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Gotama Becomes the Buddha— Reconstruction of the Nikāya Account of the Path

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Summary

During the time of the Buddha and before him the ultimate spiritual goal was to realize nibbāna in this life. Gotama also entered the houseless state to attain this goal. We have tried to reconstruct an outline of the entire spiritual journey of Gotama from isolated accounts scattered in the Nikāyas. Only those informations which can be reasonably accepted as historical and shown to have positively contributed to the attainment of the final goal have been studied in the present article.

It appears that in an early phase of his spiritual journey Gotama controlled and cultivated his thoughts in such a way that the unwholesome thoughts ceased to arise while the wholesome thoughts continued to arise spontaneously. It is this type of mind—and not any god's pleading with him—that prompted him to preach the dhamma out of compassion for the suffering humanity.

Nibbāna was accepted to be absolutely calm. One of the methods to develop mental calmness was to practice the four jhānas. Gotama also attained these jhānas and went beyond them moreover he remained unaffected by the mental state that arose after the 4th jhāna. Consequently he was free from the feelings of dukkha, sukha and adukkham-asukham, and developed greatly the calmness, mindfulness and concentration of mind. He ceased to take delight in and cling to any object. Thus he attained a special mental state which was perfectly concentrated, mindful and characterised by the absence of all these three feelings.

It is noteworthy that this mental state came into existence without being intended. Gotama's wilful exertions were all directed only to eliminate agitative elements, and

not to create a new mental state. Moreover as this mental state did

p. 330 ↗

not take delight in any object, it was free from all subjective influences in its functioning. Thus this was a unique mental state that had not got rid of the illusory 'I' and was devoid of wisdom regarding the nature of clinging etc., and yet was capable of absolutely objective observation. Observation made by this mental state was superior to any scientific observation which is always mixed up with the observer.

With this special mental state Gotama realized 'bodhi', that is the wisdom about the destruction of the defilements (āsava, āśrava) , and the two other knowledges. This wisdom showed that one can transcend the conditioned and thus enabled him to deduce the existence of the unconditioned, the nibbāna. It destroyed the illusory 'I' and thus permanently uprooted clinging. A person who has realized 'bodhi' merges into nibbāna after the dissolution of the body.

But the attainment of bodhi did not mark the end of Gotama's spiritual journey. Bodhi-mind was not utterly calm. He had yet no experience of nibbāna which is the supremely peaceful state. Moreover the attainment of 'bodhi' was not in conformity with the current śramaṇa tradition which valued only a mental state of calmness. Why, then, Gotama attained 'bodhi' ? Without 'bodhi' the illusion of 'I' is not destroyed, so there always remains the possibility of falling away from a mental state. Moreover without bodhi nibbāna in this life cannot be attained. So Gotama first realized 'bodhi' and then went for the experience of nibbāna.

Nibbāna is unconditioned and permanent. It is not possible to experience nibbāna as such , for anything mental is conditioned and impermanent. But the quality of utter calmness which is logically attributed to nibbāna can be experienced when all the saṃskāras (formative actions) cease and subside. Gotama attained this state with the realization of the cessation of perception and feeling (saññā-vedayita-nirodha) which is the same as the experience of nibbāna in this life. Gotama became the Tathāgata.

Keywords: 1.special mental state 2.bodhi 3.nibbāna

The Nikāyas contain several accounts[1] of various spiritual practices that Gotama followed while wayfaring towards the realisation of the nibbāna in this world. It is not the purpose of this article to collect all these practices into an elaborate compilation. We propose to prepare a critical and coherent account of those practices, and the resultant spiritual states that gradually progressed towards the attainment of the final goal. We have, therefore, only studied those traditions that can be accepted as historical, and decisively contributed to the realisation of bodhi and nibbāna.

While preparing such an account we find that the tradition that stands out prominently and deserves to be considered historical is the account of the four jhānas as practised by Gotama. All the suttas dealing with the early spiritual activities of Gotama[2] agree that he practised the four jhānas. These jhānas also form a part of the teachings of the Buddha as given in the Nikāyas. Moreover many of the disciples of the Buddha are known to have practised the four jhānas. It is evident from all these accounts that the four jhānas were practised by Gotama and others as a part of a larger system of spiritual training leading to bodhi and nibbāna.

Spiritual activities before the practice of the four jhānas

It is certain that Gotama did not practise the four jhānas immediately after becoming a samana. He first practised extreme physical asceticism and rejected it as useless.[3] His efforts at purification of mind must have followed his rejection of asceticism and gradually led to the practice of the four jhānas.

This new approach to the spiritual life viz. the purification of mind can be reconstructed from three different sources: i) the first jhāna formula, [4] ii) the Brahmajāla-sutta account of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda[5] and

iii) the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta.[6]

The phrase ‘kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi vivicca’ found both in the original jhāna formula of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda and in the modified jhāna formula followed by Gotama[7] shows that being separated from kāma and akusala-dhamma Gotama attained the first jhāna. But the first jhāna formula does not indicate what is precisely meant by kāma and akusala-dhamma, nor does it explain how Gotama got separated from kāma and akusala-dhamma.

We can throw light on these problems with the help of the other two sources mentioned above. Of these the Brahmajāla-sutta has been studied in detail in an article published before to which we may refer whenever necessary.[8] The Dvedhāvitakka-sutta tells us more about the methods followed by Gotama in order to renounce the unwholesome mental states like kāma etc. and ensure that these elements do not occur again in mind.[9] But this sutta seems to differ from the Brahmajāla-sutta account in its interpretation of some of the technical terms in the first

jhāna formula. In order to determine the relative merits of the two accounts as well as to understand the account of the jhānas better we first give an analysis of the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta which precedes the description of the four jhānas.

a) Analysis of the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta

1) Gotama noticed that he had two types of thoughts: unwholesome thoughts i.e. kāma (desire) , byāpāda (malevolence) , and vihiṃsā (violence) , and wholesome thoughts i.e. nekkhamma (renunciation) abyāpāda (benevolence) and avihimsā (compassion) .[\[10\]](#)

p. 333

- 2) Gotama became conscious of each of these unwholesome thoughts separately whenever such a thought had arisen.
- 3) Gotama adversely criticised each of these thoughts separately, and thus generated aversion for such thoughts.
- 4) Consequently the unwholesome thoughts did not arise any more. The adverse criticism naturally came to an end.
- 5) Gotama also paid attention to each of the wholesome thoughts whenever it arose and cultivated it by continuously appreciating it.
- 6) Gotama stopped the continuous appreciation of the wholesome thoughts as it made him tired and impaired his concentration.
- 7) It is to be noted that Gotama did not take any step against the arising of the wholesome thoughts. So they continued to arise without any special effort on his part.
- 8) Gotama became only properly mindful of dhamma (thought) as dhamma. He did not pay attention to the goodness of the dhamma.

Such mindfulness leads to bodhi and nibbāna as it has been stated in the Satipatṭhāna-sutta.[\[11\]](#)

b) Some observations on the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta

This part of the sutta has been given as a prelude to the four jhānas. But it is obvious from our analysis that the spiritual practices taught in this part actually leads to liberation; so it cannot be taken as a prelude to the four jhānas. The first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta appears to have originally constituted an independent sutta and contained the Buddha's teachings regarding the manipulation of two types of thoughts for attaining the supreme mindfulness (sati)

p. 334

that liberates. [\[12\]](#) To this was added the stock piece of teaching beginning with the four jhānas and ending with the three vijjās (knowledges) . The reason for this addition may be due to the fact that the instructions contained in the first part, as we shall see later, completely covers the meditative methods necessary for the practice of the four jhānas as well as for the higher spiritual achievements that follow the four

jhānas. Actually the methods given here are more elaborate and suitable than those given in the Brahmajāla-sutta for guiding the practice of the four jhānas.

Although the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta ends with a depiction of a mental state much higher than the first jhāna, it surely contains some genuine informations that belong to a period prior to the attainment of the first jhāna by Gotama. It is in the fitness of things that Gotama would try to be free from thoughts that are not virtuous and cultivate virtuous thoughts. While studying the first jhāna we will see that Gotama actually did so.

