

# RIGHT CONCENTRATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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## A. Right Concentration

Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the final factor of the path means firmly establishing one-pointed attention of the mind (*cittassekaggatā* or *ekaggatā*),<sup>1</sup> or focusing the mind on a single mental object, not being scattered but stable and tranquil. The concentration of mind is carried out with unfailing effort. This concentration of mind which precedes the attainment of meditations (*jhāna*), is the result of a process of continuous development, starting with moral virtue (*sīlakkhandha*) and proceeding toward restraint of sense faculties (*indriyasaṭvara*) and mental and intellectual alertness (*satisampajañña*),<sup>2</sup> This development enables the meditator to effect an inward purity and to cleanse his mind of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*).

### I. The Concentration (*samādhi*) as Four Meditations

Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) is defined as the four meditations (*jhāna*).<sup>3</sup>

To attain the four meditations, the first task is to detach the mind from sensual and unwholesome dispositions. This mentions the exclusion of the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇāni*).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *M.* . 301; *MLS.* I. 363.

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Sāmannaphala Sutta*, *D.* I. 71; *DB.* I. 82.

<sup>3</sup> *S.* V. 10; *KS.* V. 9: The four meditations (*jhāna*) are as follow: “Herein a monk, aloof from sensuality, aloof from evil states, enters on the first trance, which is accompanied by thought directed and sustained, born of solitude, easeful and zestful, and abides therein. – By the calming down of thought directed and sustained, he enters on the inward calm, that one-pointed of mind, apart from thought directed and sustained, that is born of mental balance, zestful and easeful, that is the second trance. – Then, by the fading out of zest, he abides indifferent, mindful and composed, and experiences ease through the body. Having entered on the third trance, which the Ariyans describe in these terms: “He who is indifferent and mindful dwells happily” he abides therein. – Then, by the abandoning of ease, by the abandoning of discomfort, by the destruction of the happiness and unhappiness that he had before, having entered on that state which is neither pleasant nor painful, that utter purity of mindfulness reached by indifference, which is the fourth trance, he abides therein.” See also at *D.* II. 313; *DB.* II. 345 and *M.* III. 252; *MLS.* III. 299.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*) the Buddha teaches that: “Monks, there are these five hindrances which cause blindness, loss of sight and ignorance; which obstruct insight, consort with pain and conduce not to Nibbāna.” See *S.* V. 97; *KS.* V. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *D.* I. 71; *DB.* I. 82: The Buddha talks about the abandon of the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇā*) as follows: “Putting away the hankering after the world (*abhijjhaṭṭ loke-pahāya*), he remains with a heart that hankers not, and purifies his mind of lusts. Putting away the corruption of the wish to injure, he remains with a heart free from ill-temper, and purifies his mind of malevolence. Putting away torpor of heart and mind, keeping his ideas alight (*Āloka-saññā*), mindful and self-possessed, he purifies his mind of weakness and of sloth. Putting away flurry and worry, he remains free from fretfulness, and with heart serene within, he purifies himself of irritability and vexation of spirit. Putting away wavering, he remains as one passed beyond perplexity; and no longer in suspense as to what is good, he purifies his mind of doubt.”

<sup>6</sup> Sensual desire (*kāmachanda*) is considered as desire for the five sense-pleasures, that is, for material shapes, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches which are agreeable, pleasant, liked, enticing, alluring, connected with sensual pleasure (*M. I. 85; MLS. I. 112*). It is a kind of the root intoxicant of lust (*lobha*) and a manner of craving (*taṇhā*), which the Buddha described as the origin of suffering.

<sup>7</sup> Ill-will is aversion towards disagreeable people or thing. It is a form of the root intoxicant of hatred (*dosa*).

<sup>8</sup> Sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*) are a compound hindrance. So are distraction and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) (*S. V. 110; KS. V. 93*).

<sup>9</sup> Doubt is explained as uncertainty about four things: The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Order and the training (*M. I. 101; MLS. I. 132*).

<sup>10</sup> *S. V. 145; KS. V. 124*.

