

The Gradual Path of Training in the *Dīrgha-āgama*, From Sense-restraint to Imperturbability

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Introduction

A unifying feature of nearly all of the thirteen discourses in the first chapter of the *Dīrgha-nikāya*, the *Sīlakkhandha-vagga*, is the giving of an exposition of the gradual path of training that leads from going forth to full awakening.¹ The Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* extant in Chinese translation has a similar chapter comprising ten discourses;² and the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* preserved in Sanskrit fragments likewise has a *śīlaskandha-nipāta*, which comprises twenty-three discourses.³

The assembling of discourses that in one way or another describe the gradual path of training has obvious advantages for transmission. Such a grouping of discourses is easily memorized for oral recitation, because the substantial amount of text common to the discourses need be learned only once. When transmission shifts to the written medium, the full text need be written out only at its first occurrence and can be abbreviated for subsequent discourses. This save both, time and writing material, the latter pro-

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¹ The first discourse, the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, DN 1 at DN I 4,1 to 12,17, has instead an extended exposition on morality in three graded sections.

² DĀ 20 to DĀ 29, which form the third chapter of the collection; cf. TI 82a6: 第三分.

³ For a survey of this collection cf. Hartmann and Wille (2014) (for a correction of their presentation cf. Anālayo (2014c: 8 note 13)).

bably being an important concern in a manuscript culture.

Besides serving as a factor for conveniently grouping discourses to facilitate their transmission, the gradual path account also has considerable doctrinal and practical significance. It offers in schematic fashion answers to such questions as: What are the practices that are required for progressing from unawakened worlding to fully liberated one? In what way do these practices relate to one another? By providing information on such matters, the gradual path account in the early discourses stands at the beginning of a concern with path conceptions that have been of lasting relevance in the development of Buddhist thought.⁴

Within the confines of the present paper, I am only able to study one section of the gradual path of training. The section I have chosen describes the practices to be undertaken after having already established a foundation in moral conduct and up to gaining the mental imperturbability required for developing supernormal abilities. Thus the section of the gradual path I will be examining extends from sense-restraint to the attainment of the fourth absorption.⁵ My study is based on providing a translation of this section from the Dharmaguptaka *Āṅgīra-āgama* extant in Chinese translation, in comparison with its parallels. The discourse translated, which is a parallel to the *Ambaṭṭha-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, is the first discourse in the chapter with expositions of the gradual path of training in the Dharmaguptaka *Āṅgīra-āgama*.⁶

⁴ Buswell and Gimello (1992/1994: 3f) point out that “the intrinsic efficacy of mārga generally dominates the whole of Buddhism and leads it to privilege mārga in ways that other traditions do not. Thus many of the most characteristic features of Buddhism appear to derive from its emphasis on mārga.”

⁵ For a discussion of aspects of the section on morality in the *Brahmajāla* and its parallels cf. Anālayo (2014a).

⁶ In the case of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, the full account of the gradual path is instead found in the second discourse, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*; hence in my comparative notes I will refer to this discourse. For the Mūlasarvāstivāda version of the gradual path I rely on the account given in a version of the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* preserved in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. As my main concern is to compare versions of the gradual path transmitted by the Dharmaguptaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda/Sarvāstivāda, and Theravāda reciter lineages, I will not take up the gradual path account in T 22, a discourse parallel to DN 2 that has been preserved as an individual translation. On the school affiliation of the *Āṅgīra-āgama* cf., e.g., Demiéville 1951: 252f, Brough 1962/2001: 50, Lü 1963: 242, Bareau 1966, Waldschmidt 1980:

After presenting the translation, I survey somewhat differing gradual path schemes found in the early discourses in general, in order to evaluate their function as a kind of prototype path manual.

Translation⁷

1) By cultivating noble virtue the mind [of a monk practicing the gradual path of training] is not defiled by attachment and he harbours joy and happiness within.⁸ Although seeing forms with the eye, he does not grasp at their characteristics and his eye is not bound by forms. Being without any greedy attachment, he is firm and calm, without being distressed and without any evil influxes. He firmly upholds the set of precepts and guards the eye faculty well. The ear, nose, tongue, body and mind *are also like this*.

He tames the six types of contact well, guarding and disciplining them, so that he comes to be at ease. It is just as a capable trainer [of horses] who drives a chariot with four horses on level ground, holding the whip and the reins, so that they do not stray from the route.⁹ In the same way a monk tames the ‘horses’ of

136, Mayeda 1985: 97, Enomoto 1986: 25, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Schmithausen 1987: 318, Oberlies 2003: 44, Salomon 2007: 354 note 14, and Willemen 2008: 60.

