

(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse

[How to awaken in this life itself]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 25.1/3:225)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 The truth-follower and the faith-follower

1.0 CHAPTER SUMMARY. The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) is the first of a series of ten closely parallel suttas, forming **the Okkanti Vagga** (the Chapter on the Descent), that is, chapter 25 of the Sāmyutta, all of which makes a distinction between two types of individuals who enter into “the certainty of rightness” (*sammatta, niyāma*), that is, the transcendent noble eightfold path, or the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti, magga*).¹

These ten suttas give the best definition (albeit a brief one) of the truth-follower and the faith-follower that we have in the Pali Canon.² The difference between the two is that of their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). The one who has strong faith, who resolves (*adhimuccati*) on the impermanence of the factors listed in the ten suttas, is a faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*). The one who focusses on wisdom, who gains understanding of the impermanence of the same factors, is a truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*).

Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower are declared as being certain of not passing away in this life without having realized the fruit of streamwinning. In either case, when the follower knows and sees for himself the reality of impermanence, he becomes a streamwinner. As such, the Okkanti Vagga does not distinguish the character of the two as streamwinners.

The Kīṭṭā, giri Sutta (M 70), however, states that the streamwinner who is strong in faith, on attaining fruition, is called “liberated by faith” (*saddhā, vimutta*), while the one strong in wisdom is said to be “view-attained” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*), that is, has gained right view (although he has yet to fully realize the nature of not-self, which is the domain of the arhat). The Sutta mentions a third class—the “body-witness” (*kāya, sakkhī*)—that is, those who can meditate to reach the formless attainments.³ The body-witness, however, is not a separate class but a *genus*, that is, it applies generically (*pariyāyena*)⁴ to all the saints who experience the formless attainments leading, in due course, to arhathood.⁵

1.1 SCRIPTURAL CONTEXTS. **The Alaggadūpama Sutta** (M 22) closes with the Buddha defining the various destinies of the saints and those who keep to the Dharma:

Bhikshus, the Teaching well proclaimed by me, is plain, open, clear,⁶ free from patchwork.⁷
In the Teaching well proclaimed by me, plain, open, clear, free from patchwork:

(1) there is no (more) round of existence for those bhikshus who are arhats with cankers destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,⁸ destroyed the fetters of being, completely liberated through final knowledge.

¹ S 25/3:225-228.

² See Gethin 2001:126-138.

³ M 70.17-21/1:478 f = SD 11.1.

⁴ See Gethin 2001:135 f & **Pariyāya Nippariyāya** = SD 30.16.

⁵ The *kāya, sakkhī* is def at M 70.17/1:478 = SD 11.1.

⁶ “Plain, open, clear,” *uttāno vivaṭo pakāsito*.

⁷ “Free from patchwork,” *chinna, piloṭika*, that is, unlike a patched-up piece of cloth. Comy: a cloth patched up with stitches and knots that are similar to hypocrisy and other deceptions. SubComy: Substituting assumed attitudes and postures for non-existing practice of meditation and insight. Here the analogy—that of a piece of new cloth free of patches or stitches—refers to the inner consistency of the Teaching. All this probably means that the Buddha’s teaching is not a hodge-podge of ideas to impress others or win fame, following and fortune, but a (or *the*) statement of a direct experience of spiritual liberation.

⁸ *Sadattā* may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-attā*, “one own goal,” (2) *sant + attā*, “the sublime goal,” “the ideal.”

(2) ...those monks who, with the destruction of the five lower fetters,⁹ are **spontaneously re-born** [in the Pure Abodes]¹⁰ and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

(3) ...those monks who, with the destruction of the three fetters¹¹ and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion, are **once-returners**, all of them¹² returning only once to this world to make an end of suffering.

(4) ...those monks who, with the destruction of the three fetters, are **streamwinners**, not fated for a suffering world,¹³ sure of liberation, bound for awakening.

(5) ... (who) are **truth-followers** or are **faith-followers**.

(6) ...those who have **mere faith in me and mere love for me**, are all bound for heaven.¹⁴

(M 22.42-47/1:141 f, abridged) = SD 3.13

The **Kīṭṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70) gives a list of seven disciples, but omitting (6), and lists the truth-follower and the faith-follower separately. The seven “noble individuals” are always listed in the same order, from the highest to the lowest, thus:¹⁵

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (1) The one liberated both ways | (<i>ubhato, bhāga, vimutta</i>), or the dual-liberated, |
| (2) The wisdom-liberated | (<i>paññā, vimutta</i>), |
| (3) The body-witness | (<i>kāya, sakkhī</i>), |
| (4) The view-attainer | (<i>diṭṭhi-p, patta</i>), |
| (5) The faith-liberated | (<i>saddhā, vimutta</i>), |
| (6) The truth-follower | (<i>dhammānusārī</i>), and |
| (7) The faith-follower | (<i>saddhā ’nusārī</i>). |

Of these seven saints, according to the Kīṭṭāgiri Sutta, only the first two have done their “duties with diligence” (M 70.15, 16), that is, they are totally liberated as arhats.¹⁶ The other five saints still need to “do

⁹ The 10 fetters: see §34 n.

¹⁰ *Opapātika*, that is, reborn in the Pure Abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*), the 5 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 *Akañiṭṭhā* (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

¹¹ “The three fetters” are the first three of the **10 fetters** (*sāmyojana*), viz: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rituals (*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, no 5 (*kāma, rāga*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The total abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*) (see **Ānāpānasati S**, M 118.10 = 7.13).

¹² “All of them,” *sabbe te*, omitted in **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118).

¹³ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca, gati*) (D 3:234 = 33.2.1, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal kingdom (*tirachāna, yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*).

¹⁴ “Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me,” *yesaṃ mayi saddhā, mattaṃ pema, mattaṃ*. This phrase is found in **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22.47/1:143), **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭṭāgiri S** (M 70.21/1:479) = SD 11.1. Cf **Sarakāni Ss** (S 55.24-25/4:375-380). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipas-saka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not gaining even stream-entry, they are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has “mere faith, mere love” in the Buddha are reborn in a heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive comparative table of “Persons according to strength of *indriyas* in descending order,” see Gethin 2001:127 (Table 2).

their duties with diligence” (M 70.17-21).¹⁷ The last—the truth follower and the faith-follower—are not aryas (that is, saints of the path) yet, but are true disciples (*ariya.sāvaka*) nevertheless, and because of the certainty of their attainment of the path in this life itself, they are so listed. The faith-follower and the truth-follower are in fact the two classes of who are practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning in this life itself.¹⁸

The truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) and the faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*) are mentioned in all the ten suttas of **the Okkanti Sāmyutta** (ch 25), which consists of ten parallel and short, but remarkable, suttas with only one message, that is, the reflection of impermanence on.¹⁹

(1) the six internal sense:	the Cakkhu Sutta,	S 25.1/3:225; ²⁰
(2) the six external senses:	the Rūpa Sutta,	S 25.2/3:225 f;
(3) the six sense-consciousnesses:	the Viññāṇa Sutta,	S 25.3/3:226;
(4) the six sense-contacts:	the Phassa Sutta,	S 25.4/3:226;
(5) the six feelings:	the Vedanā Sutta,	S 25.5/3:226;
(6) the six perceptions:	the Saññā Sutta,	S 25.6/3:227;
(7) the six volitions:	the Cetanā Sutta,	S 25.7/3:227;
(8) the six cravings:	the Taṭṭhā Sutta,	S 25.8/3:227;
(9) the six elements:	the Dhātu Sutta,	S 25.9/3:227; and
(10) the five aggregates:	the Khandha Sutta,	S 25.10/3:227 f.

All of them lead to, or “descend into” (*okkanti*), streamwinning in this life itself—whether one “has faith, who firmly believes” (*saddahati adhimuccati*) in the impermanence of the six senses, etc (that is, as a faith-follower, *saddhā’anusārī*, 信行者 xìn xíng zhě), or accepts this truth “after pondering over them with some wisdom” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti*) (that is, as a truth-follower, *dhammānusārī* 法行者 fǎ xíng zhě), one is assured of becoming a streamwinner, 預流 yù liú. One would not die without having realized the fruit of streamwinning.²¹

The faith-follower and the truth-follower are also distinguished in the two **Sarakāni Suttas** (S 55.24-25),²² though the terms themselves are not used there.

1.2 THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER. The truth-follower or Dharma-follower (*dhammānusārī*) is a disciple in whom the faculty of wisdom (*paññ’indriya*) is predominant and who develops the noble path led by wisdom; his main practice is the contemplation of not-self; when he attains the fruit he is called “right-view attainer” or “vision attainer” (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*).²³ **The Kīṭā,giri Sutta** defines a truth-follower as follows:

¹⁶ The key difference between the two kinds of arhats—the dual-liberated arhat and the wisdom-liberated arhat—is that the former has personal direct experience of the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*), while the latter does not.

¹⁷ The uniqueness of the Kīṭā,giri S classification of the 7 saints is that it is not only based on path and fruition (as found in the more common eightfold scheme), but also according to their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). See **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70/1:473-481) = SD 11.1 Into (5.2). The 7 types are defined somewhat differently at **Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 1.30-36/14 f) & **Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 21.74-78/659 f).

¹⁸ On the 3 types of streamwinners—the single-seeder, the clan-goer, and the seven-at-most—see **Niṭṭha S** (A 10.63) = SD 3.3(1b).

¹⁹ For practical details on the perception of impermanence, see **Dīgh’āvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347) = SD 23.16.

²⁰ This first sutta is here tr in full.

²¹ On lay followers attaining streamwinning, see **Laymen Saints** = SD 8.6, & **The Layman and Dhyana** = SD 8.5(3), esp **Sa,upādisesa S** (A 9.12/4:380-382).

²² S 55.24-25/5:375-380

²³ *Diṭṭhi-p,patta*, see **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70.19/1:478,18-23) = SD 11.1; Pug 15/1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

²⁴Here, bhikkhus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental cankers are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but those truths proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted by him after only some pondering over them with wisdom.

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the five spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70.20/1:479)

The Sarakāṇi Sutta 1 (S 55.24) lists and defines six noble individuals, beginning with the four saints (arhat, non-returner, once-returner, streamwinner) [§§7-10], followed by the truth-follower and the faith-follower [§§11-12], both of whom the sutta describes without specifically mentioning them. Of a truth-follower, the Buddha explains:²⁵

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in *the Three Jewels*. He is not one of joyous wisdom, nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has these five things [**the five spiritual faculties**]—the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom.²⁶ And he accepts the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata only after some pondering over it with wisdom.²⁷

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the ghost realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24.11/5:377)

1.3 THE FAITH-FOLLOWER. The faith-follower (*saddhā'nussarī*) is a disciple in whom the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) is predominant and who develops the noble path led by wise faith; his main practice is the perception of impermanence; when he attains the fruit he is called “faith-liberated” (*saddhā,vimutta*).²⁸ According to the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta, both the truth-follower and the faith-follower have reached the plane of the noble ones—technically, they are the “true individuals” (*sappurisa*)—but have not yet realized the fruit of streamwinning, and will do so before they die.²⁹ The faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) is defined in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** as follows:

³⁰Here, bhikkhus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental cankers

²⁴ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīnā honti. Tathāgata-p, paveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathīdam saddh'indriyam viriy'indriyam sat'indriyam samādh'indriyam paññ'indriyam.*

²⁵ “Truth-follower,” *dhammānusā*, alt tr “Dharma-follower.” Although **Sarakāṇi S** does not specifically mention it here, this section describes the truth-follower, while the next section describes the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*). They are defined in **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.20-21/1:479). According to **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), these two types of person have reached the plane of the noble ones but have not yet realized the fruit of streamwinning, but will do so before they die. See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

²⁶ The context here is interesting: it clearly implies that faith as a spiritual faculty can be “unrooted in wisdom,” but only if this faith is in the Three Jewels, or in practical terms, in *impermanence*. It should be noted that there is a very significant difference btw “blind faith” in impermanence and in the God-idea! The former is after the fact (it is taken reality for granted, as it were), but in the latter, if is simply a religious notion at best. For the 5 spiritual faculties, see §§20, 21 & **Sarakāṇi S** (S 55.24) = SD 3.6 Intro.

²⁷ *C'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti.* I render *mattaso* here as “only...some”. See S:B 1099 n269.

²⁸ *Saddhā,vimutta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.20/1:478,29-34) = SD 11.1; Pug 15/ 1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

²⁹ See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

³⁰ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīnā honti. Tathāgate c'assa saddhā,mattam hoti pema,mattam, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathīdam saddh'indriyam viriy'indriyam sat'indriyam samādh'indriyam paññ'indriyam.*

are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but he has mere faith in and mere love for the Tathagata.³¹

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the five spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70.9/1:478 f)

In the **Sarakāṇi Sutta 1** (S 55.24), the Buddha defines the faith-follower to Mahānāma, thus:³²

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha. He is not one of joyous wisdom, nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has *the five spiritual faculties*. And he holds mere faith in the Tathāgata, mere love for him.³³

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the ghost realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24.12/5:377)

As previously mentioned, the faith-follower is strong in the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*), and grows through the guidance of a teacher.

1.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER AND FAITH-FOLLOWER. The Majjhima Commentary says that the truth-follower and the faith-follower are individuals cultivating the path (*maggam bhāveti*), so that they are “those *standing* in the path of streamwinning” (*sotāpatti, magga-t, thā*).³⁴ While in **the truth-follower**, faculty of wisdom (*paññ'indriya*) predominates,³⁵ in **the faith-follower**, the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) predominates (MA 3:190). However, as stated in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), they have both “*not touched the liberations with the body*,” meaning they have *personally* tasted moments of spiritual freedom (such as attaining dhyana) through their mindfulness, so that “they *still* have to do their duties with diligence.”³⁶

The ten suttas of the **Okkanti Sāmyutta** (S 25)³⁷ discusses the differences between truth-follower and the faith-follower. The ten suttas treat the impermanent nature of the senses, their objects, their respective consciousnesses, etc, as something in which the faith-follower “has faith and firmly believes” (*saddahati adhimuccati*),³⁸ while the truth-follower “accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānani khamanti*).³⁹ In other words, while the faith-follower is simply convinced of the truth, the truth-follower accepts the truth of impermanence with wisdom.

³¹ *Tathāgatassa c'assa saddhā, mattam hoti pema, mattam*. This stock phrase is found in different contexts in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.47/ 1:143) = SD 3.13, **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.21/1:479). Cf **Sarakāṇi S 1** (S 55.24-375=377) = SD 3.6, **Sarakāṇi S** (25/4:378-380). Comy on **Bhaddāli S** (M65) explains that he keeps himself going by some world faith and worldly love towards the teacher and preceptor. Through the support of other monks, he remains a renunciant and may eventually become a great recluse who has attained the direct knowledges (MA 3:154).

³² Although not specifically mentioned in the Sutta itself, this section describes the faith-follower.

³³ “Mere faith...mere love,” *saddhā, mattam hoti pema, mattam*. The “mere” here emphasizes the quality it qualifies. A similar statement is found in **Alagaddūpamā S** (M 22.4/ 1:141) & **Bhaddāli S** (M 1:444/ 65.27): “Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me,” (*yesam mayi saddhā, mattam pema, mattam*). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipassaka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not gaining even stream-entry, they are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has “mere faith, mere love” in the Buddha are reborn in a heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

³⁴ I think this is Comy’s way of saying that they are assured of streamwinning in a matter of time (MA 3:190); see also PugA 194 (on Pug 1.35-36).

³⁵ *Paññā, pubbaṅgamam* (MA 3:190).

³⁶ See M 70.20-21/1:479 = SD 11.1; also Pug 1.35 f/15; Vism 21.75.

³⁷ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

³⁸ S 25.1/3:225,9.

³⁹ S 25.1/3:225,16.

Here the faith-follower does not merely have faith in the Buddha (as a “person”), but more importantly he is convinced of his teachings. The same is also clear from the **Puggala Paññatti** definition of these two noble disciples. Both are on the path to streamwinning, but while the truth-follower cultivates the noble path by putting wisdom first, taking it as his vehicle (*paññā, vāhiṃ paññā, pubbaṅgamā ariya, -maggam bhāveti*), the faith-follower places faith first, taking it as his vehicle (*saddhā, vāhiṃ saddhā, pubbaṅgamā*) (Pug 15).

In five short suttas in the **Indriya Saṃyutta** (S 48.12-17), the two types of practitioners are listed at the end of the usual list of noble disciples, in place of the one practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry. There, the faith-follower is placed *after* the truth-follower since the former’s spiritual faculties are weaker. The faith-follower and the truth-follower differ in their dominant faculty, that is, the faith-follower relies on faith as his mode of spiritual progress while the truth-follower relies on wisdom. On attaining the fruit of stream-entry, the faith-follower becomes “one liberated by faith” (*saddhā, vimutti*),⁴⁰ and the truth-follower, “one attained by view” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*).⁴¹

What emerges from these different presentations is that though the faith-follower relies on the faculty of faith, he or she nevertheless also needs to develop wisdom, even though this development of wisdom will be to a lesser degree than the Dhamma-follower.

(Analayo 2005:221 at M 1:478)

The **Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya**,⁴² throwing additional light on the two disciples, says that the truth-follower seeks the truth by himself in a self-reliant manner, guided in his meditation and practice mainly by his own study of scriptures. The faith-follower does the same, but under the guidance of another as his teacher.⁴³

The **ancient elders** (*porāṇaka therā*), notes the Majjhima Commentary, call such a spiritually developed person a “lesser streamwinner” (*cūla, sotāpanna*) or “maturing streamwinner” (*bāla, sotāpanna*).⁴⁴ This is clearly a term for the “streamwinner of the path” (*sotā, panna, magga*), that is, a saint who is just a step before becoming a “streamwinner of the fruit” (*sotā, panna, phala*), a full-fledged streamwinner.⁴⁵

The **Puggala Paññatti** calls the stream-winner of the path an “aeon-stopper” (*thita, kappi*): “Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry, and it were the time for the burning-up of the aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning.” (Pug 1.20/13). The meaning of this statement is that even when the world is coming to an end, he would surely attain streamwinning just before that, especially when this event is a cosmic manifestation of impermanence!

1.5 AWAKENING IS A GRADUAL PROCESS.

1.5.1 According to the Theravada Abhidhamma system, the faith-follower (*saddhā’ nusārī*) and the truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) exist for only a mind moment, and the fruit moment follows immediately. They then immediately become “freed by faith” (*saddhā. vimutta*) and “vision-attained” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*), respectively.⁴⁶

The essential difference between them is the the faith-follower has weak (*mudu*) faculties, while the truth-follower has strong or “sharp” (*tikkha*) faculties.⁴⁷ And from the **(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1)

⁴⁰ *Saddhā, vimutta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.20/1:478,29-34) = SD 11.1.

⁴¹ *Diṭṭhi-p, patta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.19/1:478,18-23) = SD 11.1.

⁴² Vasubandhu’s auto-commentary on his **Abhidharma,kośa** (5th cent, NW India).

⁴³ Abhk 6.29a-b & 6.63a-c29 = Abhk (ed Pradhan) 353,14; see Abhk:Pr 1989:952, 1016.

⁴⁴ MA 2:120; VbhA 254; cf Vism 605/29.27. See Gethin 2001:136 f.

⁴⁵ But as we shall see below [1.6], it can also refer to one who is a *step away* from becoming a streamwinner of the path.

⁴⁶ Vism 21.75/659; **Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya)** (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; **Abhidharma,hr̥daya** (tr I Armetlin, Paris) 1978:73-75. On spiritual faculties and the saints, see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50) = SD 10.4 Intro (3.1.1).

⁴⁷ The Sarvāstī, vāda system says that the faith-follower and the truth-follower will last only for 15 mind moments: **Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya)** (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; **Abhidharma,hr̥daya** (tr I Armetlin, Paris) 1978:75. The ref to *indriya* as *mudu* or *tikkha*, Gethin notes, “is not quite explicit in the Pāli sources, but is clearly enough indicated.” see MA 2:190; SA 3:235; PugA 193 f.

and the other suttas of the same Samyutta, it is clear that the faith-follower and the truth-follower, although distinguished from the streamwinner, are certainly very close to streamwinning.⁴⁸ Like the streamwinner, they are not liable to be reborn into subhuman states, and they have passed beyond the level of the worldling. Finally, it is said that they would not pass without realizing the fruit of streamwinning [§§4-5].

1.5.2 The Kīṭa, giri Sutta (M 70) lists the faith-follower and the truth-follower as the last two of the seven individuals, where they are discussed in detail, that is:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| (1) The one liberated both ways [the dual-liberated] | (<i>ubhato, bhāga, vimutta</i>), |
| (2) The wisdom-liberated | (<i>paññā, vimutta</i>), |
| (3) The body-witness | (<i>kāya, sakkhī</i>), |
| (4) The view-attainer | (<i>diṭṭhi-p, patta</i>), |
| (5) The faith-liberated | (<i>saddhā, vimutto</i>), |
| (6) The truth-follower | (<i>dhammānusārī</i>), and |
| (7) The faith-follower | (<i>saddhā' nusārī</i>). |
- (M 70.14/1:477) = SD 11.1 Intro (5.2)

The truth-follower is described as “those for whom the truths proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted only after some pondering over them with wisdom.”⁴⁹ He is also said to possess the five faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.⁵⁰ **The faith-follower**, on the other hand, has only “mere faith in and mere love for the Tathagata.”⁵¹ but he too possesses the five faculties.

Both the truth-follower and the faith-follower see by means of wisdom that their mental cankers (*āsava*)—sense-desire, views, existence, and ignorance—are not yet destroyed.⁵² Of either of them, the Buddha declares, “Seeing this fruit of diligence for such a monk, I say that he still has to do his duties with diligence.”⁵³ that is to say:

the venerable one makes use of suitable resting places, and associates with spiritual friends, and balances his spiritual faculties, he may, by realizing for himself, through direct knowledge here and now attain and abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into the homeless life. (M 70.20+21/1:479 f) = SD 11.1

As the faith-follower and the truth-follower, both of whom “makes use of suitable resting places, and associates with spiritual friends, and balances his spiritual faculties, etc,” it is simply inappropriate to speak of either of them as existing only momentarily!⁵⁴ Furthermore, we have an interesting account in **the Ugga Sutta 2** (A 8.22), where the master giver **Ugga** speaks of the unbiased joy in giving:

⁴⁸ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁴⁹ *Tathāgata-p, paveditā c’assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti* (**Kīṭa, giri S**, M 70.20/1:473; **Sarakāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ’ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379). The abs n for *nijjhānam khamati* is *nijjhāna-k, khanti* (“being convinced after pondering on it”), such as in the term *diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*: which see Intro 3.3(5).

⁵⁰ *Api c’assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidam saddh’indriyam viriy’indriyam sati’indriyam samādh’indriyam paññ’indriyam* (**Kīṭa, giri S**, M 70.20/1:473; **Sarakāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ’ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379).

⁵¹ *Tathāgatassa c’assa saddhā, mattam hoti pema, mattam*. This stock phrase is found in different contexts in **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22.47/ 1:143) = SD 3.13, **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭa, giri S** (M 70.21/1:479). Cf **Sarakāṇi S 1** (S 55.24-375=377) = SD 3.6, **Sarakāṇi S** (25/4:378-380). Comy on **Bhaddali S** (M65) explains that he keeps himself going by some worldly faith and worldly love towards the teacher and preceptor. Through the support of other monks, he remains a renunciant and may eventually become a great recluse who has attained the direct knowledges (MA 3:154).

⁵² *Paññāya assa disvā āsavā aparikkhāṇā honti* (M 70.15-19/1:477-480).

⁵³ M 70.20-21/1:479 = SD 11.1.

⁵⁴ This equally applies to all the other 5 of the 7 individuals who “still has to do his duties with diligence”—all of which the Abhidhamma tradition state are of momentary existence [§1.5.1 here]. See also Gethin 2001:131-133.

It is wonderful then when the sangha has been invited by me, devatas approach and announce,

“Householder,

this monk is one freed both ways	(<i>ubhato.bhāga,vimutta</i>);
this one is one wisdom-liberated	(<i>paññā,vimutta</i>);
this one is a body-witness	(<i>kāya,sakkhī</i>);
this one is a view-attained	(<i>diṭṭhi-p.patta</i>);
this one is a faith-liberated	(<i>saddhā,vimutta</i>);
this one is a truth-follower	(<i>dhammānusārī</i>);
this one is a faith-follower	(<i>saddhā'nusārī</i>);
this one is unvirtuous, of evil nature	(<i>dussīla pāpa,dhamma</i>).

Yet when I am serving food to the sangha, I do not find the thought arising thus: “I shall give a little to this one, or I shall give a lot to this one. Rather I give with an even mind.”⁵⁵

(A 8.22.10/4:215)

Obviously, if a faith-follower or a truth-follower can have his almsfood in an alms-giving in a devotee’s house, he could *not* be existing for only a mind-moment!

All this goes to show the change from the faith-follower and the truth-follower—from the path to its fruition—is not a sudden flash but a gradual process (or perhaps a gradual process ending in a sudden flash). The observation of careful scholars like **Rupert Gethin** is instructive:

The *suttas* of the Nikāyas are presented in the first place as the prescriptions of the Buddha applicable to particular occasions. They characteristically progress from their particular starting points via a particular course of practice or teaching towards the final goal of complete awakening. To this extent the Nikāyas can be seen as drawing attention to the gradual stage by stage nature of the process to awakening. (2001:133)

Finally, we have the Buddha Word on the gradual path:

Bhikkhus, I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress.⁵⁶

And how, bhikkhus, is final knowledge achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress? [The 12-stage training then follows.]⁵⁷ (M 70.22-23/1:479 f) = SD 11.1

1.6 THE LESSER STREAMWINNER AND THE SURE WAY.

1.6.1 THE LESSER STREAMWINNER AND THE 4TH PURIFICATION. The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta contains a term—*sammatta,niyāma* [§§4-5]—that needs some explanation. The Sutta Commentary glosses this term as “the noble path” (*ariya,magga*) (*okkanto sammatta,niyāman ti pavīṭṭho ariya,maggaṃ*, SA 2:346).⁵⁸ On the clause, “he is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning,” SA says that once the path has arisen there can be no obstruction to the fruit. It quotes **the Puggala Paññatti**, where such a saint is called an “aeon-stopper” (*thita,kappī*): “Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning, and it were the time for the burning-up of the

⁵⁵ Here, Uggā is giving to all the monks as a sangha (A 8.22.10/4:215), which is also characteristic of “the true individual’s giving”: see **Sappurisa,dāna S** (A 5.148/3:172 f) = SD 22.15 Intro (2). Elsewhere, the disciple is admonished to practise “discriminate giving” (*viceyya,dāna*), ie, giving to the giftworthy first: see eg **Sādhu S** (S 1.33/1:20-22 = SD 22.10c); (**Dāna**) **Vaccha,gotta S** (A 3.57/1:160-162 = SD 22.12 Intro (2)); **Āditta J** (J 424 = SD 22.10a Intro (1.3)).

⁵⁶ This whole para: *Nāhaṃ bhikkhave ādiken’eva aññ’ārādhanāṃ vadāmi, api na bhikkhave anupubba,sikkhā anupubba,kiriya anupubba,paṭipadā aññ’ārādhanā hoti.*

⁵⁷ The 12-stage learning process is also found in **Caṅkī S** (M 95 = SD 21.15), first in normal sequence (M 95.20/2:173) and then in reverse (M 95.21b/2:174). Cf A 4:336, 5:154.

⁵⁸ See also PmA 3:697 f.

aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning.” (Pug 1.20/13). Previously, we have noted that this refers to the “streamwinner of the path” (who is not yet a full-fledged streamwinner), called a “lesser streamwinner” by the Ancients [1.4].

But who really is **the lesser streamwinner** (*cūḷa, sotāpanna* or *cullaka sotāpanna*)? Both Buddhaghosa’s **Visuddhi, magga** (Vism) and Dhammapāla’s **Abhidhammāvatāra** (Abhdv) mention the lesser streamwinner at the conclusion of the “purification by passing beyond doubt” (*kaṅkhā, vitarāṇa, visuddhi*). In the scheme of the seven purifications (*satta, visuddhi*), it is the fulfillment of the fourth purification.⁵⁹

Now one of insight possessed of this knowledge (of the passing beyond doubt) is one who has found solace in the Buddha’s teaching, who has a footing, whose destiny is sure—he is called a lesser streamwinner. (Vism 19.27/605; cf Abhdv 119)

1.6.2 THE LESSER STREAMWINNER AND THE FACULTIES. The Nikāyas often associate the overcoming of doubt (*vicikicchā*) and the possession of wise faith (*saddhā*) with streamwinning.⁶⁰ The Commentators further state that the lesser streamwinner is one whose destiny is sure. All this is reminiscent of the Nikāya definition of the faith-follower and the truth-follower. However, according to the Abhidhamma tradition, both of them have *not* fulfilled the fourth purification (that of overcoming doubt), and have not totally abandoned the three fetters,⁶¹ especially doubt (*vicikicchā*). **Gethin**, however, notes that, “Possibly in this context *kaṅkhā* should be understood as doubt in its grosser manifestations and *vicikicchā* as rather more subtle doubt” (2001:137 n138).

Apparently, in the scheme of the seven purifications, the fulfillment of the fourth stage—the overcoming of doubt—marks the beginning of the process culminating in the supramundane path of streamwinning proper. The lesser streamwinner refers here, I think, to the practitioner who is purified (on a mundane level) with regards to his moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, which are, in fact, the first three purifications. The path of streamwinning then follows, as noted by Gethin, thus:

One might then put it that, loosely speaking, the path of stream-attainment extends from the conclusion of the fourth purification (ie the acquisition of the knowledge that causes one to pass beyond doubt) up to the seventh purification (“by knowledge and seeing”). (2001:137)

In the light of what has been discussed so far, let me venture to say that the lesser streamwinner is still a worldling (*puṭhujjana*), but he is a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puṭhujjana*), that is,

one who dwells practising in full accordance with the Dharma, accomplished in moral virtue, with sense-doors guarded, moderate in food, devoted to watchfulness night after night, devoted to the cultivation of the states of the limbs of awakening, thinking, “I will attain one or other of the fruits of recluship today or tomorrow.” (MA 1:40; ItA 1:61)

Now both the faith-follower and the truth-follower have all the five faculties (*indriya*). However, it has been stated that the worldling does not have them, and **the Paṭipanna Sutta** (S 47.18) says that

⁵⁹ The 7 purifications (*satta, visuddhi*) are: (1) purification of moral virtue (*sīla, visuddhi*); (2) purification of mind (*citta, visuddhi*); (3) purification of view (*diṭṭhi, visuddhi*); (4) purification by crossing over doubt (*kaṅkhā, vitarāṇa, visuddhi*); (5) purification by the knowledge and vision of the path and the not-path (*maggāmagga, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*); (6) purification by the knowledge and vision of progress (*paṭipadā, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*); (7) purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*) (**Ratha, vinita S**, M 24.8-15/1:147-149; Vism 1-710). For details, see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1(11);

⁶⁰ See eg **Caṇḍāla S** (A 5.175/3:206); **(Upāsaka) Parābhava S** (A 5.176/4:26); **Kiṅci Saṅghāra S** (A 6.93/3:439) = SD 12.14; **(Sotāpanna) Ānisaṃsa S** (A 6.97/3:441) = SD 3.3(4.4); **Parihāna S** (A 7.27/4:25), also called Hani S. See also SD 8.6 14.2; SD 12.14 Intro (2).

⁶¹ That is, self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rules and rituals (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*) (S 5:61; A 5.13; Vbh 377). See **Laymen Saints** = SD 8.6(12).

The one who is in every way and everywhere wholly without these five faculties, him I declare an outsider, one who stands in the ranks of the worldling. (S 47.18.4/5:202)

Here, in the Paṭipanna Sutta, the faculties are exclusively supramundane, where “worldling” probably means “blind worldling” (*andha puthujjana*), one who lacks moral fibre, mental calm and spiritual vision. As noted by **Bodhi**,

Despite the statement here restricting the faculties to those at the minimum level of path-attainer, the Pāli tradition, beginning with the Abhidhamma, regards the faculties as general wholesome capacities also possessed by worldlings. Some of the other early Buddhist schools were more stringent. (S:B 1932 n202)

In other words, we can say that the lesser streamwinner *does* have some level of the five faculties, although they may not be full developed, but certainly he is unlike the blind worldling, who lacks all the faculties.⁶² As such, with sustained practice, the lesser streamwinner is well on the way to gain stream-winning in this life itself, as guaranteed by **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and the other nine suttas of the same Saṃyutta.⁶³

The Vibhaṅga Commentary, on the other hand, describes a lesser streamwinner in Abhidhamma terms, as one who understands that name-and-form is not produced without causes and conditions. He goes on to ask what these causes and conditions are, and defines it thus: “With ignorance as condition, craving as condition, karma as condition, food as condition”⁶⁴ And he is without doubt that they are conditions arise interdependently in the past, in the future, and even now. Beyond that there is no being or person, but only a heap of formations. This insight is called “the full understanding of the known” (*ñāta, pariññā*).⁶⁵ And under the right conditions, he would be able, in one session, to attain arhathood, that is, by applying the three characteristics and comprehending the formations with a series of insights. (VbhA 1173 f/254)

1.6.3 THE SURE WAY. **Bodhi** translates *okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ* as “(one who) has entered the certainty of rightness” [§§4-5]. **Agga, citto** (of Sasanarakkha Sanctuary, Malaysia) thinks that Bodhi’s translation of *sammatta, niyāma* here as “the fixed course of rightness” (S:B 1005) (which the Commentary glosses as “the noble path”) is “self-contradictory in the suttas,” since to say that the faith-follower and the truth-follower have “entered the fixed course of rightness” means that they *are* already stream-winners, but they are *not*. Hence, he suggests translating *sammatta, niyāma* as “the fixed course to rightness,” that is to say, “the faith-follower and the truth-follower have entered the fixed course to rightness.” (2007)

I think the real problem lies, not with translation of *sammatta, niyāma*, but with the sense of okkanta, which is the past participle of *okkamati* (“he descends into”). *Okkamati* and its various forms are often used in connection with the attainment of streamwinning—as in embarking a boat on the stream of right-

⁶² On the faculties (*indriya*), see Gethin 2001:126-138.

⁶³ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁶⁴ Pm 1.286/1:55.

⁶⁵ *Ñāta, pariññā* is one of the three kinds of mundane (*lokiya*) full understanding (**pariññā**): (1) the full understanding of the known (*ñāta, pariññā*); (2) the full understanding as investigating (*tīraṇa, pariññā*); and (3) the full understanding as overcoming (*pahāna, pariññā*) (Nm 53; Pm 1.87). They are defined by **Buddhaghosa** as follows: (1) “the full understanding of the known” is the knowledge regarding the discernment of specific characteristics of phenomena, such as: “*Form* has the characteristic of being molested (*rappana*); *feeling* has the characteristic of being felt.” (2) “The full understanding as investigating” is the insight with the general characteristics (impermanence, suffering, not self) as its object regarding those same phenomena, beginning thus: “Form is impermanent; feeling is impermanent.” (3) “The full understanding as abandoning” is the insight with the characteristics as its object that occurs as the *abandoning* of the perception of permanence, etc, regarding the same phenomena. (Vism 20.3/606 f). In simple terms: (1) is the observing of the *external* characteristics of things and events; (2) is a deeper examining of the *inner* aspects of these same things and events; and (3) is the *letting go* of them through noticing their true nature.

ness destined for the sea of nirvana. There is a whole Sāmyutta chapter entitled **the Okkanti Sāmyutta** (S 25), dealing with the attainment of streamwinning in this life itself.

Although *okkanta* is a past participle,⁶⁶ in the early texts, the semantics or sense of a word is often *contextual* rather than technical. Take, for example, the common stock phrase, *ekam samayam Bhagavā Sāvattthiyam viharati*: it literally translates “the Blessed One resides near (or at) Sāvattthī,” but the usual idiomatic translation is “the Blessed One was residing near Sāvattthī.” Although the present participle of *okkamati* is *okkamanta* (“is descending (into, upon)”), we can, at least in the case in question, take *okkanta* (a past participle) in the present participle sense as “(is) descending (into, upon).” In fact, **the Pali-English Dictionary** defines *okkanta* as “coming on, approaching, taking place.” Now the reading makes perfect sense, solving the problem that troubled Aggacitto.

Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower are described as “descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course of rightness], descending into the plane of true individuals, (but) *gone beyond* the plane of the worldlings”⁶⁷ [§§4-5].⁶⁸ They are *nearing* those states, but not exactly there yet. They *have*, however, “gone beyond” (*vīti, vatto*) being worldlings. *Vīti, vatta* is *vīti* (“gone beyond”) + *vatta* (“that which has happened”) (past participle of *vattati*, “it happens”). The faith-follower and the truth-follower are, in other words, no more worldlings (more specifically, no more *blind* worldlings) but are not yet streamwinners, but are moving in that *right* direction.

The ancient elders (*porāṇakā therā*), notes the Majjhima Commentary, call such a spiritually developing person (who is “descending into the certainty of rightness”) a “lesser streamwinner” (*cūla, sotāpanna*) or “maturing streamwinner” (*bāla, sotāpanna*).⁶⁹ This is a late technical term for one who, in the spirit of **the Okkanti Sāmyutta** (S 25),⁷⁰ properly practising the perception of impermanence, is assured of attaining streamwinning within this life itself.

The lesser streamwinner—if we take as either the faith-follower or the truth-follower—are said to be on the course of “rightness” (*sammatta*), which here refers to the eightfold path of the saints. These two individuals are spiritual attainers who are not yet aryas, as suggested by **the Sammatta, niyāma Suttas 1-**

⁶⁶ CPD: o-*kkanta*, mfn [pp of¹ *okkamati*; cf *avakkanta*; Skt *avakrānta*], 1 (a) descended, come down, transmitted; (b) descended into, esp with *kucchīm*, ie attained rebirth; gone, come into; entered (a place or country); (c) passed into (a state): (i) with *niddam*, ie fallen asleep; (ii) with *middha*, ie become drowsy; (iii) with *lajji, dhammam*, ie become ashamed; (iv) with *sārajjam* (with gen of agent), ie become dejected, despondent; (d) entered upon.— 1 (a) *eso dhammo danḍānaṃ ~o purāṇo ahū*, Sn 312 (~o *ahū pavatto āsi*, SnA 324,9); — 1 (b) *yadā Bodhisatto, mātu kucchīm ~o hoti* (D 2:12,22 f = M 3:120,22 f; *Sāmo...kumāro...Parikāya tāpasiyā kucchīm ~o* (Miln 129,27); *ye keci sattā mātu, gabbhaṃ ~ā*, MilnT 25,26 (ad Miln 127,31); *deva, manussesu ariyabhūmim ~esu* (J 4:187,4 = DhA 3:178,5; *te jānanti aññe ... bhikkhū antosimam ~ā ti*, V 1:132,10 ≠ 132,12 ≠ 132,14; *te na jānimsū ti simam ~ā ti vā okkamantī ti vā na jānimsu*, VA 1064,24 (ad V 1:128,36); *~am tam tato Lanke ... mahīpati abhisecayi*, Mahv 22.22; *tādise araññe ~e*, VA 913,1; — 1 (c) (i) *āsanāsālāya...nisinno bhikkhu niddam ~o hoti*, VA 846,21; *keci niddam ~ā*, J 6:446,21; MA 3:354,9; — (ii) *~e middhe...supinaṃ passati*, Miln 299,13; — (iii) *lajji, dhammam ~o*, VA 314,10 ≠ 314,12 (~ena); — (iv) *amhākaṃ sārajjam ~an ti*, A 3:195,8 (*sārajjam ~an ti domanassam anupaviṭṭham*, AA 3:299,11; — 1 (d) *ayaṃ vuccati... ~o sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmim ~o*, S 2:225,10-11 ≠ 225,17-18 ≠ 226,2-3 (~o *sammatta, niyāman ti paviṭṭho ariya, maggaṃ*, SA 2:346,18); *sammatta, niyāmaṃ okkamantī ti magga-k, khaṇe okkamati, phala-k, khaṇe pana ~o nāma hoti*, PmA 699,30 (ad Pm 2:238,19); *anariyakammam ~am*, J 4:4:57,3* (*anariyānaṃ...kammaṃ otarivā ṭhitam*, 57,31'); *tathā koci ekam dassanaṃ okkamati, koci dve, koci tīṇi...ekasmim ~e pi, dvīsu, tīsu ~esu pi, niyatamicchādītthiko va hoti*, DA 166,31-167,1 (ad D 1:52,2 f).

⁶⁷ *Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmim okkanto vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmim*.

⁶⁸ We see this sense of an intermediate state in such expressions as *niddam okkantaṃ* (“falling asleep”) (SA 1:239; J 1:333, 399) and *niddam okkanta, kāle* (“at the time of falling asleep”) (DA 2:385; MA 5:10; J 2:247, 3:449, 5:438), both of which expresses a situation between being awake and being asleep. Similarly, *okkanta* here can express a sense of the faith-follower or the truth-follower leaving behind the state of being a worldling but not yet attaining the state of an arya (streamwinning).

⁶⁹ MA 2:120; VbhA 254; cf Vism 605/29.27. See Gethin 2001:136 f.

⁷⁰ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

3 (A 5.151-153).⁷¹ These three Suttas, I think, describe the training of the faith-follower and the truth-follower, that is, the lesser streamwinners. This training expedites their attaining streamwinning in this life itself.

2 *Attha,veda* and *dhamma,veda*

The remarkable (**Agata,phala**) **Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10) is about the well known six recollections—on the Three Jewels, on moral virtue, on charity, and on devas—any of which when practised by a noble disciple (take, for example, a streamwinner)⁷² will bring this result:

...his mind is not obsessed by lust, not obsessed by hate, not obsessed by delusion. At that time, his mind is straight,⁷³ ever focussed on *the object of recollection*.⁷⁴

Mahānāma, a noble disciple whose mind is straight
gains **inspired knowledge in the goal** (*attha,veda*),
gains **inspired knowledge in the Dharma** (*dhamma,veda*),
gains gladness connected with Dharma;
when he is gladdened, zest is born;
when the mind is zestful, the body is tranquil;
the tranquil body feels happy;
when one is happy the mind becomes concentrated.

This, Mahānāma, is called a noble disciple:

he dwells impartial (*sama-p,atta*) amongst partial [vicious] people;
he dwells unafflicted (*avyāpajjha*) amongst afflicted people.

As one who has entered upon the Dharma stream,⁷⁵ he cultivates the recollection....

(A 6.10/3:284-288 = SD 15.3)

Here, *attha,veda* refers to the clear understanding of the *attha*—the purpose and the benefit—of the spiritual life, an understanding resulting from a “straight mind” (*uju,gata,citta*), that is, one easily directed to the meditation object and a mindfulness trained on the path towards liberation. All this generates an unshakable faith rooted in some level of direct seeing of reality, and as such describes the main quality of a faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*).

In the same context, we see *dhamma,veda* as referring to a deep understanding of the Dharma as wisdom (seeing the true nature of existence). While *attha* here refers to a faithful's vision and discovery of the path towards liberation, feeling quite content just to begin journeying on it, the *dhamma* refers to one's careful examining and analysis of the terrain and structure of this path, even mapping it. Hence, *dhamma,veda* refers to the main quality of a wisdom follower (*dhammānusārī*).

Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower, however, are not yet aryas, that is, saints of the path, but are declared in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (A 25.1) to have “entered the plane of true individuals, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings” (*sappurisa,bhūmim okkanto vītivatto puthujjana,bhūmim*).⁷⁶ That is to say, they are both no more worldlings (*puthujjana*) but still not yet noble saints (*ariya*), but are

⁷¹ (A 5.151-153/3:174-176) = SD 4.2-4. On *sammatta* (rightness), see **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117.34/3:75) = SD 6.10.

⁷² “Noble saint” refers to any of the 4 kinds of aryas, viz, the streamwinner (*sot'āpanna*), the once-returner (*sākadāgāmī*), the non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and the arhat. Here the streamwinner is meant. On the saints, See **Kiṭṭhā-giri S** (M 70) = SD 11.1(5).

⁷³ “His mind is straight” (*uju,gata,cittam*), ie “his mind goes directly (*ujukam eva*) to the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha” (AA 3:337).

⁷⁴ That is, recollecting the virtues of one of the Three Jewels, or his own moral virtue.

⁷⁵ “The Dharma stream,” *dhamma,sota*. Obviously here, the Buddha is referring either to streamwinning or one on the way to become one. For details, see SD 3.2 (A 5.202) n & SD 3.14 (A 6.44) n.

⁷⁶ A 25.1/3:225.

abiding in an intermediate state that will ripen into streamwinning in this life itself, if not surely at the moment of dying (id).⁷⁷

3 The Abhidhamma view

The Abhidhamma tradition generally regards the supramundane path as lasting only a single mind-moment. As such, both the faith-follower and the truth-follower should technically (according to the Abhidhamma system), last only the mind-moment of the path.⁷⁸ “This interpretation, however,” notes **Bodhi**, “though advocated by the commentaries, is difficult to reconcile with the Nikāyas.” (S:B 1099 n268). **Rupert Gethin** similarly thinks that “the strict Abhidhamma understanding [in terms of momentariness of the path-attainment] is not altogether satisfactory for the Nikāyas here.” (2001:131)

... a number of Nikāya passages seem to quite clearly envisage all seven of these persons as walking about and performing tasks that would seem to involve the *saddhānusārin* and *dhammānusārin* in something rather more than momentary existence. A case in point is the following Ānguttara-nikāya passage:

It is wonderful that when the Saṅgha has been invited by me [for a meal], *devatās* approach and announce, “Householder, this *bhikkhu* is *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*, this one is *paññā,vimutta*, this one is *kāya-sakkhin*, this one is *diṭṭhi-patta*, this one is *saddhā,vimutta*, this one is *dhammānusārin*, [this one is *saddhā’nusārī*, this one is virtuous, of good *dhamma*,]⁷⁹ this one is unvirtuous, of bad *dhamma*.” Yet when I am serving food to the Saṅgha I do not find that the thought arises, “I shall give a little to this one or I shall give a lot to this one.” Rather I give with an even mind.
(A 4:215.10; cf M 1:439 f; A 1:73f)⁸⁰

4 Sarakāni

The Cakkhu Sutta should be studied with the two **Sarakāni Suttas**,⁸¹ which describes how an erstwhile drunk dies a streamwinner through keeping to the spiritual training at the time of his death. The Buddha explains to Mahānāma how Sarakāni dies a saint:

Mahānāma, when a layman has gone for refuge over a long time to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, how could he go to a lower world? Mahānāma, Sarakāni the Sakya had for a long time gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, so how could he go to a lower world?
(S 55.24.10/5:375)

In fact, it is clear from the Sarakāni Suttas, that Sarakāni is either a truth-follower or a faith-follower, as **Analayo** explains:

Since S 5:379 [**Sarakāni Sutta 2**]⁸² has the same set of terms used in the definition of the “*Dhamma*-follower” (*dhammānusārī*) and the “faith-follower” (*saddhā’nusārī*) at M 1:479 [**Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta**],⁸³ it seems possible that he has been such a “follower” and was thus bound to realize stream-entry latest at death (cf S 3:225 [**Cakkhu Sutta**]⁸⁴ which states that it is impossible for a *Dhamma*-follower or a faith-follower to pass away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry).
(2003 255 n22; normalized and annotated)

⁷⁷ Below, we shall examine the nature of the “lesser streamwinner” as a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), as a state just before the faith-follower and the truth-follower [1.6.1].

⁷⁸ Eg MA 3:151 f ad M 1:439 f.

⁷⁹ Omitted in Gethin’s text.

⁸⁰ Gethin 2001:131 n122; see esp pp129-133.

⁸¹ S 55.24-25/5:375-380. See also S 55.24 = SD 3.6.

⁸² S 55.25.10-11/5:379.

⁸³ M 70.18-19/1:479 = SD 11.1.

⁸⁴ S 25.1/3:115.

5 The perception of impermanence

The most universal spiritual exercise in early Buddhism is the perception of impermanence, traditionally called *anicca saññā*, but which can take many forms of spiritual exercise. Two such exercises are described in the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**⁸⁵ in parts (4)-(6) of its “insight refrain,”⁸⁶ which runs thus:

So he dwells

- (1) observing *the body in the body* internally,
- (2) or, observing *the body in the body* externally,
- (3) or, observing *the body in the body* both internally and externally;
- (4) or, he dwells observing states that arise in *the body*,
- (5) or, he dwells observing states that pass away in *the body*,
- (6) or, he dwells observing states that arise and pass away in *the body*.

Or else, he maintains the mindfulness that ‘There is *a body*,’ merely for knowing and awareness.

And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.

And that, bhikkhus, is how a monk [a meditator] dwells observing *the body in the body*.

(M 10.5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 25, 31; mutatis mutandis⁸⁷ at 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 45 = SD 13.3)

Thus he observes “the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.”⁸⁸ In the course of watching the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas, the practitioner goes on to watch the “nature of arising” (*samudaya, dhamma*), the “nature of passing away” (*vaya, dhamma*), and the “nature of (both) arising and passing away” (*samudaya, vaya, dhamma*).⁸⁹

The Samudaya, dhamma Sutta 1⁹⁰ is a reflection on the impermanence of the five aggregates. It should also be noted that the sutta defines “ignorance” (*avijjā*) as not knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away; and “true knowledge” as truly knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.

The Avijjā Sutta 1⁹¹ has instructions for another exercise in the perception of impermanence by way of noting that the senses, sense-objects and feelings that arise on account of the senses (whether pleasant, painful or neutral) are all impermanent—knowing this, one abandons ignorance, and true knowledge arises in one. While **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k, khaya Sutta 1**⁹² shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six senses as impermanent, its parallel, **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k, khaya Sutta 2**,⁹³ shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six sense-objects as impermanent. Another parallel sutta, **the (Khandha) Nandi-k, khaya Sutta 1**,⁹⁴ on the other hand, shows how the reflection on the aggregates as being impermanent liberates one’s mind.

⁸⁵ D 22; M 10; see SD 13 see esp SD 13.1(3.8).

⁸⁶ See SD 13.1(3.7).

⁸⁷ “With the appropriate changes” in ref to “feelings,” to “mind,” and to “dharmas” [phenomena].

⁸⁸ Colloquially, this is often spoken of as “Watching the nature of rising, of falling (away), and of rising and falling (away).”

⁸⁹ See Gethin 2001:53 & Analayo 2003: 102 f. Cf AK Warder 1971b:282 f on this usage of *-dhamma* in the Nikāyas. The Comys, however, take *dhamma* as indicating the conditions for the arising and fall of the body, etc (see DA 3:765, 768, 769; MA 1:249 f), although the Subcomys also allow that *dhamma* can have the sense of “nature” here (DAṬ 2:381; MAPṬ:Be 1:350: *pakati, vācī vā dhamma, saddo*). In the end the point would seem to make little difference to the general purport of the expression: the *bhikkhu* sees how body, etc, arise and fall away. (Gethin’s fn; normalized)

⁹⁰ S 22.126/3:170-172 = SD 12.5.

⁹¹ S 35.79/4:50 = SD 12.6.

⁹² S 35.155/142 = SD 12.7.

⁹³ S 35.156/142 = SD 12.8.

⁹⁴ S 22.51/3:51 = SD 12.9.

As we have noted above [1], the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta states that one who investigates the nature of impermanence (the truth-follower), even when one merely has faith in the fact of impermanence (which is clearly evident in daily life) (the faith-follower),⁹⁵ will become a streamwinner, that is, enter the path to awakening and end suffering in this life itself: “He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.”⁹⁶

The (Ānisaṃsa) Anicca Saññā Sutta (A 6.102) mentions six advantages of the perception of impermanence, as follows:

- (1) All formations will be appear transient to me (*sabba,saṅkhārā ca me anavaṭṭhito khāyissanti*).
- (2) My mind will not delight in all the world [or in the world of the all, that is, the six sense-experiences (*sabba,loke ca me mano nābhiramissati*).
- (3) My mind will rise above all the world (*sabba,lokā ca me mano vuṭṭhahissati*).
- (4) My mind will tend towards nirvana (*nibbāṇa,poṇaṇi ca me mānasam bhavissati*).
- (5) The mental fetters will be broken by me (*saṃyojanā ca me pahānaṃ gacchanti*).
- (6) And I shall attain to the supreme recluship (that is, the benefits of the holy life) (*paramena ca sāmāññena samannāgato bhavissāmi ti*). (A 6.102/3:443)

The main benefit here would of course be number (6), that is, the attainment of spiritual liberation itself, or awakening through the attaining of streamwinning, as stated in such suttas as the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) here.

One of the best evidence we have for the efficacy of the perception of impermanence in the attaining of streamwinning is found **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 72), where the Buddha exhorts Rāhula thus:

Rāhula, cultivate the perception of impermanence. For when you cultivate the perception of impermanence, the conceit I-am (*asmi,māna*) will be abandoned. (M 72.23/1:424 f)

“The conceit I-am” ranges from the grossest form of pride to a subtle feeling of one’s special abilities or attainment, that is, a sense of superiority. This later case, as conceit, forms the eighth spiritual fetter,⁹⁷ broken only by the arhat. However, in its less unwholesome form—as self-identity view (*sakkāya,dīṭṭhi*)—it is overcome by proper practice of the perception of impermanence.⁹⁸

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⁹⁵ There is a very clear difference between self-verifiable faith in impermanence (which is true reality) and self-constructed faith in a God-notion (or similar constructs) reinforced through dogmas, psychological means (eg fear) social control, and mistaken perception. One may deny God, but one cannot deny perception.

⁹⁶ See also S:B 1098 nn268-269.

⁹⁷ The 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*): see Intro (1.1) n on “the three fetters.”

⁹⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see “**I**”: **The nature of identity** = SD 19.1.

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse

(S 25.1/3:225)

- 1 At Sāvatti.
- 2 There the Blessed One said:

The six senses are impermanent

- 2 “Bhikshus,
the eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
The ear is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
The nose is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
The tongue is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
The body is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
The mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The faith-follower

4 ⁹⁹Bhikshus, one who has faith thus, who firmly believes these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called a **faith-follower**.

¹⁰⁰He is descending ¹⁰¹into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course of rightness], ¹⁰²descending into the plane of true individuals; ¹⁰³he has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings. ¹⁰⁴

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning. ¹⁰⁵

The truth-follower

5 Bhikshus, one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus, ¹⁰⁶is called a **truth-follower**.

⁹⁹ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayaṃ vuccati saddhā'nusārī okkanto sammatta, - niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ.* The operative verbs here are *saddahati* (“he has faith (in)”) and *adhimuccati* (“he resolves, adheres to, is sure of”). I have rendered *adhimuccati* here as “(he) firmly believes...”. On the streamwinner’s faith, see **Entering the stream** = SD 3.3(5).

¹⁰⁰ *Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ.* On how this should be tr, see Intro (1.6.3).

¹⁰¹ *Okkanto.* See Intro (1.6.3).

¹⁰² *Sammatta, niyāmaṃ.* See Intro (1.5).

¹⁰³ “True individuals,” *sappurisa*, also “superior persons,” “virtuous person,” “ideal person”; often syn with “noble disciple,” *ariya, sāvaka*, but here clearly includes those, although not yet on the path, but is assured of it, viz the faith-follower and the truth-follower. The qualities of the *sappurisa* are given in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6; see also **D 33.2.2(6)/3:252**, **34.1.8(7)/ 3:283**; **M 110.14-24/3:23 f**; **A 7.64/4:113**, **8.38/4:144**.

¹⁰⁴ “Worldling,” *puthujjano*, ie “born of the crowd”; more fully called “uninstructed worldling,” one unskilled (*akovidā*), ie, lacks theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, and is undisciplined (*avinīta*), and also lacks practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya, dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true individuals” (*sappurisa*) are synonymous. See also MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354.

¹⁰⁵ *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna, yoniṃ vā petti, visayaṃ vā uppajjeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti, phalaṃ sacchikaroti.* This is the Sutta’s key statement and clearly refers to what, after the Buddha’s time, is referred to as a “lesser streamwinner” (*culla, sotāpanna, cullaka, - sotāpanna*). See **Entering the stream** = SD 3.3(6).

¹⁰⁶ *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti.*

He is descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course of rightness], descending into the plane of true individuals; he has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.

The streamwinner

6 One who knows and sees these truths thus is called a **streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁰⁷ sure of liberation, destined for awakening.¹⁰⁸

— evaṃ —

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¹⁰⁷ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering”, another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca,gati*) (D 3:234=33.2.1, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*nīraya*), the animal birth (*tirachāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

¹⁰⁸ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinīpāta,dhammo niyato sambodhi,parāyano ti*. “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [streamwinner] differs from those on the way to stream-entry. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati*.” (S:B 1099 n270)