

Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta

The Greater Discourse on the Advice to Rāhula

[Meditations to overcome attachment to the body]

(Majjhima Nikāya 62/1:420-426)

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Rāhula

1.1 RĀHULA'S INSTRUCTION. According to the Majjhima Commentary, once when the 18-year-old Rāhula is following the Buddha on alms-round, he harbours carnal thoughts through being fascinated by the Buddha's physical beauty of and noting that he is of similar appearance. (MA 3:132). The Buddha, noticing Rāhula's unwholesome thoughts, gives him the teachings of the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta (M 62).¹ In this sutta, Rāhula is taught how the body is composed of the four elements [§§8-11] and space [§12], and to reflect on the body as "this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self" [§§8-12].

According to the Majjhima Commentary, the Buddha explains the meditation on form (*rūpa*) to Rāhula because he is too attached to his body (*atta, bhāva*), and does not see things with insight. It adds that Sāriputta, seeing Rāhula sitting in meditation, thinks that he is cultivating the breath meditation (*ānāpānā, sati*), unaware that Rāhula has already been instructed by the Buddha.

The Buddha begins his instruction to Rāhula with the meditation on the four elements [§§8-11]² and on space [§12] to dispel Rāhula's attachment to the body, not yet removed by the brief instruction on the not-selfness of material form. The section on the 16 aspects of the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing (as satipatthāna practice) [§§24-29] is also found in **the Ānāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 118.15-22).

1.2 TEXTUAL SEQUENCE. **Analayo**, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, notices a discrepancy between the Pali text and its Āgama version in Chinese translation.³ The Pali version reports that, on being asked by Rāhula about the breath meditation [§§6-7], the Buddha delivers detailed instructions on how to contemplate the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and space [§§8-17], followed by taking up, in brief, the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) [§18-21], the contemplation of the foulness of the body (*asubha*) [§22], and the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*) [§23], before going into a detailed exposition of the breath meditation [§§24-30].

According to the Ekottara Āgama version (Chinese translation) of the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta, however, even before Rāhula asks about the breath meditation, the Buddha has already briefly taught him the divine abodes and the perception of foulness, and it is only after Rāhula's question that the Buddha elaborates on the breath meditation.⁴ The details instructions on the five elements, given in the Pali version of the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta, are not found in the Ekottara Āgama version at all.

Here again one might wonder whether the Pali version's exposition on the elements is in its proper place, since in both versions Rāhula had asked the Buddha how to develop mindfulness of breathing so that it will be of great fruit.⁵ In view of such an inquiry one would not expect the Buddha to broach a range of different subjects and give such a detailed exposition of the five elements before taking up the topic of mindfulness of breathing.

¹ **Cūḷa Rāhul'ovāda S** is M no. 147.

² See below, (4).

³ Draft, 2005.

⁴ EĀ 17.1 = T2.581c16 & T 2.582a13.

⁵ M 62/1:421,24: *katha bhāvitā nu kho, bhante, ānāpānasati...mahāpphalā hoti?* EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a6: 云何修行安般...獲大果報?

A parallel in the Aṅguttara Nikāya and its parallel in the Saṃyukta Āgama also record an instruction on the elements given by the Buddha to his son Rāhula.⁶ Though this evidently remains hypothetical, perhaps during the course of oral transmission this instruction on the elements came to be added to the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta. (Analayo 2005:97 f)

1.3 THE MEDITATIONS ON THE ELEMENTS. That the whole section on the five elements [§§8-17] is missing from the Chinese translation of the Sutta's Āgama version. As **Analayo** has noted, Rāhula's only interest is in the breath meditation [1.2], but in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, Analayo gives another, more favourable explanation:

When evaluating this considerable difference between the two versions, the exposition on the elements may at first sight seem a little out of place, since according to the Pāli report Rāhula had actually come to the Buddha and asked about mindfulness of breathing.⁷ Hence it comes somewhat unexpected when the Buddha, instead of directly replying to this question, broaches a different subject and gives it such a detailed treatment before taking up the topic of mindfulness of breathing.

The Pali commentary, however, explains that the Buddha expatiated on the subject of the elements in order to give a more detailed exposition of his earlier instruction to contemplate the aggregate of form.⁸ This commentarial explanation does help to explain why the Buddha would first give a detailed exposition of the short instruction delivered on the road to Rāhula and only then took up the practice of mindfulness of breathing. In fact, according to the Pāli version it was Sāriputta, and not the Buddha, who had instructed Rāhula to practice mindfulness of breathing. The Buddha had rather asked him to contemplate the true nature of the aggregate of form, an instruction of which the detailed treatment on the elements would indeed be a more detailed exposition. [2006 as M 1:424]

As Buddhaghosa explains, the five element-like meditations [§§13-17]—the meditation on the four elements and on space—are given to Rāhula so that he would train himself in impartiality (*tādī, bhāva*) or “suchness.”⁹ In the **Vuttha Vassāvāsa Sutta** (A 9.11)—where impartiality practices (1)-(4) recur—Sāriputta gives a lion-roar by way of telling the Buddha that he dwells with his mind like these four primary elements in this manner, but adding his own similes to each of them.¹⁰ It is important to note here that space (*ākāsa*)—and sometimes, consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—are listed with the 4 primary elements (*mahā, bhūta*). However, as a set (of 5 or 6 as such), they are called *dhātu*, while the term *mahā, bhūta* is used only for the first four.¹¹

Each of the elements is reflected on for its positive qualities, to which one relates as in the cultivation of lovingkindness. Although this is a set of five elements, one could select one that one feels a close affinity for, and cultivate that element-like meditation. Due to the simplicity of this set of meditations, it is suitable for children, too, and, on a more mundane level, is helpful in building up self-confidence and a positive mind. The main purpose of the element-like meditations is of course to serve as helping practices for the breath meditation or as a base for going on to deeper mental focus.

⁶ A 4.177/2:164 f & SĀ 465 = T2.118c-119a. SĀ 465 takes up six elements, whereas A 4.177 treats only four elements. The examinations of the elements in A 4.177 is also shorter than its counterpart in M 62, as it does not list the bodily manifestation of each of internal element. (Analayo's fn)

⁷ M 62/1:421,24.

⁸ MA 3:138.

⁹ Vism 1.10/5, 7.71/214.

¹⁰ A 9.11/4:374 f; see also Dh 81.