⁷ The translated section is DĀ 20 at T I 84c13 to 85c13; in what follows I note only selected differences between the parallel versions, as an exhaustive study of variations would go beyond the scope of this article. I have added numbering to some paragraphs to facilitate the discussion in the study part of this article; these numbers are not found in the original. Regarding the account of the gradual path in the *Ambaṭṭha-sutta* and its parallels, Meisig (1993: 234f) considers this to be a later addition, since in his opinion it interrupts an otherwise heated debate. According to Macqueen (1988: 180), however, the gradual path fits its context in the *Ambaṭṭha-sutta* and its parallels quite well. Meisig (1987: 35ff) (cf. also Ramers (1996: 6f)) makes a similar suggestion for the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* (DN 2), where one parallel version, EĀ 43.7 at T II 762a7, lacks the account of the gradual path. For a critical reply to the suggestion that in the case of DN 2 the gradual path account would be a later addition cf. Freiburger (2000: 73f note 165).

⁸ The Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels qualify this happiness as the happiness of blamelessness; cf. Gnoli (1978: 240,18): *adhyātmam anavadyasukham prativedayate* and DN 2 at DN I 70,5: *ajjhātam anavajjasukham paṭisaṃvedeti*.

⁹ The simile is not found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels.

the six [sense] faculties [so that] he is at ease and without loss.

2) Possessing noble virtue in this way and achieving noble [restraint] of the [sense] faculties,¹⁰ he knows moderation in eating and is without greed for flavours.¹¹ He proceeds by nourishing the body so that it does not become afflicted, but not out of pride. He regulates his body so that former painful feelings cease and new painful feelings do not arise,¹² [so that] he has strength and is without concerns, so that the body is at ease.

It is just as a person who applies medicine to an ulcer in order to heal the ulcer, not seeking to adorn himself nicely, nor out of personal pride. Young brahmin,¹³ in the same way a monk takes sufficient food to support the body, without harbouring pride.

Again it is like lubricating [the axle of] a chariot, wishing to make it movable and usable, so as to use it to transport a load to some place.¹⁴ In the same way a monk takes sufficient food to support the body, wishing to practice the path.

3) Young brahmin, being accomplished in noble virtue in this way, achieving noble [restraint] of the [sense] faculties, and

¹⁰ Adopting the variant 諸 instead of 眼.

¹¹ The Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels proceed directly from sense-restraint to clear comprehension when doing various bodily activities (found only at a later point in DĀ 20); cf. Gnoli (1978: 241,3) and DN 2 at DN I 70,25. They thus do not cover topics 2 to 4 found in DĀ 20: moderation in eating, wakefulness, and *satipaṭṭhāna*.

¹² The *Visuddhimagga* and the *Yogacārabhūmi* agree that the new feelings to be avoided are those caused by overeating; cf. Vism 33,2 and Śrāvaka bhūmi Study Group (1998: 140,9) or T 1579 at T XXX 410b27 (for a study, edition, and translation of the entire section on contentment with food cf. also Wayman (1961: 139–162)).

¹³ The young brahmin to whom the exposition of the gradual path is addressed is 阿摩晝, corresponding to Ambaṭṭha in DN 3 at DN I 100,5. For a study of Ambaṭṭha in comparison with Śvetaketu in the *Upaniṣads* cf. Black (2011). Bronkhorst (2007: 354f) suggests that a possible Sanskrit form of the name as Ambaṣṭha would have signalled to a perceptive audience from the outset that he is not of pure Brahminical descent (something which, in the course of their discussion, the Buddha reveals to humble the overly arrogant young brahmin).

¹⁴ DN 2 at DN I 71,6 instead uses the image of a bird that takes its wings along wherever it flies to illustrate a monk's contentment. The similes of using medicine for a wound and of applying grease to an axle can be found also in SN 35.198 at SN IV 177,1; cf. also Vism 33,5 and 32,17.

knowing moderation in eating, in the first and last [watches] of the night a monk is diligently wakeful. Again, during the day he is constantly mindful and with a unified mind, whether walking or sitting, removing the many hindrances.

In the first watch of the night he is constantly mindful and with a unified mind, whether walking or sitting, ^[85a] removing the many hindrances. On reaching the middle watch of the night, he then lies down on his right side to sleep, constantly mindful of the time for rising again. He fixes his perceptions in [mental] clarity and his mind is not confused. On reaching the last watch of the night he rises with attention, he is constantly mindful and with a unified mind, whether walking or sitting, removing the many hindrances.

In this way being accomplished in noble virtue, achieving noble [restraint] of the [sense] faculties, knowing moderation in eating, in the first and last [watches] of the night a monk is diligently awake, constantly mindful, and with a unified mind that is not confused.¹⁵

4) How is a monk with mindfulness that is not confused? In this way, in regard to the internal body a monk contemplates the body, diligently without laxity, with undistracted mindfulness, removing desire and discontent for the world. In regard to the external body he contemplates the body ... in regard to the internal and external body he contemplates the body diligently without laxity, with undistracted mindfulness, removing desire and discontent for the world. He contemplates feeling ... mental states ... dhammas *also in this way*. This is how a monk is with mindfulness that is not confused.

