

**On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation
According to the Pali Nikāyas and Exegetical Sources**

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PART 1: THE NIKĀYAS

The problem of the term 'meditation'

Few, I suppose, would wish to dispute the suggestion that one of the primary concerns of early Buddhist texts¹ is 'meditation'. It is perhaps a little surprising then that it is by no means clear what Pali (or Sanskrit) term English, or for that matter German, words such as 'meditate/meditieren' and 'meditation' translate. Sometimes it is suggested that *bhāveti/bhāvanā* are the corresponding terms, but these words, representing causative forms from the root *bhū*, more strictly mean 'bringing into being', 'cultivation', or 'development', and certainly there are many contexts in the early texts where the translation 'meditation' or 'meditates' would not work.² Alternatively one might suggest *jhāna/jhāyati* deriving from the Sanskrit root *dhyā*, and indicating 'deep thought', but in Buddhist literature *jhāna* comes to have a specific technical meaning: someone who practices *jhāna* is not simply meditating, but rather someone who has accomplished a certain level of proficiency in meditation and attained a relatively stable state of deep concentration or absorption, defined in precise psychological and emotional terms. Another candidate is *yoga*, which is a term that is used generally in Indian religious writings to mean spiritual practice and thus embraces various kinds of meditation technique. Certainly terms such as *yogin* and *yogāvacara* are used in Buddhist texts in the sense of practitioner of yoga or 'meditator'. However, in the earliest Buddhist texts these terms are not found, and *yoga* is used not in this sense but in the sense of an emotional and psychological 'bond' that ties one to the round of rebirth.³

¹ What follows is drawn from Pali sources. This is not to be taken as indicating that I assume they are necessarily a more 'authentic' witness of early Buddhist thought—apart from the obvious fact that they are preserved in an ancient Indian language which must be relatively close to the kind of dialect or dialects used by the Buddha and his first disciples—than the Chinese Āgamas. In any case, it would seem that any account of early Buddhist meditation based on the Chinese Āgamas would be essentially similar to an account based on the Pali Nikāyas. As Étienne Lamotte has observed, the doctrinal basis common to the Chinese Āgamas and Pali Nikāyas is remarkably uniform; such variations as exist affect only the mode of expression or the arrangement of topics; see Lamotte (1988, 156).

² The verb *bhāveti* is frequently used with a direct object; expressions such as *saddhīndriyaṃ bhāveti* or *sati-sambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti* do not appear to mean 'he meditates on the faculty of faith' or 'on the constituent of awakening that is mindfulness'.

³ e.g. D III 230, 276; cf. the use of the cognate *saṃyojana*.

A later term found in the Pali commentaries that comes to correspond quite closely to the modern notion of meditation practice is *kammaṭṭhāna*. This term is found in the canonical Pali texts in the sense of occupation, business, or work (the Sanskrit *karmasthāna* is found in a similar sense, q.v. MW). But in the Pali commentaries it comes to have the specific sense of the work of meditation practice and is understood both as a specific object of meditation practice and as a way or method of meditation practice, such as that of calm (*samatha*) or insight (*vipassanā*).⁴

The Sāmaññaphala schema

Another curious fact, given the centrality of meditation practice to early Buddhism, is that so little is said about how to actually set about meditation practice. A typical description of the practice of meditation in early Buddhist texts is the one found in an extended account of the whole Buddhist path that occurs some 25 times in a number of slightly differing versions in the four primary Nikāyas.⁵ I shall refer to this as the *sāmañña-phala* schema after the first sutta of the canon in which it occurs. It states that the meditator—always designated a ‘monk’ or *bhikkhu*—should find a secluded spot—the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a rocky ravine, a cave, cemetery, forest grove, the open air, a pile of straw or a deserted house; he should sit down cross-legged, straighten his body, and establish mindfulness ‘in front of him’ (*parimukham*). The account then immediately moves to give brief descriptions of the kinds of attainment to be expected from this practice: the meditator abandons the hindrances and attains the four *jhānas*—states of heightened joy, happiness, mindfulness and equanimity; he develops various powers (*iddhi*), such as the ability to walk on water or fly through the air, and various knowledges (*abhiññā*), including that of past lives and, although less exciting in its description none the less more religiously significant, understanding of suffering, its arising, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation, otherwise understood as knowledge of the four truths or ‘enlightenment’ (*bodhi*). Just what the would-be meditator has to do to get from sitting down cross-legged to the *jhānas* and beyond is not at all clear. To put it another way, if one set off into the forest with only a copy of the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* as one’s guide, it is doubtful that one would make very much progress in one’s meditation practice. Later systematic accounts of Buddhist meditation that date from perhaps six, seven or eight hundred years later do fill in some of the gaps, but the relative absence of specific instruction in the earlier texts perhaps should be understood in the light of something that is clear in the later texts: namely a view that the effective practice of meditation requires the per-

⁴ Abhidh-av-nt̃ (B^c) II 215: *yoga-kamassa pavatti-ṭhānatāya, uparūpari-bhāvanā-kamassa kāraṇa-bhāvato ca kamma-ṭhānaṃ*. Abhidh-s-mh̃t̃ 196 *kamma-ṭhānaṃ duvidha-bhāvanā-kamassa pavatti-ṭhānatāya kamma-ṭhāna-bhūtaṃ ārammaṇaṃ uttaruttara-yoga-kamassa pada-ṭhānatāya kamma-ṭhāna-bhūtaṃ bhāvanā-vithiṃ ca*.

⁵ It occurs in 10 of the 13 suttas that comprise the *silakkhandha-vagga* of D, 8 times in M (I 178-84, 344-8, 412-3, 521-2; II 38-9, 162, 226-7; III 33-6), and twice in A (II 208-11; V 204-9); shorter and/or variant versions are also found at D I 181-84, 249-52; M I 267-71, 271-80, 353-59; M III 134-37; A I 163-4, III 92-3, 100. The reason that there is none in S (cf. Schmithausen 1981, 204, n. 15) is perhaps related to the treatment of the path in the fifth part, the *mahā-vagga*.

sonal instruction of a teacher. Thus the reason why the earlier texts fail to reveal very much about just how to practice meditation is not because they are uninterested in such matters, or think they are unimportant, but rather precisely the opposite: they are too important to write down, to be imparted in this way, i.e. textually. This is, after all, a typical ancient Indian attitude to learning: it should be imparted orally, directly from teacher to pupil. Thus we should understand the earliest texts as indicating the general framework and outlining basic guidelines for the practice of meditation practice, but the specific details of technique and the actual procedures are matters for the teacher and his pupils. It is only later that some of these get committed to writing, and even then, still in somewhat general terms. So strictly as historians of religion we must conclude that the earliest techniques of Buddhist meditation are lost to us.

