

## 10: A Comparative Study of Dhāynas according to Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna

In the Pāli *Nikāyas* of the *Suttapīṭaka* we come across only four *rūpāvacara-jhānas* (of the Realm of Form). But the Pāli texts of the *Abhidhamma-pīṭaka* speak of four *jhānas* according to one method and of five according to another. Thus, the *Dhammasaṅgāṇi* first enumerates the four *jhānas* as found in the *suttas* and says this is the *catukka-naya* (Method of Four), and then gives five *jhānas* according to another method and calls it *pañcaka-naya* (Method of Five).<sup>1</sup> The *Vibhaṅga* too, as usual, first gives the four *jhānas* and says it is the *Sūtantā-bhājanīya* (Division according to the *Suttantas*), and then gives five *jhānas* and says it is the *Abhidhamma-bhājanīya* (Division according to the *Abhidhamma*).<sup>2</sup> The later Pali works on the *Abhidhamma* such as the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* and the *Abhidhammāvātāra* speak only of five *jhānas*,<sup>3</sup> ignoring altogether even the classifications according to 'the method of four and five' or 'the divisions according to the *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma*'. But in the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of *Asaṅga*,<sup>4</sup> a purely Mahāyāna *Abhidharma* text of the fourth century A. C. as well as in the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu,<sup>5</sup> a Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* text also of the same century, we find only four *rūpāvacara-dhyānas*.

We hear only of *aṭṭha-samāpatti* (eight attainments), i.e. four *rūpāvacara-jhānas* (*jhānas* of the Realm of Form) and four *arūpāvacara-jhānas* (*jhānas* of the Realm of No-Form), but never of nine *samāpattis* as five *rūpāvacara-* and four *arūpāvacara-jhānas*.

The *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* says that the Buddha, just before his *Parinirvāṇa*, attained to the four *jhānas* of the Realm of Form and the four *jhānas* of the Realm of No-Form, and also to the *samāpatti* of the Cessation of Perceptions and Sensa-

tions (*saññāvedayitanirodha-samāpatti*).<sup>6</sup> Had there been a fifth *jhāna* of the Realm of Form, the Buddha should as well have attained to it on this occasion and the fact should have been mentioned here. There is no reason why he should have not attained to the fifth *rūpajhāna*. If there had been a particular reason for such an event, it should have specially been mentioned there.

It is evident that the list of five *rūpāvacara-jhānas*, which is not found in the original Pali *suttas*, is a later development in the *Abhidhamma*, and the very terms *Suttanta-bhājanīya* and *Abhidhammabhājanīya* found in the *Vibhaṅga* seem to indicate this. There is no such division in the original *suttas*.

The later *Abhidhamma* Pali works maintain that there are five *jhānas* on account of their different combinations of their factors, members or constituents (*jhābaṅga*).<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, they say, the first *jhāna* is composed of five factors and then by gradually eliminating them one by one the second, third and fourth *jhānas* are obtained, while the fifth *jhāna* acquires *upekkhā* (equanimity) in place of *sukha* (happiness). The full scheme, according to them, is as follows:

1st <i>jhāna</i>	} composed of	<i>vitakka</i>	<i>vicāra</i>	<i>pīti</i>	<i>sukha</i>	<i>ekaggatā</i>
is		(reasoning)	(reflection)	(joy)	(happiness)	(one-
						pointedness
						of mind)
2nd <i>jhāna</i> :		<i>vicāra</i>	<i>pīti</i>	<i>sukha</i>	<i>ekaggatā</i>	
3rd <i>jhāna</i> :			<i>pīti</i>	<i>sukha</i>	<i>ekaggatā</i>	
4th <i>jhāna</i> :				<i>sukha</i>	<i>ekaggatā</i>	
5th <i>jhāna</i> :				<i>upekkhā</i>	<i>ekaggatā</i>	

How far are the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna accounts of the *dhyānas* in conformity with their descriptions found in the original Pali *suttas*, which are universally accepted as the oldest and most authentic records of the Buddha's teachings, and hence our highest and ultimate authority?<sup>8</sup>

The stereotype formula which describes the first *jhāna* in the Pali *suttas* reads as follows: *vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkam savicāram vivekajam pītisukham paṭhamajjhānam*. 'Aloof from sense-desires, aloof from unwholesome thoughts (one

attains to) the first *jhāna* (*recueillement*) which is born of detachment (freedom) and which has reasoning, reflection, joy and happiness.<sup>7</sup>

