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A Pre-Buddhist Meditation System and its Early Modifications by Gotama the Bodhisattva (I)

Biswadeb Mukherjee
Visiting professor Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies

Summary

The present paper is the first part of the article dealing with the modifications wrought by Gotama the Bodhisattva in the Śramaṇa system of meditation which had gained prominence even before the rise of the Buddhism. The problem has been dealt with reference to the 4 rūpa jhānas created by the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins long before the advent of the Buddha. In this paper an attempt has been made to form a clear idea about the 4 rāpa jhānas.

The formulas of the 4 jhānas contain informations not only about the mental states in different stages of meditation but also about the process leading to such states. The interpretations of these formulas given in the Buddhist commentaries are of a much later date, and are more a reflection of the current Buddhist thoughts than that of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma- nibbānavāda.

It is, however, imperative that to understand truly the import of the 4 jhānas we must understand the philosophy of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda of which these jhānas originally formed a part. An attempt has, therefore, been made to reconstruct this philosophy. It has been shown that the sole purpose for which the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins led a religious life was not to gain enlightenment but to experience an agreeable feeling like pītisukha, sukha etc. Nibbāna merely stood for an unhindered enjoyment of an agreeable feeling. The meditative technique, the modes of formulation of the 4 jhāna states are but the products of this philosophy. And it is in the light of this philosophy that we have tried to understand the import of the jhāna formulas, comprehend the true meaning of the technical terms like upekkha, sukha, vitakka, vicāra etc. and to reconstruct the meditative technique employed by the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma- nibbānavādins.

The present paper thus prepares the ground for the proper understanding of the extent and nature of the modifications made by Gotama the Bodhisattva in the Sramana system of meditation. This contribution of the Bodhisattva will be discussed in the second part of the article.

Keywords : 1.Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānanāde 2.Pīṭisukha 3.4 rūpa jhānas
4.Upekkhā 5.Śramaṇa meditation

p. 457

I . INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Buddhists in its process of growth incorporated and modified many non-Buddhist ideas and practices. This process seems to have started with Gotama still faring on his journey towards enlightenment.[1]The ideas modified by Gotama the Bodhisttva remained a part and parcel of the Way later preached by the Buddha. This process can be fruitfully studied with reference to what is generally known as the system of four rūpa meditations (jhāna).

The Brahmājāla-sutta mentions the four jhanas as a part of the spiritual practice of the religious sect of the Parama-dīṭṭha-dhamma-nibbānavādins. [2]It appears that this was the earliest of the religious sects to be associated with the four jhānas. Again the Buddhist suttas speak of a system of meditation where the four jhānas are followed by the four ārupya-samāpattis.[3]These eight stages of meditation are jointly called aṭṭha-samāpattis in the Nikāyas. It appears that the followers of the ārupya meditation also practised the four jhānas but did not accept these stages as final attainments, as the Nirvāṇa in this very world, and proceeded further upto the stage of neither-perception-nor-not-perception. We will later see that both these groups of meditators followed the same technique of negating the undesiarable mental factor only for attaining a higher state of meditation.[4]

This view may be objected on the ground that the account in which the four jhānas precede the four ārupya samāpattis is a creation of the Buddhists and does not reflect the original tradition of the ārupya meditators. In support of this

p. 458

opinion we may point out that even a cursory glance at the four jhānas recorded in the Buddhist suttas in a gradually ascending order, will immediately show that the higher states of meditation invariably reject a mental factor of the immediately preceding lower jhānas. The formulations of two such states of meditation even use identical expression for the mental factor valued in the lower state but rejected in the higher state of meditation. On the contrary the first ārupya samāpatti which immediately follows the fourth rūpa jhāna, does not reject any of the mental factors attained in the fourth rūpa jhāna. The first ārupya meditation does not, therefore, appear to have been necessarily preceded by the fourth rūpa jhāna.

This objection could be negotiated if we pay attention to the technical terms characterising the fourth rūpa jhāna, viz. adukkhamasukham and purified sati (sati-parisuddhi).[5]None of these jhanic traits could be given up by any meditator who is striving to advance further than the fourth jhāna. Purified sati constitutes the very essence of the mental state of an advanced meditator. Its presence in the first ārupya meditation is to be taken for granted even though it is not mentioned by name in the jhanic formula. Moreover the feeling (vedanā) adukkhamasukham being a neutral feeling, is not an impediment to spiritual growth, and so need not be given up.[6]We may even insist that this neutral feeling must be preserved, for the absence of this feeling would automatically give rise to some other feeling which would agitate the mind. The point to be taken note of in this respect is that none of the mental factors in the fourth jhāna is dispensable, or should be given up.

On the basis of the above discussion we may conclude that the mere absence of rejection of a characteristic of the fourth jhāna in the description of the first arupya meditation cannot be construed as an evidence against the tradition that the first ārupya meditation immediately follows the fourth jhāna. Moreover this

p. 459

tradition is confirmed by the statement that the first ārupya meditation is attained by transcending the sphere of rūpa.[7]The system of four jhānas practised by the Buddhists as well as by two influential groups of pre-Buddhist śramaṇas may be regarded as one of the important contributions made by the śramaṇas to the religious culture of India.

As already noted the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins appears to be the earliest religious group to practise the four jhānas, and thus they should be credited with the original formulation of the four jhanic states. It is, therefore, obvious that to understand the transformation the system of four rūpa meditations underwent at the hand of Gotama the Bodhisattva we must first be clear about the exact implication of these jhanic fourmulas and other aspects of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda philosophy.

Our study of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda philosophy, however, is bound to suffer greatly from the scarcity of materials, as no literature of this group has come down to us. Our only source consists of the fragments of informations preserved in the Buddhist scripture about this group. The available translations of such materials are generally based on later Buddhist commentaries by Buddhaghosa and others, whereas the Parama-dīṭṭha-nibbānavādins flourished long before the Buddha. Thus there is a gap of more than 1000 years between the later Buddhist commentaries and the original formulation of the non-Buddhist materials preserved in the Buddhist scriptures. Moreover much of such materials became a part of Buddhism even during the lifetime of the Buddha. Consequently the Buddhists in course of time came to interpret the four jhānas and other materials in the light of their own philosophy. This situation warns us against blind acceptance of the explanations given in the later Buddhist texts.

