

# MUSĪLA AND NĀRADA. THE PATH OF NIRVĀṆA<sup>1</sup>

by Louis de La Vallée Poussin

(Translated from the French by Gelongma Migme Chödrön and Gelong Lodrö Sangpo)

Introduction; F 189-192.....	2
A. ARHATHOOD ACCORDING TO THE SARVĀSTIVĀDIN-VAIBHĀṢIKAS; F 192-201.....	6
AA. The two paths; F 192-198.....	6
AAA. The path of vision; F 194.....	7
AAB. The path of cultivation; F 194-198.....	7
AAB.1. The supramundane cultivation; F 195.....	8
AAB.2. The mundane cultivation; F 195-198.....	9
AB. The necessity of 'concentration'; F 198-201.....	11
B. HARIVARMAN ON 'CONCENTRATION' AND ON NIRVĀṆA; F 201-210.....	15
BA. A Buddhism where meditation can be excluded; F 202-206.....	15
BAA. Susimasuttanta (Saṃyutta, II, 119); F 202-203.....	15
BAB. Harivarman, chap. 162, on the seven concentrations; F 203-204.....	16
BAC. Harivarman resumes the examination of this problem in chap. 194: on the three discriminations; F 204-206.....	17
BB. Harivarman and nirvāṇa; F 206-210.....	20
C. 'EQUIPOISE OF CESSATION (NIRODHASAMĀPATTI); F 210-222.....	25
CA. 'Equipose of cessation' according to the Abhidharma or Sarvāstivādin doctrine; F 212-215.....	27
CB. 'Equipose of cessation' according to the Abhidhamma doctrine; F 215-217.....	29
CC. Non-standard texts; F 217-222.....	31
D. [ADDENDUM].....	35
DA. [Saṃyutta Nikāya II.68: Kosambi Sutta: At Kosambi (On Knowing Dependent Co-arising)].....	35
DB. [Saṃyutta Nikāya. II.70: Susima Sutta: The Wandering Ascetic Susima].....	38

---

<sup>1</sup> *Lodrö Sangpo*: This article was originally published in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, fifth volume: 1936-1937, pp. 189-222.

## INTRODUCTION; F 189-192

Musila and Nārada (*Samyutta*, II, 115)<sup>2</sup> represent ‘rationalism’ and ‘mysticism’, [respectively,] fairly well. Musila possesses arhathood or the status of a perfected being because he ‘knows’ or ‘cognizes’. Nārada does not consider himself to be a perfected being (*arhat*) because he has not touched *nirvāṇa* with his body. (See below, F 218, LVP’s discussion of the *Musilasūtra* as an example of a non-standard text that allows the construction of a Buddhism in which concentration is the crucial factor.)

We can, without being foolish, discern in the Buddhist sources, early or scholastic, two contrasting theories, the very ones that the *Bhagavadgītā* distinguishes by the names *sāṃkhya* and *yoga*.<sup>3</sup>

1. the theory that considers salvation to be a <190> purely or mainly discriminating undertaking, and
2. the theory that puts salvation at the end of ascetic and meditative disciplines.

---

<sup>2</sup> LS: See reprint of this *sūtra* in the Addendum, which we have added to LVP’s article.

<sup>3</sup> On this contrast, see Garbe, *Sāṃkhya und Yoga*, 34; Senart, *Bouddhisme et Yoga*, RHR., 1900. 2, 348; Hopkins, *Great Epic*, 1901, and especially Mircea Eliade, *Yoga*, 142, which is inspired by F. Edgerton, *The meaning of Sāṃkhya and Yoga*, AJPh., 1929, 27.

(i) *Sāṃkhya* is defined as ‘cognition of reality’ (*tattvajñāna*); the scholar (*jñānin*) is contrasted with the practitioner or meditator (*yogin*).

(ii) The word *yoga*, in the technical sense of meditative practitioner, is absent in the old Pāli sources (see Rhys Davids, preface to the translation of the Yogācāra’s *Manual*, and the fine article in the Pāli Text Dict.) and in Sarvāstivādin scholasticism.

The *Aṅguttara*, III, 355 (below, F 191) calls the practitioners whom we call *yogins*, *jhāyin* (‘those who devote themselves to meditation’ or meditators), and the scholars whom we call ‘those who apply themselves discrimination (*prajñā*)’, *dharmayoga* (‘those who devote or apply themselves to the doctrine’ or the speculatives).

But *Milinda*, 366, *yogī yogāvacara* (‘the strenuous Bhikṣu, earnest in effort’, Rhys Davids).

To *yogāvacara* there corresponds *yogācāra* (which the Chinese understand as *yogācārya*, ‘master of Yoga’), a word that designates the member of a school known by the *Vibhāṣā* and the *Kośa*, which continues in the schools related to Asaṅga.

Aśvaghōṣa, a valuable witness, but whose sectarian ties are not yet clarified, uses *yoga* in the sense of concentration (*samādhi*) (*Saundara*, xvii, 4 and especially xvi, 33 where *yogavidhi* comprises, besides *vyttavidhi* and *jñānavidhi*, two of the members of the noble path, namely, mindfulness [*smṛti*] and concentration [*samādhi*]); the *yogacāras* of xiv, 19 are simply the practitioners who eat only in order to sustain life... ; but the *yogins* of xvi, 1 seize the super-knowledges (*abhijñā*) after the meditations (*dhyāna*); the *yogacāras* of xv, 68 achieve their purification after the breathing practices.

(1) On the one hand, [there is] discrimination (*prajñā*), ‘investigation of factors’ (*dharmapavicaya*), consideration (*pratisaṅkhyāna*), ‘insight’ (*vipaśyanā*), the vision of the four truths (*satyadarśana*), the application to the doctrine (cf. *dharmmayoga*, *Aṅguttara*, III, 355). These practitioners understand things as they are (*yathābhūtam*), suffering, impermanent, empty, non-self; they are disgusted; they kill desire and therefore put a stop to the process of retributed action and transmigration.

(2) On the other hand, [there is] the way of ‘calm abiding’ (*śamatha*),<sup>4</sup> of ‘concentration’ (*samādhi*), <191> of the meditations (*dhyāna*) and equipoises (*samāpatti*), of ‘cultivation’ (*bhāvanā*).

<sup>4</sup> On successive or combined calm abiding (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), [see] *Aṅguttara*, II, 257; *Paṭisaṃbhidāmagga*, II, 92. – *Nettipakaraṇa*, 27. – For the great vehicle (*mahāyāna*), [see] *Sūtramalaṅkāra*, xviii, 66 and especially *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 109, 209, 260.

