

# A HISTORY OF MINDFULNESS

How Insight Worsted Tranquillity in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

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*Brahmavaṃsassa, hāsapāññassa: tassa sisso'hamasmi*

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## FOREWORD

### THE VIPASSANĀVĀDA

The purpose of this book is to analyze the textual sources of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theravāda meditation theory. The focus is on the prime source works for what may be called the *vipassanāvāda*, the ‘vipassana-doctrine’. This is a special interpretation of some central meditation concepts that has become the de facto orthodoxy in Theravāda Buddhism, although not without controversy. The term *vipassanāvāda* is useful in that the Pali suffix *-vāda* points to the crucial importance of the underlying theory that justifies the practices. More than that, the same suffix comes to mean not just a doctrine, but also the school that follows the doctrine. This is all too apposite in the current case, since ‘vipassana’ has come, rather strangely,<sup>1</sup> to be used as if it refers to an actual school of Buddhism (rather than an aspect of meditation cultivated in all schools).

The key points of the *vipassanāvāda* are reiterated countless times in almost every book on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theravāda meditation, but here they may be summed up briefly. The Buddha taught two systems of meditation, *samatha* and *vipassana*. *Samatha* was taught before the Buddha (so is not really Buddhist), it is dangerous (because one can easily get attached to the bliss), and it is unnecessary (because *vipassana* alone can develop the access *samadhi* necessary to suppress the hindrances). *Vipassana* is the true key to liberation taught by the Buddha. This method was pre-eminently taught in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the most important discourse taught by the Buddha on meditation and on practice in everyday life. The essence of this practice is the moment-to-moment awareness of the rise and fall of all mind-body phenomena. Thus *satipaṭṭhana* and *vipassana* are virtually synonyms.

It is worth noticing that not all modern meditation traditions accept this dichotomy of *samatha* and *vipassana*. For example, the teachers of the Thai forest tradition often emphasize the complementariness, rather than the division, of *samatha* and *vipassana*. I have heard an illustration of this attributed to the late meditation master Ajahn Chah. In *samatha*, you sit down cross-legged, close your eyes, watch your breath, and make the mind peaceful. But *vipassana*, now, that’s something quite different. In *vipassana*, you sit down cross-legged, close your eyes, watch your breath, make the mind peaceful, and then you know: ‘It’s not a sure thing!’ I have always felt that in this question of meditation there was a strong affinity between the Suttas and the teachings of the forest masters. Works like the present one are my attempt to demonstrate, in my clumsy, pedantic, and long-winded way, the same truths expressed with such pith and authority by masters like Ajahn Chah.

In 2000 I wrote *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, emphasizing the harmony and complementariness of *samatha* and *vipassana*. There, I discussed at some length the treatment of *satipaṭṭhana* as found in the early Suttas, focusing on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The purpose was to demonstrate that *satipaṭṭhana*, far from being a distinctive or separate mode of development, was embedded both deeply and broadly in the meaning-matrix of the early Suttas and could neither be understood nor practiced outside of this context.

Nearing the end of that project I came across an article by Richard Gombrich entitled ‘Retracing an Ancient Debate: How Insight Worsted Concentration in the Pali Canon’.<sup>2</sup> Although only partially convinced by his arguments, I was intrigued by his idea – that the shift in emphasis from *samadhi* to *vipassana*, so obvious in later Theravāda, could be traced back to editorial changes made within the period of compilation of the Pali Nikāyas. It jolted some memories of a few loose

ends left dangling in my study of satipatthana. I decided to tug on those strands of thought, and to my amazement the whole Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta started to unravel before my eyes. This is the story of how the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was woven, how it unravels, and how this affects our understanding of Dhamma-Vinaya.

The significance of such a historical approach to the teachings is still largely unrecognised among practicing Buddhists. In fact, our normal approach to the teachings is the very opposite of historical. An aspiring meditator first learns from the lips of a teacher whose words as they utter them must be the very latest formulation of the topic. Then they might go back to read some of the works of well-known contemporary teachers. Since devotees usually have faith that their teacher (or the teacher's teacher) was enlightened, they assume, often without reflection, that the teachings must be in accord with the Buddha. Finally, if they are really dedicated, they may go back to read 'the' Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Once they come to the text itself, they are already pre-programmed to read the text in a certain way. It takes guts to question the interpretation of one's teachers; and it takes not just guts, but time and effort to question intelligently.

Apart from 'the' Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the other discourses on satipatthana, being so much shorter, are usually ignored under the assumption that they add little new. Even the best of the scholars who have studied satipatthana from a historical perspective, such as Warder, Gethin, and Analayo, have treated the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as primary and the shorter discourses as supplements.

So now I would like to reverse that procedure. Our first step must be to forget all we've learnt about satipatthana, and to start again from the bottom up. A basic principle of the historical method is that simpler teachings often tend to be earlier and hence are likely to be more authentic – we must start with the bricks before we can build a house. It is the shorter, more basic, passages that are the most fundamental presentation of satipatthana. The longer texts are an elaboration. We do not assume that shorter is always earlier, but we take this as a guiding principle whose implications we can follow through.

This stratification, it should be noted, does not claim to be able to decide which teachings were genuinely spoken by the Buddha. He himself would likely have given the same teachings initially in simple form, then later expanded on various details. But the universal testimony of the traditions is that the texts as we have them today were assembled in their present form after the Buddha's passing away; so the rational approach is to assume that the texts were the outcome of an evolutionary process.

Those who disagree with this approach will usually do so for one of two reasons. Either they have faith that all of the teachings in the Suttas were literally spoken by the Buddha; or they doubt the possibility of meaningful historical reconstruction due to the unreliability of the sources or the uncertainty of the method. I believe the first position is too credulous and the second too sceptical. In any case, even if our method fails to reflect the genuine historical situation, it remains useful as a pedagogical technique. Whether in the Buddha's day or in the after-years, it is surely sensible to learn the Dhamma by starting with the simple teachings and working up to the complex.

So we should start by identifying the smallest, simplest units of meaning used to describe satipatthana. These are the basic terms and phrases common to all descriptions of satipatthana in all the schools. It would make sense to start with the Buddha's first sermon. This raised an interesting question. This sermon is for the group of five monks, who were, at the time, non-Buddhist ascetics. However, the text refers to mindfulness as if it assumes the audience would know what it means. Mahāsi Sayadaw noticed this, and felt that the discourse should have

originally included a more detailed explanation of satipatthana. But I felt that this was contextually unlikely, for the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, which explicitly explains the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta ‘in detail’, includes the standard satipatthana formula in this detailed expansion. What need for such an expansion if the formula was there in the original? The conclusion seems inescapable: the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta assumes that the five monks already knew what mindfulness was, and so from the perspective of early Buddhism, mindfulness was a pre-Buddhist practice. To check this I felt I had to examine more closely the accounts of pre-Buddhist meditation found in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts.

I was first alerted to the possibility of historical change in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by A.K. Warder, who refers to versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in ancient Chinese translations. After recording the major differences he notes in connection with the contemplation of dhammas that ‘the original text simply opposed these good principles [enlightenment-factors] to the obstacles.’<sup>3</sup> It is through such seemingly innocuous remarks that I have become cognizant of the truly momentous significance of the comparative study of the Nikāyas and Āgamas. While the Theravāda Nikāyas will forever remain our primary source for exploration of pre-sectarian Buddhism, the Āgamas of the contemporary Sarvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, and other schools, which are preserved in ancient translations in the Chinese canon, provide an essential and under-utilised check on the Pali. As the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism puts it: ‘In our days it is impossible for any scholar to refer to early Buddhism unless he pays due regard to the comparative study of the southern and northern traditions.’ I would be gratified if this survey could at least demonstrate that the early Nikāyas/Āgamas are not a mined-out field whose treasures are all safely housed in the later compendiums.

In the Nikāyas/Āgamas it is obvious that no one text pretends to present an all-encompassing, definitive exposition, so each text must be considered in relation to the collection as a whole. This raises questions of the overall structure and organization of the canon. I began to suspect that the shorter texts in the Saṃyutta may preserve an earlier perspective on satipatthana, a perspective that in some respects was better reflected in the Chinese versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta than in the Pali. My suspicions were further aroused by a comment by Bhikkhu Varado on the laxity of the compilers of the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga in omitting much of the material from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Maybe, I wrote back, they weren’t lax at all – maybe the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta had not been written when the relevant portions of the Vibhaṅga were compiled. (I later found out that I was not the first to raise this question.) This suggested that I should take account of the early Abhidhamma texts as well as the Suttas, overcoming, in part, my prejudice that the Abhidhamma was a late and sterile body of sectarian dogmas. And then, if the early Abhidhamma period overlapped with the composition of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it seemed likely that sectarian agendas would be involved in the settling of the final text. This called for a closer examination of the ways the emerging sectarian disputes found expression in the early texts. It then seemed appropriate to extend the survey to the later Abhidhamma/commentarial period, to try to gain a deeper insight into the ways the traditions adapted satipatthana to their own particular perspective on the Dhamma, and to bridge the gap between the Buddha’s time and our own.

To make use of the material on satipatthana translated from the Chinese, I had to improve my own understanding of the Āgamas and other early Buddhist sources outside the Pali. When examining and comparing these collections, with their very strong connections but also real and persistent differences, there is a strong need for a resolution, like the feeling in music that comes when two notes are very close together, but not quite: they yearn to become one. At this time I was fortunate enough to get to know Roderick Bucknell. Informed by his comparative work on the structure of the early scriptures, I have endeavoured to clarify the relations between the various types and strata of texts in the early canon, and have formulated this as the GIST. This

theory suggests a specific relationship and hierarchy of texts in the existing canons, a relationship that reflects both the doctrinal importance and the historical provenance.

I realized that the methodology that I had been using, largely intuitively, in studying satipatthana followed closely the outlines of the GIST. No doubt my belief that this approach had been fruitful in the context of satipatthana prepared me to accept that it could be extended to a general interpretive theory. So I decided to include a presentation of the GIST together with the study on satipatthana, although here the general theory is presented first. These two parts substantially reinforce each other. The study of satipatthana provides a detailed examination of an important doctrine along the lines suggested by the GIST. It exemplifies the method, providing additional evidence for many of the basic principles of the GIST, and showing that the GIST does produce meaningful and useful results. Despite this, however, it should be made clear that the two parts are not mutually dependent. If my analysis of satipatthana turns out to be misguided, this weakens but does not destroy the evidence in support of the GIST. Likewise, if the GIST is felt to be unacceptable, this weakens but does not destroy the evidence in support of the analysis of satipatthana. To some degree, the two studies may be considered independently; but taken together they are more meaningful.

We must bear in mind that we are not here embarking on a search for certainty. As long as we stay in the realm of concepts our ideas can only ever approximate the truth. What is important is that we are moving in the right direction, moving away from confusion towards clarity, away from dogmatism towards inquiry. Each of the criteria employed in historical criticism when taken individually is an imperfect tool. But they are synergistic: where several criteria agree, the concurrence multiplies our confidence in our conclusions – the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. So in these studies it is imperative to use as wide a variety of criteria as possible, sensitively appraise the reliability of each criterion in the relevant context, remain alive to any contrary indications, and make our conclusions no more certain than the evidence warrants.

I endeavour to make matters no more technical and specialized than necessary, without sacrificing precision. The translations are from various sources. Research was carried out in many places – monasteries, libraries, Buddhist centres, internet – and I regret to say that I am not able to standardize or to check all the references. Special thanks are due to Bhikkhu Fa Qing, who gave much of his time to help me explore some arcane corners of the Chinese canon, and to Roderick Bucknell for much illuminating information and challenging ideas. It is to Rod that I owe most of the detailed information on such texts as the Dharmaskandha, Śāriputrābhidharma, Kāyagatāsmṛti Sūtra, and much else. Towards the end of this project, I began a correspondence with Venerable Analayo, whose inspiring example, encouragement, and practical help was instrumental in enabling me to get a handle on reading the Chinese canon. Gone are the days when the Chinese canon was a forbidding, inscrutable place like a cloistered temple perched on a mountain crag, shrouded in mist. Now anyone, with a little patience, can begin reading with the excellent CBETA digital canon, and efficient reading software. Of course, it will still take years to gain a sensitive fluency with the language, but here the primary aim is simply to check the translations against the Indian idioms.

I have tried to maintain consistency of renderings of technical terms, and have sometimes taken the liberty of bringing the renderings in quoted passages into line with the main text. Since the Pali canon is the backbone of this work, and since I am more familiar with Pali, I have rendered almost all Indian words in their Pali rather than Sanskrit form. Exceptions include proper names and terms that are unknown in Pali in the relevant meaning, although I cannot claim complete consistency in this regard. Crucial technical terms such as samatha, vipassana, satipatthana, etc. are a normal part of contemporary Buddhist meditation vocabulary, so I treat them as anglicised forms without diacritical marks.

A peculiar difficulty of this work is that it discusses a large number of texts with confusingly similar titles. I have tried to minimize confusion by spelling out names and affiliations of texts mostly in full.

It is common practice among scholars to refer to the texts by their language, as for example the 'Pali Majjhima Nikāya' and the 'Chinese Madhyama Āgama'. This conveys the entirely misleading impression that the Āgamas, and indeed all the Indian Buddhist texts that happen to be available to us in Chinese translation, are in some sense 'Chinese'. We might as well refer to the 'English Majjhima Nikāya' simply because we happen to be reading an English translation. What matters is the meaning; and this is more significantly affected by the redactors' doctrinal perspectives than by their language. It is therefore preferable to classify texts according to school whenever possible. It is, of course, still necessary to refer to the 'Chinese canon', since the texts therein derive from many schools, and the collection as a whole is obviously a Chinese artefact.

I have tried to give references to all known versions of a particular text, which usually means the Pali and the Chinese version. Readers should be aware that this refers to a text identified as cognate<sup>4</sup> in available concordances. It does not imply that the particular term, phrase, or idea under discussion is found in all versions. I have, however, checked as many significant references as possible, and have indicated relevant differences.

Historical criticism is not *nice*. I am afraid this presentation may sometimes appear rather more surgical than inspirational. Relentless analysis can seem opposed to faith. But this need not be so; the Buddha regarded reason as the foundation of true faith. One who has true faith in the Dhamma would surely not fear that mere literary criticism could destroy the teachings. And is it not just fear that wishes to protect one's sacred scriptures, to enshrine them on a pedestal, to lock them safely away in a gorgeous chest on one's shrine, safe from any impious inquiry? Thankfully such fear, while certainly not absent, does not predominate in contemporary Buddhist circles. And our findings, no matter how cruelly we wield the scalpel, do not affect the fundamentals of our faith. There is a massive concurrence between the early sources of Buddhism as to the central teachings – not just the ideas and principles, but the specific texts and formulations as well. The discrepancies we shall notice in our explorations undermine not these fundamentals, but certain implications and trends discernable in the arrangement and emphasis of the more developed formulations. Even here the differences, to begin with, are slight and few in number. So it is my intention, not to raise doubts, but to encourage the maturing of faith.

# THE GIST: THE HIDDEN STRUCTURE OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

'Friends, just as the footprint of any creature that walks can be placed within an elephant's footprint, and so the elephant's footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size – so too, all skilful principles can be included within the four noble truths.'  
(MN 28.2/MA 30)

## CHAPTER 1: THE MEANING OF 'BUDDHA'

Buddha.

It is said that even to hear this word is precious beyond reckoning. Through countless aeons, beings fall into ruin since they are denied the opportunity of hearing it. Finally, after an incalculably long time, the Enlightened One arises in the world and the word 'Buddha' is heard, like a shower of rain in the parched desert. When the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika heard this word he was overwhelmed – his hair stood on end, he could not sleep at night, his heart leapt up with a strange exultation. Throughout the millennia since the Buddha's time, this word has developed a unique aura, a spiritual charisma that lends unparalleled prestige to the religious communities and institutions that proclaim their allegiance to his liberating teaching. We are the spiritual heirs of that great being, that man of flesh and blood who walked the rich soil of the Ganges plain nearly 2500 years ago.

The very words we use to speak about Dhamma, including this word 'Buddha', are bound and limited by the Indo-Aryan culture in which the young Siddhattha Gotama grew up. An etymologist could tell us that '*buddha*' derives from an ancient Indo-European root, whose basic meaning is to 'wake up', and which has several cognates with related meanings in existing European languages. A grammarian could tell us that it is a past participle formed from a verbal stem. A philosopher of language might find it significant that the past participle, which is unusually common in Buddhist language, denotes the arrival at or emergence into a certain condition, rather than an eternal, timeless state of being. A historian of religion could tell us that the title 'Buddha' is used to denote an enlightened or consummate being in several religions, such as Jainism and Brahmanism, as well as Buddhism. A meditation teacher, on the other hand, might emphasize how 'Buddha' refers to the intrinsic quality of awareness. And so on. All of these aspects inform and condition the resonance of the word 'Buddha'; they are part of the meaning of 'Buddha'.



It is the shared allegiance to this 'Buddha' that defines the Buddhist religion. All forms of Buddhism, from the Buddha himself down through all the schools, have acknowledged two facets, or rather phases, in arriving at true wisdom. First comes hearing the teachings, the words of truth that ultimately stem from the Buddha himself; and second is the application, investigation, and verification of those teachings within our own immediate experience. First we hear the Buddha teach us of the four noble truths – suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the way of practice leading to the end of suffering – then we look into our own minds. 'Yes!' we realize. 'There it is, right there! My own attachments, stupidity, and hatred causing this welling up of suffering and anguish in my heart, and making me speak and act in harmful, foolish ways, imposing my own pain on others.'

So this inseparable pair, the theory and the practice of Buddhism, each balancing and informing the other. Theory without practice becomes a mere intellectual mind-game; while practice without theory tends to drift without direction, or rather, directed by the personal delusions of the individual. It should hardly need restating that all Buddhists of all times agree that intellectual knowledge of the Dhamma is insufficient. Intellectual knowledge, due to the ripples in awareness stirred up by the activity of thinking, must disturb clarity of understanding, and deep insight arises only when the mind is still and silent. But intellectual knowledge has its uses; it is not a problem in and of itself. It only becomes a problem when we mistake our intellectual knowledge for the truth, our opinions for reality. Then opinion becomes conceit, and we easily succumb to a spiritual arrogance that is very hard to cure. But a skilful meditator, alert to the distorting potential of ideas and preconceptions, learns to engage fully in the present moment, seeing the impermanence and emptiness of thought, and growing wise in the ways that, at the most fundamental levels of consciousness, even the most sublime and refined mental constructs limit the power of awareness.

It might be useful to consider here the training of a musician. Perhaps one has been inspired by some great composer or player to take up an instrument. But how to start? I remember being in a music shop one time, when a student walked in and said he wanted to sound like Mark Knopfler, who was at the time the most popular guitar player, famed for his delicate and emotive melodic phrasing. Unfazed, the shop-owner sold the student a \$30 fuzz box, and the student walked out a happy man. Sadly, it's not that easy. In reality, we must spend many hours learning to read music off a page, stark black-and white dots and lines that share nothing of the warmth and colour that was our inspiration. Taking up our instrument, there are countless hours of scales, exercises, and trivial studies to be mastered before anything vaguely approaching 'music' is heard. But once the technique is mastered, it must be left behind. There is little that is worse in music than hearing a musician egotistically showing off his technical skill. All the technique, the study, the practice, must be forgotten as the artist immerses himself in the art that is created there in the present moment; but paradoxically that present moment is only made possible by the previous study and application. In this way, the experience of the past creates the magic of the present.

## THE AMBIGUITY OF TRADITION

So it is implicit in the claim to be a 'Buddhist' that one believes that the Dhamma descends from the Buddha himself through the transmission of his teachings by the traditions. I believe it is worth taking this claim seriously. As a monk I am aware that, in a very real sense, I am the material as well as the spiritual heir of the Buddha. Faithful Buddhists are willing to offer me rice and curries, just as in the past the people of India offered Siddhattha Gotama rice and curries, because they take me for a genuine follower, a 'Son of the Sakyan'. It would be insincere, even fraudulent, for me to eat that alms food while at the same time believing, practicing, or teaching things that I knew that Siddhattha Gotama would not agree with.

This raises some interesting, and challenging, problems. It is obvious that the existing cultures that all claim to be 'Buddhist' vary widely in their beliefs and practices. Now, in many cases these are just cultural variations as the Dhamma-Vinaya adapted itself to time and place. Taiwanese Buddhists do their chanting in Mandarin, while Thai Buddhists do theirs in Pali; no one makes a big deal of such things. After all, the Buddha himself urged his followers to learn the Dhamma in their own language, and not to insist on local dialects.

However, other aspects of cultural Buddhism are deeply opposed to the Dhamma. A disturbing example of this is the use of Buddhist language and concepts to justify war. This has occurred frequently in many Buddhist countries, be it Tibet, China, Thailand, Burma, Japan, and even today in the tragic civil war in Sri Lanka. When Japanese Zen masters teach that to shoot and kill is an expression of highest enlightenment, or when Sri Lankan monks invoke nationalist mythologies to justify bloody warfare, we know, without a doubt, that something has gone badly wrong. This is no innocuous cultural adaptation, but a radical perversion of the Buddha's teachings.

Such uncomfortable facts demand that we stop and examine the traditions more closely. It is simply not good enough to accept with unexamined trust the myths, the stories, and the dogmas of the schools. As people who have a commitment to understanding and practicing the liberating message of the Sakyan Sage, there is an obligation to honestly enquire as to what, exactly, our Teacher taught. We know that the traditions got it disastrously wrong in at least some cases. But these clear, unambiguous examples are in the minority. There is a wealth of other teachings presented to us by the schools, some of which differ from each other in the letter; and we need something better than blind faith before we can intelligently conclude whether they do, or do not, also differ in the meaning.

All existing schools of Buddhism share a large mass of teachings in common, and yet also include a large mass of divergent teachings. There is no doubt that the founders and developers of the various schools believed that there were genuine, meaningful doctrinal differences between the schools. All the schools agree that they disagree. This is amply demonstrated by the large quantity of polemical material filling the shelves of Buddhist canons. And, by and large, the schools also agree on what they disagree about. A text of the Theravāda school might allege that the 'person' doctrine of the Puggalavāda school contradicts the teaching of not-self; while the texts of the Puggalavāda will vigorously argue that the teaching of the 'person' is in fact the correct way to interpret not-self. Given this situation, it would seem a trifle rash to claim, as some modernist Buddhists do, that there really are no differences, or that the differences are not significant. What is needed is not such bland platitudes but an improved methodology, a way of approaching the teachings that is derived, not from the perspective or doctrines of any particular school, but from the sensitive evaluation of the textual tradition as lived by Buddhists. Yin Shun, the renowned scholar-monk of modern Taiwanese Buddhism, evidently felt the same need, according to these statements in his autobiography.

'Although "non-dispute" is good, expediently-rendered syncretism that does not know where and why the disparities are could be far-fetched, too general, and vague.'

'To understand the origin and transformations of the Buddha Dharma within certain temporal and spatial contexts in the actual world gradually became the principle of my quest for the Buddha Dharma.'

## THE DEATH OF MYTH

It is a striking feature, common to all the schools, that they feel the need to justify their particular doctrines mythologically – this is what all religions do. For 2500 years, Buddhism has been constantly changing, adapting, evolving; yet the myths of the schools insist that the Dhamma remains the same. Thus the Theravāda insists that the Theravāda Abhidhamma was taught by the Buddha in Tāvātimsa heaven during his seventh rains retreat. The Mahāyāna claims that the Mahāyāna sutras were written down in the time of the Buddha, preserved in the dragon world under the sea, then retrieved by Nāgārjuna 500 years later. Zen claims authority from an esoteric oral transmission outside the scriptures descended from Mahā Kassapa, symbolized by the smile of Mahā Kassapa when the Buddha held up a lotus. All of these are myths, and do not deserve serious consideration as explanations of historical truth. Their purpose, as myths, is not to elucidate facts, but to authorize religious convictions. They tell us, not how the teachings came to be, but how the devotees felt about them. In this way, myth offers an irreplaceable complement to history, and should never be disregarded. What I am criticizing here is not myth as myth, but myth as history: the naïve fallacy of insisting that the stories of the traditions are factual. The myths stand as a flagrant denial of impermanence, and so a sub-theme of this work is to notice the poignant irony of how the very effort to preserve the teachings, so that ‘the true Dhamma may last a long time’, tends towards a reification of time.

It is one of the great lessons of history that reason displaces myth. There is something about the human mind that cannot continue to believe in a mythic explanation for what that can be understood through reason. Mythic explanations fulfill a purpose; they create a sense of meaning and communal identity that is gratifying and self-affirming. But reason too is a positive force, since it assumes that the human mind is capable of approaching truth. As rational explanations for religious claims are progressively advanced, it becomes more and more wearying to sustain two incompatible belief structures side by side. The myths fall into disuse. Being no longer inherently convincing, they become redundant and eventually pass away. This is the inexorable tide of time.

When the modern historical study of Buddhism began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century there was, as a result of these competing mythologies (not to mention the even more misleading Hindu myths), considerable confusion as to the historical picture. In a burst of rationalist enthusiasm, scholars were prepared to question whether the myths had any factual basis at all. Was there any historical connection between the different religions practiced in far-separated places like Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Japan? Did the Buddha really exist? Was he just a sun-god? Was he an Ethiopian prophet? What did he teach? Can we know? Which traditions are most reliable (or least unreliable)? Since the traditions had been largely separated due to the forces of history – especially the destruction of Buddhism in India – they had little information about each other, and each asserted its own primacy. Each school preserved its traditions in vast collections of abstruse volumes of hard-to-read manuscripts in wildly different languages (Chinese, Tibetan, Pali, and other Indian languages such as Sanskrit). But gradually the evidence was assembled. The traditions were compared; archeological findings confirmed key facts. 1500 year-old Sri Lankan chronicles mention the names of the monks Kassapa, Majjhima, and Durabhisara sent in the Asokan period as missionaries from Vidisa to the Himalayan region; a stupa is excavated in Vidisa and the names of these monks are found there, inscribed in letters dating to the Asokan era.<sup>5</sup> By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in works by such scholars as TW Rhys Davies, whose writings retain their value today, accurate outlines were drawn. There was still controversy in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, though, as evidence was still being accumulated, new texts were edited, and new studies done.

However, as early as 1882 a scholar called Samuel Beal published a series of lectures under the title of *Buddhist Literature in China*. This included information on the process of translating into Chinese, as well as sample translations from some of the main strata of Buddhist literature – the early Suttas, the Jātakas, and a Mahāyāna text. He stated the following:

‘The Parinibbāna, the Brahmajāla, the Sigalovada, the Dhammacakka, the KasiBhāradvadja, the Mahāmangala; all these I have found and compared with translations from the Pali, and find that in the main they are identical. I do not say literally the same; they differ in minor points, but are identical in plot and all important details. And when the Vinaya and Āgama collections are thoroughly examined, I can have little doubt we shall find most if not all the Pali suttas in a Chinese form.’<sup>6</sup>

Over a century later, the thorough comparative study urged by Beal is still wanting. However, some progress has been made. In 1908 a Japanese scholar named M. Anesaki published his ‘The Four Buddhist Āgamas in Chinese: A concordance of their parts and of the corresponding counterparts in the Pali Nikāyas’<sup>7</sup> This was followed in 1929 by Chizen Akanuma’s *The Comparative Catalogue of Chinese Āgamas and Pali Nikāyas*,<sup>8</sup> a comprehensive catalogue of all known existing early discourses in Pali and Chinese, as well as the few texts available in Tibetan and Sanskrit. These findings were incorporated in full-scale historical studies such as Etienne Lamotte’s *History of Indian Buddhism* and AK Warder’s *Indian Buddhism*. These studies have largely confirmed Beal’s initial hypothesis – the Chinese Āgamas and the Pali Nikāyas are virtually identical in doctrine. They are two varying recensions of the same set of texts. These texts – popularly referred to simply as ‘the Suttas’ – were assembled by the first generations of the Buddha’s followers, before the period of sectarian divisions. They are pre-sectarian Buddhism. Although they are usually considered by all schools to be ‘Theravāda’ teachings, this is not so. Eminent scholar David Kalupahana went so far as to declare that there is not one word of Theravāda in the Pali Nikāyas (although I think this is a slight exaggeration.) The contributions of the schools are mostly limited to fixing the final arrangement of the texts and standardizing the dialect. Interpolations of sectarian ideas are few and usually readily recognizable. Lamotte comments:

‘However, with the exception of the Mahāyānist interpolations in the Ekottara, which are easily discernable, the variations in question [between the Nikāyas and Āgamas] affect hardly anything save the method of expression or the arrangement of the subjects. The doctrinal basis common to the Nikāyas and Āgamas is remarkably uniform. Preserved and transmitted by the schools, the sutras do not, however, constitute scholastic documents, but are the common heritage of all the sects.’<sup>9</sup>

All other texts, including the Jātakas, the Abhidhammas of the various schools, the Mahāyāna sutras, and so on, were written later. Relatively few of these teachings are held in common between the schools; that is, they are sectarian Buddhism. Through the lens of historical criticism, the broad picture of the emergence and development of these teachings can be traced quite clearly, both in the internal dynamics of doctrinal evolution and in Buddhism’s response to the changing cultural, social, and religious environment. There is no evidence that any of the special doctrines of these texts – that is, the doctrines not also found in the early Suttas – derives from the Buddha. Rather, these texts should be regarded as the answers given by teachers of old to the question: ‘What does Buddhism mean for us?’ Each succeeding generation must undertake the delicate task of hermeneutics, the reacculturation of the Dhamma in time and place. And we, in our own tumultuous times, so different from those of any Buddhist era or culture of the past, must find our own answers. Looked at from this perspective, we can see that the teachings of the schools offer us invaluable lessons, a wealth of precedent bequeathed us by our ancestors in faith.

So up to this stage in this essay I have emphasized the importance of understanding the historical basis of Buddhism. This provides a meaningful foundation for an appreciation of the common ground between all the schools. Before gaining a firm footing on this common ground, however, we must admit that the traditional myths of the origin of the Buddhist texts serve the polemic, divisive purpose of authenticating the particular doctrinal positions of the schools. This is not to denigrate the important religious role that myths play in Buddhism; on the contrary, we will see that the Buddhist scriptures have always been embedded in spiritual narrative, which breathes life into the teachings. The purpose of this endeavor is not to put down the followers of any of the schools, but to give us the discernment to distinguish the essential from the inessential, and the courage to let go of the inessential in our quest for the essential. For the remainder of this essay I will develop in more detail some specific theories that exemplify this quest. The discussion will become much more technical and detailed, and I fear many readers will find bafflement and confusion rather than inspiration and clarity. Much of the detail that follows is, of necessity, speculative. Those who have the time and resources are encouraged to check my reasoning in detail. For the others, who will have to accept many of my statements on trust, I hope this work will increase their faith that genuine teachings of the Buddha may still be found.

## CHAPTER 2: THE GIST 1 – THREE STRATA OF EARLY TEXTS

What is the GIST? It is a general hypothesis on the origin and development of the Buddhist texts. Seeing the need for a handy name for this hypothesis, I originally thought, with tongue securely in cheek, of following the example of the physicists and calling it the ‘Grand Unified Sutta Theory’. But the acronym ‘GUST’ was unfortunately evocative of a lot of hot air, so I thought of the ‘General Integrated Sutta Theory’: the GIST. Which is, of course, exactly what we’re after. We seek a tool with which we can reliably prune away the masses of accretions that fill Buddhist libraries and arrive, as nearly as possible, at the teachings of the Master himself. Even if we limit our inquiry to the early Suttas and Vinaya we are still presented with a vast array of teachings, some obviously post-dating the Buddha. There have been several more-or-less successful attempts to distil this matter into various strata. The most important advance in this regard has been the collation of the Pali Nikāyas with the Chinese Āgamas. This takes us back to around a hundred years after the Buddha’s death. But we are still faced with a mass of discourses with no apparent way to go further back. The GIST attempts to penetrate even further, to within the lifetime of the Buddha.

The GIST is ‘General’ because it encompasses the entire gamut of available early scriptures, that is, the Suttas, Vinayas, and Abhidhammas of all the schools preserved in Pali and Chinese. It is ‘Integrated’ because it offers a synoptic presentation of the essential relations between these texts. It deals with ‘Suttas’ not just in the obvious sense that the Sutta Piṭaka contains the most important of the doctrinal teachings, but because it suggests a reevaluation of the meaning of the word ‘sutta’ in the earliest texts. For this reason we will not follow the usual practice of referring to any text in the Sutta Piṭaka as a ‘sutta’, but will use more neutral terms such as ‘discourse’, reserving ‘*sutta*’ in italics to indicate the special meaning that the term carried in earlier usage. We may, however, continue to use ‘Sutta’ with a capital to refer to the early texts in general as contrasted with the Abhidhamma and other later works.

And finally, the GIST is a ‘Theory’ because it is not certain. No theory can ever fully capture the truth. I think a successful theory is, firstly, one that addresses a genuine problem, secondly, explains a variety of facts in a way that is at least as plausible as any alternative, and thirdly, is suggestive of further inquiry. Although the GIST is only a new-born child taking its first tottering steps, I believe it still satisfies these standards. There is definitely a serious issue at stake: how do we relate the Pali and Chinese collections together, beyond merely stating that they share many similar texts? We must try to investigate the similarities and differences more systematically, and a promising avenue for doing that is to use the structural principles spoken of within the texts themselves. As for alternatives, I do not feel competent to embark on a comprehensive evaluation of all the theories that have been proposed for the origin and development of the canon. However, I believe the current theories, while having much merit, do not sufficiently acknowledge the influence of the structure of the Dhamma itself on the structure of the canon. Whoever taught the early discourses had an extremely methodical, symmetrical way of thinking, and there is a glaring discrepancy between the balanced architecture of the teachings themselves and the sprawling collections within which the teachings are housed today. As for the third standard, the GIST offers a clear, simple, systematic method for approaching any study of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism. Rather than promiscuously pulling passages, ideas, or quotes from here and there to back up one’s own argument, the GIST suggests a clear hierarchy of significance within the early scriptures. In the second part of this work I undertake such an inquiry in the subject of satipatthana.

The basic idea for the GIST was sparked by the findings of the renowned Taiwanese scholar monk Yin Shun, who himself relied on earlier Japanese and Taiwanese research, none of which is widely known in English-speaking circles. Unfortunately I am unable, at present, to read Yin Shun’s works in Chinese and the relevant work of his is not translated (although I understand that translations of his entire corpus are pending). My information comes from the summary of Yin Shun’s work in Choong Mun-keat’s *The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism*, and through conversations with and the writings of Roderick Bucknell. Although Yin Shun’s insights sparked off the GIST, here the theory is developed significantly further. I will, therefore, not present Yin Shun’s findings to start with, but will outline the GIST in my own way and present Yin Shun’s contributions at the appropriate places. While Yin Shun argued back from later texts to establish the early, I will attempt to leap over the Buddha’s lifetime and approach the Buddha’s teachings by drifting downstream on the river of time.

The GIST asks three questions. Firstly, what are the earliest texts? This question is applied to three historical strata: the first discourses, the first collection of discourses, and the first Abhidhamma. The three strata are each established independently; that is, we do not rely on our identification of the earliest discourses in order to establish the earliest collection, and we do not rely on either of these to establish the earliest Abhidhamma. Rather, to establish each layer we use two basic criteria: the concordance of the texts and the testimony of the tradition. An important confirmation for the validity of these criteria is the elegance of the results. This becomes apparent when we answer the second question: how are the three strata related to each other? And the third question is: how are the three strata related to the rest of the Nikāyas/Āgamas? The results of this inquiry, I might mention in advance, are entirely mundane; so mundane, in fact, that they could easily be dismissed as merely stating the obvious. But what is important here is not so much the conclusions as the method; we are trying to put on a more sound basis what, up till now, has been largely a matter of subjective opinion.

## BEFORE THE BUDDHA

We should start by considering possible pre-Buddhist models for the Buddhist scriptures. It is apparent that new literary compositions in any culture are powerfully influenced by the literary forms that are available in that culture. It is therefore likely that the organization of the earliest stratum of Buddhist scriptures would have been primarily influenced by pre-Buddhist models. Subsequent strata would, of course, be primarily influenced by the earlier Buddhist models. If, therefore, we find evidence of Buddhist textual structures that are derived from pre-Buddhist models, this suggests that these structures are not merely early, but the earliest.

The only literary tradition explicitly acknowledged in the early discourses is the Brahmanical tradition of the three Vedas and various auxiliary works. These are mentioned frequently in the early discourses and obviously played a dominant role in the cultural/spiritual/literary milieu in which the Buddhist texts were formed. There are some clear connections in the literary style of the Buddhist texts and Vedas – especially in the poetic forms – but I do not know of any attempt to relate the overall structure of the Buddhist texts to the Vedas. This is, no doubt, because the structure of the existent canons bears little obvious relation to the Vedas. But perhaps it might be worthwhile to revisit this question to see if the Vedas might have influenced an earlier organizing principle.

The three Vedas are the Ṛg, Sāman, and Yajur. (The fourth Veda recognized by the later Brahmanical tradition, the Atharva, is mentioned in the early Buddhist texts but was evidently extra-canonical at the time.) The Ṛg Veda is by far the most important. It is a very ancient (1500 B.C.E.?) collection of around 10 000 devotional and liturgical verses. One of the classification systems of the Ṛg is in *vaggas*, groups of about ten lines of verse. The Sāman is largely a collection of hymns taken from the Ṛg. Even though all the Vedas contain verse, the Sāman is the songbook par excellence; its students were the *chandogyas* ('versifiers'). Alone of the Vedas the Yajur contains prose as well as verse; it focuses mainly on the sacrifice. So we have one central work and two supplements.

This triune form is probably of religious significance, reflecting the Trinities of deities found so commonly in antiquity. The Trinity usually consists, not of three equal partners, but of one presiding deity (god or goddess) who manifests in the world through the medium of two lesser deities: the One becoming Two, the Two becoming many. The 'threeness' of the Vedas is multiplied in later lists of the extended Vedic literature mentioned in the Pali tradition, where we find both a sixfold and a twelfold classification. Various parts of the Vedic literature are referred to as *āṅgas*, 'sections'. In connection with these collections the terms 'Vedanta' and 'Vedanga' occur. We may also note that the familiar term *sutta*, which in Buddhism usually refers to any discourse, in Brahmanical usage means specifically a short, basic doctrinal statement, which is treated as a basis for elaboration and commentary.

Several of these formal elements may also be noted in the Jain scriptures. Although Jainism is an older religion than Buddhism, the Buddhist scriptures do not mention any Jain texts existing at the time of the Buddha, and the Jains themselves agree that their scriptures were formalized much later. However they clearly contain early elements, and it is possible that early features of the Jain texts that are still evident in the existing texts may have exerted some influence on the formation of the Buddhist texts, although it is perhaps more likely that the influence was the other way around. The Jains acknowledge a list of fourteen *purvas* ('previous') that are now lost, and twelve *āṅgas*, eleven of which still exist. One of these *āṅgas* is called *prasnavyākaraṇa*, which means 'Questions & Answers'. In addition they have twelve *upāṅgas*, 'auxiliary sections'. It is evident that for both the Vedic and the Jain traditions the term 'āṅga' referred to specific texts that were organized in groups of multiples of three. The Ajivikas, another non-orthodox sect, are

said, in the Jain sutras, to have possessed prognostic scriptures consisting of angas, in this case eight in number. We may also note that Jains, like the Brahmans, use the word *sutta* primarily to refer to brief doctrinal aphorisms, although like the Buddhists they also use it as a term for the doctrinal texts in general. For now, we can tuck all these points away in a corner of our minds for later reference.

## THE FIRST DISCOURSES

Now let us turn to the Buddhist texts. How to identify the earliest discourses? As mentioned above, one of the most powerful tools recognized by scholars for identifying early texts is the concordance of the different traditions. In Buddhism this study, so far as it has happened at all, has focussed on the concordance between the texts preserved by the different schismatic schools. But, of course, what matters is not schism as such, but divergence into different textual lineages. There is abundant evidence of a significant degree of separation and specialization of textual study even within the Buddha's own lifetime, long before any schism. This is the most fundamental division of the teachings acknowledged by all schools and traditions: Dhamma and Vinaya. Several times the texts refer to groups of monks who specialize in one or the other of these areas of study. They had different teachers and lived in different quarters. The Theravādin account of the First Council says the Dhamma was spoken by Venerable Ānanda and the Vinaya by Venerable Upali. While not all of the details of the First Council can be accepted as historical, surely this fundamental division must date back to well before the Buddha's passing away. And of course, the content of the two collections is almost totally different. All this suggests that the few doctrinal teachings that are found in the Vinaya have a special significance. They would have been known, not just to the doctrinal specialists, but to all the monks and nuns, dating back to the earliest days of the Buddha's mission, before the collections of teachings grew so bulky that specialization became necessary. Of course, it is not the case that all teachings shared between the suttas and Vinaya must be early; discourses may have been shifted or duplicated between the collections at a later date, and we know in some cases this did happen. So we must look for those discourses that are not merely found across the Vinayas, but are also fundamental to the structure of the text itself, things that do not seem as if they could be lightly grafted on.

So what then are these teachings? There are several versions of the early Vinaya available – about half a dozen different schools are represented in the Chinese canon, the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya is available in Tibetan and partially in Sanskrit, the Theravāda is in the Pali canon; some other material is also available in hybrid Sanskrit and various Indian and even Iranian dialects. Some of these collections apparently contain substantial doctrinal material, which would be of great interest; however most of this material has not been translated, and such studies as have been done are mostly in Japanese. For now, we shall have to concentrate mainly on the material in the Theravāda Vinaya, with the hypothesis that similar material is available in the other Vinayas. This hypothesis is confirmed in some important cases, and will be a fascinating arena for future research.

The outstanding doctrinal teachings in the Vinaya occur in the first chapter of the Mahāvagga. There are three principal sermons: the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, and the Ādittapariyāya Sutta. Accompanying these are a few verses, notably the request of Brahmā for the Buddha to teach, and the Buddha's reply:

‘Wide open are the doors to the Deathless  
Let those with ears to hear make sure their faith.’<sup>10</sup>



There are other important doctrinal teachings available in the Theravāda Vinaya – notably the dependent origination and the 37 wings to enlightenment – which reinforce my argument considerably; however these passages are not as central to the structure of the Vinaya and so until their authenticity has been confirmed through comparative study of the other Vinayas we should avoid relying on them.

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is available in at least five Vinayas, as well as in the Nikāyas and Āgamas. It is, in fact, by far the most widespread of all the discourses, with no less than 17 existing versions, and is one of only a few discourses that survives in the four main Buddhist languages of Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan.<sup>11</sup> Inevitably, there are many variations in details, but the basic content is substantially similar – the four noble truths. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta presents these teachings within a framework that clearly relates to the Buddha's own spiritual development, his experiences with the extremes of self-indulgence in the palace and self-torture as an ascetic, and his own recent realization of enlightenment as the escape from these two. Thus the internal contents of the text itself suggest that it was the first discourse. The Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta also occurs in several versions, as do the Ādittapariyāya Sutta and the Request of Brahmā, although I am unable at present to uncover the full details. All these texts, however, are available in both the Nikāyas and the Āgamas.

These discourses form the doctrinal core of the oldest biography of the Buddha, telling the story from after the Buddha's enlightenment leading up to the formation of the Sangha. This is the root legend that forms a unifying narrative for all Buddhists. The story is told in many of the old texts, sometimes in the Vinaya, sometimes as a Sutta; in later embellished form it became a lengthy book in itself. But beneath the profuse elaborations remains a remarkable consistency in both the basic narrative and the doctrinal teachings. Even a late text like the Mahāvastu preserves teachings such as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta in nearly identical form.<sup>12</sup> They are universally regarded as the Buddha's first teachings, and so we have complete agreement between the concordance of the texts and the testimony of the tradition. Of course, it is impossible to ever establish that these texts were literally the first teachings. Nor can we deny that there are some minor differences between the versions. But we can be sure that these texts are fundamental to the existing collections of Buddhist scriptures, and there seems no good reason why this should not simply reflect the historical position.

There is a substantial problem with this neat theory, however. The passage we have been considering, the first chapter of the Vinaya Mahāvagga, is also found in the Sarvāstivādin tradition. However, this is not in the Vinaya, but in the Dīrgha Āgama under the title Catuspariṣat Sūtra ('Four Assemblies Sūtra').<sup>13</sup> This discourse exists in several versions, attesting to its popularity. It is very close to the Pali version, though lacking the specifically Vinaya elements. Several scholars have expressed the opinion that this text was originally part of the Vinaya, and was later moved to the Āgamas. If this is the case, there is no problem. However, it is quite possible that the movement was the other way around: the text was originally a discourse that was later incorporated into the Vinaya. This would suggest that these doctrinal passages were not, in fact part of the original Vinaya. In part, this question must await further inquiry, including detailed examination of the various Vinayas; some scholarly work has been done in this field. But I think it is better to consider the Catuspariṣat Sūtra as fundamental to both Dhamma and Vinaya. In leading up to the first sermon it supplies the background narrative for the Dhamma; and then Anna Kondanna's subsequent going forth is the perfect starting point to unfold the Vinaya.

We are trying to discern a glimpse of the earliest phase of Buddhism. In the early years, there would have been relatively few teachings. All the monks would have known by heart the few texts and discourses that were regarded as central. In addition, they would have all been familiar with the simple non-legalistic codes of behaviour expected of them as Buddhist mendicants. Thus

they would all have known both Dhamma and Vinaya. It would have taken a number of years for the bulk of the material to grow to the extent that specialization became necessary. From this point, certain monks and nuns would specialize in Dhamma, while others specialized in Vinaya. But this specialization has only ever been a matter of emphasis, not of exclusion. All the Vinaya specialists would have known some Dhamma, while all the Dhamma experts would know some Vinaya. It is entirely reasonable to suppose that the doctrinal teachings within the existing Vinayas are remnants, either directly or indirectly, of such a shared doctrinal body. It is also entirely reasonable to suggest that the monks and nuns would have all been familiar with the story of the Buddha's enlightenment, and that this legend would be given concrete literary form, although incorporating late details, largely to lend authority to this doctrinal core. That is to say, the Catuspariṣat Sūtra in its developed form may have been incorporated in the Vinaya precisely because the Vinaya experts were already familiar with the main doctrinal teachings of that discourse, and they would then be supplied with a historical context linking the doctrine with the establishment of the Sangha and the laying down of Vinaya. So I would conclude that the presence of the relevant doctrinal passages within the existing Vinayas remains as supporting evidence for the primacy of these teachings.

## THE GĀTHĀ THEORY

The GIST makes a strong case that the traditions, in this case, have got it right. A major scholarly challenge to this conclusion comes from what we can call the '*gāthā* theory'. This theory, which claims several very eminent scholars among its adherents, claims that the earliest recorded teachings that we possess today are to be found primarily among certain of the verse collections, notably the Aṭṭhaka and Pārāyana of the Sutta Nipāta.<sup>14</sup> However, while I agree that some of the verse is early, I do not think that the reasons given suffice to establish that the verses are generally earlier than the prose. To briefly state the case for and against the *gāthā* theory:

1. The language found in such texts harks back in some respects to the Vedas, and therefore is archaic.

Verse usually tends to be archaic; this could be supported in any number of cases by comparison of verse and prose passages by the same author even in modern times. This may partially be a matter of style, a preference for an archaic flavour, as in English verse one might affect 'thee' and 'thou'. Another factor is that, due to the constraints of metre, it is more difficult to translate verse as compared with prose from one Indian dialect into another; thus even in the later hybrid Sanskrit literature, the verse tends to retain more archaic Prakrit features, while the accompanying prose tends towards more formal Sanskrit. This tells us something about the translation process, but nothing about the relative ages of the different parts of the original text.

2. Several of these verses are referred to in the prose Nikāyas, and therefore must be earlier than those prose discourses.

This confirms only the chronological relationship in these few specific cases. In many other cases, verses are tacked on to the end of prose discourses, such as in the Aṅguttara, and there it seems likely that often it is the verses that were added later. Anyway, there are also prose passages that are quoted or referred to in other prose passages, notably the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which is explicitly or implicitly referred to in several important discourses. The references to the *gāthās*, moreover, while significant, never declare such passages to be the central message of the Dhamma. The key teachings, extolled over and over again in the early texts, comprise such teachings as the four noble truths, the 37 wings to enlightenment, the dependent origination, or the 'aggregates, sense media, and elements'. None of these topics are prominent in the *gāthās*. It

would be natural to assume that the earliest scriptural body consisted of teachings on just such core topics. Such references may even refer to specific texts where these doctrines are elucidated. Currently, the primary source for all these topics is the Saṃyutta.

3. The Aṭṭhaka and Pārāyana have their own canonical commentary within the Khuddaka Nikāya, the Niddesa.

This argument has recently been repeated by Gregory Schopen, who says that these are the ‘only’ texts that have received commentaries by the time of the earliest known redaction.<sup>15</sup> This seems like a strong point, until we realize that the Niddesa really just applies Abhidhamma technique to poetry, listing synonyms in mechanical, Abhidhamma style for each word in the verses. It is very similar to the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga, etc., and must stem from a similar period as a minor spin-off from the Abhidhamma project. The Vibhaṅga is clearly the more important work, and that consists largely of quotations and commentary of central prose passages of the Saṃyutta and Majjhima. In fact there is much ‘commentarial’ material even in the four Nikāyas: the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, which we will examine further below, is an explicit commentary on the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. Much of the Vinaya, too, consists of a commentary on the Pāṭimokkha.

4. Technical terminology and formulaic doctrines appear less often.

Again, this is simply part of the normal character of verse. Poetry is for inspiration, not information.

5. The monks lived as hermits in the forest rather than in settled monasteries, whereas in the prose this phase of Buddhism is largely absent, the discourses being normally set in monasteries.

This shift, from the forest life to established monasteries, is depicted in the texts themselves as having already begun within the Buddha’s lifetime, and there is every reason to believe that this was so. It is difficult to live in the forest, and the Sangha must have, before very long, started taking in recruits who were elderly, or infirm, or weak, and who would have required decent accommodation. This plain common sense is confirmed in many stories in the early texts. Here we may point out the parallel with the Franciscan order, which was accused by St Francis himself of backsliding from the rigorous standards he had set. In any case, the prose does in fact constantly refer to monks living in the forest. The mistake stems in part from the failure to distinguish between the teachings themselves and the narrative cladding in which the teachings appear, which must obviously be later. The outstanding example here is the teaching on the gradual training, the main paradigm for the monastic way of life, found in tens of discourses. Although the texts as they are today are set in monasteries, the body of the teaching itself refers simply to the monk, ‘gone to the forest, to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut...’ to meditate, with no mention of monasteries. This is a good piece of negative evidence: we know that later Buddhism was largely based in large monasteries, hence the fact that so many of the teachings extol the forest life strongly suggests these teachings must have appeared before the development of settled monasticism.

So it seems that in this instance the traditional belief can be maintained in the face of modern criticism. Please remember that we are not saying that the discourses as found today must be word for word identical with the first teachings, but that these teachings, in largely the same words and phrases, have been treated since earliest times as the most fundamental doctrines, and the traditions give us a plausible reason why this should be so. The massive preponderance of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta demands an explanation. The idea, influential for a time in

Buddhist studies, that these teachings hail from a ‘monkish’ revision of the Dhamma after the Buddha’s passing away has all the romance of a conspiracy theory, and all of its plausibility.

## THE EARLIEST COLLECTION

Having given grounds to establish the earliest discourses, we now ask: ‘What is the earliest collection of discourses?’ Here again we invoke our twin criteria: concordance of the texts and the testimony of the traditions. First we should seek for the collections that show the highest degree of congruence. Of the major collections, the following are available. The symbol ‡ denotes an incomplete collection. The Sanskrit Dīrgha is an exciting new finding coming out of Afghanistan and has not yet been fully edited.

**Table 2.1: The Nikāyas and the Āgamas**

Theravāda Nikāyas	Sarvāstivāda Āgamas	Other Āgamas (in Chinese)
Dīgha (Pali)	Dīrgha‡ (Sanskrit)	Dīrgha (Dharmaguptaka)
Majjhima (Pali)	Madhyama (Chinese)	
Saṃyutta (Pali)	Saṃyukta (Chinese)	Two ‘other’ Saṃyuktas‡ (unknown schools)
Aṅguttara (Pali)		Ekottara (Mahāsaṅghika?), Aṅguttara‡ (unknown school)

It will be useful here to make a few remarks about the early history of Buddhism, especially regarding the schools relevant to this study. The early chronology of Buddhism is still largely obscure. Even the most important date, the passing away of the Buddha, is specified very differently in different traditions, and it is far from obvious which, if any, is more reliable. Following Gombrich and others we might take the dates 484-404 B.C.E. for the Buddha as being no less reliable than other estimates. The schisms are undateable in an absolute sense, and even the relative chronology of the schisms is disputed. This probably reflects the real historical situation, since separative tendencies may have proceeded at different rates in different areas, and there may well have been no universal agreement even at the time as to the exact dates of the schisms. It is even unsure whether the Sangha at the time would have been conscious that it was creating lasting divisions into schools in the sense that we understand it today. The full implications of the breaches may only have become apparent many years later. Most of the sources date the first (Mahāsaṅghika) schism around 100-160 years after the Parinibbāna. The Sarvāstivāda schism was probably a few decades later, and the Dharmaguptaka later still.

The first separative movement, between the ancestral Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika, was driven by differing attitudes towards worldly things. The Mahāsaṅghika (‘Majority Community’) advocated a relaxing of certain Vinaya rules, especially about handling money. Later this relaxed attitude was extended to questions relating to the status of the arahant, whom they felt might still fall prey to certain human weaknesses. The Theravāda took a stricter stance on these questions, and eventually schism resulted. The Mahāsaṅghika proceeded to splinter into several sub-schools, and it is from these sub-schools that the rise of the Mahāyāna, much later, is usually traced. The existing Ekottara Āgama, which includes some Mahāyanist interpolations, is often said to come from one of these sub-schools, but the evidence is as yet inconclusive. We will, for

the purposes of this study, follow the majority of modern scholars in treating the Ekottara as stemming from one of the Mahāsaṅghika group of schools, although we should always bear in mind that this is only a tentative hypothesis. The results of our study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta tend to support this theory; at least, the Ekottara version of this discourse is relatively more divergent than the other versions, which is what we would expect of a Mahāsaṅghika text, even though the divergences are not explicitly sectarian.

The ancestral Theravāda, too, underwent many further schisms. The earliest of significance for our story was the Sarvāstivāda schism, which probably pre-dated Asoka's coronation in 268 B.C.E. Here the fundamental issue was the conception of time, the special Sarvāstivādin doctrine being that all dhammas past, present, and future, exist. The Sarvāstivāda schism produced, as well as the Sarvāstivāda, another school sometimes called the Vibhajjavāda, the 'Analytical School'. This label is used widely and inconsistently, but it is convenient to use it here as a term for the school ancestral to the Theravāda and the Dharmaguptaka. These schools are very similar in doctrine, the main difference apparently being a greater emphasis on devotion in the Dharmaguptaka, as evidenced by certain Vinaya rules regarding stupa worship, the comparison of the structure of the Dīghas, and the fact that they placed greater emphasis on the merit of making offerings to the Buddha rather than to the Sangha. This is all marginal stuff, and may be due to the Dharmaguptaka texts being settled somewhat later rather than a genuine sectarian divergence, for the Theravādins also embraced stupa worship very strongly, but did not insert it into their Vinaya. The only clearly sectarian difference from the Theravāda is the relative value of offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha. It seems likely that the divergence between these schools arose at least partly due to mere geography, the Dharmaguptaka being a branch of the Vibhajjavāda that stayed in Northern India while the Theravāda moved to Sri Lanka. The Dharmaguptaka became well established in Central Asia and initially enjoyed great success in China; Chinese bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs today still follow the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya.

Bearing this general information about the early schools in mind, we may return to our question as to which is the earliest collection. Generally, the traditions assert that all four collections were created simultaneously. Although the idea that they were put together in one session is obviously incorrect, we can still admit that the period of accumulation of texts largely overlaps. It is not implausible to even suppose that the four Nikāyas/Āgamas were started at the same time, and then finalized at the same time. This would be reinforced by the theory that each of the collections is focussed slightly differently, and was formed to cater to the needs of different sectors of the Buddhist community. Nevertheless, we may still distinguish in terms of a tendency to be earlier or later, even within this framework.

This question can, and should, be approached from a variety of angles – philological, doctrinal, cultural, and so on. All of these involve complex and large-scale investigations, and the results of none of these inquiries are yet beyond doubt. One problem with all of these approaches is that they can tell us, at best, about relative dates of certain phrases, ideas, or passages, but not about the collection as a whole. Bearing in mind the presence of intratextuality – the persistence of earlier text in later redactions – in the Nikāyas/Āgamas, and the vast quantity of material to be dealt with, it seems clear that only a very large scale statistical analysis of linguistic, doctrinal, or other features could give us firm answers. I do not know of any studies that even come close to this ideal.

Shrouded by this mass of darkness, I would suggest that the structural analysis of the Nikāyas/Āgamas offers us, at our present state of knowledge, the closest we have to a shining light. The structural principles of the collections tell us how the redactors of the collections worked, rather than how the compilers of the individual discourses worked. With the emergence of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha, we now have the full structural details of three Āgamas of one, very

important, school to compare with the Theravāda. This means we can directly evaluate the degree of congruence between the corresponding pairs of collections, without being overly concerned that sectarian issues might distort the picture.

We still lack a Sarvāstivādin collection corresponding to the Aṅguttara. Meaningful comparative studies for the Aṅguttara are very limited in scope, for the Theravāda Aṅguttara and Mahāsaṅghika Ekottara are very different, calling into question whether they are in fact recensions of a single work, or whether the existing similarities are merely due to the fact that they both use the same organizing principle. (There is another partial Aṅguttara in Chinese that is closer to the Theravādin version.) So for now, if we do not wish to delve into the complex question of whether the content of the Anguttaras seems to be earlier or later, all we can do is to put them to one side. My personal opinion is that the Anguttaras house the shorter discourses that were ‘left over’ from the main doctrinal topics in the Saṃyutta, so perhaps their omission from consideration is not so critical.

What is needed here is a comparison of the comparisons. We must ask, which collections appear to have the closest structural relationship, the three Dīghas, or the two Majjhimas, or the two Saṃyuttas? I will discuss each of these collections in further detail below, so I just present a quick overview here. In fact, the answer to this question is really obvious as soon as it is asked. The three Dīghas share many discourses in common, but the sequence and organization of the discourses are widely divergent. This is particularly the case when the Sarvāstivāda Dīgha is compared with the two Vibhajjavāda Dīghas. Similarly, the two Majjhimas share much content but little structure in common. Almost all the chapter titles and divisions are completely different, with a few exceptions discussed further below. (Anticipating the argument, we may notice that the occasional structural congruencies between the two Majjhimas and the three Dīghas may be derived from the Saṃyutta and are therefore not necessarily evidence of pre-sectarian structures in the Majjhimas and Dīghas). When we come to the two Saṃyuttas, however, the picture is radically different. They share all the same major divisions into subjects, etc., with some variations in the minor chapters and some reshuffling.<sup>16</sup> So we can say with some certainty that not only the content but also the structure of the Saṃyuttas were largely settled in the pre-sectarian period, whereas the structures of the Majjhimas and the Dīghas are largely sectarian. Thus, relying primarily on this very clear structural picture, we conclude that the concordance of the texts suggests that the Saṃyutta is earlier than the Majjhima and the Dīgha.

Some might object at this point that our reasoning proves nothing, since it is the Saṃyutta alone of the four Nikāyas/Āgamas that has a meaningful overall structure, so as soon as we choose to look at structure we will be drawn to it. In other words, our conclusion simply follows from our choice of methodology. This objection is perfectly true, yet I feel the argument still has force. We need some criterion, and structure is one possible means at our disposal. It is quite possible it will tell us nothing, yet we must at least ask the question and follow the answer through. The simple fact remains that the Saṃyutta does evidence a large scale structural congruence that is lacking in the other collections, and one rational explanation for this is that the Saṃyutta was settled earlier. It also seems to be the case that, in the case of the Majjhimas in particular, even when there is a structural grouping held in common, the actual content of that group is usually very different. For example, each of the Majjhimas has a vagga called the ‘Chapter on Kings’. In the Pali, this consists of ten discourses, in the Chinese, of fourteen. But only two discourses are held in common in the two vaggas.<sup>17</sup> Most of the other discourses are found in both the Pali and Chinese sources, but not in this chapter. Thus both of the traditions had the idea of collecting some middle-length discourses together on the theme of Kings, but the selection of discourses was independent. But in the Saṃyutta, we find almost invariably, when a group of discourses has been formed around a certain theme or principle, there is a very large percentage of the actual discourses that overlap. This is consistent with the thesis that the structures of the Saṃyutta are

pre-sectarian, while the occasional structural similarities in the Majjhima may have arisen through parallel development.

So what of the testimony of the traditions? This brings us to the important findings of Yin Shun. The Chinese and Tibetan canons contain a monumental treatise called the *Yogacārabhūmiśāstra*, written by Asaṅga around 400 C.E. This was a fundamental and authoritative work for the Yogacāra school of Mahāyāna. A section of this work called the *Vastusaṅgrāhinī* is devoted to an extensive commentary on the Saṃyukta Āgama. This demonstrates the heavy reliance by the classical Mahāyāna on the early discourses, a context that is too often overlooked. It is interesting that the other great school of early Mahāyāna, the Mādhyamaka, takes as its textual basis Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* ('Root Mādhyamaka Treatise'), which in turn is based on the *Kaccāyana Sutta* of the Saṃyutta. Thus the two main schools of the Mahāyāna share the Saṃyutta as a fundamental scripture, although I do not know of any evidence that Nāgārjuna relied on the Saṃyutta because he believed that it was historically the earliest collection. Yin Shun has shown that the Saṃyukta Āgama discussed in the *Yogacārabhūmiśāstra* is very close to the Saṃyukta now preserved in the Chinese canon, and has used the *Yogacārabhūmiśāstra* to reconstruct the earlier sequence of the Saṃyukta Āgama, which had become disordered over time. His reconstruction, which was built on the work of earlier scholars, and has been confirmed by later scholars, is considered so authoritative that it has been adopted in the Foguang edition of the *Āgamas* published in 1983. The *Yogacārabhūmiśāstra* suggests that the Saṃyukta Āgama was the foundation for the four Āgamas. Yin Shun believes that this statement can be interpreted literally, as affirming the historical priority of the Saṃyutta among the Āgamas. There does not seem to be any direct statement to this effect in the Theravāda tradition; however there are, we shall see, a few hints. The Sarvāstivādin tradition, however, regularly lists the Saṃyutta as the first of the Āgamas. Thus as to the first collection of discourses we have satisfied our two criteria, congruence of the texts and testimony of at least one tradition.

#### THE FIRST ABHIDHAMMA

What, then, of the first Abhidhamma? Here we rely primarily on the work of Frauwallner. He has demonstrated that three early Abhidhamma texts share much the same content and must have been derived from a common ancestor, which we call the '\*Vibhaṅga Mūla'. These are the *Vibhaṅga* of the Theravāda, the *Dharmaskandha* of the Sarvāstivāda, and the *Śāriputrābhidharma* of the Dharmaguptaka. The details of these works are too complex to go into here; for now we can take this congruence as established.

Both the Pali and Sanskrit traditions contain evidence that these texts were considered fundamental to the Abhidhamma. The epilogue to the Chinese translation of the *Dharmaskandha* says that it was the basic text of the Abhidhamma and the primary source for the Sarvāstivādin school. The *Vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka school outlines their Abhidhamma system, which is precisely the table of contents of the *Śāriputrābhidharma*. And the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, the main commentary on the Theravāda Abhidhamma, in its first chapter includes two prominent passages where the main topics of the Abhidhamma are listed; in the first passage, these are identical with the contents of the *Vibhaṅga*, and in the second passage very similar.<sup>18</sup> So here too the two criteria of the GIST are clearly satisfied.

To review our findings: we have demonstrated that according to both the concordance of the texts and the testimony of the traditions the following constitute the earliest strata of Buddhist texts.

**Earliest Discourses:** Dhammacakkappavattana, Anattalakkhaṇa, and Ādittapariyāya Suttas, and the Request of Brahmā.

**Earliest Collection:** Congruent sections of Saṃyutta Nikāya/Saṃyukta Āgama

**Earliest Abhidhamma:** Congruent sections of Vibhaṅga/Dharmaskandha/Śāriputrābhidharma

## SOME PROBLEMS

There is a possible objection that I would like to address here. Some might argue that our two independent criteria are not independent at all. The traditions might have decided which teachings were earliest and then invented myths expressing this, reinforcing their claim by multiplying the occurrence of these teachings in the various collections. We can see this at work even today. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta has been reproduced in dozens of Dhamma books, precisely because it is regarded by the traditions as the earliest teaching.

We must admit that this criticism has some force, especially in the case of the earliest discourses. But for the earliest collection and the earliest Abhidhamma this objection is weak, since the traditions, though preserving a dim memory of the priority of these texts, were generally not conscious of this, and did not make a display of it. Rather the opposite: the party line was that all the texts stem from the Buddha himself, so they were anxious to de-emphasize or outright deny any question of historical priority. For example, we said that the Vibhaṅga could be considered the fundamental work in Theravāda Abhidhamma by referring to the important first chapter of the Abhidhamma commentary, the Aṭṭhasālinī, which summarized the Abhidhamma by giving a list of the topics in the Vibhaṅga. This reference is itself somewhat incongruous, because these topics are usually not considered Abhidhamma as such; the distinctive Abhidhamma teachings in Theravāda today are usually said to be the matika of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the 24 conditions of the Paṭṭhāna, or later developments such as the ‘series of conscious moments’, etc. What is distinctively abhidhammic about the Vibhaṅga is not the list of topics, but the special mode of treatment; but this is not mentioned in the Aṭṭhasālinī reference. It is possible that here the Aṭṭhasālinī is passing on an old understanding of what constitutes Abhidhamma, even as, in the same chapter, it consciously articulates the myth authorizing the whole of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. Even in the case of the earliest discourses, though the objection carries some weight, it does not account for the massive agreement among the schools. Given the popularity of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, and the universal agreement that it was the first discourse, the most plausible explanation is simply that the traditions are right. How else would it have gained the approval of all Buddhists in the pre-sectarian period? Who, if not the Buddha, could have imbued it with such authority?

Another problem we need to bear in mind is the possibility of later borrowing. There is no doubt that borrowing did take place between the traditions in all periods. For example, the great Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa in his exposition of the practice of the Bodhisattva adapted parts of the Bodhisattvabhūmi from Asaṅga’s Yogacārabhūmiśāstra. Later borrowing must be borne in mind as an alternative to the thesis of a shared heritage. Generally, our response to this criticism is simply to pursue the thesis of shared heritage, follow through the implications, and see whether that leads to useful results. Working with the material in detail and in depth, it becomes more and more obvious that later borrowing is unlikely to affect more than a few details. This whole book can be read as a demonstration of the fruitfulness and reasonableness of this approach. This is not, it should be remembered, an arbitrary or unusual method. Scholars working in other areas, whether Bible studies or biology, regularly make use of similar hypotheses.



However, it might be useful to demonstrate at least one case where the thesis of later borrowing is very implausible. Let us consider the well-known Bhāra Sutta from the Khandha-saṃyutta.<sup>19</sup> This discourse is available in versions belonging to the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and (possibly) Mahāsaṅghika schools. It states that the five aggregates are the burden, and the ‘person’ (*puggala*) is the ‘bearer of the burden’. In light of the teachings on not-self, this is an unusual statement. While most of the schools took the line that the ‘person’ here was just a conventional way of speaking, one important group of schools, the Puggalavāda, declared that this referred to a real entity that existed outside the five aggregates. Their Abhidhamma treatise, existing in Chinese translation, refers explicitly to this same discourse.<sup>20</sup> Now, the Puggalavāda schism happened very early, soon after the first (Mahāsaṅghika) schism. So we have a very good spread of this discourse across all the earliest schools.

One of the important forces leading to schism was discussions and disagreements on the relevant doctrines. These discussions likely preceded the actual schism by a considerable time. As the split hardened, the schools began to formulate their position in accepted texts, developing sophisticated arguments defending their interpretation. This would have been essential training material for the energetic doctrinal debates that were ongoing. There are two main records of these discussions of the early period: Moggaliputtatissa’s Kathāvatthu in the Pali canon of the Theravādin school, and Devasarman’s Vijñānakāya, a canonical text of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma preserved in Chinese. The Kathāvatthu is traditionally ascribed to the period of Asoka; although much of the work is later, there is no reason to doubt that its origins, with some of the core arguments, stem from that period. Norman has in fact shown that the Kathāvatthu, especially the discussion of the ‘person’, includes an unusual number of Magadhan grammatical forms, suggestive of an Asokan connection.<sup>21</sup> The edicts show Asoka’s great concern to prevent schism in the Sangha, suggesting that the schismatic tendency was evident in his time. The Puggalavāda schism was among the earliest, perhaps even before the split between the Sarvāstivāda and the Vibhajjavāda.

The first and longest section of both of these works is a lengthy refutation of the ‘person’ thesis. This is obviously a core issue, perhaps the initial motivation for writing these works. This schism hurt. It was still fresh in their minds, felt as a direct assault on the cherished doctrine of not-self.

We might then ask: how can this situation best be explained? Let us assume that the Puggalavāda wrote the Bhāra Sutta to justify their special doctrine. This must have happened in the early schismatic period, while they were freshly arguing with their brothers and sisters in the other schools. The other schools were so persuaded by the authenticity of this discourse, apparently, that they borrowed it for inclusion in their central doctrinal collections, even as they were at the same time furiously arguing against the ‘person’ thesis as the worst of heresies. The Puggalavādins were so successful with their forged discourse that it became accepted without a murmur of protest or questioning across the schools for all time.

Or let us suppose that another school invented this discourse, say the Theravādins. They had been arguing with rivals, who they regarded as apostates, over the doctrine of the ‘person’. Somehow, they produced a discourse that seems to justify their opponent’s arguments and included it in their canon, being too dim-witted to see the implications. This discourse became rapidly ‘seeded’ across a variety of schools over the breadth of India; one can only assume that they were very enthusiastic about their new creation and wished to spread it far and wide. When it became known to the Theravādins’ arch-rivals the Puggalavādins, they leapt on it with glee to justify their main thesis, although it is not recorded that they thanked the authors for the gift.

If these options do not appeal, perhaps we might fall back on the drab and hackneyed idea of shared heritage. There was an discourse called the Bhāra Sutta. This was, perhaps, spoken by the

Buddha; or at least it was accepted as such by the first generations of Buddhists in the pre-sectarian period. As it dealt with the important doctrine of the five aggregates, it was assembled, along with many related discourses, in a collection that came to be called the 'Khandha-saṃyutta'. Thus its canonicity was assured. As discussions into the meanings of the discourses went on, some began to see a special significance in the mention of the 'person' here, to notice other places where the word 'person' seemed also suggestive, and to develop the 'personalist' thesis. Although some attempted to dissuade them, they persisted in their views, and eventually schism resulted. Each school inherited a version of the problematic discourse, which was already so deeply embedded in the received canon that its status was unimpeachable, and developed their own interpretation in accord with their views. These interpretations became embodied in the Abhidhamma works of the schools.

I trust that the reader, like myself, finds the final option the most plausible. Of course, not every discourse can be established so easily. But if even one discourse can be shown to be pre-sectarian, this makes it all the more likely that other similar discourses, and the collections in which these are found, also include pre-sectarian material. At least we shall not seem unreasonable if we follow this path to see where it might lead us.

## CHAPTER 3: THE GIST 2 – THE AGREEMENT OF THE THREE STRATA

### THE SEEDS OF THE SAṂYUTTA

And so to our second major question: what is the relationship of these strata to each other? The first outstanding feature is that all of the texts identified as earliest discourses are found in the Saṃyutta, the earliest collection. This is a compelling reason to consider these discourses as the root texts of all Buddhism, not in any vague or rhetorical sense, but as the literal historical seed around which the Saṃyutta and then the other collections crystallized.

It may well be the case that the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta was originally the first discourse in the Saṃyutta. At present it is number eleven in the Theravāda Sacca-saṃyutta; but in the Chinese it is the first in this chapter. (The position in the Pali can be explained by the later insertion of a *vagga* of ten discourses in front.) So if the Saṃyutta was the first collection and the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta was the first discourse in its chapter, it doesn't take too much of a leap to postulate that the Sacca-saṃyutta may have originally been the first topic in the Saṃyutta Nikāya. This would, of course, be logical, for the four noble truths is the most general, all-encompassing teaching, of which the other doctrinal categories are more specialized explanations.

There is perhaps an echo of this original structure preserved in the title given this discourse in the Pali. In most manuscripts the name 'Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta' does not occur; the

discourse is called *tathāgatena vutta* ('Spoken by the Tathagata'). This is, on the face of it, a bit odd, for most of the discourses are, of course, attributed to the Buddha. However the terms 'Spoken by the Buddha' and 'Spoken by the Disciples' occur in the Chinese recension, not as titles of discourses, but as titles of sections. Perhaps the label *tathāgatena vutta* referred originally, not to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta specifically, but to a section within a collection of discourses that consisted purely of teachings given directly by the Buddha himself.<sup>22</sup>

So it seems reasonable to suggest that the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta was originally, not the eleventh discourse in the fifty-sixth book of the third collection, but the first discourse in the first book of the first collection. The internal structure of the existing collections does not, so far as I can see, suggest that the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta and the Ādittapariyāya Sutta ever enjoyed similar primacy within their respective collections. There is some suggestion that the Request of Brahmā may have been the first discourse in the Sagāthā Vagga, based on Bucknell's reconstruction, following the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra, of the Sagāthā Vagga along the lines of the Eight Assemblies; however the argument is too complex to go into here.<sup>23</sup> The Request of Brahmā is, surprisingly, missing from the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta, although it is found in the Ekottara and (Sanskrit) Dīrgha Āgamas, and probably elsewhere, appearing immediately before the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, just as in the Vinaya.

The primacy of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta as the cornerstone of the canonical collections is supported in some of the accounts of the First Council, preserved in the Vinayas of the schools. As might be expected, each school preserves a version of the events at this Council that serves to authorize its own canon. For example, the Theravāda states that the Brahmajāla Sutta was recited first; and in the existing Pali Tipitaka we do indeed find that the Brahmajāla Sutta is the first discourse in the first collection, the Dīrgha Nikāya. This fact tends to discount the value of the sectarian accounts of the Councils as records of history. But, while not all the accounts can be accepted, there is no reason why at least one should not be substantially correct. In fact, given that the general historicity and importance of the First Council is widely accepted, it would seem likely that some memory of the actual procedures of the main business would be accurately preserved somewhere in the traditions. Only if the school later re-organized their scriptures would they feel the need to revise their account. Thus even if the existence of a corroborating account is not felt to strongly verify a theory of what happened at the First Council, the absence of a corroborating account would tend to falsify such a theory.

We should therefore consider whether any of the schools included an account of the First Council that is in line with the GIST. We do not have to look far, for the most influential of the Indian schools, the Sarvāstivādins, say the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta was the first discourse recited at the Council. They were followed by the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya<sup>24</sup>. In this narrative, the holding of the First Council is presaged by the Buddha's exhortation, shortly before he passes away, for the Sangha to preserve the Dhamma by reciting the twelve angas. Then, after the Buddha's passing away, having convened the Council, Venerable Mahā Kassapa requested that Venerable Ānanda recite the Suttas.<sup>25</sup> He first spoke the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. As we shall see below in the excerpt from the Catuspariṣat Sūtra, the Sarvastivada tradition does not include the detailed description of each of the truths (as is found in the Pali) in the first discourse. The detailed description (birth is suffering...) is here said to be the second discourse. The discourse on not-self, 'also spoken at Benares for the sake of the five monks', is therefore said to be the third discourse. When these discourses were given, all without flaw or criticism, all the arahants accepted them as the Buddha's true teaching.

'Thus Ānanda now explained every teaching. Every arahant unanimously participated in the Council. And so the five-aggregate-saṃyutta was compiled and placed in the Khandha Vagga. And also the six-sense-media-and-eighteen-elements-saṃyutta was compiled and placed in the

Āyatana-dhātu Vagga. And also the dependent-origination-and-noble-truths-saṃyutta was compiled and placed with the name Paṭicca-samuppāda [text omits ‘Vagga’; note that 緣起 can stand for either *paṭicca-samuppāda* or *nidāna*]. All those teachings that were spoken by disciples were placed in the Śrāvaka Vagga. All those teachings that were spoken by the Buddha were placed in the Buddha Vagga. All those dealing with satipatthana, right efforts, bases of psychic power, spiritual faculties, spiritual powers, enlightenment [-factors], and the path were compiled and placed in the Magga Vagga. Also the sutras in the ‘with-verses-saṃyutta’. These are now called the Saṃyukta Āgama. All the discourses that were long teachings were named the Dīrgha Āgama. All the discourses that were middle-length teachings were named the Madhyama Āgama. All those discourses with one topic, two topics, up to ten topics, these were now named the Ekottara Āgama.<sup>26</sup>

Notice that after referring to the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the passage goes on to speak of compiling a saṃyutta of texts dealing with the aggregates. Now, the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta is the fundamental text on the aggregates, and this is in fact included in the main group of texts on the aggregates, namely the Khandha-saṃyutta. Next the text speaks of a collection dealing with the sense media. Here the Ādittapariyaya Sutta is the basic text, and although it is not mentioned in the above account, in the Theravāda tradition this is regarded as the third discourse. It is included in the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta. The categories ‘spoken by disciples’ and ‘spoken by the Buddha’ are found in the existing Saṃyukta Āgama. The next passage clearly lists the 37 wings to enlightenment. These topics are the backbone of the Magga Vagga (or in the Theravāda, the Mahā Vagga) of the Saṃyutta. Finally the Sagāthā Vagga is mentioned. Clearly, then, this passage authorises the Saṃyutta as the central body of the fundamental teachings, collected around the seeds of the first discourses. Then follows the other three Nikāyas/Āgamas, compiled after the Saṃyutta. While it may be a sheer coincidence, it is worth noting that the title of this section of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya is ‘Saṃyukta Vastu’, which could be rendered ‘The Story of the Saṃyutta’.

So the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya account suggests to us some clear relationships between what we have identified as the earliest discourses and the earliest collection. It then goes on to depict Venerable Mahā Kassapa presenting the matika, the list of contents of the Abhidhamma. This is not mentioned in the Theravāda account, and is clearly a later interpolation. But it is of interest in that it shows what was presumably regarded as the basic topics of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Abhidharma. This Abhidharma has not survived, and the given topics do not exactly match with any of the existing Abhidharma works, not even the Sarvāstivāda. Nevertheless, there are strong lines of continuity with what we shall later identify as the root-Abhidhamma treatise common to the schools.

‘The matika is that which makes perfectly lucid and explicit the distinguishing points of that which ought to be known. Thus it comprises the four satipatthanas, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic powers, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven enlightenment-factors, the noble eightfold path, the four kinds of intrepidity [*vesārajjā*], the four discriminations [*paṭisambhidhā*], the four fruits of asceticism [*sāmaññaphala*]<sup>27</sup>, the four words of the Dhamma [*dhammapāda*]<sup>28</sup>, non-conflict [*araṇadhamma?*], remote samadhi [*pantasamādhi?*], empty, signless, and undirected samadhi, development of samadhi, right penetration [*abhisamaya*], conventional knowledge [*sammutiñāṇa?*], samatha and vipassana, Dhammasaṅgaṇī, Dharmaskandha – this is in what consists the matika...<sup>29</sup>

Here appear, yet again, the 37 wings to enlightenment. The standard wisdom topics – aggregates, etc. – do not appear. Most of the items are dhamma topics, but the final two are titles of books in the existing Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Abhidhamma Piṭakas respectively. These were probably

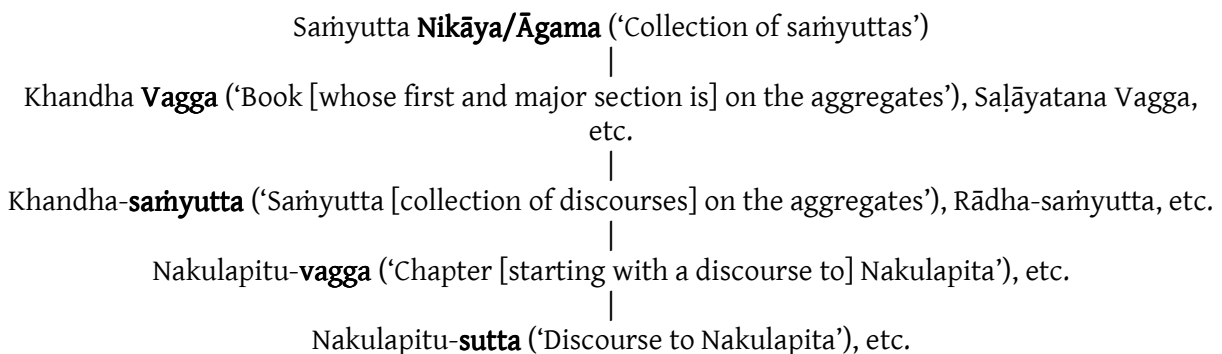
extensive Abhidhamma books, possibly sharing a common basis with their existing namesakes, and would have dealt with the wisdom topics according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda system.

It is a puzzling feature, highlighted in the narrative of the Buddha’s passing away, but implicit through the traditions, that the Buddha is said to have encouraged the Sangha to recite the angas; but the recorded traditions of the First Council say nothing of the angas. What is the missing link here? Is there some hidden connection between the angas and the existing scriptures?

## THE TWO SAMYUTTAS

We know that the existing Saṃyuttas are substantially disordered, if only because they vary between the Pali and Chinese. Since it is obvious that they are closely related, we are bound to inquire as to why they differ. Perhaps one is right and the other is wrong, or more likely, each has diverged in its own way. Any structural similarities may be taken as suggestive of a common inheritance.

Before looking more closely at the contents of the Saṃyutta, we must briefly remark on a few confusing terminological ambiguities. The word ‘saṃyutta’, which means ‘connected’, in this context primarily refers to a collection of discourses on a certain Dhamma theme. Thus we have the ‘Khandha-saṃyutta’, the collection of discourses on the five aggregates; the ‘Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta’, the collection of discourses on the six senses, and so on. Sometimes the ‘connection’ is not a Dhamma theme, but some other criterion, such as literary style (Sagāthā Vagga, Opamma-saṃyutta), or a person (Anuruddha-saṃyutta, etc.). These saṃyuttas are then gathered together in a large collection called the ‘Saṃyutta Nikāya’ or ‘Saṃyukta Āgama’, which is the ‘Collection of saṃyuttas’. Thus the word ‘saṃyutta’ can be used to refer either to this large overall body (in which case we conventionally capitalize it as ‘the Saṃyutta’) or to the individual topics (which we write in lower case as ‘saṃyuttas’). There is a similar ambiguity in the word ‘vagga’. This is used in the sense of ‘book’ as a term for each of the five great divisions into which the Saṃyutta as a whole is divided. Each of these ‘Vaggas’ (capitalized) includes a number of saṃyuttas, and is usually named after its largest saṃyutta, which is usually also its first saṃyutta. But the more important sense of ‘vagga’ is the small scale (and hence lower case) use within the saṃyuttas, where it refers to a group of usually ten discourses. The overall ‘vertical’ structure of the Saṃyuttas is therefore layered like this:



Here is the comparison between the basic structure of the reconstructed Chinese and the existing Pali Saṃyutta.

**Table 3.1: The Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda Saṃyuttas**

Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta Āgama	Theravāda Saṃyutta Nikāya
	1. Sagāthā Vagga
	2. Nidāna Vagga
1. Khandha Vagga	3. Khandha Vagga
2. Saḷāyatana Vagga	4. Saḷāyatana Vagga
3. Nidāna Vagga	
4. Sāvakaḥāsita Vagga	
5. Magga Vagga	5. Mahā Vagga (=Magga Vagga)
6. Buddhahāsita Vagga	
7. Sagāthā Vagga	

The discrepancies are not as great as would appear. Most of the material found in the Sāvakaḥāsita ('spoken by disciples') and Buddhahāsita ('spoken by the Buddha') Vaggas is distributed in the minor chapters added in the second through fifth Vaggas in the Theravāda. The Khandha, Saḷāyatana, and Magga Vaggas are in the same sequence in both collections. Only the Nidāna and Sagāthā Vaggas have moved. There is internal evidence of reshuffling of these books within the Theravāda canon. The Sagāthā Vagga consists of discourses with verses, and is thus clearly distinguished from the remaining prose collections. But there is one other saṃyutta with verses; this is the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta, which in the Theravāda is at the end of the Nidāna Vagga. As acknowledged by Bhikkhu Bodhi, this suggests that it originally belonged to the Sagāthā Vagga, a suspicion confirmed by the fact that the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta is indeed found in the Chinese Sagāthā Vagga.<sup>30</sup> Bucknell has further shown that the Pali commentary hints of a time when the Nidāna Vagga, not the Sagāthā Vagga, was the first book of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.<sup>31</sup> There is a standard passage found in the commentaries to all four Nikāyas that describes the different reasons why the Buddha teaches – in response to a question, from his own inspiration, etc. In the Dīgha, Majjhima, and Aṅguttara commentaries this appears in the commentary to the first discourse of the collection; but in the Saṃyutta it appears in the commentary to the first discourse in the Nidāna-saṃyutta. Since the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta is at the end of the Theravāda Nidāna Vagga but at the beginning of the Sarvāstivāda Sagāthā Vagga, it seems plausible that the rearrangement came about simply by misshelving: there were some pages left blank at the end of the Nidāna Vagga, so the scribe began the Sagāthā Vagga by writing the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta of the same manuscript, but subsequently an unmindful monk took the Nidāna Vagga out as the first book and replaced it as the second book (or took the Sagāthā Vagga out as the second and replaced it as the first.) Thus the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta became separated from its natural pair, the Bhikkhunī-saṃyutta. It must be admitted that in this respect the Chinese maintains a more rational and probably more authentic tradition than the Pali. So while it is not possible to resolve all the differences in structure between the two Saṃyuttas in any simple way, we can point to some clear cases of disarrangement of texts, specifically involving those books that are in different sequence in the two collections. These kinds of disarrangements may clearly have contributed to the divergence from a common ancestral Saṃyutta to the collections existing today.

It has been pointed out by several scholars that the overall structure of the Saṃyutta Nikāya/Āgama corresponds roughly with the four noble truths. Bhikkhu Bodhi notes that this correspondence is more apparent in the Chinese than the Pali.<sup>32</sup> The five aggregates and six sense media pertain to the first noble truth; dependent origination (Nidāna-saṃyutta) to the second and third; and the path is the fourth. We may refer to these fundamental topics in a general sense as the 'saṃyutta-matika'. We mentioned above that the backbone of this Magga Vagga is the 37 wings to enlightenment; in the Chinese these are preserved in a sequence that more closely

follows the standard Sutta sequence.<sup>33</sup> We therefore have a number of indications that the Chinese is more structurally reliable than the Pali: the position of the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta; the overall correspondence with the four noble truths; and the sequence of the wings to enlightenment.

We have become so used to considering the 37 wings to enlightenment as a standard doctrinal set that we automatically think that the Magga Vagga was assembled by taking the list and collecting appropriate discourses under each topic. But perhaps the situation is the reverse: perhaps the list of 37 wings to enlightenment has been abstracted from the Magga Vagga topics. The discourses came first; they were collected according to topic; the collections were given titles; the titles became used as a shorthand way of referring to the collection; and then the titles became established as an independent list, repeated and elaborated in countless later works, with their origins in the Saṃyutta largely forgotten.

If this theory is true it might help to explain some puzzling features of the list. For example, the five spiritual faculties and five spiritual powers consist of exactly the same dhammas, and there is no obvious reason why this set is repeated. Traditionally they are explained as being the same qualities at different degrees; but this is not how the Saṃyutta sees them.<sup>34</sup> The situation is even stranger in the Theravāda Saṃyutta, for the Bala-saṃyutta is virtually redundant, being just a repetition series on the spiritual powers. But the Sarvāstivāda Bala-saṃyutta has a substantial collection of texts, gathering together many of the discourses on different sets of ‘powers’ that in the Theravāda are scattered about the canon, including the five spiritual powers. This is surely more likely to represent the original collection. The Indriya-saṃyutta, likewise, has discourses dealing with various sets of faculties in addition to the five spiritual faculties – sense faculties, feeling faculties, etc. In the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga these became fixed into the classic set of 22 faculties. If, then, we compare the two saṃyuttas, one on various faculties, the other on various powers, they contain substantially different teachings, with the five spiritual faculties and five spiritual powers being the only overlapping sets. So there is no problem understanding why there should be two collections, one on the faculties, one on the powers. It is only when the titles become abstracted and considered to apply exclusively to the five spiritual faculties and the five spiritual powers that they appear redundant.

It begins to seem as if the entire Saṃyutta is a massive exposition of the four noble truths. This would be the traditional assumption of the schools; books on exegetical method such as the *Netti* and the *Peṭakopadesa* teach that the correct understanding of any discourse requires that it be examined in the light of the four noble truths. But now we can give this traditional interpretation a more concrete literary form. We have seen that at least some traditions treat the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* as the first discourse in this collection, and the seed around which the collection crystallized. This would suggest that the *Sacca-saṃyutta*, containing the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, would have been the first collection. This is not so now: it is in the *Nidāna Vagga* of the Sarvāstivāda and the end of the *Mahā Vagga* of the Theravāda. This type of ambiguity in position is found throughout the attempts to systematize the relationship between the truths and the other doctrinal categories. It seems to result from the limitations caused by imposing a linear textual structure on the organic structure of the Dhamma itself. The truths, though starting off as the overarching framework within which the other teachings are encompassed, come to be treated as just one more doctrinal item in the list. But they have no specific position within the list and can occur in almost any position. It appears that the correlation with the truths was uppermost in the minds of those who originally assembled the collections, but that for later generations this memory became dimmed. If our thinking is sound, therefore, we may infer that the original groundplan of the Saṃyutta reflected the truths even more closely. Such an inferred original collection is represented in the table below.

## THE ROOT ABHIDHAMMA TOPICS

First, however, we must consider the third and last of our strata of texts, the Abhidhammas. The topics elucidated in the Saṃyutta remain very close to the fundamental doctrines set forth in the earliest discourses. Many of the discourses in the Saṃyutta are, in fact, mere variations spun out of those basic texts. The same situation obtains in the case of the earliest Abhidhammas. Below are the matikas of the Abhidhamma texts of three schools, identified by Frauwallner as harking back to a common, pre-sectarian ancestor. He gives considerable detail; however he overlooks a couple of relevant points. The Dharmaskandha fragments from Gilgit have the dependent origination leading straight on to the 5 precepts. This suggests the sequence in the Chinese has been disrupted, perhaps by an accidental reshuffling of manuscripts. If we moved the wisdom teachings – from the faculties to the dependent origination – to the start, this would restore the connection between the dependent origination and the 5 precepts, and would also make the structure of the Dharmaskandha broadly similar to the Vibhaṅga and Śāriputrābhidharma (and the Saṃyutta). We cannot be sure the change was accidental, though, for the existing structure is certainly rational, corresponding with the classic threesome of ethics, samadhi, and understanding. In this aspect the Dharmaskandha is similar to the later Theravāda treatise, the Visuddhimagga. Another curious feature of the Dharmaskandha is that it omits the eightfold path. We must surely accept that this was part of the original treatise, and its loss must be accidental. Perhaps it simply fell off the manuscript, or was misplaced. In the following table the factors common to all three texts are highlighted. Even the factors not shared by all three of these texts, however, almost all have their own cognates in either Sutta or Abhidhamma.

**Table 3.2: The Three Versions of the Primary Abhidhamma Matika**

	<b>Theravāda Vibhaṅga</b>	<b>Sarvāstivāda Dharmaskandha</b>	<b>Dharmaguptaka Śāriputrābhidharma</b>
1	5 aggregates	5 precepts	12 sense media
2	12 sense media	4 factors of stream-entry	18 elements
3	36 elements	4 confirmed faiths	5 aggregates
4	4 noble truths	4 fruits of asceticism	4 noble truths
5	22 faculties	4 ways of practice	22 faculties
6	Dependent origination	4 noble lineages	7 enlightenment-factors
7	4 satipatthanas	4 right efforts	3 unskilful roots
8	4 right efforts	4 bases of psychic power	3 skilful roots
9	4 bases of psychic power	4 satipatthanas	4 great elements
10	7 enlightenment-factors	4 noble truths	5 precepts
11	8-fold path	4 jhanas	Elements
12	4 jhanas	4 divine abidings	Kamma
13	4 divine abidings	4 formless attainments	Persons <sup>35</sup>
14	5 precepts	4 developments of samadhi	Knowledge <sup>36</sup>
15	4 discriminations	7 enlightenment-factors	Dependent origination
16	Khuddakavatthu <sup>37</sup>	Khuddakavatthu	4 satipatthanas
17	Nanavibhanga <sup>38</sup>	22 faculties	4 right efforts
18	Dhammahadaya <sup>39</sup>	12 sense media	4 bases of psychic power
19		5 aggregates	4 jhanas
20		62 elements	8-fold path
21		Dependent origination	Unskilful dhammas <sup>40</sup>
22			Sangraha <sup>41</sup>
23			Sampayoga
24			Prasthanā



## THE THREE STRATA COMPARED

Now that we have some idea of the content of each of the three strata, we can consider the relationship between them. Here is a comparative list of the main teachings in these strata, omitting secondary matter. There is no need to justify this table in detail, since most items are obvious, but a few notes are given in less obvious cases. In the case of the Abhidhamma, I have identified the precise texts from which the Theravāda Vibhaṅga has sourced its material; the Dharmaskandha and Sāriputrābhidharma share only some of these sources.<sup>42</sup> Variant or dubious texts are marked with an asterisk.

**Table 3.3: The Three Strata**

Earliest Discourses	Earliest Collection	Earliest Abhidhamma
Truths	Truths	Truths (MN 141/MA 31/EA 27.1)
Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates (SN 22.59/SA 34 Anattalakkhaṇa)
Sense media	Sense media	Sense media <sup>43</sup>
	Elements <sup>44</sup>	Elements (MN 115/MA 181/Tib*; MN 141/MA 162)
	Feelings	
Origin of suffering	Dependent origination	Dependent origination (SN 12.2/SA 298/Skt)
Defilements	Defilements <sup>45</sup>	Defilements <sup>46</sup>
	Kamma <sup>47</sup>	Kamma
Cessation of suffering	Dependent origination	Dependent origination (SN 12.1, 2/SA 298/Skt)
	Attainment of Nibbana <sup>48</sup>	Attainment of Nibbana
Eightfold path	Eightfold path	Eightfold path (SN 45.8/SA 783*)
	Satipatthana	Satipatthana (MN 10/MA 98/EA 12.1)
	Right efforts	Right efforts (SN 49) <sup>49</sup>
	Bases of psychic power	Bases of psychic power (SN 51.13)
	Spiritual faculties	22 faculties <sup>50</sup>
	Spiritual powers	(Spiritual powers) <sup>51</sup> (AN 5.14-15/SA 675)
	Enlightenment-factors	Enlightenment-factors (SN 46.3/SA 736, 740, 724*; SN 46.5/SA 733, etc.)
	Training ( <i>sikkhā</i> ) <sup>52</sup>	Training (Jhānavibhaṅga=MN 39/MA 182/EA 49.8, etc.; Sikkhāpadavibhaṅga = 5 precepts)

This level of congruence is startling, bearing in mind that we established these three strata independently, without referring to the doctrinal similarities between the strata. These topics are the backbone of the Dhamma, repeated countless times in countless variations through all schools in all the history of Buddhism. I have, with no great labour, counted over a dozen Abhidhamma and commentarial works of various schools that are based on these topics. Usually the framework of the four noble truths can still be discerned underlying the complex surface structures. It should hardly need saying that this congruence in the content of the doctrinal lists does not prove that the schools understood the doctrines in the same way. Each of the schools evolved its own interpretation, which differed both in detail and in principle.

## THE SAMYUTTA-MATIKA IN THE MAHĀYĀNA

The persistence of the saṃyutta-matika in the Abhidharma is unsurprising. It is more striking how important it remained for the Mahāyāna as well. The saṃyutta-matika is fundamental to the

structure of the Heart Sūtra, and thus to the Prajñāpāramita and Mahāyāna in general, especially the Mādhyamakas, for whom the Prajñāpāramita provided the chief textual inspiration. The Heart Sūtra, which is usually dated to the second century of the Common Era, starts with Avalokiteśvara seeing that the five aggregates are empty of ‘intrinsic essence’ (*svabhāva*), and then applying this analysis through the wisdom section of the saṃyutta-matika. The topics listed are: the five aggregates, the sense media, the 18 elements, dependent origination, and the four noble truths. These are all thoroughly equated with emptiness, which Nāgarjuna, following the Sarvāstivāda Nidāna-saṃyukta, had already identified as dependent origination. Thus the Heart Sūtra critiques an interpretation of the topics of the saṃyutta-matika in terms of the Abhidhamma theory of ‘intrinsic essence’, replacing that with dependent origination. This Mādhyamaka philosophy can hardly be regarded as an innovation.

The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra offers a more explicit (and entertaining) account of what the issues are about.<sup>53</sup> This text was apparently composed in the second century of the Common Era to establish the hermeneutic of the Yogacāra school. The main thrust is that conceptual understanding that concerns itself with the details of things – an obvious reference to the Abhidhamma schools – is born of imagination and thought-constructs, and takes these to be reality, but only with the non-conceptual unification of samadhi is true wisdom born. The following passage shows how a forest monk can sometimes regard the study monks in their big monasteries, a perspective that is echoed often enough today:

‘The Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha and said: “World-honoured One, in the world of sentient beings, I know a few who state their understanding without pride, but I know innumerable, untold sentient beings who cherish their pride and state their understanding in a prideful manner. World-honoured One, once I was dwelling in a grove in a forest. A large number of monks lived nearby. I saw them assemble after sunrise to discuss various issues and to propose their understandings, each according to his insight.

“Some proposed their understanding of the aggregates, their characteristics, their arising, their ending, their destruction, and the realization of their destruction. Others, in a similar fashion, proposed their understanding of the sense media, dependent origination, nutriments, the truths, the elements. Others proposed their understanding of the satipatthanas, their characteristics, the states they are able to control, their cultivation, their arising from a state of being non-arisen, their non-disappearance after arising, and their increase from repeated practice. Others spoke of the true severance [=right efforts], bases of psychic power, spiritual faculties, spiritual powers, enlightenment-factors, or of the eightfold path in a similar fashion.

“...all of them cherished their pride, and, because they clung to that pride, they were unable to comprehend the one universal taste of the truth of ultimate meaning.”