<sup>11</sup> *D. I. 73; DB. I. 84*.

<sup>12</sup> *S. V. 96; KS. V. 80*.

<sup>13</sup> *S. V. 97; KS. V. 81*.

<sup>14</sup> *A. V. 195; GS. V. 134*: The text mentions: “Whosoever have escaped, are escaping or will escape from the world, all of them, by abandoning the five hindrances those defilements of the heart which cause the weakening of insight — all of them with thoughts well established in the four arisings of mindfulness, by making to grow in very truth the seven limbs of wisdom — all of them have escaped, are escaping or will escape by so doing.” Cf. *D. II. 83; DB. II. 89*.

<sup>15</sup> *M. I. 181*: “*Cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbalakaraṇe.*”

<sup>16</sup> The gladness arisen from putting away of the five hindrances is compared to freedom from debt, getting rid of disease, being out of jail, a free man, and secure. See *D. I. 73; DB. I. 84; Trōōng I. 138*.

<sup>17</sup> *D. I. 73; DB. I. 84*.

<sup>18</sup> *S. V. 9; KS. V. 9*: “*Vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṀ savicāraṀ vivekajaṀ pātisukhaṀ paḒhamaṀ jhānaṀ upasampajja viharati.*” See also *D. I. 73, II. 313; DB. I. 84, II. 345*.

<sup>19</sup> *M. I. 294; MLS. I. 354*.

<sup>20</sup> *M. I. 294; MLS. I. 354*. Vide also *M. III. 25; MLS. III. 78*.

<sup>21</sup> The Buddha taught that if the meditating person is too eager to reach the second meditation before he has perfected the first meditation he is likely to fail to gain the second and find himself unable to regain the first. The Buddha compares such a meditating person to a foolish cow who, while still unfamiliar with her own pasture, sets out for new pastures. She gets lost in the mountains without gaining food or drink and cannot find her way back home. See *A. IV. 418f; GS. IV. 281-3*. Perfecting the first meditation consists of two steps: the extension of the sign and the achievement of the five masteries. Mentioned in detail, see *Vism. 152-6; PP. 158-161*.

<sup>22</sup> *S. V. 9; KS. V. 9*. See also *D. I. 74, II. 313; DB. I. 85, II. 345*.

<sup>23</sup> The initial application and sustained application of thought are eliminated because they make the meditation stamped as being gross. See *D. 37; DB. I. 50*.

<sup>24</sup> *S. II. 273; KS. II. 184*.

<sup>25</sup> *M. I. 301; MLS. I. 363*.

<sup>26</sup> *S. V. 9; KS. V. 9*. See also *D. I. 75, II. 313; DB. I. 85, II. 345*.

<sup>27</sup> *D. I. 37; DB. I. 51*: The Buddha said: “Because inasmuch as that state involves the sense of joy, of exhilaration of heart, it is stamped as being gross.”

<sup>28</sup> *S. V. 9; KS. V. 9*. See also *D. I. 75, II. 313; DB. I. 86, II. 345*.

<sup>29</sup> *D. I. 37; DB. I. 51.*

<sup>30</sup> *S. V. 209; KS. V. 184:* The Buddha defines the faculty of pain (*dukkhindriya*) as follows: “Of what sort, monks, is the controlling faculty of discomfort? / That discomfort which is bodily, that disagreeableness which is bodily, that discomfort, that disagreeableness which is experienced when it arises from bodily contact,—that, monks, is called ‘the controlling faculty of discomfort.’”

<sup>31</sup> *S. V. 210; KS. V. 185:* The Buddha defines the faculty of grief (*domanassindriya*) as follows: “Of what sort, monks, is the controlling faculty of unhappiness? / That pain which is mental, that disagreeableness which is mental, that pain, that disagreeableness which is experienced when it arises from mental contact,—that, monks, is called ‘the controlling faculty of unhappiness.’”