The method of establishing mindfulness

Having said this, there are suttas that do give some further indications of the techniques of early Buddhist meditation, and if we cautiously allow ourselves to be guided in some measure by the later writings we can say a little more.⁶

Perhaps the most important of the early Buddhist texts that provide clues to the actual techniques of meditation is the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.⁷ Let me say at the outset that I am suggesting that we should read the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the light of the stock description of the path found in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* and elsewhere, and not, as some have done, as a kind of alternative account of Buddhist meditation (or one account among many). The reason for doing so is in part very simple and has already been stated. The description of the stages of the path found in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* has been accepted by others as a standard account,⁸ but, as I have said, it leaves many aspects of the actual techniques of early Buddhist meditation unstated. As I hope to show the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* makes rather good sense when read alongside this account as filling in certain gaps.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* takes the form of an exposition of a stock *satipaṭṭhāna* formula that is found in overt 40 places in the four *Nikāyas*.⁹ The sutta is also closely related to other suttas such as the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*—and all these suttas are related, I think, to another formula (found in six places in the *Nikāyas*) that sums up the path ending in awakening in terms of

⁶ And after all, being guided by these later writings is not to ignore historical method completely, for the works that come down to us associated with the name Buddhaghosa, for example, are not the creations of a single writer working in the fourth or fifth century, but rather an attempt to sum up and fix a commentarial tradition that flourished over several previous centuries.

⁷ I take the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M I 55–63) and *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (D II 290–314) as two versions of the same sutta. Other suttas that give some specific account of meditation technique include the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, and the *Vitakkasāṅghāna Sutta*.

⁸ See Frauwallner (1953), I 161–80, 186–7; Schmithausen (1981), 204 refers to it as a 'stereotyped detailed description of the Path of Liberation'.

⁹ For references see Gethin (1992), 355.

abandoning the hindrances, establishing the practice of the four establishings of mindfulness, and developing the seven factors of awakening.¹⁰

What do we learn about early Buddhist meditation techniques from the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula? First of all that it involves watching (*anupassati*) various kinds of object—body, feelings, consciousness, mental qualities—and trying to watch that object closely and see it clearly—he watches body *as* body, suggesting that outside the context of meditation we somehow do not see body as body, we do not see it clearly. But the goal of seeing clearly does not necessarily come easily; it requires some effort and application, the meditator is described as *ātapin*, a word related to *tapas*, used from early times in Indian texts in the sense of ‘religious austerity or mortification’. This effort and application results in some form of heightened awareness: the meditator becomes mindful (*satimant*) and fully aware (*sampajāna*), again suggesting that outside the context of meditation we are forgetful and not fully aware. Finally we can also say that the attainment of this state of heightened awareness involves overcoming distracting and disturbing emotions: the meditator is described as having removed or dispelled (*vineyya*) any feelings of longing and discontent connected with ordinary existence (*loka*).

The exposition of this basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula which follows and makes up much of the actual Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta fills out some of the details of how to put these very basic instructions into practice. In effect the sutta gives six different ways in which the meditator might carry out the practice of watching body as body: he can watch (1) his breathing (the in-breath and the out-breath), (2) his postures (whether walking standing, sitting or lying), (3) his various bodily actions and functions (moving forward and turning back, looking ahead and looking around, bending and straightening his limbs, wearing his inner and outer robes and carrying his alms bowl, eating, drinking, chewing and swallowing, defecating and urinating, walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, speaking and keeping silent), (4) the thirty-one parts that constitute his body (head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestine, small intestine, gorge, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints, and urine), (5) the four elements that constitute his body (earth, water, fire, wind), and (6) finally he can consider his body by way of various aspects of the decay and putrefaction of a dead body (bloated, livid and festering, eaten by animals, a skeleton, rotten and crumbling scattered or piled bones). The sutta subsequently gives an indication of how one should watch feelings, one’s state of mind, and qualities in general, but I shall leave these aside in the present context. I wish to focus first of all on the way the sutta describes the practice of contemplation of body.

¹⁰ D II 83; III 101; S V 108, 160–1; A III 387; V 195; Nett 94; see Gethin (1992), 58–9, 169, 172, 258.

On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation

Watching the breath

The instructions for contemplating the body through watching the breath begin in the same manner as the *sāmaññaphala* account: the meditator should find a secluded and quiet place, presumably to remove himself from basic distractions and disturbances, he should sit down cross-legged, straighten his back and establish mindfulness in front of him. The sutta continues:

Just mindful, he breathes in. Just mindful, he breathes out. As he breathes in a long breath, he knows he is breathing in a long breath; as he breathes out a long breath, he knows he is breathing out a long breath. As he breathes in a short breath, he knows he is breathing in a short breath; as he breathes out a short breath, he knows he is breathing out a short breath. He practices so that he can breathe in experiencing the whole body; he practices so that he can breathe out experiencing the whole body. He practices so that he can breathe in tranquillizing the activity of the body; he practices so that he can breathe out tranquillizing the activity of the body.

So we now have an indication of an exercise, an actual practice that one can do when one sits down cross-legged in the forest, which the *sāmaññaphala* account fails to provide. It is worth considering for a moment the manner of the practice of the other exercises for watching the body. Clearly watching one's various postures, and bodily activities and functions makes little sense as an exercise practised when seated cross-legged, and thus a more varied and active meditative practice is indicated. Contemplating the various parts of the body, the manner in which the four elements constitute the body, and the various degrees and states of decay and putrefaction of the body do, however, make sense when conceived as practices done sitting cross-legged in a secluded spot, and it seems fair to assume that this is how the sutta envisages that they should be practised. We should also note that the practices mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta under watching the body are referred to in various other contexts elsewhere in the Nikāyas. There are reasons to think that the practice of watching the breath was early on regarded as a particularly important practice. A whole sutta is devoted to it, the commentary to which says many monks practised it; there is also the later tradition that it was the meditation exercise that the Buddha practised on the night he attained awakening.¹¹

Let us now consider the practice of watching the breath as set out in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The sutta indicates four stages:

- the meditator knows (*pajānāti*) he breathes in/out a long breath;
- he knows (*pajānāti*) he breathes in/out a short breath;
- he practices (*sikkhati*) so that he can breathe in/out experiencing (*paṭisaṃvedin*) the whole body;
- he practices so that he can breathe in/out tranquillizing (*passambhayanti*) the activity of the body.