‘Then the World-honoured One addressed Subhūti and said: “This is so, Subhūti, for I have been awakened to the truth of ultimate meaning which is of one universal taste, most subtle, most profound, most difficult to fathom. Having been awakened, I declare, preach, explain, and illumine it for the sake of others. What is it that I have preached, Subhūti? I have preached that the purified content of understanding in all the aggregates, [text omits sense media], dependent origination, nutriments, [text omits truths], elements, satipatthana, true severance, bases of psychic power, enlightenment-factors, and path factors is the truth of ultimate meaning. This purified content of understanding is characterized as being of one taste...

“Furthermore, Subhūti, once those practicing monks who cultivate samadhi have understood the suchness of a single group, the selflessness of the teaching on ultimate meaning, they will not

engage in analysing one after the other the aggregates, sense media, dependent origination, nutriments, the truths, the elements, the satipatthanas [etc.].”<sup>54</sup>

The text then regularly mentions this list of dhammas as a fundamental paradigm:

‘ “The World-honoured One in a immeasurable number of sermons has explained the aggregates... sense media... dependent origination... nutriments... truths... elements... satipatthanas... right efforts... bases of psychic power... spiritual faculties... [text omits spiritual powers]... enlightenment-factors... eightfold path.”<sup>55</sup>

‘ “The World-honoured One has designed the other aspect [of his teaching, that is, other than the teaching of ultimate emptiness] that ultimate meaning is without essence in reference to the pattern of full perfection, the purified content of understanding that is the non-self of all things, that is suchness, that is the pattern of full perfection. This is how the aggregates...sense media...12 branches of existence [= dependent origination]...four nutriments...six and eighteen elements should be explained....[also the] satipatthanas, right efforts, bases of psychic power, spiritual faculties, spiritual powers, enlightenment-factors, eightfold path. All these should be explained in this manner.”<sup>56</sup>

These teachings become so familiar that the text often abbreviates, simply mentioning, for example ‘aggregates, sense media, all discussed above...’<sup>57</sup>; or else ‘the five aggregates, the six internal sense media, the six external sense media, and suchlike.’<sup>58</sup> Now, we have referred to this general list of topics as the ‘saṃyutta-matika’. The affinity between this list and the Saṃyutta is undeniable; but in many cases in the Abhidhamma, etc., the situation is complicated by the addition of other factors. So one might suspect that here we have merely an affinity of ideas, rather than literal branches of the same historical trunk. But let us compare this specific list, repeated with reasonable consistency throughout the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra,<sup>59</sup> with the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta. In particular, let us use those saṃyuttas identified by the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra as the central doctrinal chapters (on which more below), leaving aside the minor saṃyuttas and those spoken by disciples. Angles (<->) are used to indicate where saṃyuttas have been omitted. In both cases we preserve the original sequence. We also give the list of topics in the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra’s definition of the *sutta* anga in the Śrāvakahūmi section.

**Table 3.4: The Saṃyukta, the Saṃdhinirmocana, and the Śrāvakahūmi**

Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta	Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra	Śrāvakahūmi <sup>60</sup>
Aggregates (Rādha, Diṭṭhi) <sup>61</sup>	Aggregates	Aggregates
		Elements <sup>62</sup>
Sense media	Sense media	Sense media
Dependent origination	Dependent origination	Dependent origination
Nutriments (four)	Nutriments (four)	Nutriments
Truths	Truths	Truths
Elements	Elements	
Feelings	(no)	(no)
< >		Śrāvaka
		Pacceka Buddha
		Tathagata
Satipatthana	Satipatthana	Satipatthana
Right efforts (lost)	Right efforts	Right efforts
Bases of psychic Power (lost)	Bases of psychic power	Bases of psychic power
Spiritual faculties	Spiritual faculties	Spiritual faculties

Spiritual powers	Spiritual powers	Spiritual Powers
Enlightenment-factors	Enlightenment-factors	Enlightenment-factors
Eightfold path	Eightfold path	(Eightfold) path
		Ugliness (of the body)
Ānāpānasati	(no)	Ānāpānasati
Training (threefold)	(no)	Training
Stream-entry	(no)	Confirmed confidence
< >		

Thus the correlation is not merely close, it is virtually exact. Particularly relevant is the coincidence of the four nutriments, which is not standard (the Theravāda subsumes this topic under dependent origination), and the specific sequence: dependent origination, nutriments, truths, and elements, which is also not standard. There seems to be no doubt that, for the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra, the fundamental teachings of the Dhamma are, precisely, contained within the Saṃyukta of the Sarvāstivāda. This may well be the reason why Asaṅga, in his Yogacārabhūmiśāstra, chose to comment at length on this specific recension of the Saṃyukta Āgama, the foundation of the other Āgamas. The Yogacāra hermeneutic of the Saṃdhinirmocana proposes that the understanding of these teachings should be based on samadhi rather than intellect. We do not have to look far within the early texts to confirm that this, like the Mādhyamaka emphasis on emptiness as dependent origination, was no innovation.

## CHAPTER 4: THE GIST 3 – THE ANGAS

We can now move on to the last of the major questions of the GIST: what is the relationship between these backbone texts and the rest of the discourses? In order to approach this complex question it will be helpful to first consider some more of Yin Shun's findings based on the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra. This work treats the Saṃyukta Āgama in terms of three *angas* (sections): *sutta*, *geyya*, and *vyākaraṇa*. To understand the significance of this we shall have to take another step back and consider the anga classifications.

The chief significance of the angas is that they are the earliest recorded system for classifying the teachings. Classifications such as the Nikāyas/Āgamas, or the Tripitaka itself, are not referred to in the early texts, and are attested to only much later. They must therefore post-date the Buddha. But they cannot be very late, for the division in four main Āgamas is widely attested and agreed among the schools. It therefore seems that it must have been taking shape in the pre-sectarian period; however the wide divergence in internal structure suggests that the Āgamas were not yet settled in detail. Probably each school inherited a large mass of teachings, largely but not wholly overlapping, and a general arrangement of texts into the Āgamas. I think the huge task of organizing large numbers of monks and nuns to memorize such vast quantities of scriptures must have been the primary motivation in changing from the canonically authorized system of angas to the new Āgama system. We think of this process taking place in the period between the first and second Councils. It is problematic to think in terms of an 'original canon', since there is no particular evidence that the scriptures as a whole were ever considered finalized and universally accepted in the pre-sectarian period. Nevertheless, there were clearly large bodies of scripture that were universally accepted before and after the schisms. Since the Āgama system was developed relatively early, then if the angas constitute a still earlier organizational principle, it

seems very possible that the angas, or at least the kernel of them, existed in the Buddha's own lifetime.

## THE NINE AND THE TWELVE

There is a list of nine angas, supposed to constitute the sum of the Buddha's teachings, that is familiar in the early Pali Nikāyas: *sutta*, *geyya*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*, *itivuttaka*, *jātaka*, *vedalla*, and *abbhūtaḍḍhamma*. These nine are also mentioned in Mahāsaṅghika texts,<sup>63</sup> and therefore may pre-date the first schism. This list is usually increased to twelve in the Sanskrit (with the addition of *nidāna*, *avadāna*, and *upadeśa*). They are all familiar terms, but the exact meaning is controversial. In the early texts they are simply listed with no further explanation. The later texts give explanations; but these vary considerably, and involve considerable anachronisms and improbabilities. Here I will not embark on a comprehensive survey, but will examine the sources that are available to me with an eye to what gleanings appear reasonable and relevant.

Several of the later items (*gāthā*, *udāna*, *itivuttaka*, *jātaka*) are the titles of books included in the Pali Khuddaka Nikāya, and the Theravādin commentaries straightforwardly identify such angas with the books of the same name. If the later angas refer primarily to the Khuddaka Nikāya, it seems plausible that the first three are connected in some way with the four main Nikāyas/Āgamas. However, most modern scholars think that the angas refer to genres of text rather than to actual collections. For example, Lamotte says:

‘This [anga] classification does not correspond to any real division of the canon, but lists the literary styles represented in the canonical writings. One and the same text can be classified in several of the styles at the same time, depending on which of its characteristics is under consideration.’<sup>64</sup>

Lamotte is quite correct in mentioning the ambiguity of the anga classification. This, however, does not show that it was never used as a real division of the teachings, only that any such division would be in some degree arbitrary. Even in the existing Āgama system there are many such ambiguities; for example the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is middle-length, justifying its place in the Majjhima; but it deals with satipatthana, one of the main topics of the Saṃyutta; and it teaches by numbers (‘one’ way path, ‘four’ satipatthanas), and so one Chinese version places it in the Ekottara. We shall repeatedly see such ambiguities as constituting ‘breaking points’, where the anga system starts to fall apart, no doubt contributing to the emergence of more systematic organization.

The most basic reason for considering the angas as mere styles rather than an actual structure would probably be that some of the angas, particularly the first three, do not occur as titles of collections; and because, of those angas that are titles of existing collections, the books bearing these titles are generally held to have been compiled later than the early discourses where the list first appears. However, it is quite possible that the earliest list may have been shorter, and that as other books were compiled their names were added to the list. This is a less radical hypothesis than the proposition that the very idea of a canonical collection in the Buddha's time was invented and inserted retrospectively. The divergence between the Pali and the Sanskrit lists confirms that some additions must have been made, at least for the extra items in the Sanskrit. Here we will briefly discuss the later angas before returning to a more in-depth consideration of the first three. None of these attributions are beyond dispute. However, we can at least establish that it is possible, even plausible, that they referred to specific groupings of texts, many of which are still available.

**Gāthā:** Refers primarily to the early portions of the Thera/Therīgāthā and the Sutta Nipāta. The Thera/Therīgāthā now exists only in the Pali, but is frequently referred to in the scriptures of other schools, so they must have had versions of these uplifting verses that are now sadly lost, apart from some in Chinese (eg., Theragāthā 1018-1050 occur as MA 33), and a few Sanskrit fragments.<sup>65</sup> The Sutta Nipāta as a collection is not known outside the Pali tradition, but many of the individual texts are known (Khaggavisana, Ratana, Muni, Sela, etc.), and even some whole chapters (Aṭṭhaka, Pārāyana). Several of these were listed as belonging to the Dharmaguptaka Khuddaka Nikāya, including the Aṭṭhaka and the Pārāyana. There is clearly a tendency to collect the *gāthās* in distinct collections.

**Udāna:** There is evident confusion in the traditions between the texts known in Pali as ‘Udāna’ and ‘Dhammapāda’. Sometimes the contents of the two are mixed, and there are Dhammapāda-like texts in Sanskrit and Chinese that are called ‘Udānavarga’. The Chinese traditions regarded the Dhammapāda and the Udāna as being the same kind of text. Probably only the verses were originally called *udānas*, and were later embedded in background material of varying authenticity. A certain stage in this process is marked by the Pali book called ‘Udāna’. In the verses found in the Pali Dhammapāda this process was slower or more uncertain. The background stories never gained full canonical status but, with abundant imaginative elaboration, took shape as the Dhammapāda commentary, which provided the traditional framework within which the verses were presented. It is worth noting that, even though the commentary was finalized many centuries after the verses, at least some information is historically verifiable and stems from an authentic tradition. One of the stories found in the Pali Dhammapāda commentary is attested in the Sarvāstivādin Madhyama (MA 80 Kaṭṭhinadhamma Sutta). The background stories to the verses as recorded in Chinese versions of the Dhammapāda have little or no correlation with the Pali stories.

**Itivuttaka:** The Theravāda commentaries say that this refers to the Pali book of that name; however I am not convinced. Incidental evidence of authenticity comes from the commentarial background story, which says this collection was originally memorized by a lay-woman follower from whom the nuns later learnt it and taught it to the monks. It is unlikely that the monks would have invented such a story implying that they forgot their lessons. On the other hand there is no particular reason why that story should be attached to this particular group of texts. The Itivuttaka is a small aṅguttara-style text, including a verse summarizing each discourse, and the title is derived from the characteristic ‘tag’ at the beginning and end of each discourse: ‘thus it was said’. This tag is entirely ‘extrinsic’ to the actual teachings and could be affixed to any style of text. Thus the Itivuttaka is unusual among the angas in that there is no intrinsic relationship between the name of the anga and the style of text. The Chinese version of the Itivuttaka has a similar ‘tag’, so if it is not original, it is at least not late. There is a class of Vedic literature called ‘Itihāsa’, ‘thus it was’, i.e. ‘stories of the past, legendary histories’, which is sometimes equated with the Mahābhārata and the Ramāyana. By analogy, *itivuttaka* could mean ‘sayings of the past’. *Itivuttaka* might then refer to the legendary histories that are found in the Nikāyas/Āgamas, such as the Aggañña Sutta,<sup>66</sup> and the Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta.<sup>67</sup> Notice that these two discourses are paired in both the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka Dīghas. The Sarvāstivāda preferred to place these in its Madhyama, where, however, they are not paired. This theory finds support in some sources outside the Theravāda, which treat *itivuttakas* as stories of the past, sometimes interchangeably with *apadānas*. For example, Asaṅga in the Abhidharmasamuccaya says *itivuttaka* ‘narrates the former existences of the noble disciples’;<sup>68</sup> in the Śrāvakabhūmi of the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra he says it refers to ‘whatever is connected with previous practice’.<sup>69</sup>

**Jātaka:** It might be assumed that this originally referred to the stories of the Buddha’s past lives found occasionally in the four Āgamas, rather than the well-known book of the same name, which is obviously later (although there is some overlap between the two strata in the Pali; and at least

one of the stories in the Pali Jātaka book is found in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama [MA 60]). However, the terms *jātaka*, ‘bodhisatta’ (either ‘enlightenment-being’ or ‘one intent on enlightenment’), and most of the other specific features associated with the Jātaka book do not occur in the Āgama stories of past lives. For example, there is no hint that the ‘Buddha-to-be’ was in any sense destined for enlightenment, or was undertaking practices leading to enlightenment; quite the contrary, the Buddha takes pains to state that the practices that he did in past lives ‘do not lead to enlightenment’.<sup>70</sup>

If the extended list of angas was added later to the first three, it would seem more likely that *jātaka* here refers to the book, at least to an earlier version. The canonical Jātaka book contains just the verses that tell the kernel of the story; this work is almost never found independently. This situation should be compared with the Udāna/Dhammapāda as noted above. The stories themselves are contained in the commentary, although they must have been passed down together with the verses in the oral tradition, for in many cases the verses are cryptic and make no sense without the story. It is crucial to remember when considering the Jātaka literature that the verses and the ‘stories of the past’ belong together, and rarely have any distinctively Buddhist features, being largely a product of the folk storytelling tradition. Probably the stories were adopted by Buddhist teachers originally simply as moral fables. Later some of them became identified with the Buddha in past lives. When they came to be collected as a book it was probably felt desirable to standardize the literary format; this process not only reflects other verse collections such as the Udāna/Dhammapāda, but also the Vinaya, which similarly provides each rule with an origin story of often dubious historicity (a *nidāna*, one of the later angas). The ‘stories of the present’, which give the present-day (i.e. in the Buddha’s lifetime) events that were supposed to have inspired the telling of the story, are an external cladding that were added long after the stories were originally told. It is, of course, this ‘cladding’ that identifies the characters in the story with the Buddha, his family, etc. in past lives. This justifies the title ‘Jātaka’ (‘Birth Story’).

These ‘stories of the present’ presuppose a stage in the development of the bodhisatta doctrine significantly in advance of the early discourses. The evolution of this usage can be traced in the existing Nikāyas/Āgamas as follows. The term ‘bodhisatta’ commonly refers to Siddhattha in his period of striving before enlightenment; this may be taken as the earliest use. This would suggest that the earliest meaning of the word ‘bodhisatta’ was ‘one intent on enlightenment’ (*bodhisakta*), rather than ‘enlightenment-being’ (*bodhisattva*). There are apparently references in both the Chinese and Theravāda scriptures that acknowledge this meaning. The Mahāpadāna Sutta, telling the story of Vipassī, uses the word ‘bodhisatta’ as far back as the descent from Tusita heaven and birth in the final life.<sup>71</sup> The Sanskrit version of this text, although incomplete, appears to be similar in this respect. The same is also found in the Tathāgata-acchariya Sutta of the Aṅguttara.<sup>72</sup> The Theravāda Acchariya-abbhūta Sutta (evidently an adaptation of Vipassī’s story to ‘our’ Buddha) extends the scope of the term back to the previous birth in Tusita.<sup>73</sup> The Sarvāstivādin version of the same text takes the significant step of claiming that in the time of Kassapa, the immediately preceding Buddha, the bodhisatta made the vow to become a future Buddha, an idea not found in the early tradition.<sup>74</sup> From there it would take no great leap of imagination to conceive of the Buddha-to-be toiling through countless lives in his determined struggle for Buddhahood.

**Vedalla:** Another problematic term. It is used as titles for two discourses in the Majjhima Nikāya (MN 43/MA 211, MN 44/MA 44; the versions differ in some questions and details, but there is no obvious sectarian divergence). The two discourses occur together in both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda. In the Sarvāstivāda they form the last pair in the second-last chapter; thus, bearing in mind that textual units seem to frequently move about in chapters (vaggas) of ten or so discourses, they might at one stage have been the final discourses in the Majjhima.<sup>75</sup> However, the

title ‘Vedalla’ is only used in the Theravāda; the Sarvāstivādin equivalents are named after the protagonists, Mahā Koṭṭhita and Sister Dhammadinna. The word *vedalla* does not appear in the body of the texts at all, so, like the Itivuttaka, it is quite possible that the term was simply tacked on to the discourses at a late date. In fact, they are straightforward *vyākaraṇas*, and there seems no reason to invent a separate class of literature just for them. The Theravādin commentaries also include a number of similar discourses under *vedalla*. All of these are found in the existing canon except the ‘Sankhārabhājanīya Sutta’ (implausibly identified with the Sankhāruppatti Sutta). The term *bhājanīya* (‘exposition’), from the same root as ‘vibhanga’, is rare in the early discourses, and its most familiar appearance is in the chapter titles of the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga, which is not too dissimilar to the existing *vedallas*. The PTS Dictionary is unsure about the derivation of *vedalla*, improbably suggesting *veda* + *ariya*. But there is a root *dala* (= English ‘tear’), with the basic meaning of ‘break, split’. This is used for the names of certain flowers, in the sense of the unfolding and separating of the petals and leaves. The form *vidala*, attested in Sanskrit with the meaning ‘dividing, separating’, is exactly parallel with *vibhanga*, and *vedalla* is just the abstract form of this. One possibility therefore would be that *vedalla* was originally the proto-abhidhamma text we call \*Vibhaṅga Mūla. However, given the uncertainty of the term *vedalla*, and the tenuousness of the links with the existing texts, we are unable to draw any conclusions here, except that the two texts now called *vedalla* were probably paired up together before incorporation in the Majjhimas. The Sanskrit term here varies, but is usually *vaipulya*, ‘abundant’, which was a standard term for the sprawling Mahāyāna Sūtras. It is likely that the later translators or editors substituted this familiar term for the problematic and obscure *vedalla*, not coincidentally lending credibility to the disputed claims for the authenticity of the Mahāyāna. In fact the Abhidharmasamuccaya (a Mahāyāna Abhidhamma authored by Asaṅga) explicitly identifies this anga as contained in the ‘Bodhisattvapitaka’, and says that the three variant terms all refer to the same thing: *vaipulya* (because it helps all beings, and is profound), *vaidalya* (= *vedalla*, said to mean that it ‘shatters all obstacles’), *vaitulya*, (explained as ‘incomparable’).<sup>76</sup> Only the second derivation appears reliable, although as said above, the meaning is more likely to be ‘splitting’ in the sense of ‘analysis’.

**Abbhūtaḍḍhamma:** Probably the most straightforward of the angas to interpret, this obviously refers to such discourses as the Acchāriya-abbhūta Sutta (MN 123/MA 32), the Bakkula Sutta (MN 124/MA 34), etc., which discuss the ‘marvellous qualities’ of either the Buddha or various disciples. Venerable Ānanda is closely associated with this type of literature. In the Theravādin canon these two outstanding examples of the genre are found together in the Majjhima. In the Sarvāstivāda, not only do these two remain close together, but they form part of a chapter of the Sarvāstivādin Majjhima called the ‘Abbhūtaḍḍhammavagga’. This chapter also includes a discourse where the Buddha praises Ānanda’s ‘marvellous qualities’ (MA 33). Buddhaghosa’s description of *abbhūtaḍḍhamma* refers to what is probably a similar text, which is now found in the Theravāda Aṅguttara and Dīgha (DN 16.5.16). In fact, at AN 4.127-130 there is a group of four texts of this type. Moreover, there is a cluster of five discourses of this type found together in the Aṅguttara eights, and in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama Abbhūtaḍḍhammavagga. There is thus clear evidence that *abbhūtaḍḍhamma* refers to a distinct group of texts. The Bakkula Sutta is an interesting case. It is clearly late, both on internal evidence, and on the statement of the commentary that it was added at the second council. This is one of the few direct admissions of a text added after the first council, and it clearly refers to a text belonging to one of the later angas. The only other similar statements known to me refer to *gāthās*, in the Thera/Therīgāthā and the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta. These also belong to later angas. This is perhaps as close as we will get to an acknowledgement by the traditions that the later angas were added at the second council or later.

The following three angas only occur in the Sanskrit lists.



**Upadeśa:** This means ‘instructions, directions’. It occurs mainly in later texts. I do not know of any early texts in the Sanskrit traditions that use this title. However, later Chinese scholars including Hsuang Tsang say that *upadeśas* are treatises that explain the sutras.<sup>77</sup> This suggests a connection with the Peṭakopadesa, (‘Instructions in [interpretation of] the Piṭaka’). This is an early work on exegetical technique, accepted into the Khuddaka Nikāya only in Burma; some suggest that its origin lay outside the Theravāda school. Asaṅga in the Śrāvakabhūmi describes *upadeśa* as ‘all the matika and abhidhamma’ that explain the Suttas; in the Abhidharmasamuccaya he characterises it as ‘the precise, profound, and subtle teaching of the characteristics of all things.’<sup>78</sup>

**Apadāna:** This term, spelt *avadāna* in Sanskrit, is very similar to *jātaka*, usually referring to biographical stories of the past. In Pali, the *apadānas* usually refer to the past lives of disciples, while *jātakas* are past lives of the Buddha; but this distinction is not maintained consistently. According to Cone, the term has the basic meaning of ‘cutting, reaping, harvest’, applied in metaphorical sense to ‘reaping’ of the fruits of one’s actions (especially in past lives), and then to a story about kamma and result. The earliest usage in this sense is the Mahāpadāna Sutta, which, however, also includes elements of *abbhūtaḍḍhamma*, *vyākaraṇa*, *udāna* (or *gāthā*), *geyya*, and even Vinaya. This last detail suggests a connection between *Apadāna* and Vinaya, which we will consider further below. Perhaps the early life stories found occasionally in the Nikāyas/Āgamas, such as the Māratajjanīya Sutta, could be regarded as *apadānas*; however the term itself is not used in these contexts. The term is the title of a book found in the Pali Khuddaka Nikāya, which tells the stories of the previous lives of the arahants. Similar works are found in the Sanskrit traditions.

**Nidāna:** This refers to background or source material. Here it may refer to the Jātaka Nidāna, one of the early Buddha biographies. The Abhidharmasamuccaya says *nidāna* is ‘a declaration made [by the Buddha] when he is questioned, or it is the declaration of a precept with its cause.’<sup>79</sup> The first of these explanations would seem to apply rather to *vyākaraṇa*. However, it may refer to such episodes as when, for example, the Buddha gave his enigmatic smile, and when asked by Venerable Ānanda for the reason for this, he responded by telling a story of the past. The second explanation, connecting *nidāna* with the Vinaya, is clearly in accord with a straightforward early usage.

There are, in fact, many ancient sources in Chinese, etc, that connect both *nidāna* and *apadāna* with the Vinaya.<sup>80</sup> The *nidānas* are the origin stories for the rules, while the *apadānas* are the other tales included for edification, especially those that compare events in this life with those in past lifetimes. The Śrāvakabhūmi, while including *apadāna* in the Suttas, says that *nidāna* is the Vinaya, while *upadeśa* is the Abhidhamma. This suggests that the difference between the nine and the twelve angas is not necessarily a matter of historical growth of sectarian material, but that the ninefold category includes only the Suttas, while the twelvefold includes both Vinaya and Abhidhamma as well.

This ambiguity of classification reflects the fascinating way the Vinayas intertwine the hagiographic and the prosaic. For example the *locus classicus* for the *apadāna*, the Mahāpadāna Sutta, though largely hagiographic, also includes some narrative material in common with the Vinaya, suggesting that it might be considered, along with the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta and the Catuspariṣat Sūtra, as occupying a position ambiguous between Dhamma and Vinaya. These three texts form the basis for all later biographies of the Buddha, such as the famous Mahāvastu of the Mahāsaṅghika Lokuttaravāda, a text which frequently uses the word *avadāna*, includes many *avadānas*, and is sometimes suggestively referred to as the Mahāvastu-avadāna. An *apadāna* is a story that forms a parable or simile; in other words, one which points to a greater reality outside the mere events recorded, in particular, a life story that forms a spiritual paradigm for emulation. In this respect, the Buddha’s own life story, the ‘Great Apadāna’, sets the form for all that follow.

The parallels between the careers of all the Buddhas presage the theme of repeated patterns, recurring ethical choices, for good or ill, followed by the inevitable results, cycling on through the births and deaths of the ages. We have versions of this story in several recensions, each vying with the other in profusion of detail and magnification of glorious and magical embroidery. A fascinating sidelight is thrown on the interrelationship between these tales by the colophon at the end of the *Abhiniśkramana Sūtra*, translated under the title *The Romantic Legend of Sakya Buddha*:

‘It may be asked: “By what title is this Book to be called?” to which we reply, the Mahāsaṅghikas call it “Mahāvastu”; the Sarvāstivādins call it “Mahā Lalitavistara”; the Kaśyapīyas call it “Buddha-jātaka-nidāna”; the Dharmaguptakas call it “Śākyamuni-buddhacarita”; the Mahīśāsakas call it “Vinaya-ṭṭaka-mūla”.<sup>81</sup>

Thus each school would have its own version, yet each regarded as merely a different perspective on the same theme. The *Abhiniśkramana Sūtra* includes some remarks, perhaps by the later translators, on some of these variations. For example, as to the crucial question of how far did the Bodhisatta’s horse travel on the night of his escape from the palace; the text says two leagues, the Mahāsaṅghikas say twelve, but the Theravādins say a hundred.<sup>82</sup> The ‘Great Story’ of the Buddha was subject to expansion almost as limitless as the round of samsara, and yet even in the most elaborate versions, the basic teachings, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, etc., recur in almost identical form, like little nuggets of gold washed along in a stream; the stream is constantly changing, though keeping roughly the same course, but the nuggets remain untarnished and very slow to change. As a literary style, this may again be compared with several of the other angas we have discussed above. The *Pāṭimokkha* rules that form the core of the Vinaya, for example, are, in the existing Vinayas, embedded in origin stories (*nidānas*). But while the rules are almost identical form in all the existing Vinayas, we find considerable variation in the stories; examining the *Lokuttaravāda Bhikkhunī Vinaya*, I was surprised to find that most of the origin stories hardly share any common elements. We have noted a parallel situation obtaining in the case of the verses; most of the collections of verse – *Dhammapāda*, *Jātaka*, *Udāna* – come with their own background stories, but while the stories and the verses may have originated at the same time, it is the verses that were fixed in their current form earlier, embedded in a body of prose of varying flexibility.

## THE FIRST THREE ANGAS

So it seems that, despite all the uncertainty, there is no very strong reason to accept the view that the angas were merely literary genres rather than organized bodies of scripture. Many of the later angas can be connected in some way with titles of existing texts. Even in the case of those terms that are not titles of independent books, such as *vedalla* and *abbhūtaḍḍhamma*, the relevant texts are fairly consistently gathered together in the existing collections. They have clearly exerted structural influence on the existing canons. This may give us a clue as to why the scholars have dismissed the anga classification. Perhaps they have been predisposed to think in terms of books, and when some of the angas cannot be identified as books, they conclude that they are merely literary styles. But we have now found a ‘middle way’: the angas tend to be grouped together within the larger collections. Such recognizable bodies of texts might naturally evolve into distinct books. If this was the case with the later angas, it seems reasonable to postulate that the first three angas also originally existed as recognizable groups of texts, distinct sections within a larger framework. Given the conservatism of religious literature in general, and Buddhism in particular, it would seem very unlikely that no remnant of this structure should be preserved in the existing canons. We may, therefore, take this as a test: if no trace of the first three angas can be discerned in the four *Nikāyas*/*Āgamas* our hypothesis should be abandoned.

We may first examine more closely the reasons for treating the first three angas as distinct from, and earlier than, the later angas. Yin Shun points out that the Mahā Suññatā Sutta, in both the Sarvāstivāda and the Theravāda versions, lists just the first three: *sutta*, *geyya*, *vyākaraṇa*.<sup>83</sup> He takes this as evidence that these three were historically the earliest. Given the rigid consistency with which the Theravāda texts normally treat this grouping, the appearance of the three alone in the Mahā Suññatā Sutta does indeed call for explanation. The Tibetan translation of this discourse has the usual list of twelve, which, as the translator Peter Skilling notes, attests to a later stage in the development in the angas.<sup>84</sup> Here is the relevant paragraph from the Pali.

‘Ānanda, it is not worthy for a disciple to follow a Teacher for the sake of *suttas*, *geyyas*, and *vyākaraṇas*.<sup>85</sup> Why is that? For a long time, Ānanda, you have learned the teachings, remembered them, recited them verbally, examined them with the mind, and penetrated them well by view. But such talk as deals with effacement, as favours the freedom from hindrances of the heart, and leads to complete repulsion, fading away, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbana; that is, talk on wanting little, on contentment, seclusion, aloofness from society, arousing energy, ethics, samadhi, understanding, release, knowledge & vision of release – for such talk, a disciple should follow a Teacher even if he is told to go away.’

Here the three angas clearly refer to a formalized set of scriptures. Note the ambiguity: this is typical of references to formal learning of Dhamma in the early discourses; learning is encouraged, but not as an end in itself. It might be noticed that such passages, which are quite common, are likely to precede the formal redaction of the Tipitaka in Sri Lanka, for there the Sangha decided that scripture came before practice. They would not have invented such passages that are critical of their own position; in fact it is remarkable that they preserved so many passages that emphatically place practice over scripture. Mention of Venerable Ānanda’s close connection with the three angas here is intriguing; it seems that the Dhamma learnt by him could be characterized as *sutta*, *geyya*, and *vyākaraṇa*. Given that the traditions ascribe Ānanda the central role in reciting the Dhamma at the First Council, this is an indication that the Dhamma compiled there might have consisted of these three angas.

Further evidence comes from the Sanskrit Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, which has been published as a complete reconstructed version, and a partial fragment. The list of twelve angas occurs in both the complete and the partial versions, and although readings vary slightly, in both cases the first three occur in declined form, as individual words, while the remaining angas are compounded: *sūtram geyam vyākaraṇam gāthodānanidānavadānetivṛttakajātakavaipulyādbhutadharmopadeśāḥ*.<sup>86</sup> This looks very much as if the original list of three was supplemented later. Exactly the same feature occurs twice in a Sanskrit list of the twelve angas in the Śrāvakabhūmi of Asaṅga’s Yogacārabhūmiśāstra.<sup>87</sup> This text then several times gives just the first three, and then simply says that the list should be expanded as before.<sup>88</sup> The distinctness of the first three is also suggested in the manner in which Asaṅga comments on them. In both the Śrāvakabhūmi and the Abhidharmasamuccaya he says that *geyya* is ‘*suttas* that require further explanation’, and *vyākaraṇa* is ‘*suttas* that are fully explained’.<sup>89</sup> This seems to treat the two as a closely connected pair; the explanation is quite close to our interpretation of these terms developed below.

Another interesting case is in the two Pali works on textual interpretation, the *Netti* and the *Peṭakopadesa*. Both of these works regard the four noble truths as the key and the core of the Buddha’s dispensation, and refer all other teachings back to them. The *Peṭakopadesa* makes explicit the relation between the *Dhammacakkpavattana Sutta* and the angas:

‘Between the night of his enlightenment and the night of his Parinibbāna without grasping, whatever was spoken by the Blessed One – *sutta*, *geyya*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*, *itivuttaka*, *jātaka*,

*abbhūtaḍḍhamma*, *vedalla* – all that is the Wheel of Dhamma (*dharmacakka*) set rolling. There is nothing in the teaching of the Buddha, the Blessed One, outside the Wheel of Dhamma. In all his *sutta*, the noble dhamma should be sought. In the comprehension of this there is the pentad ending with “light”.<sup>90</sup>

These works were composed at a time when the canon was more or less organized as it is today, referring to such sections as the ‘Saṃyutta Nikāya’, etc., and utilizing specialist Abhidhamma terminology. The Peṭakopadesa mentions the ninefold *angas* only twice without explanation,<sup>91</sup> the *Netti* not at all. This is a bit curious for works that explain in considerable length how to analyse the discourses.

The Peṭakopadesa treats *sutta* very broadly, encompassing all the teachings. One of the main purposes of the work is to describe various principles by means of which one discourse may be interpreted using teachings found in other discourses. After describing some such principle, it frequently says that *gāthās* should be assessed with *gāthās*, *vyākaraṇas* should be assessed with *vyākaraṇas*.<sup>92</sup> While it is not explicit, this looks like our first three *angas*, although the word *anga* is not used; *gāthā* is a synonym for *geyya*, and *geyya* is often explained as ‘with *gāthās*’. The same grouping occurs in the *Netti*, though only once.<sup>93</sup>

It is not immediately clear what the Peṭakopadesa is getting at. Perhaps, as Nanamoli’s translation implies, the passage is suggesting that the *sutta*, the overall teachings, may be divided into verse (*gāthā*) and prose (*vyākaraṇa*). This is supported by statements such as: ‘Up to this point, however, the entire *sutta* – whether *gāthā* or *vyākaraṇa* – is not [quoted].’<sup>94</sup> But this does not reflect the original meaning of the *angas* very closely. The treatment of *gāthā* and *vyākaraṇa* as sub-divisions of *sutta* is reminiscent of Asaṅga’s treatment of *geyya* and *vyākaraṇa* mentioned above. It evidently dates from a time when the scope of *sutta* had been expanded from meaning one section of the teachings to meaning all of them.

There is at least one passage that is closer to our usage, and even involves the *saṃyutta matika*. The Peṭakopadesa describes the six ‘ways of entry’ (*otarāṇa* – more on these below) – aggregates, elements, sense media, faculties, truths, dependent origination – and says that ‘there is no *sutta* or *gāthā* or *vyākaraṇa* in which one or other of these six dhammas is not apparent.’<sup>95</sup> Nanamoli translates this passage differently, saying ‘there is no Thread [*sutta*], whether verse [*gāthā*] or prose exposition [*vyākaraṇa*]...’<sup>96</sup>. This is justifiable given the more usual use of these three terms in this text we have noted, yet my edition of the Peṭakopadesa clearly has ‘*suttam vā gāthā vā vyākaraṇam vā*.’ Given the very bad corruption of the text, it is obviously unwise to make too much out of such details. Yet there remains the suggestion that the Peṭakopadesa remembers a time when the texts, which all constituted elaborations on the first sermon, consisted of *suttas*, *gāthās*, and *vyākaraṇas* dealing with the topics of the *saṃyutta matika*.

Another hint that the first three *angas* were prior to the rest is the fact that the later factors exhibit considerable variation in both content and sequence, but the first three are almost always constant.<sup>97</sup> For example the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya lists the contents of the Kśūdraka Āgama (no longer existing) as follows: *jātaka*, *itivuttaka*, *nidāna*, *vedalla*, *abbhūtaḍḍhamma*, *avadāna*, *upadeśa*, *Aṭṭhakavagga*, *Dhammapāda*, *Pārāyana*, (?doubtful title, perhaps ‘various problems’), *uragavagga*. This seems like an amalgam of the later *angas* with the existing contents of the Theravāda Khuddaka Nikāya, including several sections currently included in the *Sutta Nipāta*. So it seems likely that the first three *angas* were the earliest, or at least were the first to be established as canonical, while the subsequent *angas* were gradually elaborated. However, it is not at all obvious exactly what they refer to. Here a little investigation is called for.

As one of the three angas, *sutta* means just one portion of the teachings and cannot be a general term for any discourse, as it came to mean later. The root meaning of *sutta* is ‘thread’, and it is prominently used in the metaphorical sense of a thread on which beads are strung. I think *sutta* as an anga reflects this metaphor and means ‘basic doctrinal statement’. This is similar to the meaning in the Brahmanical and Jain contexts. An echo of this meaning survives in the Vinaya. The collection of rules constituting the Pāṭimokkha is called, in the Pāṭimokkha itself, the *sutta*. The detailed analysis of those rules is called the *sutta vibhanga* (‘analysis of the *sutta*’). This *vibhanga* material is stylistically similar to the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga and probably dates from a similar period.

The early treatise on exegetical method, the *Netti*, gives a curious explanation for the word *sutta* in the four great references, taught by the Buddha shortly before he passed away.<sup>98</sup> These great references declare that if any monk, teacher, lineage, or tradition, no matter how learned and respected, makes any statement on Dhamma, that statement must be carefully compared with the Suttas and the Vinaya to ascertain whether it can be accepted as the Buddha’s teachings, or should be rejected. Now in the *Netti*, as a work devoted to literary and textual analysis, we would expect that *sutta* here would be explained as the Sutta Piṭaka. But no – *sutta* is explained as the four noble truths.<sup>99</sup> These are, of course, the main doctrinal content of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, and I believe we have here a relic from an early meaning of *sutta*: basic doctrinal statements, especially the first sermon. I would suggest that the *Netti* is essentially right here, and that when the Buddha told us to take the *suttas* as our authority in determining what was truly spoken by the Buddha, he meant primarily those core discourses now preserved in the main sections of the Saṃyutta.

The second anga, *geyya*, is less difficult to interpret. It is fairly consistently regarded as mixed prose and verse, and both the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra and the Theravāda commentaries identify it with the Sagāthā Vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. However, there are *geyyas* found outside this collection, too, including a few in the doctrinal saṃyuttas.

The word *vyākaraṇa*<sup>100</sup> means literally ‘answer’ (it can also mean ‘grammar’ and ‘prophecy’, but these meanings do not apply here). It is chiefly used in the sense of an explanatory answer to a doctrinal question.<sup>101</sup> This meaning of *vyākaraṇa* is very prominent in the Abyākata-saṃyutta, the saṃyutta on the ‘unanswered questions’, what has been ‘not-*vyākaraṇ*-ed’. The unanswered questions are, of course, those such as ‘does the Tathagata exist after death’ and so on. What is declared (*vyākata*) by the Buddha, however, is the four noble truths.<sup>102</sup> This alone would suggest that we look for *vyākaraṇas* in the Saṃyutta, the collection built on the scaffold of the four noble truths. Several discourses present us with a numerical series of dhamma inquiries: one question (*pañha*), one summary (*uddesa*), one explanatory answer (*vyākaraṇa*).<sup>103</sup> Here the meaning of *vyākaraṇa* is particularly clear. Only occasionally do we meet with *vyākaraṇa* in a more general meaning of ‘declaration’, without specifically being an answer to a question; even here, however, it might in fact be an answer, only the context does not make this clear.<sup>104</sup> In the Aṅguttara we are told of four kinds of ‘answers (*vyākaraṇa*) to questions’: answering by definitive statement, by analysis (*vibhaṅga*), by asking a question in reply, and by placing aside.<sup>105</sup> Notice that a *vibhanga*, which is a key class of doctrinal teachings, is here described as a kind of *vyākaraṇa*.

This general understanding of *vyākaraṇa* is well known, but the particular function of the *vyākaraṇas* as explanations of the *suttas* is rarely acknowledged. However, Dutt’s assessment is similar. He suggests that ‘the Suttas in which Sāriputta, Mahākaccāyana, or Buddha gave detailed exposition of the four truths or the eightfold path, or of any tenet of Buddhism or of any of the pithy sayings of Buddha, should have been included [as *vyākaraṇa*].’<sup>106</sup> Asaṅga’s Abhidharmasamuccaya has this to say:

‘What is a *vyākaraṇa*? It is the exposition of various present existences of the noble disciples in relation to their distant past in different locations. Or it is a *sutta* that is fully explained, since it is the open exposition of an abstruse meaning.’<sup>107</sup>

The first meaning here should be *apadāna* rather than *vyākaraṇa*. The second is, however, on the right track: *vyākaraṇa* is detailed explanations of points stated briefly in the *suttas*. It is perhaps surprising that this interpretation is not more widely accepted, for this kind of form is absolutely characteristic of the Indian literary tradition in general. The laconic, cryptic aphorisms of works like, say, the Yoga Sūtra were obviously intended to be explicated through a teacher-student dialogue. This literary feature is evident in the vast majority of existing discourses. Rarely do we find an exposition of any length beyond the basic doctrinal statements that is phrased in a straight declarative form.

In particular, we almost never find a disciple teaching in this way. Disciples virtually always teach in the form of a dialogue between two monks, or between a monk and the Buddha, or the teaching, though given by one monk, is phrased in ‘rhetorical’ question and answer format. There are a few exceptions; but they sometimes just prove the rule. In one Majjhima discourse Venerable Sāriputta sees Venerable Rāhula sitting meditation and exhorts him: ‘Develop anapanasati, Rāhula! When it is developed and made much of, anapanasati is of great fruit and benefit.’ This is a straightforward *sutta*; and it is a direct quote from the Saṃyutta. This association of teachings by the disciples with *vyākaraṇas* agrees with the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra, which includes the section ‘Spoken by Disciples’ within the *vyākaraṇa* anga.

A good example of the meaning of *vyākaraṇa* can be gleaned from the following passage.

On one occasion, many senior monks were staying at Macchikāsaṇḍa, in the Ambataka Forest. Now on that occasion, when the senior monks had returned from their alms round, after their meal they assembled in the pavilion and were sitting together when this conversation arose: ‘Friends, the “fetter” and the “things that fetter”’: are these things different in meaning and also different in phrasing, or are they one in meaning and different only in phrasing?’

Some senior monks answered (*vyākaraṇa*) thus: ‘Friends, the “fettters” and the “things that fetter” are different in meaning and also different in phrasing. But some senior monks answered thus: ‘Friends, the “fettters” and the “things that fetter” are the same in meaning and differ only in phrasing.’<sup>108</sup>

In this case the senior monks were upstaged by Citta the householder, who explained how they were truly different in meaning:

‘...the eye is not the fetter of visible forms, nor are visible forms the fetter of the eye; but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both – that is the fetter there.’

Now, I think the usage of *vyākaraṇa* in such passages is exactly what the *vyākaraṇa* anga is all about. Evidently the Peṭakopadesa is thinking along similar lines, for it refers to this very discourse ‘in the Citta-saṃyutta’ as *vyākaraṇa*.<sup>109</sup> Notice that the reply is phrased in terms of the six sense media; Citta is adapting a specific *sutta* of the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta (SN 35.109/SA 239) to make his *vyākaraṇa*.

There remains some ambiguity about the exact boundaries of the *vyākaraṇa* form, due to the virtual omnipresence of the ‘rhetorical question’ format. If we were to strictly admit only discourses with no questions at all as *suttas*, we’d be left with hardly any; even the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta features one or more questions in some of its versions. It seems

reasonable to count those discourses that are simple, with a small number of rhetorical questions, as *suttas*, and the more complex discourses, with a series of questions, as *vyākaraṇas*. This obviously leaves us with some grey areas, which is only to be expected; however, we are usually able to distinguish fairly readily between the two types.

#### THE THREE ANGAS AND THE FIRST DISCOURSES

Let us consider again the first discourses. These fall naturally into three divisions. The first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, is the root text setting forth the most basic general statement of the doctrine. The second and third sermons are similar to each other and belong together in the second division. They can clearly be seen as deriving from a more detailed exposition of ideas mentioned briefly in the first sermon: the first commentaries. In addition they emphasize a new literary device. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is almost entirely phrased as a direct, straightforward statement of doctrine. The second and third sermons emphasize a question and answer format. While sometimes these are purely rhetorical, in the second sermon the monks actually reply; thus for the first time we hear the voices of the disciples alongside the Buddha. The third division is the Request of Brahmā. This has a different literary form, being in mixed prose and verse.

This threefold division corresponds closely with the root meanings of the three angas. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta was, I believe, the paradigm for the *sutta* classification. The main paradigm for the *vyākaraṇa* anga is the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, together with the Ādittapariyāya Sutta. The third division consists of the Request of Brahmā, which may be seen as the paradigm for the *geyya* anga. *Geyya* literally means ‘song’, and is usually understood to be mixed verse and prose. The Request of Brahmā differs from the previous two divisions not only in literary form, but also in content and audience. The prose discourses set forth profound philosophical and psychological propositions in a literal, unembellished manner, whereas the verse is metaphorical and inspirational. This agrees with Asaṅga’s statement that the *geyya* anga is those *suttas* that require further explanation. And while the prose is addressed to the monks, the verse is addressed to a non-monastic, specifically a deity associated with the Brahmanical tradition. The Request of Brahmā also includes an unfavourable allusion, by Brahmā himself, to the ‘impure teaching among the Magadhans’, obviously an aspersion on the Vedic doctrines. This is significant in that the verse style of the Buddhists evolved directly from the Brahmanical tradition.

So we can sum up the main distinctive features of the three different divisions, corresponding with the three angas, as follows.

**Table 4.1: The Three Angas**

	<i>Sutta</i>	<i>Vyākaraṇa</i>	<i>Geyya</i>
<b>Content</b>	Basic doctrinal statements	Detailed exposition	Inspirational/devotional
<b>Style</b>	Declarative prose	Interrogative prose	Mixed prose and verse
<b>Speaker</b>	The Buddha only	The Buddha and/or disciples	The Buddha, disciples, and others
<b>Context</b>	Always monastic	Usually monastic	Usually with lay people or deities, often Brahmanical
<b>Paradigm</b>	Dhammacakkappavattana	Anattalakkhaṇa	Request of Brahmā

## THE ANGAS AND THE VEDAS

We have now covered enough ground to see the relevant connections between this threefold structure and the three Vedas. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, like the Ṛg Veda, is the prime source text. *Geyya* and *vyākaraṇa*, like the Sāman and Yajur Vedas, are secondary and derivative. We have seen how the angas multiplied in threes – 3, 9, 12 – just as the Vedic literature multiplied in threes – 3, 6, 12. We have also seen the twelvefold anga occurring in the Jain scriptures. Well after the effective dissolution of the anga system, the number three is still basic to the Buddhist scriptures as the Tripitaka, the ‘Three Baskets’. This term is used in all the traditions, despite the fact that only the Pali canon is meaningfully structured into three sections. Evidently, then, the *idea* of the Tripitaka exerts a fascination on the Buddhist mind beyond that of a mere classification system.

Other relations between the Vedas and the Buddhist scriptures are also discernable. The Buddhist texts are classified in *vaggas* of usually ten texts; the Ṛg Veda is classified in *vaggas* of about ten lines. The title *vyākaraṇa* occurs in both the sixfold and the twelvefold Vedas, but there it means ‘grammar’; however it also occurs in the Jain angas where it definitely means ‘answers’. We have also encountered the term *suttanga* to parallel the *vedanga*; in addition the term *suttanta* echoes *vedanta*.

The influence of the Vedic model would explain the curious sequence of the three angas. One would expect that *sutta* should be followed by *vyākaraṇa*; however the less closely related *geyya* appears in between. This reflects the Sāman Veda. As we noted above, while all the Vedas are mainly in verse, the Sāman is essentially a book of sacred songs, and so the position of the Sāman as second Veda may have suggested placing the *geyya* as second anga. I cannot think of any other reason for this sequence. In fact, we have seen that the existing Saṃyuttas have moved the Sagāthā Vagga to either first or last position; it seems to have enjoyed a certain independence.

The correlations between the angas and the Vedas are suggestive rather than conclusive. I am not enough of a Vedic scholar to be able to say anything more definitive on the matter. But I do think these correlations are significant enough to warrant more detailed investigation in the light of the GIST. If the three angas were structurally influenced by the three Vedas, this would lend strong support to the idea that they were the earliest classification of Buddhist texts. It would also support the idea that the angas were distinct collections of specific texts, not merely literary genres.

## CHAPTER 5: THE NIKĀYAS/ĀGAMAS

We may now return to examine the claim of Yin Shun, based on the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra, that the Saṃyukta Āgama consists of the three angas. He identifies *sutta* as the major doctrinal collections, *geyya* as the Sagāthā Vagga together with the Bhikkhu-saṃyutta (which is really just a stray chapter from the Sagāthā Vagga), and *vyākaraṇa* as the supplementary expositions. The identification of the Sagāthā Vagga is straightforward; the Pali commentaries, too, say that *geyya* is mixed prose and verse, ‘particularly the entire Sagāthā Vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya’. However, the interpretation of *sutta* and *vyākaraṇa* is not exactly along the lines we considered above. I must be careful here, for having relied on the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra in principle, I am straight away criticizing the details. But we must bear in mind that Asaṅga was recording an opinion long after the Buddha passed away, and long after the anga scheme had ceased to have



relevance as a classification of the teachings. As so often in these matters, it is possible that he has preserved an important truth, at the same time as obscuring certain aspects.

One problem with the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra's interpretation is that it does not correspond very closely to the root meanings of the terms *sutta* and *vyākaraṇa*. In fact, it is not at all clear why the term *vyākaraṇa* should have been chosen for this collection. Another point is that the Pali commentaries include the Abhidhamma Piṭaka under *vyākaraṇa*. While this is obviously anachronistic, it is perhaps not so far off the mark, for the earliest Abhidhamma was based on texts culled largely from the Saṃyutta; however, these were taken from the major doctrinal collections, not from the supplementary chapters. This is even more apparent in the Sanskrit portion of the Dharmaskandha that was excavated at Gilgit, which frequently quotes from central doctrinal texts such as the Nidāna Saṃyukta, often in almost identical phrasing as the Pali, and usually refers to such discourses as *vyākaraṇa*.<sup>110</sup> Another problem is that Asaṅga's opinion in the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra does not seem to agree here with his statements in the Abhidharmasamuccaya. We have seen that there he describes *vyākaraṇa* as past lives of the disciples, or 'fully explained' discourses. Neither of these fit well with the *vyākaraṇa* anga as implied in the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra, but at least the second interpretation fits well with the GIST.

A closer look reveals that in at least some cases the difference is not so great after all. For example, the Rādha- and Diṭṭhi-saṃyuttas follow after the Khandha-saṃyutta in both collections. They both consist of a series of question & answers on the aggregates. The Chinese adds another similar group, called 'Abandoning', to these. It seems as if these minor saṃyuttas have been spun out of a few discourses of the Khandha-saṃyutta. These are considered as *vyākaraṇa* according to Yin Shun's interpretation following the Yogacārabhūmiśāstra; and they are also *vyākaraṇas* by my reckoning. A similar case is the Anuruddha-saṃyutta, which is a brief appendix to the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta.

Notice that these minor saṃyuttas directly relate to the four noble truths: the aggregates come under the truth of suffering; the satipaṭṭhanas come under the truth of the path. Now, if we examine the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyutta according to Yin Shun's reconstruction, the *sutta* anga is based on the four noble truths, but the *vyākaraṇa* anga is not. So why do these saṃyuttas not find a home in the *sutta* anga? There are other saṃyuttas that also fit neatly in the four noble truths, yet according to Yin Shun's reckoning they come under the *vyākaraṇa* anga. For example, the Sarvāstivāda preserves a Kammavipāka-saṃyutta. This contains about fifty discourses on the ten pathways of skilful action. There is no Theravādin equivalent in the Saṃyutta, but most of the discourses are found clustered together in the Aṅguttara tens. This may plausibly be explained as a saṃyutta that has been moved from the Saṃyutta to the Aṅguttara. According to Yin Shun, this belongs to the *vyākaraṇa* anga. But the subject of kamma, and the three unskilful roots that are mentioned in this context, belong to the second noble truth. According to the GIST, these discourses would have been incorporated in the proto-Saṃyutta within the four noble truths scheme. Similarly, the Anamatagga-saṃyutta on the unknowability of the beginnings of samsara, with its repeated refrain about 'beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving', would seem to fit under the second noble truth. Or again, jhana obviously fits under the fourth truth, the unconditioned under the third, but these are considered as *vyākaraṇa*. I think it is more reasonable to regard such discourses or collections as having been originally gathered under the mainstream four noble truths collection of *suttas* and *vyākaraṇas*. More detailed work needs to be done to clarify this question, but for now I am content to stick by my approach.

The evolution of the angas of *suttas* and *vyākaraṇas* would seem to follow a very natural process. The Buddha would teach the basic doctrines very often. These would early become collected. The size of the *sutta* collection is self-limiting, for there are only so many simple variations possible on the basic doctrines. It would be natural for inquiries into the meaning of these texts to be going

on constantly. A very important early stratum of explanatory texts is the vibhāṅgas, a special kind of *vyākaraṇa*, which provide the key for understanding the doctrinal frameworks normally expressed in condensed, almost cryptic form. Many of the Saṃyuttas have a vibhāṅga; originally perhaps all did. Some of the vibhāṅgas missing from the Theravāda Saṃyutta are found in the Sarvāstivāda, for example the Bala Vibhāṅga Sutta, which should be restored from the Aṅguttara to the Saṃyutta.

But while the *suttas* are limited in size, the *vyākaraṇas* can be expanded indefinitely. It would not take long for the original simple classification to become inadequate and for new, more elaborate, structures to be required. Two possible avenues would suggest themselves at this stage. One would be to keep on accumulating individual *vyākaraṇas*, creating new collections for them out of the material spilling over from the original three-āṅga collection. Another possibility is to try to reduce the growing bulk of the texts and consequent inconvenience by assembling all of the main explanatory texts into one comprehensive Vibhāṅga that would serve as a key to all the discourses. I think that the outcome of the first development is the Majjhima, the Dīgha, and Aṅguttara, and the outcome of the second development is the Abhidhamma Vibhāṅga.

It is normally understood that the four Nikāyas/Āgamas were compiled first and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka later. But this, while generally true, may need some qualification. The GIST suggests that the proto-Saṃyutta was compiled first and that work on the Nikāyas/Āgamas may have been ongoing at the same time as the earliest Abhidhamma work. The terms ‘abhidhamma’ and ‘matika’ occur occasionally in the early texts (a *mātikā* is a list of doctrinal principles that serves as the scaffolding for an Abhidhamma work). Although these terms here cannot refer to the existing Abhidhamma Piṭaka they might well refer to some early precursor.

There is little hint in the early texts themselves what this might be. Scholars have seen significance in a passage in the Theravāda Nikāyas that mentions ‘abhidhamma’ and then discusses the 37 wings to enlightenment. These do in fact form the main framework for the meditation section of the \*Vibhāṅga Mūla. This seems to be confirmed by a hint in the Dharmaskandha, the Sarvāstivādin version of the developed \*Vibhāṅga Mūla material. The Sanskrit text quotes from the Saṃyukta a passage where the Buddha speaks of the 37 wings to enlightenment; in the Pali these are called ‘dhammas’, but the Sanskrit calls them *dharmaskandha*, which is of course the very title of the book where the quote occurs, and the book does indeed feature those topics. Later Sarvāstivādin accounts of the life of Asoka say that Venerable Mahā Kassapa, the special patriarch of the Sarvāstivāda, recited the matika, consisting largely of the 37 wings to enlightenment, at the first Council; as we have seen, this is confirmed in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya.<sup>111</sup>

There is another hint in the Sarvāstivādin version of the Mahā Gosīṅgavana Sutta. This says that Venerable Mahā Kaccāyana is a monk who delights in discussing ‘abhidhamma and abhivinaya’.<sup>112</sup> (The Theravāda attributes this to Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, but all three Chinese versions more plausibly praise Mahā Moggallāna for his psychic powers.) One of the other Chinese versions does not mention this in the body of the text, but at the end Mahā Kaccāyana is praised by the Buddha for his ability to expound the four noble truths.<sup>113</sup> In the Theravāda Aṅguttara, he is praised as the foremost in those who can ‘analyse (vibhāṅga) in detail the meaning of a saying given in brief.’<sup>114</sup> The Chinese extols him for his ability to discriminate the meaning and teach the path.<sup>115</sup> This suggests that the early meaning of ‘abhidhamma’ should be sought among Mahā Kaccāyana’s discourses. He is regarded by the traditions as one of the founders of the Abhidhammas, and his teachings contain just the sort of material we would expect – analytical *vyākaraṇas* dealing with the sense media, aggregates, etc. In addition, two of Mahā Kaccāyana’s discourses are included in the Vibhāṅgavagga. Thus the earliest Abhidhamma consisted of two

aspects: the wisdom teachings – truths, aggregates, sense media, dependent origination, elements – and the meditation teachings – the 37 wings to enlightenment.

If the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla of the Abhidhamma was derived, not from the completed Sutta Piṭaka, but from the same source as the Majjhima and Dīgha along a divergent line of development, the possibility exists that the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla may preserve some more archaic features than the existing Majjhimas. This of course would only apply to the basic specification of content, not the existing elaborate form, which is clearly not very early. One possible example of this is the chapter on the elements. The Theravāda Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga mentions 36 elements. These are all found in the Bahudhātuka Sutta, and as some of the elements are not standard there is little doubt that this was the Vibhaṅga's source (as well as elaborations from the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta). But the Bahudhātuka Sutta adds, after these 36, five more elements not in the Vibhaṅga. (The Sarvāstivāda consistently has 62 elements in both the Bahudhātuka Sutta and the Dharmaskandha.) So it seems likely that the extra five elements were added to the Bahudhātuka Sutta after it was moved out of the proto-Saṃyutta.<sup>116</sup> In *A History of Mindfulness* I examine a much more striking example of this pattern in the context of satipatthana.

It is important to note that the GIST does not simplistically assert that the Saṃyutta discourses are early and authentic, while other discourses are later. All the collections contain a mixture of early and late material. We are talking here about generalities, about a complex process forming collections of hundreds of discourses. Discourses outside the Saṃyutta would have come from a number of sources. Some were originally included in the proto-Saṃyutta, but were moved out. Other discourses may have been current in the community, but were not included in the basic collection. In other cases, discourses might have been passed down in remote areas and were incorporated later. Other discourses may have been formed later, but merely by combining pre-existing sections of text. Still others evolved out of the relatively informal narrative and background material associated with the teachings. And some, no doubt, are pure invention.

#### ANGAS IN THE SAMYUTTA

We saw above that the later angas have clearly exerted an influence over the organization of the texts as we have them today. It would seem likely that, if our understanding of the first three angas is correct, we should be able to discern traces of this system in the existing collections. The GIST suggests that the major doctrinal saṃyuttas were based on *suttas*, supplemented by *vyākaraṇa* explanations. This structure can be discerned in the existing Saṃyuttas in residual form. It is very prominent in the Theravāda Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta (SN 35), where the first 52 discourses are mainly *suttas*; the fifty-third starts with 'a certain bhikkhu' approaching the Buddha to ask questions, and thus launches a long series of *vyākaraṇas*. (In fact texts 33-52, which are represented by just one text in the Sarvāstivāda, SA 196, seem to be spin-offs from the Ādittapariyāya Sutta that were multiplied to fill out the fifty texts.) This structure is not so evident in most of the other sections in the Pali.

However, many chapters in the Chinese seem to reflect this form to some degree (using the reconstructed Saṃyukta Āgama). I must caution here: there are serious methodological flaws besetting my research on this point, which is largely based on the existing catalogues on the concordance of the scriptures of different schools. These catalogues are not always accurate, but I have not in every case double-checked. In addition, cognate *suttas* are rarely exactly identical, and I know of examples where a statement is phrased as a question in the Pali but as a statement in the Chinese or vice versa. Bearing these limitations in mind, we find that in, for example, the Khandha-saṃyutta the first 14 discourses are *suttas*, and after that is a long series of mainly *vyākaraṇas*. The Saḷāyatana, Nidāna, Sacca, Satipaṭṭhāna, Bojjhaṅga, Ānāpānasati, and Sotāpatti

saṃyuttas all seem to reflect this pattern. It will be an interesting project for future research to see whether the *sutta/vyākaraṇa* structure of these collections is as apparent as it seems from the correspondence tables.

Although we cannot deviate here to check all of these collections in detail, let us take the Sacca-saṃyutta, the doctrinal cornerstone of the whole Saṃyutta, as an example, going back to the Chinese and re-checking all the parallels. First let us list the texts in the existing Theravāda Sacca-saṃyutta, classifying them as best we can into one or other of the three angas.

**Table 5.1: Angas in the Theravāda Sacca-saṃyutta**

SN 56	<i>Sutta/Vyākaraṇa</i>
1-12	<i>S</i>
13-18	<i>V</i>
19-20	<i>S</i>
21-22	<i>Geyya</i>
23-28	<i>S</i>
29-31	<i>V</i>
32-33	<i>S</i>
34	<i>V</i>
35-41	<i>S</i>
42-43	<i>V</i>
44	<i>S</i>
45-131	<i>V</i>

This table confirms that the three angas influence the structure of the existing SN 56. Almost always, *suttas* are grouped with other *suttas*, *vyākaraṇas* are grouped with other *vyākaraṇas*, and the two *geyyas* are paired in the middle. Also, the collection starts with the biggest group of *suttas*, and ends with the biggest group of *vyākaraṇas*, reflecting the sequence of the angas.

The table below shows the occurrence of angas in the existing Sarvāstivāda Satya-saṃyukta. I also list the settings.

**Table 5.2: Angas in the Sarvāstivāda Satya-saṃyukta.**

SA	<i>Sutta/Vyākaraṇa</i>	Setting
379-402	<i>S</i>	Benares
392	<i>Geyya</i>	
	<i>S</i>	
403	<i>Geyya</i>	Magadha
404	<i>V</i>	Rājagaha (journeying)
405	<i>Geyya</i>	Vesali, Monkey's Pond
406	<i>V</i>	Monkey's Pond
407-418	<i>V</i>	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
419-420	<i>S</i>	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
421-426	<i>V</i>	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
427-433	<i>S</i>	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
434-442	<i>V</i>	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
443	<i>S</i>	Sāvattihī, Jetavana

Here the tendency for *suttas* to cluster with other *suttas*, and *vyākaraṇas* to cluster with other *vyākaraṇas*, is even more pronounced. Equally striking is that the collection starts off with an uninterrupted run of 23 *suttas*. Four miscellaneous texts, including *geyyas*, then intervene, and then 11 *vyākaraṇas*. It is suggestive that here, as in the Theravāda, the *geyyas* occur in the middle of the collection, reminding us of the sequence *sutta*, *geyya*, *vyākaraṇa*. The latter half is slightly less coherent, but still the *angas* are readily discernable, mainly *vyākaraṇas*. So the collection clearly suggests an organizing principle of a group of *suttas* followed by a group of *vyākaraṇas*, with a few *geyyas* in between.

But it is the settings that offer a startling, and unexpected, confirmation of our thesis. The first text is the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which is of course set in the Deer Park at Benares. All of the *suttas* that follow are also set in the Deer Park. It goes without saying that it is implausible that the Buddha taught all his basic statements on the four noble truths in the one place. The settings for the following discourses have been simply mechanically repeated from the first. Exactly the same thing has happened to the *vyākaraṇas*. Leaving aside the four intervening discourses, the first of the string of *vyākaraṇas* is set in Rājagaha at the Veḷuvana, and the subsequent discourses merely parrot this setting. This conclusion is substantially reinforced by two other considerations. The first consideration is that these two discourses are virtually the only ones in the whole collection to have the same setting in the Pali and the Chinese. The second consideration is that most of the discourses do not have any inherent indication as to where they were spoken. They simply give a doctrinal statement that could have happened anywhere. But the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is deeply embedded in its narrative context, and all Buddhists remember that it was spoken at the Deer Park. The first of the *vyākaraṇas*, too, internally confirms its setting, for, being set in Rājagaha, it tells the story of a person in Rājagaha.

Now let us combine these two lists by presenting a list of the concordance between the two versions of the Sacca-saṃyutta, expanding the detail by listing each individual discourse that occurs in both collections. In most cases the Theravāda does not specify the setting; this is indicated by empty brackets (). It may be assumed that the setting of these discourses was meant to be Sāvattihī. Since the Sarvāstivāda seems in several respects to be more structurally archaic, let us use the sequence of texts in SA.

**Table 5.3: Concordance of the Two Sacca-saṃyuttas**

SA	SN 56	Sutta/Vyākaraṇa	Setting in SA	Setting in SN
379	11-12	S	Benares, Deer Park	Benares, Deer Park
382	29	S	B	()
390	5-6*	S	B	()
391	5-6*	S	B	()
392	22/Iti 4.4	Geyya	B	Vajjī, Koṭigāma
393.1	3-4	S	B	()
393.5	25*	S	B	()
394	37*	S	B	()
395	38	S	B	()
397	32*	S	B	()
398	39	S	B	()
399	40	S	B	()
400	34	S (V in SN)	B	()
401	35	S	B	()
402	23	S	B	Sāvattihī
403	21	Geyya	Magadha	Vajjī, Koṭigāma
404	31	V	Rājagaha (journey)	Kośambi

405	45	<i>Geyya</i> (V in SN)	Vesalī, Monkey's Pond	Vesalī, Great Wood
406	47	V	Monkey's Pond	()
407	41	V	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana	Rājagaha, Veḷuvana
408	8	V	R,V	()
409	7	V	R,V	()
410	7*	V	R,V	()
411	10	V	R,V	()
412	9	V	R,V	()
416	15	V	R,V	()
417	20, 27	V (S in SN)	R,V	()
418	16	V	R,V	()
421	42	V	R,V	Rājagaha, Vulture's Peak
422	43	V	R,V	()
423	46*	V	R,V	()
424	46*	V	R,V	()
425	46*	V	R,V	()
426	46*	V	R,V	()
428	2	S	R,V	()
429	1	S	R,V	Sāvattḥī
430	33	S	R,V	()
435	32*	V	Sāvattḥī, Jetavana	()
436	44*	V	S, J	()
437	44*	V	S, J	()
438	36	V (S in SN)	S, J	()
439	49/SN13.1*	V	S, J	()
440.1	52	V	R,V	()
440.2	53	V		()
440.3	57	V		()
441.1-60	49*, 55*, 59*	V	S, J	()
442.1-17	51-119	V	S, J	()

This table well illustrates the kinds of issues facing us in these studies. It is obvious that here we have two very similar collections; yet the internal sequence of texts is very different. As well as a large number of equivalent texts, we also have various anomalies: a single text in one collection becomes two or more in another collection; sometimes the texts display significant variations; occasionally a *sutta* in one collection becomes a *vyākaraṇa* in the other, and so on. Nevertheless, it is apparent that texts are frequently grouped together as either *suttas* or *vyākaraṇas*, and that this should be recognized as an important structural principle underlying the formation of the existing collections. Again the list starts with a long list of mainly *suttas*, and ends with *vyākaraṇas*. Another feature is that in between the *suttas* and *vyākaraṇas* are a few *geyyas*. The position of the *geyya* SN 56.22/SA 392 is evidently anomalous, for the text is closely related to SN 56.21/SA 403. The two occur together in the Theravāda, so the position in SA is evidently just a fault in the SA transmission. If we assume that its correct position was with the other *geyyas*, we can see that at least in this *samyutta* the *geyyas* fall in between the *suttas* and *vyākaraṇas*, in accordance with the sequence of the *angas*.

Another striking correspondence is that, in several cases, an identifiable group of texts is found in both collections. For example, take the texts SA 408-412. This group of *suttas* corresponds with the group SN 56.7-10. Thus it seems to be a pre-existing unit common to both traditions. A similar situation obtains with texts SA 394-401, which loosely correspond with SN 56.32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40. On a smaller scale, several pairs of texts occur together in both collections. These correspondences raise the possibility that not merely the content, but also the sequence of the texts in the two traditions was shared, at least in part.

This suggestion finds spectacular confirmation in the case of the Kassapa-saṃyutta. This is a lively collection of *vyākaraṇas* that sheds interesting light on one of the great characters of Buddhism, especially in his historical role. It is one of the few prose saṃyuttas that is preserved in entirety in the Theravāda and in two of the Chinese Saṃyuttas, the Sarvāstivāda as well as the partial ‘other Saṃyutta’ of unknown school, possibly Kasyapiya. Here is the list of texts, using the sequence of the restored SA.

**Table 5.4: Concordance of the Three Kassapa-saṃyuttas**

Sarvāstivāda SA	‘Other’ SA <sup>2</sup>	Theravāda SN 16
1136	111	3
1137	112	4
1138	113	6
1139	114	7
1140	115	8
1141	116	5
1142	117	9
1143	118	10
1144	119	11
905	120	12
906	121	13

The correspondence is bordering on miraculous. The two Chinese Saṃyuttas are in fact identical in content and sequence, if we accept Yin Shun’s suggested restoration of the two final texts (SA 905, 906). The Theravāda is also very close. It has two extra texts at the beginning; these may have been later additions. And one text has been moved, SN 16.5 ‘Old’. This text shares in common with SN 16.8 a substantial passage on such practices as forest dwelling, alms-food eating, and so on. Thus it seems reasonable that SN 16.5 should follow SN 16.8, and that the two Chinese versions have in this case preserved the correct sequence. Leaving aside the two extra texts in the Theravāda, we have eleven texts, close enough to a classic *vagga* of ten.

Unfortunately, nowhere else in the prose saṃyuttas do we encounter such a neat correspondence. Wherever we turn, we are beset with anomalies and discontinuities. Each anomaly is a potential fault-line, a fissure through which we might just be able to discern an older structure. One obvious explanation for the inconsistencies is that the collection was reorganized at a later date by people who had either forgotten the *sutta/vyākaraṇa* structure, or for whom it had become unimportant. It might, therefore, be possible, relying on a variety of means of textual sleuthing, to uncover traces of editorial manipulation and to reconstruct what the original angas might have looked like. This procedure will, however, be speculative, complex, and not essential for our main argument, so I have relegated further structural investigations to an appendix.

#### ANGAS IN THE MAJJHIMA

For the remainder of this chapter I will investigate some structural features of the Dīghas, Majjhimas, and Anguttaras, in much less detail than the Saṃyutta. My main aim is to see if anything within these collections supports the GIST, or obviously refutes it. Answers to these questions, if they can be found at all, will require much more specific, detailed study; here I intend merely to point out some ways of addressing the questions.

There are several hints of the influence of the Saṃyutta in the formation of the existing Majjhimas. Most obvious is that several of the chapters in the Sarvāstivāda Majjhima are called ‘saṃyuttas’. There is a Kamma-saṃyutta-vagga, a Sāriputta-saṃyutta-vagga, a Samudaya-saṃyutta-vagga, and a Rāja-saṃyutta-vagga. Not only does the word ‘saṃyutta’ occur, but also these are all similar to titles of sections in the existing Chinese Saṃyutta. Furthermore, chapters 6-10 of the Theravāda Majjhima have titles that are similar or identical with titles in the Saṃyutta: Gahapati (=Gāmaṇi-saṃyutta), Bhikkhu, [Paribbājaka] (not in the existing Saṃyuttas, but would come under the eight assemblies), Rājā (=Kośala), and Brahmaṇa. With the exception of the Gahapativagga, these are in the same sequence predicted by Bucknell’s reconstructed Sagāthā Vagga. Again, the final chapter of the Theravāda Majjhima, the Saḷāyatanavagga, not only shares its title and subject matter with the Saṃyutta, but all the discourses are found in the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyutta.

The division into three groups of fifty discourses in the Theravāda Majjhima even seems to faintly reflect the three angas. The first fifty presents the main doctrines; although formally these are mainly *vyākaraṇas*, within the Majjhima as a whole they function as basic texts, in a way similar to *suttas*. The second fifty as noted above has titles similar to the Sagāthā Vagga, includes a fair number of verses, and is often addressed to lay people, thus being related to the *geyya* anga. The final fifty tend to be more analytical and expository, classic *vyākaraṇas*, including some proto-Abhidhamma texts, the Saḷāyatanavagga, and the historically important Vibhaṅgavagga.

The Vibhaṅgavagga is the only chapter that shares both the same title and almost all the same content in the two Majjhimas. The exact title in the Sarvāstivāda is ‘Mūlavibhaṅgavagga’, the ‘Root Vibhaṅga Chapter’, which is very suggestive. Most of the discourses deal with familiar topics such as the aggregates and sense media. Two of the discourses, the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta and the Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta, refer directly back to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. (The Saccavibhaṅga Sutta is not in the existing Sarvāstivāda Vibhaṅgavagga; however Bucknell argues persuasively that it was removed accidentally at a later date). Unsurprisingly, several of the discourses in the Vibhaṅgavagga are shared in common with chapters in the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga. All this suggests that this chapter, with its demonstrably close connection to the Saṃyutta, was an early and fundamental division within the Majjhima.

There is one very important framework, comprising perhaps a third of the discourses in the Majjhimas and Dīghas, which is not found, or at least is not prominent, in the existing Theravāda Saṃyutta Nikāya. This is the ‘training’ (*sikkhā*). This discrepancy has perhaps been a reason why the dependence of the Majjhima on the Saṃyutta has not been noticed. However, the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta Āgama rectifies this. It has a Sikkhā-saṃyutta containing the basic discourses on the threefold training, which in the Theravāda are now in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. In the Majjhima and Dīgha this simple threefold training is usually elaborated into the detailed ‘gradual training’, resulting in many very long discourses. If all the discourses on the training were assembled, Saṃyutta-style, into one collection it would be long and cumbersome indeed. It is plausible that such a long collection would be broken into more manageable pieces, which would form fundamental portions, perhaps *the* fundamental portions, of the new collections.

## ANGAS IN THE DĪGHA

We are uniquely fortunate to have three Dīghas available for inquiry. The Theravāda Dīgha Nikāya in Pali is well known, and has twice been translated in its entirety into English. The Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha Āgama in Chinese is much less known, and only a few discourses and



passages have been translated. The Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha Āgama is almost entirely unknown, since only in the last few years have the manuscripts emerged from Afghanistan and been made available for study (although several of the individual discourses have been edited and translated previously). I have not been able to study these discourses; the following is from Hartmann’s essay detailing the structure of the collection, which he has reconstructed with the help of the information contained in the *uddānas* (summaries of discourse titles at the end of each section), and folio numbers.<sup>117</sup> Hartmann says that these results are now ‘close to certainty’.

In addition to these sources, there is some information on a version of the Dīrgha mentioned in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikanāmaṭīkā* (AKO), available in Tibetan. Hartmann says his conclusions about the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha in his earlier work based on this source have been pleasantly confirmed by the discovery of the actual manuscript; however, others have said that there are certain differences between the Dīrgha as inferable from the AKO and the manuscript.<sup>118</sup> Since the AKO is a commentary on Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa*, and that work is a Sautrantika polemic against the Sarvāstivāda, it would seem plausible that the Dīrgha used by Śamathadeva (and Vasubandhu) belonged to the Sautrantikas.

In any case, for now we have plenty to deal with in the three existing Dīrghas. Below I present the contents of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha as reconstructed by Hartmann, together with the cognates in the Theravāda (Dīrgha and Majjhima) and Dharmaguptaka (Dīrgha). Most of these discourses have several other cognates in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit, but since we are mainly interested in the structural principles of the collections, rather than the content of the individual discourses, I only mention the cognates in the major collections. We may briefly deal with each section in turn. In the following table: @ means exists in the DA<sup>2</sup> manuscript; # means partially exists; \* means exists only as a title in the *uddāna* (although might exist in other fragments).

**Table 5.5: The Three Dīrghas: First Section**

Sarvāstivāda (DA <sup>2</sup> )	Theravāda	Dharmaguptaka
<b>Ṣaṭsūtrakaniṭṭhā</b>		
DA <sup>2</sup> 1 Daśottara *	DN 34 Dasuttara	DA 10, 11
DA <sup>2</sup> 2 Arthavistara *	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 3 Saṅgīti *	DN 33 Saṅgīti	DA 9
DA <sup>2</sup> 4 Catuṣpariṣat #	(= 1 <sup>st</sup> chapter of Vinaya Mahāvagga)	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 5 Mahāvadāna #	DN 15 Mahāpadāna	DA 1
DA <sup>2</sup> 6 Mahā Parinirvāṇa #	DN 16 Mahā Parinibbāna	DA 2

This ‘Six-Sūtra Group’, seems to have been a popular set, a ‘greatest hits’ compilation. The Arthavistara, though absent from the main Nikāyas/Āgamas, is found in a couple of miscellaneous translations in Chinese.<sup>119</sup> These are the last two of the 72 individual discourse translations located after the complete Madhyama Āgama translation, which suggests that the compilers of the Taisho edition thought they belonged to the Madhyama rather than to the Dīrgha. They are early translations, particularly T 98, which was done by An Shigao (flourished AD 148-170), the pioneer of translation into Chinese. The two translations largely agree on contents. The Arthavistara is delivered by Venerable Sāriputta and consists of 23 or 25 lists of dhammas in the style of Dasuttara and Saṅgīti, but the lists do not occur in ascending numerical

order and most have numbers over 10. Of the next three, the Catuṣpariṣat tells the fundamental story of the events following the Buddha’s enlightenment: the turning of the wheel of Dhamma, and the establishment of the fourfold assembly. The Theravāda and other schools preferred to include this text in their Vinayas. The Mahāpadāna contains much that parallels this, but set in the time of Vipassī Buddha; the Mahā Parinibbāna is the complementary narrative of the close of the Buddha’s life. So this ‘Six-Sūtra Group’ is three lists of basic doctrines, and three key biographical narratives. This makes it seem like it may have served as a basic curriculum for the beginners in Buddhist studies. One wonders whether these three biographical narratives might have comprised the āpadāna anga.

**Table 5.6: The Three Dīghas: Second Section**

Sarvāstivāda	Theravāda	Dharmaguptaka
<b>Yuganipāta</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> varga		
DA <sup>2</sup> 7 Apannaka *	MN 60 Apaṇṇaka	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 8 Sarveka *	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 9 Bhārgava *	DN 24 Pāṭika	DA 15
DA <sup>2</sup> 10 Śālya *	MN 105 Sunakkhatta	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 11 Bhayabhairava *	MN 4 Bhayabherava	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 12 Romaharṣaṇa *	MN 12 Mahā Sīhanāda	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 13 Jinayabha *	DN 18 Janavasabha	DA 4
DA <sup>2</sup> 14 Govinda #	DN 19 Mahā Govinda	DA 3
DA <sup>2</sup> 15 Prāsādikaḥ #	DN 28 Sampasādanīya	DA 18
DA <sup>2</sup> 16 Prasādanīya *	DN 29 Pāsādika	DA 17
2 <sup>nd</sup> varga		
DA <sup>2</sup> 17 Pañcatraya @	MN 102 Pañcattaya	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 18 Māyājāla #	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 19 Kāmaṭhika #	MN 95 Caṅkī	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 20 Kāyabhāvanā @	MN 36 Mahā Saccaka	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 21 Bodha @	MN 85 BodhirājakuMāra	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 22 Śāṅkara @	MN 100 Saṅgārava	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 23 Āṭṇāṭa @	DN 32 Āṭṇāṭiya	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 24 Mahāsamāja @	DN 20 Mahā Samaya	DA 19

The next section, the ‘Paired Group’, consisting of two vaggas, contains much unshared material. However, one shared structural feature is the two pairs of discourses DN 18/DA 4/DA<sup>2</sup> 13 Janavasabha & DN 19/DA 3/DA<sup>2</sup> 14 Mahā Govinda; and DN 28/DA 18/DA<sup>2</sup> 15 Sampasādanīya & DN 29/DA 17/DA<sup>2</sup> 16 Pāsādika. Both of these two pairs are quite similar in style, and they are found together in all three collections. They thus seem to belong together, and have maybe stuck together through the various changes in the collections. Apart from this, however, this section does not seem to share a common structural heritage.

This section contains several discourses that, in the Pali, are found in the Majjhima. A striking fact, pointed out by Hartmann and Bucknell, is that none of these have cognates in the existing Madhyama Āgama in Chinese. Until the discovery of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha, this was a puzzle: were all these discourses invented by the Theravāda? But now the puzzle is solved. It seems certain that the two collections, the Madhyama now found in the Chinese canon, and the Dīrgha recovered from Afghanistan, must have originally been edited conjointly, and the compilers strictly avoided duplicating any discourses in both collections. This confirms our belief that they belong to the same school, and from the internal evidence in the Madhyama, it seems very likely that this was the Sarvāstivāda. So rather than these discourses being an invention of the Theravāda, both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda had versions of these discourses, but the Theravāda chose to include them in its Majjhima, while the Sarvāstivāda included them in its Dīrgha. This is a caution against overly rash conclusions based on the absence of a particular discourse from one collection or other.

These discourses sit quite comfortably in the Dīrgha, since all of them deal, in one way or another, with the question of the relation between Buddhism and the other contemporary religions, which is also an outstanding theme of many of the other key Dīrgha discourses, especially the Sīlakkhandhavagga discussed below. The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāsa (a Vinaya commentary preserved in Chinese) in fact says that the purpose of the Dīrgha (presumably the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha) was to refute the heretics. MN 60/DA<sup>2</sup> 7 Apanṇaka opens with the Brahmans of Sālā hearing of the Buddha's good reputation, then deciding to go and see him; this stock passage is found in discourses 3-7 of the Theravāda Dīrgha. MN 95/DA<sup>2</sup> 19 Caṅkī has a similar Dīrgha-style opening and theme (incidentally, a fragment of a Mahāsaṅghika version of this discourse also exists). MN 105/DA<sup>2</sup> 10 Sunakkhatta and MN 12/DA<sup>2</sup> Mahāsīhanāda deal with the dismal spiritual career of the wanderer Sunakkhatta, who also appears in DN 24/DA 15/DA<sup>2</sup> 9 Pāṭika; thus the Sarvāstivādins felt it better to assemble these discourses together in their Dīrgha. MN 4/DA<sup>2</sup> 11 Bhayabherava is addressed to the Brahman Jāṇussoṇi, who appears, along with a number of other Brahmans featured elsewhere in the Dīrgha, at DN 13.2. This also deals with the Bodhisatta's practices before enlightenment, which link it up with MN 36/DA<sup>2</sup> 20 Mahāsaccaka, MN 85/DA<sup>2</sup> 21 Bodhirājakumāra, and MN 100/DA<sup>2</sup> 22 Saṅgārava, which all treat of the Bodhisatta's ascetic practices, in response to challenges by either the Jains or the Brahmans. MN 102/DA<sup>2</sup> 17 Pañcattaya has been described as a 'middle-length' version of DN 1/DA 21/DA<sup>2</sup> 47 Brahmajāla, a sophisticated refutation of a range of wrong views. A further unifying Dīrgha-style trait is that several of these discourses deal with, directly or indirectly, with the gradual training: MN 60/DA<sup>2</sup> 7 Apanṇaka, MN 4/DA<sup>2</sup> 11 Bhayabherava, MN 36/DA<sup>2</sup> 20 Mahāsaccaka, MN 85/DA<sup>2</sup> 21 Bodhirājakumāra, and MN 100/DA<sup>2</sup> 22 Saṅgārava. The other discourse that appears in the Theravāda Majjhima but the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha is MN 55/DA<sup>2</sup> 43 Jīvaka, which occurs in the next section of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha. This is a slightly odd choice, for the text is quite short, unusually so even for a Majjhima discourse. Nevertheless, it also addresses the theme of the Buddha's response to criticisms from other religions.

The Majjhima discourses taken together number ten. Strikingly enough, there are also ten discourses in the opposite situation; that is, they are found in the Theravāda Dīrgha but in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama. These are as follows: DN 15/MA 97 Mahā Nidāna, DN 17/MA 68 Mahā Sudassana, DN 21/MA 134 Sakkapañha, DN 22/MA 98 Satipaṭṭhāna, DN 23/MA 71 Pāyāsi, DN 25/MA 104 Udumbarika-sīhanāda, DN 26/MA 70 Cakkavatti-sīhanāda, DN 27/MA 154 Aggañña, DN 30/MA 59 Lakkhaṇa, DN 31/MA 135 Sigalovāda. Given that the standard grouping of discourses is in vaggas of ten, it seems likely that these differences result from the movement of vaggas among the collections. The question then becomes, where were they moved from? I have not looked at the question in detail, but I have examined two of the discourses found in the Theravāda Dīrgha and the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama, that is, the Satipaṭṭhāna and the Lakkhaṇa. In both of these cases the Dīrgha versions have substantial quantities of extra material, and the added material on

internal evidence seems late. Thus it seems plausible that these two discourses were taken from the Majjhima, padded out, and placed in the Dīgha. Given that they seem to have been moved as a group, this conclusion might also hold good for the rest of the discourses, too. Thus we should entertain the possibility that the Sarvāstivāda shifted one vagga from the Madhyama into their Dīrgha, and the Theravāda shifted a different vagga from their Majjhima into the Dīgha. Of course, it is equally possible that both of these vaggas originated somewhere else, perhaps the Saṃyutta, and were shifted into either the Dīgha or the Majjhima. This could be tested by a closer examination to see whether the discourses displayed any noteworthy Saṃyutta-like features.

**Table 5.7: The Three Dīghas: Third Section**

Sarvāstivāda (DA <sup>2</sup> )	Theravāda	Dharmaguptaka
<b>Śīlaskandhanipāta</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> varga		
DA <sup>2</sup> 25 Tridaṇḍin @	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 26 Piṅgālatreya @	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 27 Lohitya 1 @	DN 12 Lohicca	DA 29
DA <sup>2</sup> 28 Lohitya 2 @	DN 12 Lohicca	DA 29
DA <sup>2</sup> 29 Kaivartin @	DN 11 Kevaddha	DA 24
DA <sup>2</sup> 30 Maṇḍīśa 1 @	DN 7 Jāliya	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 31 Maṇḍīśa 2 @	DN 7 Jāliya	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 32 Mahallin @	DN 6 Mahāli	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 33 Śronatāṇḍya @	DN 4 Soṇadaṇḍa	DA 22
DA <sup>2</sup> 34 Kūṭadāṇḍya @	DN 5 Kūṭadanta	DA 23
2 <sup>nd</sup> varga		
DA <sup>2</sup> 35 Ambāṭṭha @	DN 3 Ambaṭṭha	DA 20
DA <sup>2</sup> 36 Pṛṣṭhapāla @	DN 9 Poṭṭhapāda	DA 28
DA <sup>2</sup> 37 Kāraṇavādin @	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 38 Pudgala @	(cf. AN II 205 ff.)	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 39 Śruta @	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 40 Mahālla @	No	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 41 Anyatama @	No	No
3 <sup>rd</sup> varga		
DA <sup>2</sup> 42 Śuka @	DN 10 Subha	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 43 Jīvaka @	MN 55 Jīvaka	No
DA <sup>2</sup> 44 Rājā @	DN 2 Sāmaññaphala	DA 27
DA <sup>2</sup> 45 Vāsiṣṭha @	DN 13 Tevijja	DA 26
DA <sup>2</sup> 46 Kāśyapa @	DN 8 Kassapasīhanāda	DA 25
DA <sup>2</sup> 47 Brahmajāla @	DN 1 Brahmajāla	DA 21

Here, several of the discourses found in the Sanskrit have no known cognate. A meaningful discussion of this point must wait until the texts are published. But we can see that at least a couple of the unshared discourses seem anomalous: we have already commented on the Jīvaka Sutta; this seems to have been cut adrift from its Majjhima friends. Especially startling is the inclusion of Aṅguttara-style material. Perhaps the redactors consciously used a ‘principle of diversity’ in assembling the texts: they wanted to include a range of different materials in the one collection, so deliberately inserted heterogenous material. This principle would seem to have been at work elsewhere, too. For example, the Vinaya, though focussing primarily on monastic discipline, finds room to encompass a broad range of other styles, from doctrinal teaching, to historical narrative, verses, story-telling, and so on. This might have been done since the reciters of any one collection had relatively little knowledge of the content of other collections. In the Theravāda, the compilers made sure, for example, that the Dīgha reciters would be exposed to key Aṅguttara-style teachings by incorporating such matter within larger discourses. The Sarvāstivāda also did this, but it seems they also allowed room for material that had not been adapted to fit in its context.

Leaving these anomalous texts aside, virtually all the discourses in this section are found in all three collections. This is the most outstanding structural feature of the existing Dīgha. In the rest of the Dīgha, most of the discourses are held in common among the traditions, especially between the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka, but the slight structural resemblance suggests that the sequence of discourses was settled after the Dharmaguptaka schism, which was quite late. But in the Sīlakkhandhavagga, the discourses are found consistently grouped together, even though the sequence of texts differs considerably. The few unshared discourses mostly repeat shared discourses, so do not substantially affect the picture.

Even more striking, the discourses all deal with a similar topic, offering a detailed account of monastic ethical training, justifying the chapter title ‘Sīlakkhandhavagga’ (‘Chapter on the Aggregate of Ethics’). This treatise on ethics is usually complemented by sections on the four jhanas and then the higher knowledges culminating in the realization of the four noble truths, thus completing the threefold gradual training (*sikkhā*). The position of the vagga is different – in the Theravāda it is at the beginning, in the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda at the end. In fact the Theravāda here seems correct, for the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka states that the Brahmajāla Sutta was the first discourse recited in the First Council; this text is in the Sīlakkhandhavagga of both versions, and in the Theravāda version it is the first discourse in the vagga. The Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha, therefore, must have been re-organized after their Vinaya was completed. This re-organization displaces the monastic and meditative discourses from the beginning of the collection in favour of the biographical and hagiographic; this might even have occurred under Mahāyāna influence at the time of translation. Despite this difference in the position of the vagga, and despite the fact that the internal sequence within the vagga is different, still it is evident that this vagga was a key structural element in the Dīgha current in the ancestral Theravāda school before it split into Sarvāstivāda and Vibhajjavāda. This is further confirmed in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, which mentions that the Dīgha contains the Ṣaṭsūtrakaniṣāya and the Sīlaskandhanipāta, although it does not list the individual discourses.<sup>120</sup>

In fact, it is possible that the original Dīgha was just the Sīlakkhandhavagga. This is supported by a statement in the introduction to the Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha Āgama, which describes the collection as dealing with ‘various ways of practice’, which is exactly the main thrust of the Sīlakkhandhavagga. This section has a distinctly Saṃyutta-like character – a group of ten discourses dealing with the same topic. Thus the Sīlakkhandhavagga may well have existed at first in the proto-Saṃyutta, where it could have comprised its own ‘\*Sīlakkhandha-saṃyutta’. Perhaps more likely it was the largest chapter in a ‘Sikkhā-saṃyutta’, which was later broken up because of its excessive length. The Sarvāstivāda retains a fairly humble Sikkhā-saṃyutta

consisting mainly of the short discourses on the three-fold training, but in the Theravāda this has disappeared. The shorter discourses on the threefold training were moved into the Aṅguttara, the medium ones into the Majjhima, and the longest ones formed a group on its own, which attracted other long discourses and became the Dīgha. These long discourses are all in dialogue form and are therefore classic *vyākaraṇas* in style, chronicling the vibrant debates between the Buddha and his spiritual contemporaries.

But by the time the later discourses were being added to the Dīgha, the three-anga classification was breaking down completely. A good example of this is the Mahāpadāna Sutta.<sup>121</sup> The doctrinal core of this is a Saṃyutta-style *vyākaraṇa* on dependent origination (having much in common with SN 12.4-9/SA 366). This is closely connected with one of the basic *sutta* passages on the rise and fall of the five aggregates taken from the Khandha-saṃyutta (this passage is connected with dependent origination in the Theravādin text SN 12.22 but not in its counterpart SA 348). This is embedded within an *apadāna*, a form found in the Sanskrit twelvefold anga but not in the Pali ninefold anga. The discourse begins with an *abbhūta* *adhamma*. It includes the Request of Brahmā, which is a paradigmatic *geyya*. Vinaya material and some *udānas* (or *gāthās*) from the Dhammapāda are thrown in for good measure. Thus we find, in one existing discourse, no less than seven distinct literary formats.

## THE ANGUTTARA

So if the Majjhima and Dīgha can be regarded as outgrowths of the *vyākaraṇa* anga, what of the Aṅguttara? The Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara appear to be complementary collections of the shorter discourses. While the discourses in the Saṃyutta are collected according to topic (the ‘saṃyutta principle’), the discourses in the Aṅguttara are arranged according to numerical sequence (the ‘aṅguttara principle’). In addition to this main application within the Sutta Piṭaka, this pair of organizing principles is echoed in the Vinaya and Abhidhamma. For example the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya has two appendices, one called the ‘Saṃyuktavarga’, and one called the ‘Vinayaikottara’.<sup>122</sup> We will briefly consider the Abhidhamma below. The fact that the two principles occur across the schools and also across the Piṭakas suggests that they are both quite fundamental. Given this, is it then possible to decide which organizing principle came first?

As usual, we may first consider the pre-Buddhist texts. From the Ṛg Veda onwards in much of the Brahmanical literature the verses of homage to a certain deity – say, Soma, or Agni, or the Maruts – are collected together in chapters. This clearly presages the saṃyutta principle; indeed, some of the chapters in the Saṅgāthā Vagga, such as the Sakka-saṃyutta or the Devaputta-saṃyutta, directly recall Vedic antecedents. Some of the existing Jain texts use the aṅguttara principle, but it is not clear if this usage pre-dated Buddhism. So the major pre-Buddhist literature consists largely of short pieces of text that were gathered together at a later date and sorted out by topic into a massive architecture. The Saṃyutta could almost be seen as a direct literary challenge to this Vedic supremacy, taking the same formal elements and applying them far more systematically. Just as the Vedas were regarded as an emanation of Being into sound, an expression of the innate cosmic intelligence (*veda*) as a body of inspired poetry (Vedas), the Saṃyutta by embodying the four noble truths exhibits the perfect correspondence between Dhamma as lived experience and Dhamma as formalized teaching.

From the pre-Buddhist tradition, let us then consider the original Buddhist traditions. These were of course the individual discourses, the teachings given by the Buddha himself. Most of these discourses consist of short statements on a specific topic, where the relevant aspects of the topic can be summed up in a small number of fundamental items; for example the threefold training, the five powers, or the six recollections. So the individual discourses, the building blocks, are

internally organized by topic, that is, the saṃyutta principle. This suggests that the idea of the saṃyutta principle is logically prior to the aṅguttara principle. But while in the majority of cases it seems clear that thematic affinity was the magnetic force that drew these dhammas together, the manner of presenting them in lists of distinct items instantly gives them a numerical standing. In fact, a standard style of openings for discourses is, say, ‘There are these four noble truths...’ This would invite classification under either ‘four’ or ‘noble truths’.

There are some discourses that use number as an internal organizing principle. For example the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta features the interlocking set of numbers: 2, 3, 4, 8, 12. Such discourses invoke the mysterious properties of numbers, which may be divided or multiplied, as an image seen through prisms that reveal many facets or few. But in such cases the numerical relationship, though significant, is clearly subordinate to the thematic relationship. Only occasionally do we see a discourse where the numerical principle links teachings that have no strong thematic relationship. On a small scale there are discourses such as the Mahā Pañha Sutta,<sup>123</sup> which gives a list of questions on miscellaneous sets of dhammas from one to ten, and on a larger scale there are of course the Saṅgīti and similar discourses.<sup>124</sup> But even here, while there is no strong thematic relationship between the different sets of dhammas, each individual set of dhammas is still internally organized by topic. Wherever we peel back the skin, the saṃyutta principle seems to lie antecedent to the aṅguttara principle. While this does not prove that the Saṃyutta Nikāya is earlier than the Aṅguttara Nikāya, it remains suggestive.

Perhaps the most influential remnant of the aṅguttara principle in later Buddhism was the 37 wings to enlightenment. This group well illustrates the interplay between the two organizing principles. It comprises seven sets of dhammas dealing with the path, which originally comprised the Mahā Vagga (or ‘Magga Vagga’ according to the Sarvāstivādins) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Thus the most general overall structure is the saṃyutta principle (dhammas dealing with one theme, the way of practice), and so they appropriately form part of the Saṃyutta Nikāya/Āgama. Within this overarching grouping, the standard sequence lists the groups in ascending numerical order, that is the aṅguttara principle – four (satipatthanas, right efforts, bases of psychic power), five (faculties and powers), seven (enlightenment-factors), eight (factors of the noble path). There is explicit evidence that it was in fact the aṅguttara principle that is at work here, not some abstruse progressive structure underlying the sets. This is the second Mahā Pañha Sutta, which gives the following dhammas in ascending sequence: (one) all beings subsist on sustenance; (two) name & form; three feelings; four satipatthanas; five spiritual faculties; six elements of escape; seven enlightenment-factors; eightfold noble path; nine abodes of beings; ten courses of skilful action.<sup>125</sup> This fits as many of the wings to enlightenment as possible in this numerical scheme. Some of the schools, forgetting the arbitrary nature of this sequence, tried to interpret it as implying an orderly progress of practice; that is, they interpreted a collection of teachings organized by the aṅguttara principle as having been organized by the saṃyutta principle.

Gethin points out that many of the matikas of both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Abhidhammas are constructed with the aṅguttara principle.<sup>126</sup> The most important example is the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, which is based on a matika of 22 dyads and 100 triads of dhammas. Many of these are shared with the early Suttas and the Sarvāstivāda Abhidhamma; hence, many of the dyads and triads must be old, although the elaborate working out of them is not. Gethin sees the key Abhidhamma works as springing from the interplay of such aṅguttara-matikas and the saṃyutta-matika: the Dhammasaṅgaṇī is based on an aṅguttara-matika, and analyses this with the saṃyutta-matika; the Vibhaṅga is based on the saṃyutta-matika and analyses this with an aṅguttara-matika.<sup>127</sup> However, while correctly stressing the importance of the aṅguttara principle, he does not really present any persuasive evidence that the aṅguttara principle was of such primary importance as the saṃyutta principle. No doubt the Buddha did teach in numbered sets, and no doubt these began to be collected from an early date. But the story told by the early

texts establishes the Saṃyutta as the most fundamental collection, in terms of both time and doctrine. Furthermore, saṃyutta-principle texts tend to be relatively consistent not merely in their organizing principle but also in the actual contents (the saṃyutta-matika), whereas there is no standard content of aṅguttara-principle texts.

Bucknell discusses the structural features of the Aṅguttara in some depth. Here is a sample of his findings.