The theory of salvation is also summarized in the list of three, four or five members (*aṅga*) (*Aṅguttara*, I, 162) or constitutive groups (*skandha*) of the perfected being (*arhat*, *asaikṣa*):

- (1-3) Three things are essential: morality (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), discrimination (*prajñā*) [*Kośa*, I, 3; *Vyākhyā*, 8; *Visuddhimagga* and its three divisions]. Discrimination arises only in the moral and concentrated person.
- (4) By means of discrimination, the practitioners attain liberation (*vimukti*), i.e., removal of the fluxes, which is the fourth and last member in *Dīgha*, II, 123, and III, 229.
- (5) Finally, a fifth member was added, a consecutively acquired (*Kośa*, Index: *prṣṭhalabdha*) cognition which is the ‘cognition of liberation’ (*vimuktijñāna*): “I have been liberated...”

[A curious variant in the *Ekottarāgama*, J. Przyluski, *Funérailles*, 92: erudition (*bāhuśrutya*) is the fourth and last member].

If two members are added to the three essential members, it is perhaps in order to establish parallelism between (i) the five ‘normal’ aggregates (*skandha*) (form or body, sensation, conception, formations, consciousness) and (ii) the five groups (*skandha*) that make up the perfected being: supramundane (*lokottara*), pure (*anāsrava*), ‘dharmic’ groups (*dharmaskandha*).

Again: ‘groups of the Victor’ (*jinaskandha*), ‘*dharmakāya* of five parts (since morality, by itself, constitutes the *dharmakāya* of the mendicant)’.

*Kośa*, vi, 297; *Siddhi*, 764; *Pāli Text Dict.* s. v. *khandha*.

But it should be noted:

- 1) the path (or the cognition) that destroys the fluxes (*ānantaryamārga*) is followed by a path called ‘path of liberation’ (*vimuktimārga*): it is one thing to chase the thief out of the house, another to close the door. This distinction is important in the *Abhidharma* (*Kośa*, Index: *vimuktimārga*). Liberation (*vimukti*), the work of discrimination (*prajñā*), will make up a separate group (*skandha*) or member (*aṅga*);
- 2) it is one thing to be liberated, another to cognize that one has been liberated. The schools have discussed whether the perfected beings (*arhat*) cognize that they are perfected beings. We will see, F 220, that the acquisition of ‘liberation’ and the acquisition of the ‘cognition of liberation’ are not simultaneous.

This way leads, by means of gradual purification, by means of gradual removal of thoughts (*saṃkalpa*) to a state of non-conception – ‘cessation of conception and sensation’ (*saṃjñāveditanirodha*), i.e., a cessation of mind in all its modes, or simply ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*) – that puts these practitioners in contact with a transcendent reality which is *nirvāṇa* (in the old doctrine) or which is similar to *nirvāṇa* (in Sarvāstivādin scholasticism). – As a rule, if not in fact, this path has nothing which is specifically Buddhist; the ‘vision of the truths’ does not take place in it; discrimination (*prajñā*) is not implemented in it.

A *sūtra* in *Āṅguttara*, III, 355,<sup>5</sup> is significant:

(1) The monastics who devote themselves to meditation (*jhāyins*) blame (2) the monastics who devote or apply themselves to the doctrine (the *dhammayogas*), and vice versa. They should, on the contrary, appreciate each other.

(1.) Rare indeed are those who spend their time (*vihar*)<sup>6</sup> in ‘touching with their body’ (i.e., ‘realizing, experiencing’) the deathless element or ambrosia (*amatā dhātu*, i.e., *nirvāṇa*).

(2.) Rare also are those who envision the profound reality (*arthapada*) by penetrating it with discrimination (*prajñā*).

For both [types of monastics], salvation – the end of transmigrations, the cessation of the contingent and the mortal, the entrance into the permanent and the deathless – depends on the possession of *nirvāṇa*:

(1) the former think that it is necessary, by means of concentration, to enter into bodily contact with *nirvāṇa*;

(2) the latter think that it is enough to actualize *nirvāṇa* by means of discrimination. <192>

They both should appreciate each other, says the *sūtra*.

But orthodoxy is more demanding. (1) ‘Those who devote themselves to meditation’ or the ‘meditators’ (*jhāyin*) and (2) ‘those who devote themselves to the doctrine’ or the ‘speculatives’ (*dhammayoga*) should not only appreciate each other but also recognize that their exclusive methods are condemned to failure. Arhathood, the essential and sufficient condition for liberation, demands the help of *samādhi* (concentration) and *prajñā* (discrimination or speculative consciousness), of *śamatha* (calm abiding) and *vipaśyanā* (insight or intellectual contemplation). These are the two wings necessary for the flight out of transmigration.

---

<sup>5</sup> I [LVP] have drawn attention to this *sūtra* in *Mélanges Lanman*, 1929, 135-136.

<sup>6</sup> *vihar* is indeed ‘to reside’, ‘to pass one’s time’: but passing one’s time in a spiritual practice or state. – *vihāra* is defined as ‘a certain type of concentration’ (*samādhivīśeṣa*; *Siddhi*, 406).

[In the following,] we will examine:

A. Arhathood according to the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣikas (F 192-201).

A Buddhism that combines discrimination (*praññā*) and concentration (*samādhi; yoga*), but affirms the absolute primacy of discrimination: “That which is abandoned by discrimination is truly abandoned” (*Kośa*, Index: *prahāṇa*).

- a) The two paths (F 192-198);
- b) The necessity of concentration (F 198-201).

B. Harivarman on concentration (F 201-207), the example of

- a. a Buddhism where meditation can be excluded (F 201-206),
- b. a Buddhism without *nirvāṇa* and without mysticism (F 206-210);

C. ‘Equipose of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*) (F 210-222), according to

- a. the Abhidharma (F 212-215),
- b. the Abhidhamma (F 215-217),
- c. the non-classical texts that allow the construction of a Buddhism in which concentration is the crucial factor (F 217-222).

A. **ARHATHOOD ACCORDING TO THE SARVĀSTIVĀDIN-VAIBHĀṢIKAS; F 192-201**

[A Buddhism that combines discrimination (*prajñā*) and concentration (*samādhi*; *yoga*), but affirms the absolute primacy of discrimination.]

AA. **THE TWO PATHS; F 192-198**

Arhathood or the status of a perfected being is the removal, the definitive eradication of all the fluxes (*āsrava*), of all the defilements (*kleśa*) that feed existence, that cause rebirth (*punarbhava*).

Formerly, it seems, one obtained it at little expense. Gautami-the-Thin sees the going out of a lamp: she understands impermanence and immediately becomes a perfected being (*arhat*). The thesis of ‘sudden enlightenment’<sup>7</sup> <193> will always have followers. But, in the schools, things have become less simple.

The defilements (*kleśa*) are of two categories:

- 1) defilements that are intellectual in kind, ‘afflicted views’ (*dr̥ṣṭi*), ‘errors’, delusion (*moha*): ‘afflicted view of self’ [*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*], etc.;
- 2) defilements that are emotional in kind, which in our language, are the ‘passions’, namely, aversion and desire.