5) How is he with a unified mind? In this way, when taking a step while walking, when going in or out, when looking to the left or the right, when bending or extending [a limb], when raising or lowering the head, when carrying his robes and bowl, when receiving beverages and food, when defecating or urinating, when falling asleep or waking up, when sitting or standing, when speaking or remaining silent, at all times a monk is constantly mindful and with a unified mind, without losing his deportment.¹⁶

¹⁵ The practice of wakefulness and the next section on *satipaṭṭhāna* practice are without a counterpart in the two parallel versions.

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the practice of clear comprehension cf. Anālayo (2003: 141–145) and (2013: 51f). At a workshop held at Stanford

This is being with a unified mind.

It is just as a person who walks with a great assembly; whether he walks in front, in the middle or at the back, he constantly comes to be at ease and is without fear.¹⁷

Young brahmin, in this way when taking a step while walking, when going in or out ... *up to* ... when speaking or remaining silent, a monk is constantly mindful and with a unified mind, without any worries or fears.

6) In this way possessing noble virtue, achieving noble [restraint] of the [sense] faculties, knowing moderation in eating, being diligently awake in the first and last [watches] of the night, constantly mindful and with a unified mind that is not confused, a monk delights in being in quiet places, at the foot of a tree, in a cemetery, in a mountain cave, in an open field, or among heaps of garbage.

When the time has come, he begs for food. Upon returning, he washes his hands and feet, puts away his robes and bowl, and sits down cross-legged with body erect and straight mind, collecting mindfulness in front.¹⁸

7) He discards avarice and greed; his mind completely dissociates itself from them. He extinguishes anger in the mind and is without the bondage of resentment. His mind dwells in purity, constantly harbouring kindness and empathy.

He discards sloth-and-torpor, fixing his perceptions in [mental] clarity and is with mindfulness that is not confused. He removes restlessness-and-worry and his mind completely dissociates itself from them. He dwells inwardly at peace and eliminates restlessness-and-worry from the mind. He removes uncertainty and

University, April 2014, Jens-Uwe Hartmann pointed out that, whereas DN 2 at DN I 71,¹⁴ qualifies such clear comprehension as “noble”, *ariya*, in line with the qualification used for morality and sense restraint, the gradual path account in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* employs instead the qualification “supreme”, *parama*; cf. Gnoli (1978: 241,10).

¹⁷ The Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels do not employ a simile to illustrate the practice of clear comprehension with various bodily activities.

¹⁸ The Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels do not describe how the monk begs for food. They just list secluded places and then describe how he sits down cross-legged with mindfulness in front, *pratimukha/parimukha*; cf. Gnoli (1978: 241,14) and DN 2 at DN I 71,19; for a discussion of the implications of mindfulness established “in front” cf. Anālayo (2003: 128f).

doubt, having gone beyond the net of doubt. His mind is collected and unified in wholesome states.

It is just as if a slave had been granted by his master [the right to have his own] family name and is at ease, having been set free and exempted from being a slave. His mind is delighted, having no more worries and fears.

Again it is like a person who has been granted wealth [as a loan] to make a living and has gained a great profit in return. He repays the original owner of the goods and the surplus wealth is enough for his needs. He thinks to himself: ‘Formerly I was granted wealth [as a loan] and I was afraid that it would not turn out as I wished. Now I have gained profit in return and, having repaid the original owner of the goods, the surplus wealth is enough for my needs.’ Having no more worries and fears, ^[85b] he gives rise to great delight.

[Again] it is like a person who, having been sick for a long time, recovers from his sickness;¹⁹ he is [able] to digest beverages and food, and his appearance and strength are satisfactory. He thinks: ‘Formerly I was sick but now I am recovered. I am [able] to digest beverages and food, and my appearance and strength are satisfactory.’ Having no more worries and fears, he gives rise to great delight.

Again it is like a person who, having been imprisoned for a long time, is released and at ease. He thinks to himself: ‘Formerly I was arrested and detained; now I have been liberated.’ Having no more worries and fears, he gives rise to great delight.

Again it is like a person who carries much wealth and treasure while passing through a great wilderness. He gets to cross it at ease, without encountering robbers. He thinks to himself: ‘Carrying wealth and treasure I have passed through this hardship.’ Having no more worries and fears, he gives rise to great delight and his mind is at ease.²⁰

Young brahmin, when a monk is himself overcome by the

¹⁹ Adopting the variant 瘥 instead of 差.