‘The first is titled Vaggo paṭhamo (First vagga) – or, in one manuscript, Rūpādi-vaggo paṭhamo (First vagga, on Visible Form etc.).<sup>128</sup> In this case the ten short “suttas” comprising the vagga belong together as regards both content and form. In the first of the ten the Buddha says: “Monks, I know of no other single visible form that so enslaves a man’s mind as the visible form of a woman ...”; in the next four he says the same of the sound, odor, taste, and feel (tactile experience) of a woman; and in the remaining five he repeats it all but with the words “man” and “woman” interchanged. The wording is otherwise identical in all ten “suttas”. What the text identifies as a vagga, a collection of ten suttas, actually has the characteristics of a single sutta in ten sections, which might have been appropriately located in the Fives, or perhaps in the Tens. Now, there is a sutta in the Fives that incorporates verbatim the first five of these ten “suttas”;<sup>129</sup> it differs only in adding more detail, placing the lesson in a context, and supplying introductory and closing formulas. This is, therefore, likely to be the source of the first vagga of the Ones. The central portion of the source sutta was lifted out of its context, divided into five sections, and then duplicated by switching “man” and “woman”, to yield a set of ten pseudo-suttas, each of which dealt with just one Dhamma topic.<sup>130</sup>

Bucknell notes that the ten Theravāda discourses are represented by two texts in the Mahāsaṅghika Ekottara (EA 9.7, 9.8), thus supporting the hypothesis. Similar features dominate the Ones of the Aṅguttara, and are found elsewhere in the collection, too. One possible reason for such manipulation – which is found in both the Theravāda and Mahāsaṅghika versions – is simply to provide more material for poorly-represented numbers. There are lots of sets of, say, five dhammas, but few sets of one dhamma, and this may have prompted the slicing up of some texts of fives into ones.

Even so, there still remains the question why certain of the fives are chosen and not others. Is this merely arbitrary, or is there some other guiding principle at work? One obvious reason is that many of these texts feature the word ‘one’. But not all of them do. I believe that part of the answer also lies in the symbolic resonance of the numbers. The power and mystery of numbers exerted a fascination on many of the philosophers of the ancient world; they had not become so over-familiar with figures as to see them merely as devices for mechanical manipulation and ‘number-crunching’. Number promised the key to unlock the mysteries of the stars. Particular numbers clearly have a symbolic significance in the Buddhist tradition.<sup>131</sup> It would be surprising if such numerological significance had no influence on a collection organized by number. For example, the number ‘one’ in Buddhism often denotes samadhi or ‘one-pointedness of mind’. The first fifty-five *suttas* of the Theravāda Aṅguttara deal with samadhi and its hindrances, and prominently feature the word ‘mind’ (*citta*), a word which frequently occurs in samadhi contexts as ‘one-pointedness of mind’. The first forty texts feature the word ‘one’, but the remainder do not. These texts are all demonstrably artificial: most of them were constructed by slicing one longer text into fragments. It is possible that this process was encouraged by the feeling that the number ‘one’ was particularly appropriate for a samadhi context.

We have already seen how some of the important doctrinal matter in the Aṅguttara seems to have been moved from the Saṃyutta. And indeed we often find, within the large-scale disorder of the Aṅguttara, smaller groups of discourses collected together according to topic, such as the



threefold training, the various groups of powers, the six recollections, the tenfold path, etc.; these form mini-saṃyuttas within the Aṅguttara, which in some cases are matched by genuine saṃyuttas in the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyutta. Sometimes these form a classic vagga, such as AN 3.82-93<sup>132</sup> on the threefold training, reminiscent of the ten (or so) discourses on the gradual training found in the Dīghas. Most of these are found in the Sarvāstivāda Sikkhā-saṃyutta, concentrated within one and a half vaggas. But the material generally considered most characteristic of the Aṅguttara is simple, lay-oriented teachings on ethics and devotion, and in many of the discourses the prose is supplemented by a verse summary. This reminds us of the *geyya* anga. In addition, there is a substantial number of *vyākaraṇas*, dealing with familiar topics such as the sense media, dependent origination, etc. About 78 discourses, mainly *vyākaraṇas*, are found in the Theravāda Aṅguttara but the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama. Some of these appear like ‘Majjhima-style’ discourses, and hence may have been moved from the Majjhima into the Aṅguttara. In other cases there are substantial groups of consecutive discourses in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama that share the same number; these may have been moved from the Aṅguttara.

I would suggest as an initial hypothesis that the Theravāda Aṅguttara might have started life as a much smaller collection derived from the *geyya* anga. It would have included shorter discourses dealing with relatively minor topics that were not included in the Saṃyutta. Probably its main purpose was to provide convenient material for sermons, especially for lay devotees; this function is acknowledged by the schools. At a later date it was filled out greatly with material from the Majjhima and Saṃyutta. Most of this material probably belonged originally to the other collections and was moved over to the Aṅguttara in order to give it more doctrinal weight, ensure that the Aṅguttara students got a complete education, and balance out the Nikāyas into four reasonably similar-sized collections for the purposes of memorization.

It is difficult to know how far these speculations, tentative enough in the case of the Theravāda, might also apply to the Anguttaras of other schools. The Sarvāstivāda versions of all three other Āgamas are all long, in the case of the Madhyama and Dīrgha in particular, much longer than the Pali, so they might have had a smaller Ekottara. But the existing Ekottara is quite sizeable, and includes much substantive material; perhaps it was chosen by the Chinese for translation precisely because it was one of the more substantial versions of that collection.

## CHAPTER 6: THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRUTHS

In this chapter we will look more closely at how the teachings evolve in the different strata and types of text we have been discussing. We will take as the main paradigm the four noble truths. As well as having central position in the Dhamma, this framework offers a particularly clear model for the kinds of changes we are interested in here. In particular, the texts themselves suggest an evolution in the presentation of the doctrine.

### THE SANSKRIT DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA

The Theravāda version of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which is by far the best known, presents the teaching material in the following manner. First come the two extremes and the

eightfold path; then come the definitions of the truths; finally comes the description of the ‘three rounds and the twelve modes’.

This presentation is not common to all the versions. Most importantly for our current concerns, several omit the definitions of the truths; we have mentioned that this is the case with the SA Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. One version even omits the truths entirely, presenting just the extremes and the middle way. The Sarvāstivāda Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra offers an interesting perspective on how these variations may have come about. Here I offer a condensation of this important narrative. This was published as part of Kloppenborg’s translation of the Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra; but I have substantially revised Kloppenborg’s translation to bring out the closeness of the Sanskrit with the Pali. The teachings begin after an extended dialogue between the Buddha and the group of five monks, similar to the account in the parallel passage in the Theravāda Vinaya Mahāvagga.<sup>133</sup> The five monks had been criticizing the Buddha for backsliding, reverting to a life of luxury, abandoning the hard task of asceticism. The Buddha responded:

11.14 ‘Monks, these two extremes should not be cultivated nor enjoyed nor attended by one who has gone forth: devotion to indulgence in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, ordinary, practiced by ordinary persons; and devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and pointless.

11.15 ‘Avoiding these two extremes is the middle way, which brings vision, brings knowledge, and leads to clear knowledge, enlightenment, and Nibbana.

11.16 ‘What is this middle way? It is the noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi as the eighth.’

11.17 The Lord succeeded in persuading the five monks by means of this teaching. In the morning the Lord instructed two of the five monks, while three went to the village for alms. Six of them nourished themselves on that which the three brought.

11.18 In the afternoon the Lord instructed three of the five monks, while two went to the village for alms. The five of them nourished themselves on that which the two brought. The Tathagata only ate in the morning, at the proper time.

12.1 Then the Lord addressed the five monks:

12.2 ‘ “This is the noble truth of suffering.” For me, monks, when I paid causewise attention to these dhammas unheard of before, vision arose, and knowledge, realization, and awakening (*buddhi*) arose.

12.3 ‘ “The is the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.” For me, monks, when I paid causewise attention to these dhammas unheard of before, vision arose, and knowledge, realization, and awakening arose.

12.4 ‘ “The noble truth of suffering should be fully known with clear knowledge (*abhijñā*)” ...awakening arose.

12.5 ‘ “The origin of suffering...must be abandoned with clear knowledge”...

12.6 ‘ “The cessation of suffering...must be witnessed...”...

12.7 “The way leading to the cessation of suffering... must be developed...” ...

12.8 ‘ “The noble truth of suffering has been fully known with clear knowledge (*abhjñā*)”...awakening arose.

12.9 ‘ “...the origin of suffering...has been abandoned with clear knowledge” ...

12.10 ‘ “...the cessation of suffering...has been witnessed...” ...

12.11 ‘ “The noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed with clear knowledge.” For me, monks, when I paid causewise attention to these dhammas unheard of before, vision arose, and knowledge, realization, and awakening arose.

12.12 ‘As long as, monks, regarding these four noble truths with the three revolutions and the twelve modes, vision did not arise, nor did knowledge, nor did realization, nor did awakening arise, even so long, in this world with its deities, its Māras, and its Brahmas, with its ascetics and Brahmans, this generation with its princes and people I could not claim to be released, destined, disconnected, liberated...with the unexcelled perfect enlightenment.

12.13 ‘But when, monks, regarding these four noble truths with the three revolutions and the twelve modes, vision did arise, as did knowledge, as did realization, and as did awakening arise, then, in this world with its deities, its Māras, and its Brahmas, with its ascetics and Brahmans, this generation with its princes and people, I claimed to be released, destined, disconnected, liberated...with the unexcelled perfect enlightenment.’

13.1 When this dhamma exposition was given, Venerable Kauṇḍinya attained the stainless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma regarding dhammas, together with 80 000 deities.

13.2 Then the Lord addressed the Venerable Kauṇḍinya:

13.3 ‘Kauṇḍinya, did you deeply understand the Dhamma?’

13.4 ‘I deeply understood, Lord.’

13.5 ‘Kauṇḍinya, did you deeply understand the Dhamma?’

13.6 ‘I deeply understood, Sugata.’

13.7 The Dhamma was deeply understood by Venerable Kauṇḍinya, therefore Venerable Kauṇḍinya was called “Ājñātakauṇḍinya”.’

13.8-12 [The various orders of deities, from the earth yakkhas to the Brahmā gods, take up the cry to announce the revolving of the Dhamma wheel with its three revolutions and twelve modes.]

13.13 Thus this Dhamma-wheel of the Dhamma with its three revolutions and its twelve modes is revolved by the Lord in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Therefore this exposition of the Dhamma is called ‘The Revolving of the Wheel of the Dhamma’.

14.1 Then the Lord said to the five monks.

14.2 ‘There are, monks, four noble truths. What four?’

14.3 'The noble truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

14.4 'What is the noble truth of suffering?

14.5 'Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering, association with the disliked is suffering, seeking but not getting what one wishes is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates associated with grasping are suffering. In order to fully know this, the noble eightfold path must be developed.

14.6 'What is the noble truth of the origin of suffering?

14.7 'The craving which pertains to rebirth, associated with relishing and lust, which delights here and there. In order to abandon this, the noble eightfold path must be developed.

14.8 'What is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering?

14.9 'It is the complete abandoning of that very craving which pertains to rebirth, associated with relishing and lust, which delights here and there; the relinquishing, destruction, evaporation, fading away, cessation, appeasement, and ending of it. In order to witness this, the noble eightfold path must be developed.

14.10 'What is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering?

14.11 'It is the noble eightfold path, that is: right view...right samadhi. This must be developed.'

14.12 When this Dhamma exposition was given, Ājñātakauṇḍinya's mind was released from defilements without grasping, and for the rest of the five monks the stainless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma regarding dhammas arose. At that time there was one arahant in the world; the Lord was the second.

15.1 Then the Lord addressed the rest of the five monks:

15.2 'Monks, physical form is not self...'

15.3-18 [The Buddha teaches the Discourse on Not-self, almost identical to the Pali.]

15.19 When this Dhamma exposition was given, the minds of the rest of the four monks were released from defilements, without attachments. At that time there were five arahants in the world; the Lord was the sixth.

There are too many interesting points in this narrative to mention them all; the reader is invited to compare carefully with the Theravādin version. Obviously, the teaching sections are virtually identical. The only noteworthy differences in the content is the omission of 'sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering', a phrase that is standard in the Theravāda, but omitted elsewhere in the Sarvāstivāda, such as the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta. Also the phrases 'sickness is suffering' and 'association with the disliked, separation from the liked' are sometimes omitted in the Theravāda. None of these differences are sectarian. The most striking difference is in the structure of the narrative. The Theravāda combines the teachings into one session – the two extremes, the definitions of the truths, the three revolutions and twelve modes – at the end of which Venerable Kauṇḍinya attains the Dhamma-vision. Then, over the next few days, the

Buddha gives further teachings. These are not specified, but first Venerables Vappa and Bhaddiya, and then Venerables Mahānāma and Assaji, attain stream-entry. Each, immediately on seeing the Dhamma, requests ordination under the Buddha, and it is this that forms the thematic link to the Vinaya, serving as introduction to the development of ordination procedure. Such specifically Vinaya elements are absent from the Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra. Then, during the Discourse on Not-self all five attain arahantship. So the presentation of events in the Sarvāstivāda makes good sense of the Theravāda account, too: first the basic teachings on the path and the truths were given, followed by more detailed explanation. Later, it seems, the Theravāda wished to combine the teachings into one longer discourse.

Some elements in the Sarvāstivāda are obviously late, such as the insertion of the ‘80 000 deities’; but it must be admitted that the work in general hangs together extremely well as a narrative. The two extremes and the middle way are presented more directly and explicitly as a response to the critique of backsliding. Then the fundamental teachings on the three revolutions and the twelve modes are given. These, here emphasized more than in the Theravāda, become a recurring theme. They are included in the proclamation of the gods, and again referred to in the later definitions of the truths, in the phrases ‘In order to fully know this... [etc.]’; neither of these contexts are in the Theravāda account. It appears that in this tradition, the very meaning of the title of the discourse, ‘The Revolving of the Wheel of the Dhamma’, refers to these three revolutions (see section 13.13 above). Only after the presentation of the three revolutions and twelve modes is the detailed definition of the truths given. This is phrased in a rhetorical question format, whereas in the Theravāda these questions are absent. Thus in the Sarvāstivāda version the initial statement of the basic doctrine in declarative form is followed, at a later time, by the detailed exposition in question & answer form. This corresponds exactly with the *sutta/vyākaraṇa* model. Notice the structure here:

1. Statement (*sutta*): There is suffering...origin...cessation...path...
2. Question: What is suffering?
3. Explanation (*vyākaraṇa*): Birth is suffering...the five aggregates associated with grasping are suffering.

Now the Discourse on Not-self picks up from here, by explaining how the five aggregates are suffering. It is as if another question had been asked:

1. Statement (*sutta*): There is suffering...origin...cessation...path...
2. Question: What is suffering?
3. Explanation (*vyākaraṇa*): Birth is suffering...the five aggregates associated with grasping are suffering.
4. [Question: How are the five aggregates suffering?]
5. Explanation: Physical form is not self. If physical form were self, it would not lead to affliction...

So the explanation on one level becomes the basic text for a deeper explanation. This explanation then introduces a whole new field of doctrine, the five aggregates, demanding further explanation; according to the GIST, this is the source of the Khandha-saṃyutta. Thus the concept of *vyākaraṇa* is a relative one, depending on what level of text one is explaining. This suggests that the category of *vyākaraṇa* will be flexible, and will evolve as the explanations become ever more abstracted from the original text.

## SPIRALS OF ELABORATION

The same explanatory process is explicit elsewhere in the Suttas, too, most characteristically in the teaching of Venerable Sāriputta. Here is the beginning of the Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta:

‘Friends, just as the footprint of any living being that walks can be placed within an elephant’s footprint...so too all skilful principles can be included in the four noble truths. What four? The noble truth of suffering...origin...cessation...path.

‘And what is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is suffering...the five aggregates associated with grasping are suffering.

‘And what are the five aggregates associated with grasping? They are: the aggregate of physical form associated with grasping, the aggregate of feeling...perception...activities...cognition associated with grasping.

‘And what is the aggregate of physical form associated with grasping? It is the four great physical properties and the physical form derived from them.

‘And what are the four great physical properties? They are: the property of earth...water...fire...air.

‘And what is the physical property of earth? The physical property of earth may be either internal or external.

‘And what is the internal physical property of earth? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and grasped; that is, head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin...’<sup>134</sup>

Here the recurrent rounds of text/explanation are carried out to an elaborate degree, focussing ever finer, from the truths to the aggregates to the physical properties, showing how all these ‘skilful dhammas’ are contained within the four noble truths. Given the pervasive ambiguity of the term ‘dhamma’, it is perhaps not inexcusable to read the term here as referring both to ‘qualities, principles’, meaning that all contemplative practice takes place in the broader framework of understanding the four noble truths, and also ‘teachings’, meaning that all the teachings can be classified within the four noble truths (=proto-Saṃyutta). For the early Buddhists, this would have been, not an abstruse theory, but a reflection of how the teachings embody at a profound level the structure of reality.

The Saccavibhaṅga Sutta exemplifies this elaborative process even more explicitly.<sup>135</sup> It is set in the Deer Park at Benares, and the Buddha recalls his own teaching of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta there. He praises Venerable Sāriputta for his ability to teach the four noble truths in detail, and then retires to his dwelling. Venerable Sāriputta gets the hint, and proceeds to analyse the truths. Whereas in the Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta he concentrated minutely on the four physical properties, here he offers explanations for all aspects of the truths. The teaching has the following structure:

1. Statement (*sutta*): The Buddha taught the four noble truths
2. Question: What four?
3. Explanation (*vyākaraṇa*): Suffering...origin...cessation...path...
4. Question: What is suffering?
5. Explanation: Birth is suffering... the five aggregates associated with grasping are suffering.
6. Question: What is birth?

## 7. Explanation: The birth of beings into the various orders of beings...

In these central texts on the four noble truths the traditions directly correlate their historical origin with the stage of elaboration. First is the statement of the truths; then the explanation of the truths; then the explanation of the terms used in the explanation. Notice that this final level of explanation is credited to a disciple, not the Buddha himself. And we should not be surprised to find that these detailed explanations, unlike the basic teachings, show considerable divergence. For example, the Sarvāstivāda version offers a detailed explanation of the phrase 'sickness is suffering', which is not found in this context in the Pali (the Theravāda tradition is quite ambiguous as to the inclusion of 'sickness' in the noble truths definition). Much other material, too, is expanded in the Sarvāstivāda version. In particular, there is one of the most explicit statements found within the compass of the Āgamas on the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of time: 'This noble truth of suffering has existed in the past, is existing in the present, and will exist in the future...' It is easy to see how statements such as this, affirming that the Dhamma is a timeless principle, could have slipped into a doctrine that 'dhammas' (phenomena) exist throughout the three modes of time.

The evolution of the teachings on the four noble truths was not to stop here. The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta incorporates the doctrinal body of the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, adding even more material. We will examine this further in the treatment of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The main addition is a lengthy expansion of the second and third noble truths. The truth of suffering is also expanded in more subtle ways, with the addition of 'sickness' and 'association with the disliked, separation from the liked' to both the summary and detailed explanation. There is considerable inconsistency in the way the traditions treat these phrases. Both of them are found in the Sarvāstivādin, but not the Theravādin, Saccavibhaṅga Sutta. Thus the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta presentation of the truths clearly suggests a further historical elaboration of doctrine, although in this case the historical context is not confirmed in the text itself. In fact, this is clearly an artificial text, so the absence of meaningful historical context is unsurprising.

The Theravāda Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta presentation of the truths was taken up by the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga in its exposition of the truths. Here we witness further additions. Instead of referring to one afflicted by 'some kind of misfortune', the Vibhaṅga specifies misfortune due to failure in family, wealth, sickness, ethics, or views. Also, 'the cutting off of the life faculty' (*jīvitindriyassupaccheda*) was added to the definition of death. Generally, however, the Sutta Exposition remains remarkably faithful to the Suttas. The following Abhidhamma exposition employs the developed form of abhidhamma concepts to analyse the truths. Strangely, the first and second truths are in reverse order. As usual, the exposition trails off in an increasingly meaningless and pedantic series of questions. The only interest to the final 'questions' section, standard in the Vibhaṅga, is that it once again reflects the statement/question form we have seen evolving throughout the evolution of the texts. Here even the developed Abhidhamma Exposition becomes the basic text, subject to further questioning. In fact, the Abhidhamma is sometimes said to be characterised by this 'question method', which seems odd when we know how prevalent questions are in the Suttas, too, but becomes explicable when we realize that the Abhidhamma is largely derived from the *vyākaraṇa* anga.

The evolution of the material analysing the truths in detail was: Saccavibhaṅga Sutta > Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta > Vibhaṅga. At each stage more material was added. It seems that some of the material added in the final Vibhaṅga version then found its way back into the Burmese (VRI) Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This includes possibly 'association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering', and certainly the addition of 'the cutting off of the life faculty' to the definition of death. This material then filtered down to the Burmese Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and 'the cutting off of the life faculty' even made it back into the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, thus

'devolving' in this way: Vibhaṅga > Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta > Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta/Saccavibhaṅga Sutta.

So we can confirm that, in the case of at least one important doctrine, the treatment of the teachings in the different collections is exactly as predicted by the GIST. The fundamental teachings are found in the Saṃyutta and the Vinaya. The traditions tell us that the simpler presentations of the teaching occurred first, and the more complex presentations later. The basic statement is in declarative form, spoken by the Buddha. The more complex elaborations are in question & answer format, and become attributed to disciples. These evolve from the Saṃyutta to the Majjhima to the Dīgha to the Abhidhamma.

## CHAPTER 7: WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SATTAPANI CAVE?

Before he passed away, the Buddha exhorted the monks:

‘Therefore, Cunda, all you to whom I have taught these dhammas, having witnessed them with my own clear knowledge, should come together and recite them, setting meaning beside meaning and expression beside expression, without dissension, in order that this holy life may continue to be established for a long time, for the benefit and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans. And what are the dhammas that you should recite together? The four satipatthanas, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven enlightenment-factors, the noble eightfold path.’<sup>136</sup>

This is the Theravāda version. In the Dharmaguptaka, the 37 wings to enlightenment are replaced by the twelve angas.<sup>137</sup> There is evidently a problem here. The 37 wings to enlightenment and the twelve angas are, on the face of it, very different things: the wings to enlightenment are doctrinal topics, while the angas are literary styles. But if the wings to enlightenment are, as I suggest, primarily a table of contents of the meditation section (Magga Vagga) of the proto-Saṃyutta, and if the three angas may be broadly identified with the proto-Saṃyutta as a whole, then the problem dissolves.

In the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta a similar exhortation occurs. The Buddha, after relinquishing his will to live on, assembles the monks together in the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest in Vesālī. In the Pali, the Buddha encourages the monks to learn and practice the 37 wings to enlightenment, in terms similar to above, but not specifically mentioning reciting them together.<sup>138</sup> The Sarvāstivāda version in Sanskrit version has a similar passage, but the setting is the Cāpala Shrine. Just as the Pali, this mentions the 37 wings to enlightenment, but adds that these dhammas should be ‘borne in mind, well understood, and recited’.<sup>139</sup>



Another Sanskrit version, of which we only possess this fragment, describes the same episode as taking place at the Gandhamādāna Shrine. This mentions the angas as well as the wings to enlightenment. It is a little curious that the wings to enlightenment, which are teachings on practice, are to be recited, while the angas, which are literary texts, are to be practiced; this dissolves any division between theory and practice, and tends to further imply the integration of these two groups. We note in passing that some of the phrases in the following passage ('with mutual rejoicing, without disputing, in unity, with unified recital...' etc.) are reminiscent of Vinaya material.

'Therefore, monks, those dhammas that I have declared, having witnessed and entered upon with my own direct knowledge – that is: the four satipatthanas, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven enlightenment-factors, the noble eightfold path – therein you should all, in togetherness and harmony, with mutual rejoicing, without disputing, in unity, with unified recital, one like milk and water...(?)...should dwell in comfort.

'Therefore, monks, those dhammas that were taught by me – that is, *sutta, geyya, vyākaraṇa, gāthā-udāna-nidāna-avadāna-itivuttaka-jātaka-vepulla-abbhūta-dhamma-upadeśa* – those dhammas should be well and thoroughly learnt; having been learnt they should be borne in mind; having been borne in mind they should be investigated; having been investigated they should be understood; having been understood, in just that way they should be practiced.'<sup>140</sup>

A little after this episode, in both the Pali and Sanskrit versions, comes the famous teaching of the great references, which we have met before: whenever anyone makes a statement about the Buddha's teachings, then, no matter how learned or prestigious they may be, their statement must be compared with the Suttas and Vinaya,<sup>141</sup> and only if it agrees with them may it be accepted as the word of the Buddha. The Sanskrit brings out the essential principle more explicitly than the Pali: 'The monks must rely on the Suttas, not on individuals'.<sup>142</sup> In the narrative flow, this clearly harks back to the earlier statements, and implies that the '*suttas*' here are related to the wings to enlightenment and/or the angas; i.e., the proto-Saṃyutta.

The Sanskrit version records an additional, similar statement. This is given great prominence by being included in the famous deathbed teachings of the Buddha. In terms identical to the previous context, the Buddha says that those skilful dhammas are to be learnt, remembered, and recited, but instead of mentioning the wings to enlightenment it mentions the twelve angas.<sup>143</sup> In both of these cases, the same dhammas are mentioned in the same contexts in the account found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (although I cannot be sure from Rockhill's paraphrase whether this text specifically mentions chanting).<sup>144</sup>

These passages support our thesis, regardless of whether they represent authentic sayings of the Buddha. If they are not authentic, they must have been invented by the Sangha, presumably to authorize after the fact the recitation of the First Council at Rājagaha. They could not be very late interpolations, for then they would surely mention the recitation of the Nikāyas, as does the account in the Vinaya Cūlavagga. The fact that they refer, seemingly without distinction, to the 37 wings to enlightenment and to the angas, suggest that if they were an interpolation they hark back to a time when these were seen as constituting the key teachings recited at the First Council.

And if they are authentic, it seems incredible that the Sangha should have ignored or disregarded such an important instruction. There seems no good reason to doubt that the Buddha did, shortly before he passed away, encourage the Sangha to preserve his central teachings by coming together to recite them. And I believe that they did exactly as the Buddha encouraged. After he passed away, the Sangha came together in the Sattapani Cave, in the craggy hills overlooking

Rājagaha, and recited, out of compassion for the world, the core teachings of the Dhamma: the *suttas*, *geyyas*, and *vyākaraṇas* that we find today principally in the Saṃyutta Nikāya.

These inferences from the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta dovetail rather nicely with the Theravāda exegetical tradition of the Peṭakopadesa and the Netti. The passage on the great references says a statement should be checked to see if it ‘fits in’ with the Suttas. The word we render as ‘fit in’ is the Pali *otaraṇa*, literally ‘descending, entering’. L.S. Cousins comments:

‘This is an unusual expression; it is best interpreted in the light of the Peṭakopadesa tradition where *otaraṇa* is one of the sixteen *hāras* [‘modes of conveying an interpretation’]. It may be taken as a particular mode of exegesis which links a given discourse into the teaching as a whole by means of one of the general categories of the teaching. The Peṭakopadesa in fact specifies six possibilities: aggregates, elements, spheres, faculties, truths, dependant origination. Any of these can be used to analyse the content of a discourse and their use will automatically place it in the context of the teaching as a whole. Something on these lines, if perhaps a little less defined, is surely intended in the *mahāpadesa* [‘great reference’] passages. What is envisaged for *sutta* is not then a set body of literature, but rather a traditional pattern of teaching.’<sup>145</sup>

In the list of the six topics under *otaraṇa* in the Peṭakopadesa we have, of course, yet another example of the saṃyutta-matika. We have already noticed how the Netti treats *sutta* in the great references as pertaining to the four noble truths, which points us straight to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta and the major collection that it is found in. This dissolves the dichotomy set up by Cousins in his last sentence: *sutta* is a body of literature that has been patterned after the central teachings.

There is a suggestive passage in the Samantapāsādikā, the Theravāda Vinaya commentary, that is perhaps inadvertently revealing of the historical picture here. The passage deals with the question of how the 500 monks were chosen for participation in the First Council.

‘Leaving aside many hundreds and thousands of monks who are had memorized the entire nine anga textual dispensation of the Teacher, the ordinary persons, stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners, and dry-vipassana arahants, the Elder [Mahā Kassapa] gathered 499 monks who had memorized the Tipiṭaka with all its textual divisions, attained to the discriminations, of great might, mostly those included in the foremost disciples, gainers of the three realizations, etc., all being arahants.’<sup>146</sup>

Obviously the first group are being unfavourably compared with the latter; thus it is implied that the nine anga scripture is somehow inferior to the Tipiṭaka. This is implicit in the traditions anyway, since they moved from the angas towards the Tipiṭaka, there must have been some dissatisfaction felt with the old system. This passage suggests that the First Council was the pivot point for this change, the time when the Tipiṭaka system started to come into its ascendancy. Although we cannot accept the suggestion that the Abhidhamma was part of the recitation – which is not even supported by the Theravāda Vinaya account of the Council – we can agree with the suggested dynamic. Again this harmonises quite nicely with the account of the First Council in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, for there the business of compiling the Saṃyutta Āgama (the GIST’s first three angas) was given pride of place, and led on to the compilation of the other Āgamas.

We are now poised to draw together some of the strands in the above chapters, and to paint a more coherent overall picture of the structure of the Dhamma & Vinaya. The two discourses, the Catuspariṣat Sūtra and the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, are a complementary pair. This is quite evident from many parallels and similarities in their details and structure. It is unnecessary to

examine this in detail here; suffice to exemplify a few features. Both start out in or near Rājagaha; both involve the King of Rājagaha; both tell of the Buddha journeying; both intersperse the journey with important teachings; the Catuspariṣat tells of the first convert (Aññā Koṇḍañña), while the Mahā Parinibbāna tells of the final convert (Subhadda); both mention the Buddha's superiority to the sage Āḷāra Kālāma; both feature divine intervention from Sakka, Brahmā, and Māra, as well as other deities; both feature displays of psychic powers, including the 'walking on water'; both speak of the earthquakes and other celestial portents accompanying the chief events in the career of the Tathagata; both integrate a large number of materials that are found elsewhere as individual Suttas; both, however, fail to fully integrate all the relevant material found elsewhere; both occupy a position intermediate to Dhamma & Vinaya; and so on. While these features imply a connection between the texts, explicit connections, too, are not lacking. The Catuspariṣat Sutta has the Buddha saying that he will not pass away until the four assemblies (monks, nuns, lay men, and lay women) have been fully established (on which see more below). The Mahā Parinibbāna Suttas explicitly refer to the rolling forth of the wheel of Dhamma as one of the eight causes of earthquakes; the Sanskrit mentions the 'twelve modes' and 'three rounds', thus clarifying that it is in fact the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta that is being referred to.<sup>147</sup>

The Catuspariṣat Sūtra tells the story of the beginning of the Buddha's career, while the Mahā Parinibbāna tells of the end. We have noticed above that several genres of Buddhist literature are formally structured by taking a pre-existing teaching, and furnishing this with opening and closing passages that provide a setting for the teachings. This kind of form is, of course, absolutely characteristic of the normal format for discourses: first the setting is stated, in brief or in detail; then the doctrinal teachings are given; finally the monks rejoice in what was said. Later literature such as the Jātakas, for example, provide the central story with a setting (the 'Story of the Present') in a similar way. The Pāṭimokkha rules, likewise, are preceded by origin stories (*nidānas*) and followed by case studies and analysis. What if we were to consider the Catuspariṣat and the Mahā Parinibbāna as constituting, in a parallel fashion, the narrative opening and closing settings for the whole of the Dhamma-Vinaya?

The Catuspariṣat furnishes a narrative background for the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta and the other essential early teachings that today are found in the Saṃyutta. In this way it sows the seeds of the three angas (= proto-Saṃyutta), and forms the foundation for the entire edifice of the Dhamma. We can almost see the teachings integrated in this story starting to branch off and separate: the *geyya* verses, primarily exemplified by the Request of Brahmā, are quite distinctive, and tend to occur in groups; the centrality of the *sutta* teachings of the Buddha himself, such as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, is given special emphasis; and the *vyākaraṇa* dialogues with the disciples, such as the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, expand on the fundamental teachings.

Following the establishing of the Dhamma, the ordination of Aññā Koṇḍañña forms the starting-point for the Vinaya. This narrative, in the Theravāda Vinaya, merges into the formal description of ordination procedure and thus the beginning of the Khandhakas, which is the half of the Vinaya that primarily deals with the prescriptive aspects of the monastic life, the duties and so on that are to be performed. The other half of the Vinaya, the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga, which treats the Pāṭimokkha rules and their analysis, is primarily concerned with the proscriptive aspects of the monastic life, the various kinds of misconduct that are to be refrained from. This section begins with the story of Sudinna, the monk who had sex with his former wife to grant his parent's wishes for an heir. This episode consciously forms a negative counter-narrative to the Catuspariṣat material. While the Catuspariṣat memorably features the deities taking up the cry of rejoicing over the proclamation of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the story of Sudinna has the deities, in exactly parallel fashion, taking up the cry of the corruption that has now entered the Sangha. Thus the Catuspariṣat, having branched off along the

fundamental divide of Dhamma and Vinaya, goes on to imply the main sub-divisions within each of these areas.

Once the course and structure of the Dhamma & Vinaya had been set up in this manner, each of the suggested main threads proceeded to diversify and sub-divide further, resulting in the fascinating yet frustrating mass of unity and diversity of the scriptures as we have them. The Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, as the closing narrative, attempts to pull the strands back together again. It contains much Vinaya-style material – the various sets of Dhammas leading to non-decline; the allowance to abolish the ‘lesser and minor rules’; the imposition of the ‘highest punishment’ on the recalcitrant Channa; the ordination of Subhadda; and so on. In this sense it may be seen as a summary and reflection on some of the key principles of Vinaya. In the same way, it reviews and emphasizes some of the key Dhamma teachings, notably the 37 wings to enlightenment, the four noble truths, and the threefold training of ethics, samadhi, and understanding; in other words, the key topics of the Saṃyutta.

We have noticed that contrasting sections of the teaching may be framed within mythic settings that are consciously articulated to contrast with each other, such as the cries of the deities in response to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta and to the downfall of Sudinna. In a similar manner, the Request of Brahmā that the Buddha teach, found in the Catuṣpariṣat Sutta, contrasts with the Request of Māra that the Buddha pass away, found in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta. The Sanskrit here makes the parallels between the Catuṣpariṣat and the Mahā Parinibbāna much more explicit and complex – far too complex to treat adequately here.<sup>148</sup> The Mahā Parinibbāna Suttas tell how Māra approaches the Buddha, bows with his head at the Buddha’s feet (! in the Sanskrit only), and reminds him that, while the Buddha was staying at Uruvelā on the banks of the river Nerañjarā soon after he was enlightened, Māra had come to him and requested that the Buddha pass away. This episode is in fact found in the Sanskrit Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra, in exactly parallel terms, but is absent from the Pali equivalent in the Vinaya Mahāvagga. At that time, both versions of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta go on to say, the Buddha had rejoined that he would not pass away until the fourfold assembly of monks, nuns, lay men, and lay women followers were well established and well practiced in the Dhamma, able to teach and maintain the Dhamma. (This passage, incidentally, is one of many that show that the establishing of the Bhikkhunī Sangha was not imposed on a reluctant Buddha, as appears from the Vinaya narrative, but was an intrinsic part of his mission from the beginning.) But now, says Māra, these conditions are fulfilled: the fourfold assembly has indeed been well established, so it is time for the Buddha to pass away. The Buddha tells Māra not to worry, that he will indeed pass away in three months time. The Sanskrit adds the interesting remark that, after receiving confirmation of the Buddha’s imminent Parinibbāna, Māra, full of happiness and joy, disappeared right there.<sup>149</sup> This stands in contrast to Māra’s reaction in every other encounter with the Buddha, where he vanishes ‘sad and disappointed’, which is in fact what happens in the Request of Māra in the Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra.<sup>150</sup> These detailed correlations suggest that the two Sanskrit texts were edited conjointly, and therefore probably belong to the same school. This is probably the Sarvāstivāda, although it is noteworthy that in both texts, especially the Mahā Parinirvāṇa, whose main theme is impermanence, the Sanskrit refrains from any of the quasi-eternalist statements to which the Sarvāstivāda is normally prone.

Another example of the extra connections in the Sanskrit is that, immediately before the Request of Māra, the Buddha takes the alms-offering from the merchants Tapussa and Bhallika, which was the first meal after his enlightenment. Unfortunately, the food, consisting of many ‘honey-lumps’, was perhaps too rich for the Buddha after his austere diet, for the Sanskrit, though not the Pali, says he contracted a severe ‘wind-ailment’. This immediately reminds us of the Buddha’s famous illness after eating his last meal; the relation is in fact explicitly invoked, for in the Mahā Parinibbāna Suttas the Buddha says that these two meals, the first and last, are of unparalleled

merit.<sup>151</sup> In the *Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra*, the Buddha's illness is followed by the Request of Māra; then, after Māra has disappeared, Sakka the King of Gods appears before the Buddha to offer him medicine to cure his illness. This narrative structure makes it seem as if the Request of Māra has been inserted in the illness narrative.

The whole series of episodes offers a complex, resonant mythic fabric that is not easily unwoven into its separate strands. It is the closing of the circle. Given this profound interdependence of these two texts, it seems inevitable that their conception of the scriptural Dhamma should also be interwoven. The *Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra* provides an authoritative narrative framework for the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and other central teachings; and in the same way, the *Mahā Parinibbāna Suttas* provide an authoritative narrative framework for the Buddha's instruction that, after he is gone, his followers should rely on the Dhamma & Vinaya. As we have seen, the Dhamma is chiefly formulated here as either the 37 wings to enlightenment or the angas. We have identified both of these with the proto-Saṃyutta, whose existing descendants contain the essential teaching passages of the *Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra*.

## CONCLUSION

I have tried to make as strong a case as possible for the GIST in a brief space. Doubtless I have omitted many possible counterexamples, and doubtless the real picture was more complex than any brief description. For example, I have identified the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* as the prime paradigm of *sutta anga* in contrast with the *vyākaraṇa anga*. Yet immediately following the main discourse, the text says: 'When this *vyākaraṇa* was being spoken...' (although the Sanskrit has *dhammapariyaya*, 'exposition of Dhamma'.) To rub salt into the wound, the text ends with an *udāna*. Obviously, seeking for absolute consistency is hopeless. Still, if we reject, as we must, the traditional accounts of the origin of the Tripitaka as sectarian myths, we are bound to seek for a more plausible alternative.

The continuity, even identity, between the three identified strata of texts is undeniable. It reflects an intense effort to stabilize the Buddha's teachings, to preserve them against the inexorable ravages of impermanence of which all Buddhists have been so keenly aware. Taking a leaf from Richard Dawkins' theory of memes, we can think of this textual stability in terms of the evolution of ideas. The texts themselves are not primary. They are not ends in themselves. It is the ideas, the memes, that are the driving force. The memes generate texts in order to ensure their own survival and transmission through time. The surface structures of the texts are determined by expedient and contingent matters such as local technology, literary styles, and so on, and must change in time. But the memes survive. This is the only meaningful criterion by which to judge the success of this extraordinary literary endeavour: has it preserved the essential ideas through time? In the early strata we have been considering, this reproduction was maintained using the very same words and phrases repeated in the various strata. In fact we could speak, not of the creation of new strata of texts, but of different stages of evolution of one and the same text. The only genetic peculiarity is that the earlier layers are preserved alongside the later. Our task must be to peel back the layers, the delicate art of textual archaeology.

By doing so, though the task may seem laborious and dreary, we uncover a priceless treasure: a common language, a common set of ideas that can be securely said to underlie all the schools and traditions. Using our historical perspective, we are able to shed an exciting new light on a forgotten world of Buddhism. Our situation is a little like that which came about in Chinese Confucianism around the beginning of the Middle Ages. Confucius, who lived around the same time as the Buddha, left only a small body of teachings behind, but by the start of the Common Era these had been greatly developed in detail by the followers of his school. But in 93 C.E.,

Confucius' house was demolished, and a number of manuscripts were found hidden within the walls. Embarrassingly, when these were deciphered they were found to teach doctrines decidedly different from those proclaimed by the mainstream Confucianists. The repercussions of this event have been felt in Confucianism down to the modern era.

For us, the lost manuscripts are not like the Confucian scrolls hidden in the wall, or like the Dead Sea scrolls lost in the desert. The finds of ancient manuscripts from the deserts and caves of Afghanistan and Central Asia date from well after the Buddha's time and mainly serve to substantiate, rather than undermine, the authenticity of the existing canons. The lost manuscripts are instead buried in an even deeper, more inaccessible place – the shrine rooms of Buddhist temples. There they remain, buried beneath the sands of interpretation, objects of worship not of study, inspiring devotion but not practice. The Buddha's urgent, repeated call was for these teachings not to remain mere words, but to inform and nourish the liberation of the heart.

## PART 2

# A HISTORY OF MINDFULNESS

## CHAPTER 8: INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

'Mindfulness is useful everywhere' – so said the Buddha. And in harmony with this motif, the theme of mindfulness echoes throughout each of the melodies that compose the path to freedom. At its most fundamental, mindfulness is essential for the sense of conscience on which ethical conduct is founded; hence alcohol and drugs, by destroying mindfulness, destroy the basis for a moral life. Mindfulness, in its older sense of 'memory', remembers and recollects the teachings, forming the basis for the intellectual comprehension of the Dhamma, and bears them in mind, ready to apply right at the crucial moment. Mindfulness guards the senses, endowing the meditator with circumspection, dignity, and collectedness, not allowing the senses to play at will with the tantalizing toys and baubles of the world. Mindfulness repeatedly re-collects awareness into the present, re-remembering oneself so that one's actions are purposeful and appropriate, grounded in time and place. Mindfulness is prominent in all approaches to meditation, and in refined form it distinguishes the exalted levels of higher consciousness called samadhi. On the plane of wisdom, mindfulness extends the continuity of awareness from ordinary consciousness to samadhi and beyond, staying with the mind in all of its permutations and transformations and thus supplying the fuel for understanding impermanence and causality. And finally on the plane of liberation, perfected mindfulness is an inalienable quality of the realized sage, who lives 'ever mindful'.

Given this ubiquity of mindfulness, as omnipresent as salt in the ocean, it would seem a hopeless task to isolate certain areas of the Dhamma as bearing a special affinity with mindfulness. Indeed, we might even go further and allege that any such attempt conceals a program to co-opt the unique prestige of mindfulness in the cause of one's own partisan perspective. Nevertheless, it has become a commonplace in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theravāda meditation circles that mindfulness, and in

particular its chief manifestation as satipatthana, is close or identical in meaning with vipassana, or insight. The chief support for this idea is the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which is the only well-known early text on satipatthana. The success of this doctrine, repeated in virtually every modern Theravāda text on meditation, reflects the unrivalled prestige of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Here are just a few representative quotes.

‘[The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] is generally regarded as the most important sutta in the entire Pali canon.’

Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, pg. 588

‘The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development (meditation) is called the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.’

Walpola Rāhula, *What the Buddha Taught*, pg. 69

‘[The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] is by all Buddhists rightly considered the most important part of the whole Sutta-Piṭaka and the quintessence of the whole meditation practice.’

Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka, *Path to Deliverance*, pg. 123

‘No other discourse of the Buddha, not even his first one, the famous “Sermon of Benares”, enjoys in those Buddhist countries of the East which adhere to the unadulterated tradition of the original teachings, such popularity and veneration as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.’

Bhikkhu Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, pg. 11.

In fact, the worship, as opposed to practice, of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is a remarkable and undeniable feature of modern Theravāda. Venerable Nyanaponika, in his classic *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, waxes lyrical:

‘In Lanka for instance, the isle of Ceylon, when on fullmoon days lay devotees observe eight of the ten principal precepts of novice monks, staying for the day and the night in the monastery, they frequently choose this Sutta to read, recite, listen to, and contemplate. Still, in many a home, the satipatthana book is reverently wrapped in a clean cloth, and from time to time, in the evening, it is read to members of the family. Often this discourse is recited at the bedside of a dying Buddhist, so that in the last hour of his life, his heart may be set on, consoled, and gladdened by the Master’s great message of liberation. Though ours is an age of print, it is still customary in Ceylon to have new palm-leaf manuscripts of the Sutta written by scribes, and to offer them to the library of a monastery. A collection of nearly two hundred such manuscripts of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, some with costly covers, was seen by the writer in an old monastery of Ceylon.’<sup>152</sup>

The author discreetly avoids noticing that in this atmosphere of reverential awe the question of practicing the instructions in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta does not arise. Hundreds of copies of manuscripts on meditation are accumulated in a monastery where probably no-one is actually meditating. The irrationality of this is a classic symptom of religious fetishism – the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has been transformed into a magical totem. Please notice that this eulogy of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as fetish appears at the beginning of the single most influential and widely read book on contemporary Theravāda vipassana meditation. It is explicitly invoked to magnify the aura of sanctity surrounding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a key aspect of the vipassanāvāda agenda.

Where forcefulness of opinion is matched by paucity of evidence, I cannot but smell a dogma lurking nearby. Much as we have benefited from the modern emphasis on mindfulness in daily practice, it is past time for the pendulum to swing back. The Buddha did not speak the

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in its current form. It is a late and, in part, poorly organized compilation; and it is specifically the vipassana aspects that are least authentic. In the early teachings satipatthana was primarily associated not with vipassana but with samatha. Since for the Suttas, samatha and vipassana cannot be divided, a few passages show how this samatha practice evolves into vipassana. In later literature the vipassana element grew to predominate, to the extent of almost entirely usurping the place of samatha in satipatthana. Subtle differences in emphasis between the schools can be discerned in their treatment of satipatthana, differences that can be seen to relate to the basic metaphysical controversies underlying the schisms. Thus the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is interesting not because it represents the ‘unadulterated tradition of the original teachings’, but because it provides suggestive evidence for how sectarian adulterations crept even into the early discourses.

In making such claims, claims that will inevitably be perceived as an attack on the authority of some of the most respected 20<sup>th</sup> Century meditation schools, I cannot say emphatically enough that what I am criticizing here is not the teachers of vipassana, or the meditation techniques that are marketed as ‘vipassana’, but the textual sources of the vipassanāvāda, the doctrine that vipassana is the central meditation taught by the Buddha.

The vipassanāvāda must be understood in its historical context, for it is this, rather than the textual sources, that shape its essential features. The vipassanāvāda grew up as part of the movement of ‘modernist Buddhism’, which started in the colonial era as the schools of Buddhism attempted to respond to the challenges of the modern age. This movement swept over the whole of the Buddhist world in a number of guises. In all its varieties, however, the key aspect of modernist Buddhism was rationalism. Meditation, especially samatha, was suspect, since in traditional Buddhist cultures it had often degenerated into a quasi-magical mysticism. Samatha is emotional rather than intelligential. It cultivates the non-rational aspects of consciousness, and so when it degrades it shades off into psychic tricks, fortune-telling, magic, and so on, all of which are rampant throughout Buddhist cultures. Some forms of Buddhist modernism did away with meditation altogether; this may be compared with the Protestant movement in Europe, which similarly opposed the contemplative aspect of religion. Contemplation will always remain a threat to religious orthodoxy, since there is always the uncomfortable possibility that the truth a meditator sees may not agree with the truth that the books say they’re supposed to see. However in Buddhism, unlike Christianity, the contemplative life lies at the very heart of the Founder’s message. Other modernist Buddhism movements, perceiving that Buddhist meditation was based on a rational psychology, developed contemplative systems that emphasized these aspects. These schools, originating mainly in Burma, marginalized or outright disparaged samatha and developed the vipassanāvāda as a scriptural authority for their ‘vipassana-only’ approach. The strength of these schools is that they have rightly championed an energetic and disciplined approach to meditation. But with our advancing knowledge and appreciation of the Buddhist scriptural heritage, the scriptural authority for their special doctrines lies in tatters. Followers of these contemplative schools would do well to be a little more humble in their claims, and to emphasize the demonstrable practical benefits of their practices, rather than rely on a discredited theory.

I am well aware that my claims fly in the face of virtually every modern interpreter of satipatthana. Such an accumulated weight of authority cannot be discarded frivolously. At the risk of appearing pedantic and perhaps obsessive, I must proceed very carefully. I will therefore attempt to make my coverage as comprehensive as reasonably possible, casting an eye at every available important early text on satipatthana, as well as a range of later passages. I consciously flirt with the danger of polemicism, of simply asserting one extreme in reaction to an original extreme. But everyone, no matter how ‘objective’ or ‘scientific’, has their own agenda, and it is more honest to be open with one’s perspectives than to pretend – to others or to oneself – that



one has no bias. The concern here is not so much for balance within this particular work, but for balance within the tradition as a whole.

## SAMATHA & VIPASSANA

The key to the approach used in this work is to analyse the various strata of texts on satipatthana in terms of samatha and vipassana. It is therefore necessary to start by explaining what I mean by these. We can distinguish two key aspects of how the Suttas speak of samatha & vipassana: their nature, and their function. Their specific nature is clearly distinguished in this passage.

‘A person who has samatha of the heart within himself but no vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding should approach one who has vipassana and inquire: “How should activities be seen? How should they be explored? How should they be discerned with vipassana?” And later he can gain vipassana...

‘A person who has vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding but no samatha of the heart within himself should approach one who has samatha and inquire: “How should the mind be steadied? How should it be settled? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated in samadhi?” And later he can gain samatha...

‘One who has neither should inquire about both [and “should put forth extreme enthusiasm, effort, endeavor, exertion, unflagging mindfulness, and clear comprehension to acquire them, just as if one’s turban or hair were ablaze, one would put forth extreme effort to quench the flames”...<sup>153</sup>]

‘One who has both, established in these beneficial qualities should make further effort for the evaporation of defilements.’<sup>154</sup>

‘Just as if, Nandaka, there was a four-legged animal with one leg stunted and short, it would thus be unfulfilled in that factor; so too, a monk who is faithful and virtuous but does not gain samatha of the heart within himself is unfulfilled in that factor. That factor should be fulfilled by him... A monk who has these three but no vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding is unfulfilled in that factor. That factor should be fulfilled by him.’<sup>155</sup>

The description of vipassana mentions the seeing, exploring and discerning of activities (*saṅkhārā*). The mention of ‘activities’ here implies the three characteristics – impermanence, suffering, not-self – of phenomena, conditioned according to dependent origination. The meditative discernment of the nature of conditioned reality is the central meaning of vipassana. While this definition is possibly too narrow for some contexts, still vipassana is commonly used in this sense in the Suttas and in the present day.

Samatha is described in terms of the steadying, settling, and unifying of the mind in samadhi. Elsewhere the implications of this are spelt out.

‘How does he steady his mind within himself, settle it, unify it, and concentrate it in samadhi? Here, Ānanda, he enters and abides in the first jhana... second jhana... third jhana... fourth jhana.’<sup>156</sup>

Here, as in virtually all central doctrinal contexts in the early texts, samatha or samadhi is explicitly defined as the four jhanas. We must therefore conclude that the four jhanas are an essential, intrinsic part of the path. Establishing these points formed the burden of the argument

of *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, so I won't repeat the reasons here. It is necessary to mention these conclusions, however, for anyone who persists in the very common practice of interpreting early texts on samadhi in terms of the commentarial ideas of 'access samadhi' and 'momentary samadhi' will certainly misinterpret the present work, and, I believe, will also misinterpret the Suttas.

The second mode of treating samatha and vipassana is in terms of their function, that is, the results of the practice.

'Monks, these two principles share in realization. What two? Samatha and vipassana.

'When samatha is developed, what purpose is achieved? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what purpose is achieved? Lust is abandoned.

'When vipassana is developed, what purpose is achieved? Understanding is developed. When understanding is developed, what purpose is achieved? Ignorance is abandoned.

'Monks, the mind tainted by lust is not released; understanding tainted by ignorance is not developed. Thus the release of heart is due to the fading away of lust; the release by understanding is due to the fading away of ignorance.'<sup>157</sup>

Thus the purpose of samatha is to alleviate lust, which here stands for all emotional defilements, whereas vipassana eliminates ignorance, that is, intelligential defilements. Both of these key Sutta passages strongly emphasize the complementary, integrative nature of these two aspects of meditation. While there is a clear conceptual distinction, they are not divided up into two separate baskets (still less into two separate meditation centres!). The early texts never classify the various meditation themes into either samatha or vipassana. They are not two different kinds of meditation; rather, they are qualities of the mind that should be developed. Broadly speaking, samatha refers to the emotional aspects of our minds, the heart qualities such as peace, compassion, love, bliss. Vipassana refers to the wisdom qualities such as understanding, discrimination, discernment. Samatha soothes the emotional defilements such as greed and anger, while vipassana pierces with understanding the darkness of delusion. It is apparent that all meditation requires both of these qualities, so in seeking to disentangle them we must inevitably remain in the twilight zone of emphasis and perspective, eschewing the easy clarity of black-&-white absolutes.

## CHAPTER 9: PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many learned and wise authors have studied and commented on the various versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. I have learned something from each of these writers, and any virtue in my work stems purely from my being able to stand on such broad and strong shoulders. This book is already far too long, so I try to avoid repeating topics that have already been well-treated, except where re-evaluation is necessary in light of the special methods and materials of the current

work. A survey of the general writings on satipatthana would be a pleasant but over-long task, but we may briefly survey those who have undertaken comparative and historical studies.

Oskar von Hinuber hinted at some of the issues involved:

‘More complicated is the relation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta, SN V141-192 to the Satipaṭṭhānasuttantas found in DN no. 22 Mahāsatipatthanasuttanta and MN no. 10 Satipaṭṭhānasuttanta, which deserves a detailed study, because it seems that sometimes SN has preserved smaller parts from which larger units were built, or pieces of texts, which for some reason or other were not incorporated into the larger suttantas.’<sup>158</sup>

Venerable Analayo has recently published a full-scale study of satipatthana, titled *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. This is a very valuable work, which ably discusses most of the practical and theoretical issues involved in the study of satipatthana. The author draws from a vast spectrum of sources, displaying a warm appreciation for the perspectives opened up by different scholars and meditators. Although Analayo is still influenced by the vipassana interpretation of satipatthana, his presentation is refreshingly moderate. He does no more than hint at the possible implications of a historical analysis of the subject:

‘But the detailed instructions found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta apparently belong to a later period, when the Buddha’s teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to the distant Kammāsaddhamma in the Kuru country, where both discourses were spoken.’<sup>159</sup>

It is indeed strange that such an important teaching should have been given only in such an obscure, far-away town. (The Kuru country is near present-day Delhi, and marks the probable extreme western limits of the Buddha’s peregrinations). Stranger still that the discourse would have been given twice, with only the expansion of one section differentiating them. In fact, it seems not merely strange but incredible that the Buddha should have taught only the basic pericope in all his years at Sāvattihī, etc., and in one of his rare visits to the border countries he gave such a vastly elaborated teaching, not once but twice. Were the students in the main centres to be left high and dry for all those years, deprived of the key for fully understanding satipatthana? This reinforces our contention that the shorter, mainstream teachings on satipatthana found especially in the Saṃyutta should be more closely examined, and that the longer discourses should be seen in this light.

Although Analayo is aware of the different versions of the satipatthana material, the focus remains firmly on the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.<sup>160</sup> For example, the comparison of the contents of the body contemplation shows, as we shall see later, that certain exercises, particularly the investigation of the parts of the body, are common to all traditions, while other exercises are particular to certain traditions. Analayo remarks:

‘The reasons for the omissions are open to conjecture, but what remains of the unanimously accepted core of the contemplation of the body in all the different versions is a thorough investigation of its anatomical constitution.’<sup>161</sup>

The very fact that the investigation of the body parts is unanimously accepted suggests that the other meditative exercises are more likely to be additions than omissions. If the traditions inherited a common list of meditation practices, and some subsequently were lost, there would seem to be no reason why some exercises would be left out rather than others, and therefore no reason why there should be a certain practice preserved with complete consistency. Or again if there was no common core, and all the detailed lists were invented independently by the

traditions, there would seem no reason for such consistent features. Another problem is that some of the exercises, especially in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, are clearly anomalous and best understood as additions. While undoubtedly conjectural, it nevertheless seems that the most reasonable way of explaining both the similarities and the differences is that there was a simpler, common root text, elaborated in somewhat divergent manner by the schools.

Thich Nhat Hanh published full translations of all three major versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in his *Transformation and Healing*. The translations, by him and Annabel Laity, offer an invaluable and almost unique opportunity to compare in English a major Sutta in recensions from three different schools. However the translations sometimes bend too far to accommodate the translators' ideas. Some comments on the texts are included, but the main orientation of the book is practical, so he does not pursue textual questions in great depth. The most relevant passage in our current context is this.

‘Other differences in the second version [Sarvāstivāda] are teachings on the kind of concentration which gives birth to joy and happiness, which is equivalent to the first jhana, and a concentration which abandons joy but maintains happiness, which is equivalent to the second jhana, as well as meditations on purity, clear light, and signs. All this is evidence that the practice of the Four Jhanas had already begun to infiltrate the *Sūtra Piṭaka*, although discretely. By the time of the third version [Mahāsaṅghika], the practice of the jhanas is mentioned quite openly, by name. The meditation which observes the pure light can be seen as announcing the first steps in the formation of Pure Land Buddhism, and the meditation on the sign will be developed in the use of the kasiṇa, a symbolic image visualized as a point of concentration.’

Apparently Thich Nhat Hanh believes that the jhanas were a later infiltration into Buddhism; this would entail that all of the hundreds of discourses mentioning jhanas in the canons were composed later than the current text. He offers no evidence for this extraordinary view. His comments here almost all miss the point, simply because he assumes that the current text, the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, is the original source of these various practices. However they are all found elsewhere in the canons and the current text is probably a somewhat later compilation. His association of the perception of light with Pure Land is far-fetched; the perception of light is the standard remedy for sloth & torpor, and surely the origins of Pure Land should be sought rather among the devotional passages in the early discourses, particularly the practice of the ‘recollection of the Buddha’ (*buddhānussati*). Again, his comment regarding the ‘meditation on the sign’ misses the point, for he apparently has been misled by the translation into thinking that the practice described is visualization, whereas comparison with the Pali version shows that it in fact refers to reviewing of jhana.<sup>162</sup> Thus, however beneficial Thich Nhat Hanh’s practical advice may be, his textual analysis is not very useful for a historical inquiry.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu discusses the issues briefly in *The Wings to Awakening*. He renders ‘dhammas’ in satipaṭṭhana as ‘mental qualities’ rather than ‘phenomena’, since he believes that the various groups of dhammas are chiefly variations on the abandoning of the hindrances and the development of the enlightenment-factors. He mentions the Vibhaṅga and the Sarvāstivāda version as historical support for this argument. However he retains a typically reserved attitude towards the possibility of reconstructing a projected original text. While it is certainly true that the main factors in the fourth satipaṭṭhana are mental qualities, other aspects of satipaṭṭhana are also mental qualities, such as feelings, so this does not serve to adequately distinguish the meaning here. Below we will see that the most significant difference between the fourth satipaṭṭhana and the rest is that it treats of causality, so if I were to translate dhammas here I would use ‘principles’.

Bhikṣu Thich Minh Chau furnishes details of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra in his invaluable work *The Chinese Madhyama Āgama and the Pali Majjhima Nikāya*. He points out that satipatthana is the only group of the 37 wings to enlightenment to exhibit any noteworthy variation between the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda. But he overlooks the importance of the differences when he remarks: ‘Both versions offer almost the same materials, as the basic approach to the contemplations is identical.’ It therefore seems necessary to modify his conclusion that: ‘both versions were derived from the same source but the selection of details was left to the compilers more or less freely.’ As Thich Minh Chau has well demonstrated in several other places, the differences in arrangement are not ‘free’, but reflect the emerging doctrinal divergences between the two schools.

R.M.L. Gethin in his *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, notes some of the divergences between the various versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and says that:

‘This has led some scholars, such as Schmithausen and Bronkhorst, to speculate on the nature of the “original” specification of the first and fourth satipatthanas: the former suggests that watching the body originally consisted only of watching the postures of the body, and the latter (following the [Abhidhamma] Vibhaṅga) suggests that it consisted only of watching the different parts of the body. Much of their discussion is at best highly speculative, and at worst misconceived.

‘Schmithausen, for example, suggests that the redactors of the Pali canon have put the watching of breath first because in some canonical texts, such as the Ānāpānasati Sutta, it is presented as the preliminary stage of the four satipatthanas. This is a misunderstanding. As we have seen, in the Ānāpānasati Sutta watching the breathing is not a preliminary of the satipatthanas, it actually is the satipatthanas.’<sup>163</sup>

I hope my work is not merely re-ploughing such barren fields of speculation. I might say, in defence of speculation, that bold hypotheses are essential for the advancement of knowledge; but they must be tempered by a cautious evaluation of evidence. Gethin’s observation that anapanasati is satipatthana is certainly correct; but Schmithausen’s error is understandable, for he may have been influenced by Sarvāstivādin texts such as the Abhidharmakośa, which, as we shall see, do indeed treat anapanasati as a preliminary to satipatthana. Schmithausen’s article is in German, of which I know none, but I have kindly been supplied with a summary by Roderick Bucknell. I rely on this for the remarks below, and hope that I do not misrepresent the author.

Schmithausen considers the three available versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. He does not take the Abhidhamma texts into account; if he had done so, perhaps he may have reached different conclusions. He notes, correctly, that the section in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas dealing with the feelings and the mind are similar in all versions (as indeed they are in the Abhidhamma, too). He then notes that they share a similar phrasing, for example: ‘When feeling a pleasant feeling, one understands: “I feel a pleasant feeling”.’ He assumes that the other sections in the original version would have had a similar structure. Certain of the sections in the Pali text do in fact share a similar format. In the contemplation of postures, for example, it says: ‘When going, one understands “I am going”; when standing one understands “I am standing”...’ and so on. But other passages, especially several of the exercises in body contemplation, are phrased in a different manner; for example, unlike the sections on feelings and the mind, they are illustrated with similes. Schmithausen believes that these were unlikely to have been authentic.

However, the fact that the exercises do not consistently have similes would, at the most, suggest that the similes were added; in addition, one could argue that similes are appropriate for these meditations, which have an aspect of visualization. Another point is that the sections on the parts

of the body and the elements, though not formally identical with the contemplation of feelings and mind, do correlate well with the basic satipatthana formula. One is advised to ‘review this very body...’ (*imam’eva kāyaṃ...paccavekkhati*). The emphatic *imam’eva kāyaṃ* (‘this very body’) is reminiscent of the repetitive *kāye kāya...* (‘a body in the body...’); and the ocular *paccavekkhati* (‘reviews’) echoes *anupassī* (‘contemplates’). Elsewhere the contemplation of the parts of the body is summed up like this: ‘Thus one dwells contemplating ugliness in this body’ (*iti imasmim kāye asubhānupassī viharati*).<sup>164</sup> This is similar to the standard satipatthana pericope, ‘one dwells contemplating a body in the body...’ (*kāye kāyānupassī viharati*). These close parallels in the manner of phrasing of the practices clearly indicate that these passages are describing similar kinds of things. These considerations do not, in and of themselves, prove that the contemplation of the parts of the body was originally part of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but they are sufficient to establish that such practices at least fit in with the general manner of presenting satipatthana.

In any case, Schmithausen concludes that the original text consisted of the passages that are formally congruent with the contemplations of the feelings and the mind; namely, the awareness of the four postures in body contemplation, and the sections on the hindrances, sense media, and enlightenment-factors in contemplation of dhammas. He also concludes, I think rightly, that the ‘vipassana refrain’ (contemplation of principles of origination and dissolution) of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was not original. He adduces various other supports for his conclusions, primarily the agreement between the different recensions. This does indeed offer support for some of his conclusions, especially as regards the contemplation of dhammas; but he rejects the section on the parts of the body even though they occur in all three of his texts (as well as the Abhidhammas). Thus Schmithausen is prepared to stick by his formal analysis against the universal testimony of the texts. This is going too far. I would rather say that the fact that the texts do not correspond with the analysis suggests there is something wrong, or at least incomplete, with the analysis.

Schmithausen believes that the original text would have been phrased in a consistent style. However it is obvious that the Abhidhamma texts employ a more consistent, rigorous style than the Suttas, so the congruent sections could, if one wished, be dismissed as evidence of later scholastic formalism. So I think his criterion of stylistic consistency is merely suggestive, and cannot carry enough weight to support any solid conclusions.

There is, however, an analysis of the meaning of the texts that Schmithausen employs parallel to his purely formal analysis; and it is here, I believe, that his deeper agenda is revealed. He says that the sections on feelings and mind, which are established as authentic by textual agreement, describe a practice of non-judgmental awareness, simply knowing the situation as it is, without evaluating it or attempting to change it. He also says that this is how the essence of mindfulness practice is portrayed in the opening paragraph of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This claim is in agreement with almost every modern exposition of satipatthana – and I think it is wrong. A monk once remarked to me in this connection that we are more influenced by Krishnamurti than by the Buddha; perhaps a greater influence than both of these has been *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. It is important to be clear on this point, for otherwise the significance of much the discussion to follow will be misconstrued. Here I raise a few objections to this view, and will return to this topic, directly or indirectly, throughout this book.

1) The most obvious, and probably most important, objection to the idea that satipatthana is essentially a system of choiceless awareness is simply the fact that there are four satipatthanas. One is obviously supposed, in some sense or another, to choose one of these four as a framework for meditation. One has to judge, discriminate, and direct the mind, at least to some extent, even just to stay within the domain of one’s meditation. Nowhere do the early texts imply that the four frameworks may be neglected or promiscuously mixed, and nowhere is satipatthana described as

just 'being aware of whatever arises in the present moment'. We shall see that as this idea gained hold during the historical evolution of satipatthana the importance of the division into four sections becomes marginalized. In fact, the practice of 'being aware of whatever arises' is in the Suttas called 'clear comprehension' (*sampajañña*), not satipatthana.

2) Schmithausen concludes that the sections dealing with body contemplation were later interpolations, because they involve a more directed kind of meditation. However this fact corresponds with a well-known principle of meditation. In the beginning stages the hindrances are likely to be strong and mindfulness weak, so the wise meditator will direct and hold awareness with some strength onto a chosen object. As the hindrances weaken and mindfulness grows strong, one can gradually let go more and more until finally one relinquishes all control and enters samadhi. The pattern of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta precisely mirrors this principle. It is thus plausible to interpret the variations in the style of the various exercises, not as evidence of textual corruption, but as indicating different approaches suitable for different progressive stages of meditation.

3) Several Suttas clearly suggest the use of choice and judgment within the context of satipatthana. In fact, there is even a discourse in the Saṃyutta that explicitly describes how to develop satipatthana in both 'directed' and 'undirected' modes.<sup>165</sup> As suggested above, the undirected mode of satipatthana is relevant for one who has already dispelled the hindrances through the attainment of samadhi.

4) I do not know on what grounds Schmithausen believes that the opening paragraph of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which is of course the stock description of satipatthana, portrays a practice of direct non-judgmental observation. The most likely reason would be the use of the term *anupassanā*. I will show later that a close investigation of the meaning of this term does not justify this conclusion. Suffice to note here that, although Schmithausen believes that such choiceless awareness is incompatible with such practices as the meditation on ugliness (*asubha*), in fact the phrase *asubhānupassī* occurs several times in the canon.<sup>166</sup>

I am afraid that the above criticisms will seem a bit too harsh on poor Schmithausen. He was a pioneer, and must be given credit for bringing these textual variations to light. In fact, although each of the scholars mentioned above might disagree on details, all of them agree on a number of important points. Firstly, that the texts as we have them are the outcome of a historical process. Secondly, that there is no *a priori* reason to assume that the Pali tradition, or any other tradition, is the authentic one. Thirdly, that the variations in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are significant enough to warrant investigation.

The conclusions reached by Bronkhorst constitute a considerable advance. He makes good use of the Theravāda Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga and the Sarvāstivādin Dharmaskandha, although he still omits consideration of the Dharmaguptaka Śāriputrābhidharma and the Prajñāpāramita. I agree with most of what he has to say specifically dealing with satipatthana; in several cases I arrived at the same conclusions independently. It is worth quoting at length his main points. I have added a few expansions in square brackets for clarity.

'The Vibhaṅga itself must – as pointed out by Frauwallner<sup>167</sup> – have developed out of an earlier work which also underlay the Dharmaskandha of the Sarvāstivādins...

'Our question is: did the "Original Vibhaṅga" make use of the Sūtras in their finished form, or did it rather use pieces of tradition which were still more or less free-floating and would only later be taken into the Sūtras known to us? In the former case the agreement between the descendants of

the “Original Vibhaṅga” and the Sūtras would have to be great; in the latter, we might hope to find in the Vibhaṅga and Dharmaskandha traces of a time prior to the compilation of the Sūtras.

‘Whether such traces have survived is not certain. There is, however, one passage in the Pali Vibhaṅga which *may* retain some ancient features. It occurs in the explanation of the 4 satipatthanas<sup>168</sup> ...

‘The “Original Vibhaṅga” must have contained this same description of the 4 satipatthanas, because it is also found in the Dharmaskandha, with the difference that the Dharmaskandha adds items after those given in the Vibhaṅga...The items added are also found in the same or similar form in the Sūtras which deal with the 4 satipatthanas, and we may assume that the Dharmaskandha was influenced by them...

‘It is possible, but unfortunately far from certain, that the specification preserved in the Vibhaṅga is older than most of those found in the Sūtras... [Here Bronkhorst summarizes Schmithausen’s arguments and raises some objections to them]...

‘Apart from these in themselves not very decisive considerations, there is one argument which lends some plausibility to the view that the “observation of the positions of the body” was not originally the first of the 4 satipatthanas [as maintained by Schmithausen]. Briefly stated it is that in Buddhism mindfulness is of two kinds (or better perhaps: degrees); “observations of the positions of the body” is of one kind, the 4 satipatthanas of the other.

‘In order to recognize the two kinds of mindfulness we turn to the stereotype description of the road to liberation which often recurs in the Sūtras [i.e. the “gradual training”]. It distinguishes between preparatory exercises on the one hand, and “meditation” proper on the other, the two being divided by the moment when the monk went to a lonely place and sat down in the prescribed manner. Mindfulness plays a role both before and after this moment, but in different ways. Before this moment the monk “When going out and returning acts with clear comprehension; when looking forward and to the side...when bending and stretching his limbs...when bearing his robes and bowl...when eating and drinking...when defecating and urinating...when going, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking, and keeping silent acts with clear comprehension”<sup>169</sup>; in short, the monk practices the “observation of the positions of the body”. After this moment the situation changes. The monk no longer makes any movement. Yet his first act in this motionless position is “calling up [establishing] mindfulness” (*parimukhaṃ satim upatthapetvā*). As the expression indicates, it is here that the satipatthanas [“establishings of mindfulness”] would seem to come in. If this is correct, there is no place for “observation of the positions of the body” in the 4 satipatthanas.

‘What then constitutes satipatthana on the body in this motionless position? Obviously only this: the monk directs his mindfulness to the different parts of the body...We may...consider the possibility that “observation of the constituents of the body” was originally the satipatthana on the body. And this would confirm the view that the “Original Vibhaṅga” was composed before the 4 satipatthanas were given the explanations we now find in the Sūtras.’

The remainder of that portion of Bronkhorst’s article which deals with satipatthana mainly concerns the Mahāsaṅghika Ekāyana Sūtra. He develops some arguments to the effect that this text may contain some archaic features – which is possible, although the text as a whole is late – and suggests that the original specification of contemplation of dhammas may therefore have been the enlightenment-factors only. I discuss this more below.



A key point in Bronkhorst's argument is that there are two different degrees of mindfulness in the gradual training, and that it is the second of these, 'meditation proper', that can be identified with satipatthana. I agree with this; but it is, for some, such a radical claim that it requires more detailed reasoning. I would adduce the following arguments in support of this theory:

- 1) The standard description of 'observations of the positions of the body' does not include the word 'mindfulness' in the description of the practice itself. The act is described, as above, by saying the monk 'acts with clear comprehension' (*sampajānakārī hoti*). Accordingly the overall practice is called simply 'clear comprehension' in the Saṃyutta.<sup>170</sup> It would seem, therefore, that it is, in the early Pali idiom, quite legitimate to describe the practice of being aware throughout one's daily activities without even using the word 'mindfulness'. Only in the developed version of the gradual training, however, is the practice described as 'mindfulness & clear comprehension'. On the other hand, the use of the word 'mindfulness' in the case of the monk who sits down cross legged in the forest to meditate is absolutely standard, consistent, and intrinsic to the description of the practice.
- 2) The word 'establishment' (*upaṭṭhāna*) does not occur in the standard description of awareness of activities. To be sure, it does occur occasionally elsewhere in similar contexts, chiefly sense restraint, but it is not standard in the gradual training. On the other hand, the term 'establishment' is intrinsic to the passage on the monk who sits down in the forest to 'establish mindfulness'.
- 3) The various versions of the gradual training, so far as I know, never specifically mention the four satipatthanas at the stage of awareness of daily activities. But, while it is not standard, there are at least some contexts that mention the four satipatthanas at the stage of sitting down to meditate. In a Sarvāstivāda version of the Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta, after the section on clear comprehension the four satipatthanas are brought in, leading as usual to jhana and then various psychic abilities, culminating in enlightenment.<sup>171</sup> The Dantabhūmi Sutta is similar, although there the four satipatthanas are placed a little later, after the abandoning of the hindrances in the place normally taken by the first jhana.<sup>172</sup> The Dharmaguptaka version of the Sāmaññaphala Sutta, however, differs from all these in placing the four satipatthanas *before* awareness of activities.<sup>173</sup>
- 4) The practice of anapanasati is invariably described after the monk has gone to a forest to sit meditation. This obviously pertains to the same stage in the gradual training. Since anapanasati is a major, or *the* major, paradigm for satipatthana meditation, this clearly implies that satipatthana applies to the stage of sitting down to meditate in the forest.
- 5) Several texts available in Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda versions list sequences of qualities, closely connected with the gradual training, that place mindfulness & clear comprehension early on as a foundational practice. One such text explicitly differentiates between 'mindfulness & clear comprehension' and the four satipatthanas: associating with true persons > hearing the true Dhamma > faith > causewise attention > mindfulness & clear comprehension > sense restraint > three ways of good behaviour (by body, speech, and mind) > four satipatthanas > seven enlightenment-factors > realization & release.<sup>174</sup>
- 6) The following passage speaks of exactly the same actions as the formula for clear comprehension: "Then, after he has gone forth thus, his companions in the holy life advise and instruct him thus: "You should move to & fro thus; you should look ahead and to the side thus; you should flex and extend the limbs thus; you should wear the outer robe, bowl, and robes thus"..."<sup>175</sup> This is instruction in the basics of monastic protocol, especially regarding the morning alms round, when a monk or nun leaves the leafy seclusion of the monastery to venture into the distractions of the village. This shows that the passage on clear comprehension pertains more to preliminary ethical conduct than to the practice of meditation.

Thus Bronkhorst's brief observation finds considerable textual support. This suggests that an idiomatic rendering of *satipatthana* would be simply 'meditation'. Establishing mindfulness, abandoning the hindrances, and entering *jhana* are the key meditative stages in the gradual training.

## CHAPTER 10: PRE-BUDDHIST MEDITATION

### EARLY BRAHMANICAL SOURCES

The earliest evidence for meditative culture anywhere in the world is from the Indus valley civilization. This was a vast, sophisticated, and well-organized society which, at its peak in 2500-3000 B.C.E., stretched from what is now Pakistan to the Ganges valley. The evolution of this civilization can be traced from as far back as 7000 B.C.E. in Afghanistan, with a series of villages that became towns, and then towns that became cities. It was therefore an indigenous Indian culture. There is a strong continuity with later Indian culture, although scholars are not quite sure who these people were. The iconography suggests that they were the 'noseless' and 'black' peoples (Dravidians?) whose destruction at the hands of the Aryans is still dimly remembered in the *Ṛg Veda*. Perhaps the most intriguing remnants of their brilliant world are the thousands of exquisitely carved seals, little clay tablets that were probably worn by the citizens as a religious/family/occupational icon, and, of course, as a magic totem. These seals contain some of the world's oldest writings, which are as yet undeciphered.

The most interesting for our current purpose are a few seals that clearly depict a god as a yogi sitting in meditation. These images are spine-chillingly similar to the amulets that are still widely popular in Buddhist countries today. The yogi is usually identified on the basis of iconography as a 'proto-Śiva'. He sits, not in the 'lotus posture' of the Buddha, but in either *siddhāsana* (with legs crossed at the ankles) or *mūlabandhāsana* (with soles of the feet pressed together). Both of these postures are associated with psychic powers. One of the images depicts snakes rising beside him, a startling image familiar from Eden to the Pali canon. The image of the Buddha with a serpent rising over him is still popular today, taken from the *Muñcalinda Sutta* of the *Udāna*. It is, of course, most famous as the symbol of the 'kundalini' of the Hindus. But whereas the serpent rises over the Buddha, signifying transcendence, in the proto-Śiva image the serpent rises only to the forehead. In later theory this place, the *jñāṇacakra*, was associated with lights, subtle forms, and psychic powers, and would therefore seem to be equivalent to the Buddhist form *jhanas*. These speculations are too tenuous to make much of. However, it is certain that here is an ascetic who has, as the Buddhist texts have it, 'gone to the forest, to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, sat down cross-legged, and set his body erect...' Has he taken the next step in this meditative training: 'establishing mindfulness'?

*Sati* in Buddhism is functionally described in terms of either *sara* 'memory', or *anupassanā* 'observation'. The relation between these two ideas is, to our mind, strange, and attempts at explanation have, I believe, been misleading in giving a psychological explanation for what is a historical, linguistic development. *Sara* is from the same root as *sati*, and is obviously the historical meaning. *Sati* came to mean, in the Brahmanical tradition generally, 'received tradition,

memorized texts.’ This meaning is attested in the early Suttas, where it is treated identically in Buddhist and Brahmanical contexts: one ‘remembers what was said and done long ago’.

*Sati* is apparently used since the Ṛg Veda (perhaps a thousand years before the Buddha) in two senses: to ‘remember’ or ‘recollect’, and to ‘bear in mind’. The significance of this should not be overlooked. *Sati* is not merely a word one uses to refer to some texts one remembers; it is highly probable that the development of the culture of memorizing texts lead to the discovery, investigation, and development of what ‘memory’ is. That is to say, those who memorized the Vedic mantras were engaged in an early form of mental culture, a mental culture where ‘memory’ was a vital quality. While it is impossible to document this in detail, it again seems very likely that this form of mental culture was one of the strands that became woven into what we know today as ‘meditation’.

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad a father asks his son to fast for 15 days, then tests him on his memory of the Vedic texts. He fails dismally; but after eating again he can remember easily. His father explains:

‘If, from a great blazing fire, there is only one coal left glowing, it can easily be made to blaze up again by putting grass on it. Even so, my dear son, there was [due to fasting] but one part in sixteen left to you and that, lighted up with food, blazed up and by it you remember now the Vedas.’ After that he understood what his father meant when he said: ‘Mind, my dear son, comes from food, breath from water, speech from fire.’<sup>176</sup>

The Buddha was once asked by a Brahman why the (Vedic) mantras are sometimes easy to remember and sometimes not.<sup>177</sup> Typically, he answers that when the five hindrances are present the mantras are not clear; when the five hindrances are absent the mantras are clear. This is a straightforward example of how the science of memorizing texts would lead naturally to investigation of the mental qualities necessary for success in such an ambitious venture. We still use the 4000 year old word ‘mantra’, which originally referred to the Vedic texts, as a term for a meditation word, a sound or phrase traditionally taken from the ancient texts that one repeats over and over again as a support for meditation. The relation between recollection and meditation is strong even today in Buddhism. For example, most Buddhists are familiar with the basic passages for ‘recollection’ (*anussati*) of the Triple Gem. These form the basis for both the regular chanting at Buddhist ceremonies, and also the meditation on the Triple Gem.

In a similar fashion, the verses of the Vedas had a highly numinous, mystical significance for the ancient Brahman priests, and it would have been natural for the more contemplative among them to induce exalted states of consciousness through the ecstatic recollection of the sacred words. In order to memorize long texts it is, of course, necessary to repeat passages over and over again. If one does this mechanically, without interest, the memorizing will not succeed. One must bring inspiration, joy, attention, and understanding to the task. One must learn to ‘stay with’ the present moment – and here we are crossing over to the familiar Buddhist idea of ‘mindfulness’.

This psychology also emerges in the usage of the word *dhī*, familiar as the root of the Buddhist term ‘jhana’. This makes its appearance as ‘thought’, etc. and seems to have a special connection with the ‘visioning’ of the Vedic poetry: *dhī* is the intuitive awareness as the poet/priest ‘sees’ the verses. This ‘thought’ (*dhī*) or ‘mind’ (*manas*) is to be disciplined (*yoga*) by the reciters:

‘The priests of him the divine Savitr well-skilled in hymns  
Harness their mind, yea, harness their holy thoughts’<sup>178</sup>

But we should not think that this Buddhist meditative term is well developed in its meditative meaning of ‘deep absorption’ before the Buddha. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, jhana is specifically contrasted with the deep stillness of the True Self.

‘Which is the Self?’

‘That person here made of cognition among the senses [breaths], the light within the heart. He, remaining the same, wanders about the two worlds as if thinking (*dhyāyati*), as if playing (*lelāyati*).’<sup>179</sup>

The Upaniṣads are constantly reminding us of the necessity of preserving the correct mental attitude while performing the rituals; and this applies as much to the actions as to the words. One performs the rituals with one’s whole being, contemplating the significance of each aspect of the performance as one carries it out. Even the earlier Brahmanas explicitly allow that if a ritual cannot be carried out physically it may be performed by ‘faith’, i.e. as a purely mental act.<sup>180</sup> Notice that the Buddhist definition of mindfulness referred to above mentions both what was said and what was done. In this immersion of awareness in one’s actions we can discern a precursor to the Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness through all one’s activities.

It is a curious thing that when we look at the sources most likely to be contemporary with the Buddha – namely the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya – we find that these well-known meditative terms are used less frequently, and a word apparently foreign to Buddhist meditation is found far more often. This word is *upāsana*. Edward Crangle, following Velkar, has studied this term in detail, and lists the frequency of occurrence. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, *upāsana* occurs 63 times, jhana thrice, and yoga twice. In the Chāndogya, *upāsana* occurs 115 times, jhana twelve times, and yoga again twice.<sup>181</sup> *Upāsana* is obviously a key term in considering the emergence of meditative psychology in Indian tradition, but it is no easy matter to ascertain exactly what it refers to, and even more difficult to tease out how it might relate to Buddhist terminology. It is translated sometimes as ‘worship’ and sometimes as ‘meditation’, and in fact seems to embody the shift from an external worship and ritual towards the inner contemplation. Crangle says *upāsana* is ‘a contemplative process wherein the object of worship is an object of concentration.’<sup>182</sup> The following might convey something of the mystical tone of *upāsana*:

‘Next, of this breath, water is the body. Its light-form is that moon. As far as the breath extends so far extends water and that moon. These are all alike, all endless. Verily, he who meditates/worships (*upāsana*) them as finite wins a finite world. But he who meditates/worships them as infinite wins an infinite world.’<sup>183</sup>

*Upāsana* evidently encompasses a wide spectrum of spiritual consciousness. Velkar says it is meditative, emblematic (involving elaborate symbolism), and analytic (in making philosophical distinctions). It takes a large variety of objects, concrete and abstract: God, ‘om’, sun, moon, lightning, wind, space, fire, water, breath, ‘That as Great’, ‘That as Mind’, etc.

Crangle makes the intriguing suggestion that *upāsana* is related to the Buddhist term satipatthana, especially the last element of this compound, *upaṭṭhāna*.<sup>184</sup> This may be supported on a number of grounds. The sound of the words is almost identical, especially in Sanskrit (*upasthāna* and *upāsana*). Though they are from different roots, the construction and basic meanings are similar: *upa+ās* means to ‘sit near’; *upa+sthā* means to ‘stand near’. From there they both developed the sense of ‘wait upon, serve, attend’, and then to ‘pray, worship’. In a more specifically meditative context they are both used largely in the sense of the initial grounding on the meditative/contemplative object, rather than the resulting state of absorption. We also note that some of the meditation objects for *upāsana* are also found in satipatthana: the breath, water, fire, space, bliss, mind, etc. So it seems Crangle’s suggestion can be accepted. The major

contemplative practice of the pre-Buddhist period is *upāsana*, and this practice finds its closest Buddhist connection, surprisingly enough, not with *jhana* or *samadhi*, but with *satipatthana*.

Investigation of pre-Buddhist meditation terminology is hampered by the fact that the Vedas have little or nothing on meditation and even the early Upaniṣads have nothing clear. The earliest clear descriptions of meditation outside of Buddhism are in later texts of the Upaniṣads and the Jains. These are later than the Suttas, so it is likely there is Buddhist influence. However, there is no reason why even late texts should not preserve old traditions, too.

There has in recent years been doubt thrown on the accepted wisdom that the early Upaniṣads were pre-Buddhist. The standard list of Brahmanical texts in the Suttas does not mention the Upaniṣads. But one passage in the Tevijja Sutta, discussing contemporary controversies among the Brahmins, refers to Brahmanical schools teaching different paths.<sup>185</sup> These have been equated by Jayatilleke with several of the Brahmanas (which include the Upaniṣads) as follows.<sup>186</sup>

**Table 10.1: Upaniṣadic texts in the Tevijja Sutta**

Brahmanical schools in the Tevijja Sutta	Brahmanical school	Brahmanical Text
Addhariyā	Yajur Veda Addhariya	Śatapatha Brahmaṇa (incl. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad)
Tittiriya	Yajur Veda Tittirya	Taittirīya Brahmaṇa
Chandokā	Sāman Veda Chandoga	Chāndogya Brahmaṇa
Bavharijā	Ṛg Veda Bavharija	Bahvrvas Brahmaṇa (lost, but incl. in Aitareya and Kauṣītakī Brahmanas)

This evidence suggests that the Upaniṣadic schools were in existence, but their tenets were still in ferment. Perhaps the Upaniṣads that we have today derive from the later settled tenets of each of these strands of Brahmanical thought.<sup>187</sup> But whether or not the Upaniṣads in their current form existed at the Buddha's time, there is no doubt that ideas we can call 'Upaniṣadic' were prominent. In the sphere of metaphysics we can cite the Buddha's critique of such ideas as that the self is infinite (*anantavā attā*), or that the self is identical with the world (*so attā so loko*), or that 'I am He' (*eso'hamasmi*); or indeed the Buddha's condemnation of the suggestion by a certain Brahman cosmologist that 'All is oneness' (*sabbam ekattam*). It would seem only natural to connect such metaphysics with *samadhi* attainments, as implied by the Brahmajāla Sutta.

It is necessary to proceed with caution here. The early Upaniṣads, especially the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, usually regarded as the earliest and most important, are a very mixed bag. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka includes passages of lyrical beauty, sophisticated philosophy, exalted metaphysics, and witty dialogue. It is closely concerned with ideas like the mind, the breath, and oneness, which are suggestive of a meditative culture. It distinguishes between mere perception (*saññā*) and liberating understanding (*paññā*), and emphasizes the centrality of cognition (*viññāṇa*) as contrasted with the more dynamic conceptual and emotive aspects of mind (*mano*). Therefore it insists on the necessity for personal experience rather than mere book learning. It frequently upsets preconceptions – women have strong supporting roles, and sometimes Brahmins are depicted as having to learn about Brahmā from the Kṣatriyas. (Even more remarkably, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad there is a satire depicting Brahman priests as dogs, reminiscent of an uncharacteristically scathing satire in the Aṅguttara.<sup>188</sup>)

But the Bṛhadāraṇyaka also retains much that is banal and even brutal. It endorses the sacrifice. It is unabashedly materialistic. It is full of sophisticated thaumaturgy and hocus-pocus. It contains black magic – a curse to place on one’s rival in love. It includes crude sex magic. If one’s woman is reluctant to participate she should first be bribed with presents; ‘and if she still does not grant him his desire, he should beat her with a stick or his hand and overcome her’.<sup>189</sup> (Those who like to imagine that so-called ‘tantric’ practices indicate an improvement in women’s status in andocentric Indian spiritual culture, please take note.) It hardly needs saying that such ideas are totally incompatible with any genuine mind culture. The text is a testament to the diversity of ideas that the ancient Brahmans could regard as ‘spiritual’, and to the elasticity of the compilers of the text we have today.

Let us look at some of the passages most suggestive of meditation. From the Bṛhadāraṇyaka:

‘Therefore let a man perform one observance only, let him breath up and let him breath down, that the evil death might not reach him.’<sup>190</sup>

‘The unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the uncognized cognizer... There is no other seer but he, no other hearer, no other thinker, no other cognizer. This is thy self, the inner controller, the immortal...’<sup>191</sup>

‘Therefore, knowing this, being calm, tamed, quiet, enduring, concentrated, one sees the soul in oneself.’<sup>192</sup>

By themselves such passages are too vague to reach any clear conclusion regarding meditative practices. And even the last passage, which is the most suggestive, has ‘faithful’ as a variant reading for ‘concentrated’. The Chāndogya has a slightly more explicit passage:

‘As a bird when tied by a string flies in every direction and, finding no rest anywhere, settles down at last on the very place where it is fastened; exactly so, my son, that mind, after flying around in every direction and finding no rest anywhere, settles down on breath; for indeed, my son, mind is fastened to breath.’<sup>193</sup>

But for clear teachings on meditation we must go forward to the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.

‘By making his body the under-wood and the syllable “Om” the upper-wood, man, after repeating the drill of meditation, will perceive the bright god, like the spark hidden in the wood.’<sup>194</sup>

‘If the wise man holds his body with the three upright parts even, and turns his senses with his mind towards the heart, he will then in the boat of Brahman cross over all the fearful streams.’<sup>195</sup>

‘Compressing his breath, let him, who has subdued all motions, breath forth through the nose with gentle breath. Let the wise one, being heedful, keep hold of his mind, that chariot yoked with wild horses.’<sup>196</sup>

‘When yoga is being performed, the forms that come first, producing apparitions in Brahman, are those of misty smoke, sun, fire, wind, fire-flies, lightnings, and a crystal moon.’<sup>197</sup>

These are fairly straightforward references to meditation, and they will not sound unfamiliar to anyone versed in Buddhist meditation. The simile of meditation like two fire-sticks is well known in the Buddhist texts.<sup>198</sup> Notice the close connection in SU 2.9 between ‘heedfulness’ (*appamāda*) and ‘keeping hold’ (*dhāraṇa*), a term semantically equivalent to *sati*. It seems that the earliest

Brahmanical meditation subjects were the contemplation of the mystical syllable 'Om' and the breath. Of course, the 'breath' and the 'word' are closely related and are mystically identified in the Upaniṣads; in practice, the yogis may have recited 'Om' together with the breath. The Upaniṣads have many passages that assert the supremacy of the breath over the sense faculties and mind ('mind' here meaning thoughts and emotions). These can be understood as an allegorical description of the evolution of awareness from the diversity of externals towards a unity with the breath.

The breath is a prime exercise in satipatthana body contemplation, and other aspects suggestive of satipatthana can also be discerned in the Upaniṣadic tradition. Just as in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta, the dependence of the breath (body) on food is stressed.<sup>199</sup> The elements are of course universal throughout the ancient world, and were commonly worshipped as deities. For example Agni (Fire) was a major deity in the Vedas, and undoubtedly inspired ecstatic contemplation. Vāyu (air) was also worshipped in the Vedas. The Earth (Mother), whose symbols pervade the iconography of Buddhism, was also widely revered, and seems to be associated with the Indus Valley religion. The parts of the body are worshipped in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad: hair, skin, flesh, bone, marrow.<sup>200</sup> All of these appear in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta list of body parts, and in the same order. Charnel grounds have long been a favourite haunting ground of a certain type of ascetic. The later Maitrī Upaniṣad opens with some body contemplations for inducing dispassion (*virāga*), but this is almost certainly under Buddhist influence.<sup>201</sup>

The other satipatthanas – feelings, mind, and dhammas – might even be compared with the famous Brahmanical threesome: mind, being, bliss (*cit, sat, ānanda*). Mind and bliss are obvious enough. As for being, this is a fundamental philosophical term for the Upaniṣads, just as dhamma is the fundamental term for Buddhism. The dhamma theory was clearly developed to provide an explanation for phenomenal reality opposed to the Brahmanical conception of an absolute underlying ground of being. And indeed we find that the contemplation of dhammas prominently features the same term for being, *sat*, that was so important for the Brahmans; yet here it is treated, as always in the Suttas, in a thoroughly empirical, anti-metaphysical way: the 'presence' or 'absence' of good or bad mental factors according to conditions. Another, similar, list also reminds us of the satipatthanas: food, breath (=body), mind (or thought, *manas*), cognition (*vijñāna*=mind, *citta*), bliss (=feelings).<sup>202</sup> Whether or not there is any real historical link between these specific sets, it is apparent that both traditions utilized similar simple lists of physical and mental phenomena as a guide to spiritual practice.

We shall see towards the end of this study that some of the later Buddhist theorists posited a relationship between the evolution of the stages of understanding in meditation and the stages of understanding in the philosophical outlook of the various schools. It is perhaps not so far-fetched to see a similar progress here; the Upaniṣads themselves seem to be aware on some level of this evolution. In fact we can analyse the stages of Indian religion in terms of the four satipatthanas. The earliest stages in Indian religion were wholly physical – rituals, chants, the breath, sacrifices – pursued with the goal of fertility and prosperity. This developed into the practice of self-torment, which while still physical was predicated on the ability to endure painful feelings. The next stage was the emphasis on refined states of consciousness identified as the cosmic self. Finally, the Buddhist critique of metaphysical absolutism, the analysis of dhammas in terms of conditionality and not-self.

Thus some of the various facets of satipatthana seem to have their precedents in the Brahmanical traditions. The difference, as so often, is in what is left out (hocus-pocus, rituals, deity worship, metaphysics, etc.), and in the manner of treatment. The practice is cool, rational, and sensible. The terminology has been thoroughly subsumed into the Buddhist system. The presentation is

purely in terms of clearly discernable empirical phenomena without any metaphysical overtones. It is not trying to persuade you of a theory but to point you towards your own experience.

## THE BUDDHIST SOURCES

Given the surprising paucity of explicit references to meditation in any pre-Buddhist literature we are thrown back on the material in the Buddhist texts as our earliest source. There are a number of problems with this. The compilers of the Suttas may not have had a very good knowledge of non-Buddhist practices, and may have succumbed to the temptation to put their opposition in a bad light. In addition, they quite likely described the practices of other schools in terminology they were familiar with, but which was not authentic to the other schools. Nevertheless, we find both the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist sources agreeing in broad terms in their description of pre-Buddhist meditation. There seem to be two such streams, represented by the two styles of practice undertaken by the Bodhisatta before his enlightenment. These streams are primarily represented by the samadhi practitioners of the Upaniṣads and the self-tormenters of the Jains.

The best-known passage referring to such ‘Upaniṣadic’ yogis is the story of the Bodhisatta’s apprenticeship.<sup>203</sup> I wish to first note on general principles why I consider that the significance of this passage is seriously overrated. According to the GIST, the Buddha’s main teachings are found in the basic doctrinal statements (*suttas*) together with the interrogative discussions of these statements (*vyākaraṇa*). This material does not include much biography, beyond stating that it was through understanding the four noble truths, etc., or through practicing the eightfold path, etc., that the Buddha realized enlightenment. Biography as such constitutes one of the later *angas*, *avadāna*. However, after the Buddha’s passing away the community found that the Buddha’s life story gave the teachings that ‘personal touch’ so essential for the development of Buddhism into a popular mass religion. From that time until the present day the Buddha’s life, rather than being occasionally invoked to illustrate a doctrinal point, became the main focus of attention. The events that are included in the Buddha’s life story are known to all Buddhists, and as a result sometimes minor incidents have been blown up out of all proportion to their original significance. One obvious example of this is the Buddha’s last meal, an obscure incident of dubious interpretation, absent in some versions, which has become the main battle ground in the controversy regarding the Buddhist position on vegetarianism, with the result that the several straightforward discourses directly addressing the issue, as well as the frequent mention of meat-eating in the Vinaya, are virtually ignored. Another case is the touching story of the difficult attempts by the Buddha’s foster-mother Mahā Pajāpati to secure women’s ordination. This story is known to all and is regularly invoked to deny women the opportunity for full participation in the renunciate life, while ignoring the frequent mention of the ‘fourfold assembly’ (including nuns) that the Buddha regarded as the sign of a complete, successful, and long-lasting religion. Taking note of this principle does not in and of itself mean that these passages are inauthentic, nor that they should not be taken account of, nor does it suggest taking any specific stand on such controversies; but it does suggest that we should be more careful in how we weigh and evaluate the evidence in the early texts.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that I consider the story of the Bodhisatta’s apprenticeship to already suffer from too many discussions, still we cannot avoid burdening the story with one more, sure in the knowledge that it won’t be the last. Virtually all descriptions have ignored the obvious point that the Ariyapariyesana Sutta mentions three stages of this apprenticeship. Firstly, learning and lip-reciting of the texts.<sup>204</sup> This is a hint that these are ascetics in the mainstream Vedic tradition; the nature of the texts is not specified here, but elsewhere the Buddha recalls that Uddaka Rāmaputta claimed to be a *vedagū*, a master of the Vedas.<sup>205</sup> Anyway,



as we noted above, the Vedas are the only texts that are known to the early Suttas. (It is sometimes said that these teachers belong to the Sāṃkhya school, but this claim is based on the much later Buddhacarita of Aśvaghōṣa, and is clearly anachronistic.) Secondly the path, here described as faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom.<sup>206</sup> Thirdly, the goal – formless attainments. These three stages correspond with the classic threefold formulation of Buddhism – study, practice, and realization. The five factors of the path are the same as the Buddhist five spiritual faculties – a fact which is usually overlooked by those who wish to interpret this passage as implying the ‘non-Buddhist’ nature of samadhi in general, or of formless attainments in particular. We cannot know how these qualities were understood in detail in this context; but terms such as *prajñā*, etc., occur commonly in the Upaniṣads. If it is true that the five spiritual faculties were genuinely associated with the Vedic/Upaniṣadic tradition, it may be no coincidence that it is in the spiritual faculties that we most frequently meet *sati* treated as ‘memory’.<sup>207</sup>

It must be noted that the Bodhisatta did not reject the formless attainments in & of themselves. It is definitely not the case that he practiced samadhi meditation but not mindfulness meditation. Rather, he practiced mindfulness meditation to get into samadhi. Samadhi is emphasized in this account because it was the highest, the most exalted quality acknowledged in those systems, and because of its sublime peacefulness it was mistakenly taken to be the final end of the spiritual path. The Bodhisatta became disillusioned with ‘that Dhamma’, i.e. with the teaching taken as a whole, because it led only to rebirth in the formless realm, and was therefore ‘insufficient’ to reach the ‘excellent state of peace’, the ending of birth, aging, and death. This is in perfect accord with the main stream of the Suttas. Elsewhere it is said that ordinary people attain samadhi (here the four jhanas<sup>208</sup> and the four divine abidings<sup>209</sup>), are reborn in the Brahmā realms, and after a long period of bliss fall back into lower realms. But noble disciples, after reaching the Brahmā realms, attain Nibbana from there. The difference is not in the states of samadhi as such – these are just manifestations of the mind at peace. The difference is in the views and interpretations, the conceptual wrapping that the experience is bundled up in. The path must be taken as a whole. If one starts out with wrong view, one’s meditation experiences are likely to simply reinforce one’s preconceptions. If one practices samadhi with the view that one’s soul will become immersed in some exalted state of being, well, one will get what one wishes for.