The philosophy and the four jhanic formulations are but a reflection of their jhanic experience and the method of meditation followed by them. All these aspects form an

integrated whole. A proper understanding of any part of this system of meditation is, therefore, dependent on the understanding of other parts.

p. 460

For the sake of convenience we may start with a translation of the relevant materials as given in the Brahmajāla-sutta of the Digha Nikāya. The deviations from the current translations will be justified later in course of our discussion.

II . TRANSLATION

a) Preparatory stage

The relevant passages of the Brahmajālasutta giving a short sketch of the philosophy and the religious practices of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins may be translated as follows:

Bhikkhus, there are some samanās and brāhmaṇas, advocates of the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world, who declare in five ways the supreme Nibbāna for the existing beings. On what authoritative tradition, on what basis do these honourable samanās and brāhmaṇas declare the supreme Nibbāna through 5 objects in the visible world for an existing being? Here some monk and brāhmaṇa speak thus and hold such a false view (diṭṭhi):

"Sir, as the soul (attā) which is supplied with the five objects of desire, is in complete possession of them, enjoys himself, Sir, the soul thus has attained the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world."[\[8\]](#)

Thus do some proclaim the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world for an existing being.

b) Final stage

To him someone else says:

"Sir there is indeed this attā of which you speak. I do not say that this

p. 461

does not exist, but this attā thus has not attained the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world. Why? Sir, the desirable objects (kāma) are impermanent, painful, and naturally subject to change; as they become transformed grief, lamentation, pain, melancholy and despair (soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā) arise. Since this attā having separated itself from desirable objects and unwholesome mental states attains the first jhāna and abides therein which is born of separation (vivekajam), characterised by

rapturous happiness (pītisukham) and accompanied by thoughts of enquiry and judgemental decision (savitakkam savicāram),^[9]to that extent it has attained the supreme nibbana in the visible world."

Thus do some declare the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world of an existing being.

To him someone else says:

"Sir, there is indeed this attā of which you speak. I do not say that this does not exist, but the attā has not thus attained the supreme nibbana in the visible world. Why ? Since in this case (the mind) is involved with vitakka and vicāra, it is called gross (olārikam). Since the attā due to calming down of the vitakka and vicāra (vitakka-vicāraṇaṃ vūpasamā) attains and abides in the second jhāna which is characterised by internal clarity, a state of mind directed towards one object, ^[10]absence of vitakka and vicāra, born of concentration (samā-dhijam), of rapturous happiness (pītisukham), so the attā has attained the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world."

Thus do some declare the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world.

To him..... Why ?

p. 462

"Indeed the attā has not thus attained the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world. Since in that case (the mental state) is merged in joy (pītīgatam), and is a state of agitation of mind (cetaso ubbillā-vitattam),^[11]so this is called gross. Since this attā due to its detachment (virāgā)

p. 463

from rapture (pīti), is equanimous (upekkhako), mindful (sato) and understanding (sampajañño) and experiences happiness (sukha) — whom (i. e. the attā) the arjans call "equanimous, mindful, and dwelling in happiness '— dwells having attained the third jhāna, thus the attā has attained the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world."

Thus do some declare the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world.

c) The fourth jhāna

To him..... Why ?

"Since in that case sukha (happiness) means the enjoyment through attention (ābhoga) [12] of mind, due to this it is called gross (oḷārika). Since, sir, due to the abandoning (pahānā) of happiness, due to the abandoning of pain (dukkha) due to the previous disappearance of gladness and sadness (somanassa-domanassānam atthagamā) this attā attains and abides in the fourth jhāna of neither-pain-nor-happiness (adukkhamasukham) and purity of mindfulness due to indifference (upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhim), [13] this attā has attained the supreme Nibbāna in this world."

Thus do some declare the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world of an existing being.

III. PHILOSOPHY

The core of the Parama-ditṭhadhamma-nibbāna philosophy mainly deals with the three types of feelings dukkha, sukha and adukkhamasukham. It is, therefore, necessary to know clearly what these concepts stand for before we commence our study of the philosophy of this religious group.

These three feelings together with pīti are all mental reactions to physical

p. 464

sensations. They are all associated with the body and thus differ from somanassa and domanassa which are purely mental in origin. The connection of pīti with the body is clear from a statement in the Dīgha Nikāya I, 73:

Gladness (pāmojja) arises within him; thus gladdened rapture (pīti) arises in him; and when he is rapturous his body becomes tranquil.

Tranquility in turn leads to sukha (physical happiness) on the basis of which mind becomes concentrated. Buddhaghosa's description of the five types of pīti [14] also supports this view. According to him khuddikā-pīti (minor rapture) is first to appear and can cause the hairs of the body to stand. Khanikāpīti (momentary rapture) is like lighting, but cannot be sustained for long. Okkantikāpīti (showering rapture) runs through the body in waves, producing a thrill but not a lasting impact; Ubbegapīti (uplifting rapture) causes levitation while pharaṇāpīti (all-pervading rapture) suffuses the whole body. Again Buddhaghosa states that pīti annihilates dukkha which suggests the physical association of dukkha (bodily pain). The Parama-ditṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins also believed in the physical association of pīti and the three feelings for they also differentiated between the three types of feelings and somanassa-domanassa. Moreover pīti is inseparably connected with sukha, and sukha is explicitly stated to be experienced through the kāya [15] in the description of the third jhāna.

The Parama-ditṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins were divided into four groups. Each of these groups identified the experience of one of the four jhānas with the attainment of

Nibbāna in this visible world. The fourth jhāna represents the highest peak of agreeable experience that can be attained by this religious sect

p. 465

It can be reasonably assumed that like the different religious groups of that time the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins also strove for the cessation of dukkha, the painful feeling.

