

(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta

The Discourse on Moral Virtue

(in connection with the awakening factors)

[Spiritual friendship and sainthood]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 46.3/5:67-70)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 The threefold training

The well known Buddhist scheme of the threefold training comprises moral virtue (*sīla, sikkhā*), mental concentration (*samādhi, sikkhā*) and wisdom (*paññā, sikkhā*).¹ Both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda suttas include the focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) in the section on concentration (or *samādhi*), and never the section on wisdom.²

There is, however, one important context where mindfulness appears immediately before a wisdom factor rather than *samādhi*. This is the seven enlightenment-factors: mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, energy, rapture, tranquillity, *samādhi*, equanimity. First we may notice the obvious fact that, although mindfulness is directly before investigation of dhammas, both of these ultimately support the range of *samatha* qualities, which form such a prominent portion of the enlightenment-factors. We may still wonder why the wisdom factor appears near the beginning, instead of its normal position towards the end.

The answer lies in the ambiguous usage of both mindfulness and investigation of dhammas in this context. The enlightenment-factors are presented sometimes in a teaching context, sometimes in meditation context. Mindfulness and investigation of dhammas are the only factors whose definitions differ in the two contexts.

In a teaching context, we hear of the monk who hears the teachings, then recollects and remembers that teaching with mindfulness, and then undertakes an investigation into the meaning of the teaching.³ More meditative contexts speak, in the Theravāda, simply of mindfulness, but the Sarvāstivāda supplies the expected identification with the four *satipaṭṭhanas*.⁴ Investigation of dhammas, in both versions, is the inquiry into skilful and unskilful dhammas.

While **the meditation contexts** occur far more frequently in the Theravāda, the one teaching-context text in the Theravāda is represented by three in the Sarvāstivāda, and the same passage forms the basis for the relevant section of the *Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga*. It must therefore be regarded as of considerable importance.

In the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta, it is in this teaching context alone, never in the meditative context, that the seven enlightenment-factors are said to arise in a progressive sequence, each dependent on the previous. So when considering the significance of the *sequence* of the enlightenment-factors, the primary meanings of the terms mindfulness and investigation of dhammas should be ‘recollection’ and ‘investigation’ into the teachings. This then inspires the development of *samādhi*. This, I believe, suffices to explain why mindfulness in the enlightenment-factors appears directly before the wisdom factor, rather than the *samādhi* factors.

¹ The threefold training (*ti.sikkhā*), comprises what are often called “training in higher moral virtue” (*adhisīla, -sikkhā*), “training in higher consciousness [mind]” (*adhicitta, sikkhā*), and “training in higher wisdom” (*adhipaññā, -sikkhā*) (D 31:207, :220; A 1:229).

² *Cūḷa Vedalla S*, M 44.11.12/1:301; MĀ 210.

³ **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S**, S 46.3/5:67-70; SĀ 736, SĀ 740, SĀ 724*.

⁴ *Āhāra S*, S 46.51/5:102-107; SĀ 715.

As usual, however, matters are not quite so cut-&-dried. In the context of *ānāpānasati*, the sequential arising of the enlightenment factors is also spoken of.⁵ This context, being a synthesis of several already-established doctrinal frameworks, is clearly not as fundamental as the usage in the Bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta. The main point of the section is not really to analyse the sequential origin of the enlightenment-factors, but to stress their integration with *ānāpānasati* and satipatthana.

Of course, in *ānāpānasati* we are in samatha home turf, and vipassana is normally spoken of as emerging in the final tetrad, that is, coming well after the establishment of mindfulness and the attaining of samadhi. Thus the sequential arising of the enlightenment-factors is a bit odd in this context, and is probably no more than an application of the standard sequence in a derived context, without special significance. (Ajahn Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 2005:107 f)

The three phases used to describe the cultivation of each awakening factor can be understood to be three successive stages of development: initial arising, maturation, and culmination. The Saṃyutta Commentary says that in this sutta, the awakening factors are to be understood as pertaining to insight in the preliminary stage of the path of arhathood. They occur together in one mind-moment, though with different characteristics (SA 3:142).