This is the most important feature distinguishing this episode from the later occasion (quoted below) when the Bodhisatta recollected his former experience of first jhana. This occurred as a child, seated in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree. When the Bodhisatta remembered this experience he realized that: ‘That indeed is the path to enlightenment’. As a child, his mind was uncluttered with views; he had no metaphysical agenda. The peace of the mind was just the peace of the mind; and so he realized that although such states were not the final goal he had been yearning for, they were indeed the path. This account is preserved in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta (MN 36), the Mahāvastu (from the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya), the Saṅghabhedavastu (from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya), and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya. Accounts in the Ekottara (EA 31.8) and the Lalitavistara attribute all four of the jhanas to the Bodhisatta as child; while the Tibetan Dulva and an individual Chinese translation (T 757) place the attainment of jhana later, soon after the going forth. Thus this is clearly regarded by all the schools as a crucial event in the Bodhisatta’s path towards awakening.

One of the most interesting sources for understanding the meditation practices of Brahman ascetics is the Pārāyana Vagga of the Sutta Nipāta. This text, universally regarded as one of the earliest and most authentic texts in the Pali canon, consists of a series of questions and answers between the Buddha and a group of sixteen Brahman meditators. There are several connections between this text and the Upaniṣad-style traditions we have been considering; in fact the closeness of some parallel phrases suggests direct literary influence of one sort or another,<sup>210</sup>

although there are also direct connections between some of these verses and Jain texts. The list of Brahmanical texts given is substantially shorter than that in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, suggesting that it is earlier. It has a satirical reference to an evil Brahman who threatens to ‘split heads’; the same threat occurs several times in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, the difference being that there someone’s head actually does get split!<sup>211</sup> The Buddha of course dismisses the efficacy of Vedic knowledge, ritual, sacrifice, and metaphysical conceptions of ‘Self’. We meet again the phrase ‘seen, heard, thought, cognised’ that we have encountered in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, and also frequent reference to the pairing of cognition with name & form, another Upaniṣadic idea.

The faith and devotion of these yogis is very moving, and stands in decided contrast with the sometimes strained relationship between the Buddha and the scholastic and ritualistic Brahmins. In this friendly atmosphere it seems likely that the Buddha would have, wherever possible, kept to his normal policy of encouraging his disciples to continue developing whatever spiritual practices were most inspiring and useful. The introductory verses, which are admittedly somewhat later, refer indirectly to the five spiritual faculties,<sup>212</sup> and say the sixteen Brahmins are practitioners of *jhana*.<sup>213</sup> The teachings are brief and non-technical, but there is recognizable reference to the fourth *jhana*<sup>214</sup> and to the sphere of nothingness.<sup>215</sup> And time and time again, the Buddha exhorts these yogis to be ‘ever mindful’. This confirms the association of mindfulness with Brahmanic culture; the Buddha would hardly have used the term so freely if he did not expect his audience to understand it.

Three discourses in the *Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta* present the claims of non-Buddhist wanderers to develop Buddhist-style meditation. They say they exhort their disciples to abandon the five hindrances and to develop, in two cases, the seven enlightenment-factors,<sup>216</sup> and in a third case, the four divine abidings.<sup>217</sup> Elsewhere too the divine abidings are attributed to great sages of the past, notably the Buddha in past lives.<sup>218</sup> However, although these were indeed later appropriated by the Brahmanical tradition, they are not attested in any pre-Buddhist texts. The enlightenment-factors include mindfulness and investigation of *dhammas*, which is equivalent to *vipassana*, as well as *samadhi*. The wanderers ask, then, what is the difference between their teaching and the Buddha’s? Interestingly enough, the Buddha responds, not by referring to, say, the four noble truths, not-self, or dependent origination, but by claiming that the wanderers do not fully understand *samadhi* practice in all details. This is probably what the Buddha was referring to when he claimed elsewhere to have ‘awakened to *jhana*’ (*jhānam abujjhi*);<sup>219</sup> not that he was the first to practice *jhana*, but that he was the first to fully comprehend both the benefits and the limitations of such experiences.

The *Brahmajāla Sutta* is the classic exposition of non-Buddhist meditation. It presents a bewildering array of 62 doctrinal views, many of which were derived from or reinforced by the misinterpretation of *samadhi* experiences, including both form *jhana* and formless attainments. Yogis include both the mainstream Vedic/Upaniṣadic ‘Brahmins’ as well as the radical non-conformist ‘*samanas*’, of which the Buddha himself was one. Here, five terms typically describe the path into *samadhi*: ardency (*ātappa*), striving (*padhāna*), commitment (*anuyoga*), heedfulness (*appamāda*), and right attention (*sammā manasikāra*). All these terms are common in Buddhist contexts; *ātappa* occurs in the *satipatthana* formula. ‘Heedfulness’, which we encountered above in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, is close in meaning to ‘mindfulness’. ‘Attention’ is the basis for wisdom, and is closely associated with *vipassana*. So this appears like a surprising forerunner of the treatment of wisdom preceding *samadhi*.

But the *Suttas* typically present the contemporary Brahmins as having fallen away from their glorious past. It is important to note this context: the *Suttas* do not see the fact that pre-Buddhists practiced *jhana* as a reason for denigrating and sidelining *samadhi* practice, but as a feature by which they could praise the most sublime attainments of the sages of old, thus serving

as an example for emulation and inspiration. The following verses were spoken by Venerable Mahā Kaccāna to some rude and abusive Brahman youths.

‘Those men of old who excelled in virtue  
Those Brahmans who recalled the ancient rules  
Their sense doors guarded, well protected  
Dwelt having vanquished wrath within.  
They took delight in Dhamma and jhana  
Those Brahmans who recalled the ancient rules

‘But these having fallen, claiming “We recite!”  
Puffed up by clan, faring unrighteously,  
Overcome by anger, armed with diverse weapons,  
They molest both frail and firm.

‘For one with sense doors unguarded  
[All the vows he undertakes] are in vain.  
Just like the wealth a man gains in a dream:  
Fasting and sleeping on the ground,  
Bathing at dawn, [study of] the three Vedas,  
Rough hides, matted locks, and dirt,  
Hymns, rules and vows, austerities,  
Hypocrisy, bent staffs, ablutions:  
These emblems of the Brahmans  
Are used to increase their worldly gains.

‘A mind that is well concentrated,  
Clear and free from blemish  
Tender towards all living beings –  
This is the path for attaining Brahmā.’<sup>220</sup>

Understandably, the Brahman youths were not too pleased with this. So they went to their teacher, the Brahman Lohicca, and told him. Although he too was displeased, he reflected that he should not condemn on mere hearsay, so he visited Venerable Mahā Kaccāna to discuss the matter. He asked what the meaning of ‘sense doors guarded’ was.

‘Here, Brahman, having seen a visible form with the eye, one is not attracted to a pleasing visible form and not repelled by a displeasing visible form. One abides having established mindfulness of the body, with a measureless mind, and understands as it has become that heart-release, understanding-release, where those evil unskilful qualities cease without remainder...’

Here again we see the connection between pre-Buddhist meditation and mindfulness. The sequence – sense restraint, mindfulness, samadhi, understanding, release – allows Mahā Kaccāna to present the Buddhist ideal as the natural outcome and fulfilment of the practices of the Brahmans of old, so he can skilfully lead Lohicca on in a non-confrontational manner.

#### LATER BRAHMANICAL SOURCES

Since there are no contemporary records to provide us with a deeper look at these ideas, it seems we have no choice other than to take the risky path of comparing them with later texts. The Mahābhārata clearly post-dates the Nikāyas/Āgamas, and evidences Buddhist influence.

However, the events are set in a semi-mythical time before the Buddha, and there is no reason to suppose that it has not preserved some genuine old traditions. Here we find reference to the ‘fourfold *jhanayoga*’. Only the first *jhana*, however, is described in detail:

‘The mind that is wandering about, with no support, with five gates, wobbling  
The steadfast one should concentrate in the first *jhana*’<sup>221</sup>

‘When the sage enters samadhi of the first *jhana* in the beginning,  
Sustained application (*vicāra*), initial application (*vitakka*), and seclusion (*viveka*) arise in him...’<sup>222</sup>

‘Conjoined with that bliss he will delight in the practice of *jhana*  
Thus the yogis go to Nirvana that is free of disease...’<sup>223</sup>

The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali (300-500CE?) is one of the earliest presentations of a fairly systematic path of practice from a non-Buddhist school. The Yoga school, regarded as the practical wing of the Sāṃkhya philosophy, became one of the six schools of classical Hinduism, which were orthodox in regarding the Vedic tradition as authoritative, although they differed in interpretation. The Yoga Sūtra is a fairly short work in four chapters, comprised of a series of brief aphorisms, or sutras, a style which, incidentally, well illustrates the meaning of *sutta* as discussed in the GIST. The sutras are often cryptic and as good as incomprehensible without a commentary; in fact the work as a whole may well be a collection of sayings that was assembled in the current form by the commentator.

Here we merely wish to investigate the meditation terminology, especially in relation to Buddhist meditation, so we can afford to ignore many of the knotty questions raised by the text and focus mainly on those passages closest to Buddhism. This methodology will lead to a biased view of the work as a whole, and it should be borne in mind that the Yoga Sūtra remains faithful to its own distinctive philosophy; it is not just a Buddhist rip-off. Doctrinally, it mentions ideas familiar to the Sāṃkhya/Yoga – the three ‘qualities’ (*guṇas*) of stimulation (*rajas*, literally ‘desire’), depression (*tamas*, ‘darkness’), and vitality (*sattvas*, ‘being’) that make up our worldly existence, the fundamental ground of nature (*prakṛti*) from which these evolved, and the individual soul (*puruṣa*), whose purity and clear discernment lead to the state of consummation (*kaivalya*). The main emphasis is on the practical means, especially meditation, for reaching this state. Occasionally it critiques Buddhist philosophy. Sūtras 4.16-18, for example, assert that it is impossible for a changing object to be known by one mind-moment (as the abhidhammikas claimed); the fluctuations of the mind are known due to the changelessness of the *puruṣa*, the One Who Knows. Sometimes the text bears on the controversies among the Buddhists, such as when it asserts that ‘the past and the future exist in their own form’,<sup>224</sup> which is reminiscent of the Sarvāstivādin doctrine of time: ‘all exists’.

The first chapter of the Yoga Sūtra deals with samadhi. It starts with a famous definition: yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. The fluctuations, which are caused by ignorance, are listed as valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*, defined in a way similar to the Buddhist epistemologists: direct experience, inference, and scripture), error, fantasy, sleep, and recollection (mindfulness, *sati*). This list is odd; it is difficult to see how, say, direct experience (*pratyakṣa*) could be an obstacle to samadhi. The treatment of mindfulness in a negative sense is obviously different from the Buddhist approach. For the Brahmanical schools, the word *sati* was commonly used in the sense of ‘memorised textual traditions’, so it seems that in meditation contexts the meaning of ‘memory’ was more prominent than ‘awareness’, hence the negative slant. This situation would suggest two consequences: first, that when *sati* is used in a positive sense in the Yoga we should suspect a Buddhist influence; and second, that the Yoga would need to develop an alternative terminology to speak about mindfulness within their own system. We shall find evidence in the

Yoga Sūtra to support both of these theses. However, despite this difference in the evaluation, the Yoga Sūtra defines *sati* the same way as the Buddhist schools: the non-forgetting of an experienced object. After emphasising the necessity for sincere practice and dispassion, the text goes on to speak of a form of samadhi (the word ‘samadhi’ is not used, but is plausibly supplied by the commentary) called *samprajñāta*, which it describes as: ‘accompanied by initial application, sustained application, bliss (*ānanda*), [the concept] “I am”, and form.’<sup>225</sup> This is virtually identical with the first of the four Buddhist ‘form jhanas’. The idea ‘I am’ clearly refers to a deluded perception that takes what is not the True Self, the *puruṣa*, to be the True Self. The phrase is obviously foreign to the standard jhana formula, but is similar to one of the deluded forms of ‘Nibbana here & now’ described in the Brahmajāla Sutta:

‘When, sir, this self, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskilful qualities, enters and abides in the first jhana, which has initial & sustained application, and the rapture & happiness born of seclusion, at that point the self attains Nibbana here & now...’<sup>226</sup>

Both contexts are criticising the assumption of self in this state of samadhi; for the Buddhists, of course, there is no True Self, while for the yoga the True Self is discerned only with more subtle development of consciousness. The Yoga Sūtra goes on to speak of another (higher) form of samadhi, which is called *asamprajñāta* (although again the terminology is not supplied in the extremely laconic text itself). Sūtra 18 describes this as ‘preceded by practice in renunciation, and having just a residue of activities (*saṃskāraśeṣa*)’.<sup>227</sup> Sūtra 19 is obscure: ‘For the bodiless, absorbed in fundamental Nature, [such an] existence is conditioned (*bhavapratyaayo videhaprakṛtilāyanam*)’. This seems to mean either that this state of consciousness generates a bodiless (*videha*; = formless, *arūpa*?) rebirth, or that for one without a body, such a state of consciousness is a natural condition, not something that must be attained through spiritual practice. Sūtra 20 says that ‘for others’ (presumably meaning not the ‘bodiless’ referred to in sutra 19), *asamprajñāta* samadhi is preceded by ‘faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom’.<sup>228</sup> Here again we meet the Buddhist five spiritual faculties, which are presumably what is meant by the ‘practice in renunciation’ mentioned in sutra 18. Note that *sati* here is in positive sense, as usual in Buddhism, and not in negative sense, as earlier in the Yoga Sūtra; this supports the argument of Bronkhorst that this chapter was composed from two sources, one ‘orthodox’ and one Buddhist.<sup>229</sup> The samadhi in this group of five, which precedes *asamprajñāta* samadhi, is presumably the *samprajñāta* samadhi, i.e. form jhana. The *asamprajñāta* samadhi may therefore be plausibly identified with the Buddhist formless attainments, which are also preceded by form jhana, are the outcome of a ‘gradual cessation of activities’, generate a bodiless rebirth, and the highest of which is called ‘an attainment with a residue of activities’.<sup>230</sup> It is very striking that the way of attaining this *asamprajñāta* samadhi – the five spiritual faculties – is identical with the way of practice taught by Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta for attaining formless samadhi, and is also mentioned in the Pārāyana Vagga.

The text goes on to speak of various obstacles to samadhi, similar to the hindrances, etc., including the term ‘scattered mind’ familiar from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. These result in bodily and mental discomfort, and unsteadiness of breath, and should be countered by practice of one-pointedness. Several meditations are recommended that lead to clarity of mind: these include the Buddhist divine abidings of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciation, and equanimity. Some of the other meditations, such as breath meditation and the mind free of lust, again remind us of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Next the text speaks of attainments both with initial application (*vitakka*) and without; the latter is associated with purity of mindfulness, as in the Buddhist fourth jhana. Attainments with and without sustained application (*vicāra*), which are said to be subtle conditions, are also mentioned; just as the Buddhist second jhana, absence of sustained application is associated with ‘inner clarity’ (*adhyātma prasāda*). The wisdom of this brings truth.

All these states are ‘samadhi with seed’; but when even these cease all ceases, and this is ‘samadhi without seed’.

While the first chapter of the Yoga Sūtra recalls the Buddhist treatment of samadhi, the second chapter contains some classically Buddhist instructions on vipassana:

‘Ignorance, “I-am-ness”, desire, aversion, and insistence (*abhiniveśa*) [are the defilements to be eliminated by practice]. Ignorance is the cause of the rest, whether they are dormant, weak, suppressed, or aggravated. Ignorance thinks of the permanent as impermanent, of the pure as impure, of the painful as pleasurable, of the not-self as self...’<sup>231</sup>

The definition of ‘I-am-ness’ is obscure (‘taking the two powers of seer and seen as a single self’); evidently it refers to the error of seeking a unified self in the diversity of experience. Desire and aversion are defined exactly as in Buddhism: the inherent compulsion (*anusaya*) regarding, respectively, pleasure and pain. All these ‘fluctuations’ are to be overcome with jhana. The result of action (*karma*) rooted in defilement (*kleśamūla*) is experienced in pleasant or painful rebirth, according to whether the causes are good or evil. But for the discerning, all this is suffering.

Halfway through the chapter is introduced the famous ‘eight-factored yoga’, which is obviously modelled after the Buddhist eightfold path. A similar sixfold yoga is found in the Buddhist-influenced Maitrī Upaniṣad: breath control, sense control (*pratyāhāra*), jhana, bearing-in-mind (*dhāraṇa*), reason (*tarka*), samadhi.<sup>232</sup> This leaves out the preliminary three practices of the eightfold yoga and adds ‘reason’. The eightfold scheme of the Yoga Sūtra, however, was to become standard. The first factor, *yama*, is basic ethics similar to the five precepts; the second factor, *niyama*, concerns purity, austerity, contentment, chanting, and devotion to God. To counter thoughts of harming, etc., that are rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, it is recommended that one develops the opposite thoughts as antidotes. This is identical with the Buddhist path-factor of right intention. The same principle of opposites is applied not just to wrong thoughts but to unethical actions as well: ‘When one is firm in not stealing, all treasures appear’. The third factor, posture (*āsana*), is dealt with swiftly, involving merely steadiness, comfort, and relaxation; no mention is made of the special postures for physical exercise that we today identify with the word ‘yoga’. Next follows breath control and then sense control, completing the external practices.

The next chapter introduces the ‘internal’ practices, starting with *dhāraṇa*, defined as ‘fixing the mind on one place’.<sup>233</sup> *Dhāraṇa*, like *sati*, means ‘remembering, bearing in mind’, and the Abhidhamma lists *dhāraṇa* as a synonym of *sati*. Above we noted the close relation of *dhāraṇa* with *appamāda*, mirroring the close connection in the suttas between *sati* and *appamāda*. The change in terminology from *sati* to *dhāraṇa*, as I argued above, seems to be because of the different connotations of the term *sati* in the two traditions, not because of any difference in the meaning. *Dhāraṇa* is followed by *dhyāna* (jhana), which is defined very obscurely and, for me, untranslatably. It seems to mean a realm of mental unification brought about by the practice of *dhāraṇa*. So both the Yoga and the Buddhist tradition place ‘remembering/bearing in mind/mindfulness’ as the practice on which jhana is based.<sup>234</sup>

One difference between the two systems is that, while for the Suttas, jhana and samadhi are usually synonymous, the Yoga Sūtra places samadhi as the final step of the path, following jhana. However, *dhāraṇa*, jhana, and samadhi are together said to make up ‘restraint’ (*saṁyama*), so they are anyway not conceived of as totally separate. The description of samadhi is even more obscure than jhana: ‘The shining forth of just that mere object as if empty of its own form is samadhi’. Much of the rest of the Yoga Sūtra deals with Yoga/Sāṁkhya philosophy and practice, the attainment of various psychic powers, realization of the True Self, and of the disentanglement of

the Self from the world and its constituent qualities; the Upaniṣadic non-dual metaphysic is not evident.

The above considerations lead me to tentatively conclude the following.

- 1) There is a thread of Indian meditative tradition referred to in the Nikāyas/Āgamas, which stems from the pre-Buddhist period, finds philosophical expression in the Upaniṣads, and in the later Yoga texts is developed into a practical method using the sophisticated psychological terminology developed by the Buddhists.
- 2) This tradition, through its commitment to memorizing ancient texts (*sati = sara*), gradually evolved an appreciation of the benefits of mindful awareness (*sati = anupassanā*).
- 3) In metaphysics these yogis emphasized the Self, sometimes mystically identified with the cosmos.
- 4) This metaphysic was pre-eminently realized in the practice of samadhi, especially formless attainments.
- 5) The chief way to develop these formless attainments was to develop the five faculties, especially mindfulness and form jhana.
- 6) The Buddha adopted the relevant practical aspects of this tradition into his teaching, his chief innovation being to not interpret samadhi experience in terms of a metaphysical 'self'.

## THE JAINS

We turn now to the second thread of pre-Buddhist meditation. The classic description here is the account of the Bodhisatta's austerities. His striving was most terrible: 'crushing mind with mind', doing the 'breathless jhana' until he felt as if his head was being pierced with a sword or crushed with a leather strap. But he could not make any progress. Why?

'My energy was roused up and unflagging, my mindfulness was established and unconfused, but my body was afflicted and not tranquil because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling as arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.'<sup>235</sup>

The Mūlasarvāstivāda account available in Sanskrit confirms the ascription of mindfulness to the Bodhisatta during his period of striving.<sup>236</sup> Here, 'mindfulness' is obviously used in the sense of 'present moment awareness' rather than 'memory'. This is confirmed in the following passage:

'Such was my scrupulousness, Sāriputta, that I was always mindful in stepping forwards and stepping backwards. I was full of pity even for [the beings in] a drop of water, thinking: "Let me not hurt the tiny creatures in the crevices of the ground."<sup>237</sup>

The reason he struggled on with such grim self-torture is stated unambiguously:

'Prince, before my enlightenment, while I was still an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I too thought thus: "Pleasure is not to be gained through pleasure; pleasure is to be gained through pain."<sup>238</sup>

This is wrong view, being one of the chief tenets of the Jains.<sup>239</sup> But having starved and tortured himself near to death because of that view, he reflected thus:

'“Whatever ascetics or Brahmans, past...future...and present experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is nothing beyond this. But by these racking

austerities I have not attained any truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision beyond human principles. Could there be another path to enlightenment?”

‘I considered: “I recall that when my father the Śakyān was working, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and abode in the first jhāna, with initial & sustained application [of mind], and the rapture & happiness born of seclusion. Could that be the path to enlightenment?” Then, following on that memory came the awareness: “That indeed is the path to enlightenment.”

‘I thought: “Why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities?” I thought: “I am not afraid of that pleasure, for it has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities.”’<sup>240</sup>

Here the friendly, relaxed, reasonable feel stands in refreshing contrast with the steely force of his earlier efforts. He then decided that he could not attain jhāna while so emaciated and must therefore take some food; we have already seen that the dependence of the mind on food, and hence the deleterious effects of fasting on one’s mind-state, is an Upaniṣadic idea.<sup>241</sup> Although the Bodhisatta never identifies himself in this period as following any teacher, his practices and views are identical with the Jains. And it is interesting to note that when the group of five ascetics abandoned him they went to stay in the ‘Rishi’s Park’ in Benares, where even today there is still a Jain temple.

Such ideas, however, were not exclusive to the Jains; they were a common heritage of the Indian yogic tradition, and are met with frequently in the early Brahmanical scriptures as well, as Mahā Kaccāna’s verses above indicate. In fact the Jains were reformists, in that they rejected forms of asceticism that might harm living beings, and they also laid stress on the proper mental attitude. Earlier, more primitive, ‘professors of self-torture’ had believed in the efficacy of the physical torture itself, irrespective of any mental development. Also, their goal was typically psychic powers, whereas the Jains aimed at liberation of the soul. Thus the Bodhisatta’s austerities do seem to be closer to the Jains than any other group we know of; the Jains themselves preserve a tradition that the Buddha spent time as a Jain ascetic.

The implication of this episode is that the Jain system emphasized effort and mindfulness, but not until the Bodhisatta developed the tranquillity and bliss of samādhi was he able to see the truth. Elsewhere in the Suttas, Mahāvīra (the leader and reformer of the Jains, known in Pali as Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta) is depicted as asserting the impossibility of stopping initial & sustained application of mind.<sup>242</sup> Thus he would certainly not admit any higher than the first jhāna at most. To me, the Jain teachings and practice have a roughness that does not feel congruent with samādhi attainments, though this is a purely subjective impression. The Jain sources, to my knowledge, do not offer a great deal of help here. The earliest Jain sutras speak mainly of ethical practices, lifestyle, and basic principles, but do not explicitly mention meditation in any recognizable form. Slightly later we find the following:

‘Then having preserved his life, the remainder of his life being but a short period, he stops activities and enters dry jhāna<sup>243</sup> in which only subtle activity remains and from which one does not fall back. He first stops the activity of mind, then of speech and of body, then he puts an end to breathing...’<sup>244</sup>

In Buddhist context this passage would imply the fourth jhāna; but we have no guarantee that the terminology is being used in the same sense. The context is different; here we have not just a meditator, but someone who is culminating a spiritual path by fasting to death. Later texts refer to familiar ideas such as samādhi, one-pointedness, discriminating insight, reflection on



impermanence (*anicca*), change (*vipariṇāma*), and ugliness (*asubha*).<sup>245</sup> Dayal says that the Jains attached great importance to funeral contemplations.<sup>246</sup> There are apparently references to mindfulness as part of the Jain path, but I do not know what period they belong to. The later schools developed a list of twelve ‘contemplations’. The term used here, *anuprekṣā*, is semantically identical with the term *anupassanā* that is so prominent in the Buddhist practice of satipatthana. The list is as follows:

1. Impermanence
2. No-refuge
3. Coursing on (in rebirth, *saṃsāra*)
4. Solitariness (*ekatvā*)
5. Difference (between the soul and the body)
6. Uncleanliness (of the body)
7. Influx (of pollutions, *āsava*)
8. Restraint (of kamma)
9. Wearing away (of kamma)
10. The world (as suffering)
11. The difficulty of attaining enlightenment
12. The well-expoundedness of the Dhamma

Some of these are similar to Buddhist contemplations (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12), while some are specifically Jainist in nature (5, 7, 8, 9). They appear to be practices of reflecting on or thinking over a theme rather than awareness meditations. Most of them fall on the side of vipassana rather than samatha. The Jain sources also speak of several varieties of ‘jhana’:

1. depressive brooding jhana
2. ferocious jhana
3. dhamma jhana (contemplation of scriptures; removing afflictions of oneself and others; kamma and result; samsara and the pure soul)
4. pure jhana

Only this last might correspond with the Buddhist jhanas, although some of the other meanings, such as ‘brooding’, are connected with jhana or related terms in non-technical passages. According to Prasad, ‘pure jhana has four kinds:

1. [Manifold, with initial and sustained application]: Absorption in meditation of the Self, but unconsciously allowing its different attributes to replace one another.
2. [Unified, with initial but without sustained application]: Absorption in one aspect of the Self, with changing the particular aspect concentrated upon.
3. The very fine vibratory movements in the Soul, even when it is deeply absorbed in itself, in a Kevali [consummate one].
4. Total absorption of the self in itself, steady and undisturbedly fixed without any motion or vibration whatsoever.<sup>247</sup>

Paul Dundas discusses the Jain attitude towards meditation, and concludes that ‘...Jainism, unlike Theravāda Buddhism, has never fully developed a culture of true meditative contemplation, no doubt because early Jain teachings were more concerned with the cessation of mental & physical activity than with their transformation, and meditation did not lose its original role as little more than an adjunct to austerity until the early medieval period, by which time it had become a subject of essentially theoretical interest.’

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the teaching on satipatthana as depicted in the early texts was a distinctively Buddhist practice. While we have gone to some lengths to unearth elements in common with non-Buddhist systems, in the final end this re-emphasizes how much was new, in both the expression and the meaning. The rational, progressive approach, the empirical and psychological description, the details of the four satipatthanas – none of these can be found in any straightforward way in any pre-Buddhist texts. Even the post-Buddhist texts, while showing Buddhist influence in the meditation terminology, did not adopt the satipatthanas as they did the jhanas or the divine abidings.

The early Buddhists were extraordinarily generous in their assessment of the spiritual attainments of outsiders. They were quite happy to attribute to them such central elements of the Buddhist meditation system as mindfulness, jhanas, spiritual faculties, enlightenment-factors, divine abidings, and formless attainments. In this complex weave, we can discern threads of both samatha and vipassana. Although it is impossible to fully untangle these threads, it seems possible to discern a different emphasis in the meditative approaches of the different schools that correlates with their philosophical positions.

The Upaniṣadic tradition espouses a non-dual pantheism. Brahman is the ultimate reality, which creates the world, underlies the illusion of diversity, and is immanent in all existence. Thus existence is inherently good; we already partake of the divine essence, and our spiritual practices empower us to realize this identity fully. This tradition therefore naturally emphasizes meditation practices leading to blissful identification with the One; as later traditions summed it up: ‘mind, being, bliss.’

The Jains, on the other hand, have a wholly naturalistic and non-theistic view of existence. The world is not an illusion; it really exists ‘out there’, and the ultimate reality is not a pan-theistic non-dual ‘ground of being’, but is the countless irreducible atomic monads or ‘souls’. Later Jain theory developed this pluralistic approach into a vastly complex scheme for classifying the various elemental phenomena, an Aristotelian project like those favoured by the Abhidhamma schools of Buddhism. Enlightenment consists, not in the mystic identification of the self with the universe, but in the disentanglement of the individual soul from the polluting effects of kamma. They therefore emphasize, as part of their overall strategy of forcibly stopping all activity, contemplation of the impermanence of the world, and the ability to mindfully endure painful feelings in order to get free from the defiling influences.

It would therefore seem that the Brahmanical tradition leaned to the side of samatha, while the Jain tradition leaned to the side of vipassana, each shaping its presentation and emphasis in accord with its metaphysical predilections. The evidence of the non-Buddhists themselves, as far as it goes, tends to confirm that the picture painted by the early Suttas of the non-Buddhist traditions is generally accurate. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we can conclude that the earliest Buddhist traditions accept that both the Brahmanical and the Jain contemplative traditions included the practice of mindfulness.

I must restate the tentativeness of these conclusions. The real situation was terribly complex; there was no doubt much borrowing and interchange of ideas, and I have ignored such important issues as the tenuousness of any links between the Yoga and the Upaniṣads, and the philosophical similarities between the Sāṃkhya/Yoga and the abhidhamma schools. In fact, it may be held that it is inappropriate to subject non-Buddhist traditions to a Buddhist analysis rather than simply presenting them on their own terms. In my defence, my aim here is to seek lines of continuity/discontinuity between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, and I am therefore

compelled to try to see the other traditions from a Buddhist perspective. Rather than seeing this analysis as complete or even as a summary, it may be better to view it as a point of departure against which the real complexity of Indian spiritual culture can be reckoned.

## CHAPTER 11: BUILDING BLOCKS

### THE FUNCTION OF SATIPATTHANA

Having conducted a brief overview of the meditative culture within which the Buddha taught, we can now proceed to consider the teachings on mindfulness in the Buddhist context. In accordance with the GIST we should start with the earliest statement on mindfulness in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. This is addressed to the group of five ascetics, and thus explicitly locates the Buddha's message within the existing spiritual context. It starts by dismissing the wrong practices of sensuality and self-mortification, then expounds the right way, the noble eightfold path. This consists of: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi. This formulation of the Buddha's earliest teaching is preserved in texts of the Theravāda, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, (Mūla) Sarvāstivāda, and Mahāśāṅghika schools. The factors of the path are not further defined here, apart from right view, which is implied in the discussion of the four noble truths. The text therefore suggests that the audience was already familiar with the remaining seven factors.

By listing the factors thus, even without further definition, the text does two important things. Firstly it specifies which factors are really essential for the goal; and second, it places them in a sequence implying a conditional relationship between the factors. Elsewhere this relationship is made explicit. The very first discourse of the Magga-saṃyutta stresses the causal relationship between the factors of the path including mindfulness and samadhi: 'For one of right mindfulness, right samadhi comes to be'. An important definition of 'noble right samadhi', found in all four Nikāyas, also emphasizes that the path factors, culminating in right mindfulness, function to support samadhi.

'What, monks, is noble right samadhi with its vital conditions, and with its prerequisites? There are: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness. One-pointedness of mind equipped with these seven factors is called noble right samadhi "with its vital conditions" and also "with its prerequisites".'<sup>248</sup>

The same principle is spelled out in Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā's analysis of samadhi.

'One-pointedness of mind, friend Visākha, is samadhi. The four satipatthanas are the basis for samadhi. The four right strivings are the prerequisite of samadhi. The cultivation, development, and making much of these same principles is the development of samadhi therein.'<sup>249</sup>

Or again, in the context of the five spiritual faculties:

‘It is indeed to be expected, bhante, for a faithful noble disciple whose energy is roused and whose mindfulness is established that, having made relinquishment the support, he will gain samadhi, he will gain one-pointedness of mind.’<sup>250</sup>

Elsewhere the path is analysed into three – ethics, samadhi, and understanding. If satipatthana was primarily a vipassana practice, it would of course be included in the understanding section. But both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda Suttas include satipatthana in the section on samadhi, never the section on understanding.<sup>251</sup> All of the basic statements on the function of satipatthana in the path confirm that its prime role is to support samadhi, that is, jhana.

This can be made clearer by presenting a structural analysis of the truths and the path. This is parallel to Venerable Sāriputta’s analysis of the four noble truths in the Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta. This analysis of the path is found in the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, also the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, so it is clearly relevant to satipatthana. The basic definitions are derived from the Magga Saṃyutta.

1. The noble truth of suffering...origin...cessation...path.
2. And what is the noble truth of the path? Right view...right mindfulness, right samadhi.
3. And what is right mindfulness? One contemplates a body in the body...feelings...mind...dhammas. What is right samadhi? Quite secluded...one enters the first jhana...second jhana...third jhana...fourth jhana.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta picks up from here:

‘How does one contemplate a body in the body? Here a monk, gone to the forest...establishes mindfulness. Ever mindful he breaths in, ever mindful he breathes out...’

Thus the explanations of the various satipatthanas follow on from the basic definitions of the path. They are less intrinsic, found at a more elaborated stage of the teaching. It would have been expected that those who were to learn the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta would have been familiar with this basic context. In other words, the students would already know that satipatthana is the seventh of the eight factors of the path, and its function there is to support jhana.

There is, however, one important context where mindfulness appears immediately before a wisdom factor rather than samadhi. This is the seven enlightenment-factors: mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, energy, rapture, tranquillity, samadhi, equanimity. First we may notice the obvious fact that, although mindfulness is directly before investigation of dhammas, both of these ultimately support the range of samatha qualities, which form such a prominent portion of the enlightenment-factors. We may still wonder why the wisdom factor appears near the beginning, instead of its normal position towards the end.

The answer lies in the ambiguous usage of both mindfulness and investigation of dhammas in this context. The enlightenment-factors are presented sometimes in a teaching context, sometimes in meditation context. Mindfulness and investigation of dhammas are the only factors whose definitions differ in the two contexts. In a teaching context, we hear of the monk who hears the teachings, then recollects and remembers that teaching with mindfulness, and then investigates the meaning of the teaching.<sup>252</sup> More meditative contexts speak, in the Theravāda, simply of mindfulness, but the Sarvāstivāda supplies the expected identification with the four satipatthanas.<sup>253</sup> Investigation of dhammas, in both versions, is the inquiry into skilful and

unskilful dhammas. While the meditation contexts occur far more frequently in the Theravāda, the one teaching-context text in the Theravāda is represented by three in the Sarvāstivāda, and the same passage forms the basis for the relevant section of the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga. It must therefore be regarded as of considerable importance. In the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta, it is in this teaching context alone, never in the meditative context, that the seven enlightenment-factors are said to arise in a progressive sequence, each dependent on the previous. So when considering the significance of the *sequence* of the enlightenment-factors, the primary meanings of the terms mindfulness and investigation of dhammas should be ‘recollection’ and ‘investigation’ into the teachings. This then inspires the development of samadhi. This, I believe, suffices to explain why mindfulness in the enlightenment-factors appears directly before the wisdom factor, rather than the samadhi factors.

As usual, however, matters are not quite so cut-&-dried. In the context of anapanasati, the sequential arising of the enlightenment factors is also spoken of.<sup>254</sup> This context, being a synthesis of several already-established doctrinal frameworks, is clearly not as fundamental as the usage in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta. The main point of the section is not really to analyse the sequential origin of the enlightenment-factors, but to stress their integration with anapanasati and satipatthana. Of course, in anapanasati we are in samatha home turf, and vipassana is normally spoken of as emerging in the final tetrad, that is, coming well after the establishment of mindfulness and the attaining of samadhi. Thus the sequential arising of the enlightenment-factors is a bit odd in this context, and is probably no more than an application of the standard sequence in a derived context, without special significance.

The function of satipatthana as support for jhana is suggested in a very common Sutta idiom, whose significance tends to be obscured in translation. The term *satipaṭṭhāna* (establishing of mindfulness) resolves into *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna*. The alternative resolution into *sati* and *paṭṭhāna*, though favoured by the commentaries, is spurious. The difference between the two is that while *upaṭṭhāna* expresses the subjective act of establishing or setting up mindfulness, *paṭṭhāna* would refer to the ‘foundations’ of mindfulness, the objective domains on which mindfulness is established. The basic meaning of *upaṭṭhāna* is to ‘stand near’, and it is commonly used to mean ‘serve’, ‘approach’, even ‘worship’. Taranatha Tarkavacaspati’s Sanskrit dictionary gives the meaning of ‘causing to remember’ (especially past lives), which would be identical with *sati*, but as this does not seem to be attested in any early text it is probably under Buddhist influence. We have already remarked that the closest parallel in the Upaniṣads is the term *upāsana*.

*Upaṭṭhāna* occasionally occurs in vipassana contexts, though not, so far as I know, in any central collection in the Saṃyutta. In the Aṅguttara sixes, one is encouraged to ‘establish perception of impermanence [suffering, not-self]’ regarding all conditioned activities.<sup>255</sup> Here, although it is not in the context of satipatthana, we see a similar subjective role for *upaṭṭhāna*, with the object in locative case, as in satipatthana and elsewhere. In the context of satipatthana, *upaṭṭhāna* suggests that one is to make mindfulness stand close by, to be present, to serve the meditation. *Sati* and *upaṭṭhāpeti* stand in the same organic relation as do *saddhā* with *adhimuccati*, or *virīya* with *ārabhāti*. These terms, all commonly used in conjunction, indicate a reiterative emphasis. Just as one ‘decides faith’ or one ‘rouses up energy’, so too one ‘establishes mindfulness’. In fact, we could render this phrase ‘one does satipatthana’, the difference being merely verbal. Because the verb *upaṭṭhāpeti* has such an organic relationship with the noun *sati* they are found together in a variety of settings, just as *sati* is found everywhere. But by far the most important, common, and characteristic use is in the gradual training, where the phrase refers to taking a seated posture for meditation before the abandoning of the hindrances and entering jhana.

In the gradual training, *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna* occur together in the common idiom *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhāpeti*. Here the term *parimukha* is one of those simple words that is so hard to interpret. It

literally means ‘around the mouth’. It is interpreted by the Vibhaṅga as ‘at the nose tip’, while modern renderings usually use something vague like ‘in front’. However the phrase frequently occurs in contexts outside of anapanasati, making the interpretation ‘at the nose-tip’, or any literal spatial interpretation, unlikely. The Sanskrit has a different reading, *pratimukha*.<sup>256</sup> This has many meanings, among which are ‘reflection’ and ‘presence’. Both of these would be appropriate in meditative context. But the word usually, as here, occurs in close conjunction with *upaṭṭhāna*, which also means ‘presence’. I think here we have another example of that common feature of Pali or Sanskrit, a conjunction of synonyms for emphasis: literally, ‘one makes present a presence of presence of mind’, or more happily, ‘one establishes presence of mindfulness’.

The gradual training, appearing many times throughout the early texts, must be regarded as the prime practical and detailed paradigm for the way of practice as conceived in pre-sectarian Buddhism. In the GIST we have seen how this teaching is fundamental to all the early collections, especially the Dīghas. Here is a schematic representation of the gradual training in relation to a number of other key teaching frameworks. The ten-fold path is used rather than the eightfold, since, as can be seen, this correlates more neatly with the gradual training. I include a rather comprehensive array of factors in the gradual training; typically, specific presentations only contain certain of these.

**Table 11.1**

**The Truths, the Path, and the Training**

Four Noble Truths	Threefold Training	Tenfold Path	Gradual Training
Suffering		Right view	Hearing the teaching
Origin			Gaining faith
Cessation			
Path		Right intention	Going forth
	Ethics	Right speech, right action	Rules of discipline
		Right livelihood	Purifying livelihood
	Samadhi	Right effort	Contentment
			Sense restraint
			Moderation in eating
		Right mindfulness	Wakefulness
			Clear comprehension
			Seclusion
		Right samadhi	Establishing mindfulness
			Abandoning hindrances
	Understanding	Right knowledge	Four jhanas
			Knowledge & vision
			Mind made body
			Psychic powers
Divine ear			
Knowing other’s minds			
Recollecting past lives			
Divine eye			
	Right release	Four noble truths	
		Liberation	

Our main sphere of concern for the present are the middle factors, from contentment to abandoning hindrances. I give these as falling within the training in samadhi, following the Subha Sutta.<sup>257</sup> However I have not specified their exact relationship with the relevant path-factors. They are a loose grouping of affiliated practices that form a bridge between ethics and samadhi. Since they involve bodily actions, they might seem to pertain to ethics. Several of them – contentment, sense restraint, moderation in eating, clear comprehension – relate to a monk’s relation with his alms-food, and thus are connected with right livelihood. They are probably included within samadhi because they lay primary emphasis on one’s mental attitude in various contexts, and thus form a special training-ground for the serious meditator.

I have correlated these practices with right effort and right mindfulness in a general fashion, without trying to tie them down too precisely, and do not think that the ambiguity can be fully resolved. Even right effort and right mindfulness cannot be fully disentangled from each other: one practicing satipatthana is said to be ‘ardent’ (with right effort); while one abandoning the hindrance of sloth & torpor is said to be ‘mindful & clearly comprehending’. Similar ambiguities pervade this section. For example, sense restraint is said to counteract ‘evil, unskilful qualities’, a phrase that recurs in the formula for the four right efforts. These bad qualities are further described as ‘covetousness & aversion’, the same words that appear in the satipatthana auxiliary formula. The Sanskrit here adds the word ‘for the world’, thus increasing the parallel with satipatthana. It also adds the phrases ‘controlled in mindfulness, guarded in mindfulness’ (*nipakasmṛti, guptasmṛti*); similar phrases are found elsewhere in the Pali. All this simply says that the path is practiced as a whole, and any division is provisional, useful for ease of exposition and understanding. Thus I place right effort next to ‘wakefulness’, and right mindfulness next to ‘establishing mindfulness’ to indicate their most direct correlation, but without separating them from the other factors.

This ambiguity provides a ready explanation for how clear comprehension came to be included within satipatthana. We have already seen several considerations in support of Bronkhorst’s view that we must distinguish between two levels of mindfulness in the account of the gradual training: the preliminary stage of ‘mindfulness in daily life’, usually called ‘clear comprehension’, and, when the yogi sits down in the forest to meditate, the undertaking of satipatthana proper. Clear comprehension, like other practices such as sense restraint, wakefulness, etc., involves mindfulness in its role of preparing for meditation. But because, in the gradual training, clear comprehension comes close before the ‘establishing of mindfulness’ in meditation, it would quite naturally become subsumed under satipatthana as that practice grew in scope and importance.

So it seems that we are justified in seeing a progressive, causal sequence in the factors of the path as presented in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. One’s understanding of the Dhamma impels one to renounce in search of peace; one undertakes the rules of conduct and livelihood; applies oneself to restraint and mindfulness in all activities and postures; resorts to a secluded dwelling; establishes mindfulness in satipatthana meditation; and develops the four jhanas leading to liberating insight. This understanding of the path is deeply embedded in the Buddha’s conception of the way spiritual practice unfolds. The more detailed, explicit teachings can be seen as emerging and spreading out from the concise scheme of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, like light passing through a pinhole and radiating out.

## MINDFULNESS ITSELF

We may now examine mindfulness itself under a closer focus. In this chapter we will examine the phrases and sayings regarding satipatthana that are found widely distributed among the various

collections. In the Theravāda canon, mindfulness is described in two stock formulas. The simpler one emphasizes the older, Brahmanical, meaning of ‘memory’.

‘Here, monks, a noble disciple is mindful, endowed with highest mindfulness and self-control, able to remember, to keep in memory what was said and done long ago.’<sup>258</sup>

This formula does not explicitly treat mindfulness as meditation. It is less closely associated with satipatthana as such rather than simply ‘mindfulness’, although this distinction is most tenuous and artificial. As I have shown elsewhere, the term *nepakka*, ‘self-control’, here implies sense restraint, not wisdom as the commentaries have it.

The Sarvāstivāda offers a different description of mindfulness.

‘When there is mindfulness for, mindfulness against, or having no mindfulness towards (anything) he is mindful, widely mindful, keeping in mind, not forgetful. This is called right mindfulness.’<sup>259</sup>

It is not immediately apparent what is meant here. Evidently there is some abhidhamma-style influence in this kind of definition. Perhaps the mysterious first three terms refer to the practice, which we will meet later, of perceiving the beautiful in the ugly, the ugly in the beautiful, and avoiding both through equanimity.

We have become so used to the equation of mindfulness = vipassana that it comes as a shock to realize that the word ‘mindfulness’ hardly occurs at all in the central vipassana collections. In fact, it never occurs at all in the Khandha-, Saḷāyatana-, or Nidāna-saṃyuttas in the direct sense of contemplating impermanence, etc. On the few occasions it appears, it does so in secondary contexts, typically in the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta in its role to assist sense restraint. The primary function of sense restraint is to reduce sensual lust, so this must be understood as falling on the side of samatha. On the other hand, ‘mindfulness’ appears regularly in such straightforward samatha contexts as the jhana formula, descriptions of the divine abidings and six recollections, anapanasati, the ‘establishing of mindfulness’ for abandoning hindrances, and so on.

#### THE FOURFOLD ESTABLISHING OF MINDFULNESS

The next layer of complexity describes satipatthana as fourfold. In keeping with the pragmatic and relativist perspective of the Suttas, this is not a definition of mindfulness but a prescription of how to practice. The standard formulas have both an objective aspect – what to meditate on – and a subjective aspect – how to approach the practice. I will discuss the objective aspect first. All traditions agree in listing four fundamental objects of satipatthana meditation: body, feelings, mind, and dhammas. Curiously, these are rarely described in any detail. Only in the various versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are the meanings specified. Presumably the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta acted then, as it does today, as a key with which the brief texts could be interpreted.

A crucial point here is that the fourfold formula introduces certain specific objects of meditation, moving towards treating satipatthana as such in a somewhat narrower way than mindfulness in general. Satipaṭṭhāna is the only context in the main formulations of the path – the wings to enlightenment, the gradual training, the dependent liberation – to specify the object of meditation. Generally there tends to be a somewhat curious distance in the Suttas between the subjective and objective sides of meditation. For example, the Suttas describe jhana in terms of the subjective mental qualities, and elsewhere describe various meditation objects that are intended to develop jhana, yet they virtually never speak of, say, ‘anapanasati jhana’ (but we do have ‘anapanasati samadhi’), or ‘kasiṇa jhana’ (although there is a slightly dubious reference to



‘compassion jhana’.) This distance is not comprehensively bridged until the Dhammasaṅgaṇī. So satipatthana, being thus more ‘grounded’ and specific, fulfils an important practical function in the path. The implication seems to be that the particular meditation objects here are an intrinsic and hence non-optional part of the path. It seems that all meditators must develop at least some of the satipatthana practices. Meditation subjects outside of the satipatthana scheme are very frequently taught in the Suttas, notably the divine abidings and the six recollections, but they are apparently not so essential; however, the feelings, mind states, and dhammas associated with them may obviously be treated under satipatthana. This crossover ‘objective’ aspect of satipatthana makes it somewhat of an odd man out in the 37 wings to enlightenment, and we shall repeatedly see resulting ambiguities and incongruities emerging in the later attempts to thoroughly systemize these groups.

Why these four? Later texts of several schools suggest that the four oppose the four perversions. Contemplation of the body opposes the perversion of seeing beauty in ugliness; contemplation of feelings opposes the perversion of seeing suffering as pleasure; contemplation of the mind opposes the perversion of seeing the impermanent as permanent; and contemplation of dhammas opposes the perversion of seeing self in what is not-self. Certainly they can work in that way; there is no doubt that, say, the contemplation of the body is oriented towards dispelling sensual lust and that the meditation of ugliness is an important part of this strategy. And it is indeed in the survival of the mind, *citta*, that many, even Buddhists, seek the solace of eternal bliss. Overall, however, this explanation is *post facto* and in some respects artificial. It is worth noting that since this teaching can not be derived from the early Suttas, nor is it intuitively obvious, it may represent a case of later borrowing between the sects.

A more pertinent consideration in the formulation of satipatthana in terms of these specific four subjects would seem to be that they progress from coarse to subtle. I will treat this in more detail below; until we have examined the texts in detail we may be content here with some preliminary suggestions. The body is mainly treated as the basic object for developing meditation. Feelings are the most obvious of the mental qualities. The mind, the inner sense of cognition, the ‘knowing’ rather than the ‘known’, is more subtle, and is properly approached through the first two. As we shall see, both the treatment of the terms themselves, and the correlation with anapanasati, suggest that a key facet of this progressive refinement of contemplation so far is the undertaking, development, and mastery of jhana. This much is fairly straightforward, and the traditions are more-or-less in agreement, although they sometimes tend to de-emphasize or ignore this progressive structure. This is perhaps because they treat the next factor, dhammas, as meaning various phenomena, many of which are not more subtle than the first three, and thus disturbing the sequence. I believe this is a mistake. Dhammas here are more usefully considered, not as a parallel category of phenomena consisting of a miscellaneous grab-bag of left-overs from the first three, but as being a distinctive and more profound aspect of meditation: the understanding of the causal principles underlying the development of samadhi.

#### HOW THE PRACTICE IS DESCRIBED

While the list of the four objects of satipatthanas is common to all traditions, the description of the subjective aspect differs substantially, even within the basic pericope; however this seems to be a mere matter of editing preferences rather than sectarian divergence.

The Sarvāstivāda, in both the Saṃyutta and Majjhima, is the simplest: one develops ‘the establishing of mindfulness of contemplating a body in the body...’ etc. The Sanskrit versions of the Dasuttara and Saṅgīti Suttas, which are perhaps also Sarvāstivādin, feature a similar formula. The Mahāsaṅghika Ekāyana Sūtra seems to be slightly elaborated from a similarly simple formula,

although the translations available to me is not precise enough to be really clear; it refers to meditating on the body to remove unwholesome thoughts and anxiety, and meditating on the other three in order to gain peace and joy.

The main Theravāda Nikāyas do not contain such a simple version. However the later Pali texts do include similar formulations. The Niddesa, an algebraic abhidhamma-style commentary on the oldest parts of the Sutta Nipāta (Aṭṭhaka Vagga, Pārāyana Vagga, Khaggavisāna Sutta) that is one of the most obscure and little-read corners of the Pali scriptures (and that's saying something!), includes such a phrase in its standard gloss on 'mindful'.<sup>260</sup> Similar phrases also occur in the Paṭisambhidāmagga, which is of a similar or later time.<sup>261</sup> By the time of the commentaries it becomes fairly frequent. The fact that this simple version becomes more frequent in later Pali works suggests that it might not be original. In this case, the shorter formula might be a later summary rather than a genuinely early form.

This conclusion is given clear support in SA 612 of the Sarvāstivāda Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta. This discourse has the standard ending, then, added as an obvious editorial gloss, it says:

All sutras on the four satipatthanas are to end with the following phrase, that is: 'Therefore a monk developing and practicing the four satipatthanas, giving rise to exalted aspirations, with refined striving and skilful means, with right mindfulness and right knowledge, should train.'

Thus the short formula in the Sarvāstivāda is merely a function of the abbreviation of the texts, and the tradition itself states that the abbreviated version should be expanded in every case. This expanded formula is similar to the standard Theravādin version. They both differ from the abbreviated form in leaving out the term 'satipatthana' from the formula itself, and in adding a series of terms qualifying the practice. In the Theravāda version, one contemplates each of the four objects 'ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness & aversion for the world'. This phrase is found across the schools, and for convenience we may refer to it as the 'auxiliary formula'. The Sarvāstivāda version omits the phrase 'having removed covetousness & aversion for the world'. This is found elsewhere in the Saṃyutta,<sup>262</sup> however, so its omission here might be accidental. In speaking of 'exalted aspirations, refined striving, and skilful means', it seems to expand the simple 'ardent' of the Theravāda versions. 'Skilful means' is obviously reminiscent of the Mahāyāna; but before that, it was a characteristic of Venerable Upagupta, the patriarch of the Sarvāstivāda, so the difference between the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda here might be sectarian. The phrase 'right mindfulness, right knowledge' is common, and obviously equivalent to the Theravāda's 'mindful, clearly comprehending'.

One attempt to interpret these terms is found in the Netti, which says, in general agreement with the schools, that these qualities correspond with four of the five spiritual faculties: ardent = energy; clearly comprehending = understanding; mindful = mindfulness; having removed covetousness & aversion for the world = samadhi.<sup>263</sup> However, the correlation with the spiritual faculties is not particularly close. For example, the spiritual faculty of understanding (*paññā*) is defined as 'the understanding of rise and fall that is noble and penetrative, leading to the full ending of suffering',<sup>264</sup> clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), although etymologically parallel to 'understanding' is never used in this exalted sense, but is usually restricted to the more mundane sense of 'awareness of activities in daily life', or else it expresses the wisdom dimension of jhana.

A better way of seeing these terms is suggested by the Sanskrit Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sutta. There is a well-known episode when a gorgeous courtesan comes to visit. In the Pali, the Buddha urges the monks to be 'mindful and clearly comprehending'. The Sanskrit expands this a little: 'Monks, dwell ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful. Ambapālī the courtesan comes here!'<sup>265</sup> The text goes on to define 'ardent' as the four right efforts, 'clearly comprehending' as awareness in

daily activities, and ‘mindful’ as the four satipatthanas. This would seem to correspond exactly to the usage in the satipatthana formula itself. Now, these practices are all a standard part of the spiritual path, and are included in or corresponding to elements of the gradual training.

This suggests a connection between the final phrase, ‘having removed covetousness and aversion for the world’ with the preparatory phase of the gradual training, especially sense restraint. The standard passage on sense restraint, which in the Theravāda account of the gradual training usually occurs just before ‘clear comprehension’, includes the same words ‘covetousness & aversion’ (*abhijjhā-domanassa*) that occur in the satipatthana formula.<sup>266</sup> In the Sanskrit the parallel with satipatthana is even clearer, for there the phrase is ‘covetousness & aversion for the world’ (*abhidhyā-daurmanasye loke*).<sup>267</sup> Also, the Sanskrit tends to use the word ‘mindfulness’ more frequently here; this may be seen in both the Sanskrit Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra, and also the Śrāvaka bhūmi.

We should examine a little more closely how the key words *abhijjhā* and *domanassa* are used. *Abhijjhā* is used in two clearly defined senses. As one of the ten ‘pathways of unskillful actions’ it means straightforwardly covetousness: ‘Oh! That what belongs to him should be mine!’<sup>268</sup> As an alternative to *kāmacchanda* (‘sensual desire’) as the first of the five hindrances, it is much more subtle, encompassing any desire or interest in sensual experience. In the gradual training, both the Pali and the Sanskrit describe the overcoming of this hindrance as ‘abandoning covetousness for the world’, which again is very similar to the satipatthana formula. The term *domanassa*, which I render here as ‘aversion’, usually means ‘mental suffering’, but in at least one context it clearly stands for the hindrance of ill-will,<sup>269</sup> and this surely must be the meaning in satipatthana, too. While the use of exactly the same phrase *abhijjhā-domanassa* tends to underscore the closeness of the phrase in satipatthana with sense restraint, I do not see any major significance in the exact choice of terms for ‘ill-will’; the Pali tends to use a number of terms more-or-less synonymously. While as a hindrance ill-will can be very subtle, in the ten pathways of unskillful actions, it is defined in very strong terms: ‘May these beings be destroyed, killed, and wiped out!’ So it seems that we can consider these two terms, covetousness and aversion, as encompassing a variety of levels of intensity. The coarse levels are abandoned through the preliminary practices, especially sense restraint, while the full overcoming occurs with the abandoning of hindrances on entering jhana. It would, therefore, be a little overstrong to insist, as some do, that the phrase ‘having removed desire and aversion for the world’ implies that one must attain jhana before doing satipatthana; the phrase is simply too vague to bear such a definitive interpretation.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the satipatthana auxiliary formula does sound more like samatha than vipassana. Similar descriptions of the meditative state of mind are not found in direct vipassana contexts. But let us compare with this description of the practice of loving-kindness:

Satipaṭṭhāna Auxiliary formula:

...*ātāpī, sampajāno, satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam.*

Ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness & aversion for the world.

Loving-kindness:<sup>270</sup>

...*vigatābhijjho, vigatābyapado, asammulho, sampajāno, patissato mettāsahagatena cetāsā...*

Free of covetousness, free of ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, mindful, with a heart full of loving-kindness...

This is simply a slight variation in expression describing a similar subjective process of meditation. The passage on loving-kindness is obviously referring to jhana, and the similarity of

the two passages suggests that jhana, rather than being a pre-requisite, is part of the complete fulfilment of satipatthana.

So the standard Pali phrase may be securely dated before the Sarvāstivāda schism, and may well date from the earliest times. The main point of this qualifying phrase is to emphasize that mindfulness is not developed alone, sufficient unto itself, but in the context of the path as a whole; and in this all the traditions are in full agreement.

As well as the standard formula, the texts, mainly of the Saṃyutta, offer a number of interesting variants. Below I list some of the main variations in the Pali tradition; the Chinese equivalents are, in the important cases, similar. I retain the Pali to make the parallelism explicit. Several of these variations, as marked with an arrow, in their original contexts follow on after the standard Pali formula.

1) *Kāye kāyānupassanasatipatthānaṃ...* (Sanskrit, Niddesa, etc.)

The establishing of mindfulness of contemplating a body in the body...

2) *Kāye kāyānupassī viharati; ātāpī, sampajāno, satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ...* (standard auxiliary formula)

One abides contemplating a body in the body; ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness & aversion for the world...

3) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharato yo kayasmim chando so pahīyati; chandassa pahānāya amatam sacchikataṃ hoti...*(SN 47.37)

For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, desire for the body is abandoned; with abandoning of desire the deathless is witnessed...

4) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharato kāyo pariññāto hoti...*(SN 47.38)

For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, the body is fully known...

5) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharanto pi upahanet'eva pāpake akusale dhamme...* (SN 54.10/SA 813/Skt)

When one abides contemplating a body in the body, one crushes evil unskilful qualities...

6) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharato cittaṃ virajjati vimuccati anupādāya āsavehi...* (SN 47.11/SA 614)

For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, the mind experiences fading away and release from the defilements without grasping...

7) *Kāye kāyānupassī viharatha; ātāpīno, sampajānā, ekodibhūtā, vipprasannacittā, samāhitā, ekaggacittā...* (SN 47.4/SA 621)

You should abide contemplating a body in the body; ardent, clearly comprehending, unified, with clear mind, in samadhi, with one-pointed mind...

8) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharami; ātāpī, sampajāno, satimā, 'sukhasmi' ti pajānāti...* (SN 47.10/SA 615)

I abide contemplating a body in the body; ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, I understand: 'I am blissful'...

9) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharato cittaṃ samādhiyati upakkilesā pahīyanti...* (SN 47.8/SA 616)

For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, the mind enters samadhi, the taints are abandoned...

10) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharanto tattha sammā samādhiyati sammā vipasīdati...* (DN 18.26/DA 4)

When one abides contemplating a body in the body, there one gains right samadhi, right clarity....

11) > *Kāye kāyānupassī viharahi, mā ca kāyūpasamhitam vitakkaṃ vitakkesi...* (MN 125.24/MA 198)  
You should abide contemplating a body in the body, but do not think thoughts connected with the body...<sup>271</sup>

These variants fall naturally into three groups. The first pair (1 & 2) give the most basic statement or summary of the practice. Second are the variants that describe the result of the practice in general terms similar to the description of many other modes of practice (3-6). The remainder (7-11) describe the actual meditation itself and are more specific to satipatthana. It is striking that these variants deal explicitly with samadhi. Three (7, 9, 10) mention the word samadhi. One of these (7) reinforces samadhi with the synonyms ‘unified, one-pointed mind’. This variant, in common with one other (10), also has the term *vipasāda*, which is similar to the *sampasāda* of the second jhana. The mention of ‘bliss’ (8) also suggests jhana; the context confirms this. The remaining variant in this group (11) encourages the stilling of *vitakka*, which obviously pertains to the second jhana; and again this is confirmed in the context. Later texts of the schools furnish us with even more variants on the basic formula. Here I will just list a few for the sake of comparison. The first is virtually identical to the standard Pali version; the second and third merely offer minor elaborations.

12) *Adhyātmam kāye kāyānupaśyī viharaty ātāpī samprajanaḥ smṛtīman viniyabhidhyā loke daurmanasyam...* (Sarvāstivāda Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra)  
Internally one abides contemplating a body in the body; ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness for the world, and aversion...

13) *Kāye kāyānupaśyino viharataḥ kāyālabanānusmṛti tiṣṭhati samtiṣṭhati...* (Abhidharmakośa 342)  
For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, recollection supported by the body is set up, well set up...

14) *Kāye kāyānupaśyino viharataḥ upaśṭhita smṛti bhavaty asammuḍheti...* (Abhidharmakośa 342)  
For one abiding contemplating a body in the body, unconfused mindfulness is established...

15) *Kāye kāyānudarṣī viharati, na ca kāyasahagatan vitarkan vitarkayati...* (Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhāvaśṭhitasamādhī Sūtra 15J, 18B)<sup>272</sup>  
One observes a body in the body, but one does not think thoughts associated with the body... (cp. Version 11 above)

Thus we find that within the existing variations on the basic satipatthana formula, several refer quite explicitly to samatha, while none mention the contemplation of impermanence and causality that is the hallmark of vipassana.

By far the outstanding feature of all the formulas, the definitive statement of what satipatthana involves, is that one ‘abides contemplating a body in the body... (feeling, mind, dhammas)’. Here, there are two features that demand explanation. One is the repetitive idiom, which I render ‘a body in the body’; the second is the verbal noun *anupassanā*, ‘contemplation’, which expresses the mode of awareness characteristic to satipatthana.

### ‘A BODY IN THE BODY’

The reflective idiom ‘a body in the body’ has been frequently commented on. Some hold that it is merely idiomatic, with no particular significance; but surely such repetition must at the very

least signify emphasis. The normative explanation in recent times, based on the Theravādin tradition, is that the repetition delineates and defines the object, in particular excluding taking the body (etc.) to be something that it is not, i.e. a self. This explanation of course appears in a context that takes it for granted that satipatthana is primarily vipassana. However, it might be reinterpreted to suit a samatha context as well – not straying outside the bounds of the given meditation. But none of these interpretations enjoy direct support from the Suttas. To find this, we must turn to a somewhat cryptic passage found in the Ānāpānasati Sutta, and in slightly different form in the Saṃyutta. This gives a unique set of phrases qualifying each of the four objects of satipatthana in the context of breath meditation. They are as follows:

(Body)

‘I call this a certain body [among the bodies], Ānanda, that is, breathing & breathing out...

(Feelings)

‘I call this a certain feeling [among the feelings], Ānanda, that is, close attention to breathing in & breathing out...

(Mind)

‘I say, Ānanda, that there is no development of samadhi by breathing in & breathing out by one who is muddled and who lacks clear comprehension...

(Dhammas)

‘Having seen with understanding the abandoning of covetousness & aversion, he watches over closely with equanimity...<sup>273</sup>

All these raise interpretive issues. It is not good to rely on such problematic passages, but in the absence of other relevant passages, it seems we have no choice. The sections on feelings and mind are obscure, and I will not discuss them here. The dhammas section is interesting, but I will defer a discussion until we consider anapanasati in general.

The first saying, dealing with the body, is quite straightforward. Evidently, the ‘breath’ is considered as a kind of ‘body’, or we might say in English, a kind of physical phenomenon, an aspect of the body. The bracketed portions appear in the Majjhima version only, not the Saṃyutta; comparison with the existing Chinese and Sanskrit versions might help clarify which is original. However, they do not substantially alter the meaning. The meditator is to select this sphere within the entire field of physical experience as the focus of awareness. This is entirely in keeping with the thesis that satipatthana is primarily a samatha practice. This interpretation is also in clear accord with the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas. The descriptions of all the practices in all versions speak of a series of contemplations of discrete aspects of the given topic. For example, one contemplates pleasant feeling, then painful feeling, then neutral feeling, and so on. This is a strong confirmation that we are on the right track: the primary implication of the repetitive idiom in the satipatthana formula is to narrow the focus of attention within each of the four objects of satipatthana.

‘CONTEMPLATION’

The second crucial part of the satipatthana formula, then, is the term *anupassanā*. In the Abhidhamma this is glossed with the standard register of terms for understanding, which is not wrong but is not very helpful, as it ignores the subtleties of context. This may be one reason why later writers have tended to equate *anupassanā* with vipassana, or with non-judgemental

awareness; however a closer examination suggests that this does not do either term justice. We may start with a verse from the Ṛg Veda.

‘He **contemplates** with loving favor the mortal who, like a rich man, pours for him the Soma. Māghavan [i.e. Indra, ruler of Gods] in his bended arm supports him: he slays, unasked, the men who hate devotion.’<sup>274</sup>

Here *anupassanā* obviously refers to a strongly one-sided regard, the very opposite of ‘non-judgemental’. A very similar usage is found in the early Buddhist texts, too. The first of the following verses is from the Sutta Nipāta, the second from the Dhammapāda.

‘He is no friend who is ever diligently  
Suspecting dissension, **contemplating** only flaws;  
But on whom one rests, like a child at the breast,  
He is a true friend, who is not alienated by others.’<sup>275</sup>

‘For one who **contemplates** the faults of another,  
Whose thoughts are always critical;  
His defilements increase –  
He is far from the evaporation of defilements.’<sup>276</sup>

The similarity of subject and treatment is striking. The texts strongly emphasize that ‘contemplation’ (*anupassanā*) here means seeing only (*eva*) one side of a situation. Moreover, it means seeing that one side not occasionally but constantly (*sadā, niccam*). The use of ‘diligence’ (*appamāda*) in a negative sense is very unusual; normally, of course, diligence is closely connected with mindfulness.

The Īśa Upaniṣad shows a friendlier face of *anupassanā*.

‘He who **contemplates** all beings just as the self  
And the self as all beings; he is not revulsed because of that.’

‘When all beings are just the self for the discerning one  
Then what delusion, what sorrow, for one who **contemplates** oneness?’<sup>277</sup>

This could easily be interpreted in Buddhist context as the normal Buddhist practice of universal loving-kindness. In Upaniṣadic context, of course, we may assume that the more pregnant metaphysical sense of ‘Self’ is intended. Here *anupassanā* evidently refers to a mode of contemplation that sees two sides of things – all beings as the self, the self as all beings – and resolves this surface duality into a deeper unity. The word ‘oneness’ (*ekatvā*) here may be compared with the occurrence of ‘one’ in the classic description of satipatthana as the ‘path going to one’ (*ekāyana magga*). The ‘two-into-one’ movement finds its Buddhist counterpart in the Dvāyatānupassanā Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta. This text, the longest and most doctrinally substantial text in the Sutta Nipāta, presents a series of ‘contemplations’ arranged in pairs. Many of these correspond with factors of dependent origination. Here is a typical example.

‘ “This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering” – this is one **contemplation**. “This is the cessation of suffering, this is the way of practice leading to the end of suffering” – this is a second **contemplation**. Monks, for a monk, rightly **contemplating** this pair, abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, one of two fruits may be expected: profound knowledge in this very life, or, if there is a remnant, non-return.’<sup>278</sup>

Here, just as in the Īśa, two contrasting contemplations are recommended. But the contrast is, of course, really a complement, so the full realization of these two contemplations leads to one goal (although in the Dvāyatānupassanā this is complicated by the offer of non-return as an alternative to full enlightenment). So although the contexts are quite different, the role of *anupassanā* remains similar.

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad makes the metaphysical usage of *anupassanā* explicit.

‘The one controller of the many, inactive, who makes the one seed manifold  
Standing in the self – the wise who **contemplate** him, to them belongs eternal bliss, not to  
others.’<sup>279</sup>

Here, too, the connection between *anupassanā* and the ‘one’ is prominent. The wise are to contemplate the one, inactive source, not the multiplicity of appearance; only this leads to happiness. The earlier Bṛhadāraṇyaka also uses *anupassanā* as a contemplation, a beholding, of the divine.

‘If one clearly **contemplates** him as the self, as God,  
As the Lord of what has become and what will be, one does not shrink away from him.’<sup>280</sup>

The following verses from the Dhammapāda may be considered as a crossover between the early, non-technical usage of *anupassanā* and the more specialized sense in satipatthana.

‘One who abides **contemplating** beauty,  
Unrestrained in his sense faculties,  
Immoderate in eating,  
Lazy, with deficient energy;  
Truly Māra overthrows him  
As the wind, a weak tree.

‘One who abides **contemplating** ugliness,  
Restrained in his sense faculties,  
Moderate in eating,  
Faithful, with roused-up energy;  
Truly Māra does not overthrow him  
As the wind, a rocky mountain.’<sup>281</sup>

Here one is depicted as contemplating either beauty or ugliness (*subha*, *asubha*); again, one is focusing on just one aspect of things, deliberately ignoring the other side.

*Anupassanā* in such contexts is clearly oriented towards eliminating sensual lust, and hence falls primarily on the side of samatha. *Anupassanā* does occur occasionally in vipassana contexts, too. For example, there are a few discourses in the Khandha-saṃyutta that speak of ‘contemplation’ of impermanence, suffering, and not-self.<sup>282</sup> Elsewhere we read of ‘contemplation of impermanence’, etc. especially regarding feelings.<sup>283</sup> The proper role of ‘contemplation of impermanence’ in satipatthana is in the fourth satipatthana, as is clear from anapanasati.

So *anupassanā* may be used in both samatha and vipassana contexts, and cannot be exclusively categorized as either. Although related to the word ‘vipassana’, *anupassanā* is not used when standing alone, as vipassana is, to specifically denote the meditative enquiry into impermanence and causality. The prefix *anu-* suggests ‘following, conforming, after’, and lacks the analytical implication of *vi-*. It could be interpreted here as implying a mode of contemplation that



‘conforms’ to the relevant context; thus *anupassanā* is normally the second member of a compound where the first member defines the specific subject of meditation: ‘contemplation of...’. In psychological contexts *anu-* commonly carries the nuance of ‘continuing’. Thus *vitakketi* means ‘to think’; *anuvitakketi* means ‘to keep on thinking’. The same usage occurs in the definition of *sati* as ‘memory’ that we have encountered above. There two terms are used: *sara* and *anussara*, which we should understand as ‘remembers, keeps in memory.’ A similar nuance is evident in two of the terms used in the Abhidhamma gloss for the jhana factor *vicāra* – *anusandhanatā* and *anupekkhanatā* – which should be translated ‘sustained application, sustained observation’. *Anupassanā* is semantically parallel with *anupekkhanatā*, and so also suggests ‘sustained observation’. This sustained, continuous aspect of *anupassanā* is clearly emphasized in the verses we examined above. The commentary on the Visuddhimagga comments on this word in just this way: ‘he keeps re-seeing (*anu anu passati*) with jhana knowledge and insight knowledge’.<sup>284</sup>

## CLEAR COMPREHENSION

The term *sampajañña*, which occurs in some of the satipatthana formulas and commonly elsewhere together with mindfulness, is also glossed by the Abhidhamma with the standard register of synonyms for wisdom, and has been equated by some writers with vipassana. But although *sampajañña* is etymologically equivalent to *paññā* ‘understanding’, it is not explicitly equated with vipassana. It is indeed used occasionally in the sense of vipassana; we will examine this in the context of the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta below. But *sampajañña* is most characteristically used in the context of ‘daily life awareness’ as a preparation for jhana. Both the Suttas and the Abhidhamma include this practice under samadhi. In the Subha Sutta, it is listed under the ‘aggregate of samadhi’; and in the Abhidhamma it finds its place in the Jhāna Vibhaṅga. Nowhere in the Suttas or Abhidhamma is the awareness of activities treated primarily as vipassana.

The other common usage of *sampajañña* is in the formula for the third jhana, where it expresses the wisdom dimension of samadhi. Most of the exercises of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta use the verb form of *paññā* in a similar sense, for example: ‘One understands “I am breathing in a long breath”...One understands “I am standing”...One understands “I am experiencing a pleasant feeling”...’ and so on. So there is clearly this dimension of understanding in the sense of clear awareness throughout the meditation. We find that jhanas too can be qualified by such terms; sometimes jhana is classified under wisdom, or one in jhana is said to ‘know & see’, and so on. The mere usage of these terms cannot mean that this is a vipassana practice as distinguished from a samatha practice. Reality is more subtle: all meditation must include both peace and wisdom. The question is: what is the context, how are these qualities being applied here? The contexts we have seen above suggest that the primary purpose of satipatthana is the development of samadhi, and there is nothing here to change that conclusion. All we can rightly conclude is that the development of jhana involves a dimension of wisdom.

## INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

An interesting aspect of the satipatthana teachings is that we are encouraged to practice internally, externally, and internally-externally. These internal/external modes of satipatthana are attested in all the Nikāyas, Āgamas, and Abhidhammas, and obviously rank as of some importance. We shall meet them time and time again in the later expositions. There is a slight difference between the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas and most other presentations. These Suttas present the basic formula first, then add the internal/external contemplation as part of the refrain following the detailed explanation. But usually the internal/external contemplation is integrated into the formula from the start: ‘One contemplates

a body in the body internally...’. We can call this the ‘integrated internal/external formula’. This is found in the Pali sources apart from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself, such as the Saṃyutta, the Dīgha, and the Vibhaṅga; also in the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta,<sup>285</sup> Ekāyana Sūtra, Dharmaskandha, and Śāriputrābhīdharma; also fairly consistently in later sources such as the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Abhidharmasamuccaya, and Arthaviniścaya Sūtra. Obviously there is no serious difference in the meaning, but such innocuous details are all the more useful in tracing textual affiliations and editorial fiddling.

There is, on the face of it, an interpretive problem here, for we normally understand that meditation is the ‘inward path’, and yet there is a universal agreement that satipaṭṭhana should be practiced externally also. In casual reference to mindfulness practice, such as in verse, we are frequently encouraged to direct mindfulness inwards, and there is no doubt that this is the prime focus for mindfulness meditation. For example, one passage reminds us that: ‘For one well established in internal presence of anapanasati, there are no disturbing thoughts drifting outside.’<sup>286</sup> Yet the external aspect remains – how are we to understand this?

In general Sutta usage, the terminology of internal and external is found both in the context of both samatha and vipassana. As a samatha example, take the eight liberations or the eight bases of transcendence: ‘Perceiving form internally, one sees forms externally, limited, fair and ugly; by transcending them one perceives thus: “I know, I see”. This is the first base of transcendence.’<sup>287</sup> While the phrasing is obscure, it is clear that such passages refer to the development of some visualization as an object of samadhi, such as is known in the later works as a ‘nimitta’. I think ‘perceiving form internally’ refers to imagining a part of the body as the initial stage in developing a true samadhi nimitta. This would therefore come within the sphere of satipaṭṭhana. As a vipassana example, we need look no further than the second sermon, the Discourse on Not-Self, where the Buddha speaks of each of the five aggregates as ‘internal or external’. This passage is of course one of the fundamental vipassana pericopes.

In the specific context of satipaṭṭhana we find a passage in the Dīgha Nikāya: through ‘internal’ contemplation one enters samadhi, then gives rise to knowledge & vision (i.e. psychic vision) of the body, etc., of others externally.<sup>288</sup> Within the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, internal and external contemplation emerges most naturally in the charnel ground contemplations, which are depicted as imaginative exercises: ‘As if one would see a corpse discarded in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a monk compares this very body with it thus: “This body too is of that same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”’<sup>289</sup>

Mention should also be made of the Vijaya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta. This little poem compresses most of the Suttas’ body contemplations into a few verses. Although it does not specifically mention satipaṭṭhana, it stands as the main teaching on body contemplation in the Sutta Nipāta, and might have been composed for that very reason. If so, it would not be very early. After describing some charnel ground meditations, it says:

‘As this is, so is that; as that is, so is this –  
Internally and externally, one should dispel desire for the body.’<sup>290</sup>

The internal/external contemplation of the elements is treated in detail in the Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta. For example, the internal water element is defined as the watery parts of one’s own body, such as sweat and blood, etc., and the external water element is the waters in floods, the ocean, etc. Both internal and external water element are merely water element, and should be seen rightly as not-self and impermanent. This passage might be taken as implying that the third stage, where internal and external are combined, should be seen as a synthesis where the difference between the inner and outer is surmounted.

Interestingly, the treatment of impermanence of the external water element, as too the other elements, speaks of the destruction of the earth at the end of the universe, which is most emphatically not a ‘momentary’ conception of impermanence. This seems to extend the application of ‘external’ not just to the ‘there’ but also to the ‘then’, outside in both space and time. Similar notions are preserved in the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma; we shall see below that while the Theravāda treats internal purely as ‘pertaining to oneself’ and external as ‘pertaining to others’, the Sarvāstivāda Dharmaskandha also refers to past and future lives. This usage might ultimately derive from the Saṃyukta. We have seen above that one of the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta discourses adds an editorial gloss, blatantly inserted following the usual ending. This happens elsewhere, too. One such example occurs in a discourse called ‘Development’.<sup>291</sup> In the Sarvāstivādin version, ‘development’ refers to the practice of satipatthana internally and externally, this being one of the few occurrences of this formula in the Saṃyutta. Tacked on after the end of this discourse is the sentence:

‘The development of the four satipatthanas in the past and future are also taught in this way.’

This must be one of the most obvious sectarian interpolations in the Āgamas. It establishes a clear connection between ‘internal/external’ and ‘past/future’.

Here we engage with an interesting aspect of Buddhist, or more generally Indian, thought, the correlation between the personal and the cosmic. In the Upaniṣads this is most famously expressed in the identity of Atman and Brahman, the individual soul and the world-spirit being in essence the same. Parallel ideas are found in Buddhism, for example, in the correlation between different stage of jhana and the different realms of rebirth that they produce. One of the clearest explanations of this is by Venerable Anuruddha:

‘Suppose an oil-lamp is burning with an impure wick; because of the impurity of the oil and the wick it burns dimly. So too, when a monk resolved upon and pervading a defiled radiance his bodily disturbance has not fully subsided, his sloth & torpor have not been fully eliminated, his restlessness & remorse have not been fully removed. Because of this he practices jhana, as it were, dimly. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the Gods of Defiled Radiance.’<sup>292</sup>

While satipatthana is not mentioned here, we shall see later that Venerable Anuruddha was renowned for his emphasis on satipatthana, so the connection should not be ruled out. Peter Masefield has discussed some of the relations between the Buddhist and Upaniṣadic texts, and says that the usage of ‘internal’ (*ajjhataṃ*) is identical in both contexts, while the Buddhist usage of ‘external’ (*bahiddhā*) embraces both the ‘cosmic’ (*adhidaivatam*) and the ‘objective’ (*adhibhūtam*) of the Upaniṣads.<sup>293</sup>

Another interesting indication for the meaning of internal/external is in the phrasing of the contemplation of mind in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: ‘One understands mind with lust as “Mind with lust”...’ etc. The phrasing is identical with the psychic power of being able to read the mind of another person; this also correlates with the claim by Venerable Anuruddha that his own development of such powers was due to satipatthana. The passage on the psychic powers appears often in the gradual training, whereas the passage on knowing the mind in satipatthana appears just once. Surprisingly, then the passage on psychic powers should be regarded as the basic source context.

## ‘THE PATH OF CONVERGENCE’

Finally we come to that most definitive of satipatthana slogans: *ekāyana magga*. The basic derivation is simple: *eka* means ‘one’; *ayana* means ‘going’; and *magga* means ‘path’. But further interpretation is difficult for a number of reasons: the word *eka* is used in many different senses; the exact grammatical relationship between *eka* and *ayana* is not clear; and idiomatic uses of the phrase are few and/or obscure. The commentators offer many different interpretations, which I will not repeat here, since they have been treated often enough before.<sup>294</sup> The commentators are concerned to expand the meaning, which is fine – especially when used, as often appears to be the intention, as raw material for oral instructions – but it is not very useful for we who wish to pin down the original denotation as precisely as possible. An unfortunate result of such vagueness is that terms can be usurped for polemic purposes. Standard renderings of *ekāyana* as ‘the one and only way’ tell us more about the biases of the translators than about the meaning of the Pali.

The Chinese renderings merely confirm that the Chinese translators were likewise uncertain: the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra has ‘there is one path’ (有一道), SA has ‘one vehicle path’ (一乘道 = *eka + yāna*, evidently the translator used this more familiar Mahāyāna term); SA<sup>2</sup> 102 has ‘there is only one path’ (唯有一道); while the Mahāsaṅghika Ekāyana Sūtra has ‘there is one entrance path’ (有一入道 = *eka + āyatana*). The uncertainty of the traditional interpretations suggests that the term may well be old, and may well derive from a context that the later writers were unfamiliar with. In the Theravāda tradition, it is not unusual to find the commentators struggling to explain terms and ideas that are strongly embedded in the Indian cultural background.

Gethin includes an interesting discussion.<sup>295</sup> He cautions against any attempt to settle on a single concrete definition for such a term, which early on seemed to carry spiritual/mystical connotations, and is used in a variety of senses in the Brahmanical scriptures. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad lists the ‘Ekāyana’ as an ancient Brahmanical text, which according to the commentator dealt with *nītiśāstra*, ‘social ethics’ or ‘politics’; perhaps the idea here is that social policy leads to a unified society. Gethin notes that the non-Buddhist contexts for *ekāyana* suggest two groups of meanings: the ‘lonely’ or ‘solo’ way; and a way that leads to one, a convergence point. ‘Solo way’ is accepted by the commentators, but one could question whether this was a suitable interpretation, in the light of several texts in the Saṃyutta that encourage one to develop satipatthana also for the benefit of others. Further, this meaning always seems to occur in literal contexts, not with a derived significance appropriate for meditation. Moreover, only the second meaning, which also claims commentarial support, is explicitly found elsewhere in the early Nikāyas.

This context, found in the Majjhima Nikāya, suggests a meaning of ‘leads to one place only’.<sup>296</sup> Since Ñāṇamoli, translators such as Bhikkhu Bodhi have relied on this as the only straightforward contextual meaning available in Pali, and have rendered the term the ‘direct way’ or the ‘one-way path’. While this interpretation is a marked improvement over the polemicism of ‘one and only way’, I am still not convinced that it captures the full resonance of the term. It derives from a literal context that has nothing to do with meditation, and needs evaluation in light of the philosophical/meditative usages, which are more relevant in satipatthana. Since the Brahmanical usages of this term clearly encompass a wide spectrum of meaning, there is no reason to assume the Pali means the same thing in different contexts. For this reason it may be worthwhile to examine more closely the Brahmanical references. We may start by asking: just how relevant are the Brahmanical contexts here?

Before we can answer this question clearly, we need to straighten out the occurrences of the phrase in the existing Saṃyuttas. Luckily, relevant texts are present not only in the two complete Saṃyuttas, but also the two partial Saṃyuttas. All the existing versions follow the *ekāyana* phrase by saying this is ‘for the purification of beings...’ and so on. Most of the existing versions place the statement in the period immediately after the Buddha’s enlightenment, when the Buddha reflected on satipatthana as the *ekāyana magga*.<sup>297</sup> There are three versions of this passage in the various versions of the Saṃyukta Āgama in Chinese.<sup>298</sup> All of these are located in the Sagāthā Vagga due to the presence of the verses.

These versions are, allowing for translation issues, very close, except SA<sup>3</sup> has less verses. They all follow the *ekāyana* passage by saying that one without the four satipatthanas is without the noble Dhamma, one without the noble Dhamma is without the noble path, and one without the noble path is without the deathless; but if one is with the four satipatthanas, then all the reverse is true. Then Brahmā, understanding the thought in the Buddha’s mind, vanishes from the Brahmā realm and reappears before the Buddha. He applauds the Buddha’s thought, repeats it, and adds verses in praise of the *ekāyana* path. The Chinese versions have some beautiful images, with two of them saying the path is like ‘a river flowing down to the ocean of sweet dew’ (‘sweet dew’ being the standard Chinese rendering of ‘deathless’).<sup>299</sup> So we have three main textual components: the *ekāyana* passage; the ‘without’ passage; and the verses. ‘*Ekāyana*’ and ‘without’ originate with the Buddha and echoed by Brahmā, while the verses belong to Brahmā alone.

Two of the Pali versions are quite similar, the main differences being that they lack the ‘without’ passage, and the verses are shorter.<sup>300</sup> These feature a unique variation in the satipatthana pericope; instead of the normal ‘a monk abides contemplating a body in the body’ (*bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati...*) we have ‘should a monk abide contemplating a body in the body’ (*kāye vā bhikkhu kāyānupassī vihareyya...*). In other words, the mood shifts to optative, presumably because at the time these words were spoken there were no monks yet. Even though these are *geyyas*, they appear in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta; the fact that all the Chinese versions are in the Sagāthā Vagga makes us suspect the Pali tradition shifted them at a later date.

The Chinese has another similar passage, but this is in the Anuruddha-saṃyutta. Here Venerable Anuruddha takes the part of the Buddha, reflecting in seclusion about the four satipatthanas as the *ekāyana* path – one without these is without the noble Dhamma, and so on, all as the Sagāthā Vagga versions. Venerable Mahā Moggallāna takes the part of Brahmā, reading Anuruddha’s mind, vanishing and ‘swift as a strong man might bend his arm’ reappearing in front of Anuruddha, applauding and repeating his thought. In place of the verses, Moggallāna asks Anuruddha how one delights in the four satipatthanas. Anuruddha replies with the normal pericope, but adds ‘with stilling & quietude, cultivating oneness of mind’.<sup>301</sup> This seems to be restating in psychological terms what the Sagāthā Vagga versions state in mythic terms, since Brahmā is of course regarded in Buddhism as having attained his exalted status and special powers through the practice of jhana. The text listed as cognate by Akanuma here, SN 52.1, in fact shares none of the special features of this text except for the setting. Instead, it mentions the internal/external refrain, the rising and falling refrain, and perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive (etc.). Thus it replaces the samadhi emphasis of the Sarvāstivāda version with vipassana.

There is, then, a strong unity in the presentation of the *ekāyana* passage that we have seen so far. The two main doctrinal units (‘*ekāyana*’ and ‘without’) occur together in all the Chinese versions, and always in a context that suggests psychic powers and samadhi. The doctrinal passages also occur in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna-saṃyukta. SA 607 presents the *ekāyana* passage as a simple *sutta* at Sāvattihī, while the next *sutta*, SA 608, presents the ‘without’ passage. Considering these together, they give the distinct impression that the original Sagāthā Vagga discourse was

taken up, shorn of the special setting and split into two discourses for inclusion in the *Smṛtyupasthāna-saṃyukta*.

The Pali seems to have gone one step further. Now, the *ekāyana* passage occurs in the first discourse of the collection. The beginning of a collection is always particularly susceptible to editorial funny business, as it is so easy to slip in a new discourse. Perhaps the occurrence of the word ‘one’ suggested placing this discourse here. The setting is given at Ambapālī’s Mango Grove. This seems implausible, as this setting is related to the relevant passage in the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*, and there is no sign in the versions of this that the *ekāyana* passage belongs here. Rather, they have the Buddha encouraging the monks to be mindful since Ambapālī is coming. This passage in fact comprises the second text of the Theravāda *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta*, immediately after the *ekāyana* discourse. It seems as if the *ekāyana* discourse has mistakenly copied the setting from the following discourse. In fact, this could be taken as evidence for the suggestion I made above that the *ekāyana* discourse was a subsequent insertion at the beginning of the collection. If it had been, as in the *Sarvāstivāda*, originally situated later in the collection, once the original setting was lost it would have been assumed that the setting was at *Sāvattihī*. But this, as so often, may have been left implicit and not literally spelled out. Thus when the discourse was cut-&-pasted into the beginning of the collection, it lacked a meaningful setting, and was simply inserted after the setting of the previous first discourse, which became number two.

The ‘without’ passage is similarly problematic. There is no real corresponding passage in the Theravāda, but perhaps SN 47.33 ‘Neglected’ might be regarded as a cognate. However, this just says one who has neglected *satipatthana* has neglected the path leading to the end of suffering (and the reverse), lacking the progressive series of *Dhammas* found in all five Chinese versions. If it does come from the same source, then, it has clearly suffered decay.

To sum up: the *ekāyana* passage normally occurs in Brahmanical context. This is attested in all existing versions of the *Saṃyutta*. These feature *Brahmā* in a setting similar to the ‘Request of *Brahmā*’, which the GIST identifies as the root text of the *geyya* *anga*. The other versions appear to be derived from this usage. It is noteworthy that the further the texts drift from the standard version, the greater the number of editing/textual problems they evidence. This is a good hint that we are on the right track. The conclusion of all this is very simple: we have every reason to believe, from the evidence of the Buddhist sources, that the term *ekāyana* was associated primarily, if not exclusively, with the Brahmanical context.

We may then proceed to look at the matter from the reverse perspective: do the contexts in which the term *ekāyana* appear in the Brahmanical scriptures suggest a connection with Buddhism? The key passage is in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. We have already remarked that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* is generally regarded as probably the oldest and most important of the *Upaniṣads*, and this passage in particular is justly famous, perhaps the most significant dialogue in the whole *Upaniṣadic* tradition. Gethin has already referred to this source, but his summary treatment does not bring out the full significance.<sup>302</sup> The relevant passage occurs twice in the *Upaniṣad*. Occasionally the readings differ; generally I follow the first occurrence. (The second occurrence adds material, especially emphasizing the immortality of the Self, and includes the famous description of the Self as: ‘Not this! Not this!’ We will look at an important variation between the two below.)

1. ‘Maitreyī’, said Yājñavalkya, ‘I am about to go forth from this state (of householder). Look, let me make a final settlement between you and [my other wife] *Kātyāyanī*.’

2. Then Maitreyī said: ‘If, indeed, Venerable Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would that make me immortal?’ ‘No,’ said Yājñavalkya, ‘Your life would be then like that of the rich. But there is no hope of immortality through wealth.’
3. Then Maitreyī said: ‘What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal? Tell me, Sir, what you know.’
4. Then Yājñavalkya said: ‘Ah, dear, you have been dear, and now you speak dear words. Come, sit, I will explain to you. Reflect on what I say.’
5. Then he said: ‘Truly, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self. Not for the sake of the wife... sons... wealth... Brahmanhood... Kṣatriya-hood... worlds... gods... beings... not for the sake of all is the all dear, but all is dear for the sake of the Self. Truly, Maitreyī, it is the Self that should be seen, heard, considered, and reflected on. By the seeing, hearing, considering, and cognizance of the Self, all this is known.
6. ‘The Brahman ignores one who knows him as different from the Self. The Kṣatriya... worlds... gods... beings... all ignores one who knows it as different from the Self. This Brahman, this Kṣatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings, and this all are this Self.
- 7, 8, 9. ‘As when a drum is beaten...a conch is blown...a lute is played, one is not able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the lute or the lute-player the sound is grasped.
10. ‘As from a lighted fire laid with damp fuel various smokes issue forth, even so, my dear, the Ṛg Veda, the Sāman Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Ātharva, Aṅgīrasa, histories, legends, sciences, Upaniṣads, verses, sutras, explanations, and commentaries are all breathed forth from this.
11. ‘As the ocean is the convergence (*ekāyana*) of all waters, as the skin is the convergence of all touches, as the nose is the convergence of all smells, as the tongue is the convergence of all tastes, as the eye is the convergence of all forms, as the ear is the convergence of all sounds, as the mind is the convergence of all thoughts (*samkalpa*), as the heart is the convergence of all realizations (*vidya*), as the hands are the convergence of all actions, as the genitals are the convergence of all pleasure, as the anus is the convergence of all excretion, as the feet are the convergence of all movements, as speech is the convergence of all Vedas.
12. ‘Just as a lump of salt thrown in water becomes dissolved in the water and there would not be any to be seized by the hand, but wherever you might take it up it is salty; so too this great being, infinite, with nothing beyond it, is a sheer mass of cognition (*vijñāna-ghana eva*). Having arisen out of these elements, one perishes back into them. When departed, there is no more perception (*saṁjñā*). This is what I say, my dear.’ So said Yājñavalkya.
13. Then said Maitreyī: ‘In this, indeed, you have confused me, Venerable Sir, by saying that “when departed, there is no more perception”.’ Then Yājñavalkya said: ‘Certainly I am not saying anything confusing. This is enough for cognizance.’
14. ‘For where there is duality, as it were, there one smells another, one sees another, one hears another, one addresses another, one thinks of another, one cognizes another. But where All has become identical with Self, then by what and whom should one smell... see... hear... speak... think... by what and whom should one cognize? That by which all this is cognized, by what is that to be cognized? By what, my dear, should one cognize the cognizer?’<sup>303</sup>

We should first note that the time of the great sage Yājñavalkya cannot have been too far distant from the Buddha. The Brahmanical grammarian Kātyāyana, commenting on Pāṇini, says that the Yājñavalkya scriptures are ‘of too recent origin; that is to say, they are almost contemporaneous with ourselves’.<sup>304</sup> Pāṇini lived no earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, and Kātyāyana later still; in other words, they are later than the Buddha, but ‘almost contemporaneous’ with Yājñavalkya. Thus, Yājñavalkya might be plausibly placed in the period immediately before the Buddha. In fact, Yājñavalkya’s favorite interlocuter is King Janaka, a historical character mentioned in the Jātakas, whose city is still called ‘Janakpur’ today. Since he appears in the Jātakas he is likely to be pre-Buddhist, and is likely to have been a king in the Mithila region a few generations before the Buddha. So we are justified in considering Yājñavalkya’s teachings as forming part of the immediate religious context of the Buddha.

Furthermore, virtually every aspect of this classic dialogue has close connections with the Suttas, with the obvious exception of the metaphysical ‘Self’ doctrine. Yājñavalkya’s aspiration to go forth (1) betrays influence from the samana traditions such as Buddhism. The sentiment of the futility of wealth in the face of death (2, 3) is classic Buddhism, but alien to the older Vedic tradition. The statement that the husband, etc., is dear for the sake of the Self (5) is similar to a passage in the Sagāthā Vagga, as pointed out by Bhikkhu Bodhi.<sup>305</sup> The list of seen, heard, thought, and cognized (5) is presented in the same way in the Suttas.<sup>306</sup> The list of various principles culminating in the ‘all’ (5, 6) is reminiscent of the Mūlapariyāya Sutta, a text which the commentarial tradition associates with a Brahmanical context.<sup>307</sup> The similes of the drum, conch, and lute (7, 8, 9) all appear in the Suttas. The similes of the conch<sup>308</sup> and the lute,<sup>309</sup> in particular, are treated in a strikingly similar way: the sound manifests from the coming together of the parts and the appropriate effort and cannot be grasped of itself. The image of the rivers flowing into the sea (11) occurs in the Kāyagatāsati Sutta, and even more strikingly, occur in the verses accompanying the *ekāyana* passage in two of the Chinese versions. The simile of salt (12) reminds us that the Buddha said the great ocean has just one taste, the taste of salt, just as the Dhamma-Vinaya has the taste of liberation.<sup>310</sup> The description of cognition as infinite (12) occurs in the standard formula on the formless attainments. The bewilderment of one trying to grapple with the subtle state of the realized sage after death (13) also recurs in the Suttas, in similar terms.<sup>311</sup> There have even been several attempts by modern scholars to identify the state of Nibbana with a kind of undefinable, infinite cognition (*viññāṇa*) (although such authors coyly flirt around the taboo word ‘self’).

The second version of this dialogue describes the culminating revelation of the Self as slightly differently: ‘without internal or external, just an entire mass of understanding’ (*anantaro’bāhyaḥ, kṛtsnaḥ prajñāna-ghana eva*<sup>312</sup>). The internal/external immediately reminds us of satipatthana. *Kṛtsnaḥ* is the Pali *kaṣiṇa*, a well known meditation term which for the Suttas meant not ‘external device for meditation’ (as it came to mean in the later traditions), but ‘totality’ [of consciousness in samadhi], just as here. Even though the *Pali-English Dictionary* says the derivation of *kaṣiṇa* is unknown, this derivation and meaning have been adopted in Cone’s recent *A Dictionary of Pali*, and also conforms to the Chinese rendering. The standard Sutta description of *kaṣiṇa* is ‘above, below, across, non-dual, measureless’, which once again reminds us of the Upaniṣadic passage. This version substitutes *prajñāna* (‘understanding’) for the first version’s *viññāna* (cognition); while these are usually distinguished in Buddhism, they are often synonyms in the Upaniṣads, and remnants of this remain in the Suttas, too.

We could go on at some length examining the subtleties of how these psychological and philosophical elements are treated in comparative light, and what exactly is the historical relationship between these texts, but this should suffice for our current purpose. We can definitely conclude that, just as the central usage of *ekāyana* in the Suttas looks to the Brahmanical context, the central usage of *ekāyana* in the Upaniṣads looks to the Buddhist context.



Yājñavalkya's message is the return to the One. All diversity is undercut and relativized. The repeated, emphatic use of *ekāyana* drives home the centrality of this doctrine of Oneness. An *ekāyana* is both the source from which the things of the world spring, and the place of convergence, where the diversity of external manifested phenomena come together in a profound unification. It is the inner subject that makes the external objects possible. It is precisely the term *ekāyana* that is singled out as the most exact expression of this insight. This verse occurs immediately before the dramatic revelation that 'this great being', the cosmic self that is the All, is but a 'sheer mass of cognition'. In this infinite consciousness the limiting, diversifying conceptions and perceptions (*saṃjñā*) disappear.

While it is not easy to find clear and explicit statements in the Brahmanical scriptures, usages of *ekāyana* elsewhere do not contradict this reading, and may even support it.

'The mind (*citta*) is the convergence (*ekāyana*) of all these, mind is the self (*atman*), mind is the foundation (*pratiṣṭha*).' (CU 7.5.2)

'He who would be devoted to convergence (*ekāyana*), in silence, not thinking about anything, having previously renounced, would be one who has crossed over and is free from obstacles.'  
(MBh 14.19.1)

The first passage appears to support the abstraction of the notion of 'convergence' to include states of unification in samadhi. The terminology is suggestively Buddhist; no less than three words (*citta*, *ekāyana*, *pratiṣṭha*) are similar or identical to terms used in the context of satipatthana. The second passage has puzzled commentators,<sup>313</sup> but surely a samadhi context is also applicable.