There is also no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta tradition that Gotama got rid of the thoughts of malevolence and violence, and later developed the thoughts of benevolence and compassion, and allowed them to rise in mind spontaneously. The elements of benevolence and compassion henceforth always formed a part of the mental state of Gotama. It is the presence of such wholesome thoughts—and not any god's pleading with him—that prompted the Buddha to preach the true law out of compassion for the suffering humanity.

c) Meaning of kāma and akusala-dhamma

We have already pointed out that Gotama attained the first jhāna after he had given up kāma and akusaladhamma. What do these two terms mean in the present context? According to the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda kāma means five objects of desire while the akusala-dhammas stand for the

p. 335

unwholesome mental elements of grief, lamentation, pain, melancholy and despair (soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā) .[13] But interpreted in the light of the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta kāma should mean desire and the akusala-dhammas should stand for the thoughts of desire (kamavitakka) , malevolence (byāpādavitakka) and violence (vihimsāvitakka) .[14] Which of these two traditions are applicable to the first jhāna formula ?

The phrase 'having separated from kāma and having separated from akusala-dhammas' (kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi vivicca) in the first jhāna formula followed by Gotama shows that kāma and akusala-dhamma belong to different categories. In the Brahmajāla-sutta account of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda also kāma and akusala-dhamma belong to different categories. But the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta takes kāma in the sense of desire, and kāma together with byāpāda and vihiṃsā constitute one category. So these two terms, viz. kāma and akusala-dhamma, should be interpreted in the light of the Brahmajāla-sutta tradition.

The jhāna formula followed by Gotama does not take note of the terms attā and nibbāna mentioned in the original formula. This shows that Gotama, unlike the first group of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavāda, did not accept the view that an attā realises nibbāna when it attains the first jhāna. Otherwise these two versions of the formula are identical. It is apparent that Gotama, if necessary, was prepared to change the original version, or to accept a version that is different from the original

one. Conversely we can hold that Gotama agreed with that part of the original formula which he preserved unaltered. As the phrase ‘kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi vivicca’ of the original formula was not changed by Gotama, we can suggest Gotama also accepted the original interpretation of these terms, viz. kāma meant desirable object and akusala-dhammas indicated soka, parideva etc. which belonged to the category of dukkha.

This conclusion is supported by the jhāna formulas themselves. The four jhāna formulas followed by Gotama and others were concerned with the manipulation of agitative mental elements that disturb the mind. To promote

p. 336

mental calmness these formulas, therefore, guard against pleasant and unpleasant feelings, pleasant sensation, deliberations. Thus the akusala-dhammas, generally speaking, signify certain mental elements that disturb the calmness of mind. Such being the case the mention of kāma as distinct from akusala-dhamma can be justified only if we take kāma in the sense of desirable object.

This conclusion would also support the idea that Gotama accepted the earlier tradition that the loss of kāma causes the unwholesome mental states of grief, lamentation etc.

d) Separation from kāma and akusala-dhamma

The fact that Gotama felt grief, pain etc. at the loss of desirable objects (kāma) shows that he was attached to kāma.[15] So the giving up of kāma indicates not only physical separation but also mental detachment from it. One has to give up desire for kāma. If one is not attached to a desirable object, one cannot feel grief etc. at the loss of it. So with the freedom from attachment to kāma, one also becomes free from the akusala-dhammas.

But how did Gotama give up kāma? The Brahmajāla-sutta only speaks of the unwholesome mental elements that arise due to the loss of kāma but does not explicitly speak of criticising and giving up kāma on this ground. The first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta, on the other hand, offers a solution to this problem. This text informs us that one has to stop the arising of the thought of desire by adversely criticising it everytime it arises in mind. Next he cultivates the opposite thought of renunciation (nekkhamma-vitakka) in order to ensure that the mind remains free from the thoughts of desire and always reacts to a desirable object with thoughts of renunciation. It is this method that Gotama applied to get rid of kāma before attaining the first jhāna.[16] One may object to this opinion by pointing out that kāma in the jhāna formula means desirable object and not desire. So the method taught in the sutta should not be applied to the jhāna formula. But this objection is not tenable, for, as we have seen, the painful reactions to the loss of a desirable object implies the presence of desire for such

p. 337

an object. The fact is that even after the physical separation from desirable objects, desire for such objects may still linger in mind for such objects. Real separation from an object means both physical separation and mental detachment.

We may be, therefore, justified in surmising that Gotama first adversely criticised the possession of and attachment to desirable objects and later when all thoughts of desire for such objects have ceased to arise in his mind, he practised appreciative deliberations regarding the renunciation of these objects. This he did as a safeguard against the future arising of any thought of desire for an object. We will see later that this interpretation will help us to understand the presence of 'vitakka-vicāra' in the first jhāna.

Why did Gotama strive for the attainment of the mental state known as the first jhāna? The pre-jhānic mental state was fraught with desire for objects and afflicted with pain while the first jhāna is characterised by pīti (joy) and sukha (happiness). But it would be wrong to conclude that Gotama gave up the pre-jhānic mental state for it was painful and cultivated the mental state of the first jhāna for it was pleasant. We will show later that Gotama was practising the four jhānas in order to be free from mental agitations mental, and he did not intentionally develop pīti and sukha of the first jhāna.

First jhāna

With the giving up of the desirable objects and unwholesome mental elements like dukkha etc. Gotama attained the new mental state of first jhāna which was accompanied by vitakka and vicāra (initial and sustained thoughts of appreciation about renunciation) and characterised by pīti (joy) and sukha (happiness). He abided in the first jhāna.[\[17\]](#)

a) Vitakka and Vicāra

Gotama adversely criticised kaama in order to give up kāma and akusala-dhammas. The contents of the adverse criticism surely dealt with the

p. 338

impermanency of kāma (desirable object) and the pain that ensued at the loss of kāma. This criticism falls within the mental range of an ordinary person, and it comes to an end when one gets separated from kāma. But the mental state of the first jhāna comes into existence only after the se

paration from kāma and akusal-dhammas has been effected; it, therefore, cannot be the mental state of an ordinary person. The vitakka and vicāra of the first jhāna cannot be the same as the adverse criticism made by an ordinary person against kāma. What then could be the contents of vitakka and vicaara of the first jhāna?

The meditative method taught in the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta about the elimination of the thoughts of desire (kāma-vitakka) provides a good solution to this problem. We

are justified in applying this method to the present problem, for, as already pointed out, the giving up a desirable object (kāma) at the same time means the giving up the thoughts of desire (kāma-vitakka) for that object. According to this sutta[18] Gotama not only stopped the adverse criticism of kāmavitakka when such thoughts ceased to arise, he also cultivated the opposite thought of renunciation by constantly practising appreciative deliberations regarding it. The vitakka and vicāra should refer to such appreciative deliberations concerning renunciation.

The contents of such a deliberation also can be surmised. Gotama, like the samanās (recluses) of his time, was trying to realise nibbāna in this world, as it has been stated in the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta etc. So his deliberations should have been connected with the attainment of nibbāna. But unlike this sutta, his deliberations most probably were not connected with prajñā, for in those days the samanās were not interested in prajñā (wisdom), and Gotama had not yet any knowledge of the decisive role played by prajñā in the attainment of nibbāna. The presence of the terms vitakka and vicāra in the original first jhāna formula shows that the Parama-ditṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins, the originators of this formula also knew about this method of getting rid of kāma and akusala-dhamma.

Vasubandhu[19] pointed out that vitakka and vicāra cannot occur

p. 339

simultaneously but must occur successively. One can surmise that the first jhāna formula originally had either vitakka or vicāra. But the Nikāyas always record this formula including both vitakka and vicāra. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this tradition. This helps us to understand the concept of jhāna in that early period. The different mental elements constituting a jhāna occur in a sequence. Thus the jhāna formula is not a description of a mental state at a given moment but is a record of a series of reactions that takes place over a certain period of time whenever this particular mental state comes into contact with a desirable object.

b) Arising of pīti and sukha

This mental state is also characterised by pīti and sukha according to the formula which speaks of ‘vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamajhānaṃ’. This phrase is translated in two different ways. It is either translated as ‘the first jhāna characterised by pīti and sukha born of seclusion’ or as ‘the first jhāna born of seclusion and characterised by pīti and sukha.’ I accept the second translation, for in the text each of the two compounds (i.e. vivekajaṃ and pītisukhaṃ) is separately qualifying the first jhāna (paṭha-majhānaṃ). The first translation to be correct the phrase should have contained a single compound consisting of ‘vivekaja’ and ‘pītisukha’.