The whole pattern is also found **the (Ānāpāna,sati) Ānanda Sutta** (S 54.13), but beginning with the four foundations of mindfulness as the means of arousing the awakening factor of mindfulness (*sati sambojjhaṅga*) (S 54.13/5:328-333).

2 The (Bojjhaṅga) Bhikkhu Sutta (S 46.5)

The Pali word for “awakening factor” is *bojjhaṅga*, which is resolved as *bodhi* (awakening) + *aṅga* (factor). The Buddha’s own definition of *bojjhaṅga* is found in the short **Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 46.5), here given in full:

2 Then a certain monk approached the Buddha. Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, he said this to the Blessed One:

“Venerable sir, ‘Awakening factor, awakening factor,’ it is said. In what way, venerable sir, are they called awakening factor?”

“Monk, they bring about awakening (*bodhāya samvattatanti ti...bojjhaṅgā*), therefore they are called ‘awakening factor’.”

3 (i) Here, monk, a monk cultivates the awakening factor of mindfulness (*sati*) that is dependent on solitude,⁶ dependent on fading away of lust,⁷ dependent on cessation (of suffering),⁸ ripening in letting go (of defilements).⁹

(ii) He cultivates the awakening factor of dharma-investigation (*dhamma,vicaya*)...

⁵ Eg (Ānāpāna,sati) Ānanda S, S 54.13/5:328-333; SĀ 810.

⁶ Here “solitude” (*viveka*) has special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*). This whole phrase, beginning with “dependent on solitude”—*viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ dhamma,vicaya,sambojjhaṅgam*—is called **the viveka,nissita formula**. See Gethin 2003:162-168. According to **Paṭisambhidā,magga**, there are 5 kinds of “solitude” (*viveka*): (1) solitude by suppression (*vikkhambhana viveke*); (2) solitude by the substitution of opposite or displacement by opposites (*tad-aṅga pahāna*); (3) solitude by cutting off (*samuccheda pahāna*); (4) solitude by tranquilization (*paṭipassaddhi pahāna*); and (5) solitude by escape (*nissaraṇa pahāna*). (Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693). See also “Introduction to the Satipatthāna Suttas” = SD 13.1 §4.2c.

⁷ *Virāga* also “dispassion.”

⁸ *Nirodha*, that is, “cessation of suffering.”

⁹ MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*paric-cāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. **Gethin** notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

- (iii) He cultivates the awakening factor of effort (*virīya*)...
- (iv) He cultivates the awakening factor of zest (*pīti*)...
- (v) He cultivates the awakening factor of tranquillity (*passadhi*)...
- (vi) He cultivates the awakening factor of concentration (*samādhi*)...
- (vii) He cultivates the awakening factor of equanimity (*upekkhā*) that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away of lust, dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

4 While he is cultivating these seven awakening factors, his mind is liberated from the canker of sense-desire, from the canker of existence, from the canker of ignorance.

When it is liberated, there arises the knowledge: ‘Freed am I!’

He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is no more of this state of being.’

When it is liberated, there arises the knowledge: ‘It is liberated!’

He directly knows: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’

5 They bring about awakening, monk, therefore they are called awakening factors.”

(S 46.5/5:72)

A similar but simpler definition is also found elsewhere, in **the Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28.3)¹⁰ and **the Nālandā Sutta** (S 47.12)¹¹—both spoken by Sāriputta—thus:

“Having cultivated the seven awakening factors according to reality, he is one who has awakened to the supreme self-awakening” (D 3:101; S 5:161)

3 Commentarial definition of *bojjhaṅga*

The **Saṃyutta Commentary** gives two definitions (abridged):

Awakening factors are factors of awakening, or factors of the awakened one (*bodhiyā bodhissa vā aṅgā ti bojjhaṅga*). This unity of states (*dhmma,sāmaggī*) consists in mindfulness, dharma-investigation, effort, zest, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity, that arise at the moment of the mundane and supramundane paths (*lokiya, lok’uttara, magga-k, khane*)...that the noble disciple awakens to. Therefore, they are called “awakening” (*bodhi*).

“**He awakens**” (*bujjhati*) [or, he is enlightened] means that he rises up from the sleep of the continuum of defilements (*kilesa, santāna, niddāya uṭṭhahati*); that is to say, he penetrates the four noble truths or realizes nirvana.