The end of dukkha may either merely mean the absence of dukkha, or it may indicate the presence of an agreeable feeling which prevents the rise of dukkha in mind, and thus marks the cessation of any further experience of the painful feeling. As we have already pointed out, dukkha, being a feeling (vedanā), is like the other two feelings, invariably connected with the body, and the notion of " I ".^[16] So long a meditator possesses a body, he is bound to experience one feeling or the other, and in accordance with his spiritual development, will either appreciate it as the final goal or be dissatisfied with any of the feelings other than the feeling of adukkhamasukham (neither-pain-nor-happiness). Such a feeling is regarded as the highest, the best (parama) nibbāna in the world. The use of the attribute "parama" shows that the feeling recognised as Nibbāna can only stand for one type of agreeable feeling, and not refer to agreeable feelings of different types. The eradication of the false reality of "I" is neither attempted nor aspired for, as the sole aim of spiritual life is the personal enjoyment of an agreeable feeling.

Each of the four jhanic states contains two types of mental factors. The first type (e. g. sati, sampajanna etc.) represents the knower aspect of mind while the second type deals with that aspect which is to be known. The second type includes pītisukha, sukha, and adukkhamasukham which not only negate dukkha, the painful feeling, but also constitute positive, agreeable elements to be felt. Thus of all the factors in the jhanic states only these three types of feelings can be equated with the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world.

As the three feelings are co-existent with the body, one can only try not to be overwhelmed by a feeling which is either painful or unsatisfactory to him. One can even so exert oneself that these undesirable feelings do not arise in the mind. This situation finds its reflection in the use of such terms as virāga (detachment), pahāna (giving up) and upekkhā (indifference).^[17] All these terms can be used.

p. 466

only with reference to something which has not been destroyed, which may manifest itself under suitable circumstances. One can only give up what one possesses. One cannot be indifferent to or detached from what is non-existent. All these terms refer to feelings associated with the body and possessed by the attā. It is, however, possible to have full control over the moods of happiness and depression (somanassa and domanassa), and to cause their disappearance, for the factors responsible for their origin are exclusively mental. According to the Milinda Panha:

"Since the ground and condition for the arising of the feelings of bodily pain are not yet removed, therefore he may yet experience the feeling of bodily pain. Since however, the ground and condition for the arising of the feeling of mental pain are removed, therefore he can no longer experience the feeling of mental pain."[\[18\]](#)

This state of things is indicated by the use of the term "atthagama " with reference to somanassa and domanassa.[\[19\]](#)

They believed that the agreeable feelings associated with the body could be made stable through meditation. This conclusion is based on the observation that they criticise kama and the agreeable feelings in different ways. Kāma or five objects of desire are criticised on the ground that they are subject to change and destruction, and thus cause grief, depression etc. Here the criticism is based on the impermanency of the outside objects of desire. But the internal, agreeable feelings connected with the body are not criticised on the ground of impermanency; these are criticised because these are gross.[\[20\]](#)The meditator

p. 467

is attached to the enjoyment of agreeable feelings and he wants to have more intense and higher type of enjoyment through subtler feelings. But he is not worried about the possibility of the absence of a feeling which is agreeable to him. This shows that he is confident that the feeling is stable and not subject to involuntary changes. A feeling is considered gross if it adversely affects the quality of enjoyment as well as the power of the mind to enjoy. For grosser the feeling is, the greater is the agitation it causes and thus diminishes the concentration and the intensity of awareness of an object. The feeling of adukkhamasukham in the fourth jhāna is, therefore, most suitable for the enjoyment because the nature of the agreeable feeling is so neutral and subtle that it does not affect at all the mindfulness and awareness of the meditator.

The grossness of feeling, as it will be shown later, is due to the presence of vicāra and vitakka in the first jhāna, due to its being ubbillaṅkita in the second jhāna, and due to the ābhoga of mind in the third jhāna.[\[21\]](#)

The Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins believed in the notion of attā and were actually striving for the enjoyment of ego-centric pleasure. So their mindfulness and awareness were not perfect, and they failed to understand the true nature of vedana . It is also for the same reason that they failed to appreciate the role of mindfulness and awareness as a means to realise the truth. To them these mental faculties were for perfecting the quality of experience of vedanā. Moreover this led to imperfect development of morality, as is evident from their concept of akusala-dhamma.

From the above discussion it follows that the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda is a kind of Sakkāya-dīṭṭhi according to which the attā has vedanā. This religious sect was not concerned with the eternity or destructibility of attā. Their Nibbāna was the attainment by the attā of an agreeable feeling which is extremely subtle, neutral, unchangeable (i. e. not subject to involuntary change) and absolutely free from dukkha. Every human being possessed a number of souls (attā), and each of these

souls enjoyed a particular type of agreeable feeling; the most subtle of such feelings (i. e. adukkhamasukham) was worthy of being

p. 468

accepted by all the groups of the Parma-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins as the supreme nibbanana in the visible world.

IV. Comments on the jhanic formula

a) On the progression from lower to higher jhāna

In the preparatory stage an individual tries to be free from suffering (dukkha) through the enjoyment of five types of kāma (panca vatthuhi). When he has complete mastery over the kāmās with which he is abundantly provided (samappitam samangibhutam), he thinks that he has attained Nibbāna, the very opposite of dukkha. Now what is meant by kame in the present context ?

Kāma may mean either "desire" or "object of desire". In the present context kāma should be understood in the sense of "object of desire", for it is stated that when kāma undergoes change or destruction, one suffers grief, lamentation etc. Here kāma cannot mean "desire", for destruction of desire is always considered desirable as a spiritual attainment, and an asket would surely not grieve for it. So kāma means five types of desirable sense-objects. Objects of mind or dhammas are not included in the category of kāma. The Buddhists also used the term kāma in the sense of sense-objects in some suttas.[\[22\]](#)

It is to be noted that the agreeable mental state arising out of the enjoyment of five types of external objects is not called "sukha". It is not given any particular name, and is simply equated with the supreme Nibbāna as it keeps in abeyance the disagreeable mental states. Sukha is a technical term which stands for a particular type of feeling of happiness to be experienced only in meditation of the rupa sphere.