So it seems that the main spiritual significance of *ekāyana* for the Brahmanical tradition is convergence of the mind in samadhi. This conclusion is in perfect accord with the straightforward meaning of the term. The suffix *-āyana* means literally 'going', and when used in a compound it normally means the 'going' to whatever the first member of the compound is. For example, the Brahmā Purāṇa says that God first created the waters that are called *nara* and then he released his seed into them, therefore he is called 'Narāyana'. Closer to home, the Pārāyana Vagga says: 'This path goes to the beyond (*pāra*); therefore it is called "Pārāyana".' So a perfectly obvious reading would be that *ekāyana* means 'going to one'. This is the primary meaning that Gethin ends up with, corresponding to the final of the commentarial readings (*ekam ayati*).

The question then becomes, what does 'one' mean in the Buddhist context? Gethin suggests, with the support of the Pali commentary, that 'one' refers to Nibbana. He says that the term 'one' here need not carry absolutist metaphysical connotations in the Nikāyas. The sub-commentary supports this by explaining 'one' here as 'without a second' and 'supreme'. But the 'one' was a pregnant metaphysical term for the whole Brahmanical tradition ever since the Ṛg Veda spoke of the 'One Being', and so the Suttas carefully avoid using the 'one' to refer to Nibbana. However, they are quite happy to use 'one' to refer to samadhi. By far the most common and idiomatic usages of 'one' in the Suttas' meditation vocabulary are the terms 'one-pointedness' (*ekaggatā*) and 'unification' (*ekodibhāva*), which are standard synonyms of jhana or samadhi. This is, in fact, the only sense in which 'one' is used in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, and we have seen that the Sarvāstivāda includes a discourse where Venerable Anuruddha closely associates the *ekāyana* passage with the development of 'oneness of mind' through satipatthana.

Given that, as we have seen, the primary purpose of satipatthana is to lead to jhana, it seems not at all unlikely that the contextual meaning of *ekāyana* is ‘leading to unification (of mind)’. This is precisely the explanation offered by the Mahāsaṅghika Ekāyana Sūtra:

‘Why is it called the “one entrance”? It is so-called because it is [the way to] concentration and oneness of mind.’<sup>314</sup>

The Chinese phrase I have rendered by ‘oneness of mind’ here is identical to that in Anuruddha’s discourse on the *ekāyana* path. Although the Ekāyana Sūtra, which I will discuss in detail below, seems somewhat later than the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, this statement remains one of the earliest clear definitions of this phrase. Because it is in accord with the early descriptions of satipatthana in the Suttas, and was accepted by a prominent school of early Buddhists, it should be granted some credibility.

This explanation would also furnish an answer to the question why the Suttas reserve the term *ekāyana* for satipatthana alone among the 37 wings to enlightenment. While all the groups are associated in one way or another with samadhi or one-pointedness, satipatthana is singled out as playing the key role of bringing the mind to samadhi.

#### ACHIEVING THE ‘WAY’

The statement on the ‘path leading to unification’ is followed, in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, by the statement that this is: ‘For the purification of beings, for surmounting sorrow and lamentation, for ending bodily and mental suffering, for achieving the way, for witnessing Nibbana’. Most of these are straightforward enough, but the phrase ‘achieving the way’ (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*) is vague, in Pali as well as in English. The term *ñāya* is sometimes used in the context of dependent origination, and some, including myself, have seen this as the meaning here. This is not unreasonable, for there are clear connections between satipatthana and dependent origination.<sup>315</sup> However there is no very strong reason for thinking that this is the primary intended meaning.

The most common, standard occurrence of the term is in the formula for recollection of the Sangha: ‘The Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples has practiced well, practiced directly, practiced according to the way (*ñāya*), practiced properly.’ Here we are in the realm of practice, and this, rather than dependent origination, would seem a more straightforward approach to seek the meaning of *ñāya* in satipatthana. This accords with the tradition, for the commentaries gloss *ñāya* in such contexts as ‘the noble eightfold path’. There are a whole series of texts that use the word *ñāya* in the context of practice, which do not mention dependent origination, or for that matter satipatthana, even though some of them use the very same pericope of ‘for the purification of beings...’.<sup>316</sup> These passages generally deal with the overall way of training, and all specifically include samadhi. The most explicit context is in the Sandaka Sutta of the Majjhima. First the gradual training is taught, from the appearance of the Tathagata to the abandoning of hindrances; up to this stage the term *ñāya* is not used. Then the text continues:

‘Having abandoned these five hindrances, defilements of the mind that weaken understanding, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskilful qualities, he enters and abides in the first jhana, which has initial & sustained application, with rapture & bliss born of seclusion.

An intelligent person would certainly live the holy life with a teacher under whom a disciple attains such an exalted distinction, and while living it he would attain the way (*ñāya*), the Dhamma that is skilful.’<sup>317</sup>

The text then goes on with the rest of the jhanas and higher knowledges culminating in arahantship, repeating the concluding sentence each time. The association of *ñāya* with *kusala*, 'skilful', is also relevant in the context of satipatthana, for in one place satipatthana, in the context of developing samadhi, is said to be 'for achieving the skilful' (*kusalassadhigamāya*), just as it is said to be 'for achieving the way' (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*).<sup>318</sup> Thus, while the term *ñāya* may not be pinned down very neatly to a specific doctrinal denotation, it is clearly associated with the progressive scheme of the way of practice in general, and samadhi or jhana in particular.

## THE ANĠUTTARA

This is a convenient place to survey the satipatthana material found in the existing *Āṅguttara Nikāya*. Here we find a paucity of material on satipatthana. This is, however, no surprise, for the *Saṃyutta* and *Āṅguttara* were obviously arranged as parallel collections of the shorter discourses, and the main doctrines are mostly included in the *Saṃyutta*. *Satipaṭṭhāna* appears alongside the other groups of the 37 wings to enlightenment in various repetitive series appended to some of the sections. One passage mentions six things to be abandoned in order to achieve success in satipatthana: fondness of work, speaking, sleeping, and company; lack of sense restraint; and eating too much.<sup>319</sup> This is obviously similar to the gradual training, and reinforces the suggestion I made above that these basic practices in the gradual training are a preparation for the meditative development of satipatthana. The contemplation here is treated in terms of internal and external.

Returning to the *Āṅguttara*, the only substantial discourse on satipatthana treats it purely as *samatha*.<sup>320</sup> This has the appearance of a discourse from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*, and the GIST would suggest that it was originally included in that collection and was later moved into the *Āṅguttara* in order to provide the *Āṅguttara* students with at least one substantial teaching on such an important topic. However, the discourse is not found in the *Sarvāstivādin Saṃyukta*, nor, apparently, elsewhere in the Chinese. One is exhorted first of all to develop the four divine abidings, then to develop 'that samadhi' in the mode of all the jhanas. Next one is, in identical terms, exhorted to develop the four satipatthanas, and to develop 'that samadhi' in the mode of the jhanas.

There is another interesting text, which, while it does not deal with satipatthana directly, is similar enough in its subject matter and terminology to suggest that it may have exerted some influence on later expositions. Venerable *Ānanda* lists five 'bases for recollection' (*anusattiṭṭhāna*; notice the similarity to *satipaṭṭhāna*).<sup>321</sup> They are: the first three jhanas; the perception of light; the 31 parts of the body; contemplation of death; and the fourth jhana. To these the Buddha adds a sixth – mindfulness of one's bodily postures. These are obviously close to the Theravāda *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*'s section on body contemplation. The relation becomes closer when we realize that the *Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra* includes in its section on body contemplation the four jhanas and the perception of light. Perhaps the *Sarvāstivāda* was influenced by the present text. The fact that the Buddha added the awareness of postures as an extra practice suggests that this stood slightly outside the other, more specifically meditative, practices. It is characteristic of the Buddha in such cases to focus attention on the cause.<sup>322</sup> Thus it may well be that the Buddha chose to emphasize awareness of postures at this point in order to encourage the development of the practice that would lead on to the higher stages.

Another short discourse focuses on the wisdom aspect of mindfulness, although again this is not specifically within the satipatthana framework.<sup>323</sup> Five meditations are recommended: one should 'clearly establish mindfulness on the rise and end of dhammas', and develop perceptions of the loathsomeness of food, the ugliness of the body, boredom with the whole world, and

impermanence of activities. These are the ‘bitter pill’ meditations designed to overcome our neurotic aversion and fear of acknowledging the negative and unpleasant side of life. It should be noted that in the Aṅguttara the other ‘bitter pills’, which include both samatha and vipassana aspects, are taught much more frequently than the contemplation of dhammas. ‘Dhammas’ here probably does not mean ‘all dhammas’, for these are not said to be impermanent; presumably it has the same meaning as in the satipatthana contemplation of dhammas.

We can summarize the teachings on satipatthana according to the Aṅguttara Nikāya in this way.

- 1) Satipaṭṭhāna is a meditative practice developed in the context of the gradual training.
- 2) It can be a mode of jhana.
- 3) It is to be developed both internally and externally.
- 4) Mindfulness of the rise and fall of dhammas is one of the practices developing wisdom.

The high degree of congruence of this conception with the other basic teachings throughout the canon suggests that we can regard this as an early summary of the key aspects of satipatthana. I note here in passing that none of the texts mentioned above are found in the Ekottara Āgama; however this is of little significance given the generally large divergence between this collection and the other Nikāyas/Āgamas. The Ekāyana Sūtra seems to be the only substantial discourse in the Ekottara dealing with satipatthana.

## CHAPTER 12: THE SAMYUTTA

### THE SATIPATTHANA-SAMYUTTA

The Satipaṭṭhāna-samyutta is a rich collection, with parables and metaphors, glimpses into the daily life of the Sangha, inspiring lay meditators, humour and tragedy, and a strong narrative element. Several texts shine light on satipatthana practice beyond what is found in the basic formula; yet a detailed analysis is lacking. The Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-samyutta is composed of five chapters (*vaggas*) of exactly ten discourses each, followed by the inevitable ‘Ganges Repetition Series’. Let us, to start with, classify the texts into the angas, as we did with the Sacca-samyutta. As noted above, the ascriptions are not always cut-and-dried, but are usually easy enough.

**Table 12.1: Angas in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-samyutta**

SN 47	Sutta/Vyākaraṇa
1-2	S
3	V
4-8	S
9-13	V
14	S
15-16	V
17	S

18	<i>Geyya</i>
19	<i>S</i>
20-23	<i>V</i>
24	<i>S</i>
25-30	<i>V</i>
31-39	<i>S</i>
40	<i>V</i>
41	<i>S</i>
42	<i>V</i>
43	<i>Geyya</i>
44-45	<i>S</i>
46-47	<i>V</i>
48-104	<i>S</i>

While there are some significant blocks of texts grouped according to the angas, still the formation is less striking than in the case of the Sacca-saṃyutta. Seven of the first eight texts are *suttas*; but generally the *suttas* and *vyākaraṇas* are scattered in no particular order. Let us then see what SA has to offer us.

**Table 12.2: Angas in SA**

<b>SA</b>	<b>Anga</b>
605-8	<i>Sutta</i>
609	<i>Vyākaraṇa</i>
610-13	<i>S</i>
614-15	<i>V</i>
617	<i>Geyya</i>
618-20	<i>S</i>
621	<i>V</i>
622-23	<i>Geyya</i>
624-32	<i>V</i>
633-37	<i>S</i>
638-39	<i>V</i>

The *sutta/vyākaraṇa* structure of this collection becomes immediately apparent. Fourteen of the first eighteen texts are *suttas*, and these are followed by a sequence of nine straight *vyākaraṇas*. We even have the extra grace of three *geyyas* appearing more-or-less between the two main angas, just as we saw in the Sacca-saṃyutta. The demonstrable fact that the *sutta/vyākaraṇa* structure is far more obvious in the Sarvāstivāda collection has, I think, been a major factor in the failure of scholars to recognize this fundamental principle, since their efforts have been largely concerned with the Theravāda.

Let us now combine the two collections, and remove those discourses that are not common to both, thus attempting to approximate the pre-schism collection. I also note the discourses in the form of a parable, which I call ‘tales’; these are discussed below.

**Table 12.3: Angas in the Concordance of SN 47 and SA**

SA	SN 47	Anga
606	24	<i>Sutta</i>
607	1	<i>S</i>
608	33*	<i>S</i>
609	42	<i>Vyākaraṇa</i>
610	39	<i>S</i>
611	5	<i>S</i>
614	11	<i>V</i>
615	10	<i>V</i>
616	8	<i>S</i> (tale)
617	6	<i>Geyya</i> (tale; <i>S</i> in SN)
619	19	<i>S</i> (tale)
620	7	<i>S</i> (tale)
621	4	<i>V</i> ( <i>S</i> in SN)
622	2, 44*	<i>G</i> ( <i>S</i> in SN)
623	20	<i>G</i> (tale; <i>V</i> in SN)
624	16	<i>V</i>
625	15	<i>V</i>
627	26*	<i>V</i>
628	21*	<i>V</i>
634	17	<i>S</i>
635	34*	<i>S</i>
638	13	<i>V</i>
639	14	<i>V</i>

The *sutta/vyākaraṇa* structure remains apparent. In addition, another feature manifests. There are in this concordance ten *suttas*, three *geyyas*, and ten *vyākaraṇas*. This is suggestively reminiscent of the classic grouping of ten discourses to a *vagga*. Perhaps the ancestral collection consisted of two *vaggas*, one of *suttas* and one of *vyākaraṇas*, and a few *geyyas*. In the appendix we can investigate the structure in more detail to see if any further gleanings as to the original structure of the collection are to be found. However, as in the case of the *Sacca-saṃyutta*, this inquiry will not substantially affect the content of the collection, so we may, without further ado, proceed to consider this.

## THE TALES

Two distinguishing literary characteristics of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta* deserve further consideration: the tales and the narratives.

The tales leaven the collection with humour and homely action. They extol *satipaṭṭhana* as a safe place, a refuge, thus reflecting the exhortation in the narrative passages to abide with oneself as one's refuge through practicing *satipaṭṭhana*. Psychologically, they emphasize how one is 'caught' if one strays outside one's native domain, and 'freed' if one know how to 'let go', and how this freedom, apparently paradoxically, comes from containing one's 'attention' within the proper context – *satipaṭṭhana*.

**SN 47.8/SA 616 The Cook:** The Pali and Chinese here are quite similar. The foolish cook doesn't know how to prepare the right kinds of food to please his master, so misses out on a bonus. Similarly, the foolish monk, not understanding the ways of his mind, practices satipatthana, but his mind 'does not enter samadhi, he does not abandon defilements...' But for the skilful cook and the skilful monk it is just the opposite – he enters samadhi and abandons defilements.

**SN 47.6/SA 617 The Hawk:** Tells of a quail who is caught by a hawk if he ventures outside his 'native habitat', but is safe when inside. The unsafe ground for a monk is the realm of sensuality, and the native habitat is satipatthana. Here again satipatthana, as the opposite to the five strands of sensual pleasures, plays the same role as the four jhanas. The Chinese is very close, sharing some of the exact phrases of the Pali, and also adds a verse. This repeats the story, then says that to know one's own mind is better than the power of 100 000 dragons.

**SN 47.19/SA 619 Sedaka:** A parable of harmony and mutual support, illustrated by the story of two acrobats, one supporting the other on top of a bamboo pole. The Pali contains a recognized anomaly here, for it has the apprentice saying 'you protect yourself and I'll protect myself'. The Buddha then applauds this statement, but in repeating it the saying changes to 'protecting oneself, one protects others, protecting others one protects oneself.' The Chinese does not suffer this problem, for it has the apprentice saying just that.

**SN 47.7/SA 620 The Monkey:** Here the story concerns a foolish monkey who gets his hand stuck in a tar trap. Trying to free himself, he gets his other hand stuck, too, then both his feet and even his muzzle. Stuck at five places, the hunter does with him what he will. In the same way, the monk should stay within his native habitat, just as in 'The Hawk'. The Chinese adds a further description of the foolish monk who goes into town with senses unrestrained.

**SN 47.20/SA 623: The Most Beautiful Girl in the Land:** On one side is an excited crowd; on the other a dancing girl; in between you must walk carrying a bowl brimful of oil, with a man with a drawn sword following right behind you, ready to chop off your head if you spill a drop! In just the same way should you develop 'mindfulness of the body'. This text is unique in being a 'tale' that includes a *vyākaraṇa*. The Pali is anomalous in that it mentions 'mindfulness of the body', and is the only text in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta to omit the four satipatthanas. The Chinese, however, does include the four satipatthanas, which is clearly more plausible. The Chinese also adds some verses, which mention the pot of oil and encourage concentration. Another difference is that the Theravāda version is set at Sedaka. This unusual location is the same as the preceding discourse and seems to have been mechanically copied over from there, a phenomenon that we saw was very prevalent in the Sarvāstivāda Satya-saṃyukta. The Sarvāstivāda version is set in the Deer Park at Benares.

## THE NARRATIVES

The narratives fall into two main groups: those that recall the Buddha's enlightenment, and those that recall his passing away. There is a complex relationship between these texts – some of which include narrative, and some which merely imply a narrative context – and the extended narratives (*apadānas*) of the Dīgha and Vinaya.

Of the first kind we have the 'Brahmā' suttas. As discussed above, these are found in the Sagāthā Vagga in the Chinese versions, but the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta in the Theravāda. They recall the 'Request of Brahmā' that we have treated as the paradigmatic *geyya* passage.<sup>324</sup> Both events are set at the 'Goatherd's Banyan Tree', but I can find no trace of our current text in any of the accounts of the post-enlightenment period that are available to me. Between the two there is a crucial

difference in the role played by Brahmā. In the ‘Request of Brahmā’, the deity plays the ancient mythic role of initiator of action, a personification of divine inspiration. Here, in keeping with the humble position of gods that is more normal in Buddhism, he merely echoes and supports the Buddha. The other memory of this period found in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta is called ‘Unheard Before’, which treats the satipatthanas according to the three revolutions and twelve modes of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.<sup>325</sup> This implies that understanding satipatthana was an integral part of the enlightenment experience. Similar claims are made of most of the familiar doctrinal categories, reflecting the holistic nature of the Dhamma. This text is not found in the Chinese, so we suspect it to be a later insertion; but the content is not controversial.

More material is found around the time of the Buddha’s passing away. We have already referred to the discourse set in Ambapālī’s mango grove, where the Buddha stayed shortly before the Parinibbāna, encouraging the monks to be ‘mindful & clearly comprehending’. This passage appears in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, in both Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda versions. The appropriateness of this reminder, in anticipation of the visit by a famous courtesan, is obvious in context, and this is made more explicit in the Sarvāstivāda version than the Theravāda. SN 47.9 ‘Ill’ tells the moving story of the Buddha’s illness shortly before his passing away. It is one of the most poignant passages in the canon that frankly confronts the Buddha’s frail humanity. For this reason it might not have sat comfortably with the docetic tendencies of later Buddhism, which may explain its absence from SA. On the other hand, we have seen that the Sarvāstivāda include an extra passage on the Buddha’s illness in their Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra, a passage that as far as I am aware is absent from the Theravāda tradition, so we should be careful about drawing conclusions here. This passage also contains the Buddha’s famous declaration that he does not have the ‘closed fist of a teacher’. This became another controversial sectarian issue, especially regarding those later schools that claimed to be descended from an esoteric transmission outside the main scriptural lineage. This might possibly have provided another reason for suppressing this discourse, which is not attested as an individual discourse elsewhere in the Chinese canon. However the passage is also found in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, and is included in the Sarvāstivādin version of that text preserved in Sanskrit,<sup>326</sup> and also in Chinese versions.

SN 47.11-14 form a mini biography of Venerable Sāriputta. In the first text we see him discussing with the Buddha the nature of a perfected human. Next we see Venerable Sāriputta in his home town of Nāḷandā, approaching the Buddha, and exclaiming that by an ‘inference according to dhamma’, he understands that all Buddhas, past, future, and present, become enlightened by abandoning the five hindrances, being well established in the four satipatthanas, and developing the seven enlightenment-factors.<sup>327</sup> Bearing in mind that the seven enlightenment-factors are often virtually synonymous with samadhi, this grouping reminds us of the meditation phase of the gradual training: one ‘establishes mindfulness’, abandons hindrances, and develops the jhanas. Similar groupings occur frequently throughout the Suttas; below we will see that this ‘inference according to Dhamma’ is probably equivalent to the original content of the contemplation of dhammas in satipatthana. Nevertheless, the connection with satipatthana is relatively tenuous – they are merely mentioned in passing – so it is not surprising to find that the Sarvāstivāda preferred to allocate this text to their Sāriputta-saṃyutta. The episode is found in the Theravāda Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, but not in the Sarvāstivāda or the Dharmaguptaka versions of that text.<sup>328</sup> It also forms the kernel for the much longer dialogue that now forms the Sampasādanīya Sutta, which is available in several versions.<sup>329</sup> It does not seem unreasonable to accept the Theravāda account here: this episode occurred during the Buddha’s last journey, north from Rājagaha, and records the last meeting between the Teacher and his greatest disciple.

SN 47.13/ SA 638, the next text in the Theravāda collection, relates how Venerable Sāriputta became ill and passed away. This occurred at ‘Nālakagāma’, and we might not be mistaken in seeing a relation between this and the ‘Nāḷandā’ of the previous text. The traditional story has it



that Venerable Sāriputta, aware that his time was near, returned to his home town to convert his mother, an ardent Brahman, to Buddhism. The novice Cunda – said by the commentary to be Venerable Sāriputta’s younger brother – was his attendant during his illness. On his passing away, he took Venerable Sāriputta’s bowl and robes and went to where the Buddha was staying. The Theravāda says he was at Sāvattḥī, which is incongruous – Sāvattḥī is about 200km to the north-west, and it is inconceivable that the Buddha could have made such an extravagant detour in his last, feeble, journey, a detour attested in no other text. The Sarvāstivāda says the Buddha was staying in Rājagaha, at the Veḷuvana. But this is little better, for the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta says that Sāriputta visited the Buddha in Nālandā, after he had already taken the north road from Rājagaha. Venerable Ānanda, the first to hear the bad news, is distraught, and the Buddha asks him whether Sāriputta took with him the aggregates of ethics, samadhi, understanding, release, and knowledge & vision of release; the Chinese adds to this the 37 wings to enlightenment. Ānanda says no, but that Sāriputta was so helpful to his fellows in the holy life. The Buddha encourages him: ‘How can it happen that what is born, come to be, conditioned, of a nature to disintegrate should not disintegrate? That is impossible! Therefore, Ānanda, dwell with yourselves as your own island, your own refuge, with no other refuge. Dwell with the Dhamma as your island, your refuge, with no other refuge.’ One does this through the practice of satipatthana. This is strongly reminiscent of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, and it is surprising that it finds no place in that narrative.

This text forms a pair with SN 47.14/SA 639, which follows immediately in both collections. The Theravāda recension is set in the Vajjī Republic, at Ukkacelā on the banks of the Ganges. The Chinese, however, places this episode in Madhura, by the Bhadra River. Vajjī is a plausible setting, being along the route towards the Parinibbāna. The Buddha says that the assembly appears empty to him now that Sāriputta and Moggallāna have attained final Nibbana, like the largest branches falling off the great tree of heartwood. Venerable Moggallāna’s death is not recorded in the canon, but the later Theravādin and Tibetan accounts agree in their general outlines. In the teachings, this text largely repeats the previous. However, it includes some extra literary features, suggestive of the later angas. The Buddha says that all the Buddhas in the past and the future will have a chief pair of disciples like Sāriputta and Moggallāna; this reminds us of an *avadāna*. Next he praises their ‘wonderful and marvellous’ qualities, a straightforward *abbhūta*; however, this section is absent from the Chinese.

There are some more texts that might also be set in the period immediately following the Parinibbāna, although the narrative context is not spelt out in the texts themselves, nor are they included in the longer developed narratives of the Dīgha and the Vinaya. These are the discourses featuring Venerable Ānanda and Venerable Bhadda at the Cock’s Monastery in Pāṭaliputta.<sup>330</sup> The only Sarvāstivāda cognate stands at the head of a whole series of texts at the same location; in a manner similar to the Satya-samyukta, we assume that only the first setting is genuine, and the rest were mechanically repeated. The Theravāda texts do not mention the Buddha as being alive at the time; although the Sarvāstivāda version does mention the Buddha, this might just be a result of mechanical standardization. The location is unusual, a little-known monastery in Pāṭaliputta, half-way between Kusinārā, where the Buddha passed away, and Rājagaha. It was from Rājagaha that the Buddha set out on his final journey, and back to Rājagaha that the monks, including Venerable Ānanda, returned to recite the scriptures in the First Council immediately after the Buddha’s passing away. The ‘Duration’ discourses, in particular, express evident concern over the Buddha’s passing away. So while they do not allow any definitive conclusions, it is possible that here we have a record of the discussions and debates that took place within the Sangha as, resting on the journey back from Kusinārā to Rājagaha, they contemplated the future of Buddhism without the Buddha. It is surprising that the ‘Duration’ discourses, which say that the long-lasting of Buddhism is due to the practice of satipatthana, find no cognate in the Sarvāstivāda, for the long-lasting of the sasana was one of their characteristic concerns. Once

again, this cautions us against making premature judgements on sectarian issues in the early texts.

It is interesting that several of the events that took place around the time of the Buddha's enlightenment and passing away do not appear in the developed narratives of those events. The relation between these short texts and the long narratives has been debated by scholars. Some opine that the long narratives emerged first, and the shorter texts were abstracted from them. This seems to me inherently implausible, and the current situation supports this: if the shorter texts were abstracted from the longer, where do the short texts that are not in the long narratives come from? It is easy to envisage a situation where there were many incidents and teachings remembered around these critical times, which were retold with a more-or-less casual reference to the historical circumstances. The need for definitive biographical accounts would become stronger in the absence of the living presence of the Buddha. So the events would gradually be linked up in a narrative structure, whose general outlines were very old and have changed remarkably little in the millennia of retellings, but whose specific form was elaborated over time. Not all the remembered events found a home in the story; presumably the choice was dictated by the demands of story telling.

These narratives enrich and inform the presentation of satipatthana, contextualizing the abstract meditation formula within the drama of life and death. Another discourse also emphasizes satipatthana in the context of death. This discourse, SN 47.30/SA 1038 *Mānadinna*, depicts Venerable Ānanda approaching the householder *Mānadinna*, who is gravely ill. Ānanda encourages him, even in that final extreme, to develop satipatthana. *Mānadinna* responds that he does indeed practice satipatthana; and furthermore, he has abandoned the five lower fetters. Ānanda then praises him as one who has declared the attainment of non-returning, the penultimate stage of enlightenment. This discourse exists in the Sarvāstivāda, but in another *saṃyutta*, and was therefore not in our concordance. The previous, almost identical, text in SN 47 is absent from the Sarvāstivāda.

As always in the Suttas, death and impermanence are closely related: anxiety over death is a primary cause for the existential crisis that precipitates the spiritual quest; and many of the terms signifying impermanence in a general philosophical sense are primarily applied to death in particular. Examples from the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta* include 'come to be' (*bhūta*) and 'conditioned' (*saṅkhata*). So we should not be wrong to think of death as the primary perspective from which to view impermanence in the context of satipatthana. But in these narratives we only see the connection between satipatthana and death by association. There is no hint as to how this perspective might be actually integrated within the basic meditation, which as we have seen does not mention impermanence at all.

#### CLEAR COMPREHENSION: THE CONTEMPLATION OF MIND OBJECTS

Further light on this is shed by SN 47.35, which presents a variation on the theme of 'mindfulness & clear comprehension'. The standard passage on clear comprehension is the description of awareness of daily activities, which as we have seen usually occurs in the gradual training leading up to the four jhanas. The Sarvāstivāda includes two discourses on the gradual training that have no Theravāda counterparts. SA 636 gives the standard description of one who hears the Dhamma, then decides to go forth out of faith. He then rectifies his bodily conduct, protects the four kinds of right speech, purifies livelihood, guards the sense doors, and practices clear comprehension when going out and returning, and so on. Then he resorts to a tree or a lonely place, sits down and establishes the mind in a 'peaceful abiding'. He abandons the five hindrances that entangle the bright power of the mind, and goes on to practice the four satipatthanas. This is called the

‘development of the four satipatthanas.’ The next text, SA 637 is essentially similar (in fact it abbreviates, and instructs the reader to expand as the previous discourse). It adds a few extra factors of the gradual training, such as the restraint of the Pāṭimokkha and contentment with requisites, just like a bird is content with its wings. In both of these discourses, satipatthana takes the place normally occupied by the four jhanas.

The practice of clear comprehension in one’s daily activities is presented more simply in a discourse, found in both collections, that exhorts the monks to be ‘mindful & clearly comprehending’. ‘Mindfulness’ is then defined as the four satipatthanas, and ‘clear comprehension’ as the awareness of activities.<sup>331</sup>

SN 47.35 has no SA counterpart, so it may be a secondary formation in imitation of this. In this discourse, mindfulness is presented as usual as the four satipatthanas, but clear comprehension is described as remaining aware of feelings, perceptions, and thoughts as they arise, remain, and end. It is therefore ‘contemplation of mind-objects’, a label usually erroneously ascribed to the fourth satipatthana. It is included as the third of four kinds of ‘development of samadhi’.<sup>332</sup> There is evidently an order of progression intended in these developments of samadhi. The fact that they start out with jhana suggests they are advanced practices, the higher ‘development’ of samadhi. The first two are on the side of samatha: the four jhanas, which lead to a pleasant abiding here & now; and the perception of light, which leads to ‘knowledge & vision’ (= psychic powers). The third, our current practice, leads to ‘mindfulness & clear comprehension’. The fourth is the standard practice of observing the origin and dissolution of the five aggregates, which leads to the ending of defilements. These both focus on impermanence, and therefore are vipassana. The question then arises, what is the difference between them? Why does one lead to enlightenment, and one merely to mindfulness & clear comprehension?

The answer is not spelled out in the texts, but may be readily inferred. In watching the rise, persistence, and ending of feelings, perceptions, and thoughts, the field of insight is not yet complete. The body is left out. We have seen that the primary meaning of impermanence regarding the body is the big issue, life and death. One’s own death, as such, cannot be contemplated directly, but must involve some kind of inference in a temporal framework. So it seems that this practice excludes this. It is solely concerned with the experience in the present moment, and has not yet deepened to an understanding of the principle underlying experience. To use terminology derived from elsewhere in the Suttas, it involves *dhamme ñāṇam* (knowledge regarding phenomena), but not *anvaye ñāṇam* (inferential knowledge).<sup>333</sup> The other important omission is the observation of cognition itself. One is merely observing the known, not the knowing, which is the key to really deep insight. It seems that here too, the reason is that our current practice involves only direct observation of phenomena as they occur, not inference of the causal principle describing how these events unfold over time. According to the Suttas, cognition (the knowing) arises dependent on mental objects (the known). If cognition were to directly observe itself this would entail the fallacy of something being its own cause. So cognition can never be self-supporting; in other words, one cannot directly observe the act of cognition. Insight into cognition requires, on some level, an inferential process involving time. So our contemplation of mind objects, while valuable, will not lead to full liberation until it deepens into a more full comprehension of the entire field of experience, past and future, as well as present.

We should note that both this meditative development of clear comprehension and the awareness of activities are here clearly distinguished from satipatthana as such; they are related, not equated. No doubt in practice they may not be isolated from one another, but the Saṃyutta nowhere subsumes these practices of clear comprehension within the four satipatthanas. The meditative practice, moreover, has quite different objects than satipatthana. Only feelings directly correlates. While one might try to equate perceptions and thoughts with one or the other

of the four satipatthanas (traditionally they would be slotted under dhammas), the actual descriptions of the practices, in all versions, do not support this. Again, the reason may be readily inferred. Remember that one of the key satipatthana exercises is anapanasati. The special function of this meditation is to quell thoughts. This is reinforced in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, which includes practices for quelling and suppressing thoughts. So the primary purpose of satipatthana is not to be mindfully aware of thoughts as they pass through the mind; it is to eliminate thoughts so that the mind may be brought to stillness. We also note that the phrasing of this practice is not very similar to the description of satipatthana.

The meditative development of clear comprehension described here is clearly of secondary importance; the passage occurs once only in each of the Saṃyutta, Majjhima, and Dīgha Nikāyas, and three times in the Aṅguttara. Many of the contexts this passage appears in do not inspire confidence as to its historical importance. In the Dīgha it occurs in the Saṅgīti Sutta (an aṅguttara-principle proto-abhidhamma compilation); in the Majjhima in the Acchariya-abbhūta Sutta (an *abbhūta*); and in the Aṅguttara in the context of the *paṭisambhidās*, a rare and probably late category. In the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, it occurs in the middle of the fourth vagga, a chapter that has few cognates in the Sarvāstivāda, and appears to be composed of largely artificial texts. I have not come across it in the Mahāsaṅghika Ekottara and the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyutta, but is found in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama and elsewhere. The partial Sanskrit Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra opens with the section on the rising, persisting, and ending of thoughts, which is evidently a remnant in this fragmentary manuscript of this clear comprehension practice; here this is said to be a ‘wonderful and marvellous’ quality of the Buddha, which reminds us of the similar statement in the Acchariya-abbhūta Sutta. This might, incidentally, be an indication that this discourse should be considered as part of the Mahā Parinibbāna narrative.

## THE VIBHAṄGA SUTTA

Several of the discourses identified above deal with the samadhi aspect of satipatthana. These have withstood any test of authenticity I have been able to throw at them, and, I believe, must stand as representing a central, mainstream conception of satipatthana. Finally, however, we turn to the two remaining texts in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta that deal directly with satipatthana as vipassana: SN 47.40 Vibhaṅga and SN 47.42/SA 609 Samudaya (‘Origination’).

The Vibhaṅga Sutta is not attested in the Chinese canon. This alone would make us suspect that it is a secondary development; a closer examination confirms this. Like the discourse of mindfulness and clear comprehension we have just discussed, it is located at the end of the fourth vagga, which appears dubious because almost all of the discourses seem to be artificial, or at least could have been produced by artificial means. The Vibhaṅga Sutta, being at the end of this vagga, is immediately before an unrelated discourse called ‘Deathless’, which is followed by Samudaya. Thus ‘Deathless’ seems to be arbitrarily inserted between the closely related Vibhaṅga and Samudaya.

The Vibhaṅga Sutta starts out with the Buddha saying: ‘I will teach you...’ This standard opening seems innocuous enough. Normally, however, ‘teaching’ (*desanā*) in brief is contrasted with ‘analysis’ (*vibhaṅga*) in detail. So the title and the text itself seem to be telling us two different things. The status of titles of discourses is often dubious, since in Pali texts the titles usually do not accompany the discourse itself, but are merely inferred from the mnemonic verses at the end of the vagga. So it seems likely that the statement of the text itself should be given more credence. And indeed, in accordance with the statement in the text itself, and in contrast with the title, the discourse appears more like a teaching (in brief) than an analysis (in detail). There is no proper ‘vibhaṅga’ analysing in detail the individual elements. Rather, a threefold teaching is

presented: satipatthana (the usual formula), the development of satipatthana (contemplating the nature of origination and dissolution regarding the body, etc.), and the way leading to the development of satipatthana (the noble eightfold path).

This should be compared with the Iddhipāda-saṃyutta. There, one discourse presents a fourfold ‘Teaching’: psychic power; the basis for psychic power (simply described as the practice leading to psychic power); the ‘development’ of the bases for psychic power (one ‘develops’ the four bases for psychic power according to the standard formula); and the way leading to the development of psychic power (the noble eightfold path).<sup>334</sup> The internal coherence in the usage of the terms ‘teaching’ and ‘development’ argue for the authenticity of this text. The next discourse presents an ‘Analysis’ of this teaching, which is in classic vibhanga style.<sup>335</sup> This shares some significant and unusual features in common with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The terms ‘constricted mind’ and ‘scattered mind’ occur in the contemplation of mind, and the 31 parts of the body occur in the contemplation of the body. Some other passages in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra are even closer to the Analysis of the Bases for Psychic Power:

‘And again monks, contemplating a body in the body, a monk cultivates a glorious bright mind, well received, well grasped, well remembered: as before, so after; as after, so before; as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day; as below, so above; as above, so below. In this way he is not confused at heart, he does not have entanglement. He cultivates a glorious bright mind, a mind that is finally not obscured by darkness.’<sup>336</sup>

These considerations lead us to wonder whether the Vibhaṅga Sutta of the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta should properly be called ‘Teaching’. It would then have been complemented by a more extensive discourse in vibhanga style. The only text that might fit the bill is the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, or more correctly the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla, which is very similar to the chapter on satipatthana in the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga, and has strong parallels with the Vibhaṅga of the Iddhipāda Saṃyutta. Several other vibhangas on Saṃyutta topics are now found in the Majjhima (Saccavibhaṅga, Dhatuvibhaṅga; Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga is in MN but the Sarvāstivāda counterpart remains in SA, surely its original home). These are distinguished from the vibhangas left in the Saṃyutta primarily by length: the shorter vibhangas are in the Saṃyutta, the longer ones in the Majjhima. Would it be too presumptuous to suggest that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was earlier a Vibhaṅga Sutta of the Saṃyutta, but with extra expansion was removed to the Majjhima?

Another problem with the Vibhaṅga Sutta is that here the observation of rise and fall is called ‘development’. Normally, as in the discourse from the Iddhipāda-saṃyutta described above, development (*bhāvanā*) is described in terms of the ‘cultivation, development, and making much of’ the relevant dhammas. But there are three texts in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, each of which portray ‘development’ in different ways. There are two texts that use ‘Development’ for their title. Only the first of the two ‘Development’ discourses meaningfully refers to ‘development’ in the discourse itself: ‘These four satipatthanas, when developed and cultivated, lead from the near to the far shore.’<sup>337</sup> The Sarvāstivāda contains several discourses of this type, some of which are merely listed in summary, each substituting a different stock phrase describing the benefits of developing satipatthana; it leads to the complete ending of suffering, or to great fruit and benefit, etc., The second Development Sutta in the Theravāda is of a type elsewhere titled ‘Teaching’ (*desanā*).<sup>338</sup> It starts off with the Buddha saying: ‘Monks, I will teach you the development of the four satipatthanas.’ The discourse then merely presents the basic satipatthana formula and says this is the development of the four satipatthanas. The closest Sarvāstivāda cognate to this, SA 610, elaborates development as the contemplation of the satipatthanas internally and externally. This understanding of development is found in later works like Asaṅga’s Abhidharmasamuccaya, which adds to the body of evidence that Asaṅga used a Saṃyukta very like the one we have in Chinese.<sup>339</sup>

So we now have four descriptions of the ‘development of satipatthana’: one is to ‘cultivate and develop’ the basic practice; the second simply presents the basic formula; the third, found only in the Sarvāstivāda, is to contemplate internally and externally; and the fourth, found only in the Theravāda, is to contemplate the objects of satipatthana as impermanent. Only the first of these fits the normal usage of ‘development’. The internal/external practice, while not exactly how development is presented normally, seems appropriate enough, for it teaches how to broaden and extend the basic practice, in terms commonly found in the mainstream satipatthana discourses. The contemplation in terms of impermanence is apt in a certain sense, since it also appears to depict an advanced practice intended for those already well established in the fundamentals; yet ‘development’ is not normally identified specifically with vipassana in this way.

So our final assessment of the Vibhaṅga Sutta must be that it seems late because of its position within the Saṃyutta, lack of Sarvāstivādin counterpart, and internal incongruencies. There might have been an earlier version, more aptly called ‘Teaching’, that described ‘development’ as the ‘cultivation, development, and making much’ of the four satipatthanas, or perhaps the internal/external contemplation, and later on this was replaced by the section on rise and fall.

#### THE SAMUDAYA SUTTA

We may now go on to examine the Samudaya Sutta. The existing Sarvāstivādin version of this is significantly longer than the Pali, raising the question as to which is the original. A number of considerations taken together make it virtually certain that the Sarvāstivāda version is more original. In order to make the following discussion as clear as possible I will first present here the essential doctrinal elements in the Chinese version, adapting the Chinese translation to conform more obviously with standard renderings of the Pali.

- 1) I will teach you, monks, the origination and dissolution of the four satipatthanas. Listen well and pay attention; I will speak...What is the origination and dissolution of the four satipatthanas?
- 2a) Due to the origination of food there is the origination of the body; due to the cessation of food there is the dissolution of the body.
  - 2b) In this way, monks, a monk contemplates the nature of origination in the body, he contemplates the nature of dissolution in the body, he contemplates the nature of origination and dissolution in the body.
  - 2c) He abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world.
- 3a) Due to the origination of contact there is the origination of feelings<sup>340</sup>; due to the cessation of contact there is the dissolution of feelings.
  - 3b) In this way, monks, a monk contemplates the nature of origination in the feelings, he contemplates the nature of dissolution in the feelings, he contemplates the nature of origination and dissolution in the feelings.
  - 3c) He abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world.
- 4a) Due to the origination of name & form there is the origination of the mind; due to the cessation of name & form there is the dissolution of the mind.
  - 4b) In this way, monks, a monk contemplates the nature of origination in the mind, he contemplates the nature of dissolution in the mind, he contemplates the nature of origination and dissolution in the mind.

4c) He abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world.

5a) Due to the origination of attention there is the origination of dhammas; due to the cessation of attention there is the dissolution of the dhammas.

5b) In this way, monks, a monk contemplates the nature of origination in the dhammas, he contemplates the nature of dissolution in the dhammas, he contemplates the nature of origination and dissolution in the dhammas.

5c) He abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world.

The major doctrinal content is the specification of the causes for the four objects of satipatthana, and in this both traditions are in complete agreement. However much of the remaining structure differs. The Theravāda has the introductory section 1, but instead of asking ‘What is the origination and dissolution of the four satipatthanas’ it asks ‘What is the origination of the body?’ This is clearly an editing glitch. We would expect that this question should be repeated for the other three satipatthanas, but it is not; also, the question just refers to origination, but the text refers to both origination and dissolution. These editing anomalies are not found in the Chinese. The phrasing also departs from the standard form. Normally the Buddha says: ‘I will teach you x...Listen to that...And what is x?’ But here he says ‘I will teach you x...Listen to that...And what is y?’ This kind of change could have happened if the text was written half on one page and half on the next; the question became detached from the introduction and was included with the section on the body (as in the PTS Pali and translations), and so later copyists assumed the question must refer to the body. The Chinese version is more rational and hence more likely to be authentic.

Sections b and c are absent from the Theravāda Samudaya Sutta; they are however very similar to the ‘vipassana refrain’ of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Elsewhere in the Theravāda Saṃyutta, section b occurs, but not in association with section c. This suggests that the early version of the Samudaya Sutta as preserved in Chinese was a decisive influence on the formation of the vipassana refrain of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; this must have occurred before the break-up of the Samudaya Sutta.

Section b is now found in the Vibhaṅga Sutta, which as we have seen is likely to be a later development. It seems that when the Samudaya Sutta was broken up, sections b and c were moved into the original \*Vibhaṅga Sutta, which was moved to the Majjhima and retitled the ‘Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’. Somehow, the original \*Desanā Sutta that was paired with its \*Vibhaṅga Sutta remained in the Saṃyutta, but took the title ‘Vibhaṅga’ and also section b from the Samudaya Sutta.

Having established that the Sarvāstivāda is more likely to represent the pre-schism text of the Samudaya Sutta, we should now consider more closely whether this is likely to have been in the original collection. The phrases ‘principle of origination, principle of dissolution, principle of origination and dissolution’ occur in a sequence of three discourses in the Khandha-saṃyutta.<sup>341</sup> These discourses, together with the two following, are combined into one discourse in the Chinese. The explanations for ‘origination’ and ‘dissolution’ in satipatthana are also reminiscent of the causes for the arising and ceasing of the five aggregates, as in the important Seven Cases Sutta, which is one of the most widely distributed of all the discourses (and seems to have functioned like a \*Khandhavibhaṅga Sutta in the absence of a proper text of this type).<sup>342</sup> This says that ‘due to the origination of food there is the origination of physical form [=body]...due to the origination of contact there is the origination of feeling...[and] perception...[and] conceptual activities...due to the origination of name & form there is the origination of cognition...’ Since these kinds of vipassana teachings are obviously prevalent throughout the Khandha-saṃyutta, it seems possible that that was their original home and the inclusion in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta was a secondary development. This was probably prompted by the partial correspondence

between the four satipatthanas and the five aggregates: body=physical form; feeling=feeling; mind=cognition; dhammas=(perception and conceptual activities??). This correspondence was made explicit in the later texts of the schools, as we shall notice.

Despite these doubts, however, the Samudaya Sutta is an important pre-sectarian text and deserves closer consideration. It says that the origin of the body is food; the origin of feelings is contact; the origin of the mind is name & form; and the origin of dhammas is attention. We need not pause here to consider these in detail, but we should notice that these descriptions, most obviously the first, dispose of the idea that impermanence in satipatthana means momentariness. Food sustains life; if you stop eating you'll die. Clearly here cessation or passing away just means 'death'. We have seen that the narrative passages of the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta exemplify this central paradigm in dramatic form. Contact is the origin for feelings in both the five aggregates and the dependent origination. Attention as origin for dhammas is interesting. Attention is the basis for wisdom, and is most typically treated as inquiry into causes, especially the causes of good and bad dhammas. This suggests that vipassana is intrinsic to this last satipatthana, as I have already hinted above. We will bear this definition in mind below as we probe more deeply into the original scope of the 'contemplation of dhammas'.

'Name & form' is in the Samudaya Sutta said to be the origin of mind (*citta*), whereas normally (in the aggregates and dependent origination) it is said to be the origin of 'cognition' (*viññāṇa*). Obviously here *citta* and *viññāṇa* function as synonyms; but this bare fact does not help us to understand why this terminological shift occurs in this context. Typically, *viññāṇa* is used in vipassana contexts, such as dependent origination, the five aggregates, and the process of sense cognition. It is therefore treated under the first noble truth, and is 'to be fully known'. *Citta* is more difficult to pin down, for it is widely used in non-technical contexts to mean simply 'mind', 'thought', 'mood', 'state of mind'. However, when it is used in a technical sense it is often a term for samadhi – the 'higher mind' (*adhicitta*), 'endowment with mind' (*cittasampadā*), etc. It is therefore treated under the fourth noble truth, and is 'to be developed'. This is why *citta* is appropriate for satipatthana – it encompasses both the ordinary mind and the mind developed in samadhi. But when the normal samatha context of satipatthana is extended to include vipassana, we end up with *citta* appearing out of character in a role normally played by *viññāṇa*. A similar vacillation between *citta* and *viññāṇa* also occurs in other contexts where samatha and vipassana overlap.<sup>343</sup>

It is interesting to note that the specific items given as the origination of the four satipatthanas are not directly mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The vipassana refrain speaks of origination and dissolution, without specifying the particular causes. And inside the meditation exercises themselves there is no mention of causality. The various body contemplations do not mention food (with the exception of the Śāriputrābhidharma); the contemplation of feelings does not mention contact; the contemplation of mind does not mention name & form; the contemplation of dhammas does not mention attention.<sup>344</sup> Some might challenge this, especially in the case of contemplation of mind. This mentions various mental qualities – such as greed, hatred, delusion, etc. – that are considered by the tradition to fall under the umbrella of 'name'. But this consideration cannot stand examination in light of how the Suttas themselves treat 'name'. The most straightforward and common treatment defines 'name' as 'feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention'.<sup>345</sup> None of these factors occur under the contemplation of mind. The other way of treating 'name' is to emphasize its role in concept formation, or more literally, in 'naming'.<sup>346</sup> But the contemplation of mind in satipatthana is about the emotional tone of the mind, rather than the intellectual processes. So it seems that our assertion remains valid, and that the meditation exercises described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, in all its versions, are not about investigating the causes of the objects of satipatthana. Since the Samudaya Sutta is *the* paradigm in the Saṃyutta for the treatment of the vipassana dimension of satipatthana, and since it treats



vipassana precisely as such investigation into causes, it seems obvious that the contemplative exercises in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are not being presented as vipassana.

An odd aspect of this text is that, for the only time in the Nikāyas, it treats 'satipatthana' in an objective sense. Normally 'satipatthana' ('establishing of mindfulness') refers to the subjective act of setting up or focussing mindfulness on one of the four fields. But here satipatthana clearly refers to the objects of mindfulness, that is, the body, etc. ('things on which mindfulness is established'). This objective sense if taken literally is patently absurd – it entails that the body is the 'one-way path' to Nibbana. This might come as a pleasant surprise for some; for since food is the nutriment for the body, eating must be the nutriment for the path! This ambiguity of expression again results from the shift in perspective as the framework designed for samatha is extended to include vipassana, probably under the influence of the five aggregates. In the normal cultivation of satipatthana meditation one is operating 'inside' the four fields, 'getting into' the field of meditation, whereas in developing vipassana into the objects of satipatthana one has 'pulled back' from and objectified the process for the purpose of analysis. Like the difference between reading a story, where one enters into the characters and emotions – you feel angry or sad or happy – and reading a review of the story, where one develops a critical, analytical insight into how the story works – you understand how the text made you feel angry or sad or happy. We shall see later that this ambiguity caused considerable confusion in later writings.

So there are evidently a range of issues with the Samudaya Sutta: editing irregularities in the Pali; lack of close congruence between the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda; possible influence from the Khandha-saṃyutta; unusual treatment of the subject raising serious interpretive difficulties. So while I have grudgingly conceded it a place in the concordance, its authenticity must remain dubious. One feature, however attests to the earliness of the text, which is attention as the origin for dhammas. As we shall see below, this fits well with the earlier content of the contemplation of dhammas section, but not with the developed content of the existing Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Also, this statement cannot be directly derived from the Khandha-saṃyutta or anywhere else. If the Samudaya Sutta is a secondary addition, then, it is clearly not very late.

## THE REMAINING SAMYUTTAS

We may now briefly consider the treatment of satipatthana in the rest of the Saṃyutta. The Anuruddha-saṃyutta deals entirely with satipatthana, the thematic unity underlined by the fact that all the discourses were spoken by Venerable Anuruddha. Generally, the teachings of the disciples occupy a distinctly lesser status as compared to those of the Buddha himself. They saw their task as clarifying, expanding, or commenting on the basic teachings given by the Buddha, not as introducing any radical new themes.

The Theravāda Anuruddha-saṃyutta starts with the most complex vipassana analysis yet.<sup>347</sup> This combines the internal/external contemplation with the impermanence contemplation. So one contemplates the principle of arising, of vanishing, and of arising & vanishing regarding the body internally. Then one contemplates the body externally in the same way, and so on. Each section is then added with the standard auxiliary formula So this is the only place where the vipassana section is embedded within the satipatthana formula itself. Then it introduces another framework, familiar elsewhere in the suttas. One contemplates the repulsive in the unrepulsive; the unrepulsive in the repulsive; then ignores both and abides in equanimity. Remember that in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta Vibhaṅga Sutta one first became established on all four satipatthanas, and only then was impermanence introduced. Now, however, impermanence is introduced from the first, giving the impression, without stating so explicitly, that one may undertake vipassana from the start of practice. Here we see the beginnings of a trend that can be

traced over later expositions of satipatthana. This discourse does not have a close cognate. There is one text in the Sarvāstivāda Anuruddha-saṃyutta that mentions seeing the repulsive in the unrepulsive, and so on, which we might regard as cognate.<sup>348</sup> But this has quite a different setting (like the 'Brahmā' discourses that proclaim the 'way to convergence') and omits the mention of rise and fall. The pair to this discourse, as mentioned above, complements the 'way to convergence' by saying this leads to unification of mind, a saying not found in the Theravāda.<sup>349</sup> Given Venerable Anuruddha's reputation as an archetypical quietist, this seems like a more plausible saying.

Most of the rest of the Anuruddha-saṃyutta emphasizes this samadhi aspect of satipatthana, as Anuruddha systematically ascribes his success in every kind of psychic power to satipatthana. This follows naturally from the basic function of satipatthana as support for jhana. Many of these formulaic passages are abridged in the Sarvāstivāda-saṃyukta.

The Vedanā-saṃyutta is clearly oriented towards vipassana, speaking frequently of understanding the impermanence of feelings. But this does not mean that the samatha dimension is ignored. Several discourses teach that the way to understand this cessation of feelings is through the jhanas.<sup>350</sup> All of the jhana discourses are included in the Sarvāstivāda, while the two mentioning satipatthana are not. There are 31 discourses in the Theravāda Vedanā-saṃyutta; only five are missing from the Sarvāstivāda, all of which deal with vipassana.<sup>351</sup>

Satipaṭṭhāna is invoked in two very similar discourses taught for sick bhikkhus.<sup>352</sup> One should develop the four satipatthanas, have clear comprehension, and then contemplate the conditionality and impermanence of feelings. Both these discourses occur next to each other in the saṃyutta (although in the Sarvāstivāda they are in another saṃyutta, dealing with illness), and they are both given in the identical setting, the Hall with the Peaked Roof in the Great Wood of Vesali. This is an unusual location, and begs the question why two such almost identical discourses were given here and nowhere else. The only difference between the two is that the first states that feeling is conditioned by the body, while the second says feeling is conditioned by contact. The latter is obviously the normal position of the Suttas, repeated many times in the Vedanā-saṃyutta itself, so the statement that feelings arise dependent on the body must remain under a question-mark. In fact it seems likely that we are really dealing with one text, and fairly early on the word 'body' was substituted for 'contact', perhaps by mistake, to yield a pair of discourses.

The teaching sequence of these texts is interesting: four satipatthanas; clear comprehension of bodily activities; contemplation of feelings. It seems a little like they are first presenting the basic teaching on satipatthana, then offering explanations of at least the following two. This was pointed out to me by Bucknell, who believed that this constitutes evidence that the original specification of body contemplation was the clear comprehension of activities, rather than the parts of the body, as I argue in this paper. However, a closer examination suggests that this conclusion is not required by the texts.

First of all we notice that they do not explicitly claim that the clear comprehension of activities, or the contemplation of the impermanence of feelings, fall under the relevant satipatthanas. The discourses start off with the Buddha visiting the sick monks and encouraging them to 'wait their time' mindful and clearly comprehending, saying that 'this is our instruction to you.' Then he explains 'mindful' as the four satipatthanas, and 'clearly comprehending' as awareness of activities. This is just as in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, and here as there, the surface of the texts present these as two distinct practices, with no attempt at integrating them. This is not to say that they are not integrated or connected, but simply that the text does not spell this out. One practice is stated; then the next is stated; then the Buddha sums up by repeating that 'this is our

instruction to you.’ So the body of the teaching is just the same as the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, and the repeated injunction closes off this section of the discourse.

Next is introduced the contemplation of feelings, with a distinct change in mood. Whereas previously we had a straightforward exhortation, now the text shifts to a hypothetical mood: ‘If, monks, for a monk abiding thus mindful, clearly comprehending, diligent, ardent, resolute, there arises pleasant feeling...’ This shift might be caused by the conjunction of two different textual pericopes. While this does not prove that the text as we have it is inauthentic, it does call into question its reliability as an early authority. While in this section certain of the phrasing, such as the repeated use of ‘contemplates,’ reminds us of satipatthana, some of the details are different. Unlike satipatthana, the investigation into causality is made explicit: ‘On what [is this feeling] dependent? It is dependent on contact.’ And interestingly, whereas satipatthana famously has us contemplate ‘a body in the body’, ‘a feeling in the feelings’, etc., this passage says: ‘One abides contemplating impermanence in contact and in pleasant feelings.’ (*so phasse ca sukhāya ca vedanāya aniccānupassī viharati*) So while satipatthana is about focussing intently and exclusively on one aspect of experience, our current passage is depicting a more complex, many faceted meditation, seeing different kinds of phenomena, their relationship and mutual dependence, and their common nature as impermanent. It is in contexts such as this that we find clear and explicit descriptions of the process of vipassana as investigation into causality that are so strikingly absent from the basic specifications of the meditation practices of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself. Here the development of vipassana into feelings is stated *after* satipatthana; and it is described as investigating their causal dependence, then contemplating their impermanence, vanishing, fading away, cessation, relinquishment. These terms are virtually identical with the fourth tetrad of anapanasati, in other words, the contemplation of dhammas. As noted above, this suggests that the contemplation of dhammas, where vipassana finds its proper home in satipatthana, can be extended in advanced meditation practice to encompass the other satipatthanas as well. So all in all, this text yields some interesting points of similarity and difference as compared with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

Feelings are of course an intrinsic part of satipatthana, so it is no surprise that satipatthana is introduced in the collection of discourses dealing with feeling. However, the four satipatthanas are not mentioned at all in the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta and hardly in the Khandha-saṃyutta, suggesting that the sense media and the aggregates were not considered as specially related to satipatthana. The Khandha-saṃyutta mentions satipatthana a couple of times when listing the 37 wings to enlightenment. In one other discourse they are mentioned, but not directly in connection with the aggregates:

‘And where, monks, do these three unskilful thoughts cease without remainder? For one who abides with a mind well established on the four satipatthanas, or for one who develops the signless concentration.’<sup>353</sup>

Elsewhere unskilful thoughts are said to cease in the first jhana;<sup>354</sup> anapanasati is the normal practice recommended for cutting off thoughts. The controlling of thoughts also features in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. In line with the trend emerging above, this treatment of the samatha side of satipatthana is also found in the Sarvāstivāda.

Even though the four satipatthanas as such are not mentioned in the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta, yet there is perhaps a closer connection between mindfulness and the six sense media than we find between mindfulness and the five aggregates. This reflects a subtle difference in orientation between the two frameworks. Meditation on the aggregates is specially associated with eradicating wrong view, while that on the sense media is attuned towards transcending desire. It therefore emphasizes sense restraint, which is closely associated with mindfulness, especially

mindfulness of the body. The standard passage was included above in Venerable Mahā Kaccāna’s reply to the Brahman Lohicca.<sup>355</sup> There the order of the teaching is: sense restraint; mindfulness of the body; measureless mind (i.e. jhana); understanding; release. Another passage says that a monk should train himself regarding the six senses so that they do not obsess his mind, his energy is tireless, his mindfulness is well established, the body becomes tranquil, and the mind enters samadhi.<sup>356</sup> Thus the usage of mindfulness here is much the same as we have seen above.

## ĀNĀPĀNASATI

Mindfulness of breathing was the meditation the Buddha himself practiced underneath the Bodhi tree, and remained his preferred meditation even after his enlightenment. Because of this it has always claimed a special prestige as the royal road to Nibbana. The chief source text is the Ānāpānasati Sutta in the Theravāda Majjhima Nikāya.<sup>357</sup> There is no Ānāpānasati Sutta as such in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama Āgama, but it does exist as an isolated text in the Chinese canon.<sup>358</sup> The 16 steps, moreover, are found in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama and Saṃyukta. In the Theravāda Majjhima and the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Saṃyuttas the 16 steps of anapanasati are analysed in relation to the four satipatthanas. The correlation is as follows.

**Table 12.3: The Four Satipatthānas and the Sixteen Phases of Ānāpānasati**

Satipatthāna	Ānāpānasati
1. Contemplation of the body	1. Breathing long
	2. Breathing short
	3. Experiencing the whole body
	4. Tranquillising the bodily activities
2. Contemplation of feelings	5. Experiencing rapture
	6. Experiencing bliss
	7. Experiencing mental activities
	8. Tranquillising mental activities
3. Contemplation of the mind	9. Experiencing the mind
	10. Gladdening the mind
	11. Centring the mind in samadhi
	12. Releasing the mind
4. Contemplation of dhammas	13. Contemplating impermanence
	14. Contemplating fading of lust
	15. Contemplating cessation
	16. Contemplating relinquishment

In the context of anapanasati the ‘body’ and the ‘bodily activities’ are defined just as the breath, while the ‘mental activities’ are feeling and perception. The first tetrad evidently describes the process of gradually settling and calming the breath. Contemplation of feelings is here described purely in terms of the bliss of samatha; there is no place for contemplation of pain here, and apparently no need for it. Contemplation of the mind is even more explicitly framed in terms of samadhi experiences.

In accordance with the mainstream teachings on satipatthana, not until the fourth tetrad, equivalent to contemplation of dhammas, do we encounter vipassana. The commentary typically tries to read the first three tetrads as pertaining to both samatha and vipassana, but can claim no support in the text. Similar terms expressing vipassana occur, with minor variations, throughout the Suttas. Perhaps the most fundamental group, as for example the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, etc., would be: knowledge & vision, repulsion, fading of lust, release. In anapanasati, ‘relinquishment’ might have been preferred over ‘release’ to avoid confusion with the (lesser) sense of ‘mind release’ (= jhana) in the contemplation of the mind. Or alternatively, ‘relinquishment’ may have been intended to evoke the enlightenment-factors, which include this word in their standard formula.<sup>359</sup> The Sarvāstivādin versions have impermanence, repulsion, fading of lust, cessation; again, a minor variation of terminology describing the same process.

In the Ānāpānasati Sutta, as well as both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Saṃyuttas, we are told that developing anapanasati develops the four satipatthanas, developing the four satipatthanas develops the seven enlightenment-factors, and developing the seven enlightenment-factors leads to liberation. This reminds us of the ‘inference according to dhamma’ we met above, as well as the meditative phase of the gradual training. The connection between anapanasati and the enlightenment-factors here also helps us to understand the disparity in the description of contemplation of dhammas in anapanasati and satipatthana. Whereas anapanasati has ‘impermanence, fading away of lust, cessation, relinquishment’, satipatthana has a list of various dhammas. These include, in all versions, the seven enlightenment-factors. The standard passage on these says they are ‘dependent on seclusion, dependent on fading away of lust, dependent on cessation, maturing in relinquishment’. This passage is in fact found in the Mahāsaṅghika Ekāyana Sūtra. This suggests that the contemplation of dhammas in anapanasati is related to the enlightenment-factors, a relationship it will be worth considering further.

The fourth tetrad of anapanasati contemplates impermanence; but the impermanence of what? The most plausible approach would relate this to the inner structure of the meditation itself. The whole course of anapanasati emphasizes a gradual, progressive stilling, appeasement, ending of activities. The breath is calmed and becomes very subtle and fine. The endless chatter of thinking is stilled and one experiences ever more refined bliss and tranquillity. The hindrances end and the clamour of sense impingement fades away. This successive stilling defines the course of the meditation, the entire world of the meditator’s experience at that time, and must surely constitute the prime field for understanding impermanence. An interesting perspective is thrown on this by the phrase, which we have already quoted above, describing this contemplation of dhammas in anapanasati:

‘Having seen with understanding the abandoning of covetousness & aversion, he watches over closely with equanimity...’<sup>360</sup>

‘Covetousness & aversion’ obviously harks back to the satipatthana auxiliary formula. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the section on contemplation of dhammas starts with the five hindrances. The first two of these are sensual desire and ill-will, which we can infer from this passage are similar or identical with ‘covetousness & aversion’. Seeing the abandoning of these ‘with understanding’

suggests the focus on causality that is characteristic of this section; the same word ‘abandoning’ also occurs in the contemplation of dhammas, in reference to the abandoning of the five hindrances. The contemplation of dhammas also includes the seven enlightenment-factors, and these are frequently said to be the forces that can overcome the five hindrances. So it is noteworthy that our current text finishes by saying that one should ‘watch with equanimity’; for equanimity is the last of the enlightenment-factors. This passage, then, could be read as suggesting that the contemplation of dhammas is fulfilled by understanding how the hindrances are abandoned through the strength of the enlightenment-factors, and with the fulfilment of this process one dwells in equanimity. This in turn suggests that the development of anapanasati, and hence satipatthana, will fulfil the enlightenment-factors, culminating in equanimity, which is a central theme of the Ānāpānasati Sutta, from which this passage was taken.

Compared with the conservative, incremental evolution the teachings on satipatthana underwent in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya appears as an unpredictable quantum leap. It is instructive to compare this with the Ānāpānasati Sutta. This contains no new teachings, being merely a presentation of material from the Ānāpānasati-saṃyutta with a more elaborate setting. In other words this is a more normal teaching, taught more often. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta we see, not a dainty step up in size like in anapanasati, but a massive blow-out in several directions at once. First, each of the four satipatthanas is expanded into a detailed exercise or series of exercises, few of which occur elsewhere in the context of satipatthana. Then each exercise is followed by a lengthy section dealing with insight. This is substantially similar to the insight section in the Samudaya Sutta of the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta. Given the strong conservatism that is obvious in the treatment of satipatthana in every other context, I find it very difficult to accept that on this one occasion the Buddha departed so radically from his policy. This leads me to suspect that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as we have it is the end result of a process of textual accretion. And when we look at teachings on satipatthana outside the four Nikāyas we do indeed find some concrete support for this idea.

## CHAPTER 13: EARLY ABHIDHAMMA

I take the unusual step of considering the Abhidhamma texts before the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, even though this runs counter to the standard historical sequence that underpins most of this study. This is for two reasons. One is, as I have hinted at before, there is reason to believe that some aspects of the Abhidhamma material on satipatthana preserves more archaic features than the Suttas. The second reason is that I want to deconstruct the readers’ perceptions of what satipatthana is all about. These perceptions are largely determined by modern interpretations of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and so it may be useful to consider as much alternative material as possible before re-examining that text.

The Abhidhamma literature may be described as a formalized, scholastic systemization of the Dhamma according to the perspective of the various schools. Whereas the Sutta and Vinaya literature, so far as comparative studies of available material have shown, is largely common to all schools, the Abhidhammas of the schools diverge widely. The most plausible reason for this is that the Suttas and Vinaya largely derive from the pre-sectarian period, while the Abhidhamma literature is sectarian. In our discussion of the GIST, however, we noted a significant exception to

this rule. There are three Abhidhamma texts that all seem to be derived from a common source, which we call the ‘\*Vibhaṅga Mūla’. These texts are the Vibhaṅga of the Theravāda, the Dharmaskandha of the Sarvāstivāda,<sup>361</sup> and the Śāriputrābhidharma of the Dharmaguptaka.<sup>362</sup> The common core of these works seems to have been little more than a *mātikā*, a matrix or schedule of doctrinal categories, furnished with explanations from the Suttas and with word-definitions. Since this work was evidently started before the schisms, while the Suttas were not completely finalized until after the schisms, it seems we must accept some period of overlap between the periods of compilation of the Suttas and the Abhidhammas.

## VIBHANGA

The Vibhaṅga includes a discussion of satipatthana as one of a series of chapters dealing with the 37 wings to enlightenment. As usual, the discussion is divided in two, a ‘Sutta Exposition’ and an ‘Abhidhamma Exposition’. Generally, the Sutta Expositions in the Vibhaṅga remain, as one would expect, quite close to the Suttas. The corresponding chapter of the Sarvāstivāda Dharmaskandha merely adds a few extra passages to the Vibhaṅga. At a later date the Vibhaṅga’s Abhidhamma Exposition was composed with more distinctively abhidhammic and sectarian material. The Dharmaskandha has no proper ‘Abhidhamma Exposition’ as such. We will firstly survey the Sutta Exposition of the Vibhaṅga, and then the additions to the Dharmaskandha, reserving a discussion of the Vibhaṅga’s Abhidhamma Exposition for a later chapter.

The Vibhaṅga starts out with the basic satipatthana formula, elaborated with the internal/external contemplation. The detailed structure then unfolds as follows. Most of the text is identical with the Suttas; specifically Abhidhammic material is shaded.

**Table 13.1: The Structure of the Vibhaṅga**

<b>1. Body</b>	<b>2. Feelings</b>	<b>3. Mind</b>	<b>4. Dhammas</b>
How to contemplate the body internal?	How to contemplate feelings internal?	How to contemplate the mind internal?	How to contemplate the body internal?
Body parts internal	3 feelings, then pleasant spiritual/carnal, etc. internal	Mind with lust, etc. (16 kinds) internal	5 hindrances & 7 enlightenment-factors internal
Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with external
How to contemplate the body external?	How to contemplate feelings external?	How to contemplate the mind external?	How to contemplate dhammas external?
Body parts external	3 feelings, etc. external	Mind with lust, etc. external	5 hindrances & 7 enlightenment-factors external
Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with internal/external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with internal/external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with internal/external	Develops ‘that nimitta’, then compares with internal/external
How to contemplate the body internal/external?	How to contemplate feelings internal/external?	How to contemplate the mind internal/external?	How to contemplate dhammas internal/external?
Body parts internal/external	3 feelings, etc. internal/external	Mind with lust, etc. internal/external	5 hindrances & 7 enlightenment-factors internal/external
Thus a monk contemplates the body internal/external	Thus a monk contemplates feelings internal/external	Thus a monk contemplates the mind internal/external	Thus a monk contemplates dhammas internal/external
Defines: contemplates, abides, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, world, covetousness, aversion, remove	Defines	Defines	Defines

In the Vibhaṅga the body is treated just as the 31 parts. This is clearly a much more primitive conception than the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The elements and corpse meditations, which are found in all three Sutta versions, are also found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, so it is not clear why they are not brought in here, unless the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla was older than these texts. The enumeration of the parts of the body as 31 is also early, being shared in common with the four Nikāyas; but by the time the Khuddakapāṭha of the Khuddaka Nikāya was compiled (in Sri Lanka?), the brain had been added to complete the now-classic 32. I will discuss the body contemplations below, in the context of the Śāriputrābhidharma. Feeling and mind in the Vibhaṅga are the same as the Sutta. We might spend a little time here considering the treatment of these factors, as the Vibhaṅga is typical of all the sources.

In addition to the usual threefold analysis of feelings, the satipatthana material introduces the distinction between ‘carnal’ and ‘spiritual’ feelings. This distinction is not explained in the context of satipatthana as such; the detailed discussion is in the Vedanā-saṃyutta.<sup>363</sup> Since ‘carnal’ and ‘spiritual’ are unusual terms in this context, it seems likely that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was specifically intended to explain the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta material. This impression is reinforced by another unusual feature, the inclusion of ‘rapture’ as a kind of feeling. Rapture is not mentioned in the feeling section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but it does fall under feelings in anapanasati. Again, this is an unusual if not unique usage, and suggests that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was intended to synthesize and explain the feelings sections in both satipatthana and anapanasati.

The explanations that concern us here are as follows. Carnal feelings are those connected with the senses. Spiritual rapture is in the first two jhanas, spiritual pleasant feeling is in the first three jhanas, while spiritual neutral feeling is in the fourth jhana. Spiritual painful feeling is described as depression arising as one longs for the peaceful liberations one has not yet realized (a feeling I grow more familiar with as this book grows longer!). Since the spiritual feelings are primarily defined in terms of jhana there seems little doubt that this non-standard classification was introduced in satipatthana specifically to emphasize the importance of the experiences of refined bliss associated with samadhi. Just as we cannot know darkness until we have seen the light, we cannot comprehend the nature of everyday sensual feelings until we have the perspective of contrast. Since this perspective is a special and universal feature of the satipatthana material, it is unreasonable to insist that experience of the subtle feelings of jhana are a dispensable part of the full spectrum of mindfulness meditation.

The contemplation of mind speaks first of understanding the mind with and without greed, anger, and delusion. Normally the abandoning of this classic triad indicates arahantship, but there is no need to assume that here. Sometimes this kind of phrasing is used in straightforward samatha contexts. A passage from the Aṅguttara is worth quoting here:

‘On an occasion, friends, when a noble disciple recollects the Buddha, on that occasion his mind is not overwhelmed with lust, his mind is not overwhelmed with anger, his mind is not overwhelmed with delusion. At that time his mind is upright – departed, released, and risen from greed. “Greed” is a term for the five kinds of sensual pleasures. That noble disciple abides with a heart totally like the sky, vast, exalted, measureless, free of hatred and ill-will. Having made this the support, some beings here are purified.’<sup>364</sup>

Notice the pervasive similarities with satipatthana, especially contemplation of mind: the practice is a ‘recollection’ (*anussati*); the term ‘mind’ (*citta*) is repeatedly used together with lust, hatred, and delusion; doing this, one’s mind is ‘released’; and the result is the ‘purification of



beings'. There seems to be little doubt that the subjective aspect of the contemplation of mind is similar to the six recollections.

The overall context, the progressive structure of the discourse, and the inclusion of the mind 'compressed' (by sloth) and 'scattered' (by restlessness) all suggest that here we are basically dealing with the abandoning of the hindrances on the plane of samadhi, an interpretation confirmed by the commentary. Here again, as in the contemplation of feelings, a distinctive facet of all the satipatthana material is the direct experience of the 'exalted' mind, the 'unexcelled' mind, the mind 'in samadhi', the 'released' mind – all synonyms for jhana.

These two sections share a common syntactical structure. For example: 'When feeling a pleasant feeling, one understands "I feel a pleasant feeling." ' Or in the contemplation of mind: 'One understands mind with lust as "mind with lust".' This reflexive structure is shared also with anapanasati: 'When breathing in a long breath, one understands "I am breathing in a long breath".' The phrasing in 'quotation marks' (representing the Pali particle *iti*) was perhaps what prompted some schools to equate satipatthana meditation with mental noting. But this would be a naively literal interpretation. Similar usages are found, for example, in the standard passage on the formless attainments. Due to the idiomaticness of the Pali, this is difficult to translate; literally it would be: ' "Space is infinite", one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.' Usually translators would say something like: 'Aware that "Space is infinite", one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.' Obviously here the meditator has passed well beyond thinking or noting anything. The use of *iti* with repetitions in such contexts seems rather to intimate the reflexive nature of meditative contemplation. One is not merely knowing the feeling, but one is conscious *that* one is knowing the feeling.

The Vibhaṅga section on contemplation of dhammas has the hindrances and enlightenment-factors only, a pairing that is by now becoming familiar. Unlike the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, here there are no introductory and concluding sentences to separate and define each section, such as: 'And how does one abide contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas regarding the five hindrances?' The hindrances and enlightenment-factors simply run on into each other. (Such sentences are found in the Dharmaskandha, but the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra has only the concluding sentences; this is perhaps the only point at which the Dharmaskandha is closer to the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.) Otherwise, however, the phrasing is identical with the Sutta.

The contemplation of the five hindrances and seven enlightenment-factors would seem to be primarily a samatha practice, and invites consideration as to how exactly this section differs from the previous sections. For example, the first two hindrances are sensual desire and ill-will, which seem to simply repeat the contemplation of 'mind with lust' and 'mind with anger'. But if we look closely, some subtle differences make themselves evident. The first thing is that in the contemplation of mind, the direct object of contemplation was the mind itself; the qualities of the mind, such as lust, hatred, etc., function as adjectives qualifying the mind. This suggests that the prime focus in this contemplation is the nature of knowing itself, the cognitive power of awareness in various conditions. In the contemplation of dhammas, the direct object of contemplation is not the mind, but the associated mental qualities – sensual desire, etc.

I will not dwell on this distinction, for some might feel like it is splitting hairs, although I personally think it is of considerable philosophical and psychological significance. Far more obvious is the introduction of a more detailed investigation into causality in this section. This may be most graphically represented in a table. We may compare the contemplation of mind and dhammas, keeping the translation as literal as possible.

**Table 13.2: Contemplation of Mind and Dhammas**

Contemplation of Mind	Contemplation of Dhammas
One understands mind with lust as ‘mind with lust.’	There being internal sensual desire, one understands ‘There is for me internal sensual desire.’
One understands mind without lust as ‘mind without lust.’	There not being internal sensual desire, one understands ‘There is not for me internal sensual desire.’
	And one understands how the unarisen sensual desire comes to arise.
	And one understands how the arisen sensual desire comes to be abandoned.
	And one understands how the abandoned sensual desire comes to not arise in the future.

It becomes obvious that the chief difference in the mode of contemplation is the final three sentences in the contemplation of dhammas. This is clearly an investigation into causality, into the reasons behind the rise and fall of the various good and bad qualities; an investigation, moreover, that is attuned precisely to removing the cause and abandoning forever the bad qualities. For the enlightenment factors, of course, the situation is changed: one is to understand how the enlightenment-factors come to arise, and how they are developed to fulfilment. As is made clear elsewhere, the causes for abandoning the hindrances are precisely the enlightenment-factors; and the causes for obstructing the enlightenment-factors are precisely the hindrances. Thus these two sets of dhammas are intimately intertwined, the light and shadow of the mind. This, then, is the prime distinguishing feature of the contemplation of dhammas, the investigation into causality.

This, of course, is vipassana, and it is here in the contemplation of dhammas that vipassana finds its rightful home in satipatthana. We have seen that in anapanasati, too, the contemplation of dhammas may be read as contemplating the impermanence and interrelationships of the hindrances and enlightenment-factors. But this is, of course, not a ‘dry’ vipassana, not an insight that is divorced or separated from samatha. Quite the opposite: it is an insight that emerges from understanding the principles of samadhi, why the mind is sometimes radiant and peaceful and sometimes caustic and fractured. But the mind in meditation, we learn through satipatthana practice, is no different in nature from the mind outside of meditation: it’s just the mind responding to conditions. So learning to understand the process of meditation one is learning to understand the mind. As the insight through contemplation of dhammas matures and deepens it will naturally broaden to encompass all states of mind, all that is knowable, and will ripen in the deepest insights. So the presentation of contemplation of dhammas in the Vibhaṅga is highly convincing as a natural depiction of the meditative process.

In the Vibhaṅga each section is integrated with the internal/external contemplation, here elaborated slightly from the standard form found in the Saṃyutta. One is to cultivate, develop, make much of, and clearly define body contemplation internally before progressing to body contemplation externally, and so on each stage step by step. Then follows a word definition, obviously a later, distinctively abhidhammic addition. Most of the definitions, or rather, strings of synonyms, are standard enough. ‘World’ is defined thus: ‘This very body [feeling, mind, dhamma] is the world; also the five aggregates associated with grasping are the world.’ The mechanical nature of some of these definitions is shown up by the gloss on *domanassa*, which follows the normal meaning of ‘sadness’, failing to recognize the contextual meaning here of ‘aversion’. Certain Sutta material is absent from the Vibhaṅga: there are no similes, which in Abhidhamma literature is to be expected. More significantly, there is no vipassana refrain, in striking contrast to the well-integrated internal/external refrain.

Seeing the absence of so much sutta material from the Vibhaṅga's presentation, we wonder what could be the reason. One possibility is simply that the compilers of the Vibhaṅga were slack; but the work as a whole is well edited and does not generally give the impression that the compilers were unable to read a well-known Sutta. It might be the case that the absent material is not really appropriate in Abhidhamma context. This is, of course, true in the case of, say, the setting and the similes. But as it happens, much of the absent material is quite at home in the Abhidhamma: the elements, aggregates, sense media, and truths, each of which have their own chapter in the Vibhaṅga, and are treated constantly throughout the Abhidhamma. Perhaps, then, the opposite is the case: the compilers deliberately removed the Abhidhamma-style material. This would seem like a strange procedure; certainly repetition was never an obstacle for the Abhidhammikas. Moreover, some of the absent material, such as the charnel ground contemplations, or the awareness of activities, is not distinctively Abhidhammic. Particularly curious is the absence of the opening questions defining the five hindrances and the enlightenment-factors. This kind of question is absolutely characteristic of the Abhidhamma method, which is indeed sometimes defined as the 'with-questions' method. So to remove them in order to fit them in an Abhidhamma context is unthinkable. Another problem is the location of the chosen practices. In the contemplation of the body, the Vibhaṅga has what is the fourth practice out of a total of fourteen in the Sutta; in the contemplation of dhammas, it has the first and fourth out of five. It seems bizarre that a redactor would somehow remove all the practices leaving just the fourth. Surely we would expect, if the Vibhaṅga results from the culling of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, that we would have the first practice left over, which would then in typical style imply that the rest were to be filled out. The conclusion is inescapable: the absence of material in the Vibhaṅga stems not from a loss from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but because the Vibhaṅga compilers were working with a shorter text.

## DHARMASKANDHA

In most of the above aspects the Dharmaskandha seems practically identical with the Vibhaṅga. The correlations are very strong, even down to the details. For example, the Pali has the standard phrase 'cultivates, develops, and makes much', followed by the emphatic abhidhamma phrase 'makes defined, well defined' (*svatthitam vavattheti*); the Chinese exactly follows suit. As well as including practically all of the material in the Vibhaṅga the Dharmaskandha adds the following extra material. The Dharmaskandha, unlike the Vibhaṅga, first gives the setting at Sāvattihī, just as in the Suttas. This seems to imply they were sneakily slipping the chapter in the mouth of the Buddha; but that might be a misjudgement, for the Sarvāstivāda tradition generally was happy to ascribe their canonical Abhidharma texts to various disciples; the Dharmaskandha is attributed to Venerable Sāriputta. Perhaps, then, the Sutta-style opening is just an editorial feature, an indication that the basic opening text has been cut-&-pasted from the Suttas. Interestingly, some of the discourses used as basic texts in the Vibhaṅga were in fact spoken by Venerable Sāriputta (Saccavibhaṅga Sutta, Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta). The basic satipaṭṭhana formula contains the standard auxiliary formula, rather than the abbreviated Sarvāstivāda version. The internal/external contemplation is integrated from the start. Then it says that in the past, present, and future, monks will practice the same way. This is reminiscent of the start of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, and reflects the Sarvāstivādin perspective on time. While the Theravāda Suttas sometimes have similar statements, the Sarvāstivāda seem hammer them home at every opportunity, as we have seen in their Saṃyukta also. After this introduction begins the detailed treatment; the structure can be summarized as below. Most of the sections are taken from the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, with some rearrangements and additions. Cases where the source is specifically the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra are marked as such. Material that is more-or-less similar to the existing Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas is left clear; material that occurs in the Suttas but

not in the context of satipatthana is lightly shaded; specifically abhidhammic additions are more heavily shaded.

**Table 13.3: The Structure of the Dharmaskandha**

<b>1. Body</b>	<b>2. Feelings</b>	<b>3. Mind</b>	<b>4. Dhammas</b>
a. What is 'contemplating the internal body, ardent, etc.?'	a. What is 'contemplating the internal feelings, ardent, etc.?'	a. What is 'contemplating the internal mind, ardent, etc.?'	a. What is 'contemplating the internal dhammas, ardent, etc.?'
b. Defines internal	b. Defines internal	b. Defines internal	b. Defines internal
c. Body parts (no simile)	c. Three feelings (as Sarv Sūtra, in these modes: plain, bodily/mental, carnal/spiritual, sensual/non-sensual)	c. Mind with/without lust, etc. (11 pairs)	c. Sensual desire present, absent, arising, abandoning, future non-arising (1 <sup>st</sup> hindrance)
d. Defines: contemplates, abides, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, covetousness, aversion	d. Definitions (as 1.d)	d. Definitions (as 1.d)	d. Definitions (as 1.d)
			e. 'The internal hindrances of ill-will, sloth & torpor, distractedness, and doubt are spoken of similarly.'
e. Six elements (as Sarv Sūtra; no simile)			f. Eye, visual forms, and fetters present, absent, arising, abandoning, future non-arising (as Sarv Sūtra)
f. Definitions (as 1.d; from here text usually abbreviates, saying they 'are spoken of as before')			g. Definitions (as 1.d)
			h. Remaining sense media treated similarly
			i. Enlightenment-factor of mindfulness present, absent, arising, developed to perfection
			j. Definitions (as 1.d)
			k. 'The remaining six internal enlightenment-factors are spoken of similarly'
g. Tribulations (vipassana refrain; see SN 22.122/SA 259)	e. Tribulations	e. Tribulations	l. Tribulations
h. Definitions (as 1.d)	f. Definitions (as 1.d)	f. Definitions (as 1.d)	m. Definitions (as 1.d)
(repeats 1.a-h, changing 'internal' to 'external')	(repeats 2.a-f, changing 'internal' to 'external')	(repeats 3.a-f changing 'internal' to 'external')	(repeats 4.a-m, changing 'internal' to 'external')
(repeats 1.a-h, changing 'internal' to 'internal and external')	(repeats 2.a-f, changing 'internal' to 'internal and external')	(repeats 3.a-f, changing 'internal' to 'internal and external')	(repeats 4.a-m, changing 'internal' to 'internal and external')

The specification of each of the four satipatthanas is very similar to the Vibhaṅga. All the changes to the Vibhaṅga are additions; and virtually all those additions are the same as the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra in particular. In body contemplation, the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has four elements while the Sarvāstivāda has six. This is in line with the Sarvāstivādin preference to add space and cognition to the usual four, even though cognition is obviously incongruous in body contemplation. The section on feelings is also shared with the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra but not, as far as I know, with any Pali context. The intrusion of the sense media between the hindrances and the enlightenment-factors weakens the unity of the Vibhaṅga's presentation. The six sense media are also presented exactly as the Sarvāstivāda (although the position of the section is the same as the Theravāda). The Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra presents the sense media identically to the hindrances (present, absent, arising, abandoning, future non-arising) whereas the Theravāda has a specific phrasing for the sense media; one understands, for example,

the eye, visual forms, and the fetter that arises dependent on them both. Here the Theravāda is more apt; the Sarvāstivāda version probably arose through a mechanical misapplication of the hindrance phrasing to the sense media. It thus seems clear that the additions to the Dharmaskandha over the Vibhaṅga are specifically Sarvāstivādin. The exception to this is in contemplation of mind, where the three extra factors added to the eight standard in the Theravāda do not correspond particularly closely with the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. Here is a table comparing these two Sarvāstivāda sources, compared with the Sanskrit text of the Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra, probably of the Sarvāstivāda. The factors that are similar or identical with the Theravāda are shaded. I include the factors in contemplation of mind listed by Asaṅga in the Śrāvaka bhūmi for comparison.

**Table 13.4: Four Versions of the Contemplation of Mind**

Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra	Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra	Dharmaskandha	Śrāvaka bhūmi
With/without lust	With/without lust	With/without lust	With/without lust
With/without anger	With/without anger	With/without anger	With/without anger
With/without delusion	With/without delusion	With/without delusion	With/without delusion
Defiled/undefiled			
Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered
	Slothful/energetic ( <i>linam/pragrhitam</i> )	Slothful/energetic	Slothful/energetic
Small/great		Small/great	
	Restless/unrestless ( <i>uddhatam/anuddhatam</i> )	Distracted/undistracted	Distracted/undistracted
	Untranquil/tranquil ( <i>avyupasantam/vyupasantam</i> )	Tranquil/untranquil	Tranquil/untranquil
Lower/higher			
Developed/undeveloped			
Samadhi/no samadhi	Samadhi/no samadhi	Samadhi/no samadhi	Samadhi/no samadhi
	Undeveloped/well developed	Developed/undeveloped	Developed/undeveloped
Released/unreleased	Released/unreleased	Released/unreleased	Released/unreleased

Thus the Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra version is much closer to the Dharmaskandha than the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. The only significant difference is the omission of ‘small/great’, but since this is found in most versions (including the Pali) and is likely to be authentic, it seems that here we have simply a loss on the part of the Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra, rather than an addition to the Dharmaskandha. On the other hand, the Śrāvaka bhūmi, while in all other respects identical, agrees with the Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra in omitting this pair, suggesting that Asaṅga may have been using a version of the contemplation of mind from the same lineage as this version of the Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra. Leaving this pair aside, the four pairs in the Dharmaskandha from ‘contracted’ to ‘quiet’ are virtual synonyms. The Pali commentaries say contracted means ‘with sloth & torpor’, while scattered means ‘with restlessness’. It is possible that these extra terms in the Sarvāstivāda started life as commentarial glosses on ‘contracted/scattered’, which were later read into the text. This would suggest that ‘small/great’ (*amahaggatam/mahaggatam*) should belong after tranquil/untranquil. If we further recognize that the Sarvāstivāda’s ‘developed/undeveloped’ is another virtual synonym of the Theravāda’s ‘excelled/unexcelled’, then the two versions of contemplation of mind in the two schools become very close indeed. In any case, the comparison implies that here the Dharmaskandha is more authentic to the old Sarvāstivāda tradition, while the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra version has drifted further away. Apart from helping us to trace textual affiliations, though, the variations are all trivial.

Far more significant is the addition of a vipassana refrain at the end of each section:

‘Furthermore the monk, with regard to this internal body, observes and contemplates all their many tribulations, namely: this body is like a sickness, like a boil, like a dart, troublesome, impermanent, suffering, empty, not-self, changing, wearisome, a great entanglement. It is of a nature to be lost and to decay, rapidly and incessantly becoming weak, not enduring. It cannot be relied on or trusted. It is of a nature to change and decay...’

This is evidently derived from passages in the Nikāyas, especially the Khandha-saṃyutta.<sup>365</sup> It is not found in the early texts in the context of satipatthana, and evidences the growing tendency to treat the satipatthanas in terms of the aggregates. It is clearly a different passage than the vipassana refrain of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and cannot have come from the same source. Notice that, while the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta places its vipassana refrain at the end of each exercise, the Dharmaskandha’s vipassana refrain occurs only at the end of each section, thus being less closely integrated within the practice as a whole. It is also less well integrated than the internal/external refrain, in which respect the Dharmaskandha is consistent with the Vibhaṅga.

Thus far the Sutta material. As the table shows, the additional specifically abhidhammic content is restricted to word definitions. The definitions of internal and external are interestingly different from the Theravāda and are clearly sectarian. For the Theravāda, as for the early Suttas, ‘internal’ means pertaining to oneself, especially one’s own body and mind, while ‘external’ is the bodies and minds of others. But for the Dharmaskandha ‘internal’ is ‘one’s own body [etc.], which in the present continuum has been gained and not lost.’ In other words ‘internal’ refers to this life. ‘External’ is ‘one’s own body [etc.], which in the present continuum has not yet been gained or is already lost, together with the bodily phenomena of others, possessing spirit’. This refers to past and future lives. The phrase ‘possessing spirit’ is odd; the phrase might render *saviññāṅka*, which we could relate to the familiar idea of ‘[kammically] acquired’ (*upadinna*), i.e. loosely ‘organic’ or ‘sentient’ matter. Anyway, this modification exhibits the characteristically Sarvāstivādin concern for time, which as we have seen might be derived from their Saṃyukta.

The definitions of internal and external say that ‘dhammas’ here is the aggregates of perception and conceptual activities. This significant redefinition was also adopted by the Theravāda commentaries, and has by today become standard. Here we see a common pattern – the various sectarian schools, despite their mutual polemics, often share more in common with each other than they do with the Suttas. It should be obvious that there is nothing in the actual description of ‘dhammas’ here that requires or even suggests such a definition. How, for example, can the six sense media be explained as perception or conceptual activities? Any attempt to explain this away is missing the point; for the motivation behind this definition is not to draw out the implications of the meaning of ‘dhammas’ here, but to integrate the four satipatthanas with the five aggregates.<sup>366</sup> This follows from a crucial assumption of the Abhidhamma project: that the various doctrinal frameworks of the Suttas each offer a different way of categorizing the same reality; and that it is therefore possible to systematically equate all the dhammas in one framework with those in any other. The end result of this process was the complex Abhidhamma matikas, which subsequently displaced the earlier frameworks. Personally I find this to be a dubious project in general, but this is not the time to discuss the matter in detail. Suffice to notice that the original core frameworks for this project are the five aggregates, the six sense media, and, less standardized, the elements. Even in the Suttas we see a tendency to treat the various faculties in a similar manner, including the five spiritual faculties, which accordingly begin to spill over from the fourth noble truth to the first three.<sup>367</sup> Now we see the same pattern emerging in the satipatthanas. A group originally part of the fourth noble truth, the path, is being equated with dhammas characteristic of the first noble truth, the five aggregates. The incongruity of the

results reflects the inappropriateness of the method. As mentioned above, I think that the primary sense of ‘dhammas’ here is not ‘phenomena’ but rather ‘principles’; not ‘what is there’ but ‘how it works’. While ‘phenomena’ is one of many meanings of ‘dhammas’ well established in the Suttas, there was a pronounced drift in the Abhidhamma period to emphasize this meaning at the expense of others, and a corresponding misinterpretation of relevant Sutta contexts.

The other addition is a word definition of the major terms in the basic satipatthana formula; this is merely a list of synonyms in typical Abhidhamma style. The gloss for *anupassanā* lists a register of terms denoting wisdom, including vipassana; this is much the same as the Vibhaṅga. It is striking that this word definition, though it defines the basic formula, is repeated after each section throughout the text – except the basic formula. This is clearly incongruous, an example of rampant abhidhammic over-systemization. Sometimes the abhidhamma scholars behave uncannily like a computer error.

So as compared with the Sutta Exposition of the Vibhaṅga the differences in the Dharmaskandha are:

- 1) All additions, no subtractions;
- 2) Often incongruous (setting, six elements, sense media, dhammas as perception/conceptual activities, definitions);
- 3) Sometimes hinting at sectarianism (past, present, future; influence of Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra).

It should hardly need saying that these considerations all suggest that the Dharmaskandha here is later than the Vibhaṅga. I would suggest that they both shared the same pre-sectarian text, the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla; the Sarvāstivādins finalized the editorial process on that section for the Dharmaskandha, while the Theravādins, content with the simple version for the Sutta Exposition, concentrated on writing the new, more overtly sectarian Abhidhamma Exposition.

The chief difference in perspective between the two is clear. Apart from the contemplation of dhammas, there is no overt vipassana material in the Vibhaṅga. There is no mention of rise and fall, no six elements, no sense media, and no dhammas as perception/conceptual activities. We can be as confident as we could wish that the vipassana material was added later. The significance of these additions might become clearer with a more complete examination of the Dharmaskandha. But the most striking point about this material, especially that held in common between the two, is that both the content of the exercises and the basic form of the refrains are much simpler than the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas. This clearly – and startlingly – suggests that the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla may be earlier than the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

## ŚĀRIPUTRĀBHIDHARMA

This is an abhidhamma text on a larger scale than the Vibhaṅga and the Dharmaskandha. It seems to represent the whole field of abhidhamma in the Dharmaguptaka system, containing material comparable to that found in the Theravāda Dhātukathā, Paṭṭhāna, Puggala Paññatti, and Dhammasaṅgaṇī, as well as the Vibhaṅga. The matikas of the Vibhaṅga and Dharmaskandha are discernable, though the form is more divergent. Thus the work as a whole is clearly later than the Vibhaṅga and Dharmaskandha, and the treatment of satipatthana bears this out.

**Table 13.5: The Structure of the Śāriputrābhidharma**

<b>1. Body</b>	<b>2. Feelings</b>	<b>3. Mind</b>	<b>4. Dhammas</b>
a. What is contemplating the body?	a. What is contemplating the feelings?	a. What is contemplating the mind?	a. What is contemplating the dhammas?
b. The body is the four elements, produced by parents, nourished by food	b. Feelings based on six senses.	b. Defines mind	b. Everything apart from body, feeling, mind
c. What is contemplating the internal body?	c. What is contemplating the internal feelings?	c. What is contemplating the internal mind?	c. What is contemplating the internal dhammas?
d. Contemplating internal body as impermanent, etc.; as conditioned, with dependent origination list down to 'name & form > sense media'.	d. Contemplating internal feelings as impermanent, etc.; as conditioned, with dependent origination list down to 'contact > feeling'.	d. Contemplating internal mind as impermanent, etc.; as conditioned, with dependent origination list down to 'conceptual activities > cognition'.	d. Contemplating internal dhammas as impermanent, etc.; as conditioned, with complete dependent origination list.
e. Body postures			
f. Movements			
g. Ānāpānasati			
h. Parts of the body			
i. Four elements			
j. Food			
k. Space			
l. Nine orifices			
m. Defines internal, contemplates, and each term in the standard formula	e. Defines internal; other definitions 'as said above'	e. Defines 'internal mind'	e. Defines 'internal dhammas'
n. As 1.d, changing 'internal' to 'external'.	f. As 2.d, changing 'internal' to 'external'.	f. As 3.d, changing 'internal' to 'external'.	e. As 4.d, changing 'internal' to 'external'.
o. Defines 'external'; other definitions 'as said above'	g. Defines 'external'; other definitions 'as said above'	g. Defines 'external mind'	f. Defines 'external dhammas'
p. As 1.d, changing 'internal' to 'internal/external'.	h. As 2.d, changing 'internal' to 'internal/external'.	h. As 3.d, changing 'internal' to 'internal/external'.	g. As 4.d, changing 'internal' to 'internal/external'.
q. Charnel ground	i. Three feelings; then pleasant carnal/spiritual, etc. This is contemplating internal/external feelings	i. Mind with/without lust, etc.	h. Five hindrances, their arising and ceasing (but with 'ignorance & delusion' added between ill-will and sloth & torpor)
			i. Sense media and fetters, their arising and ceasing
			j. Enlightenment-factors, their arising and ceasing
			k. Four noble truths
r. Contemplates the nature of rise, fall, and both, for awareness and detachment from the body	j. Contemplates the nature of rise, fall, and both, for awareness and detachment from feelings	j. Contemplates the nature of rise, fall, and both, for awareness and detachment from the mind	l. Contemplates the nature of rise, fall, and both, for awareness and detachment from dhammas
s. Repeats basic formula for internal, etc.	k. Repeats basic formula for internal, etc.	k. Repeats basic formula for internal, etc.	m. Repeats basic formula for internal, etc.

The somewhat eccentric structure of this text becomes clearer if we recognize that the main paradigm is exemplified in the contemplations of feelings, mind, and dhammas; body is divergent, so we will leave that until later. The first question, 'what is contemplating the feelings [etc.]' is answered by defining feelings [etc.]. This doesn't really answer the question; presumably the question was originally intended to cover the whole section, and the definitions were inserted later. The definition of the body is standard. The definition of feelings is also standard, although the Suttas do not treat feelings in satipatthana as based on the six senses; this shift is shared in common with the Theravāda commentaries. The definition of mind is a standard Abhidhamma list; it is similar to the treatment of contemplation of mind in anapanasati in the Paṭisambhidāmagga. The definition of dhammas is similarly late, and is similar in meaning to the Dharmaskandha, but the phrasing is identical to the Paṭisambhidāmagga. Internal contemplation is described in terms similar to the vipassana refrain from the Khandha-saṃyutta, just as the



Dharmaskandha. It is not clear whether the Śāriputrābhidharma borrowed from the Dharmaskandha or they both borrowed from the Khandha-saṃyutta. The vipassana refrain is expanded by adding factors from dependent origination, appropriately adjusted in each case. This may have been inspired by the Satipaṭṭhāna Vibhaṅga Sutta, which as we have seen treats causality in satipaṭṭhana in terms similar to dependent origination; however the specifics are largely different. The whole first half of these sections, describing ‘internal, etc.’ in terms of vipassana is largely an addition; notice how vipassana now becomes integrated from the start of the meditation, rather than being left until the end as the Dharmaskandha. Strangely, the authentic satipaṭṭhana material is presented after the additions. This second half of each section, featuring the meditation objects and the refrain, is very similar to the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and presumably was influenced by the (now lost) Dharmaguptaka Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The most significant difference from the Theravāda is the absence of the five aggregates from contemplation of dhammas.