Thus it is said: “**Having cultivated the seven awakening factors he is one who has awakened to the supreme self-awakening**” (*satta bojjhaṅge bhāvetvā anuttaraṃ sammā, - sambuddhiṃ abhisambuddho*) [untraced].

The awakening factors are the factors of awakening consisting in that unity of states. Further, the noble disciple who awakens through the said group of states is called “one awakened” (*bodhi*), and the factors of one awakened are the awakening factors. (SA 3:138 f)

The untraced canonical reference—“**Having cultivated the seven awakening factors he is one who has awakened to the supreme self-awakening**”—noted by the sutta Commentary, is apparently found only in the Commentaries.¹² As previously mentioned [2], the actual canonical passage reads:

¹⁰ D 28.3/3:101.

¹¹ S 47.12/5:161.

¹² MA 1:83; SA 3:138; AA 2:53; KhA 84; PmA 3:600.

Satta sambojjhaṅge yathā, bhūtaṃ bhāvetvā anuttaraṃ sammā, sambodhiṃ abhisambuddho.

“Having cultivated the seven awakening factors according to reality, he is one who has awakened to the supreme self-awakening” (D 3:101; S 5:161)

The Abhidhamma definition of the awakening factors are given in **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 277-279).¹³

4 How to cultivate the awakening factors

In the suttas, the awakening factors are often contrasted against the five mental hindrances—especially as **the Āhāra Sutta** (S 46.51)¹⁴—since with the abandoning of the hindrances, real mental progress begins. The awakening factors emerge in sequence, each serving as the condition for next, as shown in this sutta, **the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3) [4b-11]. **Bodhi** summarizes the progress of the awakening factors [he calls them “enlightenment factors”], thus:

They arise within the practice of the last three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path [right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration], guided by right view; but they represent this segment of this path in finer detail, with recognition of the contrasting qualities that must be brought into delicate balance for the path to yield its fruits.

First one attends mindfully to an object of meditation, generally selected from among the four objective bases of mindfulness (body, feelings, mind, phenomena): this is the enlightenment factor of mindfulness (*sati sambojjhaṅga*).

As mindfulness becomes steady, one learns to discern the object’s features more clearly, and can also distinguish between the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind that arise within the process of contemplation: the enlightenment factor of discrimination of states [dharma-investigation] (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*).

This fires one’s efforts: the enlightenment factor of energy (*virīya sambojjhaṅga*).

From energy applied to the work of mental purification joy arises and escalates: the enlightenment factor of rapture [zest] (*pīti sambojjhaṅga*).

With the refinement of rapture the body and mind calm down: the enlightenment factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*).

The tranquil mind is easily unified: the enlightenment factor of concentration (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*).

One looks on evenly at the concentrated mind: the enlightenment factor of equanimity (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*).

As each subsequent factor arises, those already arise do not disappear but remain alongside it as its adjuncts (though rapture [zest] inevitably subsides as concentration deepens). Thus, at the mature stage of development, all seven factors are present simultaneously, each making its own distinctive contribution. (S:B 1499 f)

While the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta give a diachronic or vertical model—spiritual progress over time—**the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta** (S 46.53)¹⁵ presents a synchronic or horizontal model, in terms of balancing the progress. The seven awakening factors fall into two categories: the activating and the restraining. **The activating awakening factors** arise first: dharma-investigation, effort and zest. **The restraining awakening factors** emerge later: tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. The activating factors are to be cultivated when the mind is sluggish, just as one stokes a small fire so that it flares up. The restraining factors are to be cultivated when the mind is restless, just as one sprinkles water or wet grass on a blaze so that it dies down. As in the five spiritual faculties, **mindfulness** acts independently, moderating the activating and the restraining factors, ensuring that they are kept in balance.

¹³ For Comy, see VbhA 310. See also S:B 1899 n52.

¹⁴ S 46.51/5:102-107 = SD 7.15.

¹⁵ S 46.53/5:112-115.