<sup>32</sup> *S. V. 209; KS. V. 184:* The Buddha defines the faculty of ease (*sukhindriya*) as follows: “Of what sort, monks, is the controlling faculty of ease? / That ease which is bodily, that agreeableness which is bodily, that ease, that agreeableness which is experienced when it arises from bodily contact,—that, monks, is called ‘the controlling faculty of ease.’”

<sup>33</sup> *S. V. 210; KS. V. 185:* The Buddha defines the faculty of pleasure (*somanassindriya*) as follows: “Of what sort, monks, is the controlling faculty of happiness? / That pain which is mental, that agreeableness which is mental, that happiness, that agreeableness which is experienced when it arises from mental contact,—that, monks, is called ‘the controlling faculty of happiness.’”

<sup>34</sup> *S. V. 213-5; KS. V. 188-190.*

<sup>35</sup> *S. IV. 231; KS. IV. 156:* The indifference feeling is also called the controlling faculty of indifference (*upekkhā-indriya*), which is defined at *S. V. 210; KS. V. 185* as follows: ““Of what sort, monks, is the controlling faculty of indifference? / That bodily or mental feeling experienced, which is neither agreeable nor disagreeable,—that, monks, is called ‘the controlling faculty of indifference.’”

<sup>36</sup> *Vism. 167; PP. 174.*

<sup>37</sup> *M. I. 296; MLS. I. 357.*

<sup>38</sup> *A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 276:* The standard formula for the sphere of infinite space is as follows: “By passing wholly beyond perceptions of form, by the passing away of the perceptions of sense-reactions, unattentive to the perceptions of the manifold, he enters and abides in the sphere of infinite space, thinking: Space is infinite.” See also *D. I. 183; DB. I. 249f.*

<sup>39</sup> *A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 276:* The formula for the attainment of the sphere of infinite consciousness reads thus: “Passing wholly beyond the sphere of infinite space, he enters and abides in the sphere of infinite consciousness, thinking: Consciousness is infinite.” See also *D. I. 184; DB. I. 250.*

<sup>40</sup> *A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 276:* The text describes the attainment of the sphere of nothingness: “Passing wholly beyond the sphere of infinite consciousness, he enters and abides in the sphere of nothingness, thinking: There is nothing.” See also *D. I. 184; DB. I. 250.*

<sup>41</sup> *A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 277:* The process of attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is described thus: “Passing wholly beyond the sphere of nothingness, he enters and abides in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.”

<sup>42</sup> *M. I. 435-7; MLS. II. 105-7.*

<sup>43</sup> *A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 277.*

<sup>44</sup> *D. III. 265; DB. III. 245 and A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 276f:* Nine gradual abidings are: the four meditations of Form world consciousness, the four meditations of Arāpa-world consciousness, and the ending of perception and feeling.

<sup>45</sup> *D. III. 266; DB. III. 245 and A. IV. 410; GS. IV. 275f:* Nine gradual endings are: “Taking each of the foregoing nine in order, by the attainment of (1) First Jhāna, sensuous perceptions cease, (2) Second Jhāna, applied and sustained thought ceases, (3) Third Jhāna, zest ceases, (4) Fourth Jhāna, respiration ceases, (5) by the perception of infinite space, perception of material things ceases, (6) by the perception of infinite consciousness, perception of infinite space ceases, (7) by the perception of nothingness, perception of infinite consciousness ceases, (8) by the perception that is neither conscious nor yet unconscious,

perception of nothingness ceases, (9) by the cessation of perception and feeling, perception that is neither conscious nor yet unconscious ceases.”

<sup>46</sup> *D.* III. 273; *DB.* III. 251. The word *vipassanā* includes *vi+passanā*. The word *passati* is to see and the prefix ‘*vi*’ stands for special or particular.

<sup>47</sup> *M.* I. 301; *MLS.* I. 363: The text mentions: “What is concentration, what are the distinguishing marks of concentration, what are the requisites for concentration, what is the development of concentration? — Whatever is one-pointedness of mind, this is concentration; the four arousings of mindfulness are the distinguishing marks of concentration; the four right efforts are the requisites for concentration; whatever is the practice, the development, the increase of these very things, this is herein the development of concentration.”