¹¹ M III 78–88 (*Ānāpānasati Sutta*); Ps II 291; see also Vajirañāṇa (1962), 227.

While from a certain point of view this begins as a straightforward description, it must be admitted that the precise force of 'he knows' is unclear, and the last two stages are increasingly obscure. However, we can say that these four stages seem to indicate a progression from focusing on the breath with full awareness to a state of increased calm and tranquillity. In order to take this further we have to follow certain clues and make links with what is said elsewhere in the Nikāyas.

Overcoming distracting thoughts

We have already noted how the effective practice of watching of the body as body, etc. involves overcoming distracting thoughts and emotions—dispelling feelings of longing and discontent connected with ordinary existence. One particular passage expands on this particular theme:

He sits down, bending his legs into a cross-legged position; holding his body straight he establishes mindfulness in front of him. Abandoning desire for the world he dwells with a mind from which desire has been removed; he purifies his mind from desire. Abandoning the stain of aversion he dwells with a mind without aversion, compassionate and friendly towards all creatures and beings; he purifies his mind from the stain of aversion and hatred. Abandoning sleepiness and tiredness he dwells with sleepiness and tiredness removed, observing brightness, mindful and comprehending clearly; he purifies his mind from sleepiness and tiredness. Abandoning agitation and depression he dwells unagitated with his mind stilled within; he purifies his mind from agitation and depression. Abandoning doubt he dwells as one who has crossed over doubt, not wondering about wholesome qualities; he purifies his mind from doubt. Abandoning these five hindrances which are defilements of the mind and weaken wisdom, he dwells watching body as body, ardent, comprehending clearly, mindful, having overcome longing and discontent with the world; he dwells watching feelings as feelings ... mind as mind ... qualities as qualities, ardent, comprehending clearly, mindful, having dispelled longing and discontent with the world. (M III 135–6)

The sequence of five disturbing and distracting emotions that is given here—namely desire, aversion, sleepiness and tiredness, agitation and depression, and doubt—is one that is standard in early Buddhist texts: it is referred to collectively as 'the five hindrances' (*pañca-nīvaraṇa*). The passage continues with a vivid simile illustrating the way in which the practice of contemplating body, etc. as a way of establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is related to the overcoming of ordinary disturbing and distracting emotions:

Just as, Aggivessana, an elephant tamer plants a great stake in the earth and tethers a wild elephant to it by the neck in order to subdue [in him] the ways and thoughts of the wild, the distress, strain and discomforts of the wild; in order to make him pleasing to villagers; in order that he should adopt ways that are agreeable to men—just so, Aggivessana, these four ways of establishing mindfulness are tethers for the mind for the abandoning of the ways and thoughts of the world, for the abandoning of the distress, strain and discomforts of the world, for the obtaining of the right way, for the realization of *nibbāna*.

Such a passage, taken together with the account of how contemplating the breath leads to a state of tranquillity and calm, allows us to make a direct link to the manner in which the attainment of *jhāna* is introduced in the *sāmaññaphala*

On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation

sequence. Here, as we have already noted, it is described how the monk, having gone to the forest, sits down cross-legged and having established mindfulness in front of himself, abandons the five hindrances:

When he sees that the five hindrances have been given up in himself, gladness arises, and when one is glad, joy arises. When the mind is joyful, the body becomes tranquil, and when the body is tranquil one experiences happiness; the mind of someone who is happy becomes concentrated. Completely secluded from sense desires and unwholesome qualities, he dwells having attained the joy and happiness of the first meditation, which is accompanied by mental application and examining, and born of seclusion. He suffuses, fills, soaks and drenches this very body with the joy and happiness that come from seclusion so that there is no part of his body that is untouched by that joy and happiness. (D I 73)

As we have noted, this passage does not indicate how in practical terms the monk actually attains *jhāna*: we are not told what practice the monk was doing in order to abandon the hindrances. But it seems safe to conclude, given the various parallels and links between this passage and the description of the practice of establishing mindfulness, that we are to understand that something like the practice of watching the breath is assumed.

So far, then, we can sum up the practice of meditation as presented in early Buddhist texts in the following terms. It involves retiring to a quiet place, sitting down cross-legged, making oneself alert and placing the attention on some object of contemplation such as the breath. Perseverance with this contemplation results in a state of mind characterized by, on the one hand, a contented calm resulting from a freedom from disturbing thoughts and emotions, and, on the other hand, a heightened state of alertness and awareness.

It seems worth considering a little further how the early texts understand the nature of the hindrances to meditation practice. A passage of some significance in this context is one that concerns a *brahmana* who questions the Buddha about the reasons why sometimes verses that have been learnt long ago become unclear, while other verses that have learnt only recently remain clear (S V 121–6). The Buddha responds with an extended and detailed simile concerning the nature of each of the hindrances

The mind possessed and overcome by attraction for the objects of sensual desire (*kāma-rāga-pariyuṭṭhita*, *kāma-rāga-pareta*) is like a bowl of water mixed with lac or turmeric, or with blue or red colouring; a person with good eyesight looking down into this bowl of water for the reflection of his own face would not know and see it as it is. The mind possessed and overcome by aversion (*vyāpāda*) is like a bowl of water that has been heated on a fire and is steaming and boiling (*uda-patto agginā santatto ukkaṭṭhito usmudaka-jāto*); the mind possessed and overcome by sleepiness and tiredness (*thīna-middha*) is like a bowl of water covered with moss and leaves (*uda-patto sevāla-panaka-pariyonaddho*); the mind possessed and overcome by excitement and depression (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) is like a bowl of water ruffled by the wind, disturbed, stirred round and rippling (*uda-patto vāterito calito bhanto ūmi-jāto*); finally the mind possessed and overcome by doubt (*vicikicchā*) is like a bowl of water that is dirty, unclear, muddy and placed in the dark (*uda-patto āvilo lulito kalālī-bhūto andha-kāre nikkhitto*). Again, anyone looking

down into any of these for the reflection of his face would not know and see it as it is. In the same way, when the mind is possessed and overcome by any one of the hindrances one does not know (and see) as it is its letting go, what is of benefit to oneself, what is of benefit to others, what is of benefit to both; verses which have long been learnt become unclear, let alone those which have not been learnt.