The Abhaya Sutta (S 46.56) recounts how the Buddha teaches prince Abhaya that the five mental hindrances are the causes for the lack of knowledge and vision, and that the seven awakening factors are the cause for the arising of knowledge and vision for spiritual liberation. At the end of the discourse, Abhaya declares his “attainment of the Dharma” (*dhmmo abhisameto*) (that is, stream-winning), saying:

Surely, Blessed One, they are the awakening factors! Surely, Blessed One, they are the awakening factors! One who possesses even a single awakening factor would know and see things as they really are, not to speak of one who possesses the seven awakening factors.

The bodily fatigue and the mental fatigue I felt from climbing Mount Vulture Peak have subsided. I have attained the Dharma! (S 46.56/5:128)

5 Dhamma, vicaya

The key awakening factor is that of dharma-investigation (*dhamma, vicaya*). Awakening itself does not comprise of the assemblage of the seven awakening factors, but just one, namely, *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* (Nm 456). This is the key awakening factor, that is, “awakening” itself, while the others are the “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **The Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83).¹⁶

The term *dhamma, vicaya* literally means “taking apart of dharmas (mental and physical states),” and translates as “Dharma-discernment” or “discrimination of dharmas.” In certain context, it means “investigation of the Doctrine.” However, in meditation practice, it usually means “investigation of bodily and mental phenomena” (Walshe 1995 n690). Both Edgerton (BHSD) and Gethin, however, call into question the translation of *vicaya* here as “investigation” (Gethin 2001:152 n38).¹⁷

The meaning of the term *dhamma, vicaya* depends on the context, as to whether it means “mindfulness” or as “investigation of dharmas.” **Ajahn Sujato**, in *A History of Mindfulness*, gives some helpful pointers:

The enlightenment-factors are presented sometimes in a teaching context, sometimes in meditation context. Mindfulness and investigation of dhammas are the only factors whose definitions differ in the two contexts. **In a teaching context**, we hear of the monk who hears the teachings, then recollects and remembers that teaching with mindfulness, and then undertakes an investigation into the meaning of the teaching.¹⁸

More meditative contexts speak, in the Theravada, simply of mindfulness, but the Sarvâstivâda supplies the expected identification with the four satipatthanas.¹⁹ Investigation of dhammas, in both versions, is the inquiry into skilful [wholesome] and unskilful [unwholesome] dhammas. While the meditation contexts occur far more frequently in the Theravada, the one teaching-context text in the Theravada is represented by three in the Sarvâstivâda, and the same passage forms the basis for the relevant section of the Abhidhamma **Vibhaṅga**. It must therefore be regarded as of considerable importance.

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¹⁶ See Gethin 2001:147 f, 152-154, 185.

¹⁷ On *dhamma, vicaya*, see Gethin 2001:147 f, 152-154, 185.

¹⁸ SN 46.3/SA 736/SA 740/SA 724*

¹⁹ SN 46.51/SA 715

6 *Sāmañña,phala* and the awakening factors

Gethin, in *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*,²⁰ discusses the close parallel between the full *sāmañña,phala* (“fruit of recluseship”) account of the dhyanas and the 7 *bojjhaṅgā* is striking. The wording of the introduction to the dhyana stock formula often in places exactly parallels the *bojjhaṅga* process formula. “Clearly this is no accident,” Gethin notes (2001:170). The following passage comes from **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (M 2):²¹

satta sambojjhaṅga

1. *sati sambojjhaṅga*

2. *dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*

3. *virīya sambojjhaṅga*

4. *pīti sambojjhaṅga*

5. *passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*

6. *samādhi sambojjhaṅga*

7. *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*

The sāmañña,phala formula²²

“He establishes mindfulness before him” (*parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā...*). (M 2.67/1:71)

“The monk sees that these 5 hindrances are abandoned in him; seeing that these 5 hindrances are abandoned in him,” (*bhikkhu ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassati; tass’ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato*) (M 2.75a/1:73)²³

[Effort is made at the *sati sambojjhaṅga* level. In fact, the first three stages work together.]²⁴

“gladness arises; because of gladness, zest arises; when the mind is zestful,” (*pāmujaṃ jayati; pamuditassa pīti jayati; pīti,manassa*) (M 2.75a/1:73)

“The body becomes tranquil; when the body is tranquil, he knows happiness” (*kāyo passambhati; passaddha,kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti*) (M 2.75a/1:73)