<sup>48</sup> *M.* III. 289; *MLS.* III. 338.

<sup>49</sup> *A.* I. 100; *GS.* I. 85f: The Buddha teaches: “Monks, for the full comprehension of lust... for the utter destruction, abandoning, ending, decay, fading out, giving up and renunciation... For the full comprehension of anger, delusion, hate, hypocrisy and spite, envy and grudging, deceit and treachery, obstinacy and impetuosity, pride and overweening pride, mental intoxication and negligence... two conditions must be cultivated. What two? — Calm and insight.”

<sup>50</sup> *Dhp.* 372: “There is no concentration to him who lacks wisdom, nor is there wisdom to him who lacks concentration. In whom are both concentration and wisdom—he, indeed, is in the presence of Nibbāna: *Natthi jhānaŪ apaññassa, paññā natthi ajhāyato, yamhi jhānaŪ ca paññañ ca sa ve nibbāna santike.*”

<sup>51</sup> *S.* IV. 360; *KS.* IV. 257. And see *A.* I. 299; *GS.* I. 276. And see *D.* III, 219; *DB.* III, 213.

<sup>52</sup> The term ‘emptiness’ (*S. ±ānyatā*, *P. suññatā*) also occurs in several passages of the Pāli canon. See *M.* III, 104ff; *MLS.* III, 147ff.

<sup>53</sup> *S.* IV, 54; *KS.* IV, 29: “Because the world is void of the self, or of what belongs to the self, therefore it is said “Void is the world.” Called the world is what is transitory by nature (*S.* IV, 53; *KS.* IV, 29). See at *S.* IV. 296; *KS.* IV. 205: “Void is this of self or of what pertains to self.” Vide also *M.* I. 297f; *MLS.* I. 358.

<sup>54</sup> *S.* III, 22; *KS.* III, 21.

<sup>55</sup> *PP.* 746, n. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *S.* III, 22; *KS.* III, 21: “What is void of the self, that is not mine, I am not it, it is not my self.” See also *M.* I, 139; *MLS.* I, 178.

<sup>57</sup> *A.* IV, 148; *GS.* IV, 102.

<sup>58</sup> Buddhaghosa identifies the signless liberation with the contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*: *PP.* xxi, 73, p. 769; n. 34).

<sup>59</sup> *D.* II, 156; *DB.* II, 173: This is the Buddha’s last word: “Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence.”

<sup>60</sup> *D.* II, 144; *DB.* II, 159: The Buddha says to Ānanda: “Have I not already, on former occasions, told you that it is in the very nature of all things most near and dear unto us that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? How, then, Ānanda, can this be possible—whereas anything whatever born, brought into being, and organized, contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution—how, then, can this be possible, that such a being should not be dissolved? No such condition can exist!” Vide also at *M.* I, 380; *MLS.* II, 45: “Whatever is of the nature to uprise, all that is of the nature to stop.”

<sup>61</sup> *PP.* 746.

<sup>62</sup> *S.* III, 225; *KS.* III, 177.

<sup>63</sup> *A.* IV, 78; *GS.* IV, 45: A description is given of how Mahāmoggallāna entered on and abode in

the signless mental concentration (*animitto cetosamādhi, vô tồùng taâm ñònh*) with the assistance of the Buddha.

<sup>64</sup> M. I. 298; *MLS*. I. 359: “A monk, by paying no attention to any signs, entering on the concentration of mind that is signless, abides therein. This is called the freedom of mind that is signless.” See also at *S*. IV. 296; *KS*. IV. 205: “Without thought of all signs, reaches and abides in that tranquillity of heart that is signless.”

<sup>65</sup> *EB*. I. 676.

<sup>66</sup> Buddhaghosa identifies the desireless liberation with the contemplation of pain (*dukkhānupassanā*: *PP*. xxi, 73, p. 769; n. 34).

<sup>67</sup> *PP*. xxi, p. 746, note 3.