A mind not possessed or overcome by the hindrances, however, is like a bowl of water unmixed with lac or turmeric, or blue or red colouring; like a bowl of water that has not been heated on a fire, is not steaming and boiling; like a bowl of water not covered with moss and leaves; like a bowl of water not ruffled by the wind, undisturbed, not stirred round, not rippling; like a bowl of water that is clear, bright, clean and placed in the light (*accho vipassanno anāvilo āloke nikkhitto*). Anyone looking down into such a bowl of water for the reflection of his face would know and see it just as it is. In the same way, when the mind is not possessed and overcome by the hindrances, one knows (and sees) as it is their letting go, what is of benefit to oneself, to others and to both; verses that have not been long learnt become clear, let alone those that have.

This passage is significant for two reasons, I think. In the first place it makes clear the psychological and emotional relationship between calming the mind and body, that is attaining a state of tranquillity on the one hand, and seeing things clearly, heightened awareness on the other. Secondly, it points to the way in which the hindrances are not to be understood as obstacles peculiar to the spiritual path of meditation, but rather as emotions that are generally disturbing and distracting.

In principle something of the process of overcoming the hindrances can be observed whenever the mind is applied to any new task that requires a certain mental application and dexterity. Take the example of learning to play a musical instrument. In order to progress one needs to practice regularly and patiently. Almost inevitably, at times other, less taxing activities seem much more attractive and pleasurable than struggling with one's practice. This is the first hindrance of desire for the objects of the senses. At times one may become frustrated, irritated and angry, seeing faults in one's musical instrument or teacher, or using the fact that the neighbours are making too much noise as a reason for not persevering with one's practice. This is the second hindrance of ill-will. Or the very thought of one's practice may make one feel tired and drowsy, yet when one thinks of doing something else that the mind finds more interesting, suddenly the mind appears wide awake and alert. This is the third hindrance of sleepiness and tiredness. Or one may suddenly become over excited at one's progress, or depressed at what one sees as one's lack of progress. This is the fourth hindrance of excitement and depression. Finally one may doubt the whole enterprise, asking oneself what the point is in learning to play a musical instrument anyway. Just as anyone wishing to make progress in the learning of a musical instrument must acquire some measure of control over such hindrances, so the meditator intent on developing his meditation subject must deal with these immediate defilements of the mind.

The material we have considered so far suggests a basic framework for Buddhist meditation practice as conceived in the early texts: by taking an object of contemplation the mind can be brought to a certain state of calm and contentment, and that state of calm and contentment involves a special clarity of mind which is the gateway to seeing through the ordinary appearance of things to how they actually are, in other words to enlightenment. Some scholars tend to see what I suggest as the underlying framework of Buddhist meditation as a later synthesis of originally divergent and even incompatible conceptions of the nature of the Buddhist path and goal: a way of stilling emotions has been artificially and forcibly harmonized with a way of intellectual understanding.¹² I have to say that I disagree. The arguments and reasons are complex and involved, and I hope to explore them fully in a future study. Suffice to say in the present context that the focusing on the divergent and incompatible in the early Buddhist accounts of the path and goal is a classic instance of a failure to see the wood for the trees. That is, I do not wish to deny that there are sometimes different voices speaking in the early Buddhist texts, but rather suggest that those different voices need to be understood in relationship to a master narrative. The preoccupation with difference and divergence in early Buddhist texts has meant, I think, that sometimes the evidence for the kind of framework I have tried to sketch out in the first half of this essay has not been fully appreciated.

Further objects of meditation

Having suggested a basic framework let us consider some of the ways it is elaborated in the early texts. In the first place in addition to the objects of meditation mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, we find other objects and practices mentioned, sometimes incorporated into what appear to be attempts at providing more comprehensive lists of possible meditation objects practices. (e.g. *M II 11–22*; *A I 34–40*). These longer lists include such items as (1) the various physical devices known as *kaṣiṇa* or *kaṣiṇāyatana*, given as ten in number (earth, fire, water, wind, blue yellow red, white, space, and consciousness); (2) the various ‘recollections’ (*anussati*), given as six in number (Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, generosity, virtuous conduct, the gods). While the manner in which these objects are used for contemplation is not exactly specified in the *Nikāyas*—we are not explicitly told that the monk goes off to the forest sits down cross-legged and contemplates these objects—the descriptions of the effect on the mind of contemplating these objects have clear resonances with the descriptions of the practice of the ways of establishing mindfulness and the attainment of *jhāna*:

At such time as the noble disciple recollects the *Tathāgata*, his mind is not preoccupied with desire at all, it is not preoccupied with hatred, it is not preoccupied with delusion; his mind is just sincere on account of the *Tathāgata*. Now the noble disciple whose mind is sincere acquires a feeling for what is profitable, a feeling for the truth; he acquires a gladness that is connected with the truth. When one is glad, joy arises. When the mind is joyful, the body becomes tranquil, and when the body is tranquil

¹² See La Vallée Poussin (1937), Schmithausen (1981), Griffiths (1981), Vetter (1988), Gombrich (1996).

one experiences happiness; the mind of someone who is happy becomes concentrated.¹³

Thus, it seems, we can take the longer lists as giving alternative practices that represent different ways to cultivate a state of emotional contentment and clarity of mind. It is worth noting also that sometimes particular practices are said to be suited to countering specific defilements and mental tendencies: meditation on the ugliness of the body counters lust; friendliness counters ill-will; mindfulness of breathing counters excessive thinking (A IV 353, 358; Ud 37).