²⁰ The sequence of the similes in the Mūlasarvāstivāda version, Gnoli (1978: 241,19), is as follows: loan, sickness, slavery, imprisonment, dangerous journey. The sequence of the similes in the Theravāda version, DN 2 at DN I 71,31, proceeds in this way: loan, sickness, imprisonment, slavery, dangerous journey.

five hindrances, he is constantly worried and fearful. He is again like a slave, like a person in debt, [like] one who for a long time has been sick, [like] one who is imprisoned, [like] one who journeys through a great wilderness. He himself sees that he is not yet free from the hindrances, which cover and darken the mind, and his eye of wisdom is not clear.

8) Then he diligently discards sensual desire, as well as evil and unwholesome states. Being endowed with [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation,²¹ with joy and happiness arisen from seclusion, he gains entry into the first absorption. His body is completely pervaded, filled, and drenched by joy and happiness,²² with no [part] that is not permeated.

It is just like a capable bath attendant who fills a container with much [soap] powder. By drenching it with water, he completely moistens it with water,²³ so that no [part] is not pervaded [by water].²⁴

In the same way a monk gains entry into the first absorption, with joy and happiness throughout his body, with no [part] that is not permeated. Young brahmin, in this way this is his first gaining of happiness with his present body. Why is that? Because this is to be gained by being diligent, with mindfulness that is not confused, and by delighting in quietude and seclusion.

Discarding [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation, he gives rise to confidence,²⁵ and his mindfulness is

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of the significance of these two factors of the first absorption cf. Anālayo (2014b: 79–84).

²² Adopting the variant 以 instead of 已.

²³ Adopting the variant 水 instead of 外.

²⁴ The *Vimuttimaggā*, T 1648 at T XXXII 417b8, explains the point of this simile to be that soap powder in its natural state can easily be scattered by the wind. Similarly, a mind without joy and concentration will easily be scattered by the five hindrances. In this way joy, happiness, and concentration are to the mind what water is to the bath powder, the kneading of which is comparable to the action of the *jhāna* factors *vitakka/vitarka* and *vicāra*.

²⁵ Adopting the variant 捨 instead of 於. The Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda parallels qualify such confidence as “internal”, *ajjhataṃ/adhyātmaṃ*; cf. DN 2 at DN I 74,14 and Gnoli (1978: 243,12). This qualification supports the impression that the inner stability reached through the absence of the first *jhāna* factors *vitakka/vitarka* and *vicāra* is a central factor in the arising of such inner confidence.

collected in mental unification. Being without [directed] awareness and without [sustained] contemplation, with joy and happiness arisen from concentration, he enters the second absorption. His body is completely pervaded, filled, and drenched by the joy and happiness of mental unification, with no [part] that is not permeated.

It is just like [a pond] on a mountain top with cool spring water that wells up by itself from within, none coming in from outside.²⁶ The pool itself is in turn soaked by the clear water that wells up from within, with no [part] that is not pervaded.

Young brahmin, in the same way a monk enters the second absorption and no [part of his body] is not permeated by the joy and happiness that are born of concentration. This is his second gaining of happiness with his present body.

Discarding joy, he dwells in equipoise and with mindfulness that is not confused. With his whole being experiencing acute happiness he enters the third absorption,²⁷ which is spoken of by noble ones as a [condition of] equipoise, mindfulness, and happiness.²⁸ His body is completely pervaded, filled, and drenched by happiness that is without joy, with no [part] that is not permeated.

It is just like *uppala* lotuses, *paduma* lotuses, *kumuda* lotuses, [or] *pundarika* lotuses, which have emerged from the mud, but have not emerged above the water. Their roots, stems, stalks, and flowers are soaked in the water, with no [part] that is not

²⁶ The Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel, Gnoli (1978: 243,18), also specifies that this pond is located on the top of a mountain. This location explains why it would not receive water flowing in from outside. In the context of the simile, the location on top of a mountain illustrates the mental aloofness experienced with the second absorption. According to the *Vimuttimaggā*, T 1648 at T XXXII 418c27, the absence of water flowing in from the outside illustrates the absence of *vitakka/vitarka* and *vicāra*, and the welling up of water from within stands for the welling up of joy and happiness born of concentration.

²⁷ My translation is based on the assumption that a reference to 身 here renders an instrumental *kāyena* in the Indic original, which in such contexts functions as an idiomatic expression to convey personal and direct experience; cf. Schmithausen (1981: 214 and 249 ad. note 50), Radich (2007: 263), Harvey (2009: 180 note 10), and Anālayo (2011: 379f note 203).

²⁸ Adopting a variant without 起.

pervaded [by the water].²⁹

Young brahmin, in the same way a monk enters the third absorption and his body is soaked in dwelling in happiness that is secluded from joy, with no [part] that is not pervaded. ^[85c] This is his third gaining of happiness with his present body.