This formula is only a description of the first *jhāna* and does not make a numerical analysis of its factors or constituents. It is the texts on the *Abhidhamma* that make the analysis and enumerate the factors. Thus, according to the *Vibhaṅga* the first *jhāna* is composed of five factors: *vitakka* (reasoning), *vicāra* (reflection), *pīti* (joy), *sukha* (happiness) and *cittassa ekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind).<sup>9</sup>

According to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*: 'The first *dhyāna* has five factors. The five factors are: reasoning, reflection, joy, happiness, and one-pointedness of mind.'<sup>10</sup>

According to the *Abhidharmakośa*: 'In the first *dhyāna* (there are) reasoning, reflection, joy, happiness and concentration (one-pointedness).'<sup>11</sup>

According to the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*: 'The first *jhāna* is composed of reasoning, reflection, joy, happiness and one-pointedness of mind.'<sup>12</sup>

All these texts agree that the first *dhyāna* is composed of five factors. But in the original passage cited above there is no mention of one-pointedness of mind (*citt'ekaggatā*) or concentration (*samādhi*), although the other four factors, namely reasoning, reflection, joy and happiness are to be found. This fact was clearly noticed by Buddhaghosa, for he says in the *Visuddhimagga* that though one-pointedness of mind is not to be seen in the original passage, it should be included in the first *jhāna* because it is mentioned in the *Vibhaṅga*.<sup>13</sup>

Unless one takes for granted that a *dhyāna* should have one-pointedness of mind and therefore freely adds it, there is no support from the original *sutta* passage to include one-pointedness of mind as a factor of the first *dhyāna*. It is true that any kind of thought has a certain percentage of concentration in addition to several other mental activities. It is according to this theory that the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (p. 6) lays down one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*) as one of the mental activities (*cetasika*) common to all thoughts (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa*)'. But it is not necessary to mention one-pointedness of mind of that calibre as a factor in speaking about *dhyānas*, for then several other things like contact (*phassa*) may also be mentioned.

The first *dhyāna* has *vitakka* (reasoning) and *vicāra* (reflection). It is not possible that a real one-pointedness of mind can exist in the company of reasoning and reflection. Asaṅga says that both reasoning and reflection are 'mental babble' (*manojalpa*): reasoning is a mental babble in search (*paryeṣaka manoialpa*) while reflection is a mental babble in reviewing or reflecting (*pratyaवेkeṣaka manojalpa*).<sup>14</sup> The *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* defines 'search' as examining 'what is this?' and 'reviewing or reflecting' as noticing or observing: 'it is this' regarding a thing already known.<sup>15</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* defines *vitakka* as 'searching' or 'examining' (*ūhana*) and *vicāra* as moving along' or 'moving around' (*anusañcaraṇa*).<sup>16</sup>

All these definitions indicate that both *vitakka* and *vicāra* are movements or activities of mind. The *Visuddhimagga* itself admits that on account of the disturbance caused by *vitakka* and *vicāra*, the first *jhāna* is like water disturbed by waves.<sup>17</sup> In such a disturbed state, however subtle the disturbance may be, true one-pointedness of mind is not possible.

Except that the texts of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* and the later works like the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, the *Abhidharmakośa* and the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* postulate one-pointedness of mind as a factor of the first *dhyāna*, there is nothing in the original passage of the Pali *suttas* to indicate that this is so.

Real one-pointedness of mind or concentration comes into being in the second *dhyāna* in which *vitakka* (reasoning) and *vicāra* (reflection) are suppressed. This is clear from the words in the formula: *cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ* (unification of mind) and *samādhijaṃ* (born of concentration), describing the second *dhyāna*. In place of the term *samādhijaṃ* (born of concentration) in the second *dhyāna* formula, there is the term *vivekajaṃ* (born of detachment or freedom) in the first *dhyāna*. It is evident that the term *vivekajaṃ* was used because *samādhijaṃ* would not apply to the first *dhyāna*.

Here is the formula describing the second *jhāna*: *vitakkevīcārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkehaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānaṃ*. 'By the suppression (elimination) of reasoning and reflection (one attains to) the second *jhāna* which is inner serenity, which is unification of

mind, without reasoning and reflection, born of concentration, and which has joy and happiness.’

This too only describes the second *jhāna* and does not enumerate its factors.