The other aspect of the elaboration of the practice of meditation we find in the Nikāyas is the attempt to define and map with increasing psychological and emotional precision the different states and attainments that result from the practice of meditation. Thus at least the initial description of the state of mind achieved by the ways of establishing of mindfulness appears to be couched in relatively general terms: it is a state in which the meditator is mindful, clearly comprehending, and free (temporarily) of desire and discontent. The account of the four *jhānas* seems concerned to provide an exact account of the progressive stages of this contentment and heightened awareness. The important thing to note is the focus on the same themes and the use of parallel terminology—freedom from hindrances (desire and aversion), joy and happiness, mindfulness and clear awareness—in various contexts.

According to the *sāmaññaphala* schema, by overcoming the hindrances a meditator goes on to attain the four *jhānas*, achieving a state of mind that is concentrated (*samāhita*) thoroughly purified (*pārisuddha*) and cleansed (*pariyodāta*), stainless (*anaṅgaṇa*), without defilements (*vigatūpakkilesa*), sensitive (*mudu-bhūta*), workable (*hammaniya*), steady (*thita*), unshakeable (*āneñja-ppatta*). This state of mind is brought about the practice of the four *jhānas*, but it falls short of awakening. Rather, it is the state of mind that forms the basis for various higher knowledges culminating in knowledge of suffering, its arising, its ceasing and the way leading to its ceasing—the four noble truths.

PART 2: THE EXEGETICAL SOURCES

The ascetic practices

Having considered in rather general terms some of what the earlier texts have to say about the practice of meditation let us now turn to consider what the later manuals of Theravāda Buddhist thought and practice have to say. The two most important manuals are the *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā*.

The basic themes and concerns of the earlier texts are still to be found but often developed or adapted to a slightly different situation. The account of the path in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* takes for granted the way of life of the ascetic (*samaṇa*), recommending a secluded place such as the forest, etc., for the practice of meditation. The later manuals have as their background a more settled

¹³ A III 285–88 (= V 329–333) repeats the same for the other five recollection practices.

On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation

way of life in monasteries (*vihāra*); and a strict ascetic lifestyle and living in the forest or at the root of a tree, etc., are presented as included in a specific list of thirteen ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*).¹⁴ This list of ascetic practices has antecedents in the Nikāyas.¹⁵ As the work of Schopen has shown we should be wary of taking the description of the ascetic lifestyle found in the early texts as necessarily and straightforwardly reflecting the actuality of the way of life of the earliest Buddhist monks. None the less, I think we can see in the manner of the presentation of the thirteen ascetic practices in texts such as the *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* a concern to maintain in the context of a more settled monastic lifestyle certain ascetic values and practices that were seen as conducive to and useful for the practice of meditation.

The *Visuddhimaggā* presents each of the thirteen ascetic practices as having three grades. I quote the description of the tree-root dweller's practice by way of example:

56. The *tree-root dweller's practice* is undertaken with one of the following statements: 'I refuse a roof' or 'I undertake the tree-root dweller's practice'.

The tree-root dweller should avoid such trees as a tree near a frontier, a shrine tree, a gum tree, a fruit tree, a bats' tree, a hollow tree, or a tree standing in the middle of a monastery. He can choose a tree standing on the outskirts of a monastery. These are the *directions*.

57. This has three *grades* too. Herein, one who is strict is not allowed to have a tree that he has chosen tidied up. He can move the fallen leaves with his foot while dwelling there. The medium one is allowed to get it tidied up by those who happen to come along. The mild one can take up residence there after summoning monastery attendants and novices and getting them to clear it up, level it, strew sand and make a fence round with a gate fixed in it. On a special day a tree-root dweller should sit in some concealed place elsewhere rather than there.

The moment any one of these three makes his abode under a roof, his ascetic practice is broken. The reciters of the *Aṅguttara* say that it is broken as soon as he knowingly meets the dawn under a roof. This is the *breach* in this instance.¹⁶

While the description of the mild grade certainly suggests a willingness to recognise less extreme forms of asceticism, I do not think, however, we necessarily have to agree with Ray and Schopen when they suggest that the later texts are increasingly hostile to the ascetic way of life in the forest, at best begrudgingly acknowledging it, at worst deliberately trying to tame it by doing their best to contain it within the monastery.¹⁷ In fact the attitude towards the ascetic practices in a text such as the *Visuddhimaggā* might also be taken as a concern to moderate ascetic zeal, and avoid asceticism for asceticism's sake. For the *Visuddhimaggā* the purpose of the ascetic practices is furtherance of one's meditation practice; they are not an end in themselves.¹⁸ Moreover, the account of the ascetic practices is immediately followed by a list of ten impediments that the prospective meditator must overcome in order to progress with his meditation.

¹⁴ *Vim* 27–38; *Vism* II 1–93; for a discussion of the ascetic practices in various ancient sources see Ray (1994), 293–323.

¹⁵ *A* III 219–21 (= *Vin* V 131, 133).

¹⁶ *Vism* II 56 (translated by Nāṇamoli).

¹⁷ Ray (1994), 293–323; Schopen (1995).

¹⁸ *Vism* II 88.

Certainly some of these impediments relate to the duties and responsibilities of communal monastic life: concern with one's dwelling and the monastic requisites, the responsibilities associated with teaching a class of pupils, the demands of fellow monks. The point seems to be that in order to make progress with one's meditation one needs to make some space and free oneself to some extent from everyday distractions.

The teacher as 'good friend'

One is now in a position to approach 'the good friend' (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), 'the giver of a meditation practice' (*kammaṭṭhāna-dāyaka*). The *Visuddhimagga* gives some account of the qualities of a 'good friend' and of the respectful behaviour the prospective pupil should show towards his teacher. The behaviour recommended by the *Visuddhimagga* in fact goes beyond the merely respectful: the meditator should dedicate himself (*attānaṃ niyyāpeti*) either to the Buddha or to his teacher. An attitude of complete trust in the teacher is conducive to progress in meditation and will encourage the teacher to help the pupil all he can—including, for example, teaching him 'secret books' (*Vism* III 123–27). Whatever the nature of these secret books, the fact that they are mentioned here suggests that the teachings on the practice of meditation presented in texts like the *Vimuttimaggā* and the *Visuddhimaggā* are not intended to be comprehensive.¹⁹ As well as an attitude of trust in the teacher, the texts emphasise the importance of approaching the task of meditation in the proper spirit (*Vism* III 128–30, IV 27).