“When he is happy, his mind is concentrated...he enters and remains in the 1st dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application. Free of initial application and sustained application, with zest and happiness born of seclusion, he enters and remains in the 2nd dhyana, free from applied thought and sustained thought, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration...” (*sukhino cittaṃ samā-dhiyati... sa,vitakkaṃ sa,vicāraṃ viveka,jaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati... avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhi,jaṃ pīti,-sukhaṃ dutiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati...*) (M 2.75b+77/1:73 f)

“and he experiences happiness with the body. He enters and remains in the 3rd dhyana, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’... He enters and dwells in the 4th dhyana, with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.” (*sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā acikkhanti upekkhako satimā sukha,vihārī ti tatiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati...upekkhā,sati,pārisuddhiṃ catuttha-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*) (M 2.81/1:75)

²⁰ See Gethin 2001:170-172 for details.

²¹ For the application of the *bojjhaṅga* formula to the 4 satipatthanas, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.30-40/3:85-87 = SD 7.13) = (**Ānāpāna,sati**) **Ānanda S 1** (S 54.13/5:331 f). See also (**Ānāpāna,sati**) **Ānanda S 2** (S 54.14/-5:334), (**Ānāpāna,sati**) **Bhikkhu S 1** (S 54.15/5:335), and (**Ānāpāna,sati**) **Bhikkhu S 2** (S 54.16/5:336-340).

²² See esp **Sāmañña,phala S** (M 2) = SD 8.10. Cf **Mahā Assapura S** (M 39.10-18/1:273-277) = SD 10.13.

²³ Gethin: “The parallel between *dhamma-vicaya* and *samanupassati* is less explicit than the rest, but in this kind of context surely any derivative of *passati* can be seen as connoting *paññā* (= *dhamma-vicaya*). Cf Vbh 194-202 (passim) which identifies *anupassanā* in the context of the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula with *paññā*.” (2001:171)

²⁴ Gethin, however, thinks that “[o]nly *virīya-sambojjhaṅga* fails to find a direct parallel here.” (2001:171)

7 Non-returners

The (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta mentions the **non-returner** (*anāgāmi*) who, on overcoming the five lower fetters (*orambhāgiya saṃyojanā*), is reborn in the Brahmā worlds known as the Pure Abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the five highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) where only non-returners assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are Āviha (“non-declining”), Ātappa (“Unworried”), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”) and Akanitṭhā (“Highest”).²⁵ **The ten fetters** are:

1. Self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*),
 2. Doubt (*vicikicchā*),
 3. Attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*),
 4. Sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*),
 5. Repulsion (*paṭigha*),
 6. Greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*),
 7. Greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*),
 8. Conceit (*māna*),
 9. Restlessness (*uddhacca*),
 10. Ignorance (*avijjā*)
- (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377)

In some places, (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first five are “the lower fetters” (*orambhāgiyā saṃyojanā*), and the rest, “the higher fetters” (*uddhambhāgiyā saṃyojanā*).²⁶

The closing half of the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta, on the five kinds of **non-returners** [14-18], is identical to the passages given in **the Sa,upādisesa Sutta** (A 9.12), each passage ending with this pericope not found in the Sīla Sutta parallel passages:

Sāriputta, there are these... , who having died with the aggregates of existence remaining *are* liberated from hell, liberated from the animal kingdom, liberated from the ghost realm, liberated from the state of misery, the evil destination, the suffering state. (A 9.12/4:379 f)

Five kinds of non-returners are mentioned in **the Sīla Sutta (S 46.3/5:69 f)** in a stock list found in many other canonical passages, namely:

Saṅgīti Sutta	(D 33.1.9(18)/3:237)
(Indriya) Vitthāra Sutta I	(S 48.15/5:201)
Eka,bhī Sutta	(S 48.24/5:204 f)
Satt'ānisaṃsa Sutta	(S 48.66/5:237 f)
(Iddhi) Phala Sutta II	(S 51.26/5:285)
(Ānāpāna) Phala Sutta II	(S 54.5/5:314)
Sarakāni Sutta II	(S 55.25.8/5:378)
(Uddesā) Sikkhā Sutta II	(A 3.86.3/1:233, only last & first kinds mentioned)
(Uddesā) Sikkhā Sutta III	(A 3.87.3/1:234)
(Cattāro Puggalā) Saṃyojana Sutta	(A 4.131/2:133 f, listed in reverse)
Dukkha Anattā Nibbāna Sutta I	(A 7.16.4/4:13 f)
Dukkha Anattā Nibbāna Sutta II	(A 7.17.4/4:14)
(Satta,puggala) Āhuneyya Sutta I	(A 4:146)
(Sāriputta) Sa,upādisesa Sutta	(A 9.12.6/4:380)
(Diṭṭhi,sampanna) Niṭṭha Sutta	(A 63.3/5:120)
(Sotāpanna) Avecca Sutta	(A 64.3/5:120)
Puggala Paññatti	(Pug §42-46/16 f)

²⁵ D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46.

²⁶ See “Is rebirth immediate?” = SD 2.17(4).

Peter Harvey, in his *Selfless Persons*, makes this note of the non-returners mentioned in the Sīla Sutta:²⁷

The Sīla Sutta (S 46.3/5:69 f) discusses the five types of non-returners in the same order as at the Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33.1.9/3:237), listing them after someone who has become an Arahat “at the time of dying”: clearly this implies that the order represents a decreasing speed of spiritual attainment. This would certainly make it likely that the first of the five types of non-returners attains *nibbāna* “in between” death and rebirth.

The interpretation given in the Theravādin Abhidhamma and commentaries, though, is that **this non-returner attains *nibbāna* immediately after “arising” in a new rebirth, or at some time before the middle of the life-span there** (Pug 16; AA 4:7). Less contentiously, the next of the non-returners is seen as one who comes to attain *nibbāna* between the mid-point of his life-span there and his death; the fifth type is one who is reborn in each of the five “pure abodes” until he attains *nibbāna* in the last of these (Pug 17). (Harvey, 1995:100; emphasis added; refs revised)

The Purisa,gati Sutta (A 7.52/4:70-74) has an interesting set of similes describing the five kinds of non-returners and which are further discussed elsewhere.²⁸

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²⁷ For more discussion, see “Is rebirth immediate?” (SD 2.17.4-6).

²⁸ A 7.52/4:70-74; DA 1030 = AA 2:350; cf SA 3:114; AA 4:7. See also Masefield 1986:115 f, 120. Harvey 1995:101; Wayman 1974:236. See SD 2.17.5.

The Discourse on Moral Virtue (in connection with the awakening factors)

(S 46.3/5:67-70)

The benefits of associating with saints

2 Monks, those monks who are **accomplished in moral virtue, accomplished in mental concentration, accomplished in wisdom, accomplished in liberation, accomplished in the knowledge and vision of liberation**²⁹ —

even the sight of those monks is very helpful, I say;

3 even listening to those monks is very helpful, I say;

even approaching [meeting] those monks is very helpful, I say;

even attending on those monks is very helpful, I say;

even recollecting those monks is very helpful, I say;

even going forth after those monks is very helpful, I say.

4a What is the reason for this?

Because when he has heard the Dharma from such monks, he dwells in solitude by way of **two kinds of solitude**, that is, the solitude of body and the solitude of mind.³⁰

The 7 awakening factors

4b Dwelling thus in solitude, he recollects and reflects upon the Dharma.³¹

5a (1) Monks, whenever a monk, dwelling thus in solitude, recollects and thinks over the Dharma, on that occasion **[68] the awakening factor of mindfulness** (*sati sambojjhaṅga*) is roused by the monk.

On that occasion, as he dwells thus in solitude, recollecting the Dharma and thinking it over, the awakening factor of mindfulness is fully developed in the monk.³²

5b Dwelling thus mindful, he discerns the Dharma, examines it, thoroughly investigates it.

6a (2) Monks, whenever a monk, dwelling thus mindful, discerns the Dharma, examines it, thoroughly investigates it, on that occasion **the awakening factor of dharma investigation** (*dhamma, - vicaya sambojjhaṅga*)³³ is roused by the monk.