To destroy the ‘errors’ is not to destroy the ‘passions’: having recognized the impermanent and harmful nature of pleasant things, the practitioners continue, nevertheless, to find them pleasant and to desire them.

The acquisition of arhathood, therefore, involves two paths:<sup>8</sup> <194>

---

<sup>7</sup> Actually, even when it demands a long preparation (hearers [*śrāvaka*] or bodhisattvas), enlightenment takes place in an instant through the power of the adamant concentration (*vajrasamādhi*, *vajropamasamādhi*), which changes the approacher into a perfected being (*arhat* or Buddha) (*Kośa*, vi, 228; *Vibhāṣā*, book 28).

<sup>8</sup> *Dīgha*, III, 213, contrasts (1) the power of consideration (*pratisaṃkhyāna*; that is to say, in terms of etymology, ‘reflection, discrimination’, and (2) the power of cultivation (*bhāvanā*), the power of the practice of meditations, of the cultivation of the ‘limbs of enlightenment’ [*bodhyaṅga*] (*Āṅguttara*, I, 52, and other sources in the *Pāli Text Dict.*, s.v. *paṭisaṃkhāna*, especially *Paṭisambhida*, II, 169).

*Majjhima*, second *sūtra*, does not know the expression *dassanamagga* (path of vision), but it defines, more or less like the Abhidharma, the fluxes (*āsrava*) ‘to be abandoned by vision’: namely, what we are calling the errors, ‘afflicted view of self’, ‘afflicted doubt’, ‘overesteeming of morality and certain types of spiritual practices’. There remain many fluxes that will be abandoned by several supplementary methods: restraining the sense-faculties (*saṃvara*), using almsfood (*paṭisevanā*), enduring cold, etc. (*adhivāsanā*), avoiding pernicious things (from the wild elephant to bad friends) (*parivajjana*), removing thoughts of sensual desire (*vinodana*), and, finally, cultivating the factors of enlightenment (*bhāvanā*).

- i) the path of vision (*darśanamārga*) which removes the ‘errors’ (the defilements called ‘to be abandoned through vision’ [*dr̥gheya*]) (F 194)
- ii) the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*) which removes the ‘passions’ (the defilements called ‘to be abandoned through cultivation’ [*bhāvanāheya*]) (F 194-198).

AAA.

### THE PATH OF VISION; F 194

The first, the path of vision, is easily understood. It is ‘supramundane’ (*lokottara*) in nature and consists of the ‘vision of the truths’ (*satyadarśana*). After lengthy preliminary efforts, the practitioners get to view, with a pure vision, the truths concerning everything in the threefold world. They remove the errors definitively; they acquire the first degree of nobleness (‘entry into the stream’ [*srotaāpatti*]) by ‘clear understanding’ (*avabodha*, *abhisamaya*) of the truths.<sup>9</sup>

AAB.

### THE PATH OF CULTIVATION; F 194-198

The second path is more complicated.

There are nine stages of existence (*bhava*):

- (1) the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*),
- (2-5) the four stages or heavens of meditation (*dhyāna*), (i.e., the form realm [*rūpadhātu*]),
- (6-9) the four stages or heavens of the equipoises called ‘formless’, (i.e., the formless realm [*ārūpyadhātu*]).

---

The theory is clarified in the Abhidhamma (*Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, 1002; Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Psychology*, 262; *Vibhaṅga*, 96). (i) What is abandoned by vision (*darśana*) are the three fetters (*saṃyojana*) of the ‘afflicted view of self’, ‘afflicted doubt’, ‘overesteeming of morality and certain types of spiritual practices’, the defilements (*kleśa*) that reside therein, the sensations–conceptions–formations–consciousnesses (*vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāras-vijñāna*) associated with them, the actions they provoke. (ii) What is abandoned by cultivation (*bhāvanā*) are the greed-hatred-delusion (*lobha-dveṣa-moha*) that remain, with the defilements, sensation, etc., actions, that are related to them. – The considerations of *Kośa*, I, p. 78 (see *Vibhaṅga*, 96) are very similar.

*Nettipakaraṇa*, 50, distinguishes the stage (*bhūmi*) of vision (*dassana*), for the acquisition of the first fruit, and the stage of cultivation (*bhāvanā*), for the acquisition of the higher fruits. – This is the theory of the Abhidharma. – See 168-170 as well.

Aśvaghōṣa is important. – *Saundara*, XV, 5, contrasts (1) cultivation (*bhāvanā*), which ‘appeases’ the latent defilements (*anuśaya*) of the desires (*kāma*), like water ‘appeases’ the fire hidden below the ashes, with (2) consideration (*pratisaṃkhyāna*), which expels the desires like light expels darkness. Cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is the concentration that confers a particular power to the sword of discrimination (*prajñā*) (xvii, 57). – xvi, 5, is not as clear.

<sup>9</sup> *Kośa*, vi, 143-193. – The sources are rare for the four ‘stages leading to penetration’ (*nirvedhabhāgiya*), stages anterior to the path of vision, that are important in the system of the Sarvāstivādins.

Those who die with passions connected with the desire realm are reborn in the desire realm. Those who have been liberated from these passions and who have risen to the first meditation are reborn in the heaven of the first meditation, because they are tied by the passions of this meditation, because they love the meditative joy particular to this meditation; and so on.

The passions connected with each of these nine stages are of nine categories, strong-strong, strong-medium, strong-weak, medium-strong...

The passions are expelled by the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā*).

One distinguishes:

1. the 'supramundane' (*lokottara*) cultivation (F 195), reserved for the practitioners who have 'viewed the truths' (*dr̥ṣṭasatya*),
2. 'mundane' (*laukika*) cultivation (F 195-198) which non-Buddhists can and do practice.

The gods who inhabit the eight higher stages of <195> the world are, with the exception notably of the 'Pure Abodes' (*śuddhāvāsika*), non-Buddhist practitioners who have practiced the mundane cultivation.

AAB.1.

### **THE SUPRAMUNDANE CULTIVATION; F 195**

The supramundane (*lokottara*) cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is simply the 'repeated vision' of the truths: *bhāvanā* means more or less 'repetition'.

A first vision of the truths, the general vision of the universe according to the truths, has uprooted the 'errors'. The practitioners now consider the factors of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), of the first meditation (*dhyāna*)... of the fourth formless equipoise as being suffering, impermanent, empty, nonself – two times nine visions per stage<sup>10</sup> – and free themselves from all desire towards these things.

In order to 'envision' or 'repeatedly envision' the truths, a certain state of concentration (*samādhi*) is required. But in order to feel disgust with the successive levels of existence and to free themselves from the 'passions' corresponding to them, the practitioners do not necessarily have to enter into the concentrations that correspond to these levels. They can restrict themselves to considering the aggregates (*skandha*; form, etc.) of these levels, and to recognize their nature as suffering, impermanent, etc.