Meditation practices and the theory of temperaments

The teacher chooses a meditation practice from a list of thirty-eight (*Vimuttimaggā*) or forty (*Visuddhimaggā*) possible practices.²⁰ This list of meditation practices is presented with reference to (1) a theory of character types related to which type a particular practice might suit, and (2) how far a particular practice can be developed in terms of 'concentration' (*samādhi*).

While there is not the space to consider the subtleties and complexities of the theory of character types here, its general psychological logic is clear.²¹ The the-

¹⁹ The secret books (*gūḥya-gantha*) are mentioned several times in the Pali commentaries (Ps II 264, Mp V 96; cf. Nidd-a I 112, As 374, Moh (B^c) 138). What precisely they were is unclear. The subcommentaries (Ps-pt (B^c) II 198, Mp-pt (B^c) III 369, *Vism*-mhṭ (B^c) I 134) refer to books on meditation practice dealing with the truths, dependent arising and so on that are profound and concerned with emptiness, but mentions none by name. Some scholars have speculated about a possible connection with the Khmer 'esoteric' manuals of meditation brought to light by the work of Bizot; see Bechert's introduction to Bizot (1988) and Cousins (1997).

²⁰ The *Vim* list of 38 topics of meditation seems to be the older and standard list; it is referred to frequently in the commentaries (Sv 185, 393, 644, 1033; Ps I 168, 195, 254; II 87, 89, 236, 358, 413; III 236; IV 95; V 40; As 158, 168; *Vibh*-a 118, 349, 364). The list of 40 *kammaṭṭhāna* appears to be peculiar to *Vism* and later texts such as *Abhidh-s* and *Abhidh-s*-mhṭ.

²¹ The theory seems to be adumbrated in the *Nikāyas* in the notion that certain meditation practices are suited to counteracting particular tendencies or problem (see above). The theory in some form is also assumed in *NiddI* (II 359, 453), *NiddII* (B^c 177), *Peṭ* (36–7, 141, 144, 216) and *Nett* (24–5, 90, 117–8, 122–3, 190).

ory runs that individuals have certain deep-rooted, general psychological tendencies that can be characterised with reference to greed, hatred and delusion. A 'greed' type is one who tends to attach to things: he is in the first place positive and enthusiastic. A hate type is one who tends to reject things: he is negative and unenthusiastic. Both these types share the quality of knowing what they think about things. The delusion type, on the other hand, is unclear about what he thinks: he does not know whether he is positive or negative about his experiences. Thus in eating, one of greedy temperament knows what he likes, and when he eats, he eats slowly, savouring the taste; one of hating temperament, on the other hand, knows what he doesn't like, and when he eats, he eats hurriedly, not bothering to savour the taste; one of deluded temperament doesn't know what he likes, and eats dropping bits into his dish, smearing his face, with his mind distracted, thinking of this and that (Vism III 93).

Meditation practice should counteract and balance these psychological tendencies. So, for example, the greed type should be given a dwelling such as a cave spattered with dirt, full of bats, in bleak surroundings and containing a bug-ridden bed (Vism III 97). The hate type should be given a comfortable dwelling with shade and water, well-proportioned walls, brightened with paintings, and decorated with flowers (Vism III 98). The greed type should meditate on the ugliness of the body, the hate type on friendliness (*mettā*), and the delusion type on the breath.

Levels and varieties of concentration

Both the Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga classify meditation practices according to the level of concentration they can be used to induce. Certain practices, such as the recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, can only bring the mind to a preliminary calm and happiness, termed 'access' (*upacāra*) in relation to full absorption or *jhāna*. Other meditation practices, mindfulness of the parts body and ugliness, bring the mind to the first level of *jhāna*, but not beyond. To go beyond the first *jhāna* to the second, third and fourth level of *jhāna*, one must use the 'divine abidings' (*brahma-vihāra*), beginning with friendliness, or the *kaṣiṇas*, or mindfulness of breathing. Finally, certain practices—the four 'formless' meditations—can only be developed by an accomplished and experienced meditator on the basis of his achievement of the fourth *jhāna* using one of the *kaṣiṇas*.

This classification neatly incorporates the various practices found in the Nikāyas into a unified scheme. This is not the place to consider the problem of whether or not the scheme is consonant with the understanding of meditation in the Nikāyas, but it is perhaps worth attempting to pass some comment on its psychological rationale. In the exegetical literature the process of meditation practice is clearly understood as a process of progressively stilling and simplifying the mind that passes by way of 'access' concentration to the first *jhāna* and through to the fourth. Stilling the mind requires that the mind stops thinking about this and that, and becomes absorbed in the object of meditation. In order to get the mind absorbed in the object of meditation one must actively think of it and examine it. The texts identify two mental qualities in particular

that accomplish this: *vitakka* and *vicāra*. The former seems to be understood as a simply applying of the mind to the object and keeping it in mind, the second as a more sustained examination of the various aspects and characteristics of the object: one must think of the object and think about it.²² When this is accomplished the mind becomes more or less absorbed in the object: the settles in access concentration or the complete absorption (*appanā*) of *jhāna* with no desire or tendency to think of or about other things.

The accomplished meditator, it seems, can achieve this state without this kind of initial thinking of and about the object of meditation:

By stilling mental application and examining, a monk lives having attained the joy and happiness of the second meditation, a state of inner clarity and mental unification without mental application and examining, and born of concentration. (D I 74)

Such a process is perhaps analogous to the way in which ordinary skills are accomplished: the initial stages of learning a language, or how to play a musical instrument, or drive a car, involve a considerable amount of deliberate and careful thinking about what we are doing. Once we have acquired the skill we do it ‘without thinking’. Technically, though, it would seem that according to the system of Theravāda Abhidhamma, we still require the kind of thinking designated as *vitakka* and *vicāra* when speaking a language, playing a musical instrument or driving car, however proficient we are.²³ Such thinking is only absent when the mind reaches the levels of stillness characterized by the second *jhāna* and beyond, and it is not possible, it seems, to speak, play the piano or drive a car in such state of mind. And this provides a clue as to why a meditation practice such as recollecting the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha is understood as unable to support the attainment of the *jhānas* proper. The qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha are relative to, say, the *kaṣiṇas* or the breath or friendliness, conceptually complex objects of meditation. In order to continue to be aware of them, the mind requires a degree of conceptual and discursive activity—*vitakka* and *vicāra*—that is simply not compatible with the stillness of *jhāna* proper.