The first jhāna formula also makes it clear that the arising of ‘pīti’ and ‘sukha’ is not intended. It is only the ‘kāma’ that Gotama adversely criticised. The criticism centered round the impermanency of ‘kāma’ and the ‘akusala-dhammas’. When he became free from ‘kāma’, the ‘akusala-dhammas’ automatically stopped arising. The akusala-dhammas consisting of pain, grief etc. belongs, in the present context, to the category of ‘dukkha’. As these painful feelings were excluded from the mind,

‘pīti’ and ‘sukha’ spontaneously arose in the mind of Gotama. In this context we may refer to a statement in the Cuḷavedalla-sutta that the painful feeling is painful when it persists and pleasant when it changes.[20] Sukha is the relief which one feels when one becomes free from the painful feeling. Thus the new mental state was, to a great extent, objectively created.

p. 340

To sum up, Gotama attained the mental state of first jhāna which was calmer being free of desire for objects, pain etc., accompanied by deliberations regarding the advantages of renunciation, and containing pīti and sukha.

This is the mental state in which Gotama abided (viharati) . The fact that he abided in this state shows that he remained indifferent while in this state. Otherwise he would have either gone beyond to a higher state or fallen down to the mental state of an ordinary person.[21]

Second jhāna

Gotama stayed in the first jhāna for some time after which he must have felt dissatisfied with the agitative elements present in this mental state and decided to get rid of them.

From the second jhāna formula we know that Gotama calmed down the vitakka and vicāra (i.e. initial and sustained thoughts of appreciation of renunciation) and attained and abided in the second jhāna which had internal clarity (ajjhataṃ sampāsadanam) , and was a state of mind directed towards one object (ekodibhāva) ,[22] without vitakka and vicāra, born of concentration and

p. 341

possessed of pīti and sukha. Gotama could abide in the second jhāna due to the practice of upekkhā or indifference to pīti.

a) Calming down of Vitakka and Vicāra

Gotama gradually became accustomed to the state of the first jhāna and found the mental deliberations of vitakka and vicāra disturbing. The vitakka and vicāra, as we have seen, refer to the appreciative deliberations regarding renunciation. Such deliberations are, according to the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta, indicative of the stopping of the opposite thought of desire, and conducive to the realisation of nibana. Why then Gotama had to calm down vitakka and vicāra ? And how did he do this ?

The Brahmajāla-sutta implies that Gotama rejected the first jhāna for it was gross (olaarika) due to the agitation caused by the vitakka and vicāra. On the other hand the first part of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta states that the continuous cultivation of such appreciative deliberations was stopped because it made the mind tired and impaired the concentration. These two statements are not contradictory for when the mind is agitated concentration suffers. But the shift in the emphasis should be noted.

While concentration is specially valuable for gaining knowledge, lack of agitation is associated with nibbāna. So it is reasonable to surmise that in the beginning of his spiritual journey Gotama followed the earlier samana tradition whose ultimate goal was calmness, and not knowledge. The emphasis on concentration, on the other hand, reflects the teachings of the Buddha to his disciples concerning the attainment of knowledge.

We, therefore, can accept the Brahmajāla-sutta tradition that Gotama stopped vitakka and vicāra for the immediate reduction of mental agitation. This sutta also shows that Gotama stopped the recurrence of an undesirable mental element by adversely criticising it. So Gotama must have calmed down vitakka and vicāra by adversely criticising them on the ground that such deliberations were gross (olārika) and agitated the mind. Only to a certain extent the practice of vitakka and vicāra is conducive to the attainment of nibbāna. When that limit is reached, it must be stopped.

It should be noted that only further cultivation of the thought of nekkhamma (renunciation) was stopped, but Gotama did not take any step against the

p. 342

spontaneous arising of the thoughts of renunciation.[23]

b) Samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānam

This description of the second jhāna has also been interpreted in two different ways. One interpretation is to take ‘samādhijaṃ’ as qualifying ‘pītisukham’ and to translate the phrase as ‘the second jhāna characterised by pīti and sukha born of concentration’. The holders of this interpretation has, as we have already noted, also translated the phrase ‘vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamajjhānam’ of the first jhāna formula in the same way. It is to be noted that there is nothing in the jhāna formulas to suggest that the pīti and sukha of the first jhāna were first rejected and then replaced by the pīti and sukha of the second jhāna. Thus according to this interpretation the same pīti and sukha can originate from two different causes, viveka (separation) or samādhi (concentration) , which is not possible. Again the Nikāyas do not recognise samādhi as the cause of pīti and sukha.[24] The obvious reason, however, for rejecting the first interpretation and accepting the other interpretation (viz. the second jhāna is born of concentration and characterised by pīti and sukha) is that grammatically samādhijaṃ and pītisukham are to be taken as two different characteristics of the second jhāna.[25]

As Gotama did not adversely criticise the pīti and sukha of the first jhāna we can conclude that the same elements of pīti and sukha also contributed to the formation of the mental state of the second jhāna.

c) Mental clarity and concentration

In the mental state of the second jhāna the elements of mental clarity and concentration become developed enough to deserve explicit mention for the first time.

The second jhāna formula is replete with terms indicative of absence of mental agitation (avitakkam and avicāram) , internal clarity (ajjhattam sampasādanam) , and concentration (samādhijam, ekodibhāvam) . But the real aim

p. 343

of the practice of jhāna becomes clear from the step Gotama undertook to go beyond the first jhāna, viz. to calm down (upasama) the vitakka and vicāra which agitate the mind. So it is clear that he was trying to be free from agitative elements. But it would be wrong to hold that he was deliberately striving after mental clarity or calmness. Theoretically he knew that the ultimate aim was to attain perfect mental calmness, but this knowledge was not allowed to create any desire for such a goal. Psychologically he remained free from this desire. His mindfulness was solely devoted to the present task of eliminating mental agitations. This problem has been discussed later. The vitakka and vicāra were brought to an end; but before they were stopped they had already created in mind a clear idea about the goal. This mental clarity together with the stopping of the vitakka and vicāra has first made the mind unidirectional and then concentrated. The mental state of the second jhāna is, therefore, called born of concentration (samādhijam) .

d) Intentional development of some mental elements

On the basis of what has been discussed in the previous section (c) we can hold that the freedom from vitakka and vicāra (avitakkam, avicāram) were intentionally developed. But the appearance of the internal clarity, and the continuation of pīti and sukha in the second jhāna were incidental. Actually Gotama afterwards exerted himself to be free from the disturbing influence of pīti and sukha.

Third jhāna

According to the third jhāna formula Gotama, due to his aversion to pīti (joy) , was able to attain a higher mental state in which he remained indifferent (upekkhako) , mindful (sato) and properly alert (sampajāno) . Moreover he was able to experience happiness due to body (kāyena sukhaṃ paṭisamvedeti) .[26]

a) Giving up of Pīti

On the basis of the Brahmajāla-sutta account of the Parama-dīṭṭhadhamma-

p. 344

nibbānavāda we can conclude that Gotama became averse to pīti because it was gross. But wherein lies the grossness of pīti ? We know that pīti is associated with strong physical sensation[27] and intense agitation of mind (cetaso ubbilāvitattam) .[28] The pīti causes great agitation; it is, therefore, called gross.

As the influence of pīti ran counter to his avowed goal of mental calmness, Gotama became free from its influence by developing aversion to it through adverse criticism, the contents of which must have dealt with pīti's grossness, and contrariness to nibbāna.

When Gotama became free from the agitative influence of pīti, his body, to that extent, became tranquil. Consequently he felt still more happy.

Therefore it is said in the jhāna formula that a meditator who attains the third jhāna feels happy due to his body. This tradition is partially supported by the Sāmaññaphala-sutta [29] which states that one feels happy due to a tranquil body.