On that occasion, the awakening factor of dharma investigation is fully developed in the monk.

6b When he discerns the Dharma with wisdom, examines it, investigates it, his effort is roused without slackening.

²⁹ These 4 form the *dhmma-k, khandha* (doctrine-body, teaching-aggregate), viz: (1) moral virtue aggregate (*sīla khandha*), (2) concentration aggregate (*samādhi khandha*), (3) wisdom aggregate (*paññā khandha*), (4) liberation aggregate (*vimutti khandha*), (5) aggregate of the knowledge and vision of liberation (*vimutti, ñāna, dassana khandha*). The set is also called the four “essences” (*sāra*). (D 3:279; A 3:134, 2:140).

³⁰ “One dwells in solitude...solitude of mind,” *dvayena vūpakāsenā vūpakaṭṭho viharati kāya, vūpakāsenā ca citta, vūpakāsenā ca*. Sometimes, 3 kinds of solitude (*viveka*) are mentioned: (1) solitude of body (*kāya, viveka*), ie physical solitude or keeping to moral virtue; (2) solitude of mind (*citta, viveka*), ie the dhyanas and the noble paths and fruitions; and (3) solitude from the substrates (*upadhi, viveka*), ie a life free from the substrates of existence, or nirvana (Nm 26, 140, 157, 341).

³¹ *So tathā vūpakaṭṭho viharanto taṃ dhammam anussarati anuvitakketi*. “Reflects upon,” *anuvitakketi* ← *anu* (after) + *vitakketi* (he thinks).

³² Bodhi: “In stating that the *sati, sambojjhaṅga* arises by recollecting the Dhamma taught by accomplished monks, the text draws upon the etymological connection between *sati* as act of remembrance and the verb *anussarati*, to recollect. Though it has been overshadowed by *sati*’s more technical sense of awareness of the present, this nuance of the word is still occasionally preserved in Pāli (eg in the definition of the faculty of mindfulness at [(**In-driya**) **Vibhaṅga S**, S 48.9/5:196 f]). (S:B 1901 n63)

³³ On *dhmma, vicaya*, see Intro (2) above.

7a (3) Monks, whenever a monk discerns the Dharma with wisdom, examines it, investigates it, rousing his effort without slackening, on that occasion **the awakening factor of effort** (*virīya sambojjhaṅga*) is roused by the monk.

On that occasion, the awakening factor of effort is fully developed in the monk.

7b When his effort is roused, zest that is not of the flesh [spiritual] arises in him.

8a (4) Monks, whenever zest that is not of the flesh [spiritual] arises in a monk whose effort is roused, on that occasion **the awakening factor of zest** (*pīṭi sambojjhaṅga*) is roused by the monk.

On that occasion, the awakening factor of zest is fully developed in the monk.

8b For one whose mind is uplifted by zest, his body, too, becomes tranquil, and his mind, too, becomes tranquil.

9a (5) Monks, whenever a monk, uplifted by zest, and his body, too, becomes tranquil, and his mind, too, becomes tranquil, on that occasion **the awakening factor of tranquillity** (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*) is roused by the monk.

On that occasion, the awakening factor of tranquillity is fully developed in the monk. [69]

9b For one whose body is tranquil, there is happiness; for one who is happy, his mind becomes concentrated.

10a (6) Monks, whenever a monk's body is tranquil, and being happy, his mind becomes concentrated, on that occasion **the awakening factor of concentration** (*samadhi sambojjhaṅga*) is roused in the monk.

On that occasion, the awakening factor of concentration is fully developed in the monk.

10b He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.

11 (7) Monks, whenever a monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated, on that occasion **the awakening factor of equanimity** (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*) is fully developed in the monk.

The arhats and the non-returners

12 Monks, when these seven awakening factors have been cultivated and often developed in this way, **seven fruits and benefits** are to be expected.

What are the seven fruits and benefits?

13 (1) One attains final knowledge early³⁴ in this life itself.

(2) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself, then one attains final knowledge at the time of death.