The structure of the section on body contemplation diverges from the pattern of the other three. Specifically, the list of meditations has been split in two, with the bulk of them inserted awkwardly in the ‘internal’ section, while the charnel ground contemplations alone follow the internal/external section. The charnel ground contemplations are described in the Suttas in terms of comparing one’s own body with a dead body. This probably suggested placing this exercise after the internal/external section. This is clearly in line with the Suttas; but the problem is that then the other exercises had to be fit in somewhere. Placing them under internal contemplation implies that they may not be practiced externally, which differs from the Suttas. The splitting of these exercises likely occurred at the Abhidhamma stage, and may not reflect the Dharmaguptaka Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. However, we shall see that a similar distinction is made in the Prajñāpāramita, although there the charnel ground contemplations are said to be external, rather than internal/external.

The long list of body contemplations falls into three natural divisions. The first two exercises are very similar, basically ‘awareness of movements’. I have discussed the role of these preparatory exercises earlier. In the standard passages such as the gradual training, only the passage on clear comprehension occurs. The four postures pericope is much less common. Since the two largely overlap, the inclusion of both would seem to be redundant; however all the recensions of the satipaṭṭhana material either include both of these pericopes or neither. There are some considerations that suggest that the four postures might be more authentic, namely that it always appears before clear comprehension, and that the phrasing is more similar to the other sections of satipaṭṭhana. It has a more generalized, meditative scope, rather than specifically illustrating a kind of lifestyle training. Perhaps this simpler, vaguer passage was felt in need of concrete illustration, so the section on clear comprehension was brought in from the gradual training. However, in the absence of any textual support such considerations remain tenuous.

The next division consists of just anapanasati, which rightly claims a unique position. Here this follows on from clear comprehension in a similar manner to the normal sequence of the gradual training. It is possible that the two sections, of clear comprehension and anapanasati, were brought in together from some other source, although I do not know of any place where they appear together in exactly this way.

In all versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the normal sixteen steps have been abbreviated to four. This is the only context where this happens (apart from the related Kāyagatāsati Sutta, which we will examine more fully below). In this case it seems very likely that the full sixteen-step version is the more fundamental one. It clearly outlines a full sequence of meditative training. The first tetrad describes the establishment of mindfulness on the basic meditation object and the tranquilization of it; the second tetrad speaks of the development of bliss and rapture; the third,

attaining of samadhi; and the fourth, contemplation of impermanence. Just putting the first tetrad on its own would seem to be incomplete; nowhere does the Buddha speak of meditation merely for attaining bodily tranquillity. There is an interesting passage where Venerable Ariṭṭha describes his practice of anapanasati as having dispelled sensual desire for things past and future, and having dispelled perceptions of aversion towards things internally and externally, just mindful he breathes in and out.<sup>368</sup> The removal of desire and aversion, and the reference to internal/external, sounds very much like satipatthana. It appears that Venerable Ariṭṭha's practice had not progressed beyond the simple observation of the breath, without proceeding to samadhi and insight. Accordingly, the Buddha, while acknowledging that this was indeed anapanasati, encouraged Venerable Ariṭṭha to fully develop anapanasati through the whole sixteen steps. Thus I believe we are justified in seeing the truncated four-step version of anapanasati in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a late, possibly inauthentic, development.

The third division consists of diverse contemplative exercises, starting with the parts of the body. Many such are taught throughout the Suttas, and such lists as in the Śāriputrābhidharma appear to be early attempts to collate and organize these practices. We have seen that the Vibhaṅga has just the parts of the body, while the Dharmaskandha adds the six elements as well. The Śāriputrābhidharma also has the parts of the body and the elements, and in the same order; in fact this sequence is maintained in all versions of the satipatthana material. The (inevitable!) exception is the Prajñāpāramita, which reverses the sequence of the body parts and elements, which I take as just an editorial slip-up. Since the parts of the body is the only exercise mentioned in all versions, and since it virtually always comes at the start of this division, it must clearly make the greatest claim to authenticity, although the elements are not far behind. The two practices are in fact very similar, for the elements, when taught in detail, are described by listing the appropriate body parts: earth element is head-hair, body-hair, etc., water element is blood, pus, etc. The charnel ground contemplations, too, appear in all the Sutta versions and always at the end. The other exercises are clearly less important, although they are not as arbitrary as may appear. They may have been influenced by Sutta passages that describe the internal space element as those apertures where food is eaten, digested, and passed out.<sup>369</sup>

These diverse exercises are treated in the Suttas in terms of both samatha and vipassana. The central purpose of contemplation of the body parts is to abandon lust, which is samatha. Sometimes this samatha aspect is made explicit, as when one is said to reach an 'attainment of vision' such that, due to proper effort, one gains 'such a form of samadhi that, with the mind in samadhi, one contemplates this very body' by means of the body parts.<sup>370</sup> But the body parts, especially when subsumed under the elements, may also be contemplated as 'not mine', etc., which is vipassana.<sup>371</sup> The elements, as well as appearing in such vipassana contexts, are frequently used as a basis for attaining samadhi, and even, it seems, can be used as a shorthand reference to the four 'form' jhanas. The commentaries would like to draw a sharp distinction between such 'kasiṇa' practice and the vipassana investigation of the elements as they really are, but it would be difficult to justify this from the Suttas. The charnel ground contemplations, too, are a powerful ground for contemplating the impermanence of life; but the practice is also described as 'guarding a subtle basis of samadhi' (*samādhinimitta*).<sup>372</sup> Thus all these practices contain the potential for developing both peace and wisdom.

Of the descriptions of body contemplation in the seven different versions of the satipatthana material, three mention only this third division (Vibhaṅga, Dharmaskandha, Ekāyana Sūtra), while four mention all three divisions (Śāriputrābhidharma, Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, Prajñāpāramita). Of these four long versions, the Śāriputrābhidharma and the Prajñāpāramita are the best organized (leaving aside the reservations about the splitting of the exercises into 'internal' and 'internal/external'). Unlike the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

they preserve the standard sequence of placing the ‘awareness of movements’ division first; and unlike the Sarvāstivāda they avoid dragging in unrelated practices.

We have seen above that there are good reasons for concluding that clear comprehension was not originally regarded as a meditation as such. This conclusion is reinforced when we examine the kinds of contexts where the body contemplations and anapanasati are taught elsewhere. For example in the Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta, Venerable Rāhula asks the Buddha to teach him anapanasati.<sup>373</sup> The Buddha digresses with a long series of other meditations – the five elements, including the body parts, and culminating in space; then the divine abidings; then ugliness; then impermanence – before returning to anapanasati. Perhaps the reason for the Buddha’s digression was that Rāhula’s mind required preparation before it was mature enough to fully benefit from a subtle exercise like anapanasati. The Meghiya Sutta is similar in presenting a graduated series of dhammas for maturing the mind.<sup>374</sup> It culminates with four meditations: ugliness for abandoning lust; loving-kindness for abandoning anger; anapanasati for cutting off thinking; and impermanence for uprooting the conceit ‘I am’. This has always struck me as one of the most sensible, balanced programs for meditation. Other variants occur, such as ugliness, anapanasati, and impermanence.<sup>375</sup> In these and other contexts we see ugliness, the elements, etc., treated alongside anapanasati as a straightforward meditation practice. But clear comprehension is conspicuously absent in such contexts – which is why those who like to promote such an approach to meditation must rely so heavily on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

If, as the concordance of the texts suggests, the section on body parts, either alone or as the head of the third division, was the original specification of body contemplation, why were the other two divisions brought in, and why were they placed before the original section? I have suggested that the influence of the gradual training is sufficient to account for the intrusion of clear comprehension in first place. Another general consideration would have been to assemble in one digestible text the various texts on body contemplation scattered through the canon.

More specifically, though, I wonder whether the introduction of anapanasati may have something to do with the mysterious ‘Case of the Murdered Monks’.<sup>376</sup> In this bizarre episode, the Buddha spoke in praise of meditation on ugliness (i.e. the parts of the body) and then went into private retreat. While he was away, many monks, because of an over-zealous application to this kind of practice, became so morbidly disgusted with their bodies that they started killing themselves in great numbers. When the Buddha emerged from retreat he commented that the Sangha was looking a bit depleted. Venerable Ānanda told him what happened and, with mastery of understatement, suggested that it would be a good idea for the Buddha to teach another meditation subject to the monks. The Buddha called the monks together and recommended that they practice anapanasati, a cool, peaceful, and pleasant abiding. As advice for meditators this is all sensible enough, but as a historical episode it remains deeply inexplicable. But it could have provided a motive for adding anapanasati before the body parts in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, especially as this was gaining in size and prestige as *the* meditation compendium. The anapanasati section begins with the words found also in the gradual training: ‘Here a monk, gone to a forest, to the root of a tree or to an empty hut...’ This may then have suggested bringing in the clear comprehension section from the gradual training as a preparation.

It seems likely that in making such additions the Śāriputrābhidharma was influenced by the (now lost) Dharmaguptaka version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The closeness of relationship between the Dharmaguptaka Suttas generally and the Śāriputrābhidharma, so far as I know, still awaits detailed investigation. Cheng Jianhua, however, has written a comparative study of the versions of the Brahmajāla Sutta.<sup>377</sup> This concludes that, while the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka versions are very close, the Dharmaguptaka Sutta is even closer, in fact identical, with the relevant material in the Śāriputrābhidharma. It is therefore possible that the precise details of the list of

body contemplations in the Śāriputrābhidharma may reflect the form of a now-lost Dharmaguptaka version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This is far from certain, as both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda display considerable variation between the Sutta and early Abhidhamma descriptions of satipaṭṭhana (although not of most other doctrines). However if it were the case, it would suggest that the reversal of the positions of the first and second divisions in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta occurred after the Dharmaguptaka schism, over 200 years after the Parinibbāna. Similar considerations would apply to the other major differences between the Śāriputrābhidharma and the Theravāda, particularly the Theravādin insertion of the five aggregates into the contemplation of dhammas.

## CHAPTER 14: THE SATIPATTHANA SUTTAS

### PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITA

There are three complete versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta available, one in Pali and two in Chinese. In addition there is a fourth, incomplete, version found in the large Prajñāpāramita Sūtra. This is one of the foundational texts of the Mahāyāna, and is usually held to have been compiled roughly 500 years after the Buddha's passing away. This text is available in versions of varying length in Tibetan and Chinese, and a reconstructed Sanskrit text has been translated into English by Conze. This version was constructed from a conflation of Sanskrit fragments in comparison with Tibetan and Chinese translations, and so, while we can be reasonably confident that the overall text is quite reliable, we should be careful about drawing conclusions on fine details. According to Conze, the different versions mainly vary simply in the quantity of repetitions, so as regards content we can effectively treat it as one work. A comparison with various versions of the Prajñāpāramita literature in Chinese reveals a remarkable consistency in this passage. Since, as we shall see, the text is highly asymmetrical and unbalanced, almost certainly resulting from a rough abridgement of a well-known earlier version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it seems very likely that the Prajñāpāramita passages on satipaṭṭhana all hark back to a single original source. This version of the satipaṭṭhana material displays a refreshing simplicity that may indicate that it lies close to the early sources. In the Tibetan tradition it is said that there was a version of the Prajñāpāramita written in Prakrit belonging to the Pūrvaśāila and Aparāśāila schools.<sup>378</sup> These schools are branches of the Mahāsaṅghika, and this might indicate that the Prajñāpāramita account of satipaṭṭhana material was derived from a Mahāsaṅghika text. There is, however, no specially close relation between this version and the Ekāyana Sūtra, which, if the Tibetan tradition is reliable, would tend to count against the Ekāyana Sūtra belonging to the Mahāsaṅghikas.

Although the Prajñāpāramita, as with the Abhidhamma, is obviously later than the Āgama Suttas, I see no reason why the basic specifications of the common teachings should be less reliable as a guide to the early doctrines. While it seems initially strange that these later styles of literature should preserve early features, a little reflection can dispel such doubts. All the traditions inherited the same mass of early Sutta material. The compilers of the Nikāyas/Āgamas were concerned to fully arrange and present this material, and in doing so it is not surprising that they should tinker around the edges, filling out and expanding texts so that nothing may be omitted.

But the compilers of the Abhidhamma and the Prajñāpāramita had a different agenda. They were concerned mainly with evolving their own special concepts and procedures, so in certain cases may have simply left the early material unretouched. We saw in the discussion of the Abhidhammas that this does seem to be the case in satipatthana. The core teachings remain unembellished; the additions and elaborations are extraneous and hence easily discerned. A similar situation seems to obtain in the Prajñāpāramita. The teachings on satipatthana have been basically ‘cut-&-pasted’ with minimal alteration.

Satipaṭṭhāna is treated in two separate places in the Prajñāpāramita. These occurrences are widely separated and have no close textual relation. Both occur as part of a larger context treating the way of practice of a Bodhisattva, and treat satipatthana as the first group of the 37 wings to enlightenment. As in the early Suttas, here the 37 are simply listed, with no attempt to synthesize the groups into an overall progressive scheme of practice, such as the Abhidhamma schools were to work out later.

The first passage begins by simply defining, as part of the Mahāyāna path of the Bodhisattva, the four satipatthanas.<sup>379</sup> Then comes a variation on the standard passage:

‘There the Bodhisattva dwells, with regard to the inward body, feelings, etc., in the contemplation of the body, etc. But he does not form any discursive thoughts associated with the body, etc. He is ardent, clearly conscious, and mindful, after putting away all worldly covetousness and sadness. And that without taking anything as a basis. And so he dwells with regard to the outer body, the inner and outer body, to feelings, thought, and dhammas.’

All the familiar features are there: the reflexive repetition ‘body in [regard to] body’; the four objects; contemplation; internal/external; and the standard auxiliary formula. The injunction not to think thoughts associated with the body is, in the Pali, found in the Dantabhūmi Sutta. We noticed briefly above how this phrase also occurs in another Mahāyāna text, the Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhāvāṣṭhitasamādhi Sūtra. We shall see below how in that context the phrase serves as a springboard for a more characteristically Mahāyāna exposition of satipatthana. Here the idea lies still in germ. The phrase rendered by Conze ‘without taking anything as a basis’ in fact seems to be the phrase ‘one dwells independent’, found in the Sarvāstivāda Samudaya Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

The text goes on to ask how a Bodhisattva dwells with regard to the inward body in the contemplation of the body. Then a list of body contemplation practices is given: awareness of the four postures; clear comprehension in daily activities; anapanasati; elements; body parts; and charnel ground. The content is identical with the body contemplation practices in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Each practice is described in virtually exactly the same words and phrases, including the illustrative similes. Awareness of activities adds to the normal list the phrase ‘and when retiring for meditation’. There are occasional, very slight, drifts in the meanings of words. In the charnel ground contemplation, the Theravāda version says one should reflect ‘This body, too, is of the same *dhamma*, the same *bhāva*...’. Here both *dhamma* and *bhāva* are non-technical words meaning simply ‘nature’. But the Prajñāpāramita translation has, instead of ‘nature’ for *bhāva*, ‘own-being’, obviously harking to an original *svabhāva*. This key technical term in Abhidhamma philosophy would have been more familiar to the compilers of the Prajñāpāramita than the ordinary-language word *bhāva*, so we presume it was substituted at some stage. Detailed examination of the versions might tell us when and how this happened. Still, the shift is a mere nuance, and I mention such trivial differences only to emphasize the importance of the similarities.

While the differences in the phrasing of the particular exercises are miniscule, far more significant divergences occur in the overall structure. Firstly, the Prajñāpāramita lists the two ‘awareness of postures’ meditations first, before anapanasati. This is in common with every other exposition of the path in all schools, except the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna and Kāyagatāsati Suttas. And secondly, there is hardly any refrain. The exercises are presented in their bare form, and at the end of each it is simply said, ‘And that through non-apprehension.’ I am not sure of the Sanskrit original, but this seems to be a Mahāyānist ‘tag’ added to identify with the special Prajñāpāramita perspective on emptiness. It could well be understood to mean the same thing as ‘not grasping at anything in the world’, but this is a matter of interpretation. This, and the obvious substitution of ‘bodhisattva’ for ‘bhikkhu’, are the only discernable Mahāyānist elements. Given the evident propensity of the Mahāyāna for florid elaborations, it does seem rather odd that there is no real refrain supplied here. If the Mahāyāna authors had inherited a version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta with a substantial refrain, as have the existing versions, one would expect them to alter and expand it, rather than slough it off. This suggests that they were perhaps working with an early, bare-bones (if you’ll excuse the pun!) version of the body contemplation exercises. It is quite remarkable that this version is very close to the Theravāda; even though the Mahāyāna in general owes much more to the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsaṅghika traditions, still their versions of satipaṭṭhana are more divergent.

It is a great shame that the text does not elaborate the details of the remaining exercises. It simply gives the standard formula for contemplating feelings, internally, etc. This asymmetry of presentation is suggestive of editing irregularities. The statement of the basic passage at the start of the text gives the satipaṭṭhana formula for all four satipaṭṭhanas. Then it gives the details of body contemplation, but does not repeat the relevant part of the satipaṭṭhana formula. But for feelings, etc., the situation is reversed: it does not give the details of feeling contemplation, etc., but it does repeat the relevant part of the formula. It looks as though the detailed expositions were lost, then the basic formula was mechanically inserted to fill the gap. Examination of the various versions might shed some light on this, and might bring to light a more complete exposition. However, as far as I am able to check various versions of the Prajñāpāramita material in the Chinese, they are remarkably uniform in this regard. Since the omission of detailed consideration of the later three satipaṭṭhanas is manifestly asymmetrical and irrational, it seems that these treatments must have sprung from a single textual source, and have slavishly followed its eccentric pattern.

Many years ago, Har Dayal commented that ‘...the Buddhist authors have written a great deal only about *kāyasatipaṭṭhāna* [body contemplation]; they dismiss the other three with a few words.’<sup>380</sup> Some therefore conclude that body contemplation was originally the only part of satipaṭṭhana. However, this is an overly rash judgement. Given the enormously repetitive nature of Buddhist texts in general, it is normal to find a text that deals with the first section in detail, then abbreviates the rest. In fact, if the remaining three satipaṭṭhanas were a later accretion, we might expect the reverse situation, that they should be explained in more detail. For example, in the Prajñāpāramita literature we are currently considering, the basic teachings such as satipaṭṭhana are taught fairly briefly, but the special Prajñāpāramita doctrines are elaborated at length. The lack of detailed explanations of the latter satipaṭṭhanas, then, can be understood as a later loss. This loss suggests that the authors of the Prajñāpāramita were not overly concerned with satipaṭṭhana as such; perhaps they simply assumed that their audience was already familiar with the basic teachings.

We may now consider the second exposition of satipaṭṭhana in the Prajñāpāramita. This defines satipaṭṭhana, together with a list of other dhammas containing both early and late elements, as ‘supramundane and not worldly’.<sup>381</sup> Then the basic passage on satipaṭṭhana is given, with no detailed exposition of the various practices. The integrated internal/external contemplation is

followed by: ‘With regard to the body he dwells as one who reviews its origination, its disappearance, and both its origination and disappearance. He dwells as one who does not lean on anything, and as one who (does not) grasp at the world.’ This seems almost identical with the vipassana refrain of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, although lacking the phrase ‘Or mindfulness is established that “There is a body”, only for the sake of a measure of knowledge and mindfulness.’ It is also very similar to the Sarvāstivāda version of the Samudaya Sutta, though lacking the specifications of the cause of each of the objects of satipatthana.

There are a number of textual details that diverge from the earlier passage. The Bodhisattva is not mentioned. More important, the arrangement of the textual elements is different. In the earlier passage the sequence was: contemplate the internal body, feelings, mind, and dhammas; ardent, clearly comprehending, etc.; contemplate the external body, etc., and so on. Here the sequence is: contemplate the body internally, externally, then internally & externally; ardent, clearly comprehending, etc. In other words the auxiliary formula is added after each satipatthana rather than being put at the end of the four. Of course, this variation has no significance of itself. But taken together with other features – the separation of the two passages in the text, the inconsistent use of ‘Bodhisattva’ – it suggests that the two satipatthana passages are taken from different sources. That is to say, there is no reason to believe that the Prajñāpāramita took an earlier, longer text integrating these two passages and broke it up into separate pieces.

This reinforces one of our basic arguments of the formation of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This contains two main important aspects: the detailed list of meditation practices, and the vipassana refrain. But there are at least three traditions that preserve these two aspects as independent textual entities. In the Sarvāstivāda, the list of meditation practices is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, while the vipassana refrain is found in the Samudaya Sutta. The Prajñāpāramita is similar. Even the Theravāda preserves the meditation exercises in the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga and the vipassana refrain in the Saṃyutta Vibhaṅga Sutta and Samudaya Sutta. Thus the treatment of these two aspects separately may represent an earlier tradition.

### SARVĀSTIVĀDA SMṚTYUPASTHĀNA SŪTRA (MA 98)

The Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra of the Sarvāstivāda school is preserved in the Madhyama Āgama of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in 389 C.E. by the Chinese monk Sanghadeva.<sup>382</sup> The Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra is more elaborate in some respects than the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and less elaborate in others. Hence it is probably neither earlier nor later, but stems from a slightly divergent tradition as the two new schools of the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda finalized the textual formulations of the teachings they had both inherited from the pre-sectarian period. This final editing probably occurred after the Sarvāstivāda schism, perhaps 150 years after the Buddha. I will ignore the various trivial differences in phrasing between the individual doctrinal units (‘pericopes’) in the various versions and concentrate on the significant differences in the choice of meditation exercises.

The Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra opens in the same way as the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: the setting is at Kammassadamma in the Kuru country, and the teaching starts with the statement on the ‘path leading to convergence’. After this, however, the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra introduces the statement that all Tathagatas, past, future, and present realize enlightenment by being established on the four satipatthanas, abandoning the five hindrances, and developing the seven enlightenment-factors.<sup>383</sup> We have met such groupings frequently; this statement was likely brought in from SN 47.12/SA 498. We have already noticed that the extra emphasis on persistence through time suggests the sectarian bias of the Sarvāstivāda.

As usual in the Sarvāstivāda (but not the Dharmaskandha), the satipatthana formula is presented very simply – one establishes mindfulness on the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and dhammas. We have established from the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Saṃyukta that this abbreviated form was intended to be spelt out in full. In the Saṃyukta, the fact that there are many discourses, one after another, all featuring the same formula is a good reason for the use of such an abbreviation. But what of this Madhyama version? This discourse on satipatthana stands alone, not part of a series, and one who was not familiar with the Saṃyukta, when studying the Madhyama would not necessarily be aware of the longer formula. In this long discourse, why could the redactors not have found room to expand the formula? There seems to be one simple answer to this puzzle: the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra was originally part of the Saṃyukta collection. There the formula was abbreviated along with most of the rest of the discourses; in fact the length of this discourse serves as a good reason to not spell out the formula in full, so that the length would not differ too much from that of the surrounding discourses.

Here are the various body contemplation exercises in relation to the Theravāda.

**Table 14.1: Body Contemplation in the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda**

Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra	Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta
1. Four postures	2.
2. Clear comprehension	3.
3. Cutting off thought	(see MN 20.3/MA 101)
4. Suppressing thought	(see MN 20.7/MA 101)
5. Ānāpānasati	1.
6. 1 <sup>st</sup> jhana simile	(Similes at MN 119.18/MA 81 Kāyagatāsati, etc.)
7. 2 <sup>nd</sup> jhana simile	
8. 3 <sup>rd</sup> jhana simile	
9. 4 <sup>th</sup> jhana simile	
10. Perception of light	(See SN 51.20)
11. Basis of reviewing	(See AN 5.28)
12. Parts of the body	4.
13. Six elements	5. (Four elements only)
14-18. Charnel ground	6-14.

Let us first deal with the factors in common. These are mostly in the same order in both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda texts. The sole exception is mindfulness of breathing, which in the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra appears in its more usual position after clear comprehension, as also in the Śāriputrābhidharma. However, a swag of new practices is added, all somewhat uncomfortable in the context of body contemplation. This raises the question as to why these incongruous passages were inserted.

Part of the answer lies with the Kāyagatāsati Sutta, versions of which are found in both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda Majjhimas.<sup>384</sup> The Theravāda version of the Kāyagatāsati Sutta centres on a list of 14 body contemplation exercises that is identical with the basic practices in the body contemplation section of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This specific set of practices is not found elsewhere in the Theravāda Nikāyas, and therefore indicates a strong relationship between these two texts. The only difference in the description of the practices is that the Kāyagatāsati Sutta omits the simile for anapanasati: one observes the breath, long or short, like a skilled turner would know when making a long or short turn. This simile is also absent from both



the Sarvāstivāda Kāyagatāsmṛti Sūtra and the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra; thus the only place it occurs, so far as I know, is in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. However, the most significant difference between the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna and Kāyagatāsati Suttas is that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, with its repeated refrain on investigating rise and fall, strongly emphasizes vipassana, while the refrain in the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta says:

‘As he abides diligent, ardent, and resolute, his memories and intentions dependent on the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning his mind becomes settled internally, quieted, unified, and brought to samadhi. That is how a monk develops mindfulness of the body.’

The Sarvāstivāda refrain says that diligent practice of this in a secluded place frees the mind from distress, brings samadhi, and brings knowledge according to reality. In both versions the body contemplation exercises then lead straight to the four jhanas, each of which is also said to be a practice of mindfulness of the body.

After the jhanas there is a substantial list of benefits of the practice, falling into four divisions. First, mindfulness of the body includes all dhammas that partake of realization, just as one who encompasses with their heart the entire ocean includes all the rivers that flow into it. Second, a list of three similes and their opposites (throwing a heavy/light ball, a sapless/sappy piece of wood, a full/empty water jug), illustrating whether Māra gains an opportunity or not. Both of these divisions are found in the Sarvāstivāda. Third, mindfulness of the body leads to the witnessing of all clear knowledges, illustrated with a further three similes – a brimful pot, a brimful pond, and a ready chariot. This division is absent from the Sarvāstivāda. Fourthly, mindfulness of the body, developed and cultivated, leads to ten benefits: overcoming discontent and delight; fear and dread; heat and cold, etc; one develops the four jhanas; one realizes the six kinds of clear knowledge. This list is also in the Sarvāstivāda, extended to 18 by the separate addition of the four jhanas and the four stages of enlightenment.

Evidently these four divisions are each of quite separate origin. There is substantial overlapping of the topics in this discourse, especially the jhanas and clear knowledges. I think it is likely that the four jhanas were originally mentioned, not as a kind of mindfulness practice, but as a benefit of mindfulness practice. This conclusion is implied by the basic refrain and by the list of benefits in both versions; however, since both versions include the jhanas both as mindfulness and as a benefit of mindfulness there is no direct textual support for this suggestion.

There is a strong imagistic consistency in many of the similes – the ocean, the full pot, the full pond, the full water jug.<sup>385</sup> This is consistent with the simile for mindfulness of the body found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta (the bowl brimful of oil), as also the ‘saturated’ imagery of the jhana similes:

**1<sup>st</sup> Jhana:** He makes the rapture and bliss born of seclusion drench, suffuse, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and bliss born of seclusion. Just as a skilled bath man, or bath man’s apprentice heaps bath powder in a metal basin and, sprinkling it gradually with water, kneads it until the moisture wets the ball of bath powder, soaks it and pervades it inside and out, yet the ball itself does not ooze...

**2<sup>nd</sup> Jhana:** He makes the rapture and bliss born of samadhi drench, suffuse, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and bliss born of samadhi. Just as though there were a lake whose waters welled up from below, and it had no inflow from east, west, north, or south, and would not be replenished from time to time with showers of rain, then the cool fount of water welling up in the lake would make the cool water

drench, suffuse, fill, and pervade the lake, so that there would be no part of the whole lake unpervaded by cool water...

**3<sup>rd</sup> Jhana:** He makes the bliss free of rapture drench, suffuse, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the bliss free of rapture. Just as in a pond of blue or white or red lotuses, some lotuses that are born and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without rising out of it, and cool water drenches, suffuses, fills, and pervades them to their tips and their roots, so that there is no part of those lotuses unpervaded by cool water...

**4<sup>th</sup> Jhana:** He sits pervading this body with pure bright heart, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by pure bright heart. Just as if there were a man covered from the head down with a pure white cloth, so that there would be no part of his body not covered by the pure white cloth...

These beautiful images lend an imminent physicality to the usual strictly psychological jhana formulas. The strong emphasis on immersion in the body no doubt prompted their inclusion in the Kāyagatāsati Suttas, and hence in the body contemplation section of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. However it would be a mistake to think that this refers here to the crude physical body, which completely disappears in jhana. The Suttas use ‘body’ in an idiomatic sense to stress the immediateness of direct personal experience; the meaning is something like ‘the entire field of awareness’.<sup>386</sup> Such abstract, almost mystical, usages of ‘body’ – note too the ‘mind-made body’, the ‘body witness’, the ‘dhamma-body’ – paved the way for the much later doctrine of the ‘Three-bodies’ of the Buddha, a metaphysical and docetic reification of the Buddha and Nibbana.

The Sarvāstivāda Kāyagatāsmṛti Sutta, in addition to the variations mentioned above, presents a different list of basic exercises. These correlate exactly with the section on body contemplation in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, just as the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta correlates with the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The Theravādins added the vipassana refrain to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the three extra similes to the Kāyagatāsati Sutta, and reversed the sequence of anapanasati and clear comprehension in both. The Sarvāstivādins added the extra practices and padded out the final section on benefits. This clearly shows that the specific details of these lists are sectarian, although the differences are not explicitly doctrinal. Each of the schools must have edited these paired discourses conjointly. This raises the important question: what was the main direction of influence, from the Kāyagatāsati Sutta to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, or vice versa? To answer this question we must first examine in more detail the extra practices in the Sarvāstivāda.

Numbers 3 and 4, dealing with ways of controlling thoughts, are two of five methods advocated in both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda versions of the Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta (‘Discourse on the Quelling of Thoughts’), which is obviously a more appropriate home for them. The description in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra is, as expected, closer to that in the Sarvāstivāda version of the Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta, and was no doubt taken from there. Both versions say that these practices are for one ‘pursuing the higher mind’, i.e. jhana, and by means of them the mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, unified, and brought to samadhi. In the first practice, unskilful thoughts are replaced by thinking skilful thoughts. The Sarvāstivāda gives the simile of a carpenter who marks a piece of wood straight and then chops it with a sharp axe; the Theravāda simile, however, speaks of a carpenter knocking out a coarse peg by using a fine one, which seems more appropriate. In the second practice one crushes and suppresses the mind with the mind, like two strong men would beat down a weaker. This violent approach to mental cultivation is uncharacteristic of the Buddha’s usual gentleness. This same practice is listed in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta among the useless byways the Bodhisatta mistakenly pursued before his

enlightenment.<sup>387</sup> Bronkhorst reasons from this that the practice must have been a Jain one, rejected by the Buddha, but later creeping back into the Suttas. However, the practice is the first and least ascetic of the Jain practices, and the last and most ascetic of the Buddhist, so it seems there is just this slight overlap.

We have met number 10, the perception of light, together with some of the body contemplations, in the Iddhipāda-saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Its inclusion in satipatthana may also have been influenced by the standard passage on how one abandons the hindrance of sloth & torpor, being ‘percipient of light, mindful & clearly comprehending’. There is no obvious reason in the passage itself why this should come under body contemplation (although the passage includes the phrase ‘as above, so below; as below, so above’, which is explained in the Iddhipāda-saṃyutta as investigating the parts of the body from the top to the bottom). The emphasis on the perception of light in the Iddhipāda-saṃyutta, supported by other passages, suggests that here we are entering the exotic realm of psychic powers.

The ‘basis of reviewing’<sup>388</sup> is mentioned in the Aṅguttara and the Dīghas as the fifth factor of noble right samadhi, the investigation of one who has emerged from jhana ‘just as if one standing should look at one lying down, or one lying down should look at one standing.’<sup>389</sup> Possibly the mention of the postures here, though obviously only a metaphor, prompted the inclusion under body contemplation. The situation with the jhana similes would seem to be similar, the body in metaphorical or mystical sense merging with the literal physical body.

The internal sequence is obscure; why have the perception of light and the reviewing knowledge been inserted at this point? It seems as if this structure has been influenced by the above-mentioned five-fold right samadhi. There are two variations of this: the Aṅguttara mentions the four jhanas (with similes) and the ‘basis of reviewing’ as fifth. The Dīgha mentions five factors: ‘suffusion with rapture, suffusion with bliss, suffusion with heart, suffusion with light, basis of reviewing.’ The first three of these obviously refer to jhana, and are especially close to the descriptions of the jhana similes. In particular the phrase ‘suffusion with heart (*ceto*)’ is quite unusual and distinctive of this passage and the fourth jhana simile. Then follow the perception of light and the basis of reviewing, all these in the same order in both the fivefold right samadhi and the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. The correspondence of these somewhat unusual passages is too close for coincidence.<sup>390</sup>

The identification of these structural influences on the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna and Kāyagatāsmṛti Sūtras allows us to make more sense of the overall structure of the body contemplation section of these texts. They start with the contemplation of body postures and movements through daily activities, the standard preparation for meditation. Another practice that acts both as a preparation for meditation and in meditation itself is the control of thoughts; this pertains to right intention of the eightfold path. Then follows the meditation proper, anapanasati, leading to the four jhanas. Next is the perception of light, associated with the development of psychic powers that regularly follow after jhana. Finally the reviewing knowledge that investigates the whole process, and especially the jhana-consciousness, in terms of cause and effect. So this whole section so far makes perfect sense as a description of the normal course of practice prescribed in the Suttas. The problem lies, not in internal incongruities, but in its placement as part of body contemplation. Only some of the sections are body contemplation proper; the rest has been included to flesh out the sequence of practice, and in the case of the jhanas the similes were used because they fit in with body contemplation. And of course the incongruity is compounded by the addition of the body contemplations proper – parts of the body, elements, charnel ground – at the end of the body contemplation section. These have nothing to do with the progressive structure of the earlier part of the section. They were either

tacked on at the end, or more likely were an early part of the text, which remained as the beginning was transformed into a comprehensive meditation program.

It seems that here we see a tendency towards inflating mindfulness of the body until it encompasses the whole path. This perhaps stems from the Buddha's statement that 'anyone who has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body has encompassed all skilful qualities there are that have a share in realization.' Satipaṭṭhāna provides an example of the same process on a larger scale. In fact the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta covers much of the same ground in the later sections, the inclusion of samadhi being an obvious example; also the investigation into causes in contemplation of dhammas is similar to the 'basis of reviewing'. Thus the inclusion of these additional practices in the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra is largely redundant, suggesting that they were originally intended for the Kāyagatāsmṛti Sūtra, and the movement into the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra was a secondary development. If this is true for the Sarvāstivāda, it may hold good for the Theravāda too, although there, with leaving behind of the jhanas, the influence is not as strong.

Having considered in some detail the contents of the body contemplation section of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, we may now move on to the remainder. The refrain in the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra speaks simply of contemplating internally and externally, then of establishing the mind upon the body (feelings, mind, dhammas) and obtaining knowledge, vision, light, understanding (有知有見。有明有達; probable Pali equivalents are: *ñāṇa*, *dassana*, *vijjā*, *paññā*). There is no mention of impermanence.

The Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta here has: 'One establishes mindfulness only for a measure of knowledge, a measure of mindfulness'. The word 'measure' (*matta*) here has always struck me as a bit odd. One can try to explain it away, but the normal meaning is 'mere' or 'limited'. Is it possible that there could have been an early confusion between *matta* 'measure' and *patti* 'attainment' or *attha* 'purpose'? It is also perhaps a bit clumsy to say that one is supposed to establish mindfulness (*sati*) in order to attain mindfulness (*patissati*). The Chinese term here means 'vision'. Could there have been a further confusion between something like *passati* and *patissati*? (Of course, *passati* is a verb and *patissati* is a noun, so this would have involved a syntactic and not merely a phonetic change.) Combining the two suggestions we could arrive at: 'One establishes mindfulness only for the sake of knowledge & vision.' This would certainly give us a more straightforward meaning, but alas I do not possess the linguistic gigabytes necessary to untangle this tangle. The Ekāyana Sūtra adds further to the confusion, as we shall see below.

The sections on feelings and mind in the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra are similar to the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but slightly more elaborate. From here to the end the text refers to 'bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs', both as the audience of the discourse, and as the meditator in the discourse itself. This is quite extraordinary, and I don't know if it is representative of the Sarvāstivādin Suttas in general. There must have been nuns and laywomen present at many of the teachings, but in those innocent days before political correctness, the texts were almost without exception standardized into the male voice. In the Theravāda, even when a discourse is addressed solely to nuns, the hypothetical practitioner of the discourse is usually a monk. Only rarely are the female practitioners acknowledged. This is rather a shame, for it tends to put modern listeners offside. The inscriptional evidence, according to Schopen, attests approximately even numbers of monks and nuns in the early schools. Many of the nuns are said to have been learned in a sutta, or in a Piṭaka, and so on, so they played their part in the transmission of the Dhamma. These inscriptions usually record substantial donations, of temples and suchlike. It would seem almost certain that the monks were, on the average, wealthier than the nuns, and so the presence of equal numbers of (presumably wealthy) monk and nun donors suggests that the total population of nuns may have been significantly greater. The Jains, unlike the Buddhists, made a census of their followers, and the figures consistently recognize far more nuns than monks. Given the patriarchal climate

of the times, this is hardly a situation they would have invented, and perhaps the numbers of Buddhist nuns, too, may have exceeded the monks in India, as they do in some modern Buddhist countries.

The contemplation of dhammas compares as follows.

**Table 14.2: Contemplation of Dhammas in Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda**

<b>Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra</b>	<b>Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta</b>
1. Internal & external sense media <sup>391</sup>	
2. Five hindrances	1. Five hindrances
	2. Five aggregates
	3. Internal & external sense media
3. Seven enlightenment-factors	4. Seven enlightenment-factors
	5. Four noble truths

All of these exercises are described in virtually identical terms in both Suttas, as indeed in the Abhidhamma versions. The Sarvāstivāda omits the aggregates and truths, retaining the sense media as the only overt vipassana practice. As we have seen, it shares this feature with the Dharmaskandha. There is one, possibly related, text in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta that mentions the sense media.<sup>392</sup> There, the enlightenment-factors are said to be the ‘one dhamma’ for abandoning the ‘things that fetter’, namely the six sense media. The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, too, speak of the sense media in terms of fetters. But in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta the enlightenment-factors, which chiefly pertain to samadhi, naturally precede the wisdom practice of the sense media. In the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, however, the sense media are displaced awkwardly to the beginning of the section, whereas in the Dharmaskandha they are in the middle. For this reason among others, I have no hesitation in concluding that this is a later interpolation, and that the original Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta included just the hindrances and enlightenment-factors.

The Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra omits the repetition of the ‘way to convergence’ statement at the end, but does include the guarantee of attainment in seven years, or as little as seven days; indeed, it even goes further than the Theravāda and says one may see results in the evening if one practices in the morning. It also omits the final sentence of the Pali, ‘This is what was said [i.e. satipaṭṭhana is the ‘way to convergence’] and this is the reason it was said [i.e. it leads to these results].’ Since this sentence is found in no other version, it may be regarded as an attempt by the Theravādin teachers to tie together the loose assemblage of passages that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta had become.

The emphasis throughout the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra is clearly on samatha. Like the Vibhaṅga, it omits virtually all the overtly vipassana oriented material of the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; and as well it adds much samatha material. It remains in harmony with the mainstream teachings in treating vipassana solely as part of the contemplation of dhammas. Both schools were moving towards using the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a compilation of meditation techniques; but in the hands of the Sarvāstivādins this became a samatha manual, while in the hands of the Theravādins it became a vipassana manual. We should remember that the significant differences are entirely in the choice and arrangement of material, not in the individual doctrinal statements (‘pericopes’) themselves.

## EKĀYANA SUTRA (EA 12.1)

The Ekottara Āgama, from which this discourse was taken, is the least congruent of the four Āgamas. It was translated, it seems, from Prakrit rather than Sanskrit. It is usually believed to belong to the Mahāsaṅghikas, the school that diverged from the ancestral Theravādins at the first schism. Thus, they are of particular interest, since textual and doctrinal material held in common between the Mahāsaṅghika lineage and the Theravāda lineage probably dates to the earliest pre-sectarian period. We have their Vinaya in Chinese, and some later texts, and recently a large number of sutras or fragments in the original Prakrit have come to light, apparently from a monastery near Bamiyan in Afghanistan. Hopefully these will be edited and published soon, which might help clarify the affiliation of the Ekottara. The Mahāsaṅghika, like the Theravāda, proceeded to further splinter into many sub-sects, with varying degrees of doctrinal development. It is sometimes suggested that the Ekottara Āgama belongs to the Lokuttaravāda, which was one of the most progressive of all the early schools and in fact was probably one of the immediate forbears of the Mahāyāna.

The famous matter of the ‘five theses’ that were the immediate cause for the schism has been discussed by L. S. Cousins. He finds that the evidence suggests that differing attitudes towards samadhi practice may underlie this schism, saying: ‘There is some reason to believe that the practice of jhanas is of great antiquity and the Mahāsaṅghikas, or this branch of them, may well have been conservative in this regard as well as others.’ Whatever the truth of this, we shall see that there is a strong samadhi emphasis in the Ekāyana Sutta.

However, the affiliation of the Ekottara is far from certain and several scholars have raised serious objections to this identification. The main reason for ascribing it to the Mahāsaṅghikas seems to be the inclusion of several references to Maitreya, and it seems that the school of the Ekottara may have had a special devotion for that Buddha of the future. This might be a trait of a Mahāsaṅghika school, but then again it might not. The doctrinal and other features that have been identified do not bear any specially close resemblance to known Mahāsaṅghika doctrines, but then the collection is notoriously idiosyncratic, and presents many variations on even standard doctrinal formulas like the eightfold path. Given the very bad inconsistency of the text it might not be worth placing too much weight on doctrinal consistency as a guide to sectarian affiliation. Even the orthodox and rigorous Theravādins retain in their Suttas a number of passages that contradict known tenets of the school (the in-between state; the gradual path; the necessity for jhana; the primacy of Suttas over Abhidhamma; the primacy of practice over study, etc.). So we must admit that we don’t really know the school of the Ekottara, but in the absence of any more plausible alternative we might consider the thesis that it belongs to the Mahāsaṅghika group of schools.

The careless editing and divergence from the other sources suggests a somewhat later date than the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. The setting, in common with the Dharmaskandha, is the Jetavana at Sāvattihī rather than Kammassadamma. This could imply that it is actually a different discourse, delivered on a different occasion. However, it should be obvious to anyone familiar with the Suttas that they are set in the Jetavana far more frequently than anywhere else; so much so that it is hard to escape the impression that the Jetavana was the ‘default’ setting for any Suttas whose provenance was unknown. This impression is given substantial support by two passages mentioned by Schopen. One passage from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, has the Buddha telling Venerable Upāli that, if the setting or other details of a discourse or training rule is forgotten, one should declare that the setting was at one of the six great cities, or somewhere the Buddha stayed many times; if one forgets the name of the King, one should say it was Pasenadi; if one forgets the name of the householder, one should say it was Anāthapiṇḍika; and so on.<sup>393</sup> A similar statement is recorded in the

Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya: in the rules concerning reciting the nine angas, if a monk forgets the setting, he should say it was one of the eight famous places.<sup>394</sup> Schopen's discussion of this principle is, I think, quite sound, and, as he says, application of such principles would quickly result in the prevalence of settings at the Jetavana that is such a characteristic of the existing canons. We have seen in the discussion of the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta that this kind of artificial ascription of setting is very prevalent. This suggests that ascription of a discourse to the Jetavana should not be taken too seriously. In cases like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, where different versions of what look like the same text are set sometimes in the Jetavana, sometimes elsewhere, we should assume that the less common setting is more likely to be authentic, and the shift to Sāvattihī happened as part of a later normalization. Thus the different settings do not imply that the texts had a different origin. On the evidence of the texts, this redaction principle would seem to have been liberally applied by all the traditions. It is worth noting though, that the two explicit mentions of the principle known so far (others way yet come to light) are from the Mūlasarvāstivāda and the Mahāsaṅghika; and these schools are very closely related to the schools that produced the Dharmaskandha and the Ekāyana Sūtra, the two texts where the 'Jetavana normalization redaction principle' seems to have been applied to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta material.

The Chinese here translates 'satipatthana' by two characters that mean 'mind-tranquillity' (意止). The Indian original of this translation would be something like *manosamatha*. This term does not appear as such in the Pali, although the virtually identical *cetosamatha* does. It is an unusual rendering for satipatthana; normally the Chinese has the more literal 'mindfulness-place' (念處). However, the rendering is found in several other places, such as T 101 (the partial Saṃyukta SA<sup>3</sup>), an independent version of the Daśottara Sūtra (T 13), the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, and several versions of the Prajñāpāramita literature. Thus it is not peculiar to the Ekottara.

After opening with the 'path leading to convergence' statement, the text says this path destroys the five hindrances. The mention of the hindrances here is in line with the mainstream understanding of satipatthana, and in particular recalls the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. 'Path' is the eightfold path, here given in a typically eccentric form: right view, right prevention, right conduct, right livelihood, right skill in means, right speech, right recollection, right concentration. The formula for the four satipatthanas treats each as internal/external; perhaps because it is included here, the internal/external formula is omitted throughout the body of the discourse. The auxiliary formula is omitted. The significance of this formula, however, is that satipatthana is developed in the context of the path as a whole, and in the Ekāyana Sūtra this has already been stated. It may be the case, as we concluded with the Sarvāstivāda version, that this omission implies the Ekāyana Sūtra has been moved from a Saṃyutta; but the erraticness of the text makes us reluctant to draw definitive conclusions.

In contrast with the rigid consistency of the Theravāda Suttas, the refrains throughout vary considerably. Thus here in the introduction, body contemplation is said to lead to the ending of unwholesome thoughts and the removal of anxiety, while the remaining three contemplations lead to peace and joy. The refrain in the parts of the body section combines these two, saying to 'realize peace and joy, end bad thoughts, and remove anxiety and sorrow'. Elsewhere the refrains might include one or other part of this phrase, which makes us suspect that this was the standard version, more-or-less garbled throughout the text. It is a similar kind of phrase to the standard auxiliary formula, but it is not easy to see a specific textual relationship. The end of the section on corpse meditation, after speaking of leading to peace, etc., speaks of understanding impermanence. Thus we see a combination of samatha and vipassana aspects.

As we noted before, the text says it is the 'way to convergence' because it leads to oneness of mind. This saying is here given greater prominence than in the other versions: firstly, because it is explicitly explained in the text itself; second, because it is used as the title; and thirdly because

the text is included in the ‘Ones’ of the Ekottara Āgama. I suggested in the GIST that the symbolic significance of number may have been an influence in the formation of the Āṅguttara/Ekottara. An important connotation of ‘one’ in Buddhism is samadhi, and this is clearly reflected in the Theravāda Āṅguttara. So here too we may suspect that the Ekāyana Sūtra was included in the ‘Ones’, classified under the first word of the text, a word that encapsulates the primary spiritual purpose of the way of satipatthana: the achievement of unification of mind. Overall, this introduction serves as a ‘policy statement’ emphasizing the very strong emphasis on the samatha dimension of satipatthana in the Ekottara school.

Omitting anapanasati and awareness of activities, the section on body contemplations simply includes the parts of the body,<sup>395</sup> four elements, and charnel ground contemplations. It adds another similar practice – observing the openings of the body through which impurities flow. This is similar to the Śāriputrābhidharma. A simile is included for the elements (the butchered cow) and the orifices (like joints of bamboo or reeds), but is omitted for the parts of the body. Since the simile is found in all the other Sutta versions, I assume this is a case of accidental loss.

The contemplations of feeling and mind are similar in their content to the other versions, but the refrains are different to both the other versions and to the refrains of the first sections in the same sutra. They refer firstly to contemplating the principles of origination and dissolution so that, ‘Regarding presently arisen feelings he has knowledge and vision, with awareness well-founded, with nothing to rely on, oneself has joy and happiness and does not give rise to feelings of attachment to the world.’ The refrain here is difficult, and the translations I have vary widely. The above is a tentative attempt to translate under the assumption that this phrase is similar to the Pali here; at least the Chinese does not seem to preclude this possibility. One of the few certainties is that the same words for ‘knowledge & vision’ are used just as in the Sarvāstivāda refrain, supporting the thesis that this was original. Then there follow some slightly varying versions of formulas for attaining arahantship commonly found throughout the Suttas, which are obviously later additions. The refrain section generally has some affinity with the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which also implies, though less explicitly, that each practice can lead to arahantship.

The contemplation of mind includes a further phrase that seems to have confused, understandably so, the translators: 可思惟. 不可思惟. This comes just after the phrase we have identified as referring to ‘knowledge and vision’, and seems as if it may follow on from that. Thich Nhat Hahn has it that this refers to knowing what is not knowable, and suggests that that this is a Prajñāpāramita-style paradox. Pasadika renders it ‘from this it can be gathered whether one is really mindful or not’. But the phrase 不可思惟, which is peculiar to the Ekottara, elsewhere stands for *atakkāvacara* (beyond the sphere of reason) or *acinteyya* (unthinkable). This does not really tell us what the phrase means (‘one considers that which is beyond thought?’), but it does suggest a connection with the phrase found occasionally in satipatthana, ‘one does not (or should not) think thoughts associated with the body’.

Moving on to the dhammas section of the Ekāyana Sūtra, we find just the seven enlightenment-factors and the four jhanas. A measure of the difficulty of the text is that Pasadika translates this section without even realizing that it refers to the enlightenment-factors. Bizarrely, the translation has 念, the normal rendering of mindfulness, here for both the enlightenment factor of mindfulness and of rapture. The enlightenment-factors are presented very simply, omitting the inquiry into causes that is characteristic of the dhammas section in the other versions. It just says one develops each of the enlightenment-factors ‘in reliance on initial application, on non-craving, on destroying the unwholesome mind, and abandoning the unwholesome dhammas’. This seems like a slightly garbled version of the common formula: ‘dependent on seclusion, on fading of lust, on cessation, and ripening in relinquishment’. The Chinese appears to have read



*vitakka* (initial application) for *viveka* (seclusion). If we accept this reconstruction, then the description of the enlightenment-factors here becomes very much like the four modes of contemplation of dhammas in anapanasati: impermanence, fading of lust, cessation, relinquishment. The ending of the discourse with the four jhanas is similar to the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya. It reaffirms yet again the function of satipatthana to lead up to jhana.

It is interesting that the inquiry into causes, prominent in the other expositions of the contemplation of dhammas, is absent here. It seems that, while the Theravāda changed the samatha aspects of satipatthana into vipassana, the school of the Ekāyana Sūtra changed the vipassana aspects into samatha. If we are right in taking this version to be later than the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the canonical abhidhamma, perhaps it was deliberately formulated in opposition to the vipassana interpretation of satipatthana favoured by the abhidhammikas. The samadhi implication of the famous introductory phrase was drawn out and made explicit. Then the hindrances were rescued from obscurity in the contemplation of dhammas and placed at the beginning and the end, always the positions of greatest emphasis. This proclaims that abandoning the hindrances is not just one exercise among many, but is the main orientation of the whole practice. Then the four jhanas were brought in to culminate the contemplation of dhammas, rendering explicit what the compilers may have felt was too ambiguous and subject to misinterpretation in the original version.

The Ekāyana Sūtra ends by repeating that satipatthana is the ‘way to convergence’, and that it gets rid of the five hindrances. It omits the guarantee of attainment found in the other versions.

In conclusion it seems that the Mahāsaṅghikas, or one of their sub-schools, preserved a simpler version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta for some time, resisting the trend to use it as a catch-all repository of meditation techniques. Of course, they may well have had other texts fulfilling this function. The expansions, none of which are overtly sectarian, tended to be in the refrains rather than the content of the meditation exercises themselves. In accordance with all the early teachings on satipatthana we have examined so far, the Ekāyana Sūtra strongly emphasizes the samatha aspect, while also giving due consideration to vipassana.

#### THERAVĀDA SATIPATTHĀNA SUTTA (MN 10, DN 22)

How might this text have been formed? Apart from the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, there are no texts in the Majjhima, or in the Dīgha for that matter, that deal with satipatthana in detail. Desiring a full-length text on satipatthana, the Majjhima redactors selected the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla from the *vyākaraṇas* in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta as the most promising. However, it was too short and needed filling out if it were to take its place in the Majjhima. This filling out involved expanding the list of meditation exercises in the contemplation of the body and of dhammas, and developing an extended refrain by adding the contemplation of rise & fall, taken from the Samudaya Sutta, to the internal/external refrain.

We have seen that the evidence suggests that these 14 exercises appeared first in the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta and were later used to flesh out the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. What change, if any, would the inclusion of these 14 exercises make?

We have seen that satipatthana is normally seen as being very close or identical to anapanasati, so its inclusion here is unproblematic. The only question marks, as we have already commented, are whether it is valid to sever the first tetrad from the rest of the practice; and also whether the simile is authentic, since it is only found in the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Perhaps it was

inserted under the influence of the strong prevalence of similes and imagery in both the Kāyagatāsati Suttas.

As regards the elements and death contemplations, we have noted that these occur grouped together elsewhere with the 31 parts, so again their inclusion is unproblematic.

The main change in the orientation of the practice is the inclusion of the sections on clear comprehension and body postures. As we have noted above, elsewhere these are kept clearly distinct from satipatthana as meditation. In the Saṃyutta they are separated, in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, the Śāriputrābhīdharma, and the Prajñāpāramita they come before anapanasati, and in the Vibhaṅga, the Dharmaskandha, and the Ekāyana Sūtra they are not found. Consistently, clear comprehension during daily activities is not treated as a meditation as such, but as a precursor to meditation. Only in the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta and the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is this practice placed after anapanasati. In the context of the Suttas as a whole, this variation may have been intended to exalt anapanasati by granting it pride of place. But to one not familiar with the overall context of the teaching this could be taken to imply that clear comprehension of one's everyday activities is itself an alternative meditation, as powerful as anapanasati. This then leads to the claim that the most important of the Buddha's meditation instructions was to be mindful whatever we do. But clear comprehension as part of the gradual training is obviously a prescription, part of the all-round mental training that was expected of those who had undertaken the monastic vocation. Thus from both the agreement of the texts, and from the broader consideration of how it fits in the Buddha's path, we can conclude that the sections on clear comprehension and body postures were not likely to have been in the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla. If they were, however, it is probable they were placed in the more normal position at the beginning. There they naturally lead on, as in the gradual training, to the monk who has 'gone to the forest, to the root of the tree, or to an empty hut' to settle into meditation.

The refrain in the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla would probably have originally consisted of the internal/external contemplation and a simple exhortation to be mindful for the sake of understanding, independence, and letting go. But since nowhere else in the Majjhima is any connection between satipatthana and vipassana mentioned, it seems that the Majjhima redactors wished to incorporate the section on impermanence from the Samudaya Sutta of the Saṃyutta. This became attached to the internal/external refrain at the end of each exercise, thus furthering the idea, already hinted at in the Theravāda Anuruddha-saṃyutta, that vipassana may be undertaken from the start of practice. While this seems to reflect the meditation orientation of the redaction school, it is possible that it was originally an unintended side-effect of the purely formal evolution of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

It is worth noticing in passing that the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas have a small spelling mistake in the refrain in the contemplation of dhammas section. The phrase is '“*Atthi dhammā*”*ti*' ('there is dhammas'), where *atthi* is singular and *dhammā* is plural. Presumably this was merely a reciters' glitch, as they mechanically repeated the phrase from the earlier sections, without noticing the change in number from singular to plural. Innocent enough, but a reminder of the fallibility of the tradition.

Another consequence of the extended refrain is that each section, ending with the phrase 'one abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world', seems to lead all the way to arahantship. Thus the text has both a 'horizontal' dimension, a progressive deepening from one section to the next (as suggested by the phrase 'again & beyond' which prefixes each section), and a 'vertical' dimension, developing to liberation within each one of the exercises. This kind of 'reflective immanence' is characteristic of the Suttas, and is no problem as long as it is understood holistically rather than divisively. That is, each meditation subject is complete, not because it

replaces other approaches but because it includes them. As we have seen, this is brought out most clearly in the context of anapanasati. But this subtle point is easily overlooked, and historically it has contributed to the gradual neglect and marginalization of the progressive structure of satipatthana.

The sections on feelings and mind are similar to all the other versions. The section on dhammas is substantially lengthened; the main interpolations in the Majjhima version being the contemplations of the aggregates and the sense media. Although these occur frequently in the early texts, nowhere else do they appear as part of satipatthana. Remember that the Samudaya Sutta of the Saṃyutta says that the origin of dhammas is ‘attention’. It is impossible to understand, and clearly against the normal position of the Suttas, how attention could give rise to the aggregates and sense media. The commentary doesn’t even try, simply agreeing that paying uncausewise attention gives rise to the hindrances and paying causewise attention gives rise to the enlightenment factors. This is absolutely in accord with one of the outstanding themes of the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta:

‘Monks, when one pays uncausewise attention, unarisen sensual desire arises, and arisen sensual desire increases and expands; unarisen ill-will.... sloth & torpor... restlessness & remorse... doubt arises, and arisen doubt increases and expands.

‘Monks, when one pays causewise attention, the unarisen enlightenment factor of mindfulness arises, and the arisen factor of mindfulness goes to fulfilment by development; the unarisen enlightenment factor of investigation of dhammas... energy... rapture... tranquillity... samadhi... equanimity arises, and the arisen enlightenment factor of equanimity goes to fulfilment by development.’<sup>396</sup>

This is obviously the same practice as in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Similar themes recur in more than a dozen texts in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta.<sup>397</sup> In the Sarvāstivāda many of these texts are grouped right at the start of the chapter, emphasizing this theme even more. Even this alone would strongly imply that the aggregates and sense media were a later interpolation. These paradigmatic vipassana exercises are suggestively placed *after* the abandoning of the hindrances but *before* the development of the enlightenment-factors. The normal position is that the enlightenment-factors, which are very close in meaning with samadhi, bring about the abandoning of the hindrances; but here it seems we can abandon the hindrances without developing samadhi and then do vipassana straight away – an idea that was to prove highly influential in Theravāda meditation.

We can, however, discern some differences that suggest that the six sense media are more at home here than the five aggregates. Firstly, as we have seen, mindfulness is more characteristically mentioned with the sense media, and the sense media do occur one time in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta. Secondly, the sense media are included in the Sarvāstivāda versions and the Śāriputrābhidharma. Thirdly, the phrasing of the contemplation is more congruent with the sections on the hindrances and enlightenment-factors. I am still confident that both were later interpolations, but I am marginally less confident in the case of the sense media.

There is another evident incongruity, implicit in some other places, but strongly evident here. In each of the other sections, as we have seen, there is no explicit mention of impermanence, causality, etc. Then impermanence is brought in with the vipassana refrain that follows. This, while probably not original, is perfectly coherent. But in the contemplation of dhammas according to the Theravāda, each meditation exercise speaks of impermanence. In the contemplation of the hindrances, enlightenment factors, and sense media, this is indicated by key words such as ‘arising’ (*uppāda*), which recurs through these sections. The contemplation of

aggregates similarly speaks of ‘origination’ (*samudaya*). But then, having already discussed impermanence once, it is re-introduced in the vipassana refrain, which also speaks of ‘origination’ (*samudaya*). Is one then to contemplate the ‘arising of arising?’ This unnecessary repetition might be explained away; but the most straightforward explanation is that it simply results from the editing together of two originally distinct texts.

The dhammas section in the Majjhima version closes with a brief enunciation of the four noble truths. This is then expanded greatly in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.<sup>398</sup> Some of the recent Burmese recensions have re-incorporated this entire section from the Dīgha Nikāya back into the Majjhima Nikāya, and even acknowledge this provenance by re-titling it the ‘Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’. Perhaps a better title would be the ‘Piltown Sutta’. This canonical innovation is extraordinary. While it is common for a word or phrase to slip between the cracks, I do not know any other place where a large body of text has been moved, obviously in fairly recent times. No doubt this editorial outrage was perpetrated with the idea of further exaggerating the already overblown status of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. But the result is rather the reverse – such clumsy mishandling leaves all-too-obvious fingerprints at the scene of the crime. The altered version is found in the so-called ‘Sixth Council’ edition published by the Vipassana Research Institute, but was inserted earlier, for the notes to the PTS Pali (edited in 1888) state that the Burmese manuscript includes under the four noble truths ‘a passage of some length, borrowed from the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya’.<sup>399</sup> This possibly refers to the Fifth Council edition. There is a Pali work called Saṃgāyanapucchāvissajjanā (included in the VRI CD), which gives the questions and answers on the texts as spoken in the Council, although it doesn’t say which Council – presumably it is the Fifth or Sixth. This also includes the ‘Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’ in the Majjhima, and has the temerity to assert that because of its great usefulness to meditators this text was recited ‘twice’ ‘in detail’ by the redactors in ancient times. While most other discourses rate a bare mention in this work, the Mahā (sic!) Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is distinguished by detailing the contents of the meditation exercises. A similarly obvious bias is apparent in the Vipassana Research Institute’s online version of the Tipitaka. Under the contents table of the Majjhima Nikāya, almost all discourses are simply listed by their title; but the Mahā (sic!) Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is again singled out by individually listing all twenty-one sections. The meditative bias of those who have put together these recensions of the Tipitaka are well known: the questioner at the Sixth Council was Mahāsi Sayadaw, the founder of the main ‘dry vipassana’ meditation system; and the VRI Tipitaka was put made by the followers of the Goenka tradition, the other main vipassana school. Although Buddhists are generally a charmingly placid lot, I think we should not take such crudely partisan manipulation of our sacred scriptures lying down. Protest! I did – I sent an e-mail to the VRI alerting them to this alteration and requesting that they restore the Majjhima version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. But there was no reply. Does no-one care? The only good thing to emerge from this blatant sectarian revision of the Tipitaka is that no-one can reasonably insist that the Tipitaka must have remained unchanged for all time.

The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is the only significant discourse in the Dīgha Nikāya that is not found in the Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha Āgama. This can be no mere oversight, for it is also absent from the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha. I would therefore consider the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a leading contender for the title of the latest discourse in the four Nikāyas, a lost waif straying over from the early abhidhamma. It is worth noting that this is the only discourse in all the existing collections to be duplicated in both the Majjhima and the Dīgha, further evidence of its anomalous character. It is obviously just the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta padded out with further material, and again, the increase is not small. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta treats the four noble truths with a bare enunciation. In the Suttas this kind of formulation often indicates, not vipassana, but the realization of stream entry; thus it could have been originally intended to express the results of the practice of the previous sections. But the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta gathers much material from elsewhere in the Suttas, ending up with the longest of all expositions of the truths, virtually

doubling the length of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and clearly presenting the four noble truths section as an extended course in vipassana.

The new material is mainly identical with the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta.<sup>400</sup> The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta adds a lengthy analysis of the second and third noble truths to the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta material. This is structured around the following series of dhammas, spelled out for each of the sense media: external sense media, internal sense media, cognition, contact, feeling, perception, volition, craving, initial application, sustained application. The Saṃyutta Nikāya includes a similar list, although it has the elements and the aggregates for the final two members of the list, rather than initial & sustained application. Several of the Saṃyuttas containing this series are missing from the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta.<sup>401</sup> Nevertheless, a similar list, again omitting the final two members, is found in the Sarvāstivāda Satyavibhaṅga Sūtra. The only place I know of where the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna list occurs verbatim in the four Nikāyas is in the ‘repetition series’ appended to the Aṅguttara sevens.<sup>402</sup> Such sections are usually to be regarded as late, and in the present case the whole passage is ignored by the commentary. These considerations suggest that the list, even in its simple form, is probably late.

This list is an expanded form of the psychological analysis of the cognitive process first enunciated in the third discourse, the Ādittapariyāya Sutta, and repeated countless times subsequently. Eventually, this sequence would evolve into the *cittavīthi*, the final, definitive exposition of psychological processes worked out in great detail by the later abhidhammikas. Thus the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta stands as an important bridge to the Abhidhamma. We have already discussed the fact that almost all this four noble truths material is found in the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga exposition of the truths.

Needless to say, the vast bulk of the new material in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is vipassana oriented, continuing the trend we have consistently observed in the development of the satipaṭṭhana texts within the Pali canon. Nevertheless, the exposition of the truths, and therefore the Sutta as a whole, ends with the four jhanas as right samadhi of the path, re-asserting the basic function of satipaṭṭhana to lead up to jhana.

The significance of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta can best be understood in light of the structure of the Dīgha Nikāya as a whole. The most authentic and often repeated teaching in the Dīgha sets out the very heart of Dhamma practice. In the discussion of the GIST we saw that, leaving aside the Brahmajāla Sutta, the Dīgha Nikāya starts off with a series of twelve discourses expounding the gradual training in detail, including the four jhanas. This would be pounded into the heads of the Dīgha students over and again as *the way of training*. In fact the GIST would suggest that this section was the original core around which the Dīgha was formed. Thus the whole of the Dīgha may well have started out as a jhana-manual. There is little vipassana material in the Dīgha. A striking example of this is the rarity of the five aggregates. Leaving aside the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, meditation on the aggregates is mentioned only in the legendary context of the Mahāpadāna Sutta. Elsewhere the aggregates receive but a bare enunciation in the proto-abhidhamma compilations such as the Saṅgīti and Dasuttara Suttas.

It seems likely that the compilers of the Theravāda Dīgha Nikāya, at some point after the Dharmaguptaka schism, wished to include some more vipassana material to counterbalance the strong samadhi emphasis. Now, there are three texts treating mindfulness practice in detail in the Majjhima: the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Ānāpānasati Sutta, and the Kāyagatāsati Sutta. The latter two clearly emphasize samadhi, so in choosing which of the three to ‘promote’ to the Dīgha the compilers chose the most vipassana oriented text and padded it out with further vipassana material to redress the imbalance of the Dīgha Nikāya as a whole. And in context, this was most reasonable. But when the discourse is divorced from its context and treated as a blueprint for a

meditation technique different from, even superior to, the mainstream samadhi practice, a shift of emphasis becomes a radical distortion of meaning.

We may be able to pin down more precisely the date of the formation of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. We have already noted that it is absent from both the Sarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka Dīrghas. Now, the Sarvāstivāda schism was pre-Asoka, and the Dharmaguptaka schism was, according to several sources, somewhat later.<sup>403</sup> So the Dharmaguptaka schism must have been in the time of Asoka or perhaps some time after that. The Sri Lankan mission arrived in the Asokan period, and the Theravāda had a strong presence on the island from that time. It seems that the headquarters of the Theravāda must have been in Sri Lanka from quite early, for an inscription at Nagarjunikonda in Southern India refers to a monastery belonging to the ‘Theravādin teachers of Sri Lanka’.<sup>404</sup> Given their evident doctrinal and textual closeness, it is plausible to think of the Theravāda and the Dharmaguptaka as being the Northern and Southern, or Indian and Sinhalese, branches of the Vibhajjavāda, the differences between the schools being as much a matter of geography as doctrine. (The sources indicate that the Dharmaguptaka in fact split, not directly from the Theravāda, but from the Mahīśāsaka, another very similar school.)

This raises the possibility that the final editing of the Pali Nikāyas was carried out on Sri Lankan soil. This case was put by Oliver Abeynayake in his article ‘Sri Lanka’s Contribution to the Development of the Pali Canon.’<sup>405</sup> To summarize a few of his points, much of the Vinaya Parivāra was composed in Sri Lanka. In addition, the restructuring of the Vinaya Piṭaka, from the early form of the Bhikkhu Vibhaṅga and Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga, attested in all schools including the Theravāda Vinaya Culavagga itself, to the current division along the lines of the ‘Pārājika Pali’ and ‘Pācittiya Pali’ is unique to Sri Lanka, and may plausibly be regarded as a Sinhalese development. Several sections of the Khuddaka Nikāya, including the Khuddakapāṭha, may plausibly be attributed to Sri Lanka. Within the four major Nikāyas, Yakkaduwe Sri Pragnarama, the late principal of the Vidyālanakara Pirivena in Sri Lanka, has identified, in the Theravāda Majjhima, eight sentences of the Mūlapariyāya Sutta and four verses of the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta that are in Sinhalese Prakrit, not Pali. In fact, the Theravāda commentaries themselves assert that some of the material in the Dīgha was added by the Sinhalese elders, namely the closing verses of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, starting with ‘There were eight measures of the remains of the one endowed with vision...’. This statement seems most plausible, since the verses are in a late metre, and are tacked on in fairly redundant manner; also they include, not merely worship of relics, but specifically the teeth relics, which is one of the most distinctive features of Sinhalese Buddhism. Moreover, the line preceding them is a catch-phrase in Pali (*evam’etaṃ bhūtapubbaṃ*, ‘that is how it was’) that typically refers to far-off events in the legendary past, like the English ‘Once upon a time...’ The commentary even admits that this phrase was inserted in the Third Council, at the time of Asoka. However, despite all this very strong evidence, some of the verses are, surprisingly enough, included in the Sanskrit version. This contains the verse ‘There were eight measures of the remains of the one endowed with vision...’ and that on the worship of the teeth relics. It is most unlikely that a Sinhalese composition found its way into a Sanskrit text in the north of India, so perhaps these verses were added in India after all. But the later verses, starting with ‘By their power this fruitful earth...’, are absent from the Sanskrit, and may well have been added in Sri Lanka.

This last point may indirectly bear on the date of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The closing verses of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta are predominately of late metres such as *vaṃsattha*. One of the few other places in the canon that contains *vaṃsattha* and other similarly late, elaborate verse styles is the Lakkhaṇa Sutta.<sup>406</sup> This hagiographical text is found in the Sarvāstivādin Majjhima and in the Theravāda, but not the Dharmaguptaka or Sarvāstivāda, Dīgha. It therefore must have been transferred from the Majjhima to the Dīgha after the Dharmaguptaka schism, at around the same time as the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was created. This shift seems to have been prompted by the

large-scale expansion of the text. The Sarvāstivāda Madhyama version merely speaks of the two careers open to a Great Man, and lists the 32 marks. The Theravāda Dīgha version adds detailed prose explanations and verse elaborations of the workings of kamma and its fruits regarding the 32 marks.<sup>407</sup> The commentary says the verses were added by Venerable Ānanda. Although this cannot be accepted as literally true, it does imply that the commentators were aware that the verses were added later and by a different hand. They could plausibly be ascribed to monks following Ānanda's devotional tradition. As we noted, these verses are similar in style to the closing verses of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, which the commentary says were added in Sri Lanka. Given this, as well as the verses' evident lateness and omission from the Sarvāstivāda, it seems reasonable to suggest that they were also added in Sri Lanka. The verses were probably added to the Lakkhaṇa Sutta around the same time as the extra four noble truths material was added to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and so we may thus suggest that the resulting Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was composed in Sri Lanka.

We may then ask when these additions may have occurred. Again, there is no direct evidence, but we can seek a convenient peg on which to hang them – this will at least give us something to argue about. Reviewing the timeline of early Sinhalese history, we note that, after the introduction of the Buddhist texts in the time of Asoka, the first literary activity of major importance mentioned is during the reign of Vaṭṭagāminī. At that time, due to internal strife (war with the Tamils – some things never change!), the lineage of oral transmission of the Tipitaka was nearly broken. The Sangha made the momentous decision to write down the Tipitaka, asserting that study and preservation of the texts was more important than practice of their contents (a decision that, sadly, has set the agenda for the Theravāda until the present day). According to recent scholarly opinion this occurred around 20 B.C.E. I suggest that this was when the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was created.

## CHAPTER 15: THE SOURCE

There is an unfortunate side-effect of the kind of textual analysis I have undertaken in this book. It is not all that difficult to deconstruct such ancient, heavily edited texts as the Buddhist scriptures. There are abundant fault-lines, anomalies, and obscurities if one wishes to look. But what are we to do – demolish the palace and leave just a pile of rubble? This too is not authentic to the texts, for the undeniable fact is that, despite everything, the Nikāyas/Āgamas offer us a vast body of teachings springing from a remarkably uniform vision, a clarity and harmony of perspective that is unparalleled in any comparably large and ancient body of writings. To convey the impression that the situation is hopelessly confused and problematic is to deny the extraordinary fact that we have the texts at all. Somehow, the group of men and women that made up the ancient Buddhist Sangha managed to organize themselves to produce and maintain a magnificent spiritual literature for 2500 years. While denial that there are problems is naïve and untenable, throwing our hands up in the air in despair shows an excess of what the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta calls 'spiritual depression' (*nirāmisā domanassa*). I think the lines of unity and consistency in satipaṭṭhana are far more significant and powerful than the fractures. But in this book so far, the threads of connection and continuity are buried in the pages of analysis: the question is, how to make this unity vivid?

My solution is to present a full reconstruction of what I consider to be the authentic source material for the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. While, obviously, any such attempt is deeply problematic, I do not think it is less problematic than simply walking away and leaving the job undone. None of the scriptural traditions offer us a pile of meaningless, deconstructed rubble. Reading a reconstructed text will at least allow those interested to gain a more immediate impression of

what the satipatthana teachings may have been like, if my methods and conclusions have any validity.

Before proceeding to the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla, let us review the ground we have covered so far. The following table displays a summary of the contents of satipatthana as represented in the above materials. It graphically shows the strands of continuity and discontinuity between the recensions. The table does not differentiate between the versions in the Theravāda Dīgha and Majjhima. Sections that I consider authentic are shaded. The identification of the Indian originals for some of the Chinese terms in the contemplation of mind is uncertain.

**Table 15.1: The Satipaṭṭhāna Material**



	Vibhaṅga	Dharmaskandha	Śāriputrābhidharma	Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra	Ekāyana Sūtra	Prajñāpāramita Sūtra
B			Four postures Clear comprehension		Four postures Clear comprehension Cutting off thought Suppressing thought Ānāpānasati		Four Postures Clear comprehension
O			Ānāpānasati	Ānāpānasati Four postures Clear comprehension			Ānāpānasati
D	Parts of the body	Parts of the body 6 elements	Parts of the body 4 elements Food Space (5 <sup>th</sup> element) Oozing orifices Charnel ground	Parts of the body 4 elements	Parts of the body 6 elements	Parts of the body 4 elements	4 elements Parts of the body
Y				Charnel ground	Charnel ground	Oozing orifices Charnel ground	Charnel ground
FEEL-INGS	Pleasant/painful/neutral Carnal/spiritual	Pleasant/painful/neutral Bodily/Mental Carnal/spiritual Sensual/Non-sensual	Pleasant/painful/neutral Carnal/spiritual	Pleasant/painful/neutral Carnal/spiritual	Pleasant/painful/neutral Bodily/Mental Carnal/spiritual Sensual/Non-sensual	Pleasant/painful/neutral Carnal/spiritual No mixed feelings	-----
M	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion Defiled/undefiled	With/without lust With/without anger With/without delusion With/without affection With/without attainment With/without confusion Contracted/scattered	-----
I	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered Slothful/energetic	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered	Contracted/scattered	
N	Exalted/unexalted Surpassed/unsurpassed	Small/great Distracted/undistracted Quiet/unquiet Samadhi/no samadhi	Exalted/unexalted Surpassed/unsurpassed	Exalted/unexalted Surpassed/unsurpassed	Small/great Lower/higher Developed/undeveloped	Universal/not universal Exalted/unexalted Surpassed/unsurpassed	
D	Samadhi/no samadhi Released/unreleased	Developed/undeveloped Released/unreleased	Samadhi/no samadhi Released/unreleased	Samadhi/no samadhi Released/unreleased	Samadhi/no samadhi Released/unreleased	Samadhi/no samadhi Released/unreleased	
D H A M M A S	5 hindrances 7 enlightenment-factors	5 hindrances 6 sense media 7 enlightenment-factors	5 hindrances 6 sense media 7 enlightenment-factors	5 hindrances 5 aggregates 6 sense media 7 enlightenment-factors	6 sense media 5 hindrances 7 enlightenment-factors	(5 hindrances in intro & conc.) 7 enlightenment-factors 4 jhanas	-----
R E F R A I N	Internal/external	Internal/external Shortcomings	Internal/external Shortcomings Rise/fall Knowledge Independence	Internal/external Rise/fall Knowledge Independence	Internal/external Knowledge	(Internal/external in introduction only. Body: refrains vary. Feelings, mind, dhammas:) Rise/fall Knowledge Independence Arahantship	Internal/external Independence

The basic principle in editing the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla is simple. We have seven early texts that teach satipatthana in detail. These all have much in common with each other. They are also substantially different from any other teachings on satipatthana, being the only places that spell out the details of the four satipatthanas. One possible explanation is that they are descended from a common source. The most likely content of this source is the shared material found in each of the texts. However, we also have to bear in mind that different types of text use different editing principles. For example, the Theravāda Abhidhamma typically does not include similes, so the absence of such material in the Vibhaṅga does not suggest that it was absent from the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla. Similarly, the Ekāyana Sūtra is somewhat later, erratically edited, and divergent compared with the other sources. Generally, then, the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla will include only material found in all texts, but will occasionally allow phrases found only in four or five.

By taking just the common material, we end up with a text that, in effect, is much like the Theravāda Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga, minus the special Abhidhamma material. I hope I have shown in the discussion of this text that it is refreshingly free of the kinds of anomalies and problems found elsewhere. So my postulated \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla is not mechanically produced by assuming that the concordance of the texts 'must' be the original core. I have also considered the internal coherence of the material, intertextual relationships with the rest of the scriptures, cultural and philosophical contexts at the time of the Buddha, evolution of sectarian positions, and so on. I think all of this evidence taken together constitutes a powerful case for the main thrust of my reinterpretation of satipatthana. Using the concordance of material from all the sources we end up with a text that is internally logical and consistent, fits neatly with the satipatthana teachings in the rest of the canon, and closely resembles an existing text.

In such a delicate operation I run a serious risk of being misunderstood, so I must make my claims explicit. The tradition supplies us with a rational explanation of how the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas were produced; that is, they were spoken by the Buddha. That may be so. However, for a number of reasons I find this implausible. Most importantly, the traditional explanation cannot account for the divergences between the existing texts. If I wish to offer an alternative, I should supply a demonstration of how the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas could have evolved that: 1) is rational; 2) accords with historico-critical methodology; 3) accounts systematically for the existing texts on satipatthana; 4) enhances understanding of the subject; 5) allows us to draw inferences about the evolution of doctrine in early Buddhism that may be tested by comparison with other texts; and 6), most important, is useful for practice of Dhamma-Vinaya. I believe this analysis fulfils these criteria. This, at the very least, should be enough to shift the burden of proof.

It would certainly be unjustified to claim that this reconstruction of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta offers an exposition of satipatthana that is complete and exclusive. Only in the later developed versions do we see attempts to assemble in one coherent system all of the chief teachings on satipatthana. It is clear that the Buddha taught satipatthana very often in brief. The detailed meaning would no doubt have been interpreted in light of the other discourses on the relevant topics. Probably any of the discourses dealing with body contemplation could be brought in under the umbrella of satipatthana, and so with the remaining three, too. All of the available traditions, while differing on the detailed content, agree in treating satipatthana, especially body contemplation, in this way. It is obviously not at all implausible to suppose that, say, the elements and charnel ground contemplations were also authentic, but as I stated above, I do not see the inclusion or exclusion of such specific exercises as significantly affecting the doctrinal orientation of the discourse. The \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla should be seen as pointing to certain core aspects of satipatthana accepted among the pre-sectarian community, rather than as definitive and final. As such it remains relevant as a way of highlighting these common features whether or not there was ever an actual closely corresponding text. I present my postulated reconstruction in full, without the customary

elisions, in order to make it as explicit as possible. First, though, I will briefly run over my reasons for inclusion or exclusion of some particular sections.

**Setting:** I think the original setting was at Kammassadamma, but I leave the setting out of the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla to emphasize that this material is not really part of the discourse, but was added by redactors.

**Audience:** I follow the lead of the Sarvāstivāda and have the discourse addressed to monks and nuns. While the textual support for this is admittedly slim, this is my little effort to redress the balance of 2500 years of male redactors. However, for convenience I retain the male pronoun, despite the slight incongruity that results.

**Path to Convergence:** I have my doubts about this, as I think the evidence of the Saṃyuttas implies that it was meant for a specifically Brahmanical context, and that is lacking in the \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla. However, I bow to the agreement of the three main Suttas and include it.

**Auxiliary formula:** Although absent from two of the Suttas, I include it because of the agreement of the Abhidhamma texts and the Prajñāpāramita, and assume that its loss in the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsaṅghika Suttas was through abridgement, as indicated in the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta.

**Internal/external:** I bow to the weight of sources and present the integrated version, rather than following each exercise.

**Body contemplation:** I include the simile, which is found consistently in the Sutta versions, including the Prajñāpāramita, and assume its absence from the Ekāyana Sutra is accidental.

**Refrain:** I think all the refrains have their problems, but there is sufficient agreement among the Sutta versions to point to a common ancestor, though perhaps none exactly reflect that source. The most distinctive common elements seem to be that one establishes mindfulness for knowledge and vision; and one dwells independent. I think there is some relationship between the *patissati* of the Theravāda and the ‘vision’ of the Chinese versions, but am not sure if the Theravāda changed ‘vision’ into ‘mindfulness’, or the Chinese mistook *patissati* for *passati* (or whatever the exact dialectical reading was).

**Ending:** I repeat the ‘path to convergence’, but omit the guarantee of attainment, which is only found in two versions, and could easily have been imported from elsewhere in the canon.

## \*Satipaṭṭhāna Mūla

This is the path to convergence, monks & nuns, for the purification of beings, for surmounting sorrow & lamentation, for ending bodily & mental suffering, for understanding the way, for witnessing Nibbana: that is, the four satipatthanas. What four?

Here, a monk or nun abides contemplating a body in the body internally, he abides contemplating a body in the body externally, he abides contemplating a body in the body internally & externally – ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed desire & aversion for the world. He abides contemplating a feeling in the feelings internally, he abides contemplating a feeling in the feelings externally, he abides contemplating a feeling

in the feelings internally & externally – ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed desire & aversion for the world. He abides contemplating a mind in the mind internally, he abides contemplating a mind in the mind externally, he abides contemplating a mind in the mind internally & externally – ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed desire & aversion for the world. He abides contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas internally, he abides contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas externally, he abides contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas internally & externally – ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed desire & aversion for the world.

And how, monks & nuns, does a monk or nun abide contemplating a body in the body?

Here, a monk or nun reviews this very body up from the soles of the feet and down from the tips of the hair, bounded by skin and full of many kinds of impurities thus: ‘In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spit, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.’ Just as if there was a bag with an opening at both ends, full of various sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, mung beans, peas, millet, and white rice, a man with good eyes were to open it up and review it thus: ‘This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are mung beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice.’ In just the same way, a monk or nun reviews this very body up from the soles of the feet and down from the tips of the hair, bounded by skin and full of many kinds of impurities thus: ‘In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spit, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.’

Mindfulness on the body is well established for the sake of knowledge & vision. One abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world. That is how a monk or nun abides contemplating a body in the body.

And further, monks and nuns, how does a monk or nun abide contemplating a feeling in the feelings?

Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling a monk or nun understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’ When feeling an unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel an unpleasant feeling.’ When feeling a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling.’

When feeling a carnal pleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a carnal pleasant feeling.’

When feeling a spiritual pleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a spiritual pleasant feeling.’

When feeling a carnal unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a carnal unpleasant feeling.’

When feeling a spiritual unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a spiritual unpleasant feeling.’

When feeling a carnal neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a carnal neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling.’

When feeling a spiritual neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling he understands: ‘I feel a spiritual neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling.’

Mindfulness on feelings is well established for the sake of knowledge & vision. One abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world. That is how a monk or nun abides contemplating a feeling in the feelings.

And further, monks and nuns, how does a monk or nun abide contemplating a mind in the mind?

Here a monk or nun understands mind with lust as 'mind with lust'.  
He understands mind without lust as 'mind without lust'.  
He understands mind with anger as 'mind with anger'.  
He understands mind without anger as 'mind without anger'.  
He understands mind with delusion as 'mind with delusion'.  
He understands mind without delusion as 'mind without delusion'.  
He understands contracted mind as 'contracted mind'.  
He understands distracted mind as 'distracted mind'.  
He understands exalted mind as 'exalted mind'.  
He understands unexalted mind as 'unexalted mind'.  
He understands surpassed mind as 'surpassed mind'.  
He understands unsurpassed mind as 'unsurpassed mind'.  
He understands mind in samadhi as 'mind in samadhi'.  
He understands mind not in samadhi as 'mind not in samadhi'.  
He understands released mind as 'released mind'.  
He understands unreleased mind as 'unreleased mind'.

Mindfulness on the mind is well established for the sake of knowledge & vision. One abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world. That is how a monk or nun abides contemplating a mind in the mind.

And further, monks and nuns, how does a monk or nun abide contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas?

Here, when there is sensual desire in him, a monk or nun understands: 'There is sensual desire in me'. When there is no sensual desire in him, he understands: 'There is no sensual desire in me'. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen sensual desire comes to be. And he understands how the abandoning of the arisen sensual desire comes to be. And he understands how the non-arising in the future of the unarisen sensual desire comes to be.

When there is anger in him, he understands: 'There is anger in me'. When there is no anger in him, he understands: 'There is no anger in me'. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen anger comes to be. And he understands how the abandoning of the arisen anger comes to be. And he understands how the non-arising in the future of the unarisen anger comes to be.

When there is sloth & torpor in him, he understands: 'There is sloth & torpor in me'. When there is no sloth & torpor in him, he understands: 'There is no sloth & torpor in me'. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen sloth & torpor comes to be. And he understands how the abandoning of the arisen sloth & torpor comes to be. And he understands how the non-arising in the future of the unarisen sloth & torpor comes to be.

When there is restlessness & remorse in him, he understands: 'There is restlessness & remorse in me'. When there is no restlessness & remorse in him, he understands: 'There is no restlessness & remorse in me'. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen restlessness & remorse comes to be. And he understands how the abandoning of the arisen restlessness & remorse comes to be. And he understands how the non-arising in the future of the unarisen restlessness & remorse comes to be.

When there is doubt in him, he understands: ‘There is doubt in me’. When there is no doubt in him, he understands: ‘There is no doubt in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen doubt comes to be. And he understands how the abandoning of the arisen doubt comes to be. And he understands how the non-arising in the future of the unarisen doubt comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of mindfulness in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of mindfulness in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of investigation of mindfulness of dhammas in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of investigation of dhammas in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of investigation of dhammas in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of investigation of dhammas in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of investigation of dhammas comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of investigation of dhammas comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of energy in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of energy in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of energy in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of energy in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of energy comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of energy comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of rapture in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of rapture in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of rapture in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of rapture in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of rapture comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of rapture comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of tranquillity in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of tranquillity in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of tranquillity in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of tranquillity in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of tranquillity comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of tranquillity comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of samadhi in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of samadhi in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of samadhi in him, he understands: ‘There is no enlightenment-factor of samadhi in me’. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of samadhi comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of samadhi comes to be.

When there is the enlightenment-factor of equanimity in him, he understands: ‘There is the enlightenment-factor of equanimity in me’. When there is no enlightenment-factor of

equanimity in him, he understands: 'There is no enlightenment-factor of equanimity in me'. And he understands how the arising of the unarisen enlightenment-factor of equanimity comes to be. And he understands how the fulfilment through development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of equanimity comes to be.

Mindfulness on dhammas is well established for the sake of knowledge & vision. One abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world. That is how a monk or nun abides contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas.

This is the path leading to convergence, monks & nuns, for the purification of beings, for surmounting sorrow & lamentation, for ending bodily & mental suffering, for understanding the way, for witnessing Nibbana; that is, the four satipatthanas.

Based on the above reconstruction, what can we say about the satipatthana method? Here I beg leave to depart for a time from the rigorous strictures of textual analysis to offer a more interpretive and personal reflection on what this text means for meditation.

Start with the body. The body is our primary object of attachment and identification, deeply bound up with our most basic biological drives: sexual reproduction and the assimilation of food. Our thoughts and concerns, our worries and plans are for the large proportion of our time occupied with it – how to feed it, cloth it, house it, keep it comfortable. Any spiritual tradition worthy of the name must recognize the limitations of corporeal existence; and yet some overstep the mark, following the dangerous and unbalanced path of rejecting, ignoring, or repressing the body and its desires. The distinctively Buddhist approach is to walk fearlessly into the lion's den. We plunge into the guts and sinews, the blood and the bones, making the body itself the prime object of our meditation. This is not from gruesome morbidity, but from the wish to truly understand, accept, and let go of this our fleshly home. We contemplate both the principle of life – the fragile, delicate breath – and the principle of death – a decomposing corpse.

The body is a solid and familiar roosting-place of consciousness, less changeable than thought, and hence forms an ideal basis for stabilizing the mind. Attention is brought to the breath, to an image of the parts of the body, or to the inner experience of physical properties such as hardness, softness, heat, and cold. As awareness is continually refocused and refined, the mind sinks deeper and deeper into the chosen object. We gain a direct and quite amazing apprehension of this body that is habitually obscured beneath our desires, aversions, and fears. The more clearly we see a particular aspect of the body, the more apparent it becomes that our everyday perception of the body as an entity is largely an illusion concocted in our minds.

The image of the body in our mind becomes very subtle; so subtle that the mental aspect of physical experience becomes prominent. We are moving into the contemplation of feelings. Feeling in Buddhist context may be defined as the hedonic tone of experience that stimulates reactions of attraction, aversion, or indifference. Normally feelings are somewhat dimly perceived concomitants of experience that manipulate our attention into patterns of desire and denial. We devote our lives to seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, but rarely do we take the opportunity to acquaint ourselves more deeply with these processes. Feelings are notoriously nebulous and changeable: physical feelings tend to be overpowered by the accompanying physical impact, and mental feelings are enigmatic and complex. But by treating the contemplation of feelings primarily as emerging from the tranquillising process of body contemplation these problems are minimized. For a time our feelings become more stable,

simple, and clear: a subtle and cool sense of rapture and bliss welling up from within the meditation subject.

One of the most astounding revelations for any meditator is the changeability of the mind's capacity to be aware, like an eye that dilates and contracts in response to the environment. Normally this is extremely difficult to see; for we are seeing the seer itself. There is no external measure. In the contemplation of mind we see how cognition operates under different conditions: burnt up by lust, withered by bitterness, darkened and compressed by sloth. We see how the mind opens up, blossoms, and expands under wholesome influences, so our knowing has more clarity and focus. We become acutely aware of the mind as awareness itself, soft and tender as a flower or a baby, yet at the same time possessed of incredible strength and resilience. At this level of development the mind becomes an instrument of unparalleled sensitivity.

We maintain a clear-eyed awareness of the various contrasting feelings and mind-states that are directly present in consciousness. Contrast sows the seeds of understanding. Here we are cultivating a wonderful garden for the flowering of wisdom; but we have not as yet turned this potential directly to inquiry into causes. In the contemplation of dhammas we become aware not just of presence, but also of absence; and this is a deeper matter, for in seeing absence one sees impermanence. But then the practice digs deeper still. Each factor is treated in terms of an investigation into causes – one understands how the hindrances arise, how they are abandoned, how the enlightenment factors are produced, and how they are developed to perfection. The hindrances obstruct samadhi; the enlightenment-factors produce samadhi. Understanding through careful investigation the causes of the hindrances and the enlightenment-factors, one understands the causes leading the mind towards or away from jhana. Paying attention by way of root or matrix eradicates the hindrances and arouses the enlightenment factors, while paying attention away from the root does the opposite.

In body contemplation, we apply ourselves to the meditation object. Here, we are basically just following the meditation instructions. Gradually we see the more subtle feelings and mind-states more clearly, and as the practice matures one enters jhana. At first this will be more or less a hit-and-miss affair. But as we repeat the practice over and over we understand why the mind is sometimes peaceful and sometimes not. As wisdom deepens, samadhi becomes more reliable. These are the central, most clearly and powerfully realized processes in our spiritual consciousness, so the meditator will automatically treat this as a paradigm for understanding the nature of conditioned experience in general. Thus the contemplation of dhammas sees the understanding of samatha maturing almost inevitably into vipassana. The whole process of satipatthana is so exquisitely normal it is almost misleading to call it a 'method'. One is not deliberately applying an artificial, preconceived scheme; the various stages simply signpost the unfolding of meditation.

## CHAPTER 16: TRENDS: SARVĀSTIVĀDA AND THERAVĀDA

We may now broaden the focus somewhat, considering a claim made earlier, that this analysis of satipatthana allows us to make testable inferences about doctrinal developments. In this chapter we may consider some unshared, possibly sectarian, material in the discourses of the two main schools whose texts are largely available to us, namely the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda, as well some developments in the Abhidhamma period. Historically, then, we are here interested in the Asokan and following period. The effort is made to incorporate some perspective on how the



religion as a whole was evolving in this time. The next chapter will look at the later period of Indian Buddhism.

## THERAVĀDA AND VIPASSANA

We have suggested that the difference in character of the emerging schools is reflected in the different orientation of their versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is moving to a proto-abhidhammic stance, where vipassana is conceived as the systematic analysis of a comprehensive array of phenomena. A similar idea occurs in the Anupada Sutta,<sup>408</sup> which is one of only a few discourses from the Majjhima Nikāya that has not so far been discovered in the existing Āgamas. There, the Buddha praises Venerable Sāriputta, who is especially associated with the Theravāda school, for his practice of analytical insight based on the eight attainments. In addition to the usual jhana factors, the discourse contains a unique long list of mental factors in strikingly Abhidhammic style; indeed, the Anupada Sutta is one of the key texts which has been invoked by the abhidhammikas to support the notion that the Buddha, even if he did not actually teach the Abhidhamma Piṭaka itself, at least taught in Abhidhamma style. But the Anupada Sutta is clearly late. It consists chiefly of stock phrases and technical terms; if these are left out we are left with only a few lines that may be considered the characteristic vocabulary of the Anupada Sutta. These lines include at least three words suggestive of a late idiom (*anupada*, *vavattheti*, and *pāramī*). In addition, the text is poorly edited. The jhana factors are listed, as per the usual Sutta idiom, with the conjunctive particle *ca*. But the remaining factors are listed in the Abhidhamma style with no *ca*; they have clearly been inserted from another source.

Another example is furnished by the Chachakka Sutta.<sup>409</sup> The Theravāda version is one of the most incisive texts dealing purely with insight in the canon. The elegance of form and profundity of content argue for its authenticity. The six groups of six dhammas that gives the discourse its title are similar to the exposition of the second and third noble truths in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, suggesting an Abhidhamma leaning. The Theravāda version celebrates the discourse by having 60 monks attain arahantship at the conclusion. This detail is missing from the Sarvāstivāda, which is unsurprising, since the traditions seldom agree in their accounts of attainment while listening to a discourse. Generally, such stories are more profitably considered as a guide to the propaganda value of a discourse for the particular tradition rather than as genuine historical records. Both the setting and the contents of the Sarvāstivāda version display considerable divergence, especially the inclusion of many groups of dhammas dealing with meditation and samadhi practice, thus altering the pure insight orientation of the Theravāda version. The text is far less balanced and elegant, and shows all the signs of a gradual accretion. In fact it has been pointed out by Watanabe that the added factors show very strong similarities to the matika of the Dharmaskandha.<sup>410</sup>

We have had occasion above to refer to the Mahā Hatthipadopama, acknowledging the significance of its mode of presenting the four elements through focussing finely on one aspect of the four noble truths. As one of the weightiest discourses given by Venerable Sāriputta, hailed by the Theravāda and others as the first abhidhammika, we are not surprised to see that, as with the Anupada Sutta, certain aspects of the teachings suggest an affinity with the Abhidhamma.<sup>411</sup> This discourse is one of the most detailed treatments of the elements in the early Suttas. While the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda versions are very similar, there seem to be slight sectarian differences. There are some editing anomalies in the Theravāda that imply that the Sarvāstivāda, especially in its general treatment of the external elements, may be a little more reliable. In our current context, we are interested in what appears to be a subtle shift in the samatha/vipassana balance. Where the Theravāda has Venerable Sāriputta saying that each element is to be contemplated as ‘this is not mine...’ etc., the Sarvāstivāda lacks this detail.<sup>412</sup> And where both

versions encourage one to avoid anger by reflecting on the simile of the saw, the Sarvāstivāda complements this by adding the passage on spreading universal loving-kindness, a detail lacking in the Theravāda.<sup>413</sup> So while both versions clearly acknowledge both samatha and vipassana in elements contemplation, there seems to be an ever-so-slight difference in orientation. Another slight difference may be noticed in the details of how the perceptual process is described.<sup>414</sup> Each gives three conditions for the arising of cognition; but the Sarvāstivāda presents all three as either being present or absent, while the Theravāda elaborates different cases where certain conditions may be either present or absent. This is a unique passage, often quoted, and the elaboration might be taken as evidence of a later, Abhidhammic, development, although the evidence is much less strong than in the case of the Anupada Sutta. It would be interesting to see if the specific differences are in fact worked out in the respective Abhidhammas. Our suspicion of emerging sectarian perspectives in this discourse is confirmed by the ending. The Theravāda culminates simply by speaking of the ending of greed, anger, and delusion regarding the five aggregates. But the Sarvāstivāda emphasises that such detachment must be towards the aggregates past, future, and present, thus suggesting the continuity in time that is so typical of this school.

Such discourses indicate a trend. Not only is there a shift in emphasis from samatha to vipassana, but the nature of vipassana itself is changing. The early discourses treat vipassana as understanding principles, not as accumulating information. They do not treat vipassana in terms of a comprehensive analysis of an objectively defined set of mind/body phenomena – that is why the abhidhammikas have supported this idea by invoking these texts. In time, this idea would grow alongside the idea of a path of pure insight that could dispense with jhana. But here we have merely the beginnings of a long slow process. In fact the Anupada Sutta treats the jhanic experience as intrinsic to the ability to clearly and precisely define each mental factor; in this it pre-empted the compilers of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī.

It seems most likely that such texts were formulated by the Theravādins specifically to authorize their new direction. That is to say, it is not that Theravādin ‘dry vipassana’ meditation is authentic because it is taught in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was assembled in order to authenticate the move towards dry insight. Of course, we should give those teachers of old the benefit of the doubt. They presumably believed they were merely ‘drawing out’ the implications of the embryonic Sutta material that they were editing. I have already emphasized that the process at this stage did not involve any radically new doctrines, but merely a reshaping, a shift of perspective.

Having identified this trend, and having pinpointed it to the nascent Theravāda, it can then – with due caution and always seeking independent corroboration – be used as a precedent. Teachings within the Suttas that are highly analytic and display the Theravādin Abhidhamma style of pedantic, systematic repetitions may be suspected to be late. Thus our analysis provides us with further interpretive tools.

## SARVĀSTIVĀDA AND SAMADHI

If the Theravādin emphasis on vipassana as evidenced in their recension of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is subtly discernable elsewhere in the Pali canon, so too the Sarvāstivādin emphasis on samadhi is apparent in their Madhyama Āgama. A number of interesting discourses with no Pali cognates deal with jhana. These texts are so little known that it seems worthwhile to summarize them here.