The third jhāna when compared with the first jhāna presents a problem. First, let us understand the first jhāna formula in more details in the light of the Sāmaññaphala-sutta tradition which is more elaborate than the first jhāna formula, but in conformity with it. The sutta gives a series of factors of which the preceding one is always the cause of the following one.[30] The tradition may be presented as follows:

Disappearance of five hindrances --- gladness --- joy (pīti) --- tranquility of the body --- happiness (sukha) .

The traditionally fixed version of the first jhāna runs as follows:

p. 345

Giving up of kāma and akusala-dhammas --- judgemental deliberations (i.e. vitakka and vicāra) --- pīti --- sukha.

The absence of vitakka and vicāra in the Sāmaññaphala-sutta tradition does not mean any real difference. Vitakka and vicāra are implied in this tradition. In the first jhāna the vitakka and vicāra stand for the judgemental deliberations with the help of which Gotama developed the wholesome mental state of renunciation. While describing the giving up of the five hindrances the Sāmaññaphala-sutta also speaks of the cultivation of the opposite wholesome mental states.[30a] The vitakka and vicāra implied in this account of the sutta are connected with the cultivation of these good mental states.

Seen in the light of the Sāmaññaphala-sutta the first jhāna tradition would appear as follows:

Disappearance of kāma etc. --- vitakka and vicāra --- gladness (pamojja) --
- joy (pīti) --- tranquility of the body --- happiness (sukha) .

The originators of the jhāna formulas as well as Gotama knew that the tranquility of body generates happiness, because the third jhāna formula speaks of experiencing happiness due to body.

We can now represent the third jhāna formula in the same way as follows:

Separation from pīti --- physical tranquility --- happiness (sukha)

The difference between the first jhāna and the third jhāna is now quite obvious. In the first jhāna formula one experiences pīti and sukha after one has become separated from kāma and akusala-dhammas (i.e. painful feelings) . Seen in the light of the Sāmaññaphala-sutta this means that pīti makes the body tranquil, and the physical tranquility, in its turn, generates happiness.

We have to note that sukha is due to physical tranquility, and not directly due to pīti. It means that happiness would be always caused by physical tranquility

p. 346

irrespective of its cause.

The third jhāna formula, unlike the first jhāna formula, clearly implies that the physical tranquility which causes happiness is due to the separation from pīti, and not due to pīti.

Both these jhāna formulas have been recorded in numerous suttas of the Nikāyas. It is obvious that neither the Buddha nor the disciples of the Buddha consider these two traditions contradictory. Actually these two traditions can be shown to belong to two different stages of spiritual development and thus to refer to the different degrees of physical tranquility and happiness. In case of the first jhāna Gotama, due to the separation from kāma and painful mental factors (akusala-dhammas) felt relieved and pīti arose. Pīti also agitates the body and mind, but compared to dukkha (pain) it agitates in a much lesser degree. So Gotama felt a certain degree of physical calmness which generates the feeling of happiness. This is the happiness which is spoken of in the Sāmaññaphala-sutta. But after attaining the spiritually advanced state of the second jhāna—which is free from the stronger agitative elements of kāma and dukkha—Gotama must have been acutely aware of the strong physical sensation and the resultant mental agitation (cetaso ubbilāvitattam) caused by pīti. So Gotama generated aversion to pīti through adverse criticism. As he did not take delight in pīti, his mind became free from its agitative influence. Consequently his body became appreciably calmer, and this resulted in greater happiness. This is the happiness mentioned in the third jhāna formula. It should be noted that whatever may be the difference in degree, the happiness in both the cases belong to the same category.

b) Characteristics of the Third jhāna——intentional and incidental

The only action Gotama took to leave behind the agitative state of the second jhāna was to be averse to pīti. Thus only the surmounting of the element of pīti was intentional, but the development of the other aspects of this mental state was incidental. The characteristics of mindfulness and awareness as well as the development of the feeling of happiness were not intended.[31] Gotama was not

p. 347

even thinking that the mind would become calmer with the calming down of the agitative element. But the mind automatically becomes calmer, and consequently awareness, mindfulness, and even happiness increase automatically.

Sukha (happiness) had to be surmounted later. The term ‘upekkhākā’ in the third jhāna should stand for indifference to sukha, and not to pīti. This is because Gotama had already become averse to pīti.

Fourth jhāna

Sukha (happiness), an element in the third jhānic state, was not intentionally created; it was not the product of any desire on the part of Gotama. But his mind was not averse to it and he became mindful of it. This point is made clear in the Brahmajāla-sutta which we will discuss later.

In the fourth jhāna formula we read that Gotama gave up the feeling of sukha. This led to the arising of a new mental state characterised by the feeling which was neither painful nor happy (adukkham-asukham), and the purification of mindfulness due to indifference^[32] (upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi). In the present context upekkhā (indifference) can only mean indifference to ‘adukkham-asukham’, for this is the only agitative element that is present in this mental state which is called the fourth jhāna. In this jhāna he could abide for he was in a position to exercise upekkhā towards the pleasant feeling characterising this mental state.

The fourth jhāna formula also draws our attention to the mental elements which Gotama had given up before, viz. dukkha, domanassa and somanassa. We have seen from the Brahmajāla-sutta account that it is by giving up dukkha, domanassa, and somanassa etc., which constitutes the akusala-dhammas that

p. 348

Gotama could attain the first jhāna. It is evident from the fourth jhāna formula that he must have also given up somanassa sometimes later. Now he only had to give up sukha to leave behind the disturbing mental state of the third jhāna.

a) Giving up of the feeling of sukha

The reason for the giving up of sukha and the method followed to give it up we can know from the Brahmajāla-sutta and the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta. According to the Brahmajāla-sutta sukha is given up because it is gross (olārika). Why does one have the perception of grossness in sukha? In other cases such vitakka, vicāra and pīti we have seen these are gross because of the mental agitation they cause. The sutta implies that sukha is considered gross because it is the ‘abhoga’ of mind.^[33] The term ‘ābhoga’ is derived from the verbal root ‘bhuj’ which means either ‘to bend’ or ‘to enjoy’. The term ‘ābhoga’ thus can mean enjoyment or bending (of the mind).

In the present context the term ‘ābhoga’ cannot mean ‘enjoyment’ for it would suggest that the mind is ‘delighting in’ or ‘clinging to’ an object. This would cause the meditator to fall from the third jhāna to the second jhāna.[34] So ‘ābhoga’ should mean ‘bending the mind to an object, paying attention to an object’. Vasubandhu supports this view of ours. According to him ‘ābhoga’ of mind means paying attention (manaskāras’ cetasa ābhogah.) .[35] Such mental activity shows that his mind was not free from agitation. The fact that he abided in this mental state shows that he neither clung to this feeling nor was yet averse to it. He was just being mindful, maintaining the attitude of indifference towards this feeling. The interpretation of ‘ābhoga’ shows why Gotama could abide in the third jhāna , and at the same time reveals why he would find ‘sukha’ to be gross afterwards. The ‘ābhoga’ indicates mental action which disturbs the mental peace. It is, therefore, gross. The Brahmajāla-sutta suggests that it is because of this grossness that Gotama gave up sukha.

But this sutta is not explicit about the method Gotama followed to give up

p. 349

sukha. On the basis of the Dvedhāvitakka-sutta we can surmise that he adversely criticised sukha constantly for its grossness, and became averse to it. As he aspired for nibbāna, we can reasonably suggested that he also criticised sukha on the ground that such an agitative element was not conducive to the realisation of nibbāna which was utter calmness.

b) Adukkham-asukham and Upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi

With the giving up of the feeling of sukha (sukhassa pahānā) the mind experiences a new mental state which is characterised by the feeling of adukkham-asukham (neither-painful-nor-happy) . This feeling is free from the characteristics that are specific to dukkha or sukha. But this feeling is still pleasant.[36] Gotama abides in this mental state. How does he abides in this state ? If he is averse to this feeling, he surmounts it and goes beyond the fourth jhāna. On the contrary if he clings to it, he reverts to the third jhānic state of unworldly happiness (nirāmisam sukham) . This is evident from the Pañcatayya-sutta.[37]Here we read that some recluse or brahmin enters upon and abides in the neither-painful-nor-happy feeling and thinks : ‘This is peaceful (santam) . This is perfect (pañitam) , that I enter upon and abide in the neither-painful-nor-happy feeling.’ When he thinks like this the feeling ceases in him. With the cessation of neither-painful-nor-happy feeling unworldly happiness arises in him, and with the cessation of unworldly happiness, neither-painful-nor-happy feeling arises in him.