First, the practitioners free themselves from the first six categories of passions of the desire realm and become once-returners (*sakṛdāgamin*), noble persons who will be reborn not more than once in the desire realm; next, [they free themselves] from the last three [categories of the desire

---

<sup>10</sup> Kośa, vi, 190, nine 'paths of immediate succession' (*ānantaryamārga*) and nine 'paths of liberation' (*vimuktimārga*) per stage, see above, F 194.



realm] and become non-returners (*anāgāmin*), noble persons who will no longer be reborn in the desire realm and who, if they do not attain complete arhathood here below, will be reborn in a higher realm; finally, [they free themselves] from the passions connected with the eight higher stages: they are then perfected beings (*arhat*), noble persons who will not be reborn.

AAB.2.

### THE MUNDANE CULTIVATION; F 195-198

Mundane (*laukika*) cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is the practice of the meditations (*dhyāna*) and the formless equipoises. It consists of the acquisition of the equipoises, in the ascent from the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) up to the fourth formless equipoise, by means of (i) disgust for the lower level and (ii) aspiration for the higher level: a disgust resulting from comparison between the successive levels and which is independent of any <196> metaphysical vision of factors and all existences as being suffering, impermanent, nonself in nature (*Kośa*, vi, 239).

The practitioners who have practiced a certain equipoise are reborn in the heaven corresponding to this equipoise and enjoy it for a more or less lengthy period of this very equipoise.

But they can ascend, during the course of one single human existence, from equipoise to equipoise and, in this way, attain a more or less complete 'detachment from desire' (*vitaraṅga*).<sup>11</sup>

They can ascend to the fourth formless equipoise or 'summit of cyclic existence' (*bhavāgra*) because disgust has liberated them from all the passions except those connected with this high level. But they are unable to expel this residue of passion: this level, being the highest, lacks any higher state by means of which they could detach themselves from it. In order to detach themselves, they should know that any existence is suffering, impermanent, nonself; they should be a Buddhist noble person; they must have seen the truths.

However, the Buddhists, the noble persons of the first level (i.e., the stream-enterers [*śrotaāpanna*]) who have expelled the 'errors' (i.e., defilements to be expelled through vision), but who remain tied by all the 'passions', (i.e., the defilements to be expelled through cultivation,) are able to use and usually do use the mundane cultivation, which, practiced by them, takes on a supramundane aspect and assures them the possession of the fruits. Without 'repeated vision of the truths' (supramundane cultivation), they expel the first six categories of the passions of the desire realm definitively and they become once-returners (*sakṛdāgāmin*); they expel the last three [categories of the passions of the desire realm] and they become non-returners (*anāgāmin*), (in the case where they would not in this life achieve the work of

---

<sup>11</sup> The detachment attained by the non-Buddhists is never definitive. They leave 'errors' that are temporarily asleep or rendered inoffensive by the efficacy of 'calm abiding', to remain. Reborn in the *bhavāgra*, the non-Buddhists will retrogress through the exhaustion of the power of the equipoise, and will be reborn in accordance with their former actions: tragic examples of this retrogression are known, *Kośa*, Index of Proper Names: Udraka.

arhathood, they would be reborn in a special part of the heaven of the fourth meditation);<sup>12</sup> they expel—always by means of mundane cultivation—the <197> passions of all the successive levels and reach the fourth formless equipoise. Then they descend again to the third [formless equipoise] (for, in the fourth [formless equipoise], ‘calm abiding’ is too strong for discrimination to be possible) and there they practice supramundane cultivation, the repeated vision of the truths applied to the fourth formless [equipoise]; they destroy the residue of passion and become perfected beings (*arhat*).<sup>13</sup>

When explaining this system [of the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣikas], one must point out its contrived nature.

One does not see why the first vision of the truths (which envisions the three realms [*dhātu*], the desire realm, etc.,) destroys the errors forever and leaves intact all the passions. It is hard to see why the mundane path, which destroys the ‘coarse’ passions, is unable to destroy the minor passions.<sup>14</sup>

Hypotheses:

- a. For certain scholars, the path of vision was considered to be sufficient [to become a perfected being] (Gautami and how many perfected beings!). But one cannot help but recognize a hierarchy among the perfected beings. The path of vision became considered to be insufficient: it had to be followed by a path of cultivation;
- b. the supramundane path of cultivation, (i.e., repeated vision of the truths,) is recasting the mundane path and is redundant. A sterile invention, since it is of little use;
- c. the mundane path of cultivation, otherwise called the path of the equipoises, leads undoubtedly to complete arhathood. The school accepts this path, but with two

---

<sup>12</sup> The heaven of the Śuddhāvāsikas, *Kośa*, vi, 213.

<sup>13</sup> *Kośa*, vi, 205. – When he settled himself under the Tree, Śākyamuni had already practiced to the fullest extent the mundane cultivation. The conquest of arhathood for him was a matter of (i) sixteen moments: path of vision, (ii) plus eighteen moments necessary for the repeated vision of the truths in order to expel the passions connected with the fourth formless equipoise.

<sup>14</sup> The reason given by the Sarvāstivādins, namely, that the ‘mundane’ practitioners cannot become disgusted with the highest stage of the world because a higher stage does not exist, seems to be weak. Indeed, above the state where conception (*saṃjñā*) is so minute that it is called ‘state of neither conception nor non-conception’, there is the state of non-conception, and the texts say that, having achieved this stage, the practitioners think: “The mind is a bother: what if I don’t think any more?” The consciousness of the Buddhist truths is not required for this desire for complete tranquility to arise. – The Sarvāstivādins, it is true, say that the non-Buddhists who do not know *nirvāṇa* loathe the total elimination of the mind because they identify this expulsion with annihilation. But, speaking in this way, the Sarvāstivādins forget what they have taught us about ‘equipoise of non-conception’ (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*), namely, that the non-Buddhists enter into this ‘equipoise of non-conception’ because they regard it, wrongly, as the ‘exit’ or *nirvāṇa*.

reservations. In order that it lead to arhathood: 1) it must, normally, be preceded <198> by the path of vision, 2) it must, at the last stage, make room for the ‘repeated vision of the truths’;

- d. the path of the equipoises is more than an auxiliary of the path of vision or repeated vision: it alone is qualified for contact with *nirvāṇa* (in the ‘equipoise of cessation’ [*nirodhasamāpatti*]). Undoubtedly, this contact was the supreme hope of the practitioners, ‘*nirvāṇa-on-earth*’: therefore the path of the equipoises is as old as the path of vision.

AB.

### THE NECESSITY OF ‘CONCENTRATION’; F 198-201

The principle is that concentration (*samādhi*) is necessary for ‘right knowledge’, ‘those who are concentrated understand according to the truth’ (*samāhito yathābhūtaṃ prajānati*).<sup>15</sup> The non-concentrated or distracted (*vikṣipta*) mind is incapable of right knowledge.