According to the informations preserved in the Brahmajālasutta, the mediator understands the disadvantages of kama because of its impermanency and the resultant unwholesome mental states of grief etc. Consequently he separates himself from the desirable sense-objects and unwholesome mental states (kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi vivicca). This sequence of happenings in the life of a meditator is instructive. It is obvious that the meditator's separation from

p. 469

kāma and akusala-dhamma is the result of his judgemental deliberations showing the disadvantages of kāma. Such deliberations, as we shall see later, are comparable to vitakka referred to in the Dvedhāvitakkasutta. These deliberations are based on the direct experience of the meditator regarding the impermanency of sense-objects, and they create aversion for the sense-objects and thus enable the meditator to get separated from them.

As already noted in the preparatory stage, the meditator experiences kāmas and the resultant painful mental states of grief etc. This is immediately followed by the statement that the meditator enters the first jhāna, the description of which includes such expressions as savitakkam and savicāram and the information about the giving up of the kāmas and the akusala-dhammas. On the basis of the account given in the preparatory stage[23]we can conclude that kāma means the five desirable sense-objects, and the akusala-dhammas refer to the unwholesome mental states (e. g. grief, lamentation etc.) one experiences due to the involuntary separation from or destruction of the kāmas. The vicāra and the vitakka, on the other hand, refer to judgemental deliberations concerning only the experience of the impermanency of the kāmas and the resultant painful mental states. The vitakka and vicāra, as we shall see later, come to an end before the attainment of the second jhāna. But it does not mean that the meditator has got rid of all types of deliberations. There are judgemental deliberations between any two states of meditation. The judgemental deliberations prefacing the attainments of the second, third and fourth jhānas are, however, not concerned with kāma, and so no longer called vitakka and vicāra.[24]Both the vitakka and vicāra, and the akusala-dhammas fall within the range of experience of an ordinary person.

These mental states are called "not good"(akusala) for they represent a situation which is just the opposite of Nibbāna, the ideal agreeable feeling. The term akusala is not moral in its implication; it merely indicates the undesirableness of a mental state that experientially runs counter to Nibbāna.

In order to critically understand the implications of the jhāna formulas it is necessary to pay attention to the following principles relevant to a jhanic state:

p. 470

- 1) Mind in concentration can know only one object at a time.
- 2) The description of four jhānas stands for four different types of mental states and include not only the characteristics connected with the act of knowing but also characteristics indicating the object to be known. For example the terms sato, sampajañño etc. refer to the knowing aspect of mind while pītisukha, sukha etc. to the objects to be known.
- 3) The characteristics of jhanic experience state are simultaneously present. It is obvious that there can be only one knowable element in the jhanic state that the meditator can be aware of during the series of moments that constitutes the duration of a jhāna. The other elements in the jhanic state belong to the aspect of knowing.

We may start with the discussion of the terms of vitakka and vicāra in the expression "savitakkam savicāram", the practice or non-practice of which is related to the attainments of the first jhāna and the second jhāna respectively. Vasubandhu[25]takes "vitakka" and "vicāra" as two types of thoughts and defines "vitakka" as a mental conversation (manojalpa) of enquiry (paryeṣako) which is characterised by either volition (cetanā) or discernment (prajñā), and constitutes the grossness of mind. Vicāra, according to him, is a mental conversation of judgement (pratyavekṣaka) characterised by either volition or discernment. This view of Vasubandhu is similar to

that of the ancient masters.[26] Thus vitakka and vicāra can appear only successively and not simultaneously. Vasubandhu, therefore, pointed out that the first jhāna has only four parts and not five parts, viz. pīti, sukha, samādhi plus vitakka or vicāra.[27]

From the point of view of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins samādhi is not of primary importance, so it is not explicitly mentioned in the jhāna formula. And we cannot simply drop either the vitakka or the vicāra; both these

p. 471

terms are well-grounded in the tradition as a part of the jhanic formula which not only originated with the parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins but also was followed by the followers of the Arupya samāpattis, the Buddha and the later Buddhists. Moreover if we accept the view of the vaibhāṣikas, it would follow that the first jhāna is attainable with the help of the gross vitakka only, and the comparatively subtle vicāra is not indispensable.

We have, therefore, to accept both the vitakka and vicāra as being associated with the first jhāna, and at the same time we have to admit that they, being successive, cannot be simultaneously present in the jhanic state. In other words they cannot be regarded as the features of the first jhāna experienced by the meditator in concentration at any given moment. So it follows that the expression "savitakkam savicāram" has to be interpreted in a way that only shows their relatedness to the first jhāna without making them an integral part of the jhāna experienced. This is possible if we take them as belonging to process leading to the jhāna, but not to the jhanic state. This suggestion is strengthened if we pay attention to the drift of the discussion on the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins as recorded in the Brahmajālasutta. Here we see that the vitakka and vicāra give rise to the separation (viveka) from kāma and akusaladhammas and this separation in its turn gives rise to first jhāna (vivekajam.....pathamajjhānam). This shows that the vitakka and vicāra become non-functional before the attainment of the first jhāna; they are not integrated into the jhanic experience, but only are related to the first jhāna through the intermediary state

p. 472

of viveka. This aspect is more explicit in the Dvedhavitakkasutta.

The immediate cause of pītisukha in the first jhāna is viveka from kāma and akusaladhamma. Concentration of mind cannot be the cause, for the first jhāna is accompanied by vitakka-vicāra. The preparatory stage is also dominated by deliberations, and not by samādhi. Therefore this jhāna is called "born of viveka" (vivekajam).