We may, therefore, conclude that neither being averse to this feeling in the fourth jhāna nor clinging to it can be abide in the fourth jhāna. So Gotama must have developed ‘upekkhā’ to this feeling to be able to abide in the fourth jhāna.

Upekkhā had been the deciding factor whenever Gotama abided in any of the four jhānas. But it is recorded for the first time in the formula of the fourth jhāna, for by this time upekkha had become sufficiently developed to deserve explicit mention.

Upekkhā occurs as a part of the expression ‘upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi’ which means purity of mindfulness due to indifference. Here ‘indifference’ cannot

p. 350

indicate indifference to sukha, for sukha had already ceased to arise in mind due to adverse criticism. Indifference must be exercised with reference to something that is still existing. So indifference in the present context must refer to the indifference to the feeling of ‘either-painful-nor-happy’. It is because of this indifference that Gotama could abide in the fourth jhāna.

This is supported by the Mahāsaccaka-sutta related his experience of the fourth jhāna as a bodhisattva in the following way. ‘But such pleasant feelings that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.’ This sentence shows that the pleasant feeling was not eliminated yet.[\[37a\]](#)

The first part of the sentence (i.e. upto my mind) shows that Gotama was indifferent to the feeling of adukkhaṃ-asukham, and consequently he was not distracted by any feeling and his mindfulness became perfect.

The fourth group of the Parama-diṭṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins also attained this mental state. But as they mistook this state to be nibbāna they developed clinging to it, and they must have been swinging back and forth between the two mental states of third jhāna and the fourth jhāna.

The Mahāsaccaka-sutta immediately after stating that the pleasant feeling remained in the mind of Gotama gives a description of a new mental state which was devoid of any feeling.

Observations on the system of the four jhānas

We may draw attention to certain salient features common to the four jhānas

p. 351

in order to understand clearly the working of this system of meditation.

- 1) Gotama was not practising this system of meditation for the sake of enjoying pleasant feelings. He adversely criticised the feelings and thereby surmounted them. Even the feeling of adukkham-asukham he gave up later.
- 2) His efforts were also not directed towards the development of concentration (samādhi) and mindfulness (sati) . While practising the four jhānas Gotama did not take a single step which directly develops these two mental faculties. They got incidentally developed with the gradual and incidental development of mental calmness.
- 3) Gotama while practising the four jhānas was only mindful of the elimination of agitative mental elements, and never entertained any thought about the immediate development of calmness and concentration nor about the ultimate goal, the

nibbāna. This is suggested by the jhāna formulas which state that Gotama exerted himself only to be free from the influences of those elements that agitate the mind, viz. vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha and adukkham-asukham.

This interpretation may be objected on the ground that the second jhāna explicitly speaks of internal clarity (ajjhataṃ sampasādanam) and concentration while the third and fourth jhānas speak of being mindful (sato) and having the purity of mindfulness (sati-pārisuddhi) respectively. Can it be concluded that Gotama while practising the four jhānas was deliberately trying to develop calmness, mindfulness and concentration?

This view cannot be accepted if we consider the following points :

- a) In the jhāna formulas mental traits like calmness, concentration etc. which incidentally came to be developed and retained, is mentioned only once when it for the first time becomes developed enough to be included in a jhāna formula. For example, calmness and concentration are mentioned only in the second jhāna, or the characteristic of the ‘purification of mindfulness due to upekkhā’ finds mention only in the fourth jhāna formula. Only in case of a feeling it continues to be mentioned so long it is not surmounted, e.g. sukha has been mentioned in the first three jhāna formulas. This indirectly shows his pre-occupation with the mental elements that agitates.
- b) The Parama-ditṭhadhamma-nibbānavādins, the originators of the four

p. 352

jhāna formulas were not interested in truly knowing an object. As it is clear from our analysis of these formulas, they merely wanted to attain and abide in a peaceful mental state. Mindfulness and concentration, on the other hand, are sine qua non of truly objective knowledge.

- c) Gotama and other practitioners of this system of meditation must have learnt that this meditative system was developed and practised for the sake of perfect mental calmness. But the meditative technique was not to have any desire for it, not to think of the ultimate goal at all while practising meditation. The mind should be fully occupied with the task in hand, viz. the elimination of the agitative elements. This point is clearly brought into relief with reference to the cessation of perception and feeling in the Cūlavēdalla-sutta. [38]

Here the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā states that when ‘a bhikkhu is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, it does not occur to him: ‘I shall attain the cessation of perception and feeling’, or ‘I am attaining the cessation of perception

and feeling’, or ‘I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling’; but rather his mind has previously been developed in such a way that it leads him to that state. The first two types of thoughts are expressive of subjective expectations that agitate the mind, and thus prevent the meditator from attaining a calmer mental state. The third type of thought cannot occur for no thought is possible during the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling. From the initial part of the jhāna formulas we know that the first two types of thoughts Dhammadinnā spoke of were absent from the mind of Gotama. During the transition from one mental state to another Gotama’s thoughts were only about the criticism of the lower mental state; he was not thinking at all about the mental state he would attain. The rest of the formula, however, shows that Gotama was fully aware of the new mental states he attained. But even these expressions are not joyous declaration of the fulfilment of his ego-centric desires; these are objective description of the mental state he was abiding in.

Only the rejection of the agitative elements is intended. But the other aspects of the mental states were not due to any planning or direction. They are

p. 353

not there to fulfil any subjective expectation. To this extent these mental elements are objective.

- 4) Each jhānic state in its origin, continuation and transformation is connected with three different attitudes of mind. From the jhāna formulas we know that its origin is due to the aversion to an agitative element in the preceding mental state. Its continuation is dependent on the attitude of indifference (upekkhā) to the strongest agitative element which characterises the present mental state. Its transformation is again due to aversion to the agitative element in the present mental state. The mental state can also get transformed if the meditator develops clinging to it, for in that case he reverts to the lower, preceding mental state.[\[39\]](#)

The reason for such transformations of the mental states is change in the degree of mental agitation. When one has aversion to an agitative mental element, that element disappears, the adverse criticism naturally comes to an end, and the mind being free from the disturbing influences grows calmer. Consequently a higher mental state is attained. But if the meditator takes delight in and clings to the mental state, his mental agitation increases. He, therefore, reverts to the preceding, lower mental state. If one maintains the attitude of indifference, the degree of mental agitation remains the same, and he continues to remain in the same mental state.

Mental states after the fourth jhāna

a) Nature of the special mental state

The suttas are not explicit about the fact that Gotama attained a new mental state by going beyond the fourth jhāna. The available traditions also do not state how he achieved this. There are, however, certain informations recorded in the Majjhime Nikāya which throw light on both these problems. In the Mahāsacckak-sutta the statement that the pleasant feeling connected with the fourth jhāna remained in the

mind of Gotama is immediately followed by the description of a new mental state which is devoid of any feeling. This proves that

p. 354

The exercised adverse criticism against the feeling of *adukkham-asukham*, became free from its influence, and the feeling disappeared from his mind. Gotama went beyond the fourth *jhāna*.

The suttas^[40] describe a mental state of Gotama immediately after the description of the fourth *jhāna*. This is a new mental state which does not mention the feeling of *adukkham-asukham* referred to in the fourth *jhāna*, or any other feeling. This is a special mental state with which Gotama realised three knowledges (*vijjā*),^[41] one of which is *bodhi*.