Discarding ⟨pain⟩ and happiness,³⁰ sadness and joy having previously ceased, being without pain and without happiness, with purity of equipoise and mindfulness, he enters the fourth absorption. His body is completely filled and drenched with mental purity, with no [part] that is not pervaded.

It is just like a person who has taken a bath and is clean. He covers his body with a new white cloth, demonstrating the cleanness

²⁹ The total immersion in water in this simile would reflect the progressive deepening of concentration reached at this juncture: from active kneading with water to form a soap ball, illustrative of the joy and happiness of the first absorption; via the welling up of spring water, illustrative of the experience of joy and happiness of the second absorption; to total immersion in water, representing the stable happiness of the third absorption, which is without the mental motion of joy. The water imagery continues in relation to full awakening, which DĀ 20 at T I 86c8 illustrates with the example of seeing in clear water plants and pebbles, as well as fish moving in various directions. The Mūlasarvāstivāda version, Gnoli (1978: 251,1), only lists the items seen, without referring to the possibility of motion. Motion is mentioned in DN 2 at DN I 84,16, which describes seeing fish that are moving or stationary. As was pointed out by Paul Harrison during the workshop held at Stanford University, April 2014, this is significant in that the water has to be very clear in order for one to be able to see fishes not only when they are moving, but also when they are motionless. The point conveyed by this detail would thus be the supreme clarity of vision gained with full awakening.

³⁰ My translation is based on an emendation, indicated by the use of pointed brackets ⟨ ⟩. The original at T I 85c2 reads: 彼捨喜樂, 憂喜先滅 (the underlined character is the problematic one). This clearly is an error, since the standard formulation in the early discourses in general and also elsewhere in the same *Dirgha-āgama* speaks of discarding “pain” and happiness, instead of “joy” and happiness (which in fact makes no sense, since the same description indicates that joy had been discarded earlier); cf., e.g., DĀ 2 at T I 23c23: 捨滅苦樂, 先除憂喜, DĀ 6 at T I 42b9: 捨滅苦樂, 先除憂喜, DĀ 9 at T I 50c22: 離苦樂行, 先滅憂喜, DĀ 17 at T I 75a24: 樂盡苦盡, 憂喜先滅, DĀ 21 at T I 93c5: 樂滅苦滅, 先除憂喜, DĀ 28 at T I 110b3: 捨苦捨樂, 先滅憂喜. Hence I emend the present passage to read: 彼捨苦樂, 憂喜先滅, assuming that due to a scribal error 苦 has been confused with 喜.

of his body.³¹

Young brahmin, in the same way a monk enters the fourth absorption and permeates his body with mental purity, with no [part] of it that is not pervaded.

9) Again, having entered the fourth absorption his mind is imperturbable, without increase or decrease. He dwells without craving or aversion in the stage of imperturbability.

It is just as a private room that has been plastered inside and outside, and whose door has been firmly shut and locked,³² with no wind or dust [entering]. Inside a lamp has been lit, which nobody touches or agitates. The flame of that lamp rises quietly and without perturbation.³³

Young brahmin, in the same way a monk has entered the fourth absorption and his mind is imperturbable, without increase or decrease. He dwells without craving or aversion in the stage of imperturbability. This is his fourth gaining of happiness with his present body. Why is that? Because this is to be gained by being diligent without laxity, being with mindfulness that is not confused, and delighting in quietude and seclusion.

Study

The table below surveys the differences in the practices described.³⁴ Common to the three versions is the starting point in

³¹ The specification that the person in this way demonstrates the cleanness of his body is not found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda parallels, nor do they mention that the person has taken a bath (the corresponding part has not been preserved among the Sanskrit fragments of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, but the same is found in the Tibetan translation of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, D 1 *kha* 76b7 or Q 1030 *ge* 71b2, which additionally specifies the size of the cloth). The specifications given in DĀ 20 help to bring out an aspect of the simile emphasized in the *Yogacārabhūmi*, T 1579 at T XXX 339c8, according to which the whiteness of the cloth represents the purity of the mind reached with the fourth absorption.

³² Adopting the variant 扃 instead of 嚮.

³³ The simile is not found in DN 2.

³⁴ Here and below, the tables proceed from the probably to most readers more familiar Theravāda version to the parallels. In the present case the Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel preserved in Sanskrit fragments is so close to the Theravāda version that both can be presented together (the only difference being that DN 2 does not illustrate imperturbability with a simile).

sense-restraint (1) and the final section, which proceeds from clear comprehension (5) to seclusion (6), the removal of the hindrances, (7), the attainment of the four absorptions (8), and the gaining of mental imperturbability (9).