But how are we to understand the meaning of pītisukha? The term pītisukha is a Bahuvrīhi compound qualifying the expression "pathamam jhānam". But what is the relationship between its component parts "pīti" and "sukha"? Should it be interpreted as a dvanda meaning pīti and sukha? Or should it be taken to mean rapturous happiness, a karmadharaya compound? We should take note of the fact that the religious strivings of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins were solely directed

towards the realisation of an agreeable feeling which to them was the same as the supreme Nibbāna. Every formula of jhānas is a record of important spiritual achievements and the jhanic formulas are so arranged as to show the gradual progression from grosser feeling to subtler feeling. Seen from this point of view it is reasonable to conclude that the term pītisukha should represent only one kind of feeling; the pīti which is not a feeling, is not an important spiritual achievement. It is, therefore, better to take pītisukha as a karmadhāraya compound which expresses clearly the quality of sukha to be felt. The dvanda compound would be a generalised statement about sukha and would not throw any light on the precise quality of sukha. Moreover, only one knowable can be known at a time. Pītisukha as a dvanda compound would mean the simultaneous presence of two knowables implying thereby the ability of mind in concentration to know two objects at one and the same time. But this is not possible. Hence pītisukha should be taken as a karmadhāraya compound meaning "rapturous happiness".

We have seen in our discussion of "savitakka" and "savicāra" that the jhāna formula not only describes the jhānic state actually experienced but also the process leading to it. Thus it is possible to interpret the compound "pītisukha" as pīti and sukha if we could have related it to the process leading to the first jhāna. As a part of the process, the awarenesses of pīti and sukha can occur successively. But this interpretation excludes the possibility of mentioning any

p. 473

agreeable feeling as the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. Hence this interpretation is not acceptable. So we have to interpret the compound "pītisukha" as indicating a type of sukha, the quality of which has been influenced adversely by pīti. The expression "pītiyā viragā" will mean the removal of the influence of pīti over sukha.

Some meditators felt dissatisfied with the experience in first jhāna. Due to the presence of vitakka-vicāra this jhāna is considered to be olārika (gross). So the meditator calms down the vitakka-vicāra (vitakka-vicārānaṃ vyupasamā). Consequently his mind becomes more concentrated and he attains the second jhāna which is characterised by the absence of vitakka-vicāra, internal clarity (ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ) and a state of mind directed towards one object (cataso ekodibhavam). All these characteristics reveal the nature of the mental state born of concentration (samādhijam). The samādhi is incidental, and the main factor in this jhāna for the meditator is what is to be felt, viz. pītisukha or rapturous happiness. Due to the influence of samādhi, the second jhāna is more calm compared to the first jhāna, so the pītisukha causes comparatively less agitation, and should be regarded as less gross than the pītisukha of the first jhāna.

The type of sukha one experiences in the second jhāna is still mixed with pīti. The pīti, we have seen, agitates the body strongly, and consequently disturbs the mental calmness. It is because of this pīti that the mental state in the second meditation becomes merged in pīti and consequently suffers from agitation; this state is therefore called olārika (gross). So the meditator now gives up "pīti" (rapture) and enters the third jhāna and abides therein.

In the formula of the third jhāna as given in the Brahmajālasutta and other places the term "upekkhako" referring to the attā who has attained the third jhāna has been mentioned twice. "Upekkhako" means that the attā has attained upekkhā. Now why has the term upekkhako been mentioned twice ? Does it mean that "upekkhako" refers to the possession of two different mental states ? Or can "upekkhā" mean feeling here ?

In the first place we read that the attā due to detachment from rapture (pīti) dwells indifferent, mindful and discerning (pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato sampajāno). Detachment from pīti is the cause of upekkhā, and upekkhā is

p. 474

surely linked to pīti. Upekkhā merely implies one who is indifferent to pīti. It is not a feeling, it is a mental action by which no attention is paid to pīti. Upekkhā here appears to be similar to amanasikāra, a term used by the ārupyavādins in their jhāna formula.[\[28\]](#)

The jhāna formula mentions for the second time the term "upekkhako" while quoting the statement made by the Noble Ones in confirmation of the mental state in the third jhāna referred to above(yan tam ariyā ācikkhanti "upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī). In both the places upekkhako means the same thing. This conclusion is supported by the use of almost identical language in both the cases. Moreover, as the feeling of "sukha" is experienced by the attā in this jhāna, upekkhā cannot be taken as a feeling here.

The sukha is free from the influence of pīti, and, therefore, more developed and subtle in the third jhāna. Sukha is regarded as the supreme Nibbāna in the visible world by the meditator.

But the meditator does not remain satisfied for long with this experience in the third jhāna his mental concentration, mindfulness, and power of discernment have also become quite developed. These mental faculties at first enable him to enjoy the feeling of sukha more intensely, but gradually leads him to the discernment of grossness in sukha. Sukha is no longer the supreme Nibbāna for him.

What is the reason for his perception of grossness in sukha ? It is connected with the "ābhoga" of mind, the mental enjoyment. The word "ābhoga" is derived from the root √bhuj which can mean "to bend" or "to enjoy". Thus "ābhoga" implies some activity of mind in the form of paying attention in order to enjoy the feeling of sukha.[\[29\]](#) This disturbs the mental calmness and adversely affects the enjoyment of an agreeable feeling. Hence the grossness of sukha.

The first part of the fourth jhanic formula appears to summarise the spiritual

p. 475

gains achieved so far. The meditator had been able to remain free from the influence of dukkha, otherwise he would not be able to enjoy pītisukha in the first jhāna. Again it is by giving up the pure feeling of sukha he was able to experience the more subtle

feeling of adukkhamasukham in the fourth jhāna. The purely mental feelings of somanassa and domanassa have disappeared even before (pubbebbha) the giving up of sukha, and the mind need not react to these mental feelings any more. So upekkha of upekkhā-satipārisuddhi in the fourth jhāna should not be related to somanassa and domanassa. But the feeling of sukha being associated with body cannot be totally destroyed, though the meditator does not identify himself anymore with sukha and dukkha, and can disassociate himself from them. So the ability of mind to know a thing perfectly is no longer affected by the experience of dukkha and sukha. The phrase upekkhā-satipārisuddhi should thus mean either "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity" or "equanimity and purity of mindfulness. "Equanimity is here with reference to dukkha and sukha, and is not associated with somanassa and domanassa.