What does the non-mention of a feeling from this special mental state signify? We know that a feeling or any other agitative mental element finds mention in a *jhāna* formula only so long it is not surmounted. For example, *dukkha* has been excluded from the description of the first *jhāna*, for it is by surmounting the feeling of *dukkha* that one attains the first *jhāna*. Again for the same reason *pīti* is included in the first two *jhāna* formulas but excluded from the third. Or *sukha* is included in the first three *jhānas* but not mentioned in the fourth *jhāna* formula. So the non-mention of the feeling of *adukkham-asukham* in the special mental state shows that Gotama had already surmounted this feeling before he attained the special mental state.

There are only three types of feelings. Before the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* two of these feelings, viz. *dukkha* and *sukha*, had already ceased to arise in mind. Gotama went beyond the fourth *jhāna* by adversely criticising the remaining feeling of *adukkham-asukham*. Consequently the new mental state he attained was without any feeling.

We have, however, to note that the special mental state, unlike the preceding mental states, does not make any explicit mention of the fact that an agitative element has been given up. The reason for this silence is that this feeling, unlike the other two feelings, is not permanently suppressed. When the first *jhāna* is reached, the feeling of *dukkha* has been permanently suppressed, and its place has been taken by the feeling of *sukha*. Unless one reverts to the mental state of an ordinary person the feeling of *dukkha* will not rise again. Similarly when the

p. 355

fourth *jhāna* is reached, the feeling of *sukha* has been replaced by the feeling of *adukkham-asukham*. In case of the feeling of *adukkham-asukham*, there is no other feeling to replace it when this feeling is suppressed and a higher mental state is attained. So the same feeling of *adukkham-asukham* which is also called *sukhā vedanā*, surfaces again and again whenever a new, higher mental state is attained. Therefore we find in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* that all the three higher mental states each of which was characterised by a *vijjā* and was attained one after another by Gotama with the help of the special mental state, were accompanied by a pleasant

mental feeling. The explicit statement in the sutta that ‘the pleasant feeling that arose’ in Gotama shows that the feeling was not present in the special mental state, but arose anew after each of the three vijjās was attained. This also indicates that before another vijjā was realised Gotama got rid of this feeling by adverse criticism. We can conclude that from the special mental state the feeling of adukkham-asukham temporarily disappeared.

The Pañcatayya-sutta[42] states that some recluse or brahmin went beyond the fourth jhāna. But he mistook this new mental state as nibbāna, took delight in it and consequently lost it. Thus it is evident that after Gotama had attained the special mental state he neither clung to it nor adversely criticised it and thereby could abide in this state.

The mental state that is described after the fourth jhāna reflects all these developments and something significantly more. We have called this mental state ‘the special mental state’ for with its help Gotama attained the three vijjās (knowledges) .

The special mental state which Gotama achieved has been described as concentrated (samāhita) , purified (parisuddha) , clean (pariyodāta) , without any blemish and defilement (anaṅgana, vigatupakkilesa) , workable (kammanīya) , steady (ṭhita) , and immovable (ānejjapatta) . It is a mental state which has become pliant (mudubhūta) and attained immovability (ānejjapatta) .

The whole description is mainly about the mental concentration and

p. 356

purification of mindfulness. Mudubhūta may mean flexibility due to upekkhā. As already noted there is no mention of any feeling in this description.

We have seen in our discussion of the mental element of ‘sukha’ of the third jhāna that the mere presence of a feeling forces the mind to pay attention to it and thus causes mental agitation. In the same way the presence of the feeling of ‘adukkham-asukham (also called sukhā vedanā) in the fourth jhāna is also a source of mental disturbance. It follows that as there is no feeling in the special mental state, the mind would be calmer, and consequently the mental concentration and mindfulness would be more developed in this mental state than in the fourth jhāna. The term ‘parisuddha’ included in the description of this mental state should refer to a mindfulness that is more developed than the mindfulness indicated in the phrase ‘upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi’ of the fourth jhāna.

The mindfulness of the special mental state should be identified with the mindfulness referred to in the phrase ‘anuttaram-upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhim’ of the Sekha-sutta,[43] for in both the cases this developed mindfulness comes into existence after the attainment of the fourth jhāna and before the acquisition of the three vijjās. The other terms such as ‘pariyodāta’, ‘anaṅgana’, and ‘Vigat-upakkilesa’ indicate the purity of mind in a more general way. The terms like ‘samāhita’, ‘.ṭhita’, and ‘ānejjapatta’ indicate developed mental concentration. Though the mind is perfectly

concentrated on and mindful of an object, it is not attached to it due to the development of upekkhā.

The special mental state like the other jhanic states owed its existence only to the intentional elimination of an agitative element in the preceding mental state, i.e. the feeling of adukkham-asukham. But the special state that emerged was not planned and directed. It is not observer created; nor can it be regarded as a product of Gotama's imagination. It is mostly an unintentional effect of his intentional act of elimination of the neither-painful-nor-happy feeling. To this extent the special mental state is objective.

b) Suitability of the special mental state as a means of true knowledge

The special mental state not only came into existence objectively but also was

p. 357

absolutely objective in its functioning. It is because of this reason that Gotama was able to realise the three types of objective knowledges (vijjā) with the help of this mental state.

Let us try to understand how the mental state could function objectively. The awareness of an 'I' as an agent was still there, for Gotama had not yet achieved 'bodhi'. But Gotama had now surmounted all the feelings. He had given up the feeling of 'dukkha' and thereby attained the first jhāna. He gave up the feeling of 'sukha', and attained the fourth jhāna. Again by giving up the feeling of adukkham-asukham he entered and abided in the special mental state which was, thus, conspicuous by the absence of all feelings. As a result the awareness of 'I' did not give rise to the different attitudes of liking, disliking, and indifference. The mind of Gotama was not tainted by any subjective reaction and was capable of making truly objective observation. In fact this special mental state by its very nature was incapable of distorting the reality of what it observed. It was only capable of seeing an object as it really is (yathābhūtam). This mental state is unique for it is ignorant of the unreality of 'I', and yet does not distort the objectivity of observation. Thus this special mental state is ideally suitable for gaining truly objective knowledges, including 'bodhi'. In this respect the observation made by the special mental state is superior to the result of any scientific observation in which the observer is inevitably and inextricably mixed up.

It should be noted that the absence of all feelings and the resultant non-clinging to any object are not due to knowledge, but due to the constant cultivation of particular types of thoughts. The clinging was suppressed but not uprooted.

Realisation of the three knowledges (vijjā)

The special mental state, though not based on knowledge, was ideally suitable for gaining truly objective knowledges. This mental state was such that Gotama by merely being mindful could gain the three different knowledges including 'bodhi', the absolutely objective knowledge of the Conditioned.

The first knowledge was about the knowledge due to the recollection of his own past lives in all details (pubbenivāsa-anussatiññāna) . This knowledge is not

p. 358

knowing what was not known before. It is more a case of recollection, anussati, regaining the knowledge of something which was forgotten.

The other two knowledges deal with knowing what was not known to him before. The second knowledge was about the ever recurring phenomenon of death and rebirth of beings (cutupapātaññāna) following the consequences of their actions. This knowledge he acquired directly through divine vision.

The first two vijjās brought Gotama face to face with the endless recurrence of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth that is the ineluctable destiny of the unenlightened beings. This spurred him on to discover the wisdom that would lead him out of this cycle.

The liberating knowledge which he gained through direct vision found its first expression with reference to āsava (defilement) which is responsible for our bondage in this saṃsāra. He had the truly objective knowledge (yathābhūtam) of the existence, origin, destruction and the path leading to the destruction of āsava (defilement) . The knowledge regarding āsava involves the law of paccasamuppāda. This is bodhir or enlightenment that destroyed all attractions for an individual existence, and uprooted the illusory 'I' and all clinging.

After the attainment of this third vijjā Gotama speaks of his final liberation thus:[44]

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taints of sensual desire (kāmasava) , from the taint of being (bhavāsava) and from the taint of ignorance (avijjāsava) . When it was liberated there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated'. I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.' This was the third knowledge attained by me in the third watch of the night.

This declaration of Gotama is a testimony to the fact that final liberation was attained. There is no more birth for Gotama. This shows that even if one has

p. 359

only attained bodhi, but not the nibbāna in this world, he is still assured of nibbāna after the dissolution of the body.