But the *Vibhaṅga* says that the second *jhāna* is composed of four factors, namely, *sampasāda* (serenity), *pīti* (joy), *sukha* (happiness) and *cittassa ekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind) according to the *Suttas*, and that it is composed of three factors, viz. *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā* or four, viz. *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā*, according to the method of the *Abhidhamma*.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to understand how the same *jhāna* could be composed of three and four factors. There cannot be one second *jhāna* composed of four factors according to the *suttas*, and another composed of three and a third of four, according to the *Abhidhamma*. The division of *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma* is a literary business, but the *dhyāna* is a spiritual matter independent of such considerations. A *yogi* does not attain to a *dhyāna* at one moment according to the *Sutta* and at another according to the *Abhidhamma*, but he attains to a *dhyāna* as such independently of all such literary divisions. Whichever way one may explain it, the second *dhyāna* should remain the same; its intrinsic qualities cannot change.

If the second *dhyāna* is composed of a set of four factors according to one method, or another set of four factors according to another method, and of three factors according to yet a third method, then it has to be admitted at the same time that it is not one, but three different *dhyānas*. Why? Because a *dhyāna* is merely a designation for the arising of a certain number of psycho-physical qualities in a given combination. There is nothing which can be taken as *dhyāna* apart from this combination of factors. If this combination of a *dhyāna* is changed either by adding, subtracting or substituting its factors, then that particular *dhyāna* changes its character and becomes something else.

For the convenience of linguistic expression we generally say that such and such a *dhyāna* has so many factors, but in fact we should say that such and such a *dhyāna* is the combination of such and such

factors. The *Vibhaṅga* itself defines *dhyāna* only by giving a list of factors. Thus, for example, the first *dhyāna* is defined as: 'The *jhāna*, means reasoning, reflection, joy, happiness and one-pointedness of mind.'<sup>19</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* clarifies this point further: 'When these five (qualities) have arisen, it is said the *jhāna* has arisen. Hence these are called its five composing factors. Therefore it should not be considered that there is another (thing) called *jhāna* which is composed of them.'<sup>20</sup>

The *Visuddhimagga* decides that although the *Vibhaṅga* says that the second *jhāna* is composed of four factors taking *sampasāda* (serenity) as one of them according to the *Sutta*, yet according to the *Abhidhamma* system it should be accepted as composed of three factors, eliminating *sampasāda*, as mentioned in the same text.<sup>21</sup> But it may be safer to accept as authority the original *sutta* passage than the *Abhidhamma* texts and the Commentaries.

How many factors can be discovered in the original formula (given above) describing the second *jhāna*?

The words: 'by the suppression (elimination) of reasoning and reflection' (*vitakka-vicāraṇaṃ vūpasamā*) and 'without reasoning and reflection' (*avitakkaṃ avicāraṇaṃ*), indicate the absence of reasoning and reflection here which were present in the first *jhāna*. What are present in the second *jhāna* are described by the terms 'inner serenity' (*ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ*), 'unification of mind' (*vetasa ekodibhāvaṃ*), 'born of concentration' (*samādhijaṃ*), 'joy and happiness' (*pītisukhaṃ*).

Looking at these terms, one may accept the four factors - *sampasāda* (serenity), *pīti* (joy), *sukha* (happiness), *cittassa ekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind) - as the second *jhāna*, rather than three. *Ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ* indicates *sampasāda*'s serenity', while *vetasa ekodibhāvaṃ* and *samādhijaṃ* denote *citt'ekaggata* 'one-pointedness of mind'. *Pīti* and *sukha* are clearly 'joy' and 'happiness'.

Faithful to the original passage in the *suttas*, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* says that the second *dhyāna* is composed of four factors, namely, *ādhyātmāsampasāda* 'inner serenity', *prīti* 'joy', *sukha* 'happiness' and *cittaikeāgratā* 'one-pointedness of mind'.<sup>22</sup> The *Abhidharmakośa* also mentions the same four as the second *dhyāna*.<sup>23</sup>

The formula in the original Pali *suttas* describing the third *jhāna* reads as follows:

*Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca vibarati, sato ca sampajāno, sukhañ ca kāyena patisamvedeti, yaṃ tam ariyā ācikkhanti 'upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī'ti tatiyajjhānam* - By detachment also from joy, (one dwells) in equanimity, mindful and aware, and enjoys happiness in body, (and attains to) the third *jhāna* which the noble ones call: "dwelling in equanimity, mindfulness and happiness".

This is not as clear as the previous two definitions.