I have accepted the first interpretation, as it tallies with the explanation given in the Vibhaṅga. [30]Upekkhā in this case can in no way be understood as feeling. The only feeling to be experienced in the fourth jhāna is adukkhamasukham for the sake of which the comparatively grosser feeling of sukha of the third jhāna had to be given up. This is the most subtle bodily feeling that a meditator can experience. It does not hamper at all the perfect execution of the activity of mindfulness. The concept of adukkhamasukham as the supreme Nibbāna was not rejected by any group of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins.

We are now able to critically comment on the contents of a jhāna formula. The jhāna formula appears to be mnemonic statement not only about mental elements determining the quality of the mind that experiences and a mental element as an object of experience but also about the meditative technique and process leading to the attainment of a jhāna.

p. 476

b) Meditative technique

The Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins followed an identical method of meditation before and after the attainment of the first jhāna. In both the cases we read about the rejection of undesirable mental elements (e. g. kusala-dhamma, pītisukha etc.) but not about the wilful and direct cultivation of the desirable element. This will be clear when we analyse the spiritual exertions of the followers of this sect. They suffer from soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyasā when they lose the desirable objects which they were so long enjoying. This entire series of undesirable mental elements can be for the sake of convenience put under the category of the feeling of dukkha. In order to get rid of the feeling of dukkha from which they were suffering and to attain the first jhāna they only put forth efforts to get separated from the desirable objects and the resultant feeling of dukkha, but do not at all strive for the direct cultivation of the agreeable feeling of pītisukha to be enjoyed in the first jhāna. Due to the conscious rejection of kāma and akusaladhamma the feeling of pītisukha automatically arises in the mind. It appears that the expulsion of the undesirable feeling and the appearance of the desirable feeling happen almost simultaneously, for so long the body exists one must experience one or the other feeling.

But how does one get rid of the undesirable mental elements of kāma and akusaladhammas ? In the Brahmajālasutta account of the Parama-dīṭṭha-nibbānavādins we read that an undesirable mental factor gets eliminated when the meditator becomes aware of the disadvantages associated with this factor and mentally expresses them. This account seems to be incomplete. Such adverse criticism will create aversion for the said mental element. But the cultivation of the aversion only will not be able to negate the undesirable element. Intense cultivation of aversion for an element would cause the element to be constantly present in the thoughts of the meditator. Consequently the undesirable element will not recede into the background; on the contrary it would get strengthened and adversely affect the entire mental state. What is necessary is not to pay any attention to it. When the adverse criticism has weakened the attachment for the undesirable element and generated aversion for it, criticism of it should be stopped, so that thoughts are no longer directed towards it. This process, though

p. 477

not expressly stated, must have been followed by the Parama-dīṭṭha-nibbānavādins, as it is evident from their success in eliminating the harmful element. Our conclusion gains support when we take note of the fact that śramaṇa Gotama as a Bodhisattva and the other śramaṇa sects of the ārupyavādins and the ucchedavādins are explicitly stated to have followed the same method of not paying attention to the undesirable element, as is evident from the use of the term "amanasikārā " etc. in the formulas of the ārupyasamāpattis.[31]

We may conclude that the same method of eliminating the undesirable element by first creating aversion leading to the destruction of attachment for it, and then paying no attention to it was also followed in getting rid of pīti and sukha in the higher stages of meditation. Partial confirmation of our interpretation of the four jhānas can be found in the writing of the early Buddhist masters. That the confirmation is partial is to be expected. For our interpretation of the jhanic formulas is based on the philosophy of the Parama-dīṭṭha-dhamma-nibbānavādins, the original formulators of these formulas. Saṅghabhadra states that the vitakka and vicāra are two types of thought and cannot occur at the same time. The Sautrāntika teachers also point out that as the vitakka and vicāra belong to the same species, they must arise successively and not simultaneously.

They further state that vedanā and samjñā belonging to different species can exist simultaneously. It is to be noted that pīti has not been mentioned in this connection.[32]The non-mention of pīti might show that the Sautrāntikas did not accept pīti as an independent characteristic of the jhāna experienced. This is in conformity with the philosophy of the Parama-dīṭṭha-dhamma-nibbānavādins,

p. 478

that an agreeable vedana is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. In this connection we may note the statement of Vasubandhu that the four dhyānas are dominated by vedanā (vedanā-prabhāvitāni dhyānāni).

By rejecting the different lower types of feelings, and by mentioning adukkhamasukham as the highest type of feeling that has been attained, the fourth jhāna again emphasises the vedana to be the supreme Nibbāna in this world.

Moreover some confirmation of our interpretation of the non-Buddhistśramaṇa thoughts, specially regarding the meditative techniques, will be found in the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta which we will discuss next. The spiritual journey of a Parama-ditṭhadhamma- nibbānavādin in quest of an ideal happiness starting from the ordinary plain of sensual enjoyment of outside objects to the attainment of the fourth jhāna may be described as follows:

An ordinary person experiences utmost happiness while fully enjoying an abundant supply of desirable objects (kāma). But his happiness gives place to the feeling of pain when the objects undergo change and destruction. So he deliberates and comes to the decision (Vitakka and vicāra) that these objects are impermanent and ultimately lead to painful mental states (akusaladhamma) of grief, lamentation etc. Thus the meditator frees himself from the attraction of these desirable objects and stops paying any further attention to them. Consequently he gets separated from desirable objects and their painful effects, viz. the unwholesome mental states of grief etc. (akusaladhamma) and attains the first jhāna characterised by rapturous happiness (pītisukha) born of separation (viveka).^[33]It is obvious that at this moment he is no longer aware of vitakka and vicāra. When he emerges from the first jhāna he again becomes aware of vitakka and vicāra and understands that they act as hindrances to the development of mental concentration and the proper enjoyment of pītisukha. So it is vitakka and vicāra that make the first jhāna gross (olārika). This judgemental deliberation which is no longer termed vitakka-vicāra, creates

p. 479

aversion for vitakka and vicāra, takes his mind away from them, and calms down the vitakka and vicāra. Consequently his concentration develops and he attains the second jhāna of pītisukha of a subtler type born of concentration (samādhijam pītisukhaṃ dutiyyajhanaṃ) which is to him the highest nibbāna attainable in this world. In his case the development of samādhi is incidental, and it finds mention in the formula only because it gives rise to a subtler type of pītisukha.