<sup>68</sup> *S*. III, 22; *KS*. III, 21.

<sup>69</sup> *S*. III, 28; *KS*. III, 28.

<sup>70</sup> The three gateways to liberation (P. *ṭṭhāni vimokkhamukhāni*, S. *ṭṭhāni vimokkhamukhāni*) are the gateway to void liberation (P. *suññata-vimokkha-mukha*, S. *suññatā-vimokkhamukha*), the gateway to signless liberation (P. *animitta-vimokkha-mukha*, S. *animitta-vimokkhamukha*), and the gateway to desireless liberation (P. *appañihita-vimokkha-mukha*, S. *appañihitā-vimokkhamukha*). See *PP*. xxi, 66, p. 766 and 70, p. 768.

<sup>71</sup> *M*. I. 40-42; *MLS*. I. 52f. See also *S*. III. 169; *KS*. III. 144.

<sup>72</sup> *A*. IV. 453f; *GS*. IV. 298.

<sup>73</sup> *S*. III. 13-15; *KS*. III. 15f.

<sup>74</sup> *D*. I. 76; *DB*. I. 86.

<sup>75</sup> The development of meditation concentration provides for the meditators the benefits of various supernormal powers whenever he directs and inclines his mind to the kinds of supernormal power, hence the Buddha says: “With his mind subtle, pliant, boundless concentration is well made become; and with boundless concentration well made become, he bends the mind to the realization by psychic knowledge and acquires the ability of an eyewitness in every case, whatever the range may be.” See *A*. IV. 420; *GS*. IV. 283. Vide also *M*. III. 96; *MLS*. III. 136 and *A*. I. 254; *GS*. I. 233.

<sup>76</sup> *D*. III. 227; *DB*. III. 219: The four holy fruits are the stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), Once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and Arahant.

<sup>77</sup> *M*. I. 523; *MLS*. II. 201f. See also *D*. III. 235; *DB*. III. 225. Cf. *D*. III. 133; *DB*. III. 125 and *A*. IV. 370; *GS*. IV. 244.

<sup>78</sup> *A*. I. 211; *GS*. I. 190f.

The five hindrances (*pañcavarāṇasā*)<sup>5</sup> are sensual desire or lust (*kāmacchanda*),<sup>6</sup> ill-will or hatred (*vyāpāda*),<sup>7</sup> sloth and torpor (*thāna-middha*),<sup>8</sup> restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), doubt or uncertainty (*vicikicchā*).<sup>9</sup> If the four foundations of mindfulness are the heap of merits, the five hindrances are the heap of demerits.<sup>10</sup> They are compared to a debt, a disease, imprisonment, slavery, and lost on a desert road.<sup>11</sup> They are obstacles to meditation. They dim the mind, weaken insight,<sup>12</sup> combine with suffering, and conduce not to nibbāna.<sup>13</sup> So those who reach freedom first abandon the five hindrances.<sup>14</sup>

It is seen that the first two hindrances correspond to the first two unwholesome roots (*akusala-māla*). The third unwholesome root, delusion (*moha*), is not mentioned separately among the five hindrances, but can be found

in the remaining three. It is obvious that the hindrances denote the whole of defiled mental states.

i) The Attainment of the First Meditation (PaĒhama-jhĀna)

When he realizes that these five hindrances (nāvaraĀ), which defile the mind and weaken the intellect, <sup>15</sup> have been got rid of and are no more within him, then gladness (pĀmojjam) springs up<sup>16</sup> and to gladness joy (pĀti) arises. His state becomes at ease, then he is filled with a sense of peace (passambhati), and in that peace his heart is stayed.<sup>17</sup> At this moment, he, “aloof from sensuality, aloof from evil states, enters on the first trance, which is accompanied by thought directed and sustained, born of solitude, easeful and zestful, and abides therein.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, his mind reaches a state of concentration called the first meditation, in which five hindrances are abandoned, and five meditation factors are possessed.<sup>19</sup> The five meditation factors are initial application of thought (vitakka), sustained application of thought (vicĀra), zest or joy (pĀti), ease or rapture (sukha), and one-pointedness (ekaggatĀ) of mind.<sup>20</sup>

ii) The Attainment of the Second Meditation (Dutiya-jhĀna)