The *Vibhaṅga* says that according to the *Sutta* there are in the third *jhāna* five factors, viz. *upekkhā* (equanimity), *sati* (mindfulness), *sampajañña* (awareness), *sukha* (happiness) and *cittassekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind), and according to the *Abhidhamma* two factors, viz. *sukha* and *cittassekaggatā*.<sup>24</sup> The *Visuddhimagga*, as before, decides that the method of the *Abhidhamma* should be accepted.<sup>25</sup>

The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* is again faithful to the original passage of the *suttas* when it says that the third *dhyāna* is composed of five factors, viz. *upekṣā* (equanimity), *smṛti* (mindfulness), *samprajanya* (awareness), *sukha* (happiness) and *cittaikāgratā* (one-pointedness of mind).<sup>26</sup>

The *Abhidharmakośa* too maintains that the third *dhyāna* is composed of five factors, viz. *upekṣā* (equanimity), *smṛti* (mindfulness), *prajñā* (wisdom), *sukha* (happiness) and *sthiti* (stability).<sup>27</sup> The only difference here is the substitution of the term *prajñā* (wisdom) for *samprajanya* (awareness), and *sthiti* (stability) for *cittaikāgratā* (one-pointedness of mind). The *Vibhaṅga* explains the terms *sampajañña* (Skt. *samprajanya*) also as *pañña* (Skt. *prajñā*),<sup>28</sup> and the term *samdāhi* also as *cittassa ṭhiti* (stability of mind).<sup>29</sup> Also *cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ* (unification of mind) is explained as *cittassa ṭhiti* (stability of mind).<sup>30</sup> Therefore the substitution of *prajñā* for *samprajanya* and *sthiti* for *cittaikāgratā*<sup>31</sup> is quite justifiable. (Here one should also remember that as the *Abhidharmakośakārikā* is written in verse, the use of these short equivalents was necessitated by reasons of metre.)

How many factors can be discovered in the third *jhāna* according to the formula in the original *suttas*? The words *pītiyā ca virāgā* 'by detachment also from joy' show that the joy that was in the second

*jhāna* is eliminated here. The remaining words indicate the factors which the third *jhāna* is composed of. By the words *upekkhako ca vibarati* 'one dwells in equanimity' it is clear that *upekkhā* 'equanimity' is a factor. The words *sato ca sampajāno* 'mindful and aware' provide *sati* 'mindfulness' and *sampajañña* (awareness). From the expression *sukhañ ca kāyena pīsamvedeti*, 'and enjoys happiness in body', one has to include *sukha* 'happiness' also as a factor. Then again the three factors *upekkhā*, *sati* and *sukha* are repeated in the phrase: *yam tam ariyā ācikkhanti upekkhako satimā sukhavihārīti* which the noble ones call: 'dwelling in equanimity, mindfulness and happiness'. Now there are from the original passage four factors of the third *jhāna*: *upekkhā* (equanimity), *sati* (mindfulness), *sampajañña* (awareness) and *sukha* (happiness).<sup>32</sup> There is no particular word in this passage to indicate 'one-pointedness of mind'. But as it was already mentioned in the second *jhāna*, *ekaggatā* can also be legitimately taken as a factor of the third *jhāna*.

Thus according to the original Pali the third *jhāna* is composed of five factors - *upekkhā* (equanimity), *sati* (mindfulness), *sampajañña* (awareness), *sukha* (happiness) and *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness) exactly as they are mentioned in the *Abbidharmasamuccaya* and *Abbidharmakośa*.

The *sutta* passage which describes the fourth *jhāna* is as follows: *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe'va somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ catutthajjhānaṃ*. - 'By the abandonment of happiness and suffering, by the disappearance already of joy and sorrow, (one attains to) the fourth *jhāna*, which is neither happiness nor suffering and which is the purity of equanimity-mindfulness.'

This too only describes the fourth *jhāna* and does not enumerate its factors.

But the *Ī'ibhaṅga*<sup>33</sup> says that it is composed of three factors - *upekkhā*, *sati*, *cittekaggatā* - according to the *Sutta*, and of two factors - *upekkhā*, *cittekaggatā* - according to the *Abbidhamma*. When the *Ī'ibhaṅga* takes five *jhānas* into consideration, then the fourth *jhāna* is composed of *sukha* and *ekaggatā* and the fifth is composed of *upekkhā* and *ekaggatā*.<sup>34</sup> The *Ī'suddhimagga* decides that the fourth *jhāna* has two factors: *upekkhā* and *ekaggatā*.<sup>35</sup>



