

SERENITY & INSIGHT

I. The Doctrinal Underpinnings of Buddhist Meditation

1. The Four Noble Truths

- (1) “Vertical” interpretation: the four noble truths as existential & psychological
- (2) “Horizontal” interpretation: the four noble truths as a statement of the causal dynamics of saṃsāra

2. Dependent origination

- (1) As expanded, more elaborate version of the four noble truths
- (2) Key stages in the formula: Old age & death ← birth ← renewed existence ← clinging ← craving/volitional activities ← ignorance
- (3) The fundamental challenge: to overcome ignorance, to replace *avijjā* with *vijjā*

3. The nature of ignorance

- (1) Negative: as concealing, hiding the real nature of dhammas
- (2) Positive: as projecting, as causing perceptual and conceptual distortions
- (3) Consequences: ignorance → mental defilements → rebirth & suffering

II. The Structure of the Buddhist Path

1. As determined by the causation of suffering and saṃsāric bondage

- (1) The threefold training
- (2) The noble eightfold path

2. Serenity and insight in relation to the path

III. Canonical Texts on Serenity and Insight

(See attached selection of suttas)

IV. Two Models of the Path

1. The model that emphasizes serenity: the gradual, step by step training
Basic pattern: MN 27, MN 51. Variants: MN 39, MN 53, MN 107, AN 4:198
2. The model that emphasizes insight: the four establishments of mindfulness
Basic texts: DN 22, MN 10. See too Saṃyutta Nikāya chapter 47.

3. The sphere of insight: contemplating the three characteristics.
Texts: SN 22, SN 35, SN 14.

V. The Commentarial Systematization of the Two Models

Text: *Visuddhimagga* Chapter XVIII

1. The path of the *samathayānika* meditator
2. The path of the *vipassanāyānika* meditator

SELECTED SUTTAS ON SAMATHA AND VIPASSANĀ

FROM THE MAJJHIMA NIKĀYA

No. 6: *Ākaṅkheyya Sutta*, “If One Should Wish”

“If a monk should wish: ‘May I, by realizing it for myself with direct knowledge, here and now enter upon and dwell in the liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, that is taintless with the destruction of the taints,’ let him fulfill the precepts, be devoted to internal serenity of mind, not neglect meditation, be possessed of insight, and dwell in empty huts.”

No. 149: *Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta*, “The Great Sixfold Base”

“When one abides uninflamed by lust, unfettered, uninfatuated, contemplating danger, then the five aggregates subject to clinging are diminished for oneself in the future; and one’s craving—which brings renewal of existence, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this or that—is abandoned. One’s bodily and mental troubles are abandoned, one’s bodily and mental torments are abandoned, one’s bodily and mental fevers are abandoned, and one experiences bodily and mental pleasure.

“The view of a person such as this is right view. His intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his mindfulness is right mindfulness, his concentration is right concentration. But his bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified earlier. Thus this Noble Eightfold Path comes to fulfilment in him by development. When he develops this Noble Eightfold Path, the four foundations of mindfulness also come to fulfilment by development ... the seven enlightenment factors also come to fulfilment in him by development. These two things—serenity and insight—occur in him yoked evenly together (*tass’ime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti samatho ca vipassanā ca*). He fully understands by direct knowledge those things that should be fully understood by direct knowledge. He abandons by direct knowledge those things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge. He develops by direct knowledge those things that should be developed by direct knowledge. He realizes by direct knowledge those things that should be realized by direct knowledge.”

FROM THE SAMYUTTA NIKĀYA

43:2 Serenity and Insight

“Monks, I will teach you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned. Listen....

“And what is the unconditioned? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this is called the unconditioned.

“And what is the path leading to the unconditioned? Serenity and insight: this is called the path leading to the unconditioned.

“Thus, monks, I have taught you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned. Whatever should be done by a compassionate teacher out of compassion for his disciples, desiring their welfare, that I have done for you. These are the feet of trees, these are empty huts. Meditate, monks, do not be negligent, lest you regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

45:159 The Guest House

“When a monk develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path, he fully understands by direct knowledge those things that are to be fully understood by direct knowledge; he abandons by direct knowledge those things that are to be abandoned by direct knowledge; he realizes by direct knowledge those things that are to be realized by direct knowledge; he develops by direct knowledge those things that are to be developed by direct knowledge.

“And what are the things to be fully understood by direct knowledge? It should be said: the five aggregates subject to clinging. What five? The form aggregate subject to clinging ... the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. These are the things to be fully understood by direct knowledge.

“And what are the things to be abandoned by direct knowledge? Ignorance and craving for existence. These are the things to be abandoned by direct knowledge.

“And what are the things to be realized by direct knowledge? True knowledge and liberation. These are the things to be realized by direct knowledge.

“And what are the things to be developed by direct knowledge? Serenity and insight. These are the things to be developed by direct knowledge.”

FROM THE ANGUTTARA NIKĀYA

2:31 Serenity and Insight

“Monks, these two things pertain to true knowledge. What two? Serenity and insight. When serenity is developed, what benefit does one experience? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit does one experience? Lust is abandoned. When insight is developed, what benefit does one experience? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit does one experience? Ignorance is abandoned. “A mind defiled by lust is not liberated, and wisdom defiled by ignorance is not developed. Thus, monks, through the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind, and through the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom.”