After attaining the first meditation the meditating person practises, makes, becomes, develops and fixes the sign thereof, so that it is well fixed. Then he is prepared to make the second meditation.<sup>21</sup>

The attainment of the second meditation is as follows: “By the calming down of thought directed and sustained, he enters on the inward calm, that one-pointedness of mind, apart from thought directed and sustained, that is born of mental balance, zestful and easeful, that is the second trance.”<sup>22</sup>

In the second meditation, the factors to be abandoned are initial application of thought (vitakka) and sustained application of thought (vicĀra).<sup>23</sup> The factors of possession are joy (pĀti), rapture (sukha), and one-pointedness (ekaggatĀ) of mind.

The second meditation is called the “Ariyan silence (ariyo tuāhābhĀvo).”<sup>24</sup> Initial application of thought (vitakka) and sustained application of thought (vicĀra) are the main mental factors causing activity of speech (vacāsaŪkhĀra).<sup>25</sup> Therefore, when these origins of verbal activity are absent, inner mental verbalization also decreases, substituted by a silence of the mind.

iii) The Attainment of the Third Meditation (Tatiya-jhĀna)

The third meditation is described as follows: “By the fading out of joy (pĀti), he abides indifferent, mindful and composed, and experiences ease through the body. Having entered on the third trance, which the Ariyans describe in these terms: ‘he who is indifferent and mindful dwells happily,’ he abides therein.”<sup>26</sup>

In the third meditation, zest or joy (pĀti) is considered as gross<sup>27</sup> and so it is eliminated. Apart from the meditation factors, this meditation has three additional mental concomitants such as indifference or equanimity (upekkhĀ), mindfulness (sati), and awareness (sampajañña).

iv) The Attainment of the Fourth Meditation (Catuttha-jhĀna)

By abandoning ease (sukha) and pain (dukkha), by the destruction of joy (somanassa) and grief (domanassa) that he had before, a meditator enters the fourth meditation, the state, which is neither-pleasant-nor-painful, the utter purity of mindfulness reached by indifference.<sup>28</sup>

Ease or rapture (sukha) is regarded as gross<sup>29</sup> in the fourth meditation, so it is abandoned here. The conditions required for obtaining the fourth meditation are the absence of ease and pain, the disappearance of pleasure and grief. To understand this clearly the Buddha said that the faculty of pain (dukkhindriya belonging to bodily pain)<sup>30</sup> comes to cease without remainder when the first meditation is won, the faculty of grief (domanassindriya belonging to mental pain)<sup>31</sup> ceases when the second meditation is obtained, the faculty of ease (sukhindriya belonging to bodily happiness)<sup>32</sup> ceases when the third meditation is gained, the faculty of joy (somanassindriya belonging to mental happiness)<sup>33</sup> comes to cease without remainder when the fourth meditation is attained.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in the fourth meditation all four feelings of pain, grief, pleasure and ease are entirely negated, there remains a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, which is also called the feeling of indifference or equanimity (upekkhāvedanā).<sup>35</sup> Indifference (upekkhā) has the characteristic of experiencing what is contrary to both the desirable and the undesirable. Its function is neutral. Its manifestation is not obvious. Its proximate cause is the cessation of pleasure.<sup>36</sup>

Attaining the fourth meditation is considered as the attainment of the freedom of mind, which has neither pain nor pleasure.<sup>37</sup>

## II. Concentration (samādhi) as Nine Meditations

Apart from the four above-mentioned levels of concentration (belonging to the four form meditations, rāpajjhānāni), there are still four more, which are considered more advanced but not necessary in all cases. They are called the formless meditations (arāpajjhānāni) and described only by their names comprising:

1) The first formless meditation: Here the meditator gives up the perception of form belonging to the four meditations and abides in the sphere of infinite space (ākāśañcāyatana).<sup>38</sup>