Theravāda (DN 2)/Mūlasarvāstivāda (Skt)	Dharmaguptaka (DĀ 20)
1) sense-restraint	1) sense-restraint & simile
	2) moderation in eating & simile
	3) wakefulness
	4) <i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>
5) clear comprehension	5) clear comprehension & simile
6) seclusion	6) seclusion
7) hindrances & similes	7) hindrances & similes
8) absorption & similes	8) absorption & similes
9) imperturbability (Skt: & simile)	9) imperturbability & simile

Here the parallel versions differ only in the degree to which they illustrate aspects of the gradual path of training with similes. The Dharmaguptaka version offers a simile for sense-restraint (1), which depicts a charioteer keeping his horses in check so that the chariot does not stray from the road. Another simile describes a person who walks fearlessly with a great assembly as an illustration of the practice of clear comprehension (5). In the case of imperturbability, the Dharmaguptaka and Mūlasarvāstivāda versions present a simile that involves a sheltered room or house.

Another and more pronounced difference is that moderation in eating (2), wakefulness (3), and *satipaṭṭhāna* (4) are taken up only in the Dharmaguptaka version. This raises the question: What to make of the absence of moderation in eating, wakefulness, and *satipaṭṭhāna* in the Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda versions?

Now in the case of another gradual path account in the *Cūlahatthipadopama-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (MN 27) and its parallel in the *Madhyama-āgama* (MĀ 146),³⁵ a collection probably transmitted by Sarvāstivāda reciters,³⁶ these practices are also not mentioned.

³⁵ MN 27 at MN I 180,19 and MĀ 146 at TI 657b27.

³⁶ On the school affiliation of the *Madhyama-āgama* cf. Anālayo (2012: 516–521).

MN 27	MĀ 146
1) sense-restraint	1) sense-restraint
5) clear comprehension	5) clear comprehension
6) seclusion	6) seclusion
7) hindrances	7) hindrances
8) absorption	8) absorption
9) imperturbability	9) imperturbability

However, in the case of yet another gradual path account found in these same two collections, namely in the *Mahā-assapura-sutta* (MN 39) and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel (MĀ 182),³⁷ moderation in eating (2) and wakefulness (3) are present in the Theravāda version, but absent from the Sarvāstivāda version.

MN 39	MĀ 182
1) sense-restraint	1) sense-restraint
2) moderation in eating	
3) wakefulness	
5) clear comprehension	5) clear comprehension
6) seclusion	6) seclusion
7) hindrances & similes	7) hindrances
8) absorption & similes	8) absorptions (abbreviated)
9) imperturbability	9) imperturbability

In this case the Theravāda version (MN 39) covers moderation in eating (2) and wakefulness (3), two practices that are not included in another discourse in the very same *Majjhima-nikāya* collection, the *Cūlahatthipadopama-sutta* (MN 27).

Although in the case of the three long-discourse versions moderation in eating and wakefulness are mentioned only in the Dharmaguptaka version, the *Mahā-assapura-sutta* (MN 39) shows that taking into account these two practices is not something specific

³⁷ MN 39 at MN I 273,3 and MĀ 182 at T I 725a25. Another parallel, EĀ 49.8 at T II 802a3, has only sense-restraint, moderation in eating & simile, and wakefulness. Since the school affiliation of the *Ekottarika-āgama* is a matter of continuing discussion, for the present comparison I leave this version aside.

to the Dharmaguptaka tradition alone, as here the Theravāda account also covers them.

The table below shows that the *Mahā-assapura-sutta* (MN 39) is not unique in this respect, as another version of the gradual path in the *Gaṇakamoggallāna-sutta* (MN 107) also covers moderation in eating (2) and wakefulness (3).

The case of the *Gaṇakamoggallāna-sutta* (MN 107) is of further significance in regard to the reference to *satipaṭṭhāna* (4) already found in the Dharmaguptaka *Dirgha-āgama*. Such a reference occurs also in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel (MĀ 144) to the *Gaṇakamoggallāna-sutta*.³⁸

MN 107	MĀ 144
	4) <i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>
1) sense-restraint	1) sense-restraint
2) moderation in eating	
3) wakefulness	
5) clear comprehension	5) clear comprehension
6) seclusion	6) seclusion
7) hindrances	7) hindrances
8) absorption	8) absorption

Here the *Madhyama-āgama* account of the gradual path of training not only mentions *satipaṭṭhāna*, it even distinguishes between *satipaṭṭhāna* practice as such and the same done in the absence of any thought. This distinction is not a peculiarity of the *Madhyama-āgama* or its reciter tradition, as the *Dantabhūmi-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* presents a similar distinction, in agreement with its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel.³⁹

So the circumstance that the above translated Dharmaguptaka *Dirgha-āgama* discourse stands alone among the long discourse versions of the gradual path of training in mentioning moderation with eating (2), wakefulness (3), and *satipaṭṭhāna* (4) does not mean that these practices were not known or not seen as required among the Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda reciters. But for some reason these practices are not always included in their

³⁸ MN 107 at MN III 2,14 and MĀ 144 at T I 652b4.