It is worth making one further point with reference to this list of meditation practices classified according to the levels of concentration. In effect, what we call ‘meditation’ is presented as a continuum from simple devotional acts and contemplations through to the most advanced spiritual practices and attainments. To chant the formula of the qualities of the Buddha beginning *itī pi so bhagavā* with any degree of feeling is effectively to engage in the practice of recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) (Vism VII 2–67), one of the standard thirty-eight or forty meditation practices; it is, then, at least a preliminary exercise in the practice of calm meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Such a devotional act is one commonly performed by lay and monastic Buddhists in the countries of

²² See the definitions and similes for *vitakka* and *vicāra* given at As 114–15 (= Pāṭis-a I 181–2 = Nidd-a I 127–8 = Vism IV 89–92).

²³ According to the system set out in such texts as Abhidh-av, Vism (chapter XIV) and Abhidh-s, the sense-sphere processes of impulsion (*javana*) which occur during ordinary waking states always involve *vitakka* and *vicāra*.

Theravāda Buddhism. This makes claims that lay participation in meditation is not traditional but a feature of Buddhist modernism,²⁴ problematic. The claim is in fact circular: it only has force when ‘meditation’ is understood with reference to modernist categories. If meditation is understood as referring to certain types of insight practice (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) based on establishing mindfulness (*satipatthāna*), then it seems clear that this indeed was not a traditional part of lay Buddhist practice before the modern period. Yet it is clear from texts such as the *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* that the notion of *bhāvanā* has not traditionally been understood so restrictively.

Developing insight: ordinary and transcendent jhāna

The *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* contain a certain amount of general advice (see, for example, *Vism* IV 34–41 on the affect that food and the weather might have on one’s meditation practice) as well as specific instructions for the various meditations practices. These I must pass over in this brief essay.

Like the Nikāyas’ *sāmaññaphala* schema, the account of the Buddhist path found in the *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* focuses on the fourth *jhāna* as a pivotal state. What is also clear from the *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* is that the various levels of concentration, the various mental feats achieved by the meditation practices we have been considering are not ends in themselves: they fall somewhat short of awakening (*bodhi*). The stillness and peace of the fourth *jhāna* and the various formless attainments, the ability to fly through the air or recall one’s past lives, useful as they may be, are distinct from awakening. What is required to achieve awakening, is insight. I should like to finish this brief essay with some observations on the practice of ‘insight’ in relationship to the meditation practices we have been considering.

In general terms the method of developing insight (*vipassanā*) is to direct the perfect mindfulness, stillness and lucidity that has been cultivated in the *jhānas*—especially the fourth *jhāna*—to the contemplation not of the *kasīnas*, etc., but of ‘reality’—reality in the sense of the ways things are, or, perhaps better, the way things work. This involves watching *dharmas*—the mental and physical qualities that constitute our experience of the world. The meditator is instructed to watch the rise and fall of *dharmas* and see them as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not self (*anattā*). This loosens the meditator’s attachment to and identification with experiences; the normally unseen processes whereby we construct our personalities and identities on the basis of countless fleeting experiences are seen and reversed. In seeing through these processes and reversing them the meditator finds a profound peace—a peace that has nothing to do with this world and is characterised as the experience of ‘the unconditioned reality’ (*asamkhata-dhātu*), awakening (*bodhi*), *nibbāna*. From the early Abhidhamma texts (*Dhs* 61ff) onwards this experience of the peace of *nibbāna* is once more termed *jhāna*, but it is no ordinary (*lokiya*) *jhāna*; it is distinguished from other *jhānas* by its being ‘transcendent’ (*lokuttara*).

²⁴ Gombrich (1983).

How we are to understand the relationship of this transcendent *jhāna* (which knows 'reality') to the ordinary *jhānas* induced by the practice of the various meditations considered earlier brings us once more to the complex issues of both the psychology and early history of Buddhist meditation practice that I referred to above. Are we dealing with a later, somewhat artificial and forced, synthesis of what were in the earliest Buddhist texts two (or three, or four) quite distinct paths of meditation, involving quite distinct conceptions of 'awakening'? As I suggested above, I would prefer to see the presentation of these matters in Buddhist exegetical literature not so much as a revisionist reading of the earlier material that holds together the incompatible and attempts to hide the joins, but rather as an elaboration of a particular vision and understanding of the practice of meditation and 'awakening' that is already articulated in the Nikāyas. In short, I am suggesting that the exegetical literature is essentially true to the vision of meditation presented in the Nikāyas. This requires argument at length and in the present context I must restrict my comments to certain aspects of the exegetical literature's understanding which have not, I suggest, been fully appreciated in the modern scholarly literature.

The *Visuddhimagga* presents the attainment of transcendent *jhāna* in the following way. The meditator's success in watching the rise and fall of *dhammas* is signalled by the fact that he begins to experience directly a world made up not, as he has previously experienced, of substantial beings and objects, put of patterns of events rising and falling, coming into existence, and passing out of existence. A feeling for the meditator's experience at this stage is well evoked by the images (drawn from the earlier texts) that Buddhaghosa gives in this connection: the world is no longer experienced as consisting of things that are lasting and solid but rather as something that vanishes almost as soon as it appears—like dew drops at sunrise, like a bubble on water, like a line drawn on water, like a mustard-seed placed on the point of an awl, like a flash of lightning; things in themselves lack substance and always elude one's grasp—like a mirage, a conjuring trick, a dream, the circle formed by a whirling fire brand, a fairy city, foam, or the trunk of a banana tree (*Vism* XX 104).