Ānanda lacked nothing in terms of instruction or learning (*śruta*); he alone knew all of the Buddha’s discourses. Nevertheless, he was excluded from the Council because he was not a perfected being (*arhat*):

Ānanda’s discrimination (*prajñā*) was great, but his power of concentration (*samādhi*) was weak. This is why he did not obtain the way immediately.<sup>16</sup>

1. There are seven ‘bases’. In order to realize the path, i.e., to envision the truths or obtain clear understanding (*abhisambodha*, *abhisamaya*), the practitioners must enter into one of the four meditations (*dhyāna*) or into one of the first three formless equipoises.<sup>17</sup> <199>

It is not the case that discrimination (*prajñā*) is obtained only in meditation. Now there are three discriminations:

- i. that arisen from the teachings (*śrutamayī*),
- ii. that arisen from reflecting on the teachings (*cintāmayī*),
- iii. that arisen from ‘meditating’ or ‘contemplating’ (*bhāvanāmayī*).

<sup>15</sup> *Dīgha*, III, 241; *Aṅguttara*, III, 21; V, 3; *Saṃyutta*, III, 13; *Visuddhimagga*, 371; *Nettipakaraṇa*, 66: *Compendium*, 55, 75; *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, 81; *Kośa*, viii, 130.

<sup>16</sup> J. Przyluski, *Concile de Rājagṛha*, 67, after *Ta-tche-tou-louen*, Tokyo, xx, 1, 156. – Harivarman, chap. 184: Because of erudition (*bāhuśrutya*), Śāriputra, etc., are called ‘great scholars’ (*mahājñānin*). If erudition causes the mind to become easily concentrated, why did Ānanda not gain liberation in the first and the last part of the night? – Ānanda [later at a subsequent occasion] gained liberation before his head touched the pillow...

<sup>17</sup> *paṭhamam... jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayāṇi vadāmi...* – These mystical states are ‘bases’ because the practitioners who rise out of them, masters of a more supple, more capable (*karmaṇya*) mind, are able to view [things] better. They are, I may add, not without danger, for the practitioners can cling to the pleasant sensation that they experience in them. – *Kośa*, viii, 128, 131-132.

The latter, which is purely intuitive, engages the object-referent independent of its name, and is the only effective one. It envisions the truths with a discrimination sharpened by concentration.<sup>18</sup>

2. For the Sarvāstivādins, who continue a long tradition, the ‘concentration’ *par excellence* is meditation (*dhyāna*), especially the fourth meditation.<sup>19</sup>

After the failure [to attain *nirvāṇa*] through his attempts at ‘pure yoga’ in the school of the teachers who taught the third and the fourth formless equipoise, Śākyamuni decided to practice the meditations (*dhyāna*): “This is the path of enlightenment” (*eso va maggo bodhāya*). (By means of the mundane path of detachment), he ascended to the fourth meditation, and, while abiding there, he acquired the three ‘clear knowledges’ (*vidyā*) and, excellently, the third, the cognition of the destruction of fluxes (*āsravaḥsaṃyaya*) by means of the vision of the truths.<sup>20</sup>

The ‘easy route’ (*sukhā pratipad*) is the four meditations (*dhyāna*) because insight (*vipaśyanā*) and calm abiding (*śamatha*) are balanced there.<sup>21</sup>

The first three formless equipoises are the ‘difficult route’ (*duḥkhā pratipad*) because the power of insight is weak and calm abiding is strong there.

The fourth formless equipoise is excluded: in it one cannot ‘envision the truths’ <200> because the power of insight is almost zero and calm abiding is very developed in it.<sup>22</sup>

3. Nevertheless, according to the Sarvāstivādins, the actual meditation, the ‘fundamental’ (*maula*) meditation, is not indispensable. Before each meditation, each equipoise (*samāpatti*), there is a preliminary stage called ‘preliminary concentration’ or ‘threshold’ (*sāmantaka*). In the ‘preliminary concentration’ of the first meditation (called ‘preparatory meditation’ [*anāgāmya*]), the practitioners are able to produce a pure mind, envision the truths, achieve arhathood.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> *Kośa*, vi, 143. – Cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is a mystical state. It presupposes virtues of moral and monastic order, good discriminating customs (‘the two withdrawals’ (*vyāpakaṣa*), ‘the four stocks’), but it is obtained only by practices, almost physiological, of disgust (‘contemplation of the corpse, etc.’) and by the hypnotic [?] methods (‘mastering of breathing’). – The *Kośa* attempts, moreover, to intellectualize these processes, vi, 145-150.

<sup>19</sup> Harivarman, chap. 158 (on the four ‘cultivations of concentration’ [*samādhibhāvanā*], *Kośa*, viii, 192; *Dīgha*, III, 222): “According to certain masters, only the fourth meditation is effective: this opinion is not justified”.

<sup>20</sup> *Majjhima*, I, 246. – It is not a matter here of the path of cultivation.

<sup>21</sup> *Kośa*, vi, 279.

<sup>22</sup> Contradiction between *Āṅguttara*, IV, 422 and 426; *Kośa*, vi, 236.

<sup>23</sup> *Kośa*, viii, 178-180; vi, 228, 235. – However, the ‘preparatory meditation’ (*anāgāmya*), like the intermediate meditation (*dhyānāntara*), is the ‘difficult route’ because calm abiding is weak in it.

The school thinks (i) that the practitioners are unable to enter into the first meditation if they are not disengaged from the carnal passions (or from the desire realm); (ii) that, on the other hand, the normal human mind (which is of the desire realm) cannot be disengaged from these passions; hence, the notion of a 'borderland or threshold' which seems to take part in both realms (*dhātu*). One enters into it without being freed from the flesh; one is liberated in it from the flesh because one already tastes therein the 'flavor' of the first meditation. – It does not seem that this theory was authorized by the Pāli sources. See below, Harivarman.

4. The Abhidharma, like the Abhidhamma, distinguishes two kinds of perfected beings (*arhat*):

- (1) those who possess discrimination only (*prajñā*), 'those liberated through discrimination' (*prajñāvimukta*) and
- (2) those, who are not only liberated through discrimination, (i.e., this is the very definition of the perfected being), but, what is more, who possess the equipoises: they are called 'those who are liberated through both parts' (*ubhayatobhāgavimukta*).<sup>24</sup> <201>

The never-returners (*anāgāmin*) who are not yet completely liberated from the fluxes by means of discrimination (*prajñā*), when they possess the equipoises, receive the name of 'bodily witness' (*kāyasākṣin*), 'because they touch cessation (*nirodha*) with their body'.

The first perfected beings (*arhat*), in the Abhidhamma, are called *sukhavipassaka* (*śuṣka*-), apparently, 'of dry insight (*vipassanā*)', because of not being moistened by the water of concentration.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *ubhayatobhāgavimukta*, the perfected beings (*arhat*) who have entered into the 'equipoise of cessation' (*nirodhasamāpatti*), for, by means of the power of discrimination (*prajñā*) and of concentration (*samādhi*), they are liberated (i) from the passions (defilements [*kleśa*], fluxes [*āsrava*]; i.e., the 'obstacle of defilements' [*kleśāvaraṇa*]) and (ii) from the 'obstacle to liberation' (*vimokṣāvaraṇa*): the 'obstacle to liberation' is the obstacle (bodily and mental incapability) that opposes the production of the eight equipoises (or liberations: meditations and formless equipoises). – This explanation, *Kośa*, vi, 276, seems to be rather convoluted! We should understand: 'those who are liberated [from the fluxes] and by means of discrimination and concentration'.

*ubhato bhāgavimutto*: "those who are liberated by means of the formless meditations (*arūpajjhāna*) and by the noble path (or discrimination [*paññā*])", *Visuddhimagga*, 660. – Thus the *paññāvimutto*, 'those who, understanding (*pajānanto*), are liberated', lack the formless meditation, but possess the normal meditation (*jhāna*).

Opposite opinion below, F 205.

The definitions that we have of these noble persons, view-possessors (*diṭṭipatta*), 'those liberated through discrimination' (*paññāvimutta*), 'bodily witnesses' (*kāyasakkhi*), 'those who are liberated through both parts' (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*), in *Majjhima*, I, 439, 477; *Āṅguttara*, IV, 452; *Puggalapaññatti*, divergent in several points.

According to the Abhidharma, unless I am mistaken, these perfected beings possess at least the ‘preparatory meditation’ (*anāgāmya*), but usually possess the meditations (*dhyāna*): the equipoises that they lack are the four formless equipoises and the ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*).

According to the *Majjhima*, I, 477, ‘those liberated through discrimination’ (*paññāvimutta*) are the perfected beings who have not touched the calm formless liberations (or equipoises [of cessation]). Therefore, it would seem, they possess the meditations (*jhāna*).

But in the *Puggalapaññatti*, the perfected beings are those who have not touched the eight liberations [namely, the four meditations (*jhāna*) and the four formless equipoises].

---

<sup>25</sup> *Visuddhimagga*, 702: Ordinary persons (*prthagjana*), the noble persons (*ārya*) of the first two classes, the never-returners (*anāgamin*) and the perfected beings (*arhat*) of the *sukkhavipassaka* class, do not enter into the ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*). The never-returners and the perfected beings who possess the eight equipoises (*samāpatti*) (four meditations, four formless equipoises) do enter into it, not the others.

*Compendium* (transl. of the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, a treatise of the 10<sup>th</sup> (?) century, in P.T.S., 1910, with good introduction by Shwe Zan Aung), 55: “...it must be borne in mind that *jhāna* is not absolutely necessary to Arahantship, as e.g., in the case of the Arahants termed ‘dry-visioned’ (*sukkhavipassakā*)”; Childers, s.v., *samatha*: the Arahant of this class is so called because he attains sanctification by contemplating the ‘dry’ facts of physical and moral phenomena, such as impermanence, etc. – Geiger, transl. of *Saṃyutta*, II, 172, which I [LVP] have not seen.

B. **HARIVARMAN ON 'CONCENTRATION' AND ON NIRVĀṆA; F 201-210**

[The example of a Buddhism where meditation can be excluded, of a Buddhism without nirvāṇa and without mysticism.]

BA. **A BUDDHISM WHERE MEDITATION CAN BE EXCLUDED; F 202-206**

Harivarman who, rightly or wrongly, relies on the *Susīmasūtra*,<sup>26</sup> thinks that concentration (*samādhi*) is necessary but that, <202> below the concentration of meditation (*dhyāna*) (or of the formless realm), there is a concentration of the desire realm. Acquisition of the 'equipoises' therefore is unnecessary.

BAA. **SUSĪMASUTTANTA (SAṂYUTTA, II, 119);<sup>27</sup> F 202-203**

There are perfected beings (*arhat*) liberated by discrimination (*prajñā*), by purely discriminating knowledge. These perfected beings have not entered into the higher equipoises (or liberations [*vimokṣa*]) of the formless (*ārūpya*) level. Neither do they possess the first five super-knowledges (*abhijñā*), but they possess the sixth which constitutes the status of the perfected being: the cognition of the destruction of the fluxes (*āsravaḥṣaya*).

Now, according to the Pāli or Sarvāstivādin scholasticism, the five super-knowledges can be obtained by the practitioners who entered into meditation (*dhyāna*; *Kośa*, vii, 105), and we may believe that all the practitioners who entered into meditation do not deny themselves the benefits of the super-knowledges: such is at least, as we will see, the thinking of Harivarman who concludes that the perfected beings (*arhat*) of the *Susīma* have become perfected beings without entering into meditation (*dhyāna*). – The last part of the *sūtra*, (where *Susīma* himself becomes a perfected being when the Blessed One explains the dependent origination to him), justifies this opinion.

---

<sup>26</sup> **Thanissaro Bhikkhu:** This discourse is sometimes cited as proof that a meditator can attain Awakening (final gnosis) without having practiced the *jhānas*, but a close reading shows that it does not support this assertion at all. The new *arahants* mentioned here do not deny that they have attained any of the four 'form' *jhānas* that make up the definition of right concentration. Instead, they simply deny that they have acquired any psychic powers or that they remain in physical contact with the higher levels of concentration, 'the formless states beyond forms.' [...] Taken in the context of the Buddha's many other teachings on right concentration, there's every reason to believe that the new *arahants* mentioned in this discourse had reached at least the first *jhāna* before attaining Awakening. <http://accesstoinsight.org/canon/sutta/samyutta/sn12-070.html>.

<sup>27</sup> *Vibhāṣā*, 112, p. 572. – The reading *suśīla* (?) 'of good morality'. *Kośa*, viii, 181, note, is probably an error.

**LS:** See reprint of the *Susīma Sutta* in the Addendum, which we have added to LVP's article.

Susima asks the perfected beings:

Is it true that you declared arhathood or final cognition in the presence of the Blessed One, saying: 'We understand: Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being'? – Yes.

Do you possess the supernatural powers, the divine ear, the cognition of the mind of another, the recollection of past existences, the divine eye, the calm equipoises beyond form? – No.

What? Did you make the declaration of arhathood or final cognition without possessing (*asamāpatti*) these spiritual qualities (*dhamma*)? – We have been liberated by means of discrimination (*prajñā*).

The Blessed One explains to Susima the 'cognition of the stability of the factors' (*dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa*; [i.e., dependent origination in forward order]) which is followed by the 'cognition of Nibbāna' (*nibbāṇe ñāṇa*; dependent origination in reverse order).<sup>28</sup> In brief: Form (*rūpa*) is impermanent, etc.: seeing this, one becomes disgusted by it; disgusted, one becomes detached from it; detached, <203> one is liberated from it; and one cognizes that one is liberated. Then one says:

Destroyed is birth,... Susima, do you see that death has birth as cause..., that the *karma*-formations (*saṃskāra*) are destroyed by the destruction of ignorance? – Yes.

And do you possess the supernatural powers... the equipoises beyond form? – No.

BAB.

### **HARIVARMAN, CHAP. 162, ON THE SEVEN CONCENTRATIONS; F 203-204**

a. There are seven bases or resources. By relying (1) on the first meditation (*dhyāna*)... (7) on the 'perception-sphere of nothingness' (*akimcanīyāyatana*), one obtains the 'destruction of the fluxes' (*āsravaḥṣaya*). Basis or resource,<sup>29</sup> i.e., 'cause'. In these seven spheres (*āyatana*), one obtains noble discrimination (*āryaprajñā*). As is said. "The concentrated mind engenders right cognition".<sup>30</sup> – There is a man who obtains meditation (*dhyāna*) and says that that is enough. The

---

<sup>28</sup> See below, pp. F 204, 207.

**Bhikkhu Bodhi:** *Sāratthappakāsinī*: "Insight knowledge is 'knowledge of the stability of the Dhamma' (*dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa*), which arises first. At the end of the course of insight, path knowledge arises; that is 'knowledge of Nibbāna', which arises later."

*Sāratthappakāsinī-purāṇa-ṭīkā*: "The 'stability of the Dhamma' is the stableness of phenomena, their intrinsic nature (*dhammānaṃ ṭhitatā taṃsabhāvatā*): namely, impermanence, suffering, nonself. Knowledge of that is 'knowledge of the stability of the Dhamma'."

<sup>29</sup> *āśraya*, perhaps, *niśraya*. [Sastri has *niśraya*].

<sup>30</sup> Above, p. 198, note.



Buddha says: “No”; one must rely on this concentration and seek the supreme factor (*dharma*); this is why the concentrations are ‘bases’ or ‘resources’.

b. How does one obtain the ‘destruction of the fluxes’ by relying on the meditations (*dhyāna*)? – The Buddha said that the practitioners should not think about the characteristics by which they have entered into meditation,<sup>31</sup> but consider only that all the aggregates (*skandha*, form, etc.) of the first meditation are like (1) a sickness, (2) an abscess, (3) an arrow, (4) a flood, are (5) impermanent, (6) suffering, (7) empty, (8) nonself:<sup>32</sup> seeing in this way, their minds become disgusted and are freed from the fluxes... The practitioners see that the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) is troubled, that the first meditation is calm; this is why the Buddha does not want them to think about the happy and calm character of the first meditation, but just that they see that the aggregates (*skandha*) of the first meditation have eight types of disadvantages.

c. Why is the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) not named among the bases or resources? – In the *Susīmasūtra*, it is said that, apart from the seven bases, there is a sphere where one attains the noble discrimination.<sup>33</sup> Therefore we know that the desire realm is also a basis or resource.

d. Someone says that the fruit of a perfected being (*arhat*) can be attained in the preliminary stage of the first meditation (*dhyāna-sāmantaka* or *anāgamyabhūmi*). <204> Is that right? – No. If the stage of the preparatory meditation (*anāgamyabhūmi*) is a basis or resource, there is a fault: if the practitioners can attain this stage, why do they not enter into the first meditation?

e. Why is the fourth formless equipoise, [i.e., the ‘perception-sphere of neither conception nor non-conception’,] not a basis or resource? – It is not distinguished as such because in it concentration (*samādhi*) is strong and discrimination (*prajñā*) weak. It is the seven concentrations with conception (*saṃjñāsamādhi*) that are the seven bases or resources.<sup>34</sup> – Why did the Buddha say that?...

BAC.

### **HARIVARMAN RESUMES THE EXAMINATION OF THIS PROBLEM IN CHAP. 194: ON THE THREE DISCRIMINATIONS; F 204-206**

a. There is a good factor (*dharma*) of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) capable of expelling the passions (*kleśa*). Thus we know that the desire realm also involves the ‘discrimination [arisen from] meditating’ (*bhāvanāprajñā*). Besides, the [*Susīma*]-*sūtra* says that one is able to attain the

<sup>31</sup> They have entered into the first meditation by considering the trouble, etc., of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), the calm, etc., of the first meditation, see F 195.

<sup>32</sup> These are the eight disadvantages (*ādinava*) of which I [LVP] do not find the list elsewhere. – *roga*, *gaṇḍa*, *śālya*, these three comparisons are common, *Kośa*, 122 (the three sufferings). – ‘Flood’, transl of *t’ong* (Ch.) (suffering), *nao* (Ch.) (anger).

<sup>33</sup> The Pāli text does not say this expressly.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Aṅguttara*, IV, 426: *yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññapaṭivedho*.

path outside of the seven bases or resources. Therefore one is able to engender true cognition by relying on the concentration of the desire realm.<sup>35</sup>

b. Question. – This person [= the perfected being in the *Susīma*] attains the path of perfected being (*arhat*) by relying on the preliminary stage (*sāmantakabhūmi*) of the first meditation, not by relying on the concentration of the desire realm.

Answer. – No, because by saying: ‘outside of the seven bases or resources’, one excludes the first meditation with its preliminary stage.

Furthermore, there is no reason to rely on the preliminary stage and not on the concentration of the desire realm. If these practitioners are able to enter into the preliminary stage, why would they not enter into the first meditation? There is no reason for that.

Furthermore, the *Susīmasūtra* says: “First comes the ‘cognition of the stability of the factors’ (*dharmasthitijñāna*), afterwards the ‘cognition of Nibbāna’ (*nirvāṇe jñāna*)”,<sup>36</sup> which means that it is not necessary first to attain the concentration of meditation in order to then reach the ‘destruction of the fluxes’ (*āsravaḥṣaya*): only the prior ‘cognition of the stability of the factors’ is needed to arrive at the ‘destruction of the fluxes’. Therefore we know that the concentration of meditation is put aside [as unnecessary]. The *Susīmasūtra* was spoken in order to put it <205> aside... No *sūtra* names the ‘preliminary stage’. Therefore it is your own imagination...

c. Question. – We have [previously] given the comparison of one wedge driving out another. By means of the path of one stage the fetters of another stage are cut off. Just as a small wedge drives out a big wedge, just so the path of the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) cuts off the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). The practitioners, when they have first cut off the desire realm and the bad factors (*dharma*), are then able to enter into the first meditation: whence the necessity of a preliminary stage by means of which the desire realm is cut off.

Furthermore, it is said: “Because of the form realm, one leaves the desire realm”: if there were no preliminary stage, how [would one leave the desire realm] because of the form realm?

Furthermore, the *sūtra* says that the practitioners, by attaining pure complacency are able to abandon impure complacency: as Nanda, out of love for the goddesses, abandoned his natural desire.

Furthermore, if one does not taste the calm of the first meditation, how could one the five sense objects (*kāma*) as being ‘coarse-perverted’?

---

<sup>35</sup> The Sarvāstivāda is far from denying that there is a ‘concentration’ of the desire realm. On the contrary, it teaches that concentration (*samādhi*), i.e., the one-pointedness on the object of the mind, which makes the mind rest on an object in an uninterrupted stream, is necessary in every mind-state (*Kośa*, ii, 156). But this ordinary concentration (*samādhi*) is not effective for discrimination.

<sup>36</sup> Below, F 207.

We conclude that, in order to abandon the desire realm, it is first necessary to obtain the preliminary stage of the first meditation.

Answer: ...

d. Question. – Are the perfected beings (*arhati*) ‘liberated through discrimination’ (*prajñāvimukta*) without concentration (*samādhi*), having only discrimination?

Answer. – The concentration that one sets aside [by calling them ‘those liberated through discrimination’] is the concentration of meditation. It is essential, that their minds must be concentrated (*samāhita*) a little, if only for an instant. The Buddha said:

When the mendicants receive their robes, there are the three poisons. When the robes are put on, they are destroyed.

There is no *sūtra* that says that the distracted mind (*vikṣipta*) engenders true cognition; these *sūtras* say that it is the concentrated mind that engenders exact cognition.

(1) The theory that affirms the necessity of meditation for the ‘true vision’ of the metaphysical truths (suffering, etc.) is explained well enough:

- (i) On the one hand, a supernatural clairvoyance practiced in all the domains is attributed to the equipoises: divine eye, recollecting of former abodes or existences, etc.
- (ii) On the other hand, considered from the moral point of view, meditation, attained through ‘separation from the sense objects’, involves a calm and a detachment which can be assumed to be indispensable for the vision of suffering <206> and nonself. In order to understand and believe without reservation that pleasure is suffering in itself, because it is something that is caused and is impermanent, is it not necessary to be raised above the realm of the desires?

(2) One may, on the other hand, take into account the tendency—pronounced in some circles but very strong in Harivarman—of challenging the need, the very usefulness of meditation. Meditation is not attained lightly: the practitioners not only must be perfect monastics, sober and detached, studious for a long time and continually attentive, they must also submit to the practices of the ‘meditation on the repulsive’ (*aśubha*) (contemplation of the corpse) and to the hypnotic [?] practices of controlling the breathing:<sup>37</sup> eliminating in this way any trace of desire, making their minds more supple.

Meditation, when practiced for a long time, has magical value: great benefit. But who, among the monastics, hopes to imitate the arhats of the past and aspires to have superhuman powers?

---

<sup>37</sup> LS: LVP has “exercices hypnotiques de la réglementation du souffle”. Whether ‘hypnotique’ refers to that desire is suspended or put “to sleep” (*hypnotikos*: tending to sleep), or refers to certain side-effects or meditative experiences these practices can have or can lead to, is not clear to us.

Who possesses meditation? To restrict the vision of the truths, i.e., entry into the path of *nirvāṇa*, to people who possess the meditations, that is, indeed, to block the path to salvation to everybody with the exception of the miracle-workers or visionaries [?].<sup>38</sup>

And again, clear understanding (*avabodha*, *abhisamaya*) is a dialectical business: scholars have written a lot on the doctrine, they have demonstrated impermanence and nonself. The ‘discrimination’ (*prajñā*) arisen from the teachings (*śruta*), the discrimination arisen from reflecting (*cintā*), are, very likely, just as efficacious as the discrimination arisen from meditating (*bhāvanā*).

BB.

### HARIVARMAN AND NIRVĀṆA; F 206-210

It seems to us today that Buddhism is especially a ‘mysticism of *nirvāṇa*’, and we are surprised at the error of the Indologists who, up to the present, make of it a ‘religion of nothingness’. This error is, however, explicable and, one can say, reasonable, since it was also the error of the Sautrāntika school and of Harivarman. <207>

Harivarman is perhaps even more clear than the Sautrāntika in the negation of the reality of *nirvāṇa*.<sup>39</sup> He explains *nirvāṇa* in his chap. 196 dedicated to the five ‘cognitions’ (*jñāna*): the first is ‘cognition of the stability of the factors’ (*dharmasthitijñāna*), the second is ‘cognition of *nirvāṇa*’ (*nirvāṇajñāna*).<sup>40</sup>

1. ‘Cognition of the stability of the factors’ (*dharmasthitijñāna*),<sup>41</sup> that is to say: “Dependent on birth, old-age-and-death comes into being” up to: “Dependent on ignorance, *karma*-formations (*saṃskāra*) come into being”. Whether there are Buddhas or not, this nature of factors<sup>42</sup> is

---

<sup>38</sup> LS: LVP has “des thaumaturges ou des hallucinés”.

<sup>39</sup> See Kośa, ii, 278-287; *Documents d’Abhidharma, Textes relatifs au Nirvāṇa...*, Bulletin, XXX, 1930.

<sup>40</sup> LS: The third is the ‘cognition of being without conflict’ (*araṇājñāna*); the fourth, the ‘cognition resulting from a resolve’ (*praṇidhijñāna*); the fifth, the ‘extreme limit cognition’ (*prāntakoṭikajñāna*).

<sup>41</sup> We have: ‘cognition that the factors are-arising-are-occurring’; ‘arise-occur’ (Ch.: *cheng-k’i*) is re-existence (*abhinirvṛtti*), *upavartana*; here, probably, *utpāda* (‘arising’).

<sup>42</sup> Nature-of-factors is *sing* (Ch.), (‘nature’); probably *sā dhātuḥ*. – Kumārajīva often translates *dhātu* as *sing* (Ch.).

The formula of the *Samyutta*, II, 25 (cf. II, 60), has a long history: *katamo ca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo / jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇam / uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ tñhitā vā sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā*.

*Anguttara*, I, 286: *uppādā vā bhikkhave tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ tñhitā vā sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā... sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā... sabbe dhammā anattā*.

Cf. *Kathāvatthu*, vi, 2; xi, 7; xix, 5, xxi, 7.

permanent or stable (*sthitā*); this is why this knowledge is called ‘cognition of the stability of the factors’.

‘Cognition of *nirvāṇa*’ (*nirvāṇajñāna*) is the cognition of the destruction [or cessation] of the factors (*dharma*), that is to say: “Through the cessation of birth, old-age-and-death ceases”, up to “through cessation of ignorance, the *karma*-formations (*saṃskāra*) cease.”

But, someone will say, the ‘cognition of *nirvāṇa*’ should also be called ‘cognition of the stability of the factors’. In fact, whether there are Buddhas or not, this nature <208> of factors, [that they perish in this way,] is permanent or stable. – No. That which is called *nirvāṇa* is the destruction (*kṣayanirodha* = cessation [*nirodha*]) of the factors (*dharma*). And what permanence or stability of a law (*dharmasthiti*) exists in destruction