³⁹ MN 125 at MN III 136,20 and its parallel MĀ 198 at T I 758b15.

versions of the gradual path.

The variations that have emerged so far must be bewildering if one conceives of differences between parallel versions as being invariably the products of intentional editorial decisions taken in accordance with the respective school affiliation. The variations found here, and also in the course of other comparative studies, clearly do not invariably follow school affiliation.

Another example illustrating the same point is the topic of contentment. In the case of the *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse translated above, contentment with one's robes and almsfood, accompanied by a simile of a bird, occurs in the midst of the section on morality.⁴⁰ The same is the case in the Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel, which also combines its description of contentment with the simile of the bird that takes its wings along wherever it goes.⁴¹ In the Theravāda version, however, contentment together with the simile occurs at a later juncture; it comes after sense-restraint and clear comprehension.⁴² Notably, an exposition of the gradual path in the Theravāda *Cūlahatthipadopama-sutta* agrees in this respect with the Dharmaguptaka and Mūlasarvāstivāda parallels to the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, since it also places contentment before sense-restraint and clear comprehension.⁴³

This shows that the positioning of contentment vis-à-vis sense-restraint and clear comprehension is also not school specific, as within the same Theravāda tradition we get the sequence sense-restraint — clear comprehension — contentment in the *Dīgha-nikāya* but contentment — sense-restraint — clear comprehension in the *Majjhima-nikāya*.

In a detailed study of the gradual path of training in the Pāli discourses,⁴⁴ Bucknell (1984: 10) points out that the practice of the various aspects of the path is "both sequential and cumulative". The sequential character can be seen in the final part of the gradual path account, which proceeds from seclusion (6) to imperturbability (9).

⁴⁰ DĀ 20 at T I 84a5; cf. also the discussion in Meisig (1987: 60f).

⁴¹ Gnoli (1978: 233,18).

⁴² DN 2 at DN I 71,4.

⁴³ MN 27 at MN I 180,19.

⁴⁴ On the gradual path cf. also Franke (1917: 50–80), Eimer (1976: 26–34), Meisig (1987: 35–80), Crangle (1994: 149–152), Ramers (1996), Freiburger (2000: 71–86), Sujato (2005: 157–159), and Melzer (2006: 12–24).

What comes before that, however, is cumulative.

The final part is sequential in so far as seclusion (6) is the basis for cultivating deep concentration, which requires the removal of the hindrances (7). Only when the hindrances are overcome, can the absorptions be attained (8). Only when the four absorptions have been attained one after the other, will imperturbability (9) be reached. This part is clearly sequential, each practice forms the foundation for the next one and it would not be possible to cultivate one mentioned later in the list before having practiced one mentioned earlier.

This sequential part from seclusion (6) via the removal of the hindrances (7) to the attainment of the four absorptions (8) and therewith the gaining of mental imperturbability (9) is found throughout in the versions surveyed above. The only exception is the *Gaṇakamoggallāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel where, due to the circumstances of the presentation, the gradual path account is taken only up to the fourth absorption. Therefore the stage of imperturbability (9) is not explicitly mentioned. The same can safely be assumed to be implied, however, since both versions do mention the fourth absorption, which in the early discourses equals imperturbability.⁴⁵

Thus the essentially sequential character of seclusion (6), removing the hindrances (7), attaining the absorptions (8) and gaining mental imperturbability (9) as practices that invariably follow one another would have served as a fixed model during teaching and transmission, hence this part remained stable throughout different presentations.

The same is not the case for the cumulative practices that come before this sequential part. Practices like sense-restraint (1), moderation in eating (2), wakefulness (3), clear comprehension (5), etc., are essentially cumulative, in that they are practiced together and do not build on each other in the way this is the case for the sequential part of the path. It would not be reasonable to assume that only after one has practiced sense-restraint (1) is one ready to cultivate moderation in eating (2); that only after having become accomplished in moderation in eating has the time come to practice wakefulness (3); and that only after one has practiced wakefulness

⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion of imperturbability cf. Anālayo (2012: 195–200).

is one ready to engage in the practice of clear comprehension (5). From a practical perspective this clearly does not make sense. Wakefulness by way of meditating in the early and late parts of the night would be something to be undertaken as soon as possible, just like moderation in eating in regard to the food received and sense-restraint. Clear comprehension should be practiced throughout.

Given the essentially cumulative character of these practices, it becomes a matter of choice how many of them are listed in a particular exposition. Such a need to select naturally arises once one moves from actual practice to theoretical description, since what is practiced simultaneously cannot be described simultaneously. Therefore some features of the practice need to be selected to represent the whole.

This in turn suggests that there is no deeper significance in the variations observed above. Such differences, in the words of Bucknell (1984: 32), simply make “use of different, though essentially equivalent, summarizing lists of stages.”