4:170 Four Ways to Arahantship

The Venerable Ānanda addressed the monks: “Friends, whatever monk or nun has declared the attainment of arahantship in my presence has done so by these four paths or by a certain one among them. What four?”

(1) “Here, a monk develops insight preceded by serenity (*samathapubbaṅgamaṃ vipassanaṃ bhāveti*). As he is developing insight preceded by serenity, the path is generated. He pursues this path, develops it, and cultivates it. As he is pursuing, developing, and cultivating this path, the fetters are abandoned and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

(2) “Again, a monk develops serenity preceded by insight (*vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṃ samathaṃ bhāveti*). As he is developing serenity preceded by insight, the path is generated. He pursues this path, develops it, and cultivates it. As he is pursuing, developing, and cultivating this path, the fetters are abandoned and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

(3) “Again, a monk develops serenity and insight in conjunction (*samathavipassanaṃ yuganaddhaṃ bhāveti*). As he is developing serenity and insight in conjunction, the path is generated. He pursues this path, develops it, and cultivates it. As he is pursuing, developing, and cultivating this path, the fetters are abandoned and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

(4) “Again, a monk’s mind is seized by restlessness about the Dhamma (*dhammuddhaccaviggahitaṃ mānasaṃ hoti*). But there comes an occasion when his mind becomes internally steady, composed, unified, and concentrated (*taṃ cittaṃ ajjhattameva santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodi hoti samādhiyati*). Then the path is generated in him. He pursues this path, develops it, and cultivates it. As he is pursuing, developing, and cultivating this path, the fetters are abandoned and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

“Whatever monk or nun, friends, has declared the attainment of arahantship in my presence has done so by these four paths or by a certain one among them.”

4:93 Four Kinds of Persons (In Brief)

“Monks, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? (1) Here, some person gains internal serenity of mind (*lābhī ajjhattaṃ cetosamathassa*) but not the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena. (2) Some other person gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena (*lābhī adhipaññā-dhammavipassanāya*) but not internal serenity of mind. (3) Still another gains neither internal serenity of mind nor the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena. (4) And still another gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(1) “Monks, the person among these who gains internal serenity of mind but not the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should base himself on internal serenity of mind and make an effort to gain the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena. Then, some time later, he gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(2) “The person who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but not internal serenity of mind should base himself on the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena and make an effort to gain internal serenity of mind. Then, some time later, he gains both the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena and internal serenity of mind.

(3) “The person who gains neither internal serenity of mind nor the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness, and clear comprehension to obtain both those wholesome qualities. Just as one whose clothes or head had caught fire would put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness, and clear comprehension to extinguish [the fire on] his clothes or head, so that person should put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness, and clear comprehension to obtain both those wholesome qualities. Then, some time later, he gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(4) “The person who gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should base himself on those same wholesome qualities and make a further effort to reach the destruction of the taints. “These, monks, are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world.”

4:94 Four Kinds of Persons (In Detail)

“Monks, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? (1) Here, monks, some person gains internal serenity of mind but not the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena. (2) Some other person gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but not internal serenity of mind. (3) Still another gains neither internal serenity of mind nor the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena. (4) And still another gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(1) “Monks, the person among these who gains internal serenity of mind but not the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should approach one who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena and inquire of him: ‘How, friend, should conditioned phenomena be seen? How should conditioned phenomena be explored? How should conditioned phenomena be discerned by insight?’ The other then answers him as he has seen and understood the matter thus: ‘Conditioned phenomena should be seen in such a way, explored in such a way, discerned by

insight in such a way' (*evaṃ kho, āvuso, saṅkhārā daṭṭhabbā, evaṃ saṅkhārā sammasitabbā, evaṃ saṅkhārā vipassitabbā'ti*). Then, some time later, he gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(2) "The person who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but not internal serenity of mind should approach one who gains internal serenity of mind and inquire of him: 'How, friend, should the mind be steadied? How should the mind be composed? How should the mind be unified? How should the mind be concentrated?' The other then answers him as he has seen and understood the matter thus: 'The mind should be steadied in such a way, composed in such a way, unified in such a way, concentrated in such a way' (*evaṃ kho, āvuso, cittaṃ saṅghapetabbam, evaṃ cittaṃ sannisādetabbam, evaṃ cittaṃ ekodi kātabbam, evaṃ cittaṃ samādahātabban'ti*). Then, some time later, he gains both the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena and internal serenity of mind.

(3) "The person who gains neither internal serenity of mind nor the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should approach one who gains both and inquire of him: 'How, friend, should the mind be steadied? How should the mind be composed? How should the mind be unified? How should the mind be concentrated? How should conditioned phenomena be seen? How should conditioned phenomena be explored? How should conditioned phenomena be discerned by insight?' The other then answers him as he has seen and understood the matter thus: 'The mind should be steadied in such a way, composed in such a way, unified in such a way, concentrated in such a way. Conditioned phenomena should be seen in such a way, explored in such a way, discerned by insight in such a way.' Then, some time later, he gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena.

(4) "The person who gains both internal serenity of mind and the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena should base himself on those same wholesome qualities and make a further effort for the destruction of the taints. "These, monks, are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world."