The experience is profoundly peaceful and in fact has the basic characteristics of *jhāna* (although the term is not used). The texts highlight ten qualities: illumination (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāna*), joy (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), happiness (*sukha*), commitment (*adhimokkha*), resolve (*paggaha*), alertness (*upatthāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) and, significantly, attachment (*nikanti*). Because of the presence of the last, these ten qualities are collectively referred to as the ten 'defilements of insight' (*vipassanupakkilesa*).²⁵

What is being said here is that the mind, being so deeply affected by its experience, grasps at it and takes it for awakening itself. In other words, the meditator may think that he has reached the end of the path. The texts warn that the meditator may become convinced that he or she is an Arhat at this point, and live with this idea for many years. Only when some experience—like the arising of strong anger or fear—brings home to him or her that this cannot be the case

²⁵ Defined and discussed at *Vism* XX 105–30.

does the meditator move on, returning to his or her practice until the true transcendent *jhāna* of stream-entry, once return or non-return is attained and he is personality is radically transformed so that he becomes one of the noble persons (*ariya-puggala*).

As the exegetical texts present it, there is a broad class of *jhāna*-type states in which the mind becomes peaceful and still by focusing and becoming absorbed in a particular object of concentration. When that object is a simple conceptual object, like the *kasīnas* or the breath or friendliness, the mind is stilled temporarily. But when the object of concentration is, in some sense, reality itself, the *jhāna* state has the transcendent, transforming quality of awakening.

But this elusive and subtle transcendent *jhāna* is not, as it were, a rabbit drawn out of a hat; its basic qualities are present in and shared with *jhāna* states in general. The literature shows some evidence of discussion concerning the question of just which states should be said to possess the qualities of awakening—'the constituents of awakening' (*bojjhaṅga*). I have argued in detail elsewhere that there is in the Nikāyas a clear and definite affinity between the list of *bojjhaṅgas* and *jhāna* states in general.²⁶ But for the commentaries, strictly we should only talk of *bojjhaṅgas* in transcendent *jhāna*, i.e. at the actual moment of attaining the path and fruit. The point here is that if the qualities—mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, effort, joy, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity—don't succeed in actually performing the function of awakening the mind, then they are not 'constituents' (*aṅga*) of awakening (*bodhi*). Nevertheless, it is also apparent that the commentaries wish to emphasize that these constituents of awakening are present in certain states that are close to awakening, that share certain essential characteristics of awakening.

For there are those who bring out the constituents of awakening not only in the case of moments of strong insight, path and fruit; some also bring them out in the case of *jhānas* [attained by means] of the *kasīnas* which are the basis for insight, and *jhānas* [attained by means] of breathing-in-and-out, ugliness, and the divine-abidings. And they are not contradicted by the teachers of the commentaries.²⁷

So here a variety of meditation practices ending in the attainment of *jhāna* is said to bring into being and develop the constituents of awakening.

What I have tried to suggest in this lecture is that there is in at least significant portions of the Nikāyas a broadly consistent and definite theory of meditation practice: the mind should by the use of various meditation practices be brought to a certain kind of deeply peaceful state where certain mental qualities, certain emotions and feelings, such as joy, tranquillity, happiness, mindfulness and equanimity, are accentuated. These qualities, these emotions and feelings, are the means to and constituents of awakening. This same theory of meditation is articulated and further elaborated in the exegetical literature with more precision and detail. Whether or not such a theory of meditation precisely reflects

²⁶ Gethin (1992), 162–82.

²⁷ Ps I 85 = Spk III 139 = Mp II 98–9 = Vibh-a 316: *te hi na kevalam balava-vipassanā-magga-phala-kkhanesu eva bojjhaṅgam uddharanti, vipassanā-pādaka-kasīna-jhāna-ānāpānāsūbha-brahmavihāra-jjhānesu pi uddharanti. na ca paṭisiddhā aṭṭhakathācariyehi.*

what the Buddha taught, whether or not it is the only theory evidenced in the early texts, it remains, I suggest, a clear and definite theory, a proper acknowledgement and appreciation of which is lacking in much of the scholarly discussion of early Buddhist meditation. While there is no doubt evidence of inconsistency where incompatible or rival views and theories have been unthinkingly or deliberately put together in the corpus of early Buddhist texts that have come down to us, there is also evidence of a broadly consistent vision. A proper appreciation of early Buddhist literature requires consideration of both kinds of evidence.

The thirty-eight meditation practices (*kammaṭṭhāna*)

<i>meditation practice</i>	<i>temperament</i>	<i>level of concentration</i>
6 recollections • Buddha • Dhamma • Sangha • good conduct • generosity • gods	faith	access
peace	intelligence	access
death	intelligence	access
repulsiveness of food	intelligence	access
determining the 4 elements	intelligence	access
mindfulness of body (32 parts)	greed	1st jhāna
10 uglinesses • the bloated • the livid • the festering • the cut-up • the gnawed • the scattered • the hacked and scattered • the bleeding • the worm- infested • the skeleton	greed	1st jhāna
friendliness compassion sympathetic joy	hate	1st–3rd jhānas
4 element kasiṇas • earth • water • fire • air	all	1st–4th jhānas
4 colour kasiṇas • blue • yellow • red • white	hate	1st–4th jhānas
mindfulness of breathing	delusion/discursive	1st–4th jhānas
equanimity	hate	4th jhāna
4 formless attainments	all	4th jhāna

Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated editions of Pali texts are those of the Pali Text Society.

A	Āṅguttara Nikāya
Abhidh-a	Abhidhammāvatāra
Abhidh-s	Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha
Abhidh-s-mhṭ	Abhidhammattha-vibhāvini-ṭīkā
As	Atthasālinī (= Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā)
B*	Burmese edition
D	Dīgha Nikāya
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇi
M	Majjhima Nikāya
Moh	Mohavicchedani
Mp	Manorathapūraṇi
MW	Monier Williams, <i>Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i>
Nett	Nettippakaraṇa
NiddI	Mahāniddeśa
NiddII	Cullāniddeśa
Nidd-a	Niddeśa-aṭṭhakathā
Paṭis-a	Paṭisambhīdāmagga-aṭṭhakathā
Peṭ	Peṭakopadesa
Ps	Papañcasūdanī
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Spk	Sāraṅgappakāsīnī
Sv	Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī
ṭ	ṭīkā (subcommentary)
Vibh-a	Sammoḥavinodanī (= Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā)
Vin	Vinaya
Vim	Vimuttimagga (References are to Ehara, et al 1977.)
Vism	Visuddhimagga (References are to chapter and section of the Warren-Kosambi edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1950) and Nāṅgamoli 1964.)

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On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation

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