Arising from the second jhāna he perceives the grossness of the mental state due to the existence of pīti which agitates the mind. So he again practices judgemental deliberations the contents of which deal with the grossness of the second jhāna due to the existence of pīti. As in the case of judgemental deliberation regarding vitakka-vicāra, here also the existence of deliberations is not explicitly acknowledged in the formula, but the role it plays can be inferred from the phrase "pītiyā virāgā" which draws our attention to the meditative process leading to the detachment from pīti. Consequently in the third jhāna he experiences pure sukha undisturbed by the influence of pīti. In this state sukha stands for Nibbāna.

Emerging from the third jhāna the meditator, however, notices the grossness

p. 480

of mind due to the influence of sukha on mind which bends towards and intensely enjoys the feeling of sukha. So Sukha is also given up by following the same method of first generating aversion for sukha through deliberations and then withdrawing attention from it. The contents of judgemental deliberations in this case comprise the grossness of jhāna due to the adverse effects of sukha.

It is to be noted that the undesirable mental elements are without exception discarded in a state of non-absorption in between the two meditative states. For example the vitakka and vicāra are given up in between the first jhāna and the second jhāna, pīti in between the second jhāna and the third jhāna, and sukha in between the third jhāna and the fourth jhāna.

p. 481

論四禪——喬達摩菩薩如何改定此一佛教前已有的法門 (上)

穆克紀

中華佛學研究所專任客座教授

提要

佛教創立之前，印度的沙門早已用了修行法門。喬達摩菩薩如何改定其中至上現法涅槃說所提出的四色禪論，乃是本文探討的主題。此所刊上篇，旨在清楚地說明何為四色禪。

固定描述四禪的文字中，不僅談到不同境界的心所，且更論及如何達到禪的境界。佛典給這些文字的詮釋，年代都相當晚，而且反映當時的佛教思想，並不是代表至上現法涅槃說的見解。

不過，要真正瞭解四禪的定義，則必須首先明瞭傳出四禪論的至上現法涅槃說，其思想究竟為何。因此，本文嘗試此方面的擬構，指出至上現法涅槃說修行的唯一目的不在覺悟，而在經歷「喜」、「樂」等愉快的感受。「涅槃」所指的只是自在地享受快樂；提出四禪的修持法，也只不過是這種思想的結果。因此本文試就其思想瞭解固定描述四禪的文字和「捨」、「樂」、「尋」、「伺」等名相的真正意義，並期擬構至上現法涅槃說的修行法門。

如此，本篇為下篇的主題——喬達摩菩薩如何改定沙門的法門——而打基礎。

[1] The Dvedhavitakkasutta (Majjhima Nikāya. Vol. I. P. 114ff. Ed. V. Trencker, P.T. S. 1979) bears testimony to the fact of Gotama's practising and modifying the system of four rūpa jhānas which appears to have been originally developed by the pre-Buddhist Śramāṇs sect of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins.

[2] Digha Nikāya, Vol. I. pp. 36~38

[3] See, ibid. pp. 34~35, pp. 183ff. Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. I. pp. 33, 410, 454~55; Dhammasaṅgāṇi (PTS. ED. E. Muller,19) pp. 55ff. etc.

[4] See pp. 476~477 of the present article, also note no. 31.

[5] See page 463 of the present article.

[6] Also see vasubandhu on manopavicāra, dharmopavicāra (Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya, ED. P. Pradhan, Patna, 1967, pp.146~49) in their relation to the Ārūpyadhātu; H. Guna-ratana, The Path of Serenity and Insight (Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1985) p. 119.

[7] Note the following expression in the first Ārūpya meditation : ayam attā sabbaso rūpasannānam samatikkamā paṭiḥhasannānam atthagamā nānattasannānam amanasikārā "Ananto ākāso" ti "ākāsanancāyatanūpago".(Digha Nikāya, I, p. 34).

[8] Yato.....ayam attā pañcahi kāmagaṇehi samappito samaṅgibhūto paricāreti ettavata.....ayam attā parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-nibbānappatto hoti (D. Nikāya I, p.36).

[9] kāmā hi bho aniccā dukkhā viparinamadhammā, tesam vipariṇāmannathā-bhāvā upapajjanti soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā. Yatoayam attā vivicca'eva kāmehi vivicca akusaladhammehi..... paṭṭhamajjhānam upasamajja viharati....(D. Nikāya Vol. I. pp. 36~37).

[10] Ekodi of ekodibhāva was first explained by S. Levi as ekoti (W.Geiger, A Pali Grammar, PTS 1994, 38. 3). The Nibandhana of the Arthavini'scaya-sūtra supports this explanation (see, N. H. Samtani (ed.) Arthaviniscaya-sutra and Its Commentary Nibandhana, patna, 1971, p. 182). The relevant passage runs as follows: ekaśabdo nanyavācī, ūtir gatiḥ, ekā sā ūtiśceti ekotiḥ, ekoter bhāvaḥ ekotībhāvaḥ, cetasa ekā gatir ālambanety arthaḥ

The word "eka", one, single, means "not anything else". ūti Signifies movement, the act of going.' One movement (ekoti) means the movement (sāgati) is unidirectional (ekā). The state of unidirectional movement is "ekotībhāvaḥ." The implication (artha) of one-movement is one object of attention (ālambana).

So "cetaso ekodibhava" means a state of mind directed towards one single object. (The ekodibhāve of the third jhāna develops into perfect mindfulness of the fourth jhāna) As A. Wayman points out, the Śrāvakabhūmi while speaking of nine grades of mental concentration makes it clear that samādhi marks the highest state of mental concentration and is immediately preceded by ekotībhāva.From the point of view of mental concentration ekotībhāva is less developed than samādhi (Kamaleshwar Nath

Mishra (ed.). Aspects of Buddhist Sanskrit, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993. p. 478). It may be noted here that both the Dhammasaṅgaṇi (Ed. Edward Muller, PTS, 1978, p. 21) and the Abhidharma-Kośabhāṣyā of Vasubandhu (Ed. P. Pradhan, K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1967, p. 54) equate samādhi with "cittasya ekāgratā".