¹¹ See Karunadasa 1967:16, 91-98

2 Breath meditation: a comparative study

In terms of the actual instructions on breath meditation, the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta [§§25 ff] and its Chinese version agree on starting the practice by directing the awareness in similar terms of the long or short nature of the in-breaths 入息 *rùxí*, and out-breaths 出息 *chūxí*. The Ekōttara Āgama, however, continues by directing the attention to the temperature of these in-breaths and out-breaths in terms of their coolness or warmth.¹² **Anālayo** notes,

From a practical perspective this instruction makes sense, since usually the out-breaths will be to some degree warmer than the in-breaths, so that attention given to this difference in temperature is a useful way of developing distinct aware of in- and out-breathing. (2005)

Both the Sutta and the Chinese version continue by directing mindfulness to “the whole body” as the third step of its scheme of sixteen steps of the breath meditation. According to **the Visuddhi, magga**, the term “body” (*kāya*) here refers to “the body of the breath,” in the sense of being aware of the whole process of breathing from beginning, the middle and the end (Vism 273). It is however possible to alternatively construe this instruction to take the physical body itself as the object of mindfulness, that is, to take it as a focus of body mindfulness (*kāyānupassanā*), an interpretation that seems to be suggested by the Chinese version, too.¹³

This would then imply a broadening of awareness, a shift from the breath alone to the physical body in its entirety. Such would indeed constitute a meaningful progression in the present context, since with the earlier steps of directing mindfulness to long and short breaths, found in both versions, awareness of the breath in its whole length would have already been covered.

(Anālayo, 2005)

The Chinese version next instructs the meditator to be aware if the breath is present or if it is not present: “when there is breath, he knows it is there; when there is no breath, he knows it is not there,” 有時有息亦復知有，又時無息亦復知無。 (EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a19)

From a practical perspective this instruction does indeed make sense, since during the deeper stages of mindfulness of breathing the breath becomes increasingly subtle, until a meditator may no longer feel it. Though strictly speaking total disappearance of the breath occurs only with the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* [S 36.11/4:217,8], from a subjective perspective the phenomenon of the disappearance of the breath takes place at an earlier stage, thinking that the meditation is over, as the meditation object has disappeared [Vism 283,16].

(Anālayo, 2005)

The Pāli Sutta and the Chinese version continue in a similar tone with regards to tranquilizing the “bodily formation.” However, where the Pāli Sutta goes on to instruct on the cultivation of altogether twelve more steps, the Chinese version has only one more step at this point. The Chinese version here instructs the meditator to be aware if the breath comes “from the heart” (EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a20).

This instruction could imply to become aware of the breath in the chest area at this point. Such a way of [practice] is known in the Thai tradition, where the point seems to be that after some initial practice of mindfulness of breathing at the nose tip in order to build up continuity of mindfulness one shifts to focusing on the chest or heart area in order to further collect and concentrate the mind.

(Anālayo, 2005)

¹² EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a17: 冷 coolness; 暖 hotness. (Anālayo, 2005)

¹³ EĀ 17.1 = T2.582b1: “completely contemplate the body [when] breathing in, breathing out, having known it altogether and entirely,” 盡觀身體入息，出息，皆悉知之。 The character combination 身體 seems to be used predominantly to refer to the physical body. (Anālayo, 2005)

Both the Pāli and Chinese versions then say that the Buddha concludes the exposition of breath meditation by saying that it is of great fruit and great benefit. While the Pāli sutta declares that, if the breath meditation is practised well, “even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it” [§30], the Chinese version declares that, if practised well, the taste of the deathless will be gained, 得甘露味 *dégān-lūwèi*.¹⁴

While the Pāli Sutta concludes here, the Chinese version goes on to describe how Rāhula puts the instructions into practice and develops the dhyanas as well as the three knowledges (*te, vijjā*).¹⁵ Rāhula then goes to the Buddha and proclaims his achievement. The Buddha approves and then declares Rāhula to be the foremost of those monks who have the desire for training (EĀ 17.1 = T2.582c3).

3 Meaning of *parimukha*

There are two applications of the term *parimukha* in the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta (M 62): the first is when Rāhula decides to meditate immediately after receiving instructions from the Buddha himself [§4]; the second is when the Buddha instructs him on the breath meditation [§25]. On both occasions, the phrase used is “having established mindfulness before him,”¹⁶ *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*, where *parimukhaṃ*, literally means “around the mouth,” but idiomatically and adverbially means “in front.”¹⁷

In connection with the breath meditation in the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta [§24] and in the **Ānāpāna-sati S** (M 118),¹⁸ however, the **Paṭisambhidā, magga** and the **Vibhaṅga** explain it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” as the proper location for the mindfulness of breathing.¹⁹ This explanation is supported by the Āgama version of the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta, where the **Ekottara Āgama** discourse explicitly speaks of “keeping the mind at the tip of the nose.”²⁰ However, in the standard description of sitting meditation found in other Ekōttara Āgama discourses do not speak of the nose-tip, but consistently speak of putting mindfulness “in the front.”²¹

In the first appearance of *parimukhaṃ* in the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta, when Rāhula sits down after receiving instructions from the Buddha on the five aggregates [§4], the sense is clearly that of simply establishing mindfulness although the actual meditation is not mentioned.

In this context, the injunction to keep mindfulness “in front” would however seem to have a different meaning, since contemplation of the five aggregates does not bear any apparent relation to the tip of the nose, all the more since Rāhula at this junction of events seems to have been new to the practice of mindfulness of breathing, as he still had to be given instructions on it. As after being encouraged by Sāriputta to practice mindfulness of breathing Rāhula requested the Buddha to teach him how to put into practice, it seems as if at the time when he undertook contemplation of the five aggregates he had not yet been taught how to practice mindfulness of breathing. This

¹⁴ EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a23.

¹⁵ **The 3 knowledges** (*te, vijjā*): (1) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives; (2) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421). See **Tevijja S** (D 13) = SD 1.8 Intro 2.2.

¹⁶ This tr may be adjusted to fit the context: at §25, it is rendered as “establishes mindfulness before him.”

¹⁷ So U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527).

¹⁸ M 118.17/3:82 = SD 7.13.

¹⁹ Pm 1:171,19; Vbh 252,13 = §537. For further discussion, see **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 Intro (2) & **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10) = SD 13 Intro (3.9d).

²⁰ EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a15: 繫意鼻頭.

²¹ Eg in EĀ 37.3 = T2.711c19: 念在前, corresponding to *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā* in its Pali parallel M 32.17 = 1:219,30. The same expression 念在前 as part of the standard description of sitting down for meditation occurs over 30 times in the Ekottara Āgama alone. In contrast, the expression to keep the mind at the nose tip, 繫意鼻頭, does not seem to recur anywhere else in the Ekottara Āgama or in the other three Āgamas. (Analayo, 2005 ad M 1:425).

makes it even more improbable that he would have directed his attention to the nose tip. The Ekottara Āgama version of this instance does in fact not mention the nose tip, but rather speaks simply of establishing unification of the mind.²² (Analayo 2005 at M 1:425 n37)

As such, **Analayo** concludes,

This suggests that the instruction to keep the mind at the tip of the nose in the Chinese parallel to the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta may not be a translation of what in its Indic original corresponded to *parimukha*, but could rather be an explanatory gloss on the practice of mindfulness of breathing, a gloss found also in the work that contains what probably are the historically earliest parts of the Pāli Abhidhamma, the Vibhaṅga. (2005 at M 1:425)

In connection with the Chinese texts instructing one to keep the mind at the nose-tip and similar remarks, **Erik Zürcher** explains that the early Chinese translators “during the work of translation...gave oral explanations...concerning the contents of the scriptures translated. Explanations of this kind often appear to have crept into the text.”²³

4 The 4 primary elements

In contemporary terms, the four elements—earth, water, fire, wind—may be known respectively as the elements of extension, cohesion, heat and motion, or as the basic states of matter, that is, solidity, liquidity, heat (plasma) and gaseousness. However, even today, science only accepts three states of matter (solid, liquid and gas). The Buddhist four-element model, however, is not meant to be a scientific model, but to serve as a meditative framework for reflecting on the true composition of one’s body,²⁴ and its interconnectedness with the world around one, as a support for an ecological awareness.