2) The second formless meditation: After surmounting the meditation and object of infinite space, the meditator enters and dwells in the sphere of infinite consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana).<sup>39</sup>

3) The third formless meditation: The meditator, by surmounting and not by giving attention to the sphere of infinite consciousness, enters upon and dwells in the sphere of nothingness (ākāśañcāyatana).<sup>40</sup>

4) The fourth formless meditation: The meditator passes the sphere of nothingness, enters upon and dwells in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana).<sup>41</sup>

It is said that those who have reached all these eight levels of meditation (jhāna) are Non-returners (Anāgāmi) or Arahantas,<sup>42</sup> and are capable to obtain another level beyond these eight. It is called the ninth level that is the Extinction

of Perception and Feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), sometimes called the Extinction Attainment (*nirodhasamāpatti*). The text says: "Passing wholly beyond the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters and abides in the ending of perception and feeling."<sup>43</sup> These nine meditations are called the nine gradual abidings (*anupubbavihāra*)<sup>44</sup> or the nine gradual endings (*anupubbanirodha*).<sup>45</sup>

### III. Concentration as Calm (*samatha*) and Insight (*vipassanā*)

Concentration that is one-pointedness (*cittakaggatā*) of mind is divided into two inter-related systems, namely, calm (*samatha*), and insight (*vipassanā*).<sup>46</sup> Calm (*samatha*) has the function of focussing the mind on one good object to exclude all others and bad ones and to calm the mind. Such a good object is known as one of the objects of the four foundations of mindfulness in right mindfulness, which also is called the distinguishing marks of concentration. The development of the calm (*samatha*) along with its cultivation is supported by the four right efforts.<sup>47</sup> In this stage, it is clearly seen that the three factors such as right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration operate in integrating each other.

Calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) occur simultaneously.<sup>48</sup> They combine with each other to destroy all bad tendencies<sup>49</sup> for calming the mind and to investigate every thing. Without calm (*samatha*), no insight (*vipassanā*) can be developed. Without insight (*vipassanā*), no calm (*samatha*) can be developed.<sup>50</sup> The combination of both in practice conduces to the freedom (*vimutti*), freedom of mind (*cetovimutti*) and freedom through insight (*paññāvimutti*).

### IV. Concentration (*samādhi*) as the Three Gateways to Liberation

Concentration (*samādhi*) is distinguished into three kinds such as concentration on emptiness (*suññatā-samādhi*), concentration on the signless (*animitta-samādhi*) and concentration on the desireless (*appaṇihita-samādhi*).<sup>51</sup>

#### 1. Concentration on Emptiness (*Suññatā*)

Concentration on emptiness (*suññatā-samādhi*)<sup>52</sup> is practised in various ways. The meditator sees that all things are void of self.<sup>53</sup> They are non-self because of the words, "what is suffering, that is void of the self,"<sup>54</sup> and because of four reasons that are in the sense of voidness, of having no owner-master, of having no overlord, and of opposing self.<sup>55</sup> The meditator observes all this with perfect insight, he sees that nothing can be identified as 'I' or 'mine' or 'my self'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, concentration on emptiness is reflection on all worldly things that are of impermanence, of suffering in impermanence, of no self in suffering.<sup>57</sup>

#### 2. Concentration on the Signless (*animitta-samādhi*)

Concentration on the signless is to contemplate that every object is impermanent,<sup>58</sup> subject to destruction,<sup>59</sup> because of its non-existence after having been. It is in the state of rise and fall,<sup>60</sup> of change, of temporariness, and of denying permanence.<sup>61</sup>

When whosoever has faith in considering all component things as impermanent,<sup>62</sup> and pays no attention to any signs, abiding in the signless mental concentration (animitto cetosamādhi),<sup>63</sup> such a one reaches the freedom of mind that is signless (animitto cetovimokkha).<sup>64</sup>