## Dependent Liberation

MA 44, MA 54, and MA 55 present versions of the doctrinal framework that I call ‘dependent liberation’, known elsewhere as ‘transcendental dependant origination’. The Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta Āgama includes a saṃyutta comprised of discourses on this theme, most of which in the Pali have been shifted to the Aṅguttara Nikāya. The elements of the framework occur in a whole range of central teachings, yet a full exposition is lacking from the Theravāda Majjhima. It does seem as if this important teaching found less favour among the Elders of the Mahā Vihāra in Sri Lanka. Each of the various versions of the dependent liberation presents a series of factors unfolding in a conditional sequence that culminates in Nibbana. The sequences here are very similar to the Pali, yet have no exact cognate.

**MA 44:** Mindfulness & clear comprehension<sup>415</sup> > protection of the sense faculties > protection of precepts > non-remorse > gladness > rapture > bliss > samadhi > knowledge & vision of things as they have become > repulsion > fading of lust > liberation > Nibbana.<sup>416</sup>

**MA 54:** Honouring and attending upon > approaching > listening to the good Dhamma > giving ear<sup>417</sup> > consideration of the meaning of the Dhamma > learning the Dhamma by heart<sup>418</sup> > recital > reflective acceptance<sup>419</sup> > faith > right consideration<sup>420</sup> > mindfulness & clear comprehension > protection of the sense faculties > protection of precepts > non-remorse > gladness > rapture > bliss > samadhi > knowledge & vision of things as they have become > repulsion > fading of lust > liberation > Nibbana.<sup>421</sup>

**MA 55:** Ignorance > conceptual activities > cognition > name & form > six sense media > contact > feeling > craving > grasping > existence > birth > aging and death > suffering > faith > right consideration > mindfulness & clear comprehension > protection of the sense faculties > protection of precepts > non-remorse > gladness > rapture > bliss > samadhi > knowledge & vision of things as they have become > repulsion > fading of lust > liberation > Nibbana.<sup>422</sup>

## Venerable Anuruddha

In the Theravāda Majjhima Nikāya, Venerable Anuruddha appears in a few discourses, typically dealing with samadhi, but he only delivers one full-length discourse. The inclusion of three major extra discourses by Anuruddha, the archetypical reclusive meditating sage, suggests that his mode of teaching was more popular in the Sarvāstivāda than in the Theravāda. We have already seen that the two Anuruddha-saṃyuttas differ in this regard, too: the Sarvāstivāda emphasizes samadhi where the Theravāda has vipassana.

**MA 80 (\*Kaṭṭhinadhamma Sutta):** Although this charming story is not found in the Nikāyas, the background events are included in the commentary to Dhammapāda 93. At Venerable Anuruddha’s request, Venerable Ānanda organized a group of monks to sew replacements for Anuruddha’s worn-out robes. The Buddha noticed the monks sewing, and asked Ānanda why he had not informed him so that he could help in sewing the robes. The Buddha then joined in with the monks to help sew Anuruddha’s robes. When they were finished, the Buddha lay down to ease his sore back and asked Anuruddha to deliver a speech on kaṭṭhina to the monks. Anuruddha spoke of how he embraced the monk’s life, observed the precepts, abandoned the hindrances, developed meditation, attained the four jhanas, and finally the six clear knowledges culminating in arahantship. The Buddha sat up, praised Anuruddha, and encouraged the monks to practice these kaṭṭhina dhammas.

**MA 218:** Venerable Anuruddha is asked how a monk is said to die as a noble one. He explained that if one attained the four jhanas one would die as a noble one, but not as absolutely noble. However if one developed the six clear knowledges culminating in arahantship one was said to die with a noble mind that was supreme and absolute.

**MA 219:** Similar, but here the question is how to die without distress. Venerable Anuruddha then taught that one who had correct view and precepts beloved of the noble ones, the four satipatthanas, the four sublime abidings, and the four formless attainments would die without distress. However, only one who could eliminate the bodily touch (?)<sup>423</sup> and through understanding evaporate the defilements would die absolutely without distress. Here the mention of ‘correct view’ and ‘precepts’ echoes the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta. The four satipatthanas occur here in place of the four jhanas, as occasionally in the Nikāyas too.

### Miscellaneous

**MA 176:** Describes four people: one whose meditation was regressing but they thought it was progressing; one whose meditation was progressing but they thought it was regressing; one whose meditation was regressing and they thought it was regressing; and one whose meditation was progressing and who thought it was progressing. Here, ‘meditation’ probably refers to jhana.

**MA 117:** Describes another four kinds of meditators. The following scheme is repeated for each of the eight attainments.

- 1) Attained first jhana but does not hold on to the practice, does not pay attention to the basis,<sup>424</sup> but harbours thoughts connected with desire. They would not stand fast, nor progress, but would regress.
- 2) Attained first jhana, holds on to the practice, pays attention to the basis, establishes their mind on that dhamma and makes it one-pointed. They would not regress, nor progress, nor become repulsed, but would stand fast with long-lasting samadhi.
- 3) Attained first jhana but does not hold on to the practice, does not pay attention to the basis, but inclines their mind to the second jhana, wishing to progress further. They would not regress, nor stand fast, nor become repulsed, but before long would progress to the second jhana.
- 4) Attained first jhana but does not hold on to the practice, does not pay attention to the basis, but inclines their mind to extinction, calmness, absence of desire. They would not regress, nor stand fast, nor progress, but before long they would experience repulsion and evaporate the defilements.

**MA 222:** To understand each of the 12 links of the dependent origination one should develop: the four satipatthanas; the four right efforts; the four bases of psychic power; the four jhanas; the five spiritual faculties; the five spiritual powers; the seven enlightenment-factors; the noble eightfold path; the ten spheres of totality;<sup>425</sup> the ten dhammas of the adept.

So it seems possible to argue the case that the difference in emphasis, however slight, between the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta may also be discerned elsewhere in the early texts. I have been looking for evidence in the Nikāyas/Āgamas to support this contention, and as you can see, I have not come up with much. If the difference is genuine, it is certainly minimal. It is a mere shadow of a nuance of the divisions that were to wrack later Indian Buddhism.

We might consider whether this divergence reflects something of the religious and philosophical orientations of the emerging schools. There is a range of hints that suggest

something of the different characters of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools: the Theravāda was a more intellectual, scholarly, urban movement, while the early Sarvāstivāda emphasized devotion, meditation, and forest dwelling. It is worth mentioning some of these points, for the prevailing scholarly discussion of the Sarvāstivāda has focussed mainly on their later Abhidhamma works and has thus tended to see them as a scholastic movement, which was perhaps not so true for the early school.<sup>426</sup>

1. **Patriarchs:** The root patriarch of the Sarvāstivāda is Venerable Mahā Kassapa, who is the archetypal charismatic forest sage, rejecting settled monastic life in favour of the austere life in the jungle. The Theravādins, however, regard as their root patriarch Venerable Sāriputta, renowned for his subtle analytic wisdom, and as a Dhamma teacher second only to the Buddha himself; the Jains evidently saw him as encouraging the move from the jungle to the village monasteries. This difference is evident even in the Suttas. In the Theravāda version of the Mahā Gosīṅgavana Sutta,<sup>427</sup> Sāriputta and Mahā Kassapa refer to each other with the familiar term *āvuso* ('respected friend'), but in the Sarvāstivādin version<sup>428</sup> Sāriputta addresses Mahā Kassapa as *bhante* ('venerable sir'). This distinction is maintained in the later patriarchs of the Asokan era. Moggaliputta Tissa of the Theravāda was a master dialectician, skilled in subtle logic and doctrinal niceties, whereas Upagupta of the Sarvāstivāda was a reclusive and eccentric forest sage renowned for his unpredictable teaching methods and his meditative attainments.<sup>429</sup> Time after time, his countless disciples are said to have realized the Dhamma after developing the four jhanas.<sup>430</sup>
2. **Sitting cloth:** The sitting cloth is a small mat originally used primarily for sitting meditation in the forest. The Sarvāstivāda Madhyama Āgama frequently describes the monks taking the sitting cloth, folding it, placing it over the shoulder, and going into the forest to meditate. The Theravāda almost always omits this detail; however it is mentioned, interestingly enough, in the famous episode where the Buddha claims he could live on for an aeon. Since this kind of idea is absolutely characteristic of the Sarvāstivāda it is possible that this is evidence of Sarvāstivāda influence on the Theravāda canon. But, as so often, the texts don't allow any simplistic conclusions: the complete Sarvāstivāda version of the Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra in Sanskrit omits to mention the sitting cloth, but the shorter Sanskrit fragment does. Be that as it may, the references to the sitting cloth indicate that the Sarvāstivāda had a preference for forest dwelling and meditation.
3. **Compassion:** The four divine abidings are mentioned frequently in both schools, but there are several discourses in the Majjhima where these are mentioned in the Sarvāstivāda but absent in the Theravāda.<sup>431</sup>
4. **Miracles:** The Sarvāstivāda Madhyama tends to emphasize the miraculous more than the rather sedate Theravāda discourses. For example, the Theravāda depicts Venerable Raṭṭhapāla as walking from his home to the forest, whereas the Sarvāstivāda have him flying through the air.<sup>432</sup>
5. **Devotion:** In the Theravāda texts the monks usually address the Buddha simply as 'bhante', but the Chinese has 'World Honoured One' (*lokanātha*). It is possible, however, that this change occurred with the translation into Chinese. Some of the Sarvāstivāda discourses include exuberant descriptions of the Buddha's appearance, 'reverberating with light like a golden mountain', etc.<sup>433</sup> Also the Bodhisattva theory seems to have been at a slightly more developed stage.
6. **Early Abhidhamma:** The early strata of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidhamma, such as the Dharmaskandha and the Saṅgītiparyāya, seem to retain a more archaic, less specialized mode of analysis than the Theravāda Abhidhamma.

This difference reflects the orientation of these emerging schools. The Theravādins, with their vipassana emphasis, were more rational, scholastic, urban. The Sarvāstivādins were more faith-orientated, emphasizing the unpredictable charisma of the forest sage. A similar distinction is recognizable within the modern Theravāda, with the forest monks devoting themselves to samadhi, while their brothers in the city monasteries do dry vipassana. But it is almost inevitable that the rugged earnestness of the forest tradition will become tamed and civilized, and will turn away from practice towards study. Sometimes this only takes a generation or two. And so the later Sarvāstivādins went on to develop a vast Abhidhamma commentarial literature, in which, as we shall see in the next chapter, satipatthana became just vipassana.

## THE DEMON OF TIME

The differences between the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, and to a lesser degree the Saṃyuttas, reflect the fundamental schismatic issue that divided these schools – time. The Sarvāstivādins, preferring the evenness and constancy of samatha, shied away from the contemplation of impermanence in satipatthana, while the Theravādins emphasized watching the successive passing away of phenomena in experience. Vipassana sees discontinuity in time, samatha sees continuity: taken together, one realizes the relativity of continuity and discontinuity; taken separately one would tend to reify either continuity or discontinuity into an absolute. In these incipient stages the differences were a mere matter of emphasis, not yet consciously articulated. The need for clear and cogent justifications for these divergent approaches was a driving force in the formulation of the metaphysics of time. The Theravādins went on to develop a radical version of the theory of momentariness, holding that each dhamma arises, stays, and passes away in an instant, leaving no remainder in the following instant. The Sarvāstivādins accepted a version of the theory of moments, but they also held the tenet, from which they derived their name, that ‘all dhammas – past, present, and future – exist’. The present moment was seen as the manifest or effective mode of phenomena. Thus impermanence is marginalized; ultimate reality is becoming changeless. We have seen hints of this perspective emerging in their Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra and Dharmaskandha; the Kośa applies the fully-fledged Sarvāstivādin metaphysic of time to satipatthana.<sup>434</sup>

The origins of this arcane idea should, I believe, be sought in the emotional response of the Buddhist community to the acute sense of pain and loss with the passing of the Buddha. The Sarvāstivādins keenly felt that they lived in a diminished age, that the glory days of the religion were inexorably passing. As an emotional rather than intellectual issue, it is articulated on the mythic and symbolic level. Their patriarch Venerable Upagupta’s role was to halt the passage of time by sustaining the religion. The key myth had him binding Māra, the God of Death, with a rotting carcass slung around his shoulders. Māra could do nothing to remove the stinking corpse, and all his begging left Upagupta unmoved. ‘The Buddha,’ whinged Māra, ‘He never did anything nasty to me like this! All those terrible things I did to him, and never once did he punish me or try to hurt me. You know, he wasn’t such a bad guy after all.’ And so Māra gained faith in the Buddha. Immediately, Upagupta released his hold and the corpse vanished. Māra, with the fervour of the newly converted, offered to do whatever he could in service of Upagupta, unsurpassed in skilful means. Upagupta said that his only regret was that he had not lived in the time of the Buddha, and had never gazed upon that glorious visage, so sadly passed away. ‘But you, Māra,’ he said, ‘You were alive in the Buddha’s time. You saw him often, and must remember his appearance well. And, you are an unequalled master in changing your form. Now may you, out of gratitude to me for releasing you from the ways of evil, assume the appearance of the Supreme Buddha!’ Māra was shocked. ‘I couldn’t do such a presumptuous thing!’ he protested. But Upagupta implored and insisted, until finally Māra agreed, on one condition: that when he changed his shape into the Buddha, Upagupta was not, under any circumstances, to bow to him. After all, he’s still Māra.

Upagupta agreed; but when he beheld the splendour of the Buddha's form created by Māra he could not help himself – overwhelmed with rapture he fell to the ground and prostrated himself before Māra.

This brilliant myth relates the poignant dilemmas tearing apart the Buddhist community: the ambiguity of the Buddha-cult, with its obsession with worship of imitative idols; and the paradox of longing to preserve forever the Buddha's precious dispensation, a dispensation whose essential message is that all things must pass under the sway of the god of Death and illusion. This ambiguity of time emerges clearly in the contrast between the Jātakas' emphasis on continuity of character in time, with their implicit yearning for return and personal connection to the 'golden age' of the Buddha, and the atomic, seemingly nihilistic, theories of momentariness that were emerging in the contemporary Abhidhamma schools. This indicates a widening fracture in consciousness between the popular and scholastic forms of Buddhism. It was in the pan-sectarian folk Buddhism, far removed in spirit from the combative sectarianism of the Abhidhamma scholars, that the Bodhisatta doctrine slowly emerged, with all its momentous implications for Buddhist history. But the Theravāda Abhidhamma scholars, for all their insistence on radical momentariness, still betray a nervousness, amounting almost to neurosis, in their obsessively repetitive texts, a massive attempt to freeze the Dhamma in a matrix of abstract, contextless, changeless, and bloodless dhammas. I think the philosophical and psychological content of the Abhidhamma – which in fact adds little to the Suttas – has been overemphasized at the expense of ignoring the religious significance of this movement within Buddhism.

#### THE VIBHANGA'S ABHIDHAMMA EXPOSITION

We have already examined the treatment of satipatthana in the Sutta Exposition of the Vibhaṅga, an early stratum of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. Now we turn to the second part of the Vibhaṅga's treatment, the Abhidhamma Exposition.

This treats satipatthana purely as it occurs in the abhidhammic 'transcendental jhana'. Note that the idea of 'transcendental jhana' is presented here, quite correctly, as a peculiarly abhidhammic doctrine. It would therefore be a mistake, according to the Abhidhamma Piṭaka itself, to use this concept to interpret the Suttas. It has its interest, however, in showing how closely the Theravāda school, at this early stage, equated satipatthana with their conception of jhana. The basic passage is an adaptation of the standard description of transcendental jhana in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī.

'How does a monk abide contemplating a body in the body? Here, on the occasion when a monk develops transcendental jhana – which leads out [of samsara], brings dispersal [of rebirth], for the abandoning of pernicious views, for the attainment of the first stage [i.e. stream-entry] – quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, he enters and abides in the first jhana, which has initial & sustained application and the rapture & happiness born of seclusion, on the painful way of practice with sluggish clear knowledge contemplating a body in the body; on that occasion the mindfulness, recollection ... right mindfulness, enlightenment-factor of mindfulness, path-factor, included in the path – this is called satipatthana. Remaining dhammas are associated with satipatthana.'<sup>435</sup>

This is to be repeated with appropriate variations for the various jhanas, stages of enlightenment, etc. Most of the variations are not spelled out in the text. The whole thing is then taken through two rounds – one for the path, one for the fruit. The clumsiness of the phrasing is as evident in the Pali as in the translation, since the passage is essentially just a conglomeration of technical terms from various sources.

Here there are a number of both continuities and discontinuities with the earlier accounts. The basic descriptions of jhana and satipatthana are identical to the Suttas. The close relation between the two is also characteristic of the Suttas, although they do not equate the two quite as comprehensively as here. The mention of the painful way of practice is clumsy. In the Suttas this is contrasted with jhanas; while it would be a mistake to see this in the context of the Suttas as implying a separate path than jhana, it is incongruous to call the jhana itself 'painful'. 'Satipaṭṭhāna' itself is defined just as *sati*; that is, satipatthana is simply the subjective act of mindfulness. Other dhammas are 'associated with satipatthana'. This seemingly innocuous phrase in fact reveals an underlying tension in the development of a strictly abhidhammic interpretation of satipatthana; for 'association' (*sampayutta*) is a technical abhidhamma term that only applies to interdependent mental phenomena, and yet here it is supposed to include the body as well. More on this below.

The Theravāda came to interpret the 'transcendental jhana' discussed here and throughout the Abhidhamma Piṭaka as just a single 'mind moment' (*cittakkhaṇa*) flashing by immediately before enlightenment. However, the text gives us no reason to suppose that time should be interpreted here in terms of the definitive, atomic theory of moments that came to dominate the later metaphysics. The theory of moments was not yet developed at the time of the composition of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. As far as I know the only reference to 'moments' in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka is to the 'moment of rebirth' in the Vibhaṅga.<sup>436</sup> There are plenty of contexts in the Abhidhamma that treat time in an everyday sense.<sup>437</sup> As always with the historical method, we should try to interpret, not by looking back through the lens of later tradition, but forward through the lens of earlier tradition. The Abhidhamma Piṭaka was obviously written by and intended for those who were already familiar with the thought-world of the early teachings. The Vinaya Piṭaka begins each passage with 'On that occasion...' (*tena samayena*); the Sutta Piṭaka uses 'On one occasion...' (*ekam samayam*); and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka uses 'On whatever occasion...' (*yasmim samaye*). All these idioms treat time in a non-specific, common sense manner. The difference between them is not in the duration of time that they envisage, but in that the Suttas and Vinaya are specific while the Abhidhamma is general. The Sutta and Vinaya idioms are intended to ground the teachings in time and place, to lend them concreteness and historicity, emphasizing how they are true and useful relative to context. The Abhidhamma wants to universalise, de-contextualise; this is part of its movement towards a conception of abstract, absolute truth.

There is nothing in the description of transcendental jhana to suggest that it was meant to be applied purely to the moment immediately preceding enlightenment, which was the developed interpretation. On the contrary, the language clearly implies duration; the Pali term indicating duration, *viharati* (abides), is mentioned twice. Time is treated in the transcendental jhana in just the same way as the normal jhana leading to rebirth. For the Vibhaṅga, 'during' the transcendental 'path', one 'abides' 'contemplating the body', 'cultivating, developing, making much of' a 'way of practice' that may be either 'sluggish' or 'swift', and which 'leads' to enlightenment.

'Transcendental jhana' is not contrasted with 'non-transcendental jhana' in terms of time, but in terms of object and result. The treatment of result is straightforward – non-transcendental jhana leads to rebirth, transcendental jhana leads to enlightenment and dispersal of rebirth.

The treatment of object is trickier. For the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, non-transcendental jhana is based on one of the various meditation subjects such as *kaṣiṇas*, divine abidings, corpses, etc.<sup>438</sup> Transcendental jhana on the other hand is based on emptiness, signlessness, or desirelessness.<sup>439</sup> But the Vibhaṅga confuses that distinction. The problem arises because the Vibhaṅga wants to apply the idea of transcendental jhana to the various wings to enlightenment. Of those groups,



satipatthana is the only one to specify the object of meditation. It would be difficult to explain how, in the transcendental path and fruit, one was ‘contemplating the body’, since the object of the transcendental jhana is supposed to be Nibbana. The later traditions seem to have hesitated over this one; the sub-commentary to the Vibhaṅga suggests that the mention of the body, feelings, mind, and dhammas here distinguishes the various satipatthanas by way of approach.<sup>440</sup> This seems to imply that one is not literally contemplating the body at this point, but that the contemplation of the body has been the predominant preparatory factor. This of course is not what the passage says. The Visuddhimagga addresses the issue thus.

‘When they [i.e. the 37 wings to enlightenment] are found in a single consciousness in this way [i.e. at the path-moment], just the one mindfulness that has Nibbana as its object is called the “four satipatthanas” by virtue of its accomplishing the function of abandoning the notions of beauty, etc., with regard to the body, etc.’<sup>441</sup>

This is neat; but again, it is quite patently not what the Vibhaṅga is talking about. It seems that the Vibhaṅga is caught in an awkward developmental stage. It is not clear whether it wishes to present this transcendental jhana as a kind of ‘vipassana samadhi’ (if we may borrow still later terminology) where one is abiding absorbed in the contemplation of the body as empty of self, or as a kind of enlightenment experience. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī has forced a wedge between the non-transcendental jhana and the transcendental jhana and identified the path with the latter. But the Abhidhamma Piṭaka remains close enough to the thought-world of the Suttas that it struggles to apply this conception consistently. Not until the fully-fledged metaphysics of the mature commentarial phase of abhidhamma were the implications of this breach made explicit.

It hardly needs saying that, apart from the discrete mention of the word ‘emptiness’, vipassana is entirely in the background during this exposition. Even ‘emptiness’ cannot really mean vipassana here, for it applies just as much to the fruit as to the path. In fact it would seem as if this presentation was intended to emphasize in the most explicit way possible how jhana is as intrinsic to the very idea of satipatthana as it is to the path itself. The compilers of the Abhidhamma seem to have taken to heart the Sutta saying that ‘samadhi is the path’. So much the stranger then, that the later conception of transcendental jhana, which was orthodox from the time of the Visuddhimagga, in time became one of the key conceptual tools used to wriggle out of the necessity for practicing jhana as part of the eightfold path, substituting dry insight meditation based on satipatthana: one only need enter the mind-moment of jhana at the time of realization itself. This is not only a grave distortion of the Suttas; it is a misunderstanding of the very nature of the transcendental path. This was conceived as a perfected path, the culmination and consummation of the various practices that make up our spiritual journey. Thus transcendental jhana is not a non-jhana, it is not something else that can be substituted for jhana; it is the ideal, the quintessence of jhana, which naturally emerges as the practice of jhana matures in balance and harmony with the rest of the path.

## OTHER ABHIDHAMMA TEXTS

To my knowledge, the superfluity of jhana is first explicitly suggested in the Puggala Paññatti.<sup>442</sup> Although most of the material in this minor Abhidhamma work is derived from the Aṅguttara Nikāya with only slight modifications and is therefore early, here the use of purely abhidhammic doctrines shows that the ideas underlying the Dhammasaṅgaṇī must have been already current when this passage was composed. It describes four people who are mentioned in the Aṅguttara Nikāya.<sup>443</sup> One gains ‘samatha of the heart within’ but not ‘vipassana into principles pertaining to the higher understanding’. A second person has vipassana but not samatha, a third has neither, and a fourth has both. The Aṅguttara describes samatha here as steadying, settling, unifying, and

concentrating the mind in samadhi, which is similar to the Puggala Paññatti's description as one who gains the form or formless attainments. But whereas the Aṅguttara describes vipassana as the seeing, exploring, and discerning of activities, the Puggala Paññatti speaks of one who possesses the transcendental path and fruit. This is obviously incongruous – the discourse is quite clearly speaking of the contemplative investigation of conditioned phenomena. For the Suttas, both samatha and vipassana should be developed and only then will the one enter the path.<sup>444</sup> But if one already has the transcendental attainments, why bother developing mere mundane jhana? A further incongruity is that the transcendental path and fruit, as we have seen, is invariably described in the Abhidhamma in terms of jhana, yet here one is able to get the path and fruit without having 'samatha of the heart within'. The passage does not clarify just how one can gain the transcendental jhana without non-transcendental jhana; and this omission is made even more pointed when we notice that this short passage in the Puggala Paññatti follows close behind a full-length exposition of the gradual training, presenting jhanas right in the heart of the path, just as in the Suttas.<sup>445</sup>

The next discussion of satipatthana occurs in the Kathāvatthu, a polemical work of the Theravāda school dedicated to refuting the wrong views of other schools of Buddhism. This is generally agreed to be the latest book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. A controversy arises, seemingly due to the ambiguity we noted above between the normal, subjective meaning of satipatthana ('the act of establishing mindfulness') and the objective sense required in one discourse dealing with vipassana ('things on which mindfulness is established'). The heretic asserts that all dhammas are satipatthana. This view is attributed by Buddhaghosa to the Andhakas, and seems to have been held by the Sarvāstivādins and Mahīśāsakas. The Theravādin quite properly shows the incoherence of this idea. The four satipatthanas only manifest with the arising of a Buddha; if there were no Buddha would all dhammas disappear? If everything is satipatthana, then do all beings practice satipatthana?

The next book to consider is the Paṭisambhidāmagga. This may be described as an elaborate compilation of the path of practice from the Theravādin perspective. The style is similar to the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, but it is included in the Khuddaka Nikāya of the Sutta Piṭaka. However A.K. Warder, editor of the English translation and a leading expert in dating Pali texts, regards its final compilation at 100 B.C.E. or later, which makes it later than the bulk of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka concurs in placing the Paṭisambhidāmagga later than the Abhidhamma. And indeed, the treatment of satipatthana bears this out. The section on the body gives a unique list: earth, water, fire, air, head hair, body hair, outer skin, inner skin, flesh, blood, sinew, bone, and marrow. Feeling is simply pleasure, pain, and neutral feeling; thus the 'spiritual feelings' associated with jhana are not explicitly mentioned. Mind is treated as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, with the addition of the six kinds of sense cognition; we have already seen that the treatment of *citta* in terms of *viññāṇa* in satipatthana signals the shift from samatha to vipassana. In the corresponding section on anapanasati, however, mind is defined with a list of synonyms lifted from the Dhammasaṅgaṇī. Dhammas are all dhammas except body, feeling, and mind; or, in the anapanasati section, a list of 201 dhammas derived from the beginning of the Paṭisambhidāmagga. Both of these are similar to the developed conception of dhamma embodied in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Dharmaskandha, and the Śāriputrābhidharma. The position of the Paṭisambhidāmagga is thus curiously similar to the heretical view that had been refuted in the Kathāvatthu. The Paṭisambhidāmagga wriggles out of the dilemma by means of an obscure passage that seems to have become the accepted Theravāda solution. The body (etc.) is an establishing, but is not mindfulness; mindfulness is both an establishing and mindfulness. The solution is a way of avoiding having to admit that the idea of considering the satipatthanas as objects is really incoherent. It ignores the fact that 'establishing' and 'mindfulness' are quasi-synonyms,<sup>446</sup> and the solution runs aground in the context of the fourth satipatthana: at least one dhamma is mindfulness, i.e. the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness. Notice that the contexts

that emphasize the samatha aspect of satipatthana – most of the Suttas and the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga – treat satipatthana purely as subjective, whereas contexts that emphasize the vipassana aspect – the Saṃyutta Vibhaṅga Sutta and the Paṭisambhidāmagga – spell out the objective interpretation.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga virtually completes the process of ‘vipassanizing’ satipatthana. At first satipatthana was primarily samatha, the way of getting jhana. Then vipassana was seen to emerge through understanding the process of samadhi in contemplation of dhammas only. Then, for one already well established in all four satipatthanas, vipassana was introduced as an advanced mode of contemplating them.<sup>447</sup> Next vipassana was introduced following each of the four sections.<sup>448</sup> In the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta it became affixed at the end of each exercise within the four sections. Finally in the Paṭisambhidāmagga, each item in each section (‘earth’, ‘water’, etc.) is contemplated from the start in terms of impermanence, suffering, not-self, repulsion, fading away, cessation, and relinquishment. The ultimate outcome of this process would be to marginalize or discard the original four objects of satipatthana altogether, abstract the vipassana aspect of satipatthana as constituting the real essence of the practice, and therefore treat satipatthana purely as contemplation of impermanence, etc., on any miscellaneous phenomena. We shall see that this step was in fact taken in the next strata of abhidhamma/commentarial literature.

The Milindapañha, a later work of which versions are found in both Chinese and Pali, treats mindfulness as a ‘calling to mind’ and a ‘taking hold’ regarding skillful and unskillful dhammas. While not directly bearing on meditation as such, this is certainly in line with the interpretations developed in this work, especially in contemplation of dhammas. For a fuller discussion the reader is referred to Gethin’s *The Buddhist Path of Awakening*.<sup>449</sup>

There are a few references to satipatthana in the paracanonical work the Peṭakopadesa. This is a treatise on exegetical technique, parallel to the Netti, and of equally uncertain date. Satipaṭṭhāna is regularly treated as vipassana, with the methodology we have referred to above of opposing the four satipatthanas to the four perversions. However, satipatthana, or more precisely the second element of the compound, *upaṭṭhāna*, is mentioned under the definition of samatha. The word *paṭṭhāna* is also included; although this is not really the second element of the word ‘satipatthana’, the commentaries treat it as such, so it was probably intended to evoke satipatthana here. This is not one of the standard definitions as found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī or the Paṭisambhidāmagga, and seems to be unique to the Peṭakopadesa. It starts with a series of words formed from the root *sthā*, ‘to stand’. An attempt to represent the effect in English might look something like this:

‘Whatever, of the mind, is standing, steadiness, stability, stasis, standpoint [*paṭṭhāna*], establishment [*upaṭṭhāna*], samadhi, centering, non-distraction, non-dispersal, tranquillity of the heart, one-pointedness of mind; this is samatha.’<sup>450</sup>

I might briefly mention here the Vimuttimagma. This is a commentarial compilation that seems to have been the model for the Visuddhimagma. It only mentions satipatthana under anapanasati, adding nothing to the Suttas. It does, however, introduce a very significant concept, the path of ‘dry vipassana’, which is conspicuous by its absence from the Suttas and its prominence in contemporary meditation circles. The path of dry insight, however, is here not connected with satipatthana.

## CHAPTER 17: LATER BUDDHISM

Let us complete our journey with a brief survey of some statements on mindfulness in the later Buddhist texts. This is not intended to be comprehensive or authoritative. My own acquaintance with this vast and obscure literature is not great. I merely propose to present some bits and pieces I have stumbled across in my reading. I am precariously dependent here on secondary sources and translations, and so any attempt at interpretation is most tenuous; the primary interest lies in exploring lines of continuity between the kind of perspective on satipaṭṭhana developed in this essay and later traditions.

### THE THERAVĀDA COMMENTARIES

Commentarial material for satipaṭṭhana is found in the commentaries for the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta as well as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in the Majjhima and Dīgha, and also the Vibhaṅga. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta received an extensive commentary, but since this has been translated into English and the ideas have been incorporated in many modern books on meditation, I will treat it only briefly here.<sup>451</sup> But first I will glance at the Saṃyutta commentary. Like the material in the Saṃyutta Nikāya/Āgama itself, this is much briefer than the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta commentary, and has received much less attention. But for this very reason it may be of some interest.

Often the Saṃyutta commentary will give a brief explanation for a particular word or phrase. The Majjhima will repeat exactly the same phrase, but then offer a much more lengthy elaboration. This suggests – but only suggests – that the Majjhima commentary represents a later phase of development. Both commentaries mention places or people in Sri Lanka, but the Saṃyutta does so less often, leading me to wonder whether it might preserve something closer to the Indian commentary from which the tradition claims it is derived. The Saṃyutta commentary occasionally repeats large bodies of text found also in the longer commentaries, such as the section on clear comprehension. Occasionally, too, it gives us extended narratives, such as the story of Venerable Sāriputta's passing away. One interesting passage has a number of Elders giving different opinions as to what 'satipaṭṭhana', 'enlightenment-factors', and 'supreme enlightenment' mean. All the Elders equate satipaṭṭhana there with vipassana. This is interesting, for vipassana is nowhere mentioned in the basic definition of satipaṭṭhana at the start of the commentary. Might this be interpreted as a sign of doctrinal evolution within the Theravādin community? The Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta's references to samadhi are explained away using the convenient commentarial terms 'momentary samadhi' and 'threshold samadhi'.

One interesting detail at the start of the commentary is its gloss on the 'path to convergence'. The commentary says: '“*Ekāyañvayan” ti ekāyano ayam.*' This is simply a resolution of the compound; but the interesting thing is that the reading *ekāyañvayaṃ* is different from the Majjhima and other versions, which have *ekāyano ayam*. The sub-commentary remarks that this is a tradition of the Saṃyutta reciters. The reading *ekāyano ayam*, has in fact made its way back into the Saṃyutta in the Burmese Tipiṭaka that I am using – making the commentarial gloss nonsensical – but apparently *ekāyañvayaṃ* is preserved in some other editions. Since the phrase is, I believe, primarily associated with the Brahmanical context given in the Saṃyutta and only secondarily with the Majjhima context, and since we know that in some editions of the Saṃyutta the reading *ekāyano ayam* has been read back into the text from the commentary, it is tempting to think of the reading *ekāyañvayaṃ* as the original one.

Another point worth noting in passing is that there are a large number of discourses that the commentary completely ignores. These are, of course, usually those of negligible content.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta commentary subjects each of the aspects of satipatthana to a detailed exposition utilizing the fully developed apparatus of the mature abhidhammic and commentarial systems. Similar versions are given for both the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga. The Vibhaṅga commentary offers no explanation as to why the satipatthana material there is so much shorter than the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; sometimes it refers to Sutta material, as for example when it speaks of the ‘14 kinds of body contemplation’, which probably indicates borrowing from the Sutta commentary. There is strong emphasis on vipassana throughout; nevertheless, the samatha perspective is not completely neglected. When recommending approaches for different character types, body and feelings are suggested for samatha yogis, while the mind and dhammas are appropriate for vipassana yogis.<sup>452</sup> But it goes on to contradict itself by asserting that, while the contemplation of the body concerns both samatha and vipassana, the remaining three deal with pure insight only. The mention of the contemplation of mind as vipassana-only is incongruous, for the commentary itself agrees that many terms in the contemplation of mind refer to jhana. In the case of feelings, we have seen that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta refers to ‘spiritual’ feelings, which the Suttas associate primarily with jhana. But the commentary shifts the emphasis here by equating ‘spiritual’ feelings with the ‘six kinds of mental pleasure dependent on renunciation’, a category that is more evocative of vipassana. In one place, the commentary suggests that ‘mindfulness’ means samatha while ‘clear comprehension’ means vipassana.<sup>453</sup> In the discussion on anapanasati it says, in conformity with the Suttas and the Visuddhimagga, that ‘the four jhanas arise in the sign of breathing. Having emerged from the jhana, he lays hold of either the breath or the jhana factors [for developing vipassana].<sup>454</sup> The section on clear comprehension has an interesting piece of advice for over-enthusiastic yogis:

‘In this matter, a person who experiences pain in every moment due to standing long with bent or stretched hands or feet does not get concentration of mind, his subject of meditation entirely falls away, and he does not obtain distinction (jhana and so forth). But he who bends or stretches his limbs for the proper length of time does not experience pain, gets concentration of mind, develops his subject of meditation, and attains distinction.’<sup>455</sup>

The Sub-commentary adds some interesting points:

‘Mindfulness denotes samadhi, too, here on account of the inclusion of mindfulness in the aggregate of samadhi.’<sup>456</sup>

‘Confusion is the state of mind which, because of the whirling in a multiplicity of objects, is jumping from thing to thing, diverse of aim, and not one-pointed.’<sup>457</sup>

‘If wisdom is not very strong in the development of concentration there will be no causing of contemplative attainment.’<sup>458</sup>

Thus throughout both the commentary and sub-commentary, although both strongly emphasize vipassana, there remains a recognition of the samatha aspects of satipatthana.

## DEVELOPMENTS IN SARVĀSTIVĀDA

There is some evidence that the Sanskrit traditions, starting with the Sarvāstivāda, emphasized samadhi more than the Theravāda. This emphasis was not only reflected in the philosophical differences, but in lifestyle, too. Venerable Śāṅkavāsin, the preceptor of Venerable Upagupta, the most famous of the Sarvāstivāda patriarchs, was reported to have said:

‘Clothed in hempen robes, I have attained the five stages of jhana.  
Seated in jhana among the mountain peaks and lonely valleys, I meditate.’<sup>1459</sup>

Upagupta himself took over Śāṅkakavāsin’s monastery at Mount Urumuṇḍa, which was called ‘the foremost of the Buddha’s forest domains, where the lodgings are conducive to samatha.’<sup>1460</sup> These sages embodied the austere forest tradition – clad in unkempt hempen rags, living in remote mountains and jungles, unpredictable, sometimes depicted with long hair and beard: feral monks. It has been argued, with some plausibility, that this kind of lifestyle inspired the early Mahāyāna, which began as a ‘back-to-nature’ reform movement of unconventional forest yogis who, as ‘bodhisattvas’, took as their chief inspiration the ascetic, meditative lifestyle of *the* Bodhisattva. Similar reform movements spring up from time to time as a necessary countermovement to the tendency of religions to urbanize and ossify.

A difference in the attitude towards mindfulness in these different schools is evidenced in their respective Abhidhammas. For the Theravādins, mindfulness was an exclusively skilful mental quality; it could not coexist with unwholesome states of mind. This leaves a rather embarrassing gap. Despite attempts to systematically list all possible mental factors, the Theravāda Abhidhamma has no term for memory. If *sati* meant memory, this would mean that one could have no memory of unskilful states of mind, which is, alas, all too obviously not the case. Venerable Nyanaponika was perhaps the first abhidhammika to notice this anomaly; he suggests *saññā* could perform the role of memory. But while *saññā* has some connection with memory, it is not used in the required sense of ‘recollection’. *Saññā* is always present in consciousness, recollection is not. This problematic position of the Theravādins seems to have developed out of a wish to exalt the role of mindfulness. The Sarvāstivādins, with no such agenda, were happy to take the Sutta references to ‘wrong mindfulness’ at their face value and treat *sati* as both good and bad. In general agreement with the Indian traditions, they treat *sati* as the ‘not-forgetting’ or ‘retention’ of the object, the, as it were, ‘repetition’ of the object leading to non-distraction. These descriptions suggest the samatha dimension of mindfulness.

We have already discussed in some detail the treatment of satipatthana in the Dharmaskandha, noting the close connections but also divergences from the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. While the Dharmaskandha forms the basis for the canonical Abhidhamma of the school, the massive Jñānapraṣṭhāna forms its culmination. This work encompasses all the fields of Abhidhamma within its very broad purview; in this sense it does not seem to have a close analogy in the Theravāda Abhidhamma. It was probably composed around the close of the canonical Abhidhamma period, and indeed in the Sarvāstivāda there seems to be a less sharp distinction between the canonical works and later treatises than in the Theravāda. The chapter on satipatthana contains a combination of some verbatim quoting and some commentary.<sup>1461</sup> The section on body contemplation is mainly devoted to the four jhanas. This is a little curious, and certainly shows that this passage is dependent on the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, rather than any pre-sectarian text, or even the Dharmaskandha. The sections on feelings and the mind are also similar to the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. Contemplation of dhammas includes the five hindrances, six sense media with fetters, and seven enlightenment-factors. Here the content is the same as both the earlier Sarvāstivāda sources, but the sequence is shared only with the Dharmaskandha, while the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra places the sense media at the start of this section, which seems less convincing. Anyway, we can confirm that the Jñānapraṣṭhāna is based on the existing Madhyama Āgama, which adds another detail to the evidence that this is indeed a Sarvāstivādin collection. Also it seems clear that the Sarvāstivādin emphasis on jhana as a central part of satipatthana, especially body contemplation, continued through this period.

This makes the position of our next text somewhat surprising. Frauwallner has an interesting discussion of a Sarvāstivāda text, the Abhidharmasāra of Dharmasri. This post-canonical treatise is one of the earliest Abhidharma philosophical systems, and many of its features were taken over by the later Abhidharmakośa and even the Mahāyāna. Here are some of the most relevant of Frauwallner's comments.

'If we now compare these [Sutta descriptions of the satipatthanas] with Dharmasri's description, it is striking that even taking the concision of the latter into account, there are no individual correspondences. The contemplation of the body as impure, impermanent, suffering, and non-self is important in Dharmasri's account as preparation for what follows, but it has no counterpart in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The treatment of the contemplation of dhammas is also completely different...There is no question [in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] of uniting the objects of all the satipatthanas and their contemplation as impermanent, empty, non-self, and suffering as in Dharmasri's work. It is, however, important in the latter as preparation for what is to follow. Under these circumstances it would seem justified to regard the use of the satipatthanas in the new doctrine merely as a means of gaining a canonical starting point with which the new doctrine can be linked and from which it can as far as possible be derived.

...'In the canon, the attainment of the liberating cognition and thus of the elimination of the defilements is premised by entry into the state of jhana.

'In Dharmasri's version of the new doctrine there is no mention of this. Without interruption the satipatthanas, the skilful roots, and the path of vision follow one another without any mention being made of entry into meditation [jhana]...This is a radical innovation.<sup>462</sup>

The only mention of jhana in the system of the Abhidharmasāra would seem to be the 'peak non-transcendental dhamma' (*laukikagrādharma*). This occurs, as 'non-return', 'jhana-interval', or the four 'root jhanas' for one moment only, immediately prior to the enlightenment experience. Thus, despite the opposing labels, this 'peak non-transcendental dharma' seems to fulfil the same function in the Sarvāstivāda system as the 'transcendental jhana' of the Theravāda: to maintain a terminological continuity with the old Suttas while teaching a radically new doctrine.

It is hard to understand how the treatment of satipatthana could have changed so much in such a short time. The major canonical work the Jhānaprasthāna treats body contemplation mainly as the four jhanas; then the earliest strata of post-canonical literature, composed in roughly the same period, treats body contemplation as straight vipassana. I suspect that the answer lies in the manner and role of the presentation of satipatthana within the overall framework, and must be sought in a more detailed contextual study of these works.

## THE ABHIDHARMAKOŚA

We can examine the Sarvāstivāda position in some more detail using Vasubandhu's classic Abhidharmakośa. This is an interesting text, for it presents a thorough and clear description of the field of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma from the point of view of an author who is not committed to that school, but has leanings towards the Sautrantika. The Kośa defines the intrinsic nature of satipatthana not as 'mindfulness', but as 'understanding' (*paññā*). The Sarvāstivādins arrive at this definition through taking the term *anupassanā* to express the essence of satipatthana. We have seen that the Theravādins agree in taking *anupassanā* as 'understanding', but they still treat satipatthana itself as mindfulness, not wisdom. Here the Sarvāstivādins run smack into absurdity. They must conclude that satipatthana belongs, not with the path factor of right mindfulness, but with right view; not with the spiritual faculty of mindfulness, but with understanding.<sup>463</sup> But the

same problem must arise for anyone who equates satipatthana with vipassana – satipatthana as faculty, power, enlightenment-factor, or path factor is always distinguished from understanding, and when the factors are grouped together, it is included with samadhi.

However, a closer look suggests that mere terminological confusion is at least part of the problem. Generally speaking, the description of the path according to the Sarvāstivāda, which was later adapted by the Mahāyānists too, falls into five stages: the paths of preparation, reaching, vision, development, and the adept. A very simple summary is sufficient for our purposes. The path of preparation includes all the early stages of the gradual training from learning the teachings, ethics, etc., up to jhana; the path of reaching is vipassana; vision is stream-entry; development is the further development of the noble eightfold path by the noble ones; and the adept is the arahants. In the path of preparation the approach to meditation is exemplified with anapanasati for cutting off thinking and the ugliness of the body parts for dispelling lust.<sup>464</sup> These are treated primarily as samatha; ugliness is specifically said to be *not* impermanence, etc.<sup>465</sup> Nevertheless, anapanasati is defined as ‘understanding’.<sup>466</sup> The definition of anapanasati and satipatthana as ‘understanding’ should be evaluated in light of the very broad treatment of understanding in Sarvāstivādin theory. For example, jhana is also defined as ‘understanding’, and is said to have samatha and vipassana yoked together.<sup>467</sup> Evidently in such contexts we are to take ‘understanding’ in the sense of ‘clear awareness’, which we have seen is a prominent theme in these contexts in the Nikāyas/Āgamas too.

In bizarrely direct contradiction with the Suttas, the Kośa says that anapanasati is cultivated only with neutral feeling, because:

‘...pleasant and painful feelings are favourable to thinking; thus anapanasati, which is the opposite of thinking, cannot be associated with pleasure or pain. On the other hand, the two agreeable sensations [rapture & bliss of the jhanas, apparently] form an obstacle to the application of the mind to any object, and anapanasati can only be realized by this application.’<sup>468</sup>

This makes me wonder whether Vasubandhu had ever meditated or even read the relevant Suttas.<sup>469</sup> The next section is just as odd. Whereas for the Nikāyas/Āgamas anapanasati and body contemplation were part of satipatthana, here they are supposed to be just preliminaries.

‘We have spoken of the two teachings, the visualization of ugliness and anapanasati. Having attained samadhi by these two portals, now with a view to realizing insight...Having realized stilling, he will cultivate the satipatthanas.’<sup>470</sup>

Thus satipatthana is identified exclusively with insight developed on the basis of jhana. In this the position of the Kośa seems to be quite different from the Abhidharmasāra, which as we have seen omits jhana altogether in favour of vipassana. This satipatthana vipassana is supposed to proceed by seeing each of the four satipatthanas in terms of their ‘intrinsic essence’, and also in terms of their general characteristics as impermanent, etc. However the text dwells little on the intrinsic essence, merely defining the body as primary elements and derived materiality, and dhammas as everything that is not the other three; strangely, feelings and mind are omitted. The focus is clearly on the general characteristics, and these are often talked of just in terms of dhammas.<sup>471</sup> Thus satipatthana in the Kośa seems to virtually ignore the basic exercises of the Suttas and treat satipatthana entirely in terms of the vipassana aspects. However this is at least partly a mere change in the expression, for this satipatthana vipassana is of course undertaken only after samadhi based on anapanasati or contemplation of body parts, and so is not presented as ‘dry insight’.



If we search a little we can discern echoes of the earlier significance of satipatthana too. The four satipatthanas are said to be undertaken in sequence, for:

‘...one sees first that which is the coarsest. Or rather: the body is the support for sensual desire, which has its origin in the lust for feeling; this feeling occurs because the mind is not calmed, and the mind is not calmed because the defilements are not abandoned.’<sup>472</sup>

Or in the context of the spiritual faculties:

‘In order to obtain the result in which one has faith, one rouses energy. When striving, there is the establishing of mindfulness. When mindfulness is set up, one fixes the mind [in samadhi] in order to avoid distraction. When the mind is fixed, there arises a consciousness that conforms to the object [paññā].’<sup>473</sup>

The exposition on the way of practice in the Kośa falls into confusion when it tries to treat various frameworks such as satipatthana and the other wings to enlightenment as distinct stages along the path, rather than as each offering complementary perspectives on the path as a whole. The Kośa gives two alternative explanations of the progressive development of the 37 wings to enlightenment, both of which place the satipatthanas before samadhi.<sup>474</sup> Thus even such innovations, though underivable from the Suttas, still preserve significant threads of continuity with the early teachings. Of course the entire presentation is subsumed within the overriding emphasis on understanding that is a definitive pan-sectarian characteristic of the Abhidhamma project.

The Arthaviniścaya Sūtra is an Abhidharma work of a similar Sautrantika/Sarvāstivāda affiliation as the Kośa, organized around a version of the familiar saṃyutta-matika. The Sanskrit has been published together with its commentary, although not knowing Devanagari characters I am limited to reading Samtani’s summaries. The text seems to present yet another straightforward integrated internal/external version of the satipatthana formula, without mentioning impermanence.<sup>475</sup> Later, right mindfulness is described in terms of contemplating the impurities of the body, internally and externally.<sup>476</sup>

The commentary presents the common scheme of opposing the four satipatthanas to the four perversions of beauty, happiness, permanence, and self.<sup>477</sup> Contemplating the body, etc., is explained, as in the Kośa, as seeing both the individual and the general characteristics. The general characteristics are impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and not-self (the Sarvāstivāda, from the Āgamas onwards, regularly adds emptiness to the three more familiar in the Theravāda). The individual characteristics are described as follows:

**Table 17.1: Individual Characteristics of the Satipaṭṭhānas in the Arthaviniścaya Sūtra**

Satipaṭṭhāna	Individual Characteristic
Body	Primary and derived materiality ( <i>bhūtabhautikatvā</i> )
Feelings	Experientiality ( <i>anubhāvatvā</i> )
Mind	Beholding ( <i>upalabdhitvā</i> )
Dhammas	All except those three

‘Internal’ is defined as pertaining to one’s own continuum (*santati*), while ‘external’ pertains to others. The repetitive idiom ‘body as body’ is explained by saying that it serves to avoid the perverted mind that would arise from seeing ‘body’ as ‘feeling’, ‘mind’, or ‘dhamma’. Following the Sarvāstivādin precedent the text says that understanding (*paññā*) is the intrinsic essence

(*svabhāva*) of the satipatthanas. The sequence of the satipatthanas is explained as the order in which they arise. All in all, the text and commentary add little to our understanding of satipatthana, except by showing the influence and consistency of the interpretations of the schools.

## OTHER EARLY SCHOOLS

Richard Gombrich mentions that Harvarman's Satyasiddhiśāstra of the Bahuśrutīya school uses the Susīma Sutta to justify a path requiring a degree of concentration short of jhana. In this they agree with the Theravāda commentaries; but their position is not justified by the Susīma Sutta itself, in either the Theravāda or Sarvāstivāda versions. The name of this school ('The Very Learned', or perhaps 'The Followers of the Very Learned') confirms the correlation between the move towards dry insight and the move out of the forest hermitages into the urban scholastic universities. Nevertheless, it appears that they did not base their conception of the path of dry insight on satipatthana. The Satyasiddhiśāstra analyses the 37 wings to enlightenment as either samatha or vipassana. It describes the first three satipatthanas as samatha and the contemplation of dhammas as vipassana. Mindfulness in the faculties, powers, and enlightenment-factors is also treated under samatha. In this respect it would appear that this text is in agreement with the early Suttas, the \*Vibhaṅga Mūla, and perhaps, in spirit if not in letter, with the Sarvāstivāda too.

Another important early school was the Puggalavāda ('Personalist School'), whose distinctive doctrine was that there is a 'person' who exists, neither identical with or separate from the five aggregates, who undergoes rebirth, experiences the results of kamma, and who attains final Nibbana. In this they naturally incurred the vigorous condemnation of the other schools, who claimed they were reverting to the 'self' of the non-Buddhist teachings. However, they rebutted such claims with equal vigour, and survived to exert considerable influence on the doctrines of the schools for over 1000 years. Bhikṣu Thich Thien Chau has published a detailed study, *The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism*. Only four of their works survive in the Chinese; one of these is on Vinaya, one deals specifically with their special doctrine of the person, and the remaining two are very similar versions of an Abhidhamma treatise. Effectively, then, we are limited to one work, known as the Tridharmakaśāstra.<sup>478</sup> This is attributed to a certain Giribhadra of the Vātsīputrīya sub-school of the Puggalavāda, and possibly dates from around the start of the Common Era, together with a commentary of perhaps a few centuries later, and was translated from (hybrid?) Sanskrit into Chinese by Gautama Sanghadeva in 391CE.

The work first deals with the classic triad of good acts: generosity, ethics, and meditation, the latter being described as the jhanas, divine abidings, and formless attainments. Then it goes on to deal with the skilful roots, acceptance, learning, right thoughts, practice, ascetic practices, sense restraint, and 'access samadhi'. This last term is familiar from the Theravādin commentaries in the sense of an approach to jhana; but for the Puggalavādins it denotes rather the approach to insight. All these topics are, of course, familiar to all the schools. The next section is on 'means', (*upāya*), which here is a term for the triad of ethics, samadhi, and understanding. Samadhi (here the Chinese translation suggests a Sanskrit original *uttaraśamatha*, 'exalted tranquillity') is said to include three factors of the eightfold path: energy, mindfulness, and wisdom. Mindfulness is defined as the absence of forgetfulness regarding the four satipatthanas of body, feelings, mind, and dhammas – internal, external, and both internal & external. Here 'internal' seems to be defined as 'kammically acquired' (*upadinna*), a mainly abhidhammic technical term denoting this set of aggregates, elements, and sense media that has been acquired as a result of past actions. 'External' refers to others. This practice eliminates greed, anger, and delusion. All of these teachings on satipatthana are in perfect accord with the Suttas and the schools. The sectarian perspective of the school, however, is brought out when the text argues that when the Buddha

said that ‘he contemplates a body in the body’, the word ‘he’ (so) refers to the ineffable person.<sup>479</sup> Next the text deals with samadhi, focussing on the triad of ‘emptiness samadhi’, ‘undirected samadhi’, and ‘signless samadhi’. This set replaces the normal four jhanas here, probably because it is a triad; the title of the work means the ‘Treatise of Threefold Dhammas’, and the work does indeed subsume much of its subject matter within groups of three. The four jhanas were dealt with earlier, where they were listed with the divine abidings and formless attainments, thus making up an extended set of three groups of four dhammas. Hence the substitution of the three samadhis for the four jhanas here is more plausibly explained as dictated by the purely formal exigencies of the context (an application of the ānguttara-principle), rather than a genuine doctrinal shift. Next is the section on wisdom; this is where the sectarian emphasis on the ‘person’ is prominent. The rest of the work deals with various matters unrelated to our present purpose. However, it is interesting to note that under the topic of ‘doubt’, there is a comprehensive list of samadhi attainments, all familiar from the early Suttas, and conspicuously lacking the commentarial innovations of ‘momentary’ and ‘access’ samadhi.

Leon Hurvitz has published an interesting translation of some Āgama sutras on satipatthana together with cognates from the Pali canon, and Chinese commentaries by Fa Sheng and others. The text gives the first vagga of ten Sūtras in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna-saṃyukta (Hurvitz adds Pali cognates, not all of which are correct), and then addends a miscellaneous discussion that has little to do with the particular texts at hand. The commentaries for the most part agree with the Kośa. Vipassana is a strong theme throughout, with a special emphasis on dependent origination (which recalls the Śāriputrābhidharma), as well as Abhidhamma-style analysis into ‘atoms’ and ‘moments’. However, one of the commentators is careful to note that right knowledge is produced by samatha. Body contemplation exercises mentioned are anapanasati, ugliness, and elements. Initially one is to concentrate one’s mind on these internally only; according to one commentator only the perception of ugliness can be developed on the bodies of others. The other objects of satipatthana are not specified, except that dhammas again is perception and conceptual activities. Satipaṭṭhānas as objects is again discussed; the text claims that the Buddha said that ‘all dhammas’ refers to the four satipatthanas; since this statement is not found in the existing Nikāyas/Āgamas, it may be discounted. But the text rightly warns of the dangers in this approach:

‘...though it is all-inclusive, its fields of perception tend to get out of hand and a certain restriction is needed if the same goal, severance of the defilements, is to be achieved.’

Here the commentators, more explicitly than the other texts we have reviewed, treat the contemplation of dhammas as encompassing the other three:

‘Having entered into the dhammas, he takes a general look,  
Beholding identically the marks of the dhammas:  
“These four [objects of satipatthana] are impermanent,  
Empty, not-self, suffering.”’

The Mūlasarvāstivāda were said by Warder and others to be a late offshoot of the Sarvāstivāda (200 C.E.?), although recent scholars have questioned this.<sup>480</sup> It is difficult to isolate specific doctrinal deviations from the Sarvāstivāda, and it may be that their main innovations were literary rather than doctrinal. They composed very long and elaborate Sūtras and Vinaya in the style made fashionable by the contemporary Mahāyāna sutras. Their Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna Sūtra (sometimes called the Mahā Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra) takes advantage of the trend towards expansiveness that had already begun in the treatment of satipatthana by the early schools.<sup>481</sup> As well as offering much doctrinal and meditative material it includes various descriptions of

heavens and hells and also includes references to the arts, painting, and theatre. Thus it popularises the topic, placing satipatthana within the contemporary cultural movements of the day. Indeed, some scholars have seen in one of the late Chinese translations of this work the influence of the Kasmirean version of the Rāmāyana. I have not been able to locate the Sanskrit text, but in a cursory survey of the Chinese I cannot find the satipatthana pericope or any of the special features of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, suggesting that it shares little but the name. I have come across the following interesting passage.

‘When the time of death is approaching, he sees these signs: he sees a great rocky mountain lowering above him like a shadow. He thinks to himself: “The mountain might fall on top of me”, and he waves with his hand as though to ward off this mountain. His brothers and kinsmen and neighbours see him do this; but to them it seems that he is simply pushing his hand out into space. Presently the mountain seems to be made out of white cloth and he clammers up this cloth. Then it seems to be made out of red cloth. Finally, as the time of death approaches, he sees a bright light, and being unaccustomed to it he is perplexed and confused. Because his mind is confused he sees all sorts of things such as are seen in dreams. He sees his future father and mother having sex, and seeing them a thought crosses his mind, a perversity arises in him. If he is going to be reborn as a man, he sees himself having sex with his mother and being hindered by his father; or if he is going to be reborn as a woman, he sees himself having sex with his father and being hindered by his mother. At that moment the intermediate existence ends, life and consciousness arise, and causality begins once more to work.<sup>482</sup> It is like the imprint made by a die; the die is then destroyed, but the pattern has been imprinted.’<sup>483</sup>

While the style and subject matter might seem far removed from the early Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, the passage still retains an urgent interest in the questions of life, death, and causality. In fact the connection between satipatthana and understanding rebirth is already implicit in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, where the causes of the four satipatthanas may all be explained in terms of dependent origination. Probably the key link is the term ‘confusion’. Mindfulness, the antidote for confusion, prepares us for death, the most important moment of our life. The whole process sounds remarkably similar to samadhi experiences. The bright light appears like a samadhi nimitta; this unexpected and unknown experience often causes confusion and fear in inexperienced meditators. Then various signs and visions appear. If the dying person or the meditator loses mindfulness and becomes distracted, the hindrances such as desire and anger arise, here exposed in their most stark, Oedipal perversity. This and other aspects of this passage are found in the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’, and was possibly a source text for that work. The illustration of rebirth with the simile of the die is also found in the Visuddhimagga, which is interesting, since by the time of the compilation of these texts, the two traditions had already been separated for perhaps seven hundred years.<sup>484</sup>

## THE MAHĀYĀNA

It will be fitting to conclude this survey with some details from the treatment of satipatthana in the main Indian schools of Mahāyāna. First, however, we may briefly look at how the great pair of samatha and vipassana is treated in Mahāyāna meditation in general. I am frequently struck at how the Mahāyāna texts emphasize the complementary nature of samatha and vipassana, where the Theravāda emphasizes their difference. This reflects the difference in philosophical orientation between the schools. The Theravāda, emphasizing the method of analysis, tends towards an ontology of pluralistic realism, and thus sees samatha and vipassana as essentially different ‘things’, while the Mahāyāna, emphasizing the method of synthesis, tends towards a monistic (or perhaps ‘holistic’) idealism, and thus sees samatha and vipassana as, in themselves, incomplete parts whose significance emerges when synthesized as a greater whole. An

outstanding work of modern scholarship is a collection of essays edited by Minoru Kiyota, simply called *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation*. Here are some extracts.

‘...others having a like notion speak therefore of a “dry vipassana”, in other words, a vipassana without samatha, even though the presence of samatha is held to be an indispensable condition for all vipassana.’ (pg. 47)

‘The perfect union of these two, mental stabilization and higher vision (*samathavipassanāyuganaddha*) is the immediate aim of Buddhist meditative practice, for all the paths of Buddhism – whether Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna including Vajrayāna – depend on this coupling.’ (pg. 47)

Geshe Sopa, ‘*Śamathavipaśyanāyuganaddha: The Two Leading Principles of Buddhist Meditation*’

‘From the very beginning, it has been generally accepted that the higher reach of wisdom (*paññā*) is attained either through or accompanied by meditation (*jhana*, *samadhi*, and so on). Examples of this idea can be seen in various formulae such as “the pairing of quietude and insight” (*samathavipassanāyuganaddha*), and in the last two of the “three disciplines” (*sīla-samadhi-paññā*), the “five faculties” (*saddhā-viriya-sati-samādhi-paññā*), and the “six perfections” (*dāna-sīla-khanti-viriya-jhāna-paññā*).’ (pg. 66)

Gadjin M. Nagao, ‘“What Remains” in Śūnyatā: A Yogacāra Interpretation of Emptiness’

‘Meditation, the basis of the third kind of wisdom, is practiced in the following way: (1) by mastering samatha or the tranquillization of the mind through the observation of moral and yogic rules, nine stages of samatha, four jhanas, and so on; then (2) by vipassana (analysis of the object of meditation from the point of view of what has been studied by investigation).’ (pg. 135)

Yuichi Kajiyama, ‘*Later Mādhyamakas*’

‘“...this cognition, nonerroneous and free from conceptualization with respect to an ultimately real object, depends on a principal cause, which is samatha intimately conjoined with vipassana”.’ (pg. 149)

Charlene McDermott, ‘*Yogic Direct Awareness*’

‘Now, in Indian Buddhism, vipassana is an exercise in the close scrutiny of the characteristics of the skandhas, dharmas, and other compounded elements, and it is supposed to be done in conjunction with exercises in tranquillity (*samatha*) or stilling the externally directed activities of the mind.’ (pg. 178)

‘In commenting on the [Heart] sutra passage, “O Sāriputta, form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form”, he [Fa-tsang] first says that when one sees form as identical with emptiness, one perfects the practice of samatha, and when emptiness is contemplated as identical with form, one perfects the practice of vipassana, and he concludes that when the two are practiced together, they are ideal.’ (pg. 179)

Francis H. Cook, *Fa Tsang’s Brief Commentary*

‘...the practice of transferring merits is guided by insight (*vipassana*), and insight by meditation (*samatha*). In the Upadeśa, worship and praise [earlier identified as *samatha*] are the instruments to purify the mind; vow and meditation [=vipassana] refer to the state which has realized pure mind. The two are not distinct and apart’ (pg. 259)

Minoru Kiyota, ‘*Buddhist Devotional Meditation*’

Thus most of the essays in this collection speak clearly of the harmony of samatha and vipassana. These fundamental aspects of meditation are reinterpreted in accord with the particular perspective of the school. A good example of this is in the treatment of the Heart Sūtra above. The Heart Sūtra boldly confronts us with a series of statements that, on the face of it, appear

paradoxical. In order to make sense of these enigmas, the commentator brings in the more familiar, readily comprehensible teachings on samatha and vipassana. This does a number of things: it explains the new and radical by showing connections with the already known; it invokes basic Buddhist concepts, thus reassuring us that the Heart Sūtra does not really mean to destroy Buddhism; and it points out that the Heart Sūtra is meant to inspire practice, not philosophical speculation. Perhaps most importantly, the presentation of the commentator is clearly intended to demonstrate at length that the relationship between samatha and vipassana is integrative, rather than divisive, and he works from this basis to show the integrative nature of the Heart Sūtra teachings as well. (The text does this with much more thoroughness than the short quote above.) Several of the passages quoted above speak of ‘samatha conjoined with vipassana’, a phrase derived from a discourse by Venerable Ānanda.<sup>485</sup> This says that all those who declare they are enlightened do so in one of four ways: samatha preceding vipassana; vipassana preceding samatha; samatha conjoined with vipassana; or else the mind is seized with restlessness, but later becomes settled in samadhi. Practicing in each of these ways, the path is born, then cultivated to enlightenment. These four options all involve a balance of samatha and vipassana, and rule out any approach that would try to dispense with samatha altogether. Yet the passage, on the face of it, treats each option as equal and does not, as the Mahāyāna interpretations above do, praise ‘samatha conjoined with vipassana’ as superior to the other options. So these interpretations emphasize the integrative approach, if anything, even more than the early Suttas.

We may continue by briefly surveying some sayings on mindfulness from a few of the outstanding Mahāyāna writings.

‘It is the persevering practice (of the four satipatthanas) that is called “samadhi.”’  
Nāgārjuna, ‘Letter to a Friend’

‘He who has established mindfulness as a guard at the doors of his mind cannot be overpowered by the passions, as a well-guarded city cannot be overcome by the enemy.’  
Aśvaghoṣa, ‘Saundarānanda Kāvya’<sup>486</sup>

‘...constant mindfulness  
Which gains in keenness by devoted zeal  
And zeal arises if one comes to know  
The greatness that lies in inner stillness.’  
Śantideva, ‘Śikṣāsamuccaya’, Kārikās 7-8

‘If an excessive preoccupation with external activities has been avoided with the help of mindfulness & clear comprehension, then, thanks to them, the mind can steadily keep to a single object as long as it wishes.’  
Śantideva, ‘Śikṣāsamuccaya’

Thus these great teachers all acknowledge the samadhi aspect of mindfulness. We have already seen that the great Prajñāpāramita Sūtra, the cornerstone for all Mahāyāna philosophy, contains an exposition on satipatthana inserted almost unchanged from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of an early school. We may now examine a few other Mahāyāna Sūtras in their treatment of satipatthana.

One of the important early collections of Mahāyāna Sūtras is the Mahā Ratnakūṭa (translated as *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras*). One of the discourses contained therein, translated under the title ‘Sūtra of Assembled Treasures’, has a short passage on satipatthana, included as part of a long list of various dhammas.

‘The four mindfulnesses cure clinging to body, feelings, mind, and dhammas. One who practices the Dharma and contemplates the body as it really is will not be trapped by the view of a real self. One who contemplates feelings...mind...dhammas as they really are will not be trapped by the view of a real self. These four mindfulnesses, therefore, cause one to abhor the body, feelings, mind, and dhammas, and thereby open the door to Nibbana.’<sup>487</sup>

Here the vipassana aspect is emphasized. The passage does not appear to be very directly derived from the early satipatthana pericope. The emphasis on not-self is familiar from the Suttas, although not directly in the context of satipatthana as such. The attitude of abhorring (*nibbidā*?) comes across as over-strong, although this may be due to the translations. The early Suttas have more of a balanced approach, embracing both the attractive (breath, pleasant feelings, purified mind, enlightenment-factors, etc.) and unattractive (charnel ground, painful feelings, defiled mind, hindrances) aspects of experience within the purview of satipatthana. This strong negativity is perhaps surprising given the Mahāyāna’s reputation for a non-dualistic approach, but this is just one isolated passage.

The Avataṃsaka Sūtra is one of those vast, sprawling Mahāyāna Sūtras that seems to find a place for almost everything. The 26<sup>th</sup> chapter, in a discussion of the ten stages of the Bodhisattva’s progress, describes the fourth stage as ‘Blazing’, and includes a list of dhammas, including our familiar 37 wings to enlightenment, starting as usual with the satipatthana formula.<sup>488</sup> This is a version of the integrated internal/external formula, including the standard auxiliary formula. In fact it appears to be identical with the pericope at SN 47.3/SA 636/MA 76\*, the only change being the substitution of ‘bodhisattva’ for ‘bhikkhu’. Again we confirm the use of straightforward ‘cut-&-paste’ insertions from the early Suttas even in such an advanced Mahāyāna scripture.

Santideva’s Śikṣāsamuccaya, which I have quoted from briefly above, includes many powerful statements on satipatthana, in part collected from other Mahāyānist works. Many of the passages are collected in Nyanaponika Thera’s widely available *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, so there is no need to repeat them here in detail. Suffice to note the inclusion of sectarian material, continuing the trend of using the prestige of satipatthana to buttress one’s position in the energetic doctrinal debates that characterize much of written Buddhist history. The text quotes the Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra, giving a characteristically Mahāyānist slant on the internal/external contemplation of feelings.

‘When experiencing a pleasant feeling he conceives deep compassion for beings whose character is strongly inclined to lust, and he himself gives up the propensity to lust. When experiencing an unpleasant feeling he conceives deep compassion for beings whose character is strongly inclined towards hatred, and he himself gives up the propensity to hatred. When experiencing a neutral feeling he conceives deep compassion for beings whose character is strongly inclined to delusion, and he himself gives up the propensity to delusion.’

The contemplation of body includes a very powerful passage from the Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra. This includes an attack on the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of time:

‘This body did not come from the past and will not go over to the future. It has no existence in the past or the future except in unreal and false conceptions.’

#### THE SAMADHI OF DIRECT ENCOUNTER WITH THE BUDDHAS OF THE PRESENT

A more interesting development is found in the Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhī Sūtra, which translates as ‘The Discourse on the Samadhi of the Direct Encounter with the

Buddhas of the Present’. I will refer to it amore economically as the ‘Buddhas of the Present Sūtra’. I have given a Sanskrit extract of the satipatthana formula from this sutra above. Here I will condense the main passages dealing with satipatthana.

[18B] ‘Further, Bhadrāpāla, Bodhisattvas who dwell contemplating a body in the body, but do not think any thoughts (*vitakka*) connected with the body, and who dwell contemplating feelings...mind...dhammas, but do not think any thoughts connected with feelings...mind...dhammas – those Bodhisattvas obtain this samadhi [i.e. the samadhi of the sutra’s title]. Why is that, Bhadrāpāla? It is because if Bodhisattvas and Mahāsattvas [practice satipatthana in the way described], then they do not objectify any dhammas... they do not conceptualize or think discursively...they do not see any dhammas...that is known as unobscured cognition. Bhadrāpāla, it is precisely unobscured cognition that is called samadhi. Bhadrāpāla, the Bodhisattvas who possess this samadhi see immeasurable and incalculable Buddhas, and they also hear the True Dhamma. On hearing it they master it. They also obtain the unobscured cognition and vision of liberation and the unimpeded cognition of those Tathagatas, Arahants, Perfect Buddhas.

[18C] ‘Further, Bhadrāpāla, Bodhisattvas dwell contemplating a body in the body, and in doing so do not see any dhammas whatsoever. Not seeing them they do not conceptualize or think discursively, even though they are neither blind nor deaf. Similarly as regards feelings, mind, and dhammas. Not seeing them they are not dependent; not being dependent they cultivate the path; by virtue of having cultivated the path they have no doubts with regard to dhammas; and being without doubts they see the Buddhas. And in seeing the Buddhas, by virtue of the fact that all dhammas are unproduced, liberation occurs.

[18D] ‘Why is that, Bhadrāpāla? If Bodhisattvas should adopt the perception of dhammas, that itself would be for them the false view of an object of apprehension (*upalambhadṛṣṭi*). That itself would be the false view of existence, of a self, a being, a soul, a person. That itself would be the false view of aggregates, elements, sense media, signs, existing things, causes, conditions, and the seizing of an object of apprehension.<sup>7489</sup>

The first thing that we notice is that the basic formula is adapted from the Dantabhūmi Sutta,<sup>490</sup> including the special phrase, ‘does not think thoughts connected with the body, etc.’ Readings vary between ‘body’ (*kāya*) and ‘sensual desires’ (*kāma*). In the Dantabhūmi Sutta the context does not clarify the meaning; even though the interpretation might change, still both readings make sense. But in the Buddhas of the Present Sūtra the text unambiguously depends on the meaning ‘body’ (etc.). The fundamental purpose of practicing in this way is to attain samadhi, just as, in the Dantabhūmi Sutta, the practice immediately leads on to the jhanas. Here it is emphasized that one with such samadhi does not ‘objectify’ or become ‘dependent’ on any dhammas. As we saw in the discussion on satipatthana in the Prajñāpāramita, the idea of lacking ‘dependence’ suggests the ‘independence’ of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, although I am again unable to confirm whether it is a truly cognate phrase. The argument is a standard Mahāyāna criticism of the Abhidhamma schools, who took the dhammas as being really existent ‘things’. Thus wrong views about dhammas are said to be just as mistaken as wrong views about a self. The implication here is that one who merely thinks about dhammas will misconstrue them, mistaking the intellectual understanding of the teachings for true wisdom into the emptiness of all phenomena. Satipaṭṭhāna is enjoined in order to overcome the thinking mind so that one can ‘see’ without ‘views’. It is fascinating to see how the schools can take the same agreed-upon fundamental texts and develop them in quite opposite ways. For in the Theravāda, of course, the practice of satipatthana was to become more and more a matter of seeing these ultimately existing dhammas, and one is instructed to ‘think thoughts connected with the body [etc.]’ through the habit of mental noting.



Another intriguing aspect of the Buddhas of the Present Sūtra is the statement that one in such a samadhi will see immeasurable Buddhas. This is a new innovation in satipatthana, and is in fact the central theme of the discourse. The meditation on the Buddha in the early discourses is one of the six ‘recollections’ (*anussati*), and we have noticed that this term, and some aspects of the description of the practice, suggest a connection with satipatthana. This implication, however, remains latent in the early period. The seeing of the Buddhas appears to be a kind of meditation vision or *nimitta*. The text then says that one will ‘hear the True Dhamma. On hearing it they master it.’ This points to the belief that one can, in a state of meditative concentration, hear the Buddhas teach the authentic Dhamma, a Dhamma which is to be learnt by heart.

Here we surely have explicit evidence on the disputed question of the origin of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. The Mahāyāna Sūtras emphatically claim to have been spoken by the Buddha, although this is historically impossible. Are we to believe that the Mahāyanists were so unscrupulous as to deliberately forge new texts and palm them off as authentic? There are a number of general things to be kept in mind here: the ancient world, and specifically the early Buddhists, did not have such an individualistic insistence on ownership and authorship of works; editing of the early Suttas had been ongoing, thus making people accustomed to a somewhat fluid idea of what the canon was; and, most pertinently for this context, the Mahāyāna philosophy was increasingly emphasizing breaking down the distinction between the inner, subjective world and the outer, objective world, thus paving the way for imagination to be considered as more-or-less on a par with historical facts. In fact the desire to have new Sūtras accepted as authentic developed hand-in-hand with this anti-historical world view, hence the marvellous, mythic settings of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. Warder has suggested that the Mahāyāna monks may have been inspired by meditative visions and to have interpreted these as stemming from the Buddha in some mystical sense. The Buddhas of the Present Sūtra clearly says that that is just what happens. Even the title of the Sūtra suggests this. It includes the word *sammukha*, literally meaning ‘face to face’, which is most familiar from the early idiom used to emphasize that one has heard a teaching in the immediate presence of the Buddha himself: ‘Face to face with the Blessed One have I heard this, face to face I have learnt it.’<sup>491</sup> It is not uncommon today, even among Theravādins, for meditators to see a vision of the Buddha, hear his teaching, accept it as authentic, and to teach it to others as the Buddha’s teachings. Such ‘inspired’ teachings can be straightforward re-statements of Buddhist doctrines, insightful elaborations, or mildly eccentric reformulations; but sometimes they are nothing more than mumbo-jumbo.

The status and meaning of meditative visions is further explained elsewhere in the Buddhas of the Present Sūtra, again relying on satipatthana, here the exercises in charnel-ground contemplation. The passage is not exactly the same as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, yet it clearly depicts the same practice. It is worth bearing in mind that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says ‘as if one would see a corpse...’ (*seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ*), thus depicting it as a purely imaginative exercise.

[3J] ‘For example, Bhadrāpāla, when a monk performing the meditation on ugliness sees in front of him corpses – bloated...livid...putrefied...bloody...gnawed...with the flesh peeled off...with no flesh and blood...white...shell-coloured...become skeletons – then those corpses have not come from anywhere, nor have they gone anywhere, they are not made by anyone, nor are they made to cease by anyone. Yet, Bhadrāpāla, by that monk’s mastery of mental focussing he sees the skeleton lying in front of him.

‘In the same manner, Bhadrāpāla, in whatever quarter Tathagatas, Arahants, Perfect Buddhas might dwell, those Bodhisattvas who are supported by the Buddha and established in this samadhi concentrate their minds on that quarter in order to obtain a vision of the Buddhas. By

concentrating their minds on that quarter they see the Tathagatas, Arahants, and Perfect Buddhas in that quarter. Why is that? Namely, Bhadrāpāla, this obtaining of a vision of the Buddhas is a natural outcome of this samadhi. Bodhisattvas who are established in this samadhi see the Tathagatas, and they appear to them through the combination and concurrence of these three things: the glory (*ānubhāva*) of the Buddha, the application of the force of their own wholesome potentialities, and the power from attaining samadhi.<sup>492</sup>

Thus the visualization of the Buddhas is said to be an imaginative exercise just the same as the visualization of a corpse. The almost shocking analogy implied between the Buddha and a rotting corpse may be just an accident of the text; the corpse meditation may have been chosen as example merely because it is one of the clearest examples of a meditative exercise in visualization. Yet there is a poignancy to the juxtaposition, for by the time the Buddhas of the Present Sūtra was written, the historical Buddha had long since become the Buddha of the Past; the living presence had become a corpse, combusted in the flames of impermanence. The meditative visualization of the Buddha was perhaps the most potent of the many means developed by the Buddhist faithful to resurrect the Buddha, to preserve the vital force of the Teacher and his Teachings. In this way the meditation on the transience of life is transformed.

## YOGACĀRA

We may pursue our enquiry further through examining the treatment of mindfulness in some of the more methodical treatises, starting with the Yogacāra school. They were a meditative school whose distinctive philosophy is usually taken to be the assertion that ‘mind only’ exists, all else is illusion. This opens them up to the criticism that they are reverting to the Upaniṣadic position of postulating consciousness as the ground of being, which is also equated with Nibbana; however the early Yogacārins such as Vasubandhu and Asaṅga stated that even the underlying ‘storehouse consciousness’ ceases in Nibbana. Nevertheless, Vasubandhu makes a couple of startlingly casual references to Nibbana as the true Self.<sup>493</sup> One of the key systematizers was Asaṅga, who lived in the fourth century C.E. in North-West India.<sup>494</sup> He was said to have been largely inspired by Maitreya, the Bodhisattva currently dwelling in Tusita heaven awaiting rebirth to become a Buddha. His *Abhidharmasamuccaya* is described as ‘an extremely important work of the Mahāyāna Abhidharma. It contains nearly all the main teachings of the Mahāyāna, and can be considered a summary of all the other works by Asaṅga. The method of treatment of subjects in this work is the same as the traditional method found in the texts of the Pali Abhidhamma which preceded it by several centuries, such as the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Vibhaṅga*, and *Dhātukathā*: posing a question and answering it.’<sup>495</sup> Not merely the ‘Q & A’ format reminds us of the early Abhidhamma: we also find the first part treats the aggregates, elements, and sense media, using Abhidhamma methods such as *saṅgaha* (‘grouping’) and *sampayoga* (‘conjunction’); the second part treats the four noble truths, including the path in detail; thus these two parts together are similar to the *saṃyutta-matika*. Although the text is strongly defensive of the Mahāyāna perspective, in fact most of the text deals with matter familiar from the early Suttas, strongly influenced by the Sarvāstivāda/Sautrantika systemizations.

Mindfulness is first mentioned under a general list of 52 mental factors described under the umbrella of the aggregate of activities. While the list in general is fairly ad hoc, the sequence just at this point is reminiscent of the Suttas: mindfulness, samadhi, understanding. I give the definitions for mindfulness and samadhi:

‘What is mindfulness? It is non-forgetting by the mind (*cetas*) with regard to the object experienced. Its function is non-distraction.

‘What is samadhi? It is one-pointedness of mind on the object to be investigated. Its function consists of giving a basis to knowledge (*jñāna*).’<sup>496</sup>

These are perhaps the most useful succinct definitions of these terms I have come across. ‘Non-forgetting’ regarding an object that has already been experienced emphasizes the sustained observation of *anupassanā*. ‘Non-distraction’ is of course the basic function of samatha, and recalls such contexts as satipatthana as the ‘path to convergence’, the ‘basis for samadhi’, and so on, and particularly anapanasati in its function of non-distraction. And while mindfulness gives rise to samadhi, samadhi in its turn has the proper function of giving rise to wisdom.

The path is described, in a way similar to the Kośa, as starting with the fundamentals of the gradual training: ethics, sense control, moderation in food, putting forth effort, clear comprehension, etc., and also the wisdom from hearing, thinking, and meditating. Samatha and vipassana are mentioned, without explanation (although the Kośa seems to mainly exclude vipassana from this stage). Next is a lengthy analysis, again leaning heavily on the Sarvāstivāda, of the process leading to the vision of the four noble truths. Then the ‘path of development’ is explained, largely consisting of the 37 wings to enlightenment, which are here treated exclusively as applying to the noble disciples (in Theravāda terminology the ‘transcendental path’). The explanations of satipatthana are clear and straightforward, and sometimes offer interesting new perspectives. I will summarize the key aspects.<sup>497</sup>

**Objects:** Body, feelings, mind, dhammas; also ‘things pertaining to oneself’.

**Intrinsic essence:** Understanding and mindfulness.

**Companion:** Associated mind and mentality.

**Development:** Contemplation of a body in the body, etc., internally/externally/internally-externally.

**Internal:** Internal material sense media.

**External:** External material sense media.

**Internal-external:** The external sense media, which are the seats of the sense faculties, and which are linked to the internal sense media; and also the internal material spheres pertaining to others.

The first explanation for internal-external seems to mean the internal as related to the external, and suggests a synthetic interrelationship. The second half of this explanation suggests that the internal spheres of others are external for oneself, and thus taken together they are ‘internal-external’. These explanations of internal-external differ somewhat from the Theravāda.<sup>498</sup> Internal-external feelings, etc., are described as feelings, etc., produced by the internal-external body. The most interesting aspect is the description of contemplation of the ‘body in the body’: ‘contemplation of the identity (or similarity, *samatāpaśyanā*) of the natural image of the body (*prakṛtibimbakāyasya*) with the imagined counter-image of the body (*vikalpapratibimbakāyena*).’ This clearly refers to the development of a visualized reflex-image in meditation, known in Theravāda as the ‘counterpart sign’ (*paṭibhāganimitta*). This appears as a reflective mirror-image of the body, or of a part of the body such as the breath, in the period immediately preceding full absorption. Although this is readily comprehensible, it is not at all clear how a similar explanation would apply to the other satipatthanas. The text offers no help, merely saying that the contemplation of feelings, etc., should be understood the same way.

The treatment of the five spiritual faculties and powers acknowledges that each factor supports the next, including mindfulness as support for samadhi.<sup>499</sup> In the discussion of the noble eightfold path it is said that ‘right effort is the factor that dispels the impediments of the [major] defilements (*kleśa*), right mindfulness is the factor which dispels the impediments of the minor defilements (*upakleśa*), right samadhi is the factor which dispels the impediments to the qualities

of distinction.<sup>500</sup> In this the text demonstrates its close reliance on the early texts, visible even among the many later elements.

There is another interesting passage on satipatthana in Asaṅga's Śrāvakabhūmi. We have already seen that the contents of the contemplation of mind are identical with the Sarvāstivāda Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra. The specification of the contemplation of the body is, however, very different from the Suttas, listing 35 of the most diverse kinds of 'body'. As usual, the satipatthanas are opposed to the four perversions. Then the text says this:

'Another method is: where one does the action; the purpose for which [one acts]; who does the action; and by what does one act. Comprising all that in brief, the four satipatthanas are established. Therein: in the body one acts; for the sake of feeling; by the mind; by means of skilful and unskilful dhammas'.<sup>501</sup>

Stefan Anacker's 'Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from the Extremes' offers a translation of the Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya, which is, according to the translator, 'one of the most striking works in the Mahāyāna literature'. It is a commentary by Vasubandhu<sup>502</sup> on verses attributed to 'Maitreya-nātha'. Vasubandhu was Asaṅga's brother, and it seems they shared the same inspirational connection with Maitreya Bodhisattva.

Following the Sarvāstivādin precedent the text tries to rationalize the traditional order of the sets of wings to enlightenment as a progressive sequence (whereas for the Suttas the order is not essential to the groups and simply organizes the sets according to numbers for the sake of convenience). There is an attempt to equate the four satipatthanas with the respective noble truths; this section has a refreshingly simple description of the contemplation of dhammas: 'lack of confusion as regards dhammas that serve to afflict and dhammas that serve to alleviate'.<sup>503</sup> This is identical with the conception of contemplation of dhammas we have seen in the early material. Having accomplished this, one is supposed to undertake the four right efforts, and then develop samadhi through the four bases of psychic power. There is considerable discussion on various obstacles to meditation and antidotes; mindfulness is defined in agreement with the schools as 'the lack of loss of image, etc. of the meditation object'.<sup>504</sup> Elsewhere the function of mindfulness is as antidote to 'secondary afflictions' because of 'the absence of slackness and excitedness in mindfulness which is well-established in the preparatory causes for samatha, etc.'<sup>505</sup> Next, continuing the sets of the wings to enlightenment, arise the five spiritual faculties:

'Having taken hold of faith, one undertakes energy, the result of this cause. Having undertaken energy, mindfulness occurs, and through mindfulness having occurred, the mind enters samadhi. When the mind is in samadhi, one knows as it is'.<sup>506</sup>

Here we are firmly in Sutta territory. The difference between the spiritual faculties and spiritual powers is explained in terms of progressive stages of the path according to the Sarvāstivāda system; and then the enlightenment-factors and the noble eightfold path arise in due order.

Although the above treatment is basically similar to the Kośa, now the text asserts what it claims are three features distinguishing Mahāyānist satipatthana.<sup>507</sup>

- 1) The object of meditation for disciples is their own bodies, etc., while the bodhisattvas' is both their own and others.

This is just wrong; as we have repeatedly seen, all strata of texts in all schools from the Suttas onwards acknowledge both internal and external contemplation.

- 2) Disciples contemplate the impermanence, etc., of the body, etc., while bodhisattvas use the method of non-apprehension [of bodies, etc.].

This refers to the fundamental philosophical division between the Abhidhamma schools and the Mahāyāna: the abhidhammikas, especially the Sarvāstivādins, tended to treat the dhammas as real substantial entities that possessed the characteristics of impermanence and so on. But the ‘Emptiness School’ (to which the author belonged) held that a dhamma, like a magical illusion, ‘does not exist as it appears, with the state of possessing apprehended [objective] and apprehendor [subjective] aspects, but yet it doesn’t not<sup>508</sup> exist, because of the existence of the illusion itself.’<sup>509</sup> This is the most important and complex philosophical dispute in later Indian Buddhism. Suffice to say here that, in my opinion, the abhidhammikas ventured significantly beyond the Suttas in their ontological reification of dhammas; but the ‘emptiness’ reaction, with some noble exceptions, did not distinguish between the doctrines of the Suttas and the abhidhammikas, and hence tended to stigmatise all of the followers of early Buddhism as naïve realists. So this criticism, while it may have been pertinent in a certain context, does not apply to those simply following the Suttas.

- 3) Disciples cultivate satipatthana for the sake of non-attachment to their bodies, etc., while bodhisattvas practice neither for lack of attachment nor for nonlack of attachment, but for Nirvana which has no abode.

This requires some interpretation, for of course all schools of Buddhism in fact practice for ‘Nirvana which has no abode’. Presumably this is here intended to refer to Buddhahood, the ultimate goal of the Mahāyāna schools. Mere non-attachment is perhaps thought to lack compassion. No doubt a similar point is being made here as when the text says that studying, reflecting on, and teaching the sutras of the Great Vehicle only is of great fruit, not of the Inferior Vehicle, since the Great Vehicle is distinguished because of its kindness to others.<sup>510</sup> It is the tedious old cliché about the selfishness of the disciples. Given how emphatically the Mahāyāna stigmatized the early schools as selfish, it seems likely that there is some truth to the accusations, in certain places and times. But it is naïve to generalize this to all the early Buddhists; and to demonstrate this I can do no better than to quote the words of the Master.

“I will protect myself,” monks: thus should the satipatthanas be practiced. “I will protect others,” monks: thus should the satipatthanas be practiced. Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.

‘And how is it, monks, that by protecting oneself one protects others? By the cultivation, development, and making much [of the four satipatthanas]. It is in such a way that protecting oneself one protects others.

‘And how is it, monks, that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness, and sympathy. It is in such a way that protecting others one protects oneself.’<sup>511</sup>

## MĀDHYAMAKA

The other main Indian Mahāyāna school was the Mādhyamaka. Although they arose earlier than the Yogacāra, here I treat them later, simply because the only relevant work of theirs that I have access to is later than the Yogacāra works discussed above. Whereas the Yogacāra were better known as a contemplative school, the Mādhyamaka were renowned for their witheringly sophisticated dialectic. However, they did not neglect meditation; the Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla was a meditation manual from the Mādhyamaka school of Śantarakṣita that seems to have been prepared for introducing meditation to the newly converted Tibetans. This work was

studied in an essay by Yuichi Kajiyama titled ‘Later Mādhyamakas’. The general path is described in the usual way as first mastering the scriptural and theoretical aspects, then developing samadhi culminating in jhana and formless attainments before undertaking vipassana. As in the Yogacāra account it is acknowledged that only on the vipassana level is there any significant divergence from the early schools. What is truly remarkable is that the course of vipassana seems to be derived from the doctrinal evolution of the schools through history. That is to say, one is to meditate successively seeing ultimate reality as it is presented by each of the main schools, then to realize that this level of reality is in fact empty, and then to pass to higher, more subtle perspectives, culminating, of course, in the ultimate emptiness of the Mādhyamaka. Thus one’s individual consciousness quite explicitly evolves in reflection of the collective consciousness. Even more remarkable, these stages of historical evolution as presented here clearly parallel the four satipatthanas, even though (so far as the sources available to me reveal) the satipatthanas are not explicitly invoked. Here I will quote from Kajiyama’s summary.

‘In the foregoing sections taken from Kamalaśīla’s Bhāvanākrama 1, four stages are plainly distinguishable:

- 1) The preliminary stage in which external realities admitted in the systems of the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrantika are presented as the object of criticism;
- 2) The stage in which only the mind with manifested images is admitted – the system of the Satyākāravāda-Yogacāra school forms the object of meditation;
- 3) The meditation stage in which the objects of cognition as well as the duality of subject and object are condemned as unreal and in which the knowledge without duality is proclaimed to be real – this being the standpoint of the Alīkāravāda-yogacārin.
- 4) The stage in which even the non-dual knowledge or the pure illumination of cognition is declared to be empty of an intrinsic nature. This latter stage is the highest one proclaimed by the Mādhyamaka.’

Thus the first stage sees the dhammas as substantial entities, paralleling the contemplation of the body. The second stage admits the ‘features’ or objects of the mind, paralleling the contemplation of feelings, which are the most prominent properties of the mind. The third stage only admits cognition itself, corresponding to the contemplation of the mind. And the last sees only pure emptiness, which is defined as ‘dependent origination’, just as the contemplation of dhammas focuses not on seeing the phenomena in and of themselves, but as a matrix of conditions. Please note that this is not to identify these things or deny their differences, but merely to indicate certain relationships. I think the parallelism is both undeniable and significant. The original sequence of the four satipatthanas embodies a natural progression, from coarse to fine, that can be discerned in experience. Like so many other Buddhist teachings it is a simple but extremely subtle paradigm that is reflected in any number of manifestations. As such, for those steeped in the teachings there is a tendency, whether conscious or not, to assimilate the principles, abstract them, and apply them in contexts quite removed from the original – as indeed we are doing here. This has its use in discerning continuities and relationships, but it demands a corresponding re-assertion of the original context if we are not to be cut adrift from our mooring. As we have been warned above, ‘its fields of perception tend to get out of hand and a certain restriction is needed if the same goal, severance of the defilements, is to be achieved’.

To examine the role of mindfulness in later Tibetan Buddhism, which is primarily derived from the Mādhyamaka, I will rely on the extensive modern scholarly work *Meditation on Emptiness* by Jeffrey Hopkins. This is based on a variety of sources, including Indian Buddhist texts, Tibetan treatises, and oral teachings by contemporary Tibetan monks. Here, mindfulness is treated exclusively in the mode of samatha. The basic descriptions of mindfulness expand on Asaṅga’s definition given above.

‘Mindfulness is non-forgetfulness with respect to a familiar phenomenon; it has the function of causing non-distraction. Mindfulness has three features:

- 1) Objective feature: a familiar object. Mindfulness cannot be generated towards an unfamiliar object.
- 2) Subjective feature: non-forgetfulness within observation of that object. Even though one might have become familiar with that object previously, if it does not presently appear as an object of mind, mindfulness cannot occur.
- 3) Functional feature: causing non-distraction. Since the stability of the mind increases in dependence on mindfulness, non-distraction is specified as the function of mindfulness.

...all achievements of samadhi in Sūtra and tantra are attained through the power of mindfulness.<sup>512</sup>

‘Right mindfulness: constant attentiveness to objects of awareness and to modes of perception of those objects necessary for ascending the paths.’<sup>513</sup>

Hopkins presents some charts summarizing the Tibetan conception of the stages in the development of samatha. They are similar in spirit but not identical with the early Suttas. There is a list of five faults in samatha together with their remedies.<sup>514</sup>

**Table 17.1: Faults and Remedies of Samatha**

<b>Faults</b>	<b>Remedies</b>
Laziness ( <i>kausīdya</i> )	Faith ( <i>śraddhā</i> ), desire ( <i>chanda</i> ), effort ( <i>vyāyāma</i> ), tranquillity ( <i>prasrabdhi</i> )
Forgetting the instructions ( <i>avavādasammoṣa</i> )	Mindfulness ( <i>smṛti</i> )
Slackness ( <i>laya</i> ) and restlessness ( <i>auddhatya</i> )	Clear comprehension ( <i>samprajanya</i> )
Lack of application ( <i>anabhisamkāra</i> )	Application ( <i>abhisamkāra</i> )
[Over-] application ( <i>abhisamkāra</i> )	Equanimity ( <i>upekṣā</i> )

Most of these seem to be sensible enough. Tranquillity as remedy for laziness is incongruous, and probably stems from a fault in the transmission. Mindfulness is treated straightforwardly in its old sense of ‘memory’. The following list, which is to be read from the bottom up, also places mindfulness among the factors developing samatha.<sup>515</sup>

**Table 17.2: Aspects of Samatha**

<b>Six Powers</b>	<b>Nine Aspects of Samatha</b>
Familiarity ( <i>parichaya</i> )	Concentration ( <i>samādhāna</i> )
Energy ( <i>vīrya</i> ) >	One-pointedness ( <i>ekotikaraṇa</i> )
>	Strong peace ( <i>vūpaśamana</i> )
Clear comprehension ( <i>samprajanya</i> ) >	Peace ( <i>śamana</i> )
>	Control ( <i>damana</i> )
Mindfulness ( <i>smṛti</i> ) >	Close setting ( <i>upasthāpanā</i> )
>	Re-setting ( <i>avasthāpanā</i> )
Thought ( <i>cintā</i> )	Continuous setting ( <i>samsthāpanā</i> )
Learning ( <i>śruta</i> )	Setting the mind ( <i>cittasthāpanā</i> )

Here again these lists are, generally speaking, similar to the early Suttas, yet have many differences in details; we cannot accept that the changes constitute any improvement. The list of six powers contains mental qualities that, with the exception of the topmost, *parichaya*, are familiar from the Suttas; yet here the logic of the sequence has decayed. Most importantly, energy, which for the Suttas precedes mindfulness, here follows after mindfulness and clear comprehension. This causes the evident incongruity in the correlation with the list of the nine aspects of mental stability: energy is equated with strong peace and one-pointedness. This is reminiscent of the situation in the five faults of samatha discussed above, where tranquillity is the opposite of laziness. Another incongruity is the equation of clear comprehension with peace and control. In fact, it is fairly obvious that here we have two completely separate lists, each of which has its own (imperfect) internal logic, which have been artificially collated at some later date.

The nine aspects of samatha are identical with the definition of samatha in the Abhidharmasamuccaya, and have obviously been derived from there or from a related source.<sup>516</sup> However, in the early source there is no implication that sequence of the terms are meant to describe the progress in meditation. They are simply a list of synonyms for samatha in typical Abhidhamma style. Some time later they were re-interpreted to imply a progress in mediation by forcibly reading arbitrary meanings into the terms. From the point of view of mindfulness, the most interesting are the four terms that form the foundation of the nine aspects of samatha. They culminate with *upasthāpanā* (= *upaṭṭhāna*, here translated following Hopkins as ‘close setting’ rather than my usual ‘establishing’), the second member of the compound satipatthana (*smṛtyupasthāna*). The first three terms are all from the same root, and have obviously been derived from *upasthāna*. Little can be inferred from the exact meanings of the various prefixes used to distinguish these terms. However, it is obvious that what is being emphasized here is the root meaning of ‘standing, stability, steadiness’, three English words also ultimately derived from the same Indo-Aryan root *stha*. ‘Setting’, or ‘establishing’, or ‘placing’ the mind on the meditation object, firmly, repeatedly, continuously, is the means leading to unification. The Theravāda Abhidhamma definition of samatha similarly includes a series of terms derived from *stha*, which curiously enough even share the identical prefixes in the same order (*ṭhiti*, *saṅṭhiti*, *avaṭṭhiti*). But there the absence of *upaṭṭhāna* from the list, and the use of a different derived form (*ṭhiti* rather than *ṭhāna*), obscures the connection with satipatthana.

## AFTERWORD

I would like to finish by recapping a few important areas where the GIST and the history of mindfulness intersect.

The first thing to notice is the value of seeing the Buddhist scriptures in their historical and cultural context. In some cases this leads us to quite secure conclusions, which we could hardly have reached relying on the Buddhist sources alone. A good example of this is the analysis of *ekāyana*, where both the Pali and the Chinese sources seem to be unsure of the meaning, but the Upaniṣadic context is very revealing.

This case also reaffirms the necessity to examine the Saṃyutta as the prime source. From the Satipaṭṭhana Sutta itself we would have no idea that the phrase *ekāyana* had any Brahmanical connection, but the Saṃyutta clearly suggests this.



Our studies have also emphasized the crucial importance of a holistic approach to study of the Dhamma. We cannot treat individual limbs as if they have nothing to do with the greater organism. The holistic paradigm must stem from the four noble truths, and the dhamma categories that are most directly derived from the four noble truths. Any serious study along such lines will inevitably end up back at the Saṃyutta before too long, since this is where most of the core doctrines are found. Thus we have treated satipatthana, not as the ‘only way’, but as the *seventh* factor of the *eightfold* path. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is no more – and no less – than an elaboration of this stage of the path.

While the doctrinal centrality of the Saṃyutta must force itself upon the student, we have also made the more radical claim, following Yin Shun, that the Saṃyutta also constitutes the historically oldest strata of Buddhist scriptures, and have even suggested that this collection was current during the Buddha’s lifetime, and was the prime work codified at the First Council. Obviously any such claim will remain controversial, and we can merely point out that certain evidences can be interpreted in that manner. I have said this already, but it bears repeating: this does *not* mean that everything in the Saṃyutta is early and authentic and everything else is late and inauthentic. It simply means that the saṃyutta material is likely, on average, to be early, and the accretions are mainly restricted to editorial repetitions, etc., rather than doctrinal expansion. Nevertheless, we have noted several instances where even the Saṃyutta seems to evidence very slight sectarian influence.