14 (3) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself or at the time of death, then with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters,³⁵ he becomes **an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state**.³⁶

15 (4) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself or at the time of death, or one is not an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state,

³⁴ “Early,” PTS *paṭihacca*, also at S 5:204 f. FL Woodward notes that this word is “probably influenced by *upahacca* following” (S:W 5:57 n3). Be Se *paṭihacca*. Cf UA 347. Comy: *asampattheyeva maraṇa, kāle ti attho* (the meaning is “before the time of death has come”) (SA 3:143), where Tīkā glosses *-paṭihacca* as *pag’eva*, lit “at the earliest” (SAṬ = CSCD VRI 2:129; Be 2:420). Woodward’s n: *Paṭihacc’evā ti paṭhamam y’eva* (S 2.3.2); cf ThaA on Tha 547 (Tha:RD 256 n2): *paṭigacc’evā ti puretaram y’eva*. Comy (Ce) spells it *paṭigacc’*. But Trenckner’s n (Miln 421,48,32) derives the term from *paṭikaroti*, “to provide against future events,” as in J 4:166 (S:W 1:319, normalized).

³⁵ “The 5 lower fetters,” see Intro (7) above.

³⁶ *Antarā, parinibbāyī* (D 3:237). In **Sa, upadisesa S** (A 9.12 = SD 3.3), each of the foll verses close with this pericope: “This, Sāriputta, is <the first...> person, who having died with the aggregates of existence remaining is liberated from hell, liberated from the animal kingdom, liberated from the ghost realm, liberated from the state of misery, the evil destination, the suffering state.” (A 9.12/4:378-382). On the 5 non-returners, this and the other 4 mentioned below, see SD 2.17(4-5).

then, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, one becomes **an attainer of nirvana upon landing**.³⁷

16 (5) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself or at the time of death,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana upon landing,

then, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, **an attainer of nirvana without exertion**.³⁸

17 (6) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself or at the time of death,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana upon landing,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana without exertion,

then, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, one is **an attainer of nirvana with exertion**.³⁹

18 (7) If one does not attain final knowledge early in this life itself or at the time of death,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana in the intermediate state,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana upon landing,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana without exertion,
or one is not an attainer of nirvana with exertion,

then, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, one is **one bound upstream, heading towards the Akaniṭṭha**⁴⁰ **realm**.⁴¹

19 Monks, when these seven awakening factors have been developed and cultivated in this way, seven fruits and benefits may be expected.”

— evam —

³⁷ *Upahacca,parinibbāyī* (D 3:237).

³⁸ *Asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī* (D 3:237). BDict: “*Asaṅkhārika-citta*, an Abhidhamma term signifying a ‘state of consciousness arisen spontaneously,’ ie without previous deliberations, preparation, or prompting by others; hence: ‘unprepared, unprompted.’ This term and its counterpart (*sasaṅkhārika*, [see foll n]), probably go back to a similar distinction in the Suttas [A 4.171; ‘Path’ 184]. See Table I; examples in *Vism* 14.84 f.” (normalized)

³⁹ *Sa,sāṅkhāra,parinibbāyī* (D 3:237). “*Sasaṅkhārika-citta* (in Dhs: *sasaṅkhārena*): a prepared, or prompted, state of consciousness, arisen after prior deliberation (eg weighing of motives) or induced by others (command, advice, persuasion)—see Table I; exemplified in *Vism* 14.84 f” (BDict, normalized).

⁴⁰ *Uddhamsoto Akaniṭṭha.gāmī* (D 3:237). **The Suddh’āvāsa** or “Pure Abodes” are a group of 5 heavens in the formless realm populated only by non-returners, and where they attain arhathood and nirvana. The 5 Pure Abodes, ie their inhabitants and respective lifespans, are: Āviha (“Non-declining,” 1000 MK), Ātappa (“Unworried,” 2000 MK), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible,” 4000 MK), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned,” 8000 MK) and Akaniṭṭhā (“Highest,” 16000 MK) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). MK = *Mahā Kappa*. that is, a full cycle of a world-period or cycle of the universe (V 3:4=D 3:51, 111=It 99; D 1:14; A 2:142). For celestial map, see **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11) = SD 1.7; for world cycle, see **Aggañña S** (D 27) = SD 2.19.

⁴¹ *Uddhamsoto Akaniṭṭha.gāmī* (D 3:237).

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