This perhaps explains the curious fact that *satipaṭṭhāna* (4) is mentioned only rarely, in spite of its importance for cultivating the path to liberation. The reason is simply that those responsible for early versions of the gradual path did not feel a need to mention *satipaṭṭhāna* explicitly. Mindfulness in some form or another would in fact be required for all aspects of the gradual path. In particular sense-restraint (1) and clear comprehension (5) necessarily imply mindfulness practice, so that it would be absurd to assume that training in mindfulness was not part of the gradual path in actual practice. Given that the early path descriptions were not meant to be all-comprehensive and invariably fixed, the absence of an explicit reference to *satipaṭṭhāna* would not have been perceived as problematic.

In later times, path manuals naturally tend to adopt a more fixed form and strive for greater comprehensiveness. Although this results in neat theoretical presentations, without the type of variations observed above, it is not without problems. The kind of problems that can arise from adopting a fixed model can be seen in relation to the basic division of the path into the threefold training in morality, concentration, and wisdom.

As part of a presentation of the threefold training in morality, concentration, and wisdom, the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* of the

Theravāda tradition indicates that concentration that is conjoined with and supported by morality is very fruitful, just as wisdom that is conjoined with and supported by concentration is very fruitful, and such wisdom will lead to the destruction of the influxes.⁴⁶ Similar indications can be found in its Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel,⁴⁷ whereas the Dharmaguptaka version gives only the threefold training, without detailing the interrelations among the three.⁴⁸

Although these three trainings clearly build on one another, this does not imply a rigid separation. According to a simile in the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta* and its parallel, the relationship between morality and wisdom can be illustrated with two hands that wash each other.⁴⁹ Similarly, morality and wisdom support each other.

With later tradition the interrelations among the three trainings have not always remained as prominent a characteristic as in this simile. Shankman (2008: 86) points out that since the “standard gradual path of practice proceeds progressively through the threefold division of ... morality, concentration and wisdom”, this then “is used to support the notion of two distinct types of meditative developments as presented in the *Visuddhimagga*.” In other words, the fixing of the path description by the time of the *Visuddhimagga* contributes to a separation of what in the early discourses were two complementary aspect of meditative cultivation: tranquillity and insight.⁵⁰

Such are the possible pitfalls of fixed path accounts taken too literally. Keeping in mind such possible repercussions offers a

⁴⁶ DN 16 at DN II 91,7: *iti sīlaṃ iti samādhi itī paññā. sīlaparibhāvito samādhi mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso. samādhiparibhāvītā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā. paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammadeva āsavehi vimuccati.*

⁴⁷ The Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel has a similar formulation, although without the link from concentration to wisdom; cf. Waldschmidt 1951: 160 (§8.6): *itīmāni bhikṣavaḥ sīlāny ayaṃ s(amā)dhir iyaṃ prajñā, sīlaparibhāvitaḥ samādhiś cirasthitiko bhavati, prajñāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ samyag eva vim(u)cyate.*

⁴⁸ DĀ 2 at T I 13a3 just introduces noble morality, noble concentration, noble wisdom, and noble liberation as four profound teachings, 有四深法, 一曰聖戒, 二曰聖定, 三曰聖慧, 四曰聖解脫; cf. also T 6 at T I 178b5.

⁴⁹ DN 4 at DN I 124,5 and DĀ 22 at T I 96b18 (where the simile is spoken by the Buddha himself); on this simile cf. Gombrich (1984: 99).

⁵⁰ On the interrelation of these two in early Buddhist thought cf. Anālayo (2003: 88–91) and (2006).

perspective on the variations in the path accounts studied above. Given that variations are found within a single reciter tradition and even within a single discourse collection, it seems clear that path descriptions were not considered as having to conform to one single model. With complementary perspectives standing side by side, the tendency to latch on to one particular list as the only right way is deprived of a foundation. After all, any description of the gradual path of training is simply a map, whose purpose is to provide guidelines to be put into practice in the particular teaching context within which it evolved. In this way, the variations in the gradual path accounts are like various fingers pointing to the moon. Attention should not be paid to a particular finger, but to the direction in which it points, in order to see the moon for oneself.

Conclusion

A comparison of accounts of the gradual path of training from sense-restraint to imperturbability shows several variations, even between discourses pertaining to the same reciter tradition. Closer inspection suggests that such variations need not be problematized as reflecting contending accounts of the path of practice. Instead, they can more fruitfully be viewed as complementary. From the viewpoint of the tendency of later path accounts to become more fixed, such variation in presentation has the advantage of being less prone to misinterpretation, in the sense of mistaking what for the purpose of communication is presented separately as reflecting actually separate types of practices.

Abbreviations:

D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dirgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
frgm	fragment
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>

Q	Peking edition
Skt	Sanskrit
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
T	Taishō edition
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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