Implications of Bodhi

It is only after attaining 'Bodhi' that Gotama could really know that the nibbāna, the Unconditioned, actually exists and it can be attained. With him nibbāna was no

longer a matter of faith. But the knowledge he had of the existence of the nibbāna and its characteristics was the result of logical deductions. Bodhi not only revealed the true nature of the Conditioned but also showed that it is possible to go beyond the Conditioned and to attain nibbāna, the Unconditioned. Being Unconditioned it must be permanent. As it is permanent it must be changeless. Being changeless it is completely devoid of all actions and consequently utterly calm. And what is calm should be free from all clinging, for clinging causes agitation. All these logical deductions are valid being based on absolutely objective knowledge. Accordingly the suttas describe the nibbāna as the cessation of all formative actions (sabba-saṃkhāra-samatha) and as a supreme state of excellent peace (anuttaram santivarapadam) .[45] It is because of such a characterisation of nibbāna when some samana or brahmin attained a comparatively calm mental state he mistook it for nibbāna and declared: “I am calm, I have attained nibbāna, I am without any attachment.” (sānto’ham asmi, nibbuto’ham asmi, anupādāno’ham asmi) . Such a monk or brahmin was wrong, for as the Buddha pointed out, this statement made by a person without wisdom showed that he took delight this state clung to it and therefore his mind was not perfectly calm. Gotama was not objecting to the characterisation of nibbāna as calm and non-clinging. He was only pointing out that such a samana or brahmin had not yet realised these characteristics of nibbāna.

Realisation of Bodhi is imperative

Gotama also attained this mental state but remained unaffected by it. But instead of trying to attain still calmer mental state and realise nibbāna, he strove for and attained bodhi. The spiritual goal of Gotama also was nibbāna. So this

p. 360

striving of Gotama for the realisation of bodhi may appear to be enigmatic, especially because this step did not conform to the general spiritual practice of the samanas who were not interested in gaining knowledge; they were all for attaining an utterly peaceful mental state. Moreover the mind of one who has only realised bodhi is not utterly calm. It is not yet bereft of all formative actions (Saṃkhāra) . Thus it appears that Gotama revolutionised the samana spiritual world by going for and realising bodhi. What is the reason for such an action ?

In the Samyutta Nikāya (Vol.2, p.124f) Buddha tells Susiimaparibbājaka that nibbāna is to be realised after bodhi. In the Rathavināta-sutta[46] the same message has been given more clearly and elaborately. This sutta mentions a series of spiritual achievements in an ascending order at the apex of which stands nibbāna, immediately preceded by the purification of knowledge and vision, i.e. bodhi. The sutta states that it is for the sake of nibbāna, and not for the other spiritual achievements, that the bhikkhus follows the teachings of the Tathāgata. But nibbāna cannot be experienced without first attaining bodhi and other spiritual states. Thus bodhi had to be attained, and only then nibbāna in this world could be experienced.

Realisation of Nibbāna

A person who has realised 'bodhi' can automatically attain nibbāna after the dissolution of the body. So why was nibbāna declared to be the ultimate spiritual goal to be attained in this world? What does the realisation of nibbāna in this world precisely mean? Or how can one attain nibbāna?

All these problems can be solved if we pay a closer attention to the nature of nibbāna. We have seen that all the characteristics attributed to nibbāna are logically deduced. The main characteristics of the nibbāna viz. the unconditionedness, and permanency can never be experienced by mind for the mind is conditioned and impermanent. So these two characteristics never came to be associated with the nibbāna in this world. The others characteristics such as absence of all activities, utter calmness and complete non-clinging follow from the two main characteristics. All these logical deductions are valid for they are

p. 361

based on absolutely objective truths, and they characterise the nibbāna in this world. So the chief signs of the attainment of nibbāna in this world are the cessation of all formative actions and the utter mental peacefulness. This mental state, as we shall see, is not the bodhi mind, but the cessation of perception and feeling which also stands for the cessation of all formative actions (sabba-saṃkhāra-samatha). We can even say that as nibbāna marks the cessation of all saṃkhāras, it is perfectly calm.[47] In bodhi all the saṃkhāras are not destroyed. Before the attainment of 'Bodhi' the verbal saṃkhāras (i.e. vicāra and vitakka) and the bodily saṃkhāras (i.e. the in-breathing and the out-breathing) are temporarily suppressed in the second jhāna and the fourth jhāna respectively. But in the state of saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha (cessation of perception and feeling) all the saṃkhāras including the mental saṃkhāras of perception and feeling, remain suppressed at the same time.[48]

It is obvious that to attain such a state another object of meditation was necessary. Gotama now followed the system of formless meditations which deal with different types of perception, Gotama gradually went beyond the perceptions of form, infinite space, nothingness, infinite consciousness, and the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Then he made an end of perception and attained the state of the cessation of perception and feeling. He thus became the Tathāgata, the Buddha. His spiritual journey at last came to an end.

But why was it necessary to realise bodhi first in order to realise nibbāna in this world. The bodhi destroys mental element of clinging by destroying the illusory 'I'. The false sense of personality (sakkyāya) extends upto the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[49] It is not possible to go beyond this state without realising the truth of 'anattā'. But as Gotama had already realised 'bodhi', he could go beyond this state, and attain the cessation of perception and feeling.

There are several suttas which confirms that the state of saññā-vedayita-

p. 362

nirodha is attained after the state of the neither-perception-nor-non-perception. The Ariyapariyesana-sutta also confirms this tradition; moreover this sutta also states that Gotama experienced the nibbāna in this world after the attainment of the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[\[50\]](#) It is obvious that the cessation of perception and feeling is the same as the nibbāna in this world. This is also proved by the description of nibbāna as the cessation of all formations and the state of utter peacefulness, for the state of saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha also marks the end of all formative actions, and is, therefore, utterly calm.[\[51\]](#) With the attainment of nibbāna in this world i.e. the saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha Gotama's spiritual journey came to an end. He declared himself to be the Tathāgata, the Sammāsambuddha.[\[52\]](#)

喬答摩成佛—— 《尼柯耶》 (Nikāya) 成佛之道的重構

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提要

在佛陀及其以前的時代，最終的修行目標在於得證現法涅槃 (nibbāna)。喬答摩 (Gotama) 亦出家以達成這個目標。

我們嘗試利用散布於《尼柯耶》 (Nikāya) 中的敘述，來重構喬答摩整個修行歷程的輪廓。文中僅探討那些可接受為合乎史實並對最終目標之達成有積極說明的資料。

在修行歷程的初期階段，喬答摩運用息止惡念並同時使善念持續生起的方法來調伏與長養心念。正是這種心靈——非天神的啟請——促使他出於慈悲而為受苦的世人說法。

涅槃被認為是完全的寂靜，達到心的寂靜的一個方法就是修習四禪 (the four jhānas)。喬答摩也證得了四禪，而且超越四禪·甚而他維持不被第四禪生起之後的心靈狀態所干擾·接著，他捨離苦、樂、不苦不樂受，而大大地增進寂靜、正念及心的專一。他不再樂著於任何對象，因而，他證得了一種完全專一、正念分明的特別心靈狀態，及因除掉這些感受而顯得特別。

值得注意的，是這種心靈狀態的出現不是刻意追求的。喬答摩的努力全都導向煩擾因素的去除，而非生發一種新的心靈狀態。再者，既然這種心靈狀態並不樂著任何對象，在作用時也就免除了一切主體的影響力·因此，這是一種特殊的心靈狀態，並未捨去虛幻的「我」，不具有看透諸如執著等之本質的智慧，卻能夠作絕對客觀的觀察。此種心靈狀態所作的觀察優於任何科學的觀察，後者總是無法免除觀察者的影響。