This holistic approach also reaffirms the necessity for comparative studies. When we turn attention away from the more obvious sectarian differences and look more closely at the central teachings, the similarities between the traditions are outstanding. We have mostly dealt with the Pali and Chinese sources, since this is where most of the early scriptures are found. It should be re-emphasized, however, that the Tibetan canon, though lacking the actual texts, is still based on the Āgama sutras, which are still regarded as canonical within that tradition. It is rather a shame that those inspired by the Tibetan tradition remain largely unaware and unappreciative of the historical sources from which their teachings and practices ultimately stem.

We have used our appreciation of the central role of the Saṃyutta to reassess the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. It is obvious from a cursory examination of the various versions that there is a real problem to be resolved. While we can certainly go a long way with straight comparative study of the existing versions, at several points the saṃyutta-connections give crucial assistance. For example, in deciding whether the satipatthana auxiliary formula was standard in the Sarvāstivāda as in the Theravāda, the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas are useless, and the key is only provided by a little footnote in the Chinese translation of the Saṃyutta. Again, it is the Saṃyutta that provides confirmation of the original specification of contemplation of dhammas.

While stressing the importance of the pre-Buddhist environment, we have also acknowledged the significance of considering the later sources. The pre-Buddhist sources tell us about the Buddha’s audience, his language, the kinds of issues and ideas he was addressing. But we cannot forget that the fact that the early Suttas exist at all is due to the efforts of the schools; and the ideas and agendas of the schools can hardly be expected to leave no imprint at all on the scriptures. In some cases this is merely the echoes of the technologies and languages of the times; in other cases we find significant doctrinal developments. We have noticed that it is precisely the later accretions in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – specifically, the vipassana refrain and the addition of the aggregates, sense media, and truths to the contemplation of dhamma – that has become most emphasized in later works, almost to the point of ignoring the authentic material. Nevertheless, we repeatedly find, across the schools, that important aspects of satipatthana are remembered and explained accurately. Thus we can neither agree with the traditionalists, who assert that the commentarial tradition of their own particular school has got it all wrapped up, nor with the radical modernist

reformers, who opine that the traditions are just a mass of error, better disposed of. Rather, we find that a careful evaluation of the traditions in the light of the Suttas shows they have much to teach us about the Suttas, and even when they are in error they show us how the living communities adapted the Dhamma to their situation.

This social aspect of the Dhamma is worth reflecting on, for Dhamma never lives in a vacuum. I have always been intrigued by this curious fact: differences in meditation techniques, divided precisely along the lines of samatha versus vipassana, are among the most divisive issues in Buddhism. We invest a lot in our meditation, a lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of pain; and so we attach, much more deeply than to mere theory. Differences in approach and emphasis to meditation can harden into defensiveness as to who's got the right 'system', and the interpretation of doctrine is then shaped to suit, with a strident insistence on the primacy of one's own take on 'ultimate reality'.

This being so, it would seem that an approach to meditation that emphasized the essential harmony and complementariness of samatha and vipassana would be a healing force in the Buddhist community. This would allow us to appreciate the benefits of the various approaches to meditation without insisting on any one of them as absolute and sufficient for everyone. In this we would be following in the tolerant footsteps of the Buddha, accepting whatever spiritual practices are good and in line with the Dhamma, while avoiding dogmatic extremes.

'What, Bhante, does "one who abides in Dhamma" refer to?'

'Here, a monk studies the Dhamma – *sutta*, *geyya*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*, *itivuttaka*, *jātaka*, *abbhūtaḍḍhamma*, *vedalla*. He does not waste his days with that Dhamma he has studied, he does not neglect retreat, he is devoted to tranquillity (*samatha*) of the heart within. Thus, monk, a monk is "one who abides in Dhamma".

'Thus, monk, I have taught you the monk who studies a lot, the one who teaches a lot, the one who thinks a lot, and the one who abides in Dhamma. I have done for you what should be done by a Teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples out of compassion. Here, monk, are roots of trees, here are empty huts. Practice jhana, monk! Do not be negligent! Do not regret it later! This is our instruction to you.<sup>517</sup>

# Appendix 1

## THE SAMYUTTA-MATIKA

This table shows a variety of texts, from the Nikāyas/Āgamas on, that make use of the saṃyutta-matika. The texts represented are very varied, and so is the manner of utilizing the matika. Sometimes, as in the Saṃyuttas, the saṃyutta-matika forms the fundamental structure of the work as a whole. In other cases the topics are presented along with discussions of other matters, and must be abstracted. Sometimes the saṃyutta-matika is simply mentioned as a list. I have made no attempt to represent these important differences or to justify my particular choices, which is sometimes determined by the limited secondary sources available to me. The table is simply intended to represent in a graphic and immediate manner how pervasive the saṃyutta-matika is throughout the schools.

THERAVĀDA					
Saṃyutta Nikāya	Vibhaṅga	Dhammahadaya	Dhātukathā	Yamaka	Visuddhimagga
Dependent origination	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates
Elements	Sense media	Sense media	Sense media	Sense media	Sense media
Aggregates	Elements	Elements	Elements	Elements	18 elements
Sense media	Truths	Truths	Truths	Truths	22 faculties
Feelings	22 Faculties	22 Faculties	22 Faculties	Activities	4 noble truths
Eightfold path	Dependent origination	Causes ( <i>hetu</i> )	Dependent origination	Compulsions ( <i>anusaya</i> )	Dependent origination
Enlightenment-factors	Satipaṭṭhāna	4 nutriments	Satipaṭṭhāna	Mind	Satipaṭṭhānas
Satipaṭṭhāna	Right efforts	Contact	Right efforts	Dhammas	Right efforts
Faculties	Bases of psychic power	Feeling	Bases of psychic power	22 Faculties	Bases of psychic powers
Right efforts	Enlightenment-factors	Perception	Jhana		Spiritual faculties
Spiritual powers	Eightfold path	Volition	Immeasurables		Spiritual powers
Bases of Psychic Power	Jhana	Mind	Spiritual faculties		Enlightenment-factors
Jhana	Immeasurables		Spiritual Powers		8-fold path
Ānāpānasati	Training rules		Enlightenment-factors		
Stream entry			Eightfold path		
Truths			Contact		
			Feeling		
			Perception		
			Volition		
			Mind		
			Decision ( <i>adhimokkha</i> )		
			Attention		

SARVĀSTIVĀDA			DHARMAGUPTAKA
Saṃyukta Āgama	Dharmaskandha	Dhātukāya (Chp 7)	Śāriputrābhidharma
Aggregates	5 precepts	5 precepts	12 sense media
Sense media	4 factors of stream-entry	4 confirmed faiths	18 elements
Dependent origination	4 confirmed faiths	4 fruits of asceticism	5 aggregates
Nutriments	4 fruits of asceticism	4 ways of practice	4 noble truths
Truths	4 ways of practice	4 noble lineages	22 faculties
Elements	4 noble lineages	4 right efforts	7 enlightenment-factors
Feeling	4 right efforts	4 bases of psychic power	3 unskillful roots
Satipaṭṭhāna	4 bases of psychic power	4 satipaṭṭhanas	3 skilful roots
[Right efforts]	4 satipaṭṭhanas	4 noble truths	4 great elements
[Bases of psychic power]	4 noble truths	4 jhanas	5 precepts
Faculties	4 jhanas	4 immeasurables	Elements
Spiritual powers	4 immeasurables	4 formless attainments	Action
Enlightenment-factors	4 formless attainments	4 developments of samadhi	Persons
Eightfold path	4 developments of samadhi	7 enlightenment-factors	Knowledge
Ānāpānasati	7 enlightenment-factors	22 faculties	Dependent origination
Training	(Ksudravastuka)	12 sense media	4 satipaṭṭhanas
Stream entry	22 faculties	Aggregates	4 right efforts
	12 sense media	62 elements	4 bases of psychic power
	Aggregates		4 jhanas
	62 elements		8 fold path
	Dependent origination		Unskillful dhammas

MAHĀYĀNA (YOGĀCĀRA)					
Śrāvakabhūmi	Heart Sūtra	Abhidharmasamuccaya	Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra	Arthaviniścaya Sūtra	Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya
Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates	Aggregates
Elements	Sense media	18 elements	Sense media	Grasping-aggregates	Sense media
Sense media	18 elements	Sense media	Dependent origination	18 elements	18 elements
Dependent origination	Dependent origination	4 noble truths	Nutriment	Sense media	Dependent origination
Nutriments	4 noble truths	4 satipatthanas	Truths	Dependent origination	Good & bad dhammas
Truths	Knowledge	4 right efforts	Elements	4 noble truths	22 faculties
Disciples, Pacceka Buddhas, Tathagatas	Attainment/non-attainment	4 bases of psychic power	Satipaṭṭhānas	22 faculties	3 times
Satipaṭṭhāna		5 spiritual faculties	Right efforts	4 jhanas	4 noble truths
Right efforts		5 spiritual powers	Bases of psychic power	4 formless attainments	Vehicles
Bases of psychic power		7 enlightenment-factors	Spiritual faculties	4 divine abidings	Conditioned/unconditioned
Spiritual faculties		8-fold path	Spiritual powers	4 ways of practice	Satipaṭṭhānas
Spiritual powers			Enlightenment-factors	4 developments of samadhi	Right efforts
Enlightenment-factors			8-fold path	4 satipatthanas	Bases of psychic power
Path				4 right efforts	Spiritual faculties
Ugliness				4 bases of psychic power	Spiritual powers
Ānāpānasati				5 spiritual faculties	Enlightenment-factors
Training				5 spiritual powers	8-fold path
Confirmed faith				7 enlightenment-factors	
				8-fold path	
				Ānāpānasati	
				Factors of stream-entry	
				Tathagata-powers	
				4 intrepidities	
				4 discriminations	
				18 aveṇika dhammas	
				32 marks of a great man	
				80 minor marks	

## Appendix 2

### THE IRONIC ASSUMPTIONS OF GREGORY SCHOPEN

The methods and assumptions of Buddhist studies such as the current work have in recent years come under challenge, indeed frontal assault, by the influential academic Gregory Schopen. His writings are deliberately provocative and sometimes brilliant. His basic approach in understanding Indian Buddhism may be summed up as a change in method, leading to different results.

In method, he criticizes the assumption of modern scholars that the study of Buddhism may be equated with the study of its texts, and instead proposes that the archaeological evidence should be granted priority. I think all would agree that he has a point here, but it is not obvious to me that previous scholars have been so negligent in this regard. As just one random example, Lamotte's discussion of King Milinda occupies about seven pages.<sup>518</sup> The first three pages mainly survey the evidences of the coins and other material evidence, summed up as 'as few fragmentary inscriptions'; the next three pages discuss the *Milindapañha*, an important work of the Middle Period preserved in Chinese and Pali; and the final page mentions a few references in later works. This seems reasonable to me; if anything I would have liked to see more discussion of some of the philosophical points raised in the *Milindapañha*, whose stance tends to be intermediate between the canonical doctrines and the developed positions of the schools.

As far as the results of research are concerned, Schopen says that the record of the bones and stones depicts a very different type of Buddhist monastic, one who is more worldly and human than the caricature of the ascetic hero striving for Nibbana alone in the forest. Since Schopen's work constitutes the most influential and sustained critique of the kind of project undertaken in this book, it is worth considering his claims in some detail. If we weather this storm, we'll be ready for anything.

Many of Schopen's conclusions, I think, are obviously true. He is primarily interested in the 'Middle Period' of Indian Buddhism, that is, the five hundred years or so from the beginning of the Common Era. He uses the remnants of monasteries, stupas, graves, etc., together with Vinaya material, primarily from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* in Tibetan (he makes little use of the Chinese sources), which he says stems from the same period and depicts much the same activity. These sources speak to us of monks and nuns who accumulate wealth, make substantial donations from their own wealth for building projects, promote devotional activity such as worship of stupas, images, and relics, are engaged in business transactions, contracts, and lending on interest, and are frequently at the beck and call of the lay followers for performance of rituals such as weddings, house blessing, and so on. All of this picture is quite convincing and needs little discussion here.

But while it is obviously true, I would also contend that it is truly obvious. All the activities that Schopen depicts may be plainly seen in the activities of the majority of the ordained Sangha in all traditions in the present day. Schopen merely points out that these conditions also obtained in the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism as well. While this may come as a surprise to academics with little contact with Buddhism in the real world, and constitutes an important critique of the fallacy of equating Buddhism with the idealized portrait in the sacred texts, it will come as no surprise for those of us who encounter Buddhism in the world every day.

Another of Schopen's arguments that is well taken is that the average monk or nun, not to speak of the lay followers, may hardly even know of the scriptural texts. The scriptures may have only been known to a small elite of scholars, and the ideas therein might not be representative of the range of Buddhists. A few years ago I was staying in a forest hut belonging to a devoted, intelligent Thai Buddhist, who, when he was young, had been in robes for two and a half years. Once I visited a local monastery and borrowed copies of some of the Suttas. When I mentioned it to my friend, he looked absolutely blank: he had never even heard the words 'Majjhima Nikāya' or 'Dīgha Nikāya'. Again it seems plausible that this situation, observable today, could have obtained two thousand years ago in India. But the argument should not be overstated. The Buddhist scriptures are big works. They must have required a substantial organization of monk-&-nun power to maintain, whether in oral form or even in the later written form, and so a large number of people must have known them. The number of inscriptions from ancient India is only a few thousand, and so can only represent a tiny fraction of scraps of ideas of all the Indian Buddhists. And those who are wealthy enough to donate religious monuments are hardly likely to be representative of the full spectrum of the Buddhist community. Anyway, as Schopen emphasizes, many of the donors are monks and nuns (according to Schopen, most of the donors are monastic, and in the Middle period, about half the monastics are nuns) who state that they are versed in the 'Suttas' or 'Vinaya' or 'Tripiṭaka' or 'Nikāyas'; in other words, they are the same people as those who passed down the scriptures.

Schopen is scathing in his assessment of the 'assumptions' made by various Buddhist scholars. He characterizes the work of early, Victorian, scholars such as Oldenberg and Rhys Davids as 'protestant', and suggests that they have read their own biases into the Buddhist texts, depicting the Buddha and his Sangha much like rational, cultured European gentlemen. This, too, is true, but it is hardly a valid criticism. Anyone familiar with Buddhist thought should accept that our understanding is always coloured by our beliefs and values. Fine, let's point this out – but let's not assume that we are an exception. I am a forest monk, and I believe that the Buddha and his early generations of ordained disciples were also forest monks and nuns. So when I look at the heritage of Buddhism, I naturally focus on this aspect. Gregory Schopen is a highly paid academic from an overwhelmingly materialistic society, and so when he looks at the heritage of Buddhism he sees money, rocks, and material remains. When he does look at the texts – as any scholar, whatever their beliefs, must eventually do, for the information contained in the inscriptions is scanty – he focuses on the Vinayas, since they deal most directly with the material aspects of monastic life – buildings, etc. But the Vinayas themselves represent a movement from the spiritual to the material – they are about what monks and nuns do when they misbehave, and so taken by themselves they are misleading. We would not expect to gain an accurate vision of how an ordinary person leads their daily life today by reading law books. Schopen contrasts the wealthy, developed monasteries with the poor, simple villages nearby. His agenda seems to be, in the broadest sense, Marxist. I do not mean that in the slightest pejorative sense – I think it's sweet that he dedicates his books to the 'working men and women' whose 'labor paid for my scholarly leisure'. But he seems to have little interest in the spiritual aspect of Buddhism, which puts him in a minority of those, at any time, who wish to learn the Dhamma. It should be obvious that Schopen's assumptions influence his conclusions, just as the assumptions of earlier scholars influence their conclusions. Wholesome states of mind leave no scar on the rocks. Meditation attainments are airily ephemeral. Insights into reality happen in the wispy world of the mind. If we were to accept Schopen's methods unconditionally, we would have to abandon the very reason that most of us became interested in Buddhism. There would be no more reason to study ancient India than any other ancient culture. This may not be a problem for Schopen, but it is a big one for most students of Buddhism. My primary interest is in spiritual practice, and my interest in the Āgama Suttas stems from this: they describe a spiritual practice that I find inspiring, practical, and profound. I have tried, to my limited best, to live up to the ideals taught in that literature, and have invariably found that, when problems arise, they are due to my own

inadequacies, not those of the teachings. I have also had close contact with a number of human beings whose inner radiance testified to the power of the Dhamma when lived to its fullest. Since this tradition that I belong to claims to stem from a genuine historical individual called the Buddha, it seems reasonable to see what truth there might be to this claim.

Schopen's work contains much that is interesting and informative, but little that could be called inspiring. His writing is characterized by wit, scandal, and good yarns. Unfortunately, it is not always characterized by consistency, and we should examine some of his fracture lines. He rests his arguments heavily on the authority of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a text he cheerfully admits to not having fully read. This Vinaya is 'monstrous' in size, perhaps 4000 folios in the Tibetan, and most scholars have taken it to be late, perhaps 500 C.E. Schopen would like to see this Vinaya dated earlier, around the beginning of the Common Era. On the other hand, the Theravāda Vinaya has been taken by most scholars to be early, but Schopen would also like to date that around the beginning of the Common Era. Thus the battle-lines are drawn. Schopen says that the discussion of the date of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya has been:

'badly misdirected by a very red herring and the inattention of those who are supposed to be following the trail. In 1958 the great Belgian scholar Etienne Lamotte declared that this *Vinaya*, or code, was late, that "one cannot attribute to this work a date earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries of the Christian Era." This pronouncement – even at its inception based on very shaky grounds – still proved almost fatal, for Lamotte was forced by his own further work to change his position – and he did so several times – but few scholars seem to have noticed. By 1966, Lamotte was in fact referring to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya as a source of information for the first or second century of our era. Ironically, other scholars then, and for a long time after, continued to quote only the Lamotte of 1958.'<sup>519</sup>

I must also confess inattention, for I have not followed the trail of Lamotte's arguments and so must declare my incompetence to pronounce on the date of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya. It might be noticed in passing, though, that the two positions ascribed to Lamotte in this passage are not necessarily contradictory. Given the evidently long period it would take to compile a vast compendium like the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, it would not seem unreasonable to maintain that the final redaction was in the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries C.E., but that it contains material inherited from a much earlier time. In fact, I believe that something of this sort could be said for almost all Buddhist literature. This is a phenomenon known as 'intratextuality', the ongoing life of a given text through a particular stream of tradition, which reflects the conservative nature of religious literature: the redactors valued ancient authority over creative expression and thus tended to work with material already to hand rather than inventing new material.<sup>520</sup> In any case, I do not see what is 'ironical' in the failure of some writers to notice Lamotte's change of views: if scholars continue to quote from earlier, discredited theories this is merely an unfortunate mistake, not an irony.

An example of true irony could be better seen from Schopen's own work. In the same book as the above quote, he says this:

'...this literature, the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, is itself considered by many to be late – Lamotte, for example, thinks it is the latest of the *vinayas* and says "we cannot attribute to this work a date earlier than the fourth-fifth centuries of the Christian Era" ...'<sup>521</sup>

Note that here Schopen says that Lamotte 'thinks' (present tense), thus precluding any later change of mind. This clanger needs little comment, apart from reminding us that Schopen, like the rest of us, is sometimes guilty of seeing what he wants to see.

While I am not competent to date the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, and have no opinion on the matter, I must say that the passages quoted by Schopen himself frequently give me the impression of lateness. The elaborateness of the text may be partly explained, as Schopen argues, by cultural or other factors rather than by date, but the examples he gives fall well short of establishing this in full. As for specifics, we notice that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya frequently mentions books and writing, while the Theravāda Vinaya mentions them rarely. This was one of the classic reasons the early European Buddhist scholars concluded (not ‘assumed’) the Theravāda was earlier, and as far as I can see the argument still holds good. Similar considerations apply when we see that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya refers to worship of Shiva and Vishnu, while, as is well known, these deities are virtually unknown in the Theravāda canon. Schopen also argues that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya evidences the influence of the Hindu Dharmaśāstras (legal codes), while the Theravāda does not. He says that this may be explained by the lack of influence of the Dharmasastras in Sri Lanka, and is therefore evidence that the Theravāda Vinaya was composed in Sri Lanka. While I agree, for other reasons, that the Theravāda Vinaya shows some minor Sri Lankan influence, I don’t think this particular argument is very convincing. The Dharmaśāstras themselves evidently date from well after the Buddha’s time, and the situation might as well or better be explained by the simple hypothesis that most of the material in the Pali was composed in India before the Dharmaśāstras became influential, and, because of the unimportance of the Dharmaśāstras in Sri Lankan culture, the Theravāda Vinaya did not have to be extensively revised.

Another target of Schopen’s critique is the vagueness or ambiguity of some Vinaya rules, which he suggests may have been deliberate.<sup>522</sup> It seems that the poor old Vinaya just can’t win: if it is definitive, it is rigid, and if it is flexible it is decadent. Again we might compare this with one of Schopen’s own little ‘ironies’:

‘In most cases, we can place the Vinayas we have securely in time: the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya that we know was translated was translated into Chinese at the beginning of the fifth century (404-405 C.E.). So were the Vinayas of the Dharmaguptakas (408), the Mahīśāsakas (423-424), and the Mahāsaṅghikas (416). The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya was translated into both Chinese and Tibetan still later, and the actual contents of the Pali Vinaya are only knowable from Buddhaghosa’s fifth century commentaries.’<sup>523</sup>

Does this remarkable assertion assume that the date of a text may be determined by knowing the date of its translation or commentary? That would certainly solve a lot of problems: I have beside me a translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya dated 2000 C.E., so we can place that ‘securely in time’. Of course, the phrase is so vague – deliberately? – that Schopen escapes actually asserting that the dates of composition of the Vinayas may be determined from their translation or commentary. If that was the case, however, we would have to conclude, contrary to Schopen’s position, that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya was later than the others, for its translation was later. Regarding the Theravāda Vinaya, it has been accepted, so far as I know, by all the scholars who have looked into the matter that Buddhaghosa was primarily a translator and editor, who worked with material stemming from a much older time, no later than 100 – 200 C.E. If the commentarial material dates from then, the Vinaya itself must be considerably earlier. Recently it has come to light that the Chinese canon contains a Sri Lankan Vinaya commentary that Buddhaghosa may have had before him. If so, this would allow a much more accurate assessment of the kinds of changes he introduced.

An important part of Schopen’s argument is that there is little or no early – pre-Common Era – evidence for Buddhist monasteries of the developed sort that are depicted in the Vinayas. This is, for him, a sign that the Vinayas were compiled in the ‘Middle Period’. He notes that the words *vihāra* and *āvāsa*, which are commonly used of monasteries, really mean little more than



‘dwelling’, and give us little information about what kind of institution is being discussed.<sup>524</sup> However he neglects to notice that the main terms used of a monastery in the Pali Suttas are *vana* (woodland grove) and *ārāma* (park); the fact that they are used together in the name of the most famous monastery of all (‘Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park’) suggests that they may be synonyms. These, of course, have a much more specific meaning – evidently the main form of Buddhist monasticism in the Suttas was the forest monastery. Even today, the typical forest monastery consists of small huts or caves scattered through the forest, with a larger wooden sala for communal activities, and some buildings for stores, kitchen, etc. Such an institution would leave little or no evidence for an archaeologist to uncover. Schopen does not seem to consider the possibility of a ‘middle way’ between the large, institutionalized *vihāras* that are such a feature of the archaeological record of Buddhism, and the life of the lonely sage in the forest. It would seem that the forest monastery offers such a ‘middle way’. Forest monasteries can evolve to a high degree of sophistication in their internal organization, such as is described in the Vinayas, and usually have a high regard for authentic practice of the Vinaya. They often do not engage in large building projects, not because they do not have the resources or the know-how – forest monks are often more educated and better supported than the city monks – but because they want to live simply. This is just a suggestion, and more careful work on the Vinayas – including the Chinese – has to be done to see if this suggestion has any cogence. It is obviously tenuous to draw such parallels between Buddhist practice in such far-distant times and places. But Schopen himself draws many instructive parallels between practice in Buddhist and Christian monasticism, which would seem to be no less distant. And as I have noted above, many of Schopen’s more acceptable findings do find clear parallels in contemporary Buddhism.

Schopen dismisses the ‘perishable materials’ argument for the lack of early monasteries, saying that the earliest archaeological evidence we do possess shows us a monastery in the time of Asoka that is ‘poor and unimpressive’, ‘crudely made of “rubble”’.<sup>525</sup> He asserts that: ‘the earliest extant remains of monastic residential architecture, like the earliest cult images in stone, show a tradition still struggling, in this case towards order, still lacking a sense of functional organization and structured use of space. Such a tradition – again like that which produced the early extant cult images – does not suggest a long period of development or directed experimentation in wood or other perishable materials preceding it.’<sup>526</sup> But this argument would also seem to be circumvented by the forest monastery hypothesis – when living in widely scattered dwellings in the forest it is not necessary to develop such a structured sense of space. What seems to be happening here is that the monastics are, for the first time, living in close proximity. This might be due to a number of factors – perhaps there were too many Buddhist monastics in that period. But some of the early sites mentioned by Schopen also share another significant feature: the monastic dwellings are near a stupa. This might suggest that these are the first monasteries for whom the devotional practices described by Schopen are becoming important.

What is perhaps more relevant for our current purposes, however, is that this argument exposes yet another of Schopen’s ‘ironies’. He assumes that the emergence of sophisticated architecture or fine arts requires a substantial prior period of development – a most reasonable assumption. But is not the same the case in literature? Schopen wants to put very sophisticated literary tracts like the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* in the early Middle Period. But surely such works must have required a lengthy evolution. Similarly, we know for certain (from the dates recorded for the Chinese translations) that the earliest *Mahāyāna Sūtras* date from no later than the beginning of the Common Era. These too are sophisticated literary and philosophical products, which are, to a large degree, a critical response to some aspects of the early schools, especially the (*Sarvāstivāda*) *Abhidhamma* philosophy, and also to such monastic practices as are detailed in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, as Schopen himself argues.<sup>527</sup> The *Abhidhamma* texts themselves are sophisticated literary works that are in turn based on the material found in the early Suttas. So

the early Sutta material – not necessarily the exact collections in the form we have them today, but the main doctrinal material – must be several philosophical generations before the Mahāyāna Sūtras. Again, this conclusion, not ‘assumption’, was one of the classical reasons for assigning a relatively early date to the Nikāyas/Āgamas, and nothing Schopen says really affects this.

Schopen tries to show that the forest monastic life was little different from settled monastic life in general. He does this by quoting a passage from the Vinaya that describes the lovely, luxurious forest dwelling of a certain Venerable Udāyin, where many people would go to visit him. Schopen says that this is apparently how the compilers of the Pali Vinaya saw the forest life.<sup>528</sup> Incredibly, he makes no mention of the fact, known to every Grade 1 Vinaya student, that Udāyin is the archetypical ‘bad monk’, whose appalling behaviour prompted the formulation of many Vinaya rules. On this occasion, Udāyin gropes and sexually harasses a woman who comes to visit him, prompting the laying down of yet another rule on his behalf. This part of the story, however, is discreetly omitted by Schopen as he tries to depict Udāyin as a regular forest monk.

While it is obvious that the cult of relics and so on played a large part in Buddhist practice from the Middle Period, Schopen wants to discredit the received opinion that the early texts, and hence early Buddhism, do not include the relic cult. He ends up clutching at some embarrassingly flimsy straws. For example, he points to a passage in the Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta where the novice Cunda, after the passing away of Venerable Sāriputta, takes his bowl and robes and goes to tell Venerable Ānanda.<sup>529</sup> Schopen says that the PTS edition (which I do not have) has a variant reading from a Burmese edition that includes the phrase *dhātuparibhāvana*.<sup>530</sup> Schopen admits that the meaning is obscure, but it ‘almost certainly contains a reference to relics’. This is dubious, for *dhātu* rarely if ever means ‘relic’ in this strata of literature. The VRI CD that I am using does not have *dhātuparibhāvana*, so it seems that this reading does not represent the mainstream Burmese tradition. Thus far Schopen’s argument is flimsy, but not necessarily wrong. But then he goes on to say that the commentary appears to have a reference to relics, since it includes the term *dhātuparissāvaṇa*. *Parissāvaṇa* means ‘water strainer’, and *dhātu* might, in the commentary, mean ‘relics’, though the compound ‘relics-&-water strainer’ does seem a little odd. (Might *dhātu* here mean ‘minerals’: a strainer for removing sediment from water?) Anyway, the matter is clarified by the very next sentence of the commentary, which is ignored by Schopen. This says: ‘But in the text (*pālī*) it just says “Here are his bowl and robes”.’ In other words, the commentary explicitly states that the original text did not mention anything other than the bowl and robes. Thus it seems almost certain that *paribhāvana* was not in the original text; it was probably read back into the text by garbling the commentary (by a monk whose reading rivals Schopen in carelessness). Schopen does not refer to the Chinese parallel, which is very close to the Pali, and which similarly mentions just the bowl and robes. He says that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya version of the incident does refer to relics, although he admits that the phrase is not a cognate of either of the Pali terms with *dhātu* in them. This makes it seem like an independent later development, not a common inheritance. Schopen is right on the mark when he says that ‘this will require further study to sort out’. I hope it has now been sorted out. Rather than being ‘virtually certain’ that the Pali here has suffered loss – or as Schopen insinuates, deliberate suppression – I would say it is absolutely certain the Pali and the Chinese and the Theravāda commentary all agree that the original account of Sāriputta’s death does not mention relics. Much later the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya and perhaps the Pali commentaries added the mention of relics. Thus this context, as with many others, suggests that the Mulasarvāstivādin Vinaya has more in common with the Theravādin commentaries than with the canon.

Schopen’s work offers us further lessons in ‘irony’ in the discussion of the term *paribhāvita*.<sup>531</sup> He shows that several inscriptions and late textual sources describe the relics of the Buddha as being ‘infused’ or ‘permeated’ (*paribhāvita*) with such qualities as ethics, samadhi, understanding, and release. This suggests a quasi-magical conception of relics in this period. Schopen discusses the

term in some detail and offers several references from the Pali canon showing a naturalistic usage of the term, for example a chicken sitting on eggs and ‘imbuing’ them with warmth. But, incredibly, he avoids all mention of the most well known occurrence of the term: the frequently repeated statement of the Buddha in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta:

‘Samadhi imbued with ethics is of great fruit, great benefit; understanding imbued with samadhi is of great fruit, great benefit; the mind imbued with understanding is rightly released from defilements.’<sup>532</sup>

Not only does the term *paribhāvita* appear repeatedly, but it does so specifically describing a list of dhammas similar or identical with those repeatedly mentioned in the inscriptions quoted by Schopen.

The implications of this are slightly worrying. Schopen has built a successful career largely on his pioneering research into the nature of the cults of the stupa and relics in Indian Buddhism. The prime canonical reference for these practices is the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, which describes the distribution of the Buddha’s relics. One of the most famous and prominent passages in this text repeatedly uses the term *paribhāvita* in connection with ethics, samadhi, understanding, and release. Schopen discusses at length the use of *paribhāvita* in inscriptions to describe relics that are imbued with ethics, samadhi, understanding, and release. He gives several references to unrelated uses of the term in the Pali canon, but avoids all mention of the usage in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta.

What is going on? Has Schopen not even read the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, the main source text in his own special field? Or might we conspiratorially wonder whether Schopen has deliberately suppressed the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta reference (just as Schopen alleges the redactors of the Pali canon suppressed mention of relics and stupas)?

Once the obvious connection with the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta is noticed, it becomes impossible to escape the conclusion that the inscriptions are, in fact, quoting from or referring to this specific text. Note that the passage on ethics, samadhi, understanding, and release in itself has no connection with the relic cult. If it existed as an isolated fragment or in another context there would be no reason to associate this passage with relics. Only when taken as part of the overall narrative of the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta would it be possible to form an association between the passage and the Buddha’s relics.

To be sure, the implications of the usage in the inscriptions is radically different from that in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta. In the discourse it describes spiritual qualities to be developed by a living person, whereas in the inscriptions it seems to mean the magical infusion of relics with mystic power. This obviously suggests that the earlier, rational, psychological teaching has been altered – dare I say ‘corrupted’? – by magical conceptions. This is a straightforward reading from the evidence, not an imposition of ‘protestant presuppositions’. Of course, this conclusion would be impalatable to Schopen, because it would suggest, firstly, that the discourses, or at least the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, were actually known to a variety of Indian Buddhists and influenced their beliefs; and secondly that the picture he paints of the Middle Period is representative of Buddhism in its decadent, materialistic phase, rather than the psychological spirituality of the early teachings.

It is worth noting that Schopen’s key inscriptional and textual sources for this quasi-magical use of *paribhāvita* are dated to around the first century of the Common Era. By this time, the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta must have been composed, and already be well-known and influential. This must have happened long enough for some of the central messages to be radically reinterpreted,

and for these reinterpretations to have gained wide currency. The Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta evidences later elaboration, and, despite the fact that several sectarian versions are known, most scholars do not place it among the earliest strata of the Suttas. So if the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta was in existence significantly before the Middle Period, many other discourses must be even earlier. So we must be grateful to Schopen for, yet again, inadvertently offering us another proof of the existence of the early Suttas well before the Middle Period.

Schopen's failure to notice this obvious inference stems from his wilful enslavement to his own methodological presuppositions. He has a religious faith in 'hard facts', things that 'actually' exist in stone and bone. As normal, when a particular means of knowledge is given absolute priority in this way, it leads to philosophical distortions and a blindness to the broader perspective. Schopen castigates those who would render archaeological evidence subject to texts, since archaeological evidence can be located in place and time, and represents what was said by 'actual' people (as if those who wrote the texts were not 'actual' people). One of his pervasive unexamined assumptions is the reliability of archaeological evidence. I am no expert, but it does seem to me that archaeologists, like those in any field of science, are engaged in pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, and to do so must rely on sometimes tenuous inferences. Schopen remarks several times that the sites he is referring to have not been fully excavated, or were poorly reported, or that there is uncertainty as to dating. It does not seem obvious that the inferences derived from such methods are necessarily more reliable than those derived from textual sources.

Just one example will suffice here. Schopen quotes an inscription that refers to the setting up of an image of the 'Blessed Lord, the Buddha *amitābha*' (*bhagavato buddha amitābhasya*).<sup>533</sup> He says that this is the only inscriptional reference to Amitabha in India, and constitutes one of the few 'hard facts' we know about his cult in India. The inscription is certainly interesting, and it is useful that Schopen brought it to light. But what does it mean? The inscription says an image was set up by a certain Nāgarakṣita or Sāmraṣita, who wishes that 'by this skilful root may all beings attain unexcelled knowledge'. Such references to 'all beings' and 'unexcelled knowledge' are typical of Mahāyānist inscriptions; but the present inscription is very early, apparently 200 years prior to the widespread appearance of Mahāyānist inscriptions. Schopen assumes that *amitābha* refers to the Buddha of that name in the well-known Sūtras so popular in China. Thus, as usual, he is unable to say anything meaningful about the inscription without the context provided by the texts. In this case, his interpretation is reasonable, but is not necessarily true. 'Amitabha' means 'infinite light', and is virtually identical with a word used in the Pali tradition to describe an order of deities: *appamāṇābhā devā*, the 'deities of measureless light'. It is possible that *amitābha* was used of certain deities, and from there became an epithet of the historical Buddha, and only later the human and divine elements were fused into 'Amitabha Buddha'. In other words, the inscription might not be a reference to 'the' Amitabha, but might simply be a descriptive epithet of Śākyamuni, representing a stage in the development towards Mahāyāna ideas. I am not arguing that this is in fact the case, but am merely pointing out that, in the absence of context, it is impossible to know which interpretation is correct. Crucially, any meaningful statement on the matter must be based on an inference, on what we think is the more reasonable interpretation, not on the 'hard facts'.

I might beg leave here to give an example from my own experience. Once I was staying at a forest monastery where the practice was to inter the cremated remains of the monastery supporters in the monastery wall. A hole was made in the wall, and with a simple ceremony, the ashes were placed in and covered with a brass plaque. Someone, perhaps an archaeologist of Schopenesque bent, might come at some time later and notice a peculiar feature of the plaques. In a certain section, that closest to the entrance and dated earliest, the plaques say 'Rest in Peace', a typically Christian saying. The later plaques, however, say 'May she attain Nibbana', which is obviously Buddhist. What is going on? Did the monastery change from Christian to Buddhist? Is this

evidence of an obscure sect of antipodean ‘Buddho-Christians’? Might we suspect darkling intrigue, a hidden tussle for power between two opposed groups of monks, vying for the funds from the different religious communities? Happily, I was there at the time, and can answer ‘none of the above’. These plaques were ordered from a shop whose normal business, this being in a predominately Christian country, was to make plaques for Christian burials. So they came with a typically Christian burial slogan. The monks simply didn’t give the matter any thought, until it was pointed out that a Buddhist saying would be more appropriate, and so one was invented. That’s all there was to it. Incidentally, we did not really believe that saying ‘May she attain Nibbana’ on the burial plaque would really help the lady concerned to attain Nibbana; it just seemed like a nice sentiment. I might compare this concrete, dateable, placeable, ‘actual’ evidence with, say, some of my own essays that are available on the Net. They have no date, no place, no concrete existence at all. Yet I regard them as a more reliable and accurate guide to my beliefs and practices than those messages on the plaques at the monastery where I stayed.

Schopen dismisses the idea that shared passages in a text are evidence of early, pre-sectarian material. He prefers the hypothesis that shared material is evidence for later sharing, levelling and standardizing of material. Thus he apparently believes that when the Buddhist monastics lived in close proximity in the Ganges valley, speaking a common language, and regarding each other as being all of one community, they developed different diverging scriptures, but when they were spread widely over ‘greater India’, speaking different languages, and regarding each other as belonging to different communities, they ‘levelled’ and ‘standardized’ their scriptures. This does not strike me as inherently plausible, or even vaguely rational. He attempts to justify this with reference to what is known in Christian history; but the Bible is accepted with slight variations as canonical by all Christians, whereas the writings of later theologians and teachers are accepted only by certain denominations and are rejected by others.

It is as if we were to come across people living in two neighbouring villages, each speaking a slightly different dialect, with customs, beliefs, lifestyle, and physical appearance that were similar, and a shared myth that asserted that they sprang from the same origins. Schopen would point out that there is no ‘hard evidence’ that they ‘actually’ share a common ancestry. The ‘actual’ situation is that there are two different villages, with divergent languages, beliefs and so on. Any ‘assumption’ that the observable similarities derive from a common ancestry is sheer speculation. After all, there is plenty of evidence that cultures tend to homogenize, to move away from diversity towards similarity. The only reasonable explanation would seem to be that here we have two different peoples, and the similarities in their cultures and physical appearance is evidence of cultural interchange and intermarriage between two originally disparate communities. This description might sound like a caricature of Schopen’s ideas, but I honestly believe it is not.

One of Schopen’s main arguments in favour of his ‘later borrowing’ thesis is the story of the stupa for Kassapa Buddha at Toyika. Wynne has shown that this argument is deeply flawed. Schopen compares various versions of the same story, but conveniently confines to a footnote the fact that, while the other versions occur in the Vinayas, the Theravāda version is found in the Dhammapāda commentary. This turns out to be yet another piece of evidence that the Theravāda tended to close their canon early, placing later material in their commentaries. Not only is this a fatal error in one of Schopen’s key arguments, but it is, as Wynne points out, a misrepresentation of the methods of the ‘higher criticism’ that Schopen is so dismissive of. Normally scholars will take the congruence of the canonical, not the commentarial, literature as evidence of pre-sectarian remnants. But this is not the only place that Schopen misrepresents his opponents. He asserts, for example, that the ‘cardinal tenet of this criticism states, in effect, that if all known sectarian versions of a text or passage agree, that text or passage must be very old; that is, it must come from a presectarian stage of the tradition.’<sup>534</sup> The repeated use of ‘must’ is highly

misleading. The sharing of material is only one of many independent criteria that are regularly employed to support and check each other. I do not know of any scholar who would make the blanket assertion that shared material 'must' be earlier. It is no more than a reasonable hypothesis that forms a basis for further research.

Compared with the situation in Bible studies, the quantity of Buddhist literature is so vast, the subject matter so obscure, and the amount of serious research so small, that it is premature to discard any methodology. While the early scholars may not have given due weight to the archaeological evidence, they must be forgiven, in consideration of the sheer time and effort it takes to learn the Buddhist languages and read the texts. They have at least given us a reasonably coherent and satisfying working model of Indian Buddhism. If we were to accept Schopen in his more radical moods we would be rendered incapable of saying anything about the Buddha or his teachings, and would be left with no idea as to why there were, in the later periods, such widely spread religious schools claiming inspiration from a common Teacher, sharing a similar lifestyle, and borrowing wholesale each other's scriptures, at the same time as vigorously arguing with each other over what the scriptures mean.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
BAU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CBD	Connected Discourses of the Buddha
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
DA	Dīrgha Āgama
Dhp	Dhammapāda
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇī
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
EA	Ekottara Āgama
Iti	Itivuttaka
Kośa	Abhidharmakośabhāṣya
LDB	Long Discourses of the Buddha
MA	Madhyama Āgama
MBh	Mahā Bhārata
MLDB	Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
MVB	Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya
PP	Puggala Paññatti
PED	Pali-English Dictionary (Pali Text Society)
SA	Saṃyukta Āgama
SED	Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Monier-Williams)
Skt MPS	Sanskrit Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra
Skt CPS	Sanskrit Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra
Skt SPS	Sanskrit Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Sutta Nipāta
T	Taisho edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka
Ud	Udāna
Vsm	Visuddhimagga
YS	Yoga Sūtra

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 vipassana, 2, 104, 107, 134, 139, 140, 155, 185, 207, 208, 223,  
 227, 228, 229, 231, 243, 244, 252, 253, 258  
 vipassanavada, 2  
 Visuddhimagga, 160, 251, 252, 263  
 Visuddhimagga, 40  
 Vitakkasanthana Sutta, 220  
 vyakarana, 46, 55, 61, 63, 64, 67, 72, 81, 91, 177  
 war, 11, 233  
 Warder, 4, 5, 14, 253, 262, 297  
 Yajur, 18, 62  
 Yin Shun, 12, 17, 28, 46, 55  
 Yogacara, 28, 269  
 Yogacarabhumisastra, 28, 33, 46, 63

## NOTES

References are to discourse and section of LDB and MLDB; saṃyutta and discourse of CDB (which varies from the reckoning in earlier texts and translations, especially in SN 35); to Nipāta and discourse for the Aṅguttara Nikāya and the Itivuttaka; vagga and discourse for the Udāna; and verse number for the Dhammapāda and Sutta Nipāta. For other Pali texts I have used the VRI CD and/or the listed translations.

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<sup>1</sup> But there is a precedent in the case of the Chinese *Chan* school (*Zen* in Japanese), which is derived from the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (Pali *jhāna*), which here just means ‘meditation’.

<sup>2</sup> Gombrich

<sup>3</sup> Warder, pg. 86 footnote.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘cognate’ literally means ‘born together’, and is used in etymology of words that are believed to derive from a common ancestor. Some scholars prefer to use words such as ‘parallel’ or ‘counterpart’ to refer to the suttas found in Pali and Chinese versions, since these terms do not imply any particular theory as to the relations between the texts in question. However, I am quite comfortable with ‘cognate’, since I believe that in most cases the theory that similar suttas derive from a common ancestor is the most rational one.

<sup>5</sup> See Frauwallner 1956; recently corrected by Willis. Also see Wynne.

<sup>6</sup> Beal, pg. xii

<sup>7</sup> Anesaki

<sup>8</sup> Akanuma. I have been kindly provided with a draft catalogue by Roderick Bucknell, who, together with Venerable Analayo, is updating Akanuma, working from the published Chinese correspondence tables, and with many additions and corrections. We are currently working to make these available on the web at [www.suttacentral.net](http://www.suttacentral.net).

<sup>9</sup> Lamotte, pg. 156

<sup>10</sup> MN 26.21/MA 204/T 765.4. Taking *tesaṃ* as supplying the implied ‘their’ of the second line (cp. DN 18.27/DA 4/T 9) and *pamuñcantu* as a poetic variant of *adhimuñcantu* (cp. Sn 1146, 1149, AN 1.14/EA 4.1-10). However, one Sanskrit version has *pramodanur*, and would translate as ‘May those who wish to hear rejoice in faith’. Another has *praṇudantu kaksāh*, ‘dispel opinions’.

<sup>11</sup> See Smith. There is an ‘18<sup>th</sup>’ version at Paṭisambhīdāmagga 2.6.1. Although this is now in the Khuddaka Nikāya, it is a quasi-Abhidhamma text, so we could say that the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta occurs in all three Piṭakas.

<sup>12</sup> Rāhula, pg. 8

<sup>13</sup> Kloppenborg

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Nakamura, chapters 2.3 & 2.4

<sup>15</sup> Schopen 1997, pg.24

<sup>16</sup> Details in Choong, pp.19-22

<sup>17</sup> MN 81/MA 63 Ghaṭikāra and MN 83/MA 67 Makhādeva.

<sup>18</sup> Tin, pg. 4, 38

<sup>19</sup> SN 22.22/SA 73/EA 25.4

<sup>20</sup> Sāmmīṭṭīyanikāyaśāstra (San-mi-ti pu lun, T 1649), 463b 11, 465b 10, 463b 9-12. See Thien Chau, pg. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> Norman, 1979, pp. 279-287.

<sup>22</sup> This line of reasoning suggested itself independently to both Bucknell and myself.

<sup>23</sup> Bucknell, ‘Structure’.

<sup>24</sup> The following account is based on the Chinese (T 1451, ) and Rockhill’s paraphrase of the Tibetan.

<sup>25</sup> Before Ānanda begins his recitation, there is a slightly odd episode where Mahā Kassapa said to all the monks: ‘There will be monks who are weak in faculties and of scattered mind. They will not be able to learn and memorize the sutta-vinaya-abhidhamma. Therefore it will be fitting for us in the morning to compile the ‘Brief Verses Saṃyutta’, (略伽他事相應 = *saṅkhitta-gāthā-saṃyutta?*, T24, no. 1451, p. 406, a22-23), in the afternoon it will be fitting to compile the sutta-vinaya-abhidhamma.’ It is not clear what this is referring to; the Sagāthā Vagga is referred to just below, in its proper place in the Saṃyutta, so it seems unlikely this is what is meant. Perhaps it refers to some of the verse collections of the Khuddaka.

<sup>26</sup> T24, no. 1451, p. 407, b20-c2

<sup>27</sup> SN 45.35/SA 796-797/SA 799

<sup>28</sup> Explained at AN 4.29 as freedom from covetousness and ill-will, right mindfulness, and right samadhi. Also found at T 1536.7.

<sup>29</sup> T24, no. 1451, p. 408, b6-11. Translation from Rockwell pg. 160. The details given by Rockwell have been corrected following Watanabe pg. 44, and from the Chinese. A few of the Chinese terms, especially in the latter part of the passage, are unclear.

<sup>30</sup> CBD, pg. 532.

<sup>31</sup> Bucknell, unpublished essay.

<sup>32</sup> CBD, pg. 27.

<sup>33</sup> CBD, pg. 30.

<sup>34</sup> SN 48.43

<sup>35</sup> Cp. Puggala Paññatti

<sup>36</sup> Cp. Nānavibhaṅga

<sup>37</sup> A list of defilements; the name 'Khuddakavatthu' is taken from the Dharmaskandha.

<sup>38</sup> A list of knowledges, comparable to the Paṭisambhidāmagga.

<sup>39</sup> An independent Abhidhamma work, referred to as such in the first chapter of the Atthasālinī, with its own matika of some interest: aggregates, sense media, 18 elements, truths, 22 faculties, 9 causes (*hetu*), 4 nutriments, and 7 contacts, feelings, perceptions, volitions, and minds.

<sup>40</sup> =Khuddakavatthu?

<sup>41</sup> *Saṅgaha* and *sampayoga* are technical terms in the Theravāda Dhātukathā. Paṭṭhāna is the title of the Theravāda Abhidhamma treatise on causality. Frauwallner says these all owe something to the common Abhidhamma tradition.

<sup>42</sup> More details are listed in an appendix to the PTS Pali edition of the Vibhaṅga, pg. 437.

<sup>43</sup> This is based on merely the list of the sense media rather than any particular passage and therefore cannot be traced to any one source.

<sup>44</sup> The elements (*dhātu*) vary greatly in character. While in later literature they were treated alongside the aggregates and sense media as given here, the treatment in the existing Saṃyutta is more closely related to dependent origination.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. SN 24/SA 4 Diṭṭhi.

<sup>46</sup> Khuddakavatthu

<sup>47</sup> SA 41, omitted in SN but likely to be original.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. SN 43/SA 890 Asaṅkhata, SN 55/SA 30 Sotāpatti

<sup>49</sup> Although the teachings on the efforts and bases for psychic powers are found elsewhere in the Chinese, these chapters, together with part of the faculties, have been lost from the existing Chinese Saṃyutta due to a failure in the transmission of the texts. Probably the manuscript was simply misfiled and later lost. Bizarrely, a passage from the 'Life of King Asoka' (Aśokarājavadāna), which has nothing to do with the Saṃyutta, has ended up in its place – a reminder of the human fallibility of the generations of pious copyists who faithfully transmitted this absurdity. Lamotte was evidently unaware of this problem when he remarked: 'As they [the Āgamas] were closed much later [than the Nikāyas], they make room for works of comparatively recent date; hence the Saṃyutta contains long extracts from the Aśokarājavadāna.' (Lamotte (1976), pg. 155) More detailed examination gives no reason to conclude that the Āgamas were, generally speaking, closed earlier or later than the Nikāyas; each case needs to be treated individually.

<sup>50</sup> Another hybrid group whose variable position reflects its ad hoc nature. The position in any particular list (*mātikā*) can be explained as due to the predominance of either the five spiritual faculties (which pertain to the truth of the path) or the six sense faculties (which pertain to the truth of suffering). The Vibhaṅga, implicitly acknowledging that the group of 22 is not found as such in the suttas, exceptionally offers no 'Sutta Exposition' here; however it is likely that this is found in the Dharmaskandha, probably based on SN 48.9/SA 647 Vibhaṅga

<sup>51</sup> Omitted, no doubt being felt redundant, in the existing Vibhaṅga/Dharmaskandha/Śāriputrābhidharma, but found elsewhere in the Abhidhammas, e.g. the Pali Dhātukathā, whose matika, staying closer to the original order of the wings to enlightenment, is in some ways more archaic than the Vibhaṅga. The Chinese Bala Saṃyutta is much more extensive than the Pali. The reference is to the relevant Vibhaṅga sutta.

<sup>52</sup> SA 29, omitted in SN but likely to be original.

<sup>53</sup> T 676. I use Keenan, which is based on the Chinese. The Tibetan is utilized in the French translation by Etienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra: L'explication des Mysteres* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1935), and the English translation by John Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Berkeley, CA, Dharma Publishing, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Keenan, pp. 22-23

<sup>55</sup> Keenan, pg. 35

<sup>56</sup> Keenan, pp. 46-47

<sup>57</sup> Keenan, pg. 23

<sup>58</sup> Keenan, pg. 97

<sup>59</sup> I think variations, such as those noted above, are likely to be mere textual corruption.

<sup>60</sup> Śrāvakabhūmi, pg. 226.

<sup>61</sup> These two minor saṃyuttas, which also follow the Khandha-saṃyutta in SN, deal with the aggregates and are really just an appendix to the Khandha-saṃyutta. This is similar to the relationship between the Satipaṭṭhāna- and the Anuruddha-saṃyuttas.

<sup>62</sup> The text has two adjacent listings for the elements: *dhātupratīsaṃyukta* and *dhātusamgaṇapratīsaṃyukta* ('connected with elements' and 'connected with things associated with elements' [?]). I am not sure of the significance of the twofold division; in any case, the elements clearly seem to be out of sequence here.

<sup>63</sup> Nine angas occur in the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya T 1425, p 227b; in the Saṅgīti Sūtra, T no 12, p 227b; in the Itivuttaka, T no 765 p 684a and 697c; in the Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra T no 761 p 612a; in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, T no 262 p 7c (though this seems to be a different set), in the Dharmasaṅgraha, T no 764 p 661a and in the Daśavihāravibhāsa, T 1521 p 19b. My thanks to Venerable Analayo for this information.

<sup>64</sup> Lamotte (1976), pg. 144

<sup>65</sup> Some references in Lamotte (1976), pp 161, 162.

<sup>66</sup> DN 27/DA 5/T 10/MA154/EA 40.1/Skt

<sup>67</sup> DN 26/DA 6/MA 70

<sup>68</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 179

<sup>69</sup> Śrāvakaḥūmi, pg. 230

<sup>70</sup> MN 83.21/MA 67/ EA 1/EA 50.4/T152.87/T211, DN 19.61/DA 3/T8/Skt

<sup>71</sup> DN 14.1.17/DA 1/T2/T3/T4/EA 48.4/Skt

<sup>72</sup> AN 4.127/MA 32\*/EA 25.3\*

<sup>73</sup> MN 123.3

<sup>74</sup> MA 32

<sup>75</sup> Immediately preceding the two Vedallas is a group of three discourses that occur together and in the same sequence in both Majjhimas: MN 77/MA 207 Mahāsakaludāyīn; MN 79/MA 208 Cūḷsakaludāyīn; and MN 80/MA 209 Vekhanassa. (MN 78/MA 179 Samaṇamaṇḍikā, falling as it does between the 'Mahā' and 'Cūḷa' Sakaludāyīn Suttas, is obviously a later interpolation, probably just a filing error.) Thus it seems likely that both this group of three and the two Vedalla Suttas were pre-existing groups that were incorporated into the Majjhima.

<sup>76</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 180

<sup>77</sup> Gnoli, Pt. 1, pg. xix

<sup>78</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 180

<sup>79</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 179

<sup>80</sup> Discussed in Matsumura

<sup>81</sup> Beal (1985), pg. 386-7; translation corrected following Lamotte, pg. 177

<sup>82</sup> Beal (1985), pg. 140

<sup>83</sup> MN 122.20/MA 191.

<sup>84</sup> p 957

<sup>85</sup> There are some variant readings. I do not have the various Pali editions available, so my thanks go to Venerable Analayo for the following readings. The PTS has: *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇassa hetu*; Burmese and Sinhalese have: *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇaṃ tassa hetu*; the Siamese has: *suttageyyaveyyākaraṇassa sotuṃ*. The PTS version would thus seem to have only two angas, whose explanation the disciple wants from the Tathagata (cp. the translation by Horner: '...for the sake of an exposition of the discourses that are in prose and in prose and verse'). But the grammar is odd; this phrase would seem rather to have formed by contraction from the Burmese/Sinhalese reading (= *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇ'assa hetu*). The Chinese version reads 正經 · 歌詠 · 記說故. This does indicate that its original read *hetuḥ*, not *sotuṃ* as proposed by the Siamese edition. *Sotuṃ* ('for the hearing of...') would seem to be more straightforward; grammatically the compound formation in the Siamese edition is also more straightforward, leading me to suspect the Thai editors have normalized a difficult reading. The Chinese does not give a hint to the grammatical problems of this passage. In any case, the Chinese and most of the Pali versions have three angas, and the apparent presence of two angas in the PTS seems easily explicable.

<sup>86</sup> Waldschmidt (1950, 1951) 40.62; Waldschmidt (1968).

<sup>87</sup> Śrāvakaḥūmi, pg. 154, 232

<sup>88</sup> Śrāvakaḥūmi, pg. 154, 184, 220, 226

<sup>89</sup> *Neyyattha* and *nītattha*; Śrāvakaḥūmi pg. 228; Abhidharmasamuccaya pg. 179, but see de Jong's comment, pg. 295.

<sup>90</sup> Peṭakopadesa 1.7. In the final sentence I accept Nānamoli's suggested amendment to *alokapañcakaṃ*, referring to the series of five terms in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta describing the Buddha's realization of the noble truths.

<sup>91</sup> Peṭakopadesa 1.7, 1.22

<sup>92</sup> Peṭakopadesa 1.8, 1.9, 1.12, 4.41, 5.53, 5.54, 7.105

<sup>93</sup> Netti 89.

<sup>94</sup> Peṭakopadesa 1.12

<sup>95</sup> Peṭakopadesa 5.53

<sup>96</sup> Nānamoli (1964), pg. 133.

<sup>97</sup> There are some variations, however. According to Lamotte, the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra has: *sūtra, gāthā, itivuttaka, jātaka, abbhūtaḍḍhamma, nidāna, aupama, geya, upadeśa*.

<sup>98</sup> DN 16.4.7ff/DA 2/T5/T6/T7/T1451/Skt

<sup>99</sup> Netti 122

<sup>100</sup> In Pali usually spelled *veyyākaraṇa* or *byākaraṇa*.



- <sup>101</sup> E.g. DN 11.85/DA 24/P 5595, SN 12.12/SA 372, SN 12.32/MA 23/SA 345/Skt, SN 12.70/SA 347, SN 35.116/SA 234, SN 35.204/SA 1175, SN 41.1/SA 572MN 32/MA 184/EA 37.3/T 154.16, MN 44/MA 210, MN 56.6/MA 133/Skt, M 133.21/MA 165, AN 3.21, AN 6.61/SA 1164
- <sup>102</sup> DN 9.29/DA 28, DN 29.32/DA 17, MN 63.9/MA 221/T 94, SN 16.12/SA 905/SA<sup>2</sup> 121
- <sup>103</sup> SN 41.8/SA 574, AN 10.27/EA 46.8/SA 486-489\*, AN 10.28
- <sup>104</sup> E.g. DN 18.4/DA 4/T 9, AN 5.93, AN 6.62/MA 112/T 58
- <sup>105</sup> AN 4.42/T 1536.8
- <sup>106</sup> Dutt, pg. 225
- <sup>107</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 179 (adapted following de Jong's note, pg. 295); the Śrāvaka bhūmi pg. 228 is similar, lacking only the final phrase.
- <sup>108</sup> SN 41.1/SA 572
- <sup>109</sup> Peṭakopadesa 10
- <sup>110</sup> See Dietz e.g. pg. 26 'kumbhopame vyākaraṇe' (= SN 12.51/SA 292/Skt; the Pali title is 'parivīmaṃsana'; pg. 33 'phalgunavavāde vyākaraṇe' (= SN 12.12/SA 372; the Pali title is 'moḷiyaphaguna'); pg. 52 'pataleyavyakarane' (=SN 22.81/SA 57).
- <sup>111</sup> Przylyski, pp. 45, 334; cp. Rockhill, pg. 160
- <sup>112</sup> MN 32/MA 184/EA 37.3/T 154, Chapter 6.
- <sup>113</sup> T 154
- <sup>114</sup> AN 1.197
- <sup>115</sup> EA 4.2. Analayo (unpublished essay on M 32) discusses this point, as does Minh Chau, pp. 251-257.
- <sup>116</sup> Another possible instance is the Jhāna Vibhaṅga. This gives an account of the gradual training that is briefer than the usual Sutta versions. However, in this case it seems to me that this is an abbreviation rather than an archaic version.
- <sup>117</sup> My thanks to the author for supplying me with a copy of this essay.
- <sup>118</sup> Stephen Hodge, private communication.
- <sup>119</sup> T 97, T 98. My thanks to Rod Bucknell for this information.
- <sup>120</sup> T24: 35a3 & 57a26-7, Yin Shun 1971, pp. 720-725. In the Chinese, the second nipāta is mistakenly called the 'Sixty-three-Nipāta'.
- <sup>121</sup> DN 14/DA 1/EA 48.4
- <sup>122</sup> Heirman, pg. 27.
- <sup>123</sup> AN 10.27/EA 46.8/SA 486-489\*
- <sup>124</sup> DN 33/DA 9/T 12/Skt
- <sup>125</sup> AN 10.28
- <sup>126</sup> Gethin, 1992.
- <sup>127</sup> Even this is an oversimplification, for some of the Vibhaṅga topics, such as the 37 wings to enlightenment, suggest the aṅguttara principle, and parts of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī matika suggest the saṃyutta principle. Examples of the latter were discussed by Nyanaponika Thera in his Abhidhamma Studies. For example, the following triads clearly reflect the Sutta sequence of meditative development:  
*savitakkasavicārādhammā/avitakkavicāramattādhammā/avitakkāvicārādhammā >*  
*pītisahagatādhammā/sukhasahagatādhammā/upekkhāsahagatādhammā > dassanena pahātabbādhammā/bhāvanāya*  
*pahātabbādhammā/n'eva dassanena na bhāvanāya pahātabbādhammā*
- <sup>128</sup> AN 1.1-10/EA 9.7-8.
- <sup>129</sup> AN 5.55.
- <sup>130</sup> Bucknell, unpublished essay.
- <sup>131</sup> PED has some interesting remarks on this obscure matter, some of which are endearingly far-fetched – it invites comparison between the five groups of twelve musicians mentioned in the commentary to the Vimāna Vatthu with the five times twelve cromlechs in the outer circle at Stonehenge!
- <sup>132</sup> Different editions vary the numbering of discourses by one at this point. My correspondence table lists AN 3.81 Samaṇa to AN 3.90 Paṅkadha as having SA counterparts.
- <sup>133</sup> Most of this passage is included in the widely available *Life of the Buddha* by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.
- <sup>134</sup> MN 28.2-6/MA 30
- <sup>135</sup> MN 141/MA 31/T 32/EA 27.1/T 1435.60
- <sup>136</sup> DN 29.17/DA 17
- <sup>137</sup> According to Bucknell, unpublished essay.
- <sup>138</sup> DN 16.3.50
- <sup>139</sup> Waldschmidt (1950-1951), 19.7-10.
- <sup>140</sup> Waldschmidt (1968).
- <sup>141</sup> The Sanskrit traditions, including the Mahāyāna and the Sarvāstivāda, usually add *dhammatā* (the 'way of things') to *sutta* and *vinaya*, although there is one Chinese Sutta that just has the two. Remarkably, the Theravādin Netti also has *dhammatā*. See Lamotte, 1983-4, pg.4.
- <sup>142</sup> Waldschmidt (1950-1951), 24.2.

- <sup>143</sup> Waldschmidt (1950-1951), 40.62
- <sup>144</sup> Rockhill, pg. 132, 140.
- <sup>145</sup> Cousins (1983), pg. 3.
- <sup>146</sup> Samantapāsādikā, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā, Paṭhamasaṅgītikathā
- <sup>147</sup> DN 16.3.18/Skt MPS 17.17
- <sup>148</sup> Skt MPS 16.1-12. The Pali has the Mara episode (DN 16.3.7), but without mentioning that Mara first requested the Buddha pass away when he was newly enlightened at Uruvelā. This statement is not found until the recapitulation at DN 16.3.34, following the eight causes of earthquakes, whereas the Sanskrit has the full passage once only. The Pali, in between the two mentions of the Request of Mara, drags in several irrelevant sets of eight dhammas (eight assemblies, eight stages of mastery, eight liberations), an arbitrary application of the aṅguttara principle. It is, in fact, probably the inclusion of these extra sets of dhammas that necessitated the Pali recapitulating the Request of Mara; this is a classic sign of textual manipulation, technically known as ‘resumptive recapitulation’.
- <sup>149</sup> Skt MPS 16.12
- <sup>150</sup> Skt CPS 4.7
- <sup>151</sup> DN 16.4.42/Skt MPS 29.5-12. The Skt does not include the controversial reference to ‘pig’s delight’, nor does it mention the illness. Instead it inserts an odd section on an ‘evil monk’ who carried off the ‘metal pot’ under his armpit, only to be revealed by the power of the Buddha.
- <sup>152</sup> Nyanaponika, pg. 11
- <sup>153</sup> Inserted passage from AN 10.54
- <sup>154</sup> AN 4.94
- <sup>155</sup> AN 9.4
- <sup>156</sup> MN 122.7 cp. MN 19.8-10, MN 20, MN 4.22, SN 40.1
- <sup>157</sup> AN 2:3.10
- <sup>158</sup> von Hinuber, pg 37
- <sup>159</sup> Analayo, pg. 16
- <sup>160</sup> Since completing the study of satipatthana, Venerable Analayo has undertaken a systematic comparative study of all the suttas in the Majjhima Nikāya with their Chinese and other cognates. He has been kind enough to share with me some of his draft studies. This includes a comparative study on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, covering much the same material as this work from a somewhat different angle.
- <sup>161</sup> Analayo, pg. 121
- <sup>162</sup> AN 5.28
- <sup>163</sup> Schmithausen (1976) pp. 241-66; Bronkhorst (1985) pp. 309-12.
- <sup>164</sup> AN 10.60/Tibetan (Peking edition, Otani reprint, Tokyo 1956) 754
- <sup>165</sup> SN 47.10
- <sup>166</sup> E.g. AN 10.60, Iti 80, 81, Dhp 7, 8.
- <sup>167</sup> Frauwallner (1995), pg 43ff.
- <sup>168</sup> I omit Bronkhorst’s lists of the specifications of the satipatthanas in the Vibhaṅga and Dharmaskandha, which contain some errors of detail.
- <sup>169</sup> DN 2.65, etc. Here I substitute my translation for Bronkhorst’s for consistency.
- <sup>170</sup> SN 47.2, SN 36.7,8
- <sup>171</sup> MA 144=MN 107 Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta
- <sup>172</sup> MN 125/MA 198
- <sup>173</sup> Meisig, pg. 273
- <sup>174</sup> AN 10.62/MA 51-53
- <sup>175</sup> MN 67.16
- <sup>176</sup> CU 6.8.5-6
- <sup>177</sup> AN 5.193, SN 46.55
- <sup>178</sup> RV 5.81.1
- <sup>179</sup> BU 4.3.7
- <sup>180</sup> Aitareya Brahmaṇa 5.5.27
- <sup>181</sup> Crangle, pg. 71
- <sup>182</sup> Crangle, pg. 74
- <sup>183</sup> BU 1.5.14
- <sup>184</sup> Crangle, pg. 198
- <sup>185</sup> DN 13.10. The cognate DA 26 mentions three paths: 自在欲道. 自作道. 梵天道 (CBETA, T01, no. 1, p. 105, b13). It is not clear to me how closely these might match with the Pali.
- <sup>186</sup> Jayatilleke, pg.
- <sup>187</sup> See ‘A Pali Reference to Brahmaṇa-Caraṇas’, included in Wijesekera.
- <sup>188</sup> CU 1.12, cp. AN 5.191
- <sup>189</sup> BAU 6.4.9
- <sup>190</sup> BAU 1.5.17

<sup>191</sup> BAU 3.7.23

<sup>192</sup> BAU 4.4.23

<sup>193</sup> CU 6.8.2

<sup>194</sup> SU 1.14

<sup>195</sup> SU 2.8 Cp. Sn 1034f

<sup>196</sup> SU 2.9

<sup>197</sup> SU 2.11

<sup>198</sup> E.g. MN 36.17ff

<sup>199</sup> E.g. BAU 5.12

<sup>200</sup> CU 1.19

<sup>201</sup> Maitrī 1.3, 3.4

<sup>202</sup> Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.2-6

<sup>203</sup> MN 26/MA 204

<sup>204</sup> The account in the Sanghabhedavastu of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya omits the mention of lip recital.

<sup>205</sup> SN 35.103

<sup>206</sup> The Sarvāstivādin version (MA 204) mentions only faith, energy, and wisdom here, but includes mindfulness just below. The Sanghabhedavastu (Gnoli pg. 97) and the Lalitavistara (239.2) mention all five spiritual faculties.

<sup>207</sup> E.g. SN 48.9

<sup>208</sup> AN 4.123

<sup>209</sup> AN 4.125

<sup>210</sup> Compare the following verses:

*Yathā nadyas syandamānās samudre*  
Just as rivers flowing into the ocean

*Astam gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya*  
Go to their end, having dropped name & form

*Tathā vidvān nāmarūpād vimuktaḥ*  
Thus the realized [sage], freed from name & form

*Parāt-param puruṣam upaiti divyam*  
Beyond the beyond is that Man he enters, divine.

(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.8)

*Acci yathā vātavegena khittam*  
Just as a flame tossed by a strong wind

*Attham paleti na upeti saṅkham*  
Goes out to the end, and does not enter reckoning

*Evaṃ muni nāmakāyā vimutto*  
Thus the sage, freed from the name-group [i.e. mental factors]

*Attham paleti na upeti saṅkham*  
Goes out to the end, and does not enter reckoning.

(Sutta Nipāta 1080)

<sup>211</sup> BU 3.9.26

<sup>212</sup> Sn 1026

<sup>213</sup> Sn 1009

<sup>214</sup> Sn 1107

<sup>215</sup> Sn 1070, Sn 1113ff. Interestingly, the sphere of nothingness is described in Sn 1070 as a ‘support’ (*ārammaṇa*) for crossing over. This rare positive use of ‘support’ may be compared with the Mahābhārata passage quoted above that describes the unconcentrated mind as ‘without support’. The Jhāna Saṃyutta also speaks of the development of ‘skill in the support’.

<sup>216</sup> SN 46.52, SN 46.53

<sup>217</sup> SN 46.54

<sup>218</sup> E.g. MN 83/MA 67/EA 1/EA 50.4/T 152.87/T 211 Makhādeva; DN 19 Mahāgovinda also includes the divine abidings, but they are absent from DA 3, T 8 p207c-210b, and Mv 3.197-224.

- <sup>219</sup> SN Sagāthā Vagga verse 269, AN (4)449-51. This phrase was somewhat misleadingly rendered by Bhikkhu Bodhi in CBD as ‘discovered jhana’. Perhaps the accusative here could be read as instrumental (‘awakened by means of jhana’).
- <sup>220</sup> SN 35.132
- <sup>221</sup> MBh 12.188.9
- <sup>222</sup> MBh 12.188.15. Bronkhorst (2000) pg. 71 notes that here, as well as in the Yoga Sūtra and in some Buddhist works, *vitakka* and *vicāra* ‘are apparently looked upon as special faculties in the first jhana, not as mere thought remaining from ordinary consciousness’.
- <sup>223</sup> MBh 12.188.22
- <sup>224</sup> YS 3.12
- <sup>225</sup> YS 1.17. The word ‘form’, *rūpa*, does not occur in all texts.
- <sup>226</sup> DN 1/DA 19
- <sup>227</sup> YS 1.18
- <sup>228</sup> YS 1.20
- <sup>229</sup> Bronkhorst (2000), pp. 72ff
- <sup>230</sup> SN 14.11
- <sup>231</sup> YS 2.3-6
- <sup>232</sup> Maitrī 6.18
- <sup>233</sup> YS 3.1
- <sup>234</sup> Crangle pp 117-119 discusses the similarity between Buddhist *sati* and yogic *dhāraṇa*, and their role as support for jhana.
- <sup>235</sup> MN 36.20, etc.
- <sup>236</sup> Gnoli, pg. 103
- <sup>237</sup> MN 12.56
- <sup>238</sup> MN 85.10/DA<sup>2</sup> 21/T 1421.10
- <sup>239</sup> MN 14.20
- <sup>240</sup> MN 36.31, MN 85, MN 100
- <sup>241</sup> CU 6.7
- <sup>242</sup> SN 41.8
- <sup>243</sup> *sukkajjhāna*.
- <sup>244</sup> Uttarajjhāyana 29.72/1174
- <sup>245</sup> E.g. Ṭhānaṅga Sutta. See Bronkhorst (2000), pg. 38ff
- <sup>246</sup> Dayal, pg. 95
- <sup>247</sup> Prasad, pp 167-168
- <sup>248</sup> DN 18.27, MN 117.3, SN 45.28, AN 7.42. The term ‘*parikkhāra*’ more familiarly refers to a monk’s four requisites – bowl, robes, dwelling, and medicine. Here it obviously means the factors that are ‘pre-requisite’ for attaining jhana. In later usage it is replaced in this sense by its etymological twin ‘*parikamma*’, usually rendered something like ‘preparatory work’.
- <sup>249</sup> MN 44.12
- <sup>250</sup> SN 48.50
- <sup>251</sup> MN 44.11/MA 210
- <sup>252</sup> SN 46.3/SA 736/SA 740/SA 724\*
- <sup>253</sup> SN 46.51/SA 715
- <sup>254</sup> E.g. SN 54.13/SA 810
- <sup>255</sup> AN 6.102-4
- <sup>256</sup> E.g. Skt MPS 27.16; Skt CPS 6.1; Skt SPS 63
- <sup>257</sup> DN 10.2.1-18/DA<sup>2</sup> 42. Walshe’s translation here is faulty. He has: ‘This comes to him through concentration’. It should read: ‘This is, for him, what pertains to concentration’.
- <sup>258</sup> SN 48.9, etc.
- <sup>259</sup> MA 189, etc.
- <sup>260</sup> E.g. Mahā Niddesa 1.1.3
- <sup>261</sup> Paṭisambhidāmagga 169
- <sup>262</sup> SA 610/SN 47.39
- <sup>263</sup> Netti 4.23
- <sup>264</sup> SN 48.9/SA 647
- <sup>265</sup> Waldschmidt (1950, 1951) 10.8
- <sup>266</sup> DN 2.64/DA 27/T 22/EA 42.7/SA 154-163\*, etc.
- <sup>267</sup> Meisig, pg. 268.
- <sup>268</sup> AN 10.176
- <sup>269</sup> Sn 1112
- <sup>270</sup> SN 42.8/SA 916/SA<sup>2</sup> 131, AN 10.219

- <sup>271</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi has changed his rendering here from ‘connected with the body’ to ‘connected with sensual desire’. According to his note 1177 in the revised 2001 edition of MLDB, the PTS edition has *kāyūpasamhitam* (connected with the body), abbreviates the next two, then has *dhammūpasamhitam*. The Burmese editions, supported by a 1937 Sinhalese edition, have *kāmūpasamhitam*. He also cites the Chinese translation in support. The Sanskrit version quoted just below, however, supports *kāyūpasamhitam*.
- <sup>272</sup> Harrison. The Sanskrit has been tentatively reconstructed by the translator.
- <sup>273</sup> SN 54.10/SA 813, SN 54.13/SA 810, MN 118.23ff
- <sup>274</sup> Ṛg Veda 10.160.4
- <sup>275</sup> Sn 255
- <sup>276</sup> Dhṛ 253
- <sup>277</sup> Īśa 6-7
- <sup>278</sup> Sn 3.12
- <sup>279</sup> Śvetāśvatara 12
- <sup>280</sup> BU 4.4.15
- <sup>281</sup> Dhṛ 7, 8
- <sup>282</sup> SN 22.39-42/SA 27, SN 22.147/SA48
- <sup>283</sup> SN 36.7/SA 1028, SN 36.8/SA 1029, MN 37/SA 505/EA 19.3
- <sup>284</sup> See Vsm trans (Ñānamoli), pg. 168 note 47.
- <sup>285</sup> SA 610, but not its cognate SN 47.2
- <sup>286</sup> Iti 3.36. This includes the unusual phrase ‘*ajjhataṃ parimukhaṃ*’.
- <sup>287</sup> MN 77.23
- <sup>288</sup> DN 18.26
- <sup>289</sup> MN 10.14
- <sup>290</sup> Sn 205
- <sup>291</sup> SN 47.39/SA 610
- <sup>292</sup> MN 127.16
- <sup>293</sup> Masefield. My thanks to the author for supplying me with a copy of this article.
- <sup>294</sup> E.g. MLDB, pg. 1188, note 135; Gethin (2001), pg. 60.
- <sup>295</sup> Gethin (2001), pp. 59-66.
- <sup>296</sup> MN 12.37/ T 757/SA 612\*/SA 684\*/SA 701\*/EA 27.6\*/EA 31.8\*/EA 46.4\*/ EA 50.6\*/T 780\*/T 781\*/T 802\*/Skt\*.
- <sup>297</sup> SN 47.18/SA 607/SA 1189/SA<sup>2</sup> 102/SA<sup>3</sup> 4
- <sup>298</sup> SA 1189/SA<sup>2</sup> 102/SA<sup>3</sup> 4
- <sup>299</sup> SA 1189, SA<sup>2</sup> 102
- <sup>300</sup> SN 47.18, SN 47.43
- <sup>301</sup> The Chinese partly overlaps SN 47.8/SA 616
- <sup>302</sup> Gethin (2001), pg. 61
- <sup>303</sup> BU 2.4, 4.5
- <sup>304</sup> Wijesekera, pg. 282
- <sup>305</sup> SN 3.1.8. Curiously, this has no cognates.
- <sup>306</sup> The commentaries say that *muta* here means cognized by the nose, tongue, or body; that is, they correlate this list with the six senses; thus some contemporary translators render it as ‘sensed’. But *muta* is just a past participle of the normal word ‘to think’, and never means ‘sensed’. The Upaniṣadic context makes it plain that the meaning here is what has been ‘thought’ or ‘conceived’.
- <sup>307</sup> MN 1/MA 106/T 56
- <sup>308</sup> DN 23.19/DA 7/MA 71/ T 45
- <sup>309</sup> SN 35.246/SA 1169
- <sup>310</sup> AN 8.157
- <sup>311</sup> MN 72.17/SA 962/SA<sup>2</sup> 196
- <sup>312</sup> BU 4.5.14
- <sup>313</sup> See Gethin (2001), pg. 62 note 142.
- <sup>314</sup> 云何名為一入。所謂專一心 (CBETA, T02, no. 125, p. 568, a4-5)
- <sup>315</sup> The relation between satipatthana and dependent origination is implicit in the Samudaya Sutta, which we will discuss below, and made explicit in the Śāriputrābhidharma.
- <sup>316</sup> AN 3.75/EA 21.4, AN 4.35, AN 4.194/SA 565, AN 6.26/SA 550, AN 6.30/T 1536.16, AN 9.37/SA 557
- <sup>317</sup> MN 76.43/SA 973\*/SA<sup>2</sup> 207\*
- <sup>318</sup> DN 18.28/DA 4/T 9
- <sup>319</sup> AN 6.117ff
- <sup>320</sup> AN 8.63
- <sup>321</sup> AN 6.29
- <sup>322</sup> Cp. MN 32/MA 184, MN 123/MA 78
- <sup>323</sup> AN 5.122

- <sup>324</sup> SN 47.18/SA 607/SA 1189/SA<sup>2</sup> 102/SA<sup>3</sup> 4; SN 47.43
- <sup>325</sup> SN 47.31
- <sup>326</sup> Waldschmidt (1950, 1951), 14.14.
- <sup>327</sup> SN 47.12
- <sup>328</sup> DN 16.1.16-17
- <sup>329</sup> DN 28/DA 18/T 18
- <sup>330</sup> SN 47.21\*/SA 628; SN 47.22; SN 47.23.
- <sup>331</sup> SN 47.2/SA 610
- <sup>332</sup> AN 4.41/T 1536.7
- <sup>333</sup> SN 12.33/SA 356, SN 12.34/SA 357.
- <sup>334</sup> SN 51.19 (No SA cognate, as the Iddhipāda Saṃyutta has been lost from the Chinese.)
- <sup>335</sup> SN 51.20
- <sup>336</sup> MA 98; cp. SN 51.20
- <sup>337</sup> SN 47.34/SA 634
- <sup>338</sup> SN 47.39/SA 610
- <sup>339</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 160
- <sup>340</sup> CBD mistakenly has the singular 'feeling'.
- <sup>341</sup> SN 126-128/SA 256
- <sup>342</sup> SN 22.57/SA 42/EA 41.3. Also in the partial 'Other translation' of SA, and forms the basis of a long independent Seven Cases Sutta in the Chinese, which appears to be a Saṅgīti Sutta style compilation.
- <sup>343</sup> e.g. MN 138/MA 164 Uddesavibhaṅga
- <sup>344</sup> We must add our usual reservations regarding the contemplation of dhammas: although the word 'attention' is not used, the way the practice is presented is very similar to other contexts where the word 'attention' is used, underscoring the fact that contemplation of dhammas introduces an important vipassana dimension to satipatthana.
- <sup>345</sup> SN 12.1/SA 298/T 124/Skt etc. The Chinese sometimes has 'the four immaterial aggregates', which is almost certainly a later corruption; however, this does not affect the current argument.
- <sup>346</sup> DN 15.20/DA 13/T 14/MA 97/T 52/Skt
- <sup>347</sup> SN 52.1
- <sup>348</sup> SA 536
- <sup>349</sup> SA 535
- <sup>350</sup> SN 36.11, 36.15-20
- <sup>351</sup> SN 36.2, 36.7-10, 36.22
- <sup>352</sup> SN 36.7, 36.8
- <sup>353</sup> SN 22.80
- <sup>354</sup> MN 78/MA 179 Samaṇamaṇḍikā
- <sup>355</sup> SN 35.132, etc.
- <sup>356</sup> SN 35.134
- <sup>357</sup> MN 118
- <sup>358</sup> Chih-ching, according to Minh Chau pg. 347. These miscellaneous discourses, found added to the major collections, consist of alternative translations and sometimes texts not found in the major Āgamas. Their doctrinal affiliations are usually unknown and they have been even less studied than the major collections.
- <sup>359</sup> The Pali terms are slightly different: *paṭinissagga* in anapanasati and *vossagga* in the enlightenment-factor formula, but I do not see any significance in this variation. Bhikkhu Bodhi (CDB, pg. 1892, note 7) tries to distinguish them, while acknowledging that this does not find support in the commentaries. He suggests that *paṭinissagga* refers to the final stages of insight, whereas *vossagga* comes close in meaning to Nibbana. This interpretation, however, is untenable, for *paṭinissagga* in fact occurs in two of the main definitions of Nibbana: in the third noble truth definition, and as the 'relinquishing of all belongings' (*sabbupadhipaṭinissagga*).
- <sup>360</sup> SN 54.10/SA 813, SN 54.13/SA 810, MN 118.23ff
- <sup>361</sup> T 1537
- <sup>362</sup> T 1548. Frauwallner (1995) discusses the relations between these texts in detail. See pp. 15ff, 43ff, and 97ff.
- <sup>363</sup> SN 36.31/SA483
- <sup>364</sup> AN 6.26/SA 550
- <sup>365</sup> SN 22.122/SA 259
- <sup>366</sup> A similar shift happened to *nāma*. Although the suttas take pains to define this excluding cognition, the later scholastics explained it as all four immaterial aggregates, including cognition. This interpretation is already found in the Sarvāstivāda Nidāna Saṃyukta, from where it no doubt made its way into the Sarvāstivāda Abhidhamma. So in the case of *nāmarūpa*, as in the case of the satipatthanas, we see the tendency to integrate other doctrinal formulas with the aggregates first appear in the Sarvāstivāda, then later in the Theravāda.
- <sup>367</sup> SN 48.2-7
- <sup>368</sup> SN 54.6/SA 805
- <sup>369</sup> MN 140.18/MA 162; MN 62.12/EA 17.1.

- <sup>370</sup> DN 28.7/DA 18
- <sup>371</sup> MN 28.6/MA 30
- <sup>372</sup> E.g. DN 33.1.11.10/DA 9
- <sup>373</sup> MN 62/EA 17.1
- <sup>374</sup> Ud 4.1
- <sup>375</sup> Iti 3.36
- <sup>376</sup> Ud 10.9
- <sup>377</sup> Jianhua. This contains a lengthy comparative study as well as full translation and Chinese text of the Dharmaguptaka Brahmajāla Sutta.
- <sup>378</sup> Dutt, pg. 254
- <sup>379</sup> Conze, pg. 153-155
- <sup>380</sup> Dayal, pg. 90
- <sup>381</sup> Conze, pg. 580
- <sup>382</sup> MA 98
- <sup>383</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh's translation refers in the plural to 'all Tathagatas of the present (including myself)', which sounds very Mahāyānist; but the text is singular.
- <sup>384</sup> MN 119/MA 81
- <sup>385</sup> Analayo, pg. 53ff, discusses the various satipatthana similes in more detail.
- <sup>386</sup> See Sujato, pp 164f
- <sup>387</sup> MN 36.20
- <sup>388</sup> *Paccavekkhana nimitta*. Minh Chau has 'contemplating image', suggesting that the Chinese translation was influenced by the later meaning of *nimitta*. See discussion in Sujato, pg. 166f.
- <sup>389</sup> Cp. AN 5.28, DN 34.1.6/DA 10
- <sup>390</sup> The situation is complicated by a curious editing feature, which I was alerted to by Bucknell. In the Aṅguttara, the fivefold right samadhi is followed by saying that one can then realize any of the clear knowledges, illustrated by the similes of the brimful pot, the brimful pond, and the ready chariot. This entire passage is included in the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta, but not the Sarvāstivādin version. Thus from the fivefold right samadhi, the jhanas with similes are included in both Kāyagatāsati Suttas, the extra practices in the Sarvāstivāda only, and the extra three similes in the Theravāda only.
- <sup>391</sup> Gethin follows Warder's error here in stating that the Chinese version omits the sense media. It does not. Other commentators, such as Minh Chau, seem to have been misled by an inconsistency in the text itself. The description of the practice, as in the Theravāda, speaks of the both the internal (e.g. eye) and external (e.g. visible forms) sense media. But whereas the Theravāda summary at the end of the section rightly mentions the internal and external sense media, the Sarvāstivāda mentions only the internal; no doubt this is an ancient editing mistake.
- <sup>392</sup> SN 46.29
- <sup>393</sup> Schopen 2004, pp. 395ff
- <sup>394</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 283, note 59. This note, unfortunately disconnected from Schopen's main discussion of the matter, gives a couple of further references.
- <sup>395</sup> 24 in number. Theravāda has 31. I have available to me three translations of the list of body parts from the same Chinese text of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. They reckon the parts of the body at 29, 30, and 31 respectively.
- <sup>396</sup> SN 46.35
- <sup>397</sup> SN 46.2, 5, 7, 23, 24, 33, 34, 37, 39, 40, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56
- <sup>398</sup> DN 22
- <sup>399</sup> Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 1, PTS, pg. 534. The preface lists a number of similar interpolations from the Dīgha into the Burmese Majjhima, but none are of any length or doctrinal significance.
- <sup>400</sup> MN 141
- <sup>401</sup> SN 18, SN 25, SN 26, SN 27
- <sup>402</sup> AN 7.80ff
- <sup>403</sup> Vasumitra, Śakyaprabha, Vinītadeva (see Hopkins, pp 713-719); Bhāvya, Tāranātha, Vasumitra, Śāriputrapariṇchā, Mañjuśrīpariṇchā (see Lamotte, pp 529-538).
- <sup>404</sup> Schopen 1997, pg. 5
- <sup>405</sup> Abeynayake, pp.163-183
- <sup>406</sup> DN 30/MA 59
- <sup>407</sup> The doctrinal material of the Sarvāstivāda version is thus entirely stock formulae, lacking all the unique material peculiar to the Theravāda version. But the setting is more complex: it has the monks sitting around discussing the 'wonderful and marvelous' qualities of the Tathagata, then the Buddha entering and enquiring into the topic of conversation, etc. (as in the Mahāpadāna Sutta). So in the angas it belongs to the *abbhūtaḍḍhammas*. The Theravāda just has the Buddha giving the discourse straight off, and so the identification as *abbhūtaḍḍhamma* is not explicit. The commentary explains the need for the discourse being precisely the question of what kamma is it that gives rise to

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the marks, an issue that is not addressed at all in the Sarvāstivāda. All this raises the question of whether the two may be regarded as cognate texts at all.

<sup>408</sup> MN 111

<sup>409</sup> MN 148/MA 86

<sup>410</sup> Watanabe, pg. 54

<sup>411</sup> MN 28/MA 30. The following information is from Bhikkhu Analayo (unpublished essay).

<sup>412</sup> MN 28.6

<sup>413</sup> MN 28.9

<sup>414</sup> MN 28.27

<sup>415</sup> To facilitate easy comparison, where the parallels with the Pali are close and obvious I have substituted my own preferred renderings of technical terms for those given in Minh Chau. Here and elsewhere the Chinese regularly has 'right knowledge', evidently reading *sammā ñāṇa* instead of the Pali *sampajañña*.

<sup>416</sup> cp. AN 5.24, 5.168, 6.50, 7.61, 8.81, 10.3-5, 11.3-5

<sup>417</sup> Chinese has 'the ear-sphere'.

<sup>418</sup> Chinese has 'receiving and hearing the dhamma'.

<sup>419</sup> Chinese has 'consideration of patience', evidently a mistranslation of *nijjhānakkhanti*. *Khanti* in this sense seems to be misunderstood throughout the Chinese tradition, leading to a distinct shift in meaning in many passages.

<sup>420</sup> Probably *yoniso manasikāra*, 'paying attention to the root'.

<sup>421</sup> cp. MN 95

<sup>422</sup> cp. SN 12.23

<sup>423</sup> Probably a confusion stemming from the idiom *kāyena phusati*, 'one personally contacts'.

<sup>424</sup> Chinese has 'think of its characteristic', evidently from *nimittāṃ manasikaroti*.

<sup>425</sup> *Kasiṇāyatana*.

<sup>426</sup> Most of these points are discussed more fully in Minh Chau.

<sup>427</sup> MN 32

<sup>428</sup> MA 184

<sup>429</sup> Recently it has been argued that Upagupta must be assigned to the time of Kālaśoka, a few generations before the famous Buddhist patron Dhammasoka. This would mean that he was not a contemporary of Moggaliputtatissa, and might suggest a historical rather than sectarian explanation for the adoption by the Buddhist communities of such seemingly different figures as patriarchs.

<sup>430</sup> See e.g. Li, Chapter 8

<sup>431</sup> MN 31/MA 185 Cūḷagosiṅga; MN 25/ MA 178 Nivāpa; MN 99/MA 152 Subha.

<sup>432</sup> MN 82/ MA 132 Raṭṭhapāla

<sup>433</sup> MN 75/MA 153 Māgandiya, MN 99/MA 152 Subha.

<sup>434</sup> Kośa 6.19d

<sup>435</sup> Vibhaṅga pg. 374

<sup>436</sup> Vibhaṅga pg. 411ff

<sup>437</sup> E.g. Dhs 597, 636, 642-646, 1115, 1366

<sup>438</sup> Here we see the move towards elevating *kaṣiṇas* from obscurity in the Suttas to primacy in the Visuddhimagga.

<sup>439</sup> We have already encountered above a Sutta passage where the signless concentration is clearly distinguished as different from *satipatthana* (SN 22.80), although it is not clear whether these things have the same meaning in the *Abhidhamma*; the treatment of these meditations in the Suttas is somewhat obscure and variable.

<sup>440</sup> Mūla Tīkā Be (1960) to Vibh-A 287; quoted at Gethin pg. 323

<sup>441</sup> Vsm 22.40

<sup>442</sup> PP 4.187

<sup>443</sup> AN 4.94

<sup>444</sup> AN 4.170

<sup>445</sup> PP 4.177ff

<sup>446</sup> See Vsm 20.120

<sup>447</sup> SN 47.40

<sup>448</sup> SN 52.2, and to some extent MES

<sup>449</sup> Gethin 2001, pp. 37-40

<sup>450</sup> Peṭakopadesa 6.64

<sup>451</sup> The discourse and commentary, together with extracts from the sub-commentary, have been published in translation by Soma Thera under the title *The Way of Mindfulness*.

<sup>452</sup> pg. 30

<sup>453</sup> pg. 40

<sup>454</sup> pg. 54

<sup>455</sup> pg. 97

<sup>456</sup> pg. 39

<sup>457</sup> pg. 165



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<sup>458</sup> pg. 166

<sup>459</sup> Aśokarājavadāna 1206 [Prz363-364]

<sup>460</sup> Aśokarājavadāna pg. 3 [Strong 1983b:174; Przylyski 1923a:363]

<sup>461</sup> T XXVI 1023b29 is the beginning of the contemplation of dhammas section.

<sup>462</sup> Frauwallner (1995), pg 179ff

<sup>463</sup> Kośa 6.68

<sup>464</sup> Kośa 6.9

<sup>465</sup> Kośa 6.11

<sup>466</sup> Kośa 6.12

<sup>467</sup> Kośa 8.1

<sup>468</sup> Kośa 6.12

<sup>469</sup> The commentary to the Arthaviniścaya, however, evidently takes this claim seriously enough to offer an explanation: although anapanasati is accompanied by equanimity, the meditator turns back the awareness that has air as its object and experiences rapture and bliss. This does not interrupt the practice, since the purpose of the practice is not given up, or since he can regain his object quickly. (See Samtani, pg. 102)

<sup>470</sup> Kośa 6.13-14

<sup>471</sup> Kośa 6.14, 15b, 16, etc.

<sup>472</sup> Kośa 6.15; cp. 6.2

<sup>473</sup> Kośa 6.69

<sup>474</sup> Kośa 6.70. Similar sequential explanations occur throughout the literature, as for example the Arthaviniścaya commentary (Samtani pg. 99).

<sup>475</sup> Samtani, pg. 48

<sup>476</sup> Samtani, pg. 52

<sup>477</sup> Samtani, pp. 96-97

<sup>478</sup> San fa tu lun, T. XXV, No. 1506, pp. 15c-30a.

<sup>479</sup> Dutt, pg. 187

<sup>480</sup> Enomoto suggests that Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda are really the same. Although this is certainly the case in some of the passages he quotes, his argument is not really convincing. One of his passages, quoted from the Ārya-sarvāstivāda-mūla-bhikṣuṇī-pratimokṣa-sūtra-vṛtti, says: 'Sarvāstivāda also has the root (*mūla*) and the branches. Of them the root is one, namely Sarvāstivāda. The branches derived from it are seven, namely Mūlasarvāstivāda, Kaśyapīya, Mahīśasaka, Dharmaguptaka, Bahūśrutīya, Tarṇraśātiya, and Vibhajjavāda.' This is obviously polemical, aimed at exalting one school over another, and its historical value is diminished accordingly. As it stands, the passage clearly distinguishes between Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda. What it seems to be claiming is that the Sarvāstivāda is the *real* root (*mūla*) school, and those Mulasarvāstivādins, who pretend to be the root, are just a branch. Enomoto goes on to say that the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, which is different from the other Sarvāstivāda Vinayas, should be recognized as not belonging to a distinct school, but to a sub-sect of the Sarvāstivādins. This distinction between a sub-sect of a school and a closely related derived school seems a little arbitrary, and perhaps we need to simply accept that the notion of what constitutes a 'school' is not clear-cut. There is also much textual evidence left unconsidered by Enomoto. For example, the matika of the Mulasarvāstivādins mentioned in their Vinaya, while also based on the saṃyutta-matika, has no specially close relation with the topics of the Dharmaskandha. Others suggest that the Mūlasarvāstivāda is really the same as the Sautrantika. This, too, I find implausible, though I have not examined the arguments in detail. The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya has Mahā Kassapa reciting the matika at the First Council. It seems to me utterly implausible that the Sautrantikas, whose primary tenet was that the Suttas alone represent the word of the Buddha, should have thus endowed the Abhidhamma with mythic authority, something even the Theravāda Vinaya does not do. Moreover, another of the Sautrantika's key doctrines was to deny the existence of dhammas in the three times, insisting on a radical version of the momentariness theory. Again, it seems implausible that anyone calling themselves Sarvāstivāda, whether 'Mūla-' or otherwise, should reject the chief tenet of the school.

<sup>481</sup> T 721/T 722

<sup>482</sup> So the translation; but no school of Buddhism, to my knowledge, has ever taught that causality does not operate during the period between lives. Presumably the original meaning referred to the start of a new cycle of dependent origination, or something of that sort.

<sup>483</sup> Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna Sūtra 34 (quoted in *The World's Great Religions*, pg. 63, published by Time Inc., 1957). French translation by Lin.

<sup>484</sup> Vsm 17.166

<sup>485</sup> AN 4.170/SA 560

<sup>486</sup> Aśvaghōṣa was probably not a Mahāyanist, but his works were renowned in the schools.

<sup>487</sup> Chang, pg. 399

<sup>488</sup> Cleary, pg. 729 (one-volume edition), vol. 2 pg. 41 (two-volume edition)

<sup>489</sup> Harrison, pp. 144, 145

<sup>490</sup> MN 125/MA 198

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- <sup>491</sup> E.g. MN 123.3/MA 32
- <sup>492</sup> Harrison, pg. 41
- <sup>493</sup> *Viṃśatikā-kārikā-vṛtti* 10c (Anacker pg. 166)
- <sup>494</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. xvii
- <sup>495</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. xviii
- <sup>496</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 9
- <sup>497</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 160-162
- <sup>498</sup> See CBD, note 1, pg. 1397
- <sup>499</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 166
- <sup>500</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 168
- <sup>501</sup> Wayman, pp.97-98.
- <sup>502</sup> Frauwallner's postulation of 'two Vasubandhus' has been vigorously contested by Anacker (pg. 7ff), but defended by others; suffice to note that Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* is from the Śrāvakāyana (Sarvāstivāda/Sautrantika) perspective, while the *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya* is Mahāyāna (Yogacāra).
- <sup>503</sup> MVB 4.1. Anacker has published an earlier, partial translation of this work in under the title 'The Meditational Therapy of the Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya' in Kiyota, and a revised full translation under the title 'Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from the Extremes' in Anacker. In order to assist readers who may have access to one or other of these works, I give references to the divisions of the text rather than page numbers; these are, however, not quite consistent in the two versions. The references usually refer to the commentary on the numbered verses.
- <sup>504</sup> MVB 4.5b
- <sup>505</sup> MVB 4.11a
- <sup>506</sup> MVB 4.7
- <sup>507</sup> MVB 4.12b
- <sup>508</sup> Anacker's earlier translation omits the second 'not'.
- <sup>509</sup> MVB 5.17
- <sup>510</sup> MVB 5.9, 10
- <sup>511</sup> SN 47.19
- <sup>512</sup> Hopkins, pg. 247.
- <sup>513</sup> Hopkins, pg. 289.
- <sup>514</sup> Hopkins, pg. 72, chart 2.
- <sup>515</sup> Hopkins, pg. 81, chart 3.
- <sup>516</sup> Boin-Webb, pg. 170
- <sup>517</sup> AN 5.73
- <sup>518</sup> Lamotte (1976), pp. 419-426
- <sup>519</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 20
- <sup>520</sup> See Carr, pg. 12
- <sup>521</sup> Schopen 2004, pg 399
- <sup>522</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 143
- <sup>523</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 94
- <sup>524</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 76
- <sup>525</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 77
- <sup>526</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 75
- <sup>527</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 95
- <sup>528</sup> Schopen 2004, pg. 93
- <sup>529</sup> SN 47.13/SA 638
- <sup>530</sup> Schopen 1997, pg. 203, note 111
- <sup>531</sup> Schopen 1997, pg.126-128
- <sup>532</sup> E.g. DN 16.1.12, 1.14, 1.18, 2.4, etc. The passage occurs with similar frequency in the Skt.
- <sup>533</sup> Schopen 1997, pg. 39
- <sup>534</sup> Schopen 1997, pg.27