The signless mental concentration (animitto cetosamādhi) is a developed state of mind, reached through constant training of the mind (bhāvanā), in which all signs are eliminated. In this state of mind all mental obsessions are absent and the mind is inclined towards insight (vipassanā), seeing things in their true perspective (yathābhāta-ñāṇa).<sup>65</sup>

### 3. Concentration on the Desireless (appañihita-samādhi)

Concentration on the desireless (appañihita-samādhi) is to contemplate that every phenomenal existence is suffering (dukkha),<sup>66</sup> It is suffering for four reasons, which are in the sense of burning, of being hard to bear, of being the basis for pain, and of opposing pleasure.<sup>67</sup> It is suffering because “what is impermanent is suffering,”<sup>68</sup> It involves understanding all things that exist as giving rise to suffering, due to the conflict generated through their continually changing nature. If the emergence is from the painful, then he acquires the concentration faculty (samādhi-indriya) because he has great tranquillity, he is liberated by the desireless liberation (appañihitavimokkha).

From the above consideration, these three kinds of concentration can be understood as expressing the contemplations of the three characteristics (tilakkhaṇa), namely, impermanence (aniccatā), suffering (dukkhatā) and non-self (anattatā). These are the three aspects of realisation of the true nature of all phenomena.<sup>69</sup> This realisation thus never arises in separation; it always goes with each other, and they are also called the three gateways to liberation (P. t̄ṇi vimokkhamukhāni, S. t̄ṇi vimokkhaṇi, a-mukhāni).<sup>70</sup>

#### A. The Benefits of Right Concentration For Human Development

The practice and development of concentration brings about various benefits as below:

i) Abidings in ease (sukha) here-now in the discipline for a noble person.<sup>71</sup> Meditations (jhāna) are of benefit not only prior to final attainment, as a foundation for insight, but maintain their benefit even afterwards as well. The Buddha himself declares the meditation to be a kind of nibbāna in this present life.<sup>72</sup>

ii) Knowing things as they really are and no grasping them.<sup>73</sup> This can solve the problem of life and its repeated cycle of birth and death, by the total annihilation of all greed (lobha), aversion (dosa) and delusion (moha).

iii) Attaining knowledge of the modes of supernormal power (iddhividhāṇā): From the fourth form meditation onward, the concentrated mind is “pure, translucent, cultured, devoid of evil, supple, ready to act, firm, and imperturbable.”<sup>74</sup> This is the basis for attaining various kinds of supernormal powers (abhiññā).<sup>75</sup>

iv) The practical ethics of Buddhism for the purpose of building up the human character and improving it, through the attainment of the four noble fruits, also called the four noble individuals,<sup>76</sup> of which Arahanta is the highest. Arahanta indicates complete enlightenment (bodhi) which is the result of understanding the true nature of things through the process of mind. In the process, the greater or lesser amount of destruction of the fetters is the full or partial enlightenment, which will be attained respectively.

The arahanta is considered as a symbol of the Buddhist moral ideal. He is so full of the fundamental virtues that it is impossible for him to become one intentionally to deprive the life of any living creature, to take what has not been given, as it were by theft, to indulge in sexual intercourse, to tell lies, to enjoy pleasures of the senses in regard to what was stored as he did formerly when in the household state.<sup>77</sup> He, as long as he lives, by abandoning the killing of beings, abstains therefrom. He has laid aside the sword and weapons. He is modest, kind and has compassion for all beings, and so on.<sup>78</sup> An Arahanta always does actions bringing about benefit to beings pertaining to the laws of morality and as such no kammic consequences are produced.

#### Resume of Bhikkhuni Hue Lien

Born in 1958 in Saigon, Vietnam, bhikkhuni Hue Lien became a Buddhist nun at the age of fifteen.

She got full ordination in 1979. Having received a B.A. degree in Buddhist Studies from Vietnam Buddhist University in 1988, she became a dhamma teacher. She obtained M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University in 1998 and 2003 respectively.

Since then she has been working as a lecturer of Vietnam Buddhist University, she is also members of Central Department of Monastic Education, Central Department of Dhamma Propagation and Central Department of International Buddhist Affairs.