藉由這種心靈狀態，喬答摩證得了「菩提」 (bodhi)，那是有關漏 (āsava, āśrava) 盡和其他二明的智慧。這個智慧彰顯出一個人可以超越有為 (the

conditioned），使他得以推究無為（the unconditioned）——涅槃——的存在。此智慧破除了虛幻的「我」，

p. 364

因此永久根除了執著。一個證得「菩提」的人在肉體離散之後進入涅槃。

但是「菩提」的證得不意謂著喬答摩修行歷程的終止，菩提之心（bodhi-mind）並非全然地寂靜，他仍未經驗到涅槃的最為寂靜的狀態。再者，「菩提」的證得和當時只重心靈寂靜的沙門（śramaṇa）傳統並不一致。那麼，喬答摩為何證得「菩提」？沒有「菩提」就不能破除「我」的虛幻性，所以總是存在著心靈退墮的可能性。其次，沒有「菩提」就不可能體證現法涅槃。所以喬答摩先證得「菩提」，然後進一步求取涅槃的經驗。

涅槃是無為與常恆的，由於屬於心靈的一切都是有為的和無常的，如此則不可能經驗到涅槃，但是邏輯上歸之於涅槃的完全寂靜的屬性，在所有的「行」（saṃskāra）止息時是可被經驗到的。喬答摩通過想受滅（sañña-vedayita-nirodha）——同於現法涅槃的經驗——的證得而達致此種完全寂靜的狀態。他成了如來（Tathāgata）。

關鍵詞：1.特別的心所 2.菩提 3.涅槃

[1] Dvedhāvitakka-sutta (Majjhima Nikāya, Vol.1 (abbreviated as M) No. 19, pp. 114ff.; Ariyapariyesana-sutta. M. No. 26, pp. 160ff. ; Bhayabherava-sutta, M. No. 4, pp. 16ff.; Mahāsaccaka-sutta, M. No. 36, pp. 237ff.; Māgandiya-sutta, M. I, pp. 501ff. etc.

[2] M. pp. 247; M. pp. 21~22; M. p. 117

[3] M. No. 36, pp. 241~47; Mahāsihanāda-sutta, M. No. 12, pp. 77~81.

[4] M. p. 117.

[5] Diigha Nikāya, Vol.1 (abbreviated as D.) pp. 36ff.

[6] M. I, pp. 114~17.

[7] For original formula, see, D. p. 36; for the modified formula followed by Gotama see, M. I, p. 21, 117 etc.

[8] Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal (Taipei, Taiwan) No. 8, pp. 455ff., 1995.

[9] Ibid., No. 9, pp. 312~15 for English translation of the relevant Pali text.

[10] The terms abyāpāda and avihimsā cannot simply mean the absence of byāpāda and avihimsā in the present context. Here they stand for the opposite thoughts of benevolence and compassion, see, Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 9 (1996) , p. 313, note, 7.

[11] Cf. Satipatthāna-sutta (M. p. 60. 'Or else mindfulness that there are mind-objects is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness (ñānamattāya paṭissutimattāya) . And he abides not clinging to anything in this world.' If anyone should develop mindfulness in such a way even for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return. This path is the direct path for the realisation of nibbāna. (M. I, p. 63; also see, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, pp. 151ff) .

[12] This part of the sutta was most probably the original Dvedhāvitakka-sutta and contains two types of traditions: one deals with Gotama the bodhisattva's actual spiritual practices while the other reflects the Buddha's teachings to his disciples. See, Chung Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 9 (1996) pp. 324ff.

[13] Ibid., No. 8 (1995) , p. 469.

[14] Ibid., No. 9 (1996) , p. 320.

[15] Māgandiya-sutta, M. 75. 10.

[16] See p. 333 of the present article, especially the points from 3 to 7.

[17] In the light of the new materials I found later I have interpreted the First Jhāna differently from what I did before, see, Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 8 (1995) , p. 461; also see pp. 337, 338 of this article.

[18] P. 333 of this article, points 3 to 5.

[19] See, Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya of Vasubandhu (ed. P. Pradhān, Patna, India, 1967) , pp. 60~61 under the sūtra ‘vitakkacārāvaudāyasūkṣmate.’

[20] M. p. 303.

[21] M. pp. 349~353, 247; also see, pp. 21, 25 of the present article

[22] The term ‘sampasādanam’ in the expression ‘ajjhataṃ sampasādanam’ means clear, clarity. The verbal root ‘sad’ can mean ‘to become clear’ ‘to grow calm’. When used together with the prefix ‘pra’ or ‘pa’, it generally means clear, bright etc. (cf. the term prasanna) . In the present context the term ‘sampasādanam’ cannot be taken in the sense of ‘calmness’ due to the following reasons: i) In the Nikāya the word generally used to mean peace, calmness, peace is ‘santi’ while ‘santo’ means calm. ii) In the four jhāna formulas a positive mental element is mentioned for the first time when it has become developed enough to deserve mention (see, p. 351 of the present article) . The second jhāna contains too many agitative elements like pīti, sukha to be properly calm. Only after suppressing the feeling of ‘adukkham-asukham’ of the fourth jhāna a samana declares that he has become calm (cf. the expression santo’smi etc. see, Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 2, p. 237) . So there is no reason to mention calmness while describing the second jhāna. For Ekodibhāva see, Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 8 (1995) , p. 462, note 10.

[23] See p. 333, point 7 of this article.

[24] See, pp. 339, 345 of the present article.

[25] See, p. 339 of the present article

[26] M. pp. 22, 247.

[27] Visuddhimagga (Ed. H. C. Warren, revised by Dhammananda Kausambi, Harvard University Press, 1950) p. 117; Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 8 (1995) , p. 464.

[28] D. p. 37; Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 8, p. 462 for English translation of the Brahmajāla-sutta passage, and notes 10.

[29] D. p. 73.

[30] Ibid.

[30a] D. I., p. 71.

[31] This was the standard meditative technique followed in that period. The meditator only thinks adversely of the agitative element to be eliminated, but never entertains any idea about the mental state that emerges in consequence of the elimination. Even when he is rejecting the state of neither-perception-nor-not-perception through adverse criticism, his thoughts are entirely occupied with the adverse criticism, and he does not think of the next state of the *sañña-vedayita-nirodha* in any way, see also p. 360 of the present article.

[32] This translation of the expression ‘*upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*’ is supported by *Vibhanga* (Rangoon, Burma, *Buddhasāsana Samiti*, 1961) p. 271.

[33] See, *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, No, 8 (1995), p. 463, 474; D. p. 37.

[34] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. 2, pp. 235~37.

[35] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, p. 54.

[36] M. I, p. 247; also see p. 350 of the present article.

[37] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. 2, p. 236.

[37a] The English translation is taken from *The Middle Length Discourses*, p. 341 (Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1995). The Pali sentence runs: ‘*sukhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati*’ (M. I, p. 247). If we translate the passage as: ‘The pleasant feeling without having affected the mind remains’, it only speaks of Gotama’s indifference to the pleasant feeling which remains. But the fact is that Gotama got rid of this feeling and attained a higher mental state. The next step that Gotama eliminated this pleasant feeling through adverse criticism is understood. The passage perhaps may be also translated as ‘The pleasant feeling did not remain having affected the mind.’ In this case we are informed of both the steps taken by Gotama, viz. remaining indifferent to the feeling and then getting rid of it. But the first translation seems to be better linguistically.

[38] M. p. 302.

[39] *Pañcattaya-sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, 2. pp. 235~37.

[40] M. pp. 22, 117, 247.

[41] M. pp. 22~23; 117; 247~49.

[42] *Majjhima Nikāya*, 2. p. 237. Such a bhikkhu or a brahmin declared (*santo ’ham asmi, nibbuto’ham asmi, anupādāno’ham asmi*). Such a view reflects an ego-centric reaction to a likable mental state. This shows clinging; see, *ibid.*

[43] M. pp. 357~58.

[44] M. p. 248~9; The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Translated by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publication, Boston, 1995) pp. 341~2.

[45] Cf. Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 2, pp. 234~8.

[46] M. pp. 148~9.

[47] M. pp. 166,167; in many other suttas nibbāna in this world has been described in a similar way, e.g. Mahāmālūṅka-sutte, M. p. 436, Pañcattaya-sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 2, pp. 235ff. etc.

[48] M. p. 302.

[49] Āneñjasappāya-sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 2, p. 265.

[50] M. pp. 167~8.

[51] Also see, Āneñjasappāya-sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 2, p. 264 which shows the identity of the nibbāna in this world with the saññā-vedayīta-nirodha state.

[52] M. I, p. 172.