[11] The expression "ubbillāvitattam" should mean a "state of agitation". It is an abstract noun made out of the causative past participle "ubbillavita" of the verbal root *vell* with the prefix "ud". The following rules should be taken into consideration in understanding the term: 1) Frequently "e" is shortened to "i" before double consonants (Geiger, Pali Grammar, 15.1); 2) Voicing of "p" to "v" is common in Pali (Geiger, *ibid.* 38.5). So ubbillāpita seems to be the original form of ubbillāvita. 3) *Dv* becomes *bb* through *vv* by progressive assimilation.

[12] See p. 474 of the present article for the discussion of the term ābhoga; also note that Vasubandhu (*ibid.* p. 54) explains the act of paying attention as enjoyment of mind: manaskāraścetasā ābhogaḥ.

[13] See pp. 474~475 of the present article.

[14] Henepola Gunaratana, *ibid.* pp. 61 ~ 62; Visuddhimagga (Ed. Henry Clarke Warren. Revised by Dhammananda Kosambi, Harvard University press, 1950) p.117.

[15] kāya means both body and the mental states in Buddhist scriptures. Perhaps both these meanings are implied in the present context. The Parama-dīṭṭhadhammanibbānavādins most probably used the expression "kāyena" in order to show the association of sukha with body.

[16] See p. 463 of the present article; Dīgha Nikāya , Voll. II, p. 67 (PTS, London 1982); Chung Hwa Fo Hsueh Hsueh Pao (No.6, July, 1993) p.416~17

[17] Dīgha Nikāya, Vol.I, p. 37; also see pp. 460~463 of the present article.

[18] See p. 463 of the present article; Dīgha Nikāya, I, P. 37

[19] See pp. 460~463 of the present article; also note the following statements in the text: *kāmā hi bho anicca, or yad eva tattha vitakkitaṃ vicaritaṃ etena etaṃ olārikam, or yad eva tattha pītigat ṃ cetaso ubbillā-vitattam etena etaṃ olārikam, or yad eva tattha sukham iti cetaso ābhogo etena etaṃ olārikam* (Dīgha Nikāya, Vol. I. pp.36~37).

[20] See pp. 478~480 of the present article; see note no.19

[21] Vekhanassasutta (Majjhima Nikāya), II, pp. 42~43.

[22] Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. I, pp. 114ff.

[23] See pp. 458 of the present article; Dīgha Nikāya, I, P. 36

[24] Such mental deliberations are called "adhicitta", higher thoughts.

[25] Vasubandhu in the Prakaraṇapāda states: vitarkaḥ katamaḥ / paryeṣako manojalpaś cetanāprajñāviśeṣaḥ / yā cittsyaudārikatā // vicāraḥ katamaḥ / pratyavekṣako manojalpaś cetanāprajñāviśeṣaḥ / ya cittsyasūkṣmatā //Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam, Louis de La Valle poussin, English translation Vol. 1, by Leo M. Pruden (California, 1968) pp. 339~40, Note no. 171.

[26] The ancient masters say: "What is vitarka ? A mental conversation (manojalpa) of enquiry (paryeṣaka) wich has for its support volition (centanā) or the speculative consciousness depending on whether it does or does not contain deduction (abhyūha). This is the grosser state of mind. What is vicāra ? A mental conversation of appreciation, of judgement (paryavekṣaka) which has for its support volition....."Acoording to this theory vitarka and vicāra constitute two almost identical psychological complexes: they differ in that the first includes "inquiry" and the second " judgement". (Leo M. Pruden, ibid. p.339, Note no. 171.)

[27] Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam (P. Pradhan (ed.), pp.60 ~ 61 under the sutra "vitarka-cārāvaudayasukṣmate".

[28] For reference, see Note nos 3.

[29] Cf. Manaskara is the modification (ābhoga) of mind; in other words, "to bend" or "to apply" the mind towards an object. (Manaskāra is explained as manasaḥ karaḥ or manaḥ karoty āvarjayati), see, Leo M. Pruden, ibid. p. 190.

[30] Vibhaṅga (Rangoon, Burma, Buddhasasana Samiti, 1961) p. 271; H. Gunaratana, ibid. p. 99.

[31] The non-Buddhist śramaṇa sects were following a method of comprehending the demerits of the object of attraction in order to get rid of the attachment for it, and paying no attention to it anymore. None of these sects have, however, explicitly mentioned both these steps of the meditative process. While the Parama-dīṭṭhandhamma-nibbānavādins give details only about the deliberations regarding the demerits of the said object, others are explicit about the next step viz. withdrawal of attention from the object no longer desired (note such expressions as amanasikārā, samatikkamā, and atthagamā in the meditation formulas of the ārupya-samapattis.)

[32] For the discussion in this para, see note no. 170 (p.339) of the English translation of the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, Vol. I; also see the reference given in the note no. 27 of the present article.

[33] The accounts given about the meditative techniques followed by the non-Buddhistśramaṇa sects make it clear that any agreeable mental element automatically arieses when one eliminates the disagreeable mental element. This method was successfully followed by these sects in order to get rid of any disagreeably vedanā or saññā. But such accounts run counter to the Law of Pratītya-samutpāda which teaches that "A" existing "B" come into existence. The becoming of "B" is dependent on the prior existence of "A". With the disappearance of "A" "B" will also cease to exist. The

non-existence of anything — actual or nctional — cannot be the determining cause for the becoming of something. For example, the creation of a type of pītisukha has been made to be dependent on the disappearance of kāma and akusaladhammas while a more subtle type of pītisukha is generated by the calming down of vitakka and vicāra. Again the arising of pure sukha and the feeling of adukkhamasukham are dependent on the detachment from pīti and the giving up of sukha respectively. It is obvious that the formulas of the four rūpa jhānas were created by those who had no idea of the Law of Pratītya samudpāda.