The **Visuddhi,magga**²⁵ says that the four primary elements are only briefly explained in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22),²⁶ and at length in

the Mahā Hatthi,padōpama Sutta (M 28),²⁷

the Mahā Rāhul’ovada Sutta (M 62.8-17/1:421-426) and

the Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta (M 140.13-18/3:240-242).

Curiously, the Visuddhi,magga does not mention **the (Dhātu) Rāhula Sutta** (A 4.177)²⁸ and its Chinese version in the Saṃyukta Āgama (SĀ 465).²⁹ SĀ 465 speaks of the 6 elements,³⁰ whereas A 4.177 treats only the four elements. This analysis of the elements does not list the bodily manifestations of each internal element, and as such, is shorter than the one in the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 62).

The four elements are also explained in some detail in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1). The six elements (4 primary elements + space + consciousness) are mentioned in

the Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33.2.1 (16)/3:248),

the Bahu,dhātuka Sutta (M 115.5/3:62), and

the Tith’āyatana Sutta (A 3.61).³¹

²² EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a12: 專精一心.

²³ Erik Zürcher, “A new look at the earliest Chinese Buddhist texts.” In *From Benares to Beijing, Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion*. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1991:277-300.

²⁴ See eg **Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2,12.2:3 f = SD 5.11) & also **Rūpa** = SD 17.2.

²⁵ Vism 348.

²⁶ D 22.6/2:293.

²⁷ M 28.6-27/1:185-191 = SD 6.16, esp Intro (3).

²⁸ A 4.177/2:164 f.

²⁹ SĀ 465 = T2.118c-119a.

³⁰ The 6 elements are the 4 primary elements + space + consciousness: these are mentioned in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.1 (16)/3: 248).

³¹ A 3.61.6/1:175 f = SD 6.8. See also Dhs 638. For the first 5 elements in later Buddhism, see Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, London, 1959:183 ff.

In the **Thera,gāthā**, Sāriputta declares that he is like the first three elements in that he is neither attached to nor repulsed by sensory contacts (Tha 1014). In the **(Sāriputta) Vuttha Sutta** (A 9.11), Sāriputta gives a lion-roar by way of telling the Buddha that he dwells with his mind like the four primary elements, but adding his own similes to each of them (A 9.11/ 4:374 f).

5 The sutta closing

Both the Pali and the Āgama versions of the Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta close with the Buddha's proclaiming that the practice of the breath meditation "is of great fruit and great benefit" [§30]. According to the Pali version, the Buddha adds that if the breath meditation is practised well, "even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it," that is, even one's last breath would be experienced with mindfulness. As already mentioned, the Chinese Āgama version records the Buddha explaining that, if the breath meditation is practised well, one will taste the deathless [2].³²

The Pali version concludes at this point with Rāhula's joyful approval of the Buddha's teaching. The Chinese version continues by describing how Rāhula puts the Buddha's instructions into practice and develops the four dhyanas together with the three super-knowledges. Rāhula then goes to the Buddha and proclaims his attainment, which the Buddha approves, followed by his declaring Rāhula to be the foremost amongst the monks who have the desire for learning (or training).³³

While the Pali texts agree that Rāhula is the foremost of those monks who have desire for learning,³⁴ they record his full awakening as occurring on another occasion. According to the **Cūḷa Rāhul'ovāda Sutta** (M 147) and its **Samyukta Āgama** version, Rāhula becomes an arhat after receiving an instruction from the Buddha concerning the true nature of the six sense-spheres.³⁵

— — —

³² EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a23: 得甘露味 *dégānlùwèi*.

³³ EĀ 17.1 = T2.582c13.

³⁴ A 1.14/1:24,16: *etad aggaṃ mama sāvakānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ sikkhākāmaṇaṃ, yad idaṃ Rāhulo.*

³⁵ M 147/3:280,7 = S 35.121/4:107,28; SĀ 200 = T251c9.

The Greater Discourse on the Advice to Rāhula

(M 62/1:420-426)

1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha instructs Rāhula

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove near Sāvattihī.³⁶

2 Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One, having dressed, taking bowl and outer robe, entered Sāvattihī for alms. The venerable Rāhula, too, [421] having dressed, taking his bowl and outer robe, followed close behind the Blessed One.

3 Then the Blessed One turned around to look³⁷ at the venerable Rāhula and addressed him:³⁸

“Rāhula, whatever form—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near³⁹—all forms should be seen as it is with right wisdom thus:

“This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.”⁴⁰

“Only material form, Blessed One? Only material form, Sugata [well-farer]?”⁴¹

³⁶ **Sāvattihī** (Skt Śrāvastī). According to the Purāṇa (records of brahminical mythology), Śrāvastī was founded by Śrāvasta, an early member of the Ikṣvaku (Pali Okkaka) line; hence its name. It was located on the bank of the Aciravatī bank (the modern Rapti) and was 6 leagues (about 45 mi = 72 km) from Sāketa (V 1:253), a distance that could be covered in one day with 7 relays of horses (M 24.14/1:148 f). The site of Sāvattihī has been identified with the twin villages of Saheth Maheth, on the south bank of the Rapti river, about midway between Bahraich and Gonda (about 26 mi = 42 km either way), in the district of Oudh in Uttar Pradesh. (J Finegan, *An Archaeological History of Religions of Indian Asia*, NY: Paragon House, 1989:93).

³⁷ “Turned back to look at,” *apaloketvā*, lit “having looked back.” Traditionally, the Buddha is said to turn his whole body around—the elephant look (*nāgāpalokita*)—when looking at someone (eg the Māra Dūsī, M 50.21/1:337) or at something (eg at Vesālī, D 16.4.1/2:122). Anyway, it is highly unlikely that the Buddha would give someone a teaching and have a dialogue in a most indecorous—not to say uncomfortable—position by turning his neck (as *apaloketi* literally means).

³⁸ According to the Majjhima Comy, when the 18-year-old Rāhula was following the Buddha on alms-round, he harboured carnal thoughts through being fascinated by the physical beauty of the Buddha and noting that he was of similar appearance. At once the Buddha decided to admonish him to regard the non-ownership of the body by way of reflecting, “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” (MA 3:132). See foll n.

³⁹ See **Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:47). This “totality formula” classification of the aggregates is explained in detail in the Vibhaṅga and briefly in the Visuddhimagga: “internal” (*ajjhata*) = physical sense-organs; “external” (*bahiddhā*) = physical sense-objects; “gross” (*oḷārika*) = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); “subtle” (*sukhuma*) = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); “inferior” (*hīna*) = relating to undesirable or unattractive physical sense-objects; “superior [sublime]” (*paṇāna*), relating to desirable or attractive physical sense-objects; “far” (*dūre*) = subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”); “near” (*santike*) = gross objects (“easy to penetrate”) [this last pair is by way of distance] (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38 f; Boisvert 1995:43-48. As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhata*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have two applications: (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them and anything else is “external”; (2) the sense-organs are “internal” and their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.” Boisvert (1995: 43, 47), however overlooks these applications.

⁴⁰ **The Mahā Hatthi, padopama S** (M 28.7) also gives a more concise statement as “There can be no considering that (element) as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’” (M 28.7/1:185), which represents respectively the three kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), craving (*taṇhā*) and conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f), or as “graspings” (*gāha*), namely, view (*diṭṭhi*), craving, conceit (MA 2:111, 225).

“Material form, Rāhula, and feelings, perceptions,⁴² mental formations and consciousness, too.”

4 Then the venerable Rāhula thought,

“Who indeed,⁴³ after being personally exhorted by the Blessed One himself today, would go into the city for alms?”

So, turning back, he sat down at the foot of a certain tree, crossed his legs and, keeping his body upright, established mindfulness before him.⁴⁴

Sāriputta meets Rāhula

5 The venerable Sāriputta saw the venerable Rāhula at the foot of the tree, sitting cross-legged, keeping his body upright, with mindfulness established before him. Having seen the venerable Rāhula, he addressed him:

“Cultivate the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing, Rāhula. When the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing is cultivated and continuously developed, Rāhula, it is of great fruit and great benefit.”⁴⁵

6 Then, when it was evening, the venerable Rāhula came out of his retreat⁴⁶ and went up to the Blessed One. Having approached and paid homage to the Blessed One, he sat down on one side. Then, sitting on one side, the venerable Rāhula said this to the Blessed One,

7 “Venerable sir, how is the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing cultivated and continuously developed so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?”⁴⁷

The 5 elements⁴⁸

8 EARTH ELEMENT.⁴⁹ (1) “[What, Rāhula, is **the earth element** [hardness]?]”⁵⁰

Rāhula, whatever that is solid, rigid [solidified]⁵¹ and clung to⁵² internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

⁴¹ “**Sugata**,” from *su* (good, well) + *gata* (gone) here untranslated since it is polysemic; a common epithet of the Buddha, variously translated: (1) emphasis on *su*:- the Sublime One (Ñāṇanamoli), the Fortunate One (Bodhi); (2) emphasis on *-gata*: the Well-gone, the Well-farer (Rhys Davids, Woodward, Horner, Walshe, Norman). If there is a need for choice, I think “Well-farer” is most suitable here, even though “Well-gone” is more technically accurate.

⁴² “Perception,” *saññā*, also “apperception”: the mental process of discrimination and categorization of the sense impressions, resulting in their labeling. For example, the process in which the color of the visible object is designated as ‘blue,’ ‘yellow,’ or ‘red.’

⁴³ “Indeed,” *nu* from *n’ajja*.

⁴⁴ “Established mindfulness before him,” *parimukham satim upaṭṭhapetvā*, where *parimukham*, lit “around the mouth,” idiomatic and adverbial, meaning “in front”: so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). Here, the sense is clearly that of simply establishing mindfulness although the actual meditation is not mentioned. Cf §25 where *parimukha* appears again.

⁴⁵ Sāriputta, seeing Rāhula sitting in meditation, thought that he was cultivating the breath meditation (*ānāpānā,,sati*), unaware that Rāhula had already been instructed by the Buddha. (MA 3:137 f).

⁴⁶ “Retreat,” *paṭisallāna*, alt tr “solitude.”

⁴⁷ This is the “thesis question” that the rest of the sutta answers.

⁴⁸ **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28/1:185-191) (SD 6.16) deals with the 4 primary elements in detail: see also SD 17.2. On how the 4 primary elements cannot exist in themselves, see Boisvert 1995:36 f. Practical meditation instructions on the elements can be found in Vimm:ESK 1961:197-205, Vism 351, Pa Auk 1996:17; Fryba 1987:123.

⁴⁹ Comy says that the Buddha begins his instruction to Rāhula with four great elements rather than mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing to dispel Rāhula’s attachment to the body that is yet undisputed by the brief instruction on the not-selfhood of material form. See foll n.

⁵⁰ This sentence is not found in the text, but is found in eg **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140.14/3:240) = SD 4.17.

⁵¹ “Solid, rigid [solidified],” *kakkaḥaṃ kharigatam*. The former is the element’s characteristic (*lakkaḥaṇa*) and the latter its mode (*ākāra*) (Vism 286). In the Abhidhamma, the hardness (*kakkaḥatta*) itself is the earth element (VismṬ 362 f). See Karunadasa 1967:17 f.

head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin;⁵³
 flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;⁵⁴
 heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),⁵⁵ spleen, lungs;⁵⁶
 large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,⁵⁷ dung,⁵⁸

or whatever else⁵⁹ that is solid, solidified and clung to, internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal earth element.

Now both the internal earth element and the external earth element are simply **earth element** [hardness].⁶⁰ And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’⁶¹ [422]

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by⁶² the earth element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the earth element.⁶³

9 (2) And what, Rāhula, is **the water element** [cohesion]?⁶⁴

The water element may be either internal or external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal water element?

Rāhula, whatever that is water, watery and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat,⁶⁵
 tears, skin-grease [tallow], saliva, snot, oil of the joints,⁶⁶ urine.⁶⁷

or whatever else that is water, watery and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal water element.

⁵² “Clung to,” *upādinna*. In the Abhidhamma, this is a technical term applicable to bodily phenomena that are produced by karma. Here, in Mahā Rāhulovāda S (M 62), as well as **Mahā Hatthipadōpama S** (M 28), it is used in the general sense as applicable to the entire body insofar as it is grasped as “mine” and misapprehended as a self.

⁵³ The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca, pancake kamma-t, ṭhāna*) (Vism 242=8.50) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to novices on their initiation.

⁵⁴ *Mamsam nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi, miṅṅā vakkam*.

⁵⁵ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

⁵⁶ *Hadayaṃ yakanam kilomakam pihakam papphasam*.

⁵⁷ *Udariyam*, lit “that which is in the *udara* (stomach),” sometimes tr as “gorge” (Vism:Ñ 8.120/-122/258 f); technically, this includes chyme (food half-digested by gastric juices, expelled into the duodenum).

⁵⁸ *Antam anta, guṇam udariyam karisam*. See M 3:90; KhpA 38. Later traditions add the 32nd part—*matthake mattha, luṅgam* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): “brain” is not listed at S 4:111). Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “dung” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. For a fascinating discussion on how ancient ascetics obtain such knowledge of the human anatomy, see Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*, 1998:34-37.

⁵⁹ The phrase “whatever else” (*aññam pi kiñci*) is intended to include the earth element as comprised in those parts of the body not included in the above enumeration. According to the Abhidhamma the four elements are primary qualities of matter in which they are all inseparably present in varying degrees of strength. Thus “each element is also included though in a subordinate role, in the bodily phenomena listed under the other three elements” (M:ÑB 1221 n329). See also BDict: Dhātu.

⁶⁰ Comy to Mahā Hatthi’padōpama S ad loc says that this statement is made to emphasize the insentient nature (*acetanā, bhāva*) of the internal earth element by yoking it to the external earth element, thus making its insentient nature more apparent (MA 2:223 f). The Vibhaṅga lists more examples: iron, copper, tin, lead, etc. (Vbh 82). According to Abhidhamma, it is characterized by hardness (*thaddha, lakkhaṇa*).

⁶¹ See §3n.

⁶² “Is revulsed by” (*nibbindati*), n *nibbidā*: see SD 20.1.

⁶³ “Becomes dispassionate towards,” *cittam virājeti*.

⁶⁴ “Water,” *āpo*. Abhidhamma characterizes it by cohesion (*ābandhana*).

⁶⁵ *Pittam semham pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo*.

⁶⁶ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

⁶⁷ *Assu vasā kheḷo siṅghāṇikā lasikā muttam*. Here there are a total of 31 parts of the body. See here (4)n.

Now both the internal water element and the external water element are simply **water element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the water element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the water element.

10 (3) Rāhula, what is **the fire element** [heat]?

The fire element may be either internal or external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal fire element?

Rāhula, whatever that is fire, fiery, and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns,⁶⁸ and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted⁶⁹ gets completely digested,

or whatever else that is fire, fiery and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal fire element.

Now both the internal fire element and the external fire element are simply **fire element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the fire element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the fire element.

11 (4) Rāhula, what is **the wind element** [motion]?⁷⁰

The wind element may be either internal or external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal wind element?

Rāhula, whatever that is wind [airy], wind-like and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,⁷¹

⁷²up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the belly, winds in the chest,⁷³ winds that course through the limbs,⁷⁴ in-breath and out-breath,

or whatever else that is wind, wind-like and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal wind element.

Now both the internal wind element and the external wind element are simply **wind element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ [423]

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the wind element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the wind element.

12 (5) Rāhula, what is the element of **space**?⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Apparently, these preceding three terms—*santappati, jiriyati, pariḍayhati*—refer to the body metabolism. In fact, the whole section refers to the body metabolism.

⁶⁹ *asita, pīta, khāyita, sāyitā*. These are the four modes of consuming food, namely: *eat* food; *drink* liquids; *chew* solid food, a toothstick, betel-nut, chewing gum; *taste* (or lick) sweets, ice-cream.

⁷⁰ “Wind,” *vāyo*, or “air” element, that is, motion, in Abhidhamma, said to be “strengthening” or “supporting” (*vitthambhana, lakkhaṇa*). On how winds cause pains, see **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.28-29/2:193) = SD 4.9.

⁷¹ See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 Intro (2.1.1).

⁷² According to **Visuddhi, magga**, “winds” are responsible for the various internal motions of the body, namely, “up-going winds” (*uddhañ, gamā vātā*) for vomiting and belching, “down-going winds” (*adho, gamā vātā*) for the expelling of faeces and urine (Vism 350). “Wind” here clearly refers to elemental “motion,” not to the object moved.

⁷³ *Koṭṭha* means “the stomach or abdomen” (PED); and, *kucchi* is “stomach.” As such, here I take *koṭṭhasayā* to be cognate with or related to Skt *koṣṭhya* (mf), meaning “proceeding from the chest, emitted (as a sound) from the centre of the lungs” (SED), which makes clear sense here.

⁷⁴ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅgam-aṅgānūsārino vātā*. In reference to this, **Peter Harvey** says, “Note that the ‘motion/air’ element might be related to the modern concept of electrical discharges of the nerves... In that case, the mind would move the body by effecting the electrical modulation of nerve discharges.” (1993:7 digital ed). In contemporary terms, these “winds” clearly refer to the oxyhaemoglobin, ie, the oxygen in the blood, coursing through the body.

The space element may be either internal or external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal space element?

Rāhula, whatever that is space, spatial and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

the ear-canals, the nostrils, the mouth cavity, and that (opening) whereby whatever is eaten, drunk, taken, and tasted, is swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is voided from below,

or whatever else that is space, spatial and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal space element.

Now both the internal space element and the external space element are simply **space element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the space element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the space element.

The 5 element-like meditations⁷⁶

13 (1) Rāhula, cultivate **an earth-like meditation**. For when you cultivate an earth-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts⁷⁷ that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.⁷⁸

Rāhula, just as they throw things clean and foul⁷⁹—things soiled with dung, with urine, with spittle, with pus, or with blood—*the earth is not pained, ashamed, or disgusted,*⁸⁰ *because of that.*

So too, Rāhula, cultivate an earth-like meditation. For when you cultivate an earth-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

14 (2) Rāhula, cultivate **a water-like meditation**. For when you cultivate a water-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

Rāhula, just as they wash things clean and foul—things soiled with dung, with urine, with spittle, with pus, or with blood—*water is not pained, ashamed, or disgusted, because of that.* [424]

So too, Rāhula, cultivate a water-like meditation. For when you cultivate a water-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

15 (3) Rāhula, cultivate **a fire-like meditation**. For when you cultivate a fire-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

Rāhula, just as they burn things clean and foul—things soiled with dung, with urine, with spittle, with pus, or with blood—*fire is not pained, ashamed, or disgusted, because of that.*

So too, Rāhula, cultivate a fire-like meditation. For when you cultivate a fire-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

⁷⁵ “Space,” *ākāsa*, according to Abhidhamma, is not a primary element but is classified under “derived (or derivative) material form” (*upādā rūpa*). See (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S S 22.56.7 in SD 3.7 n on “forms derived...” See also Sue Hamilton, *Early Buddhism: A new approach; The I of the beholder*. Richmond: Curzon, 2000:168-172.

⁷⁶ Comy: The methods given in §§13-17—the meditation on the elements and on space—are given to Rāhula so that he would experience the quality of impartiality (*tādī, bhāva*) or “suchness” (Vism 1.10/5, 7.71/214). The first 4 methods are also listed by Sāriputta as his practice of impartiality in **Vuṭṭha Vass’āvāsa S** (A 9.11.4/4:374 f) = SD 28.2. See Intro (5).

⁷⁷ “Contacts,” *phassa*, ie all experiences through the six sense-bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.

⁷⁸ “Overpower...and remain,” *pariyādāya ṭhassanti*. One who practices meditation on the elements can see the strength of his own mind in applying his understanding of things to unwholesome objects that arise at a sense-door (sense organ). By reflecting on the experience in terms of conditionality and impermanence—as “guests” (*āgantuka*) at the sense-doors (*dvāra*)—he transforms the potentially provocative situation of being subjected to the powers of sense-experience into an opportunity for spiritual insight. See MA 2:225 f.

⁷⁹ “Things clean and foul,” *sucim pi...asucim pi*. Here I follow Nina van Gorkom, email 23 May 2003.

⁸⁰ “Is not pained, humiliated, disgusted,” *aṭṭīyati vā harāyati vā jigucchati vā*. For fuller analyses of these terms, see **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11.5/1:213) = SD 1.7 n sv.

16 (4) Rāhula, cultivate a **wind-like [air-like] meditation**.⁸¹ For when you cultivate a wind-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

Rāhula, just as the wind blows on things clean and foul—things soiled with dung, with urine, with spittle, with pus, or with blood—the wind is not pained, ashamed, or disgusted, because of that.

So too, Rāhula, cultivate a wind-like meditation. For when you cultivate a wind-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

17 (5) Rāhula, cultivate a **space-like meditation**. For when you cultivate a space-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.

Rāhula, just as space is not established anywhere—

so too, Rāhula, cultivate a space-like meditation. For when you cultivate a space-like meditation, agreeable and disagreeable contacts that have arisen will not overpower your mind and remain.⁸²

The divine abodes⁸³

18 (1) Rāhula, practise the cultivation of **lovingkindness**. For when you cultivate lovingkindness, any ill will will be abandoned.

19 (2) Rāhula, practise cultivation of **compassion**. For when you cultivate compassion, any cruelty will be abandoned.

20 (3) Rāhula, practise the cultivation of **altruistic joy**. For when you cultivate altruistic joy, any discontent will be abandoned.

21 (4) Rāhula, practise the cultivation of **equanimity**. For when you cultivate equanimity, any aversion will be abandoned.

Cultivation of foulness

22 (5) Rāhula, practise the cultivation of **foulness [of the body]**.⁸⁴ For when you cultivate foulness, any lust will be abandoned.

Perception of impermanence⁸⁵

23 Rāhula, cultivate **the perception of impermanence**. [425] For when you cultivate the perception of impermanence, the conceit 'I am' will be abandoned.⁸⁶

⁸¹ “Wind-like meditation,” *vāyo, sama bhāvana*, alt tr “air-like meditation.”

⁸² **Milinda, pañha** qu this para (Miln 388).

⁸³ These 4 divine abodes and the following perception of impermanence are elaborated in an interesting way in **Saṅgīti S** (M 33) as the “six elements making for deliverance” (*nissaraṇīyā dhātu*) (M33.2.2(17)/3:247-250).

⁸⁴ “Foulness [of the body],” *asubha bhāvana* (cultivation of foulness), elsewhere (eg A 60.6/5:109) called *asubha, saññā* (perception of foulness); called *asubha, nimitta* (sign of the foul) at **Āhāra S** (S 46.51.15/5:105 = SD 7.15), which Comy says is one or other of the 10 foul objects, ie a corpse in one of the 10 stages of decomposition (Vism 6.1-11/178 f). However, in the Suttas (eg **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S**, D 22.5/2:293 = SD 13; **Ānāpāna, sati S**, M 10.10/1:57 = SD 13 = SD 7.13; **Giri-m-ānanda S**, A 10.60/5:109 = SD 15.15), *asubha, saññā* (perception of foulness) or simply *asubha* (the foul or *asucī* (the impurities) refers to the observing of the 31 parts of the body, of which the Comys list 32 parts, adding “brain (in the head)” (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f, Vism 8.42-144/236-266 & KhA 60), calling them *kāya, gata sati* (mindfulness of the body). The 31 parts of the body are also listed at **Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja S** (S 35.127.6/4:110-113). A slightly different list on the body meditation is given in **Vijaya S** (also called *Kāya, vicchandānika S*) (Sn 193-206/no 11) where it is said, “And the hollow of its [the body’s] head | Is filled with the brain” (Sn 199). Here in Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S, *asubha bhāvanā* may either refer to the stages of bodily decomposition (or the charnel ground meditations), or to the meditation on the 31 parts of the body, some of which have earlier on been defined in terms of the 4 elements [§§8-11]. From canonical usage, it is more likely to refer to the latter.

⁸⁵ See prec n29 on the divine abodes.

⁸⁶ This brief but highly significant statement shows that the perception of impermanence is instrumental in overcoming the major fetter, which then makes one a stream-winner. See (**Anicca Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7(4).

THE CULTIVATION OF IN-AND-OUT BREATHING⁸⁷Physical preparation

24 Rāhula, cultivate **the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing**. And how, Rāhula, is the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing cultivated and how is it continuously developed so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?⁸⁸

25 Here, Rāhula, a monk⁸⁹ who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty house, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.⁹⁰

—Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.

26 (A) The First Tetrad: The observing of the body

- (1) Breathing in long,⁹¹ he is aware [he knows]: ‘Breathing in long’;⁹²
Or, breathing out long, he is aware: ‘Breathing out long’;
- (2) Or, breathing in short, he is aware: ‘Breathing in short’;⁹³
Or, breathing out short, he is aware: ‘Breathing out short’;
- (3) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in experiencing the whole body (of breath).’⁹⁴
He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out experiencing the whole body (of breath)’;
- (4) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;⁹⁵

⁸⁷ See foll n.

⁸⁸ See M:ÑB 2nd ed 2001 nn140-142. This section is as at **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.4) except for the similes in the latter. The whole section on the Mindfulness of the Breath (M 118.16-22) here is identical to that of Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S (M 1:425-7=62.25-29). The Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S however ends by mentioning that breath meditation benefits one in that “even the final in-breaths and out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown” (M 62.30), that is, the practitioner dies with a calm and clear mind. On terms here, see Vism ch 8.

⁸⁹ DA on the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S with the identical context here says that “monk” (*bhikkhu*) indicates “whoever undertakes that practice... is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*.” See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf the Bhikkhu Vagga (ch 25) and the Brāhmaṇa Vagga (ch 26) of Dh.

⁹⁰ Cf §4 where *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā* appears again, **Paṭisambhidā, magga** and **Vibhaṅga**, in connection with **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118), however, explains it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” (Pm 1:171,19; Vbh 252,13 = §537). For discussion, see Intro (3) above; see also **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 Intro (2) & **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10) = SD 13 Intro (3.9d).

⁹¹ Brahmavaṃso: “As one relaxes and settles down, the breath becomes short by itself. When the body is relaxing, you don’t need as much oxygen to give the body energy. So it’s quite natural that these two steps usually follow one after the other. The whole point of these two steps [long breaths, short breaths] is just to experience the breath instead of attending to many things. What you’re doing is to focus on one thing.” (“The Beautiful Breath,” 1999).

⁹² I have rendered these important sentences and those of the first 2 (“noting”) tetrads to reflect a “bare noting” (denoted by *pajānāti*) that should occur in meditation whose purpose is mental focus and not grammatically complete sentences. Only the steps 1-4 are noted by *pajānāti*; the rest (5-16) are *sikkhati*, or “training” aspects (ie one has to put in more regulated effort).

⁹³ In practical terms, focussing on the first 2 factors of this tetrad, ie, maintaining one’s undivided focus on the breath or one’s conception of it can lead to dhyana. However, in (**Pabbateyyā**) **Gāvī S**, the Buddha warns Moggallāna not to go into the 2nd dhyana until he has thoroughly mastered the 1st dhyana (A 4:418 f = 9.35 qu at Vism 153 f).

⁹⁴ “The whole body,” so Thich Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49) & esp Bodhi (2001 n141). MA glosses as “the whole body of breath,” ie, its three phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle and end. Brahmavaṃso keeps to this tradition, teaching that “you have just the target in your mind—just the breath and nothing else... the full attention on the breath” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). Cf the remark that in-and-out-breathing is “a body among the bodies” (§24). Cf transpersonal psychology (esp bodywork and breathwork): the whole *body* breathes.

⁹⁵ *Saṅkhāra*. The bodily formation is the in-and-out-breathing itself (M 44.13). This calming process may lead to the development of dhyana, but this is not the primary object here (Walshe 1995 n641). See the Cūḷavedalla S (M 44.14) for explanation of *kāya, saṅkhāra*.

He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out calming the bodily formation (of breathing)',⁹⁶

27 (B) The Second Tetrad: The observing of feelings

- (5) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in experiencing zest',⁹⁷
He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out experiencing zest';
- (6) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in experiencing joy',⁹⁸
He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out experiencing joy';
- (7) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in understanding the mental functions',⁹⁹
He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out understanding the mental functions';
- (8) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in calming the mental functions';
He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out calming the mental functions';

28 (C) The Third Tetrad: The observing of the mind

- (9) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in experiencing the mind',¹⁰⁰
He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out experiencing the mind';
- (10) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind',¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Brahmavaṃso: "Once you have full attention on the breath, the next stage is where the beauty and the bliss have a chance to arise... This is where you calm down that object of mind, the breath, by giving the suggestion, 'calm, calm, calm.' Instead of just an ordinary breath that you're aware of, you deliberately, by an act of will, calm that breath down...it gets softer and softer...more and more beautiful. But you have to be careful here...If you calm the breath in the fourth stage before you complete the third stage, that's when you go to sleep... **When the attention is fully there, then calm that object inside your mind.**" ("Beautiful Breath," 1999)

⁹⁷ *Pīti*. Sometimes tr as "rapture," but "zest" is closer to evoking the more subtle yet enthusing nature of *pīti*. One experiences zest in two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd dhyana in which zest is present, one experiences it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); by emerging from that *jhāna* and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, one experiences zest in the mode of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, zest is a kind of "joyful interest," as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Zest belongs the Formation Group (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) while joy (*sukha*) belongs to the Feeling Group (*vedanā-k,khandha*). Zest is like when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; joy is what he feels when he is drinking the water. See Vism 4.94 ff.

⁹⁸ Brahmavaṃso: "As you calm the breath down, you get to the stage where the breath becomes very, very refined, very peaceful, and very smooth. It is the nature of such a mind state that it should be very happy... This is another type of happiness, and it takes wisdom to be able to recognize it...the Buddha taught the fifth and sixth steps to arouse that [un arisen] beauty." The 5th step is the deliberate arousal of zest (*pīti*) with the beautiful breath; the 6th step is the deliberate arousal of joy (*sukha*). "This is one important training in meditation, to be able to extract the perceptions of happiness and joy from whatever you're doing... When the breath is very peaceful, search for that bliss and you will find it." Brahmavaṃso calls this "**the beautiful breath.**" ("Beautiful Breath," 1999)

⁹⁹ "Mental functions," *citta,saṅkhārā*. The same method given in the previous note applies to the second and third clauses. According to Brahmavaṃso, "When the beautiful breath is established, it may appear that your breath has disappeared, that you have this beautiful stable peace but no breath...you are still breathing, but the breath is no longer being experienced as a touch of the body, instead it is experienced as an object of mind. You are switching from feeling to knowing...That is why the Buddha called this seventh stage...'knowing the breath as a mind object.'" ("Beautiful Breath," 1999). According to some teachers, in the second, the three lower dhyana are present and in the third, all four are present. Mental formations here refer to feelings, perceptions and other mental concomitants, and which are calmed by the development of successively higher levels of calm and insight. See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *citta,saṅkhārā*.

¹⁰⁰ "Experiencing the mind." According to Brahmavaṃso, "It's only at this stage that you can know the mind... **the only place where you can know actually experience the mind**...by what we call a *nimitta*, a reflection of the mind. Remember the mind is that which is 'knowing.'" ("Beautiful Breath," 1999). According to Bhikkhu Bodhi "experiencing the mind" is to be understood by way of the fourth dhyana (2001 n1118). *Citta*, "mind" is syn with *mano* and *viññāṇa* (*Yam...idam vuccati cittan ti vā mano ti vā viññāṇan ti vā*, D 1:21; *Yam ca kho etam... vuccati cittam iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇa iti pi*, S 2:94 f), so too in most traditions following the Abhidharma period, but they were clearly differentiated within the Yogācāra. SA says that all the three are names for the mind-base (*man'āyatana*). See Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, 2000:769 n154.

- He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind';
 (11) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in concentrating the mind';¹⁰²
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out concentrating the mind';
 (12) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in freeing the mind';¹⁰³
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out freeing the mind';

29 (D) The Fourth Tetrad: The observing of dharmas¹⁰⁴

- (13) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in observing impermanence';¹⁰⁵
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out observing impermanence';
 (14) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in observing the fading away (of lust)';¹⁰⁶
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out observing the fading away (of lust)';
 (15) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in observing the cessation (of suffering)';¹⁰⁷
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out observing the cessation (of suffering)';
 (16) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in observing the letting go (of defilements)';¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ "Gladdening the mind." According to Brahmavaṃso, the mental reflex (*nimitta*) may appear to some as being "too dull" or "unstable," which are addressed by the 10th and 11th steps, respectively; "shining the *nimitta* and sustaining the *nimitta*." "The more joy there is in the mind, the more brilliant shines the *nimitta*. To enter *Jhāna*, the *nimitta* has to be the most brilliant thing that you have ever seen, and on unearthly beauty." ("Beautiful Breath," 1999). The reflex may be dull also due to poor moral conduct or to low mental effort. In the latter case, one should remedy it by switching to "the inspirational meditations" like a reflection (*anussati*) on any of the Three Jewels, on giving (*cāgānussati*) or *mettā, bhāvanā*. According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, "gladdening the mind" is either the attainment of the first 2 dhyana (containing zest) or as the penetration of those dhyanas by regarding them with insight as subject to destruction. (2001 n1118)

¹⁰² "Concentrating the mind." Sometimes, "even the brilliant *nimitta* can appear unstable... it is just a reflection of the knower... If the knower moved so did [his] reflection, the *nimitta*." The solution, according to Brahmavaṃso, is to "focus on the knower, that which is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness." ("Beautiful Breath," 1999). According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, "concentrating the mind" refers either to the concentration pertaining to the *jhāna* or to the momentary concentration that arises along with insight (2001 n1118)

¹⁰³ "Freeing the mind." Here, according to Brahmavaṃso, "the mind usually has two experiences that are exactly the same, but just depending on your perspective. You either find yourself "diving" into the *nimitta*... The attention just sinks in there. Or else that *nimitta*, that 'beautiful light' or 'feeling,' just completely 'envelops you.' 'You' don't do this... it just happens... You enter the *Jhāna* through freeing the mind. The Buddha called the *Jhānas* stages of freedom (*vimokkha*) [D 16.3.33, A 8.66]" This is probably the most truly powerful experience in one's life, when one can really call oneself a "mystic." It is a kind of momentary "joy of awakening" (*sambodhi sukha*, M 1:454). ("Beautiful Breath," 1999).

¹⁰⁴ These last four stages relate to the meditator who has just emerged from dhyana. The first thing one should do then is to review that state: "What was that?" "How did that arise?" "How do I feel?" "Why do I feel that way?" "What have I been doing all this time?" "What worked and what failed?" "What was the result of the meditation?" "Why is it happy?" All such reflections give rise to deep insight. Having reflected thus, "you either take up *Sati-paṭṭhāna*... or just go directly to the last four stages of *Ānāpānasati*." The meditator has any one of these four following things to contemplate on after emerging from the *jhāna*. (Brahmavaṃso, "Beautiful Breath," 1999)

¹⁰⁵ *Anicca*, "impermanence." What we call the "self," something that appears to be so constant that we do not even notice it. In *jhāna*, it disappears. If you experience this deeply as "not-self," "it's very likely to give rise to the experience of Stream Winning." (Brahmavaṃso, "Beautiful Breath," 1999).

¹⁰⁶ *Virāga*, also translated as "dispassion" (see §42). If reflections on impermanence does not work, then one should go on to reflect on the "fading away" (*virāga*). "This is when things just disappear... things which were so close to you, that you thought were an essential part of you..." (Brahmavaṃso, "Beautiful Breath," 1999).

¹⁰⁷ *Nirodha*. Something that was once there had now disappeared. "So much of the universe that you knew has ceased, and you're in a completely different space... what you thought was important has gone... Cessation is also the Third Noble Truth [the cessation of suffering]. The cause of that cessation is letting go... And what's left?... the opposite of *dukkha*... it is *sukha* (happiness). The ending of suffering is happiness." (Brahmavaṃso, "Beautiful Breath," 1999).

¹⁰⁸ While the previous three tetrads deal with both calm and insight, this tetrad deals only with insight. "Observing fading away..." and "observing cessation..." can be understood both as insight into the impermanence of forma-

He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out observing the letting go¹⁰⁹ (of defilements)';

30 Rāhula, this is how the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing, when cultivated and continuously developed, is of great fruit and great benefit. Rāhula, when the mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing is cultivated and continuously developed in this manner, [426] even the last breath leaves [ends] with your knowledge, not without it.¹¹⁰

The venerable Rāhula joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

tions and as the supramundane path leading to Nirvana, that is, the fading of lust (*virāga*) and the cessation of suffering. "Observing letting go..." is the giving up of defilements through insight and the gaining of nirvana through the path.

¹⁰⁹ *Paṭinissagga*, "letting go, abandoning." "In this context *Paṭinissagga* is not giving away what's 'out there,' but giving away what's 'in here'... the letting go of the "doer,"... even of the "knower"... especially letting go of... the "will," the "controller." This is the path to the end of suffering. (Brahmavaṃso, "Beautiful Breath," 1999)

¹¹⁰ *Ye pi te carimakā assāsā te pi viditvā nirujjhanti no aviditā ti*. When a dying person is mindful of his breath, he dies calmly with mindfulness and clear awareness. **Visuddhi,magga** says: "Herein there are three kinds of final breaths on account of cessation, that is to say, final in *becoming*, final in *dhyana*, final in *death*. For, among the various kinds of existence, in-breaths and out-breaths occur only in the sense-sphere existence, not in the form-existence nor the formless existence. That is why there are final ones in existence. They occur in the first three dhyanas but not in the fourth. That is why there are final ones in the dhyanas. **Those that arise along with the sixteenth consciousness-moment preceding the death-consciousness cease together with the death-consciousness**. They are called 'final in death.' It is these last one that are meant here by 'final'" (Vism 8.241/291 f). On the 17 thought-moments, see Abdh 4.6, rev tr Bodhi 2nd ed 1999:153 ff. For a brief explanation, see GP Sumanapala, *An Introduction to Theravada Abhidhamma*, Singapore, 1998:137 (ch 8). For a comparative study of the closing, see Intro (5)

Bibliography

Anālayo Bhikkhu

- 2003 *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003.
2005 “Some Pali discourses in the light of the Chinese parallels” [parts 1-2], in *Buddhist Studies Review* 22,1 2005:1-14 & 93-105. See esp 2005:97 f.
[2006] [Comparative study of M 62 in the light Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese texts. Forthcoming. Draft.]

Boisvert, Mathieu

- 1995 *The Five Aggregates: Understanding Theravāda psychology and soteriology*. Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion & Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995. Repr Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1997.

Fryba, Mirko

- 1987 *The Art of Happiness: Teachings of Buddhist Psychology*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987. Repr 1989.

Gethin, Rupert

- 1986 “The five Khandhas: their treatment in the Nikāyas and early Abhidhamma.” Dordrecht: *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 14 1986:35-53.

Hamilton, Sue [Susan]

- 1996a *Identity and Experience: The constitution of the human being according to early Buddhism*. London: Luzac Oriental, 1996.
2003 *Early Buddhism: A new approach. The I of the Beholder*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2003.

Karunadasa, Y

- 1967 *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*. Colombo: Dept of Cultural Affairs, 1967.

Pa Auk Sayadaw

- 1996 *The Light of Wisdom*. Malaysia: WAVE, 1996. Free booklet.

THICH Huyen-Vi

- 1986- “Ekottarāgama.” Vol 1, 1986. In *Buddhist Studies Review*. Serialized.

Zürcher, Erik

- 1991 “A new look at the earliest Chinese Buddhist texts.” In *From Benares to Beijing, Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion*. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1991:277-300.

050309; rev 061027; 071203; 080425; 091118