājika*), the rest are all “**lesser and minor training-rules**” (*khuddakānukhuddakāni sikkhāpadāni*) (AA 2:348). The 4 *pārājika* rules prohibit sexual intercourse (of any kind), stealing (removal of articles valued at the lowest currency denominator), murder of a human being, and making false claims to superhuman attainments. Comy’s interpretation of “the lesser and minor rules” is overly liberal. The traditional monastic order has not come to any conclusion over its definition (V 2:287 f = D 2:154; V 4:143; A 1:233; cf Divy 465). It is probable that the Comy def here is provisional, ie, other than the 4 *Pārājika* rules, the transgression of any of the other monastic rules permits rehabilitation on the part of the offender. See foll n.

⁷⁰ Rehabilitation of a monastic who has transgressed any of the lesser and minor rules, or for the purposes here, in reference to those rules other than the 4 *Pārājika* rules (see prec n), are by way of prescribed penalties and measures, and often it would be confession before the Order. “This sutta should help to dispel the notion widespread in Buddhist lands, that noble ones are utterly incapable of infringements of the Vinaya. Indeed, just below [§4 of this sutta] the Buddha says that even arahants can commit such minor transgressions; AA adds that they may commit offences against prescribed rules (almost certainly without intention of doing so), but they do not transgress basic [natural] morality” (A:ÑB 288 n63). See **Sutavā (Paribbājaka) S** (A 9.7/4:369-371) for 9 things that an arhat can never do.

⁷¹ The saint is incapable of breaking any of the *Pārājika* rules, ie “those training-rules fundamental to the holy life, in conformity with the holy life” (*tāni sikkhāpadāni ādi, brahma, cāriyikāni brahma, cāriya, sārūppāni*).

⁷² **Fetters** (*saṃyojana*), see [3.1] n.

⁷³ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of ruin/suffering,” another name for the 4 **woeful courses** (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), esp as *niraya, tiracchāna, pettivisaya, asurakāyā* (KhP 189,12 = DA 2:496,11 (on D 2:55,27) = SA 2:97,5 (on S 2:92,16); Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes **5 courses** (*pañca, gati*) (D 33,2.1(4)/3:234; A 9.68/4:459) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tiracchāna, yoni*), the ghost realm (*petti- or pittī, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see A:ÑB 1999:14-19. See **Pañca, gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.20. See also a late work, **Pañca, gati, dīpana**, ed L Feer (JPTS 1884:152 ff); tr Feer, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 5, 1883:514-528: sv Naraka, kaṇḍa, Tiracchāna~, Peta~, Manussa~, Deva~.

By realizing for himself through direct knowledge, right here and now,
with the destruction of the mental influxes,⁷⁴
attains and dwells in the influx-free freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom.⁷⁵ [He is an
arhat.]

Thus, monks, one who is partly accomplished achieves part success. One who is fully accomplished achieves full success.

But these training-rules are not fruitless,⁷⁶ I say! (A 3.85/1:231 f), SD 3.3

9.2 It is evident from this sutta that to be either a streamwinner or a once-returner, a basic condition is one's being "fully accomplished in moral virtue," that is, accomplishment in the "higher virtue" (*adhi-sīla*), here clearly referring to "virtues dear to the noble ones,"⁷⁷ unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration."⁷⁸ The last phrase "giving rise to concentration" here is not a prerequisite for streamwinning but a point of advantage for the streamwinner: his lifestyle is conducive for mental development.

9.3 However, full accomplishment in concentration and full accomplishment in wisdom—that is the higher mind and the higher wisdom—only applies to the levels of the non-returner and the arhat.⁷⁹ Since the non-returner has fulfilled the training in the higher mind, and this is defined as the 4 dhyanas, he is as such a dhyana-attainer.

It might still be questioned, however, whether he must possess *all* four *Jhānas*. While a literal reading of the above *sutta* would support this conclusion, if we bear in mind my earlier comments about interpreting stock formulas [2001:44 f], we might conjecture that the training in the higher mind is fulfilled by the secure attainment of even one *Jhāna*. (Bodhi 2001:57)

10 Mahā Māluṅkyā Sutta (M 64)

10.1 What Bodhi proposes above—that even one dhyana suffices to fulfill the training of the higher mind (*adhi,citta*)—is confirmed by **the Mahā Māluṅkyā Sutta (M 64)**, which shows how dhyana figures

⁷⁴ "Mental influxes" (*āsava*), see [4] n.

⁷⁵ "Freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom," respectively, *ceto,vimutti* (or, freedom by concentration, ie through the destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā,vimutti* (freedom by insight) (A 1:60). One "freed by wisdom" is one who "may not have reached the 8 deliverances (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed" (M 70,16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly freed in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the 8 liberations** (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called "freed both ways", that is, freed from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are "freed both ways" (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*). The differences between the two types of freedom are given in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f), **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f), and **eso Jhānābhīññā S** (S 16.9,29 n), SD 50.7. For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15,35/ 2:70 f). See also M 120,37/3:103 (SD 3.4).

⁷⁶ "Not fruitless," *avañjhāni*, following S 5:202 etc & Comy which glosses it as "not fruitless, with fruits" (*atucchāni sa,phalāni*) (AA 2:349)

⁷⁷ "Virtues dear to the noble ones," *ariya,kantāni sīlāni*. See (2b) above.

⁷⁸ "Unbroken,...giving rise to concentration," *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi viññūpa-saṭṭhehi aparāmaṭṭhehi samādhi,samvattanaikhehi* [2]. See UA 268. For details, see Vism 1.143 ff/51-58.

⁷⁹ Bodhi: "I myself believe there is strong evidence in the *Nikāyas* that the *jhānas* become an essential factor for those intent on advancing from the stage of once-returning to that of non-returner. I will review the texts that corroborate this thesis later in this paper" (2001:38).

in the preliminary phase of the path to non-returning. The sutta opens with the Buddha pointing out to Mālunkya,putta and Ānanda that one with the 5 lower fetters [3.1] is fettered by them at all times and not only at the time they assail the person (which Mālunkya,putta holds) (M 64.1-6).

Then the Buddha declares to Ānanda that he will teach “the path and the way for the abandoning of the five lower fetters” (M 64.7). Two important similes follow. The first simile shows the importance of the method he is about to teach. Just as it is impossible to reach the heartwood of a tree without first cutting through the bark and softwood, so it is impossible to cut off the lower fetters without relying on the path he is about to teach (M 64.7). The second simile similarly shows the need for spiritual strength for the task of liberation. Just as a feeble man cannot safely swim across the river Ganges that is flooded over, but only a strong man can; even so “when the Dharma is being taught to someone for the cessation of personality, if his mind enters into it and acquires confidence, steadiness and resolution, there he can be regarded as like the strong man” (M 64.8).

10.2 The method of becoming a **non-returner** by way of abandoning the five lower fetters is then given, beginning with the attainment of the first dhyana, as follows:

And what, Ānanda, is **the path, the way, to the abandoning of the five lower fetters?**

Here, with the seclusion from the acquisitions,⁸⁰ with the abandoning of unwholesome states, with the complete tranquillization of bodily inertia,⁸¹ quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk attains to and dwells in the first dhyana, that is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, with zest and happiness born of seclusion.

Whatever exists by way of form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.⁸² He turns his mind away from those states⁸³ and directs it to the deathless element [nirvana] thus:

“This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions [attachments], the destruction of craving, dispassion [letting of craving], cessation (of suffering), nirvana.”⁸⁴

If he is steady in that, he reaches the destruction of the influxes. If he does not reach the destruction of influxes because of the desire for the Dharma, because of the delight in the Dharma, then with the destruction of the five lower fetters, he becomes one who would reappear spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes) and there attain final nirvana without ever returning from that world.

This is the path, the way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters. (M 64,9/1:435 f)⁸⁵

⁸⁰ “The seclusion from acquisitions” (*upadhi,viveka*) (Nm 26, 140, 157, 341). Comy glosses *upadhi* here as the 5 cords of sense-pleasures (MA 3:145). See M:ÑB 1268 n654.

⁸¹ “Bodily inertia,” (*kāya,duṭṭhulla*). Comy glosses it as “bodily idleness” (*kāyālasīya*) (MA 3:145, 4:202) or “bodily unwieldiness due to food” (*bhattam nissāya kāyassa akammaññatā*) (VbhA 479). See M 3:151, 159.

⁸² Like the prec **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** passage, this passage shows the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*) on the basis of calm (*samatha*), using dhyana on which the insight-practice is based as the object of insight. The terms “impermanent” (*aniccato*) and “disintegrating” (*palokato*) here show the characteristic of impermanence; three terms—“alien” (*parato*), “void” (*suññato*), and “not self” (*anattato*)—show the characteristic of not-self; the remaining 6 terms—*dukkhato, rogato, gaṇḍato, sallato, aghato, ābādhato*—show the characteristic of suffering (MA 3:146).

⁸³ “He turns his mind away from those states” (*so tehi dhammehi cittam paṭivāpeti*) from the 5 aggregates included in the dhyana, which he has seen to be marked with the 3 characteristics (MA 3:146).

⁸⁴ The “deathless element” (*nibbāna,dhātu*) is nirvana. First, “he directs his mind to” it with the insight consciousness, having heard it praised and described as being “peaceful, sublime,” etc. Then, with the supramundane path, “he directs his mind to it” by making it an object and penetrating it as the peaceful, the sublime, etc. (MA 3:146)

⁸⁵ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (7), where this passage is contrasted with a similar one from **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** (M 52).

10.3 The text then goes on to each of the other 3 form dhyanas in turn, any of which the practitioner could enter into. Each of the form dhyanas is reflected by way of its aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness; and the same is done for the first 3 formless attainments,⁸⁶ but omitting form. Next, he contemplates on those states in 11 ways, regarding them “as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.”

And when his contemplation is complete, he turns his mind away from them and directs it to the “deathfree element” (*amata, dhātu*), that is, nirvana. If he is steady in his efforts, he immediately gains arhathood, but if he is hindered by attachment to and delight in the Dharma, then he destroys the 5 lower fetters and becomes a non-returner.

10.4 The Mahā Māluṅkyā Sutta—and its parallel text, **the (Aṭṭha) Jhāna Sutta** (A 9.36)—as such makes it necessary for us to gain dhyana before we can attain to non-returning.⁸⁷ This means that a once-returner who wishes to become a non-returner should develop at least the first dhyana, using it as a springboard for developing insight.

11 Non-returners without dhyana

11.1 THE UGGA SUTTAS. “We may still query,” says Bodhi, “whether this is an invariable rule⁸⁸ or merely a general stipulation that allows for exceptions” (2001:58). He then points out that this is more likely to be a general stipulation allowing for exceptions and that several suttas support this notion. He then quotes the two consecutive **Ugga Suttas** (in the Aṭṭhaka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara), where the Buddha extols the “eight wonderful and marvellous qualities”⁸⁹ of the two laymen named Ugga (one of Vesālī, the other of Hatthi, gāma).⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Comy says that the 4th formless attainment—the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception—is not mentioned because its constituents are too subtle to be comprehended by insight (MA 3:147). However, a parallel text, **(Aṭṭha) Jhāna S** (A 9.36/4:422-426) teaches a method by which the 5th formless attainment, as well as the cessation of feeling and perception, can be used to generate insight, and thereby reach arhathood or non-returning.

⁸⁷ “Though the *sutta* discusses the practice undertaken by a monk, since the Buddha has declared this to be ‘the path and practice for abandoning the 5 lower fetters,’ we are entitled to infer that lay practitioners too must follow this course” (Bodhi 2001:58). However, the 2 Suttas mentioned (and similar texts) are simply showing how dhyana leads out of the 5 lower fetters. There is no mention that these fetters could not be eliminated in a different manner (such as insight practice).

⁸⁸ That is, that it is “necessary for one to gain dhyana before one could attain to non-returning.” See prev para.

⁸⁹ A 8.21/4:208-212. **Ugga of Vesālī’s 8 remarkable qualities**, in brief, are:

- (1) on his first seeing the Buddha, faith arose in him;
- (2) he waited upon the Buddha, full of faith and on listening to the graduated discourse attained non-returning, thereupon taking upon himself the rule of celibacy;
- (3) he released his 4 wives from their marital obligations;
- (4) he distributed his wealth impartially amongst the virtuous;
- (5) he always attended upon a monk with respect;
- (6) he listened with respect to a monk teaching the Dharma;
- (7) devas would visit him proclaiming the virtue of the Dharma, and in response to them he shows no arrogance;
- (8) he had abandoned the 5 lower fetters, ie he is a non-returner (A 8.21/4:208-212): see **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6

(5). Cf Uttarā Nanda, mātā in SD 8.6(9).

⁹⁰ A 8.22/4:212-216.

In the first text, **the (Vesālika) Ugga Sutta** (A 8.21), the Buddha declares that Ugga of Vesālī has abandoned all 5 lower fetters,⁹¹ and in the second, **the (Hatthi.gāmika) Ugga Sutta** (A 8.22), he says that Ugga of Hatthi,gāma has no fetters bound by which he might return to this world.⁹² Although their spiritual status as non-returners is confirmed, the Buddha does not mention any dhyanic attainments amongst the 8 wonderful qualities.

This, of course, need not be taken to mean that they lacked attainment of *Jhāna*. It may have been that their *jhānic* skills were less remarkable than the other qualities they possessed, or they may have been adept in only one or two *Jhānas* rather than in all four. But it does leave open the possibility that they were non-returners without *Jhāna*. (Bodhi 2001:59)

11.2 DĪGHĀVU SUTTA. Another good case of a non-returner without dhyana is found in **the Dīghāvu Sutta** (S 55.3) which records how the Buddha counsels the dying Dīghāvu, a streamwinner, advising him not to worry about his father, Jotika the householder. The Buddha teaches him how to reflect on the virtues of the Three Jewels, and to contemplate on impermanence, on suffering and on not-self. This latter set forms the basis for “the 6 things conducive to true knowledge,”⁹³ that is, the perceptions of impermanence, of suffering, of not-self, of letting go, of dispassion, and of cessation.⁹⁴ Dīghāvu later passes away and arises spontaneously in the Suddhāvāsa as a non-returner (S 55.3).⁹⁵

Dīghāvu is transformed from a streamwinner into a non-returner entirely through a series of contemplations pertaining to insight. There is no mention of dhyana whatsoever, but through the six things that partake of true knowledge, Dīghāvu eliminates the five lower fetters and gained non-returning.

11.3 THE 2 KINDS OF NON-RETURNERS

11.3.1 A doctrinal background to Dīghāvu’s attainment of non-returning may be found in two suttas (amongst others), namely, **the (Sa,saṅkhāra) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.169)⁹⁶ and **the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3),⁹⁷ both dealing with 2 kinds of non-returners: the one who attains final nirvana without effort (*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*) and the one who attains final nirvana with effort (*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*).

The former is the one who attains the 4 dhyanas (described in stock formula in **the (Sa,saṅkhāra) Paṭipadā Sutta**, A 4.169,5). The latter practises the more austere meditations, such as the contemplation of the body, the reflection on the repulsiveness of food, the disenchantment with all the world, the perception of impermanence in all formations, and the recollection of death.⁹⁸ Here again, there is no clear assertion that the latter is without dhyana,

... but the contrast of this type with one who gains the four *Jhānas* suggests this is a possibility.

Though the possibility that there might be non-returners without *Jhānas* cannot be ruled out, from the *Nikāyas* we can elicit several reasons why we might normally expect a non-returner to have access to them. One reason is inherent in the very act of becoming a non-returner,

⁹¹ As for Uttarā Nanda,mātā [8.2].

⁹² As for the Citta the householder [8.2].

⁹³ *Cha vijjā,bhāgiyā dhammā*, also tr as “the six things that partake of true knowledge.”

⁹⁴ These 6 perceptions are found along with others in **Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta** (S 46.71-76/5:132 f) & at A 3:334.

⁹⁵ S 55.3/5:344-347 (SD 23.16).

⁹⁶ A 4.169/2:155-157 (SD 98.17).

⁹⁷ S 46.3/5:69 f (SD 10.15).

⁹⁸ *Idha bhikkhu asubhānupassī kāye viharati, āhāre paṭikkula,saññī, sabba,loke anabhirata,saññī, sabba,saṅkhāresu aniccānupassī, maraṇa,saññā kho pan’assa ajjhataṃ sūpaṭṭhitā hoti* (A 4.169.2/2:155).

the meditator eradicates two fetters that had been merely weakened by the once-returner: sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*) and ill will (*byāpāda*). Now these two fetters are also the first two among the five hindrances,⁹⁹ the defilements to be abandoned to gain the *Jhānas*. This suggests that by eradicating these defilements the non-returners permanently removed the main obstacles to concentration. Thus, if his mind so inclines, the non-returner should not find it difficult to enter upon the *Jhānas*.
(Bodhi 2001:60)

11.3.2 There is another reason [11.3.1] why non-returners should be dhyana-attainers, while streamwinners and once-returners need not be so and it has to do with their future destiny in the rounds of existence. Although all the categories of saints have escaped the planes of misery—the hells, the animal kingdom and the realm of the departed—streamwinners and once-returners are still liable to return to the sense-world (*kāma, dhātu*), but non-returners are utterly freed from any such birth. What holds back the streamwinner and the once-returner to the sense-world is the fetter of sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*) which remains latent in them.

11.3.3 However, if a streamwinner or a once-returner succeeds in attaining dhyana, he can suppress sensual desire (and other mental hindrances) and thus achieve rebirth in the form or formless realms. But this is not fixed for saints at the lower two stages, who would normally undergo a fortunate rebirth in the human world or the sense-sphere heavens. Non-returners, on the other hand, are so called simply because they never again return to be born in the sense-world. They have destroyed sense-desire, observed celibacy and have great skill in meditation. At death, they spontaneously arise in the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*, all 4th-dhyana states) and attain nirvana there without ever having to return from that world.

11.4 THE WORLDLING DHYANA-ATTAINER. That the non-returner has eliminated the fetter of sense-desire corresponds to the status of an ordinary dhyana-attainer. **The Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142), for example, mentions the “outsider free from lust for sense-pleasures” (*bāhirakā kāmesu vitarāga*) that is, a worldling dhyana-attainer¹⁰⁰ (M 142). If the dhyana-attainer dies in dhyana, his good karma would lead him to rebirth in a commensurate plane of birth in the form realm.

Despite the similarity between the non-returner and the worldling dhyana-attainer in terms of being free from sense-pleasures, the similarity stops there. In fact, the two are divided by fundamental differences. The worldling dhyana-attainer's freedom from sense-pleasures is only temporary since he has not uprooted any mental fetter, so that in a lapse of mindfulness, he could easily fall into sensuality. Similarly, his sojourn in the form world is only as long as his supporting wholesome karma lasts. When this karma is exhausted, the dhyana-attainer might fall back into the sense realm or even a lower world.

The non-returner, on the other hand, has eliminated sense-desire and ill will so that they never arise in him again. Since he has eradicated these two fetters, he remains in the form realm when he is reborn

⁹⁹ The 5 mental hindrances are: (1) sensual lust, ie being drawn away by the perception of pleasure; (2) ill will, ie being negative at a sense of lack in pleasure; (3) sloth and torpor, ie apparent loss of mental energy, heavy drowsiness; (4) restlessness and worry, which arise from thinking of the past and planning ahead, and (5) spiritual doubt, ie lacking self-confidence. They are so called because they hinder mental focus that is the basis of meditation. See **(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126), SD 3.12 & **Anīvaraṇa S** (S 46.3/5:95 f), SD 3.2 (5.3). See also **Pañca-nīvaraṇa: The 5 mental hindrances**, SD 32.1.

¹⁰⁰ M 142,5/3:255 (SD 1.9). The worldling dhyana-attainer, if he existed before the Buddha's time in India or exists outside of Buddhism, then Brahmavamso's assertion that “the Buddha discovered *Jhāna*” must be re-examined (Brahmavamso 2003:5). See also **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (2) & **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b.

there. The non-returner does not return to the sense world,¹⁰¹ irreversibly heading towards final nirvana while within the form realm itself.¹⁰²

12 The “dry insight” meditator and satipatthana

12.1 The Commentaries introduced an interesting notion of the “dry insight” meditator (*sukkha, vipassaka*), who it is said gains arahthood entirely through “dry insight” without resorting to any form-sphere dhyana at all. This notion is found *only* in the Commentaries and there is no trace of such an idea in the Nikāyas. Bodhi closes his ground-breaking essay with this question:

Although such a type is not explicitly mentioned in the *Nikāyas*, the question may be raised whether the Commentaries, in asserting the possibility of arahantship without attainment of *Jhāna* in the mundane portion of the path, have deviated from the Canon or brought to light a viable possibility implicit in the older texts. The famous *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* declares, in its conclusion, that all those who earnestly dedicate themselves to an uninterrupted practice of the four establishment of mindfulness are bound to reap one of two fruits: either *arahantship* in this very life or, if any residue of clinging remains, the stage of non-returning. While several exercises within the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are certainly capable of inducing the *Jhānas*, the system as a whole seems oriented towards direct insight rather than towards the *Jhānas*.¹⁰³ Thus this opens the question whether the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* might not be propounding a way of practice that leads all the way to non-returning, even to arahantship, without requiring attainment of the *Jhānas*.
(Bodhi 2001:64)

12.2 SATIPATTHANA WITH DHYANA AND WITHOUT IT

12.2.1 The answer to this question is found in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22)¹⁰⁴ and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10)¹⁰⁵ themselves. The key phrase *evaṃ bhāveyya* (“were to cultivate ... in this way”) (D 22 = M 10.) refers to *ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*, “having put away covetousness and displeasure in the world, he dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, (contemplating body in the body, ... mind-objects as mind-objects)” [4].¹⁰⁶

This key phrase can be explained in the following way:

- (1) *vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*—having abandoned the 5 hindrances dhyana arises.
- (2) *aatimā*—on account of dhyana, the mind is profoundly calm and clear.
- (3) *ātāpī*—the profound joy that arises with dhyana allows us to sustain mindfulness stably on the object.

¹⁰¹ However, a non-returner of the Pure Abodes (Suddh’āvāsa) may *visit* the earth if he wishes, as in the case of the *pacceka, brahma* (individual Brahmā), Tudu, who appears to the dying Kokalika, the renegade monk and ally of Devadatta. On seeing him, Kokalika abuses him, saying, “Were you not declared a non-returner by the Blessed One, friend? Then why have you come back here? Look at the extent of this offence of yours!” (A 10.171/5:171).

¹⁰² The differences between the non-returner and the worldling dhyana-attainer in terms of the 4 form dhyanas are clearly shown in **Nānā Puggalā S** (A 4.123/2:126-128).

¹⁰³ Bodhi’s fn: “This is a widespread view among contemporary interpreters, though the sutta itself does not describe its method explicitly in such terms.

¹⁰⁴ See SD 13.2.

¹⁰⁵ See SD 13.3.

¹⁰⁶ Gethin discusses this basic formula in *The Buddha Path to Awakening*, 2001:47-53.

12.2.2 While dhyana may arise in an experienced meditator, this is usually not the case for everyone, especially beginners and those who are unable to overcome all the 5 mental hindrances. However, the practice of satipatthana, even without dhyana is greatly helpful in building up our mindfulness to a profound level. This is especially the case when we combine satipatthana practice with the cultivation of lovingkindness.¹⁰⁷

It should be understood, then, that there are 2 kinds of satipatthana practices. **The 1st kind**, which is more common, do not bring about dhyana, but there is sufficient calmness and clarity of mind to feel a deep sense of joy and peace that are helpful for, say, the reflection on impermanence. This is the kind of practice that prepares us to streamwinning in this life itself.¹⁰⁸

The 2nd kind are for those practitioners—especially renunciants—who are able to overcome all the 5 mental hindrances so that the mind gets into dhyana.¹⁰⁹ This is the kind of calm and clear mind that brings the profound joy that can displace, and in due course remove, sensual craving and attachment, so that the mind is able to progress to attain non-returning, even arhathood.¹¹⁰

12.3 A comprehensive meditation practice, indeed a summary of the Buddhist path itself, comprises these three steps and their goal:¹¹¹

- (1) the abandoning of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*),¹¹²
- (2) the calming of the mind through the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*),¹¹³
- (3) the proper cultivation of the seven awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*);¹¹⁴ and
- (4) the goal: nirvana.

This is in fact the method used by all the Buddhas, past, present and future, as noted by Sāriputta in his lion-roar and confirmed by the Buddha himself (**Nālandā Sutta**, S 47.12/5:159-161).¹¹⁵

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¹⁰⁷ On satipatthana with lovingkindness, see SD 13.1 (3.7.8).

¹⁰⁸ See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

¹⁰⁹ On satipatthana bringing dhyana, see SD 41.1 (6.3).

¹¹⁰ On the 10 fetters and sainthood, see SD 40a.1 (15.4.4) n; SD 49.14 Table 2.

¹¹¹ See 2001: 172.

¹¹² The 5 mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): see §11.3 n.

¹¹³ The 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are meditational focus arising through (1) body-based meditation (*kāyānupassanā*), (2) feeling-based meditation (*vedanā'nupassanā*), (3) mind-based meditation (*cittānupassanā*), and (4) phenomena-based meditation (*dhammānupassanā*). We begin by using the proper posture for comfort (so that the body remains still) and start off, eg, with breath meditation. As we meditate, we note whatever feeling that arises whether they are pleasant, painful or neutral, just as they are without further evaluation. Then, we note whatever thought (emotion, etc) that arises in a similar manner. Finally, we note whatever phenomena or mental states that arise, just as they are. After this initial practice, these 4 focuses are applied as they arise and as necessary. For details, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63), SD 13.1+3.

¹¹⁴ The 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*), namely, the awakening-factor (*sambojjhaṅga*) of: (1) mindfulness (*sati* ~); (2) mental investigation (*dhamma, vicaya* ~); (3) effort (*virīya* ~); (4) zest (*pīti* ~); (5) tranquillity (*passaddhi* ~); (6) concentration (*samādhi* ~), and (7) equanimity (*upekkhā* ~). The awakening-factors describe meditation that is already grounded in some level of mindfulness, which is then directed to mental investigation, ie, noting the rise and fall (impermanence) of mental events. Such an exercise inspires effort which arouses zest (joyful interest) as a result, and which in turn supports tranquillity. All this brings the mind to concentration, and finally blissful and clear equanimity (including some level of dhyana, or at least deep and joyful concentration). See (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:67-70), SD 10.15.

¹¹⁵ This sutta is an abridgement of **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28/3:99-116). For a more comprehensive discussion on meditation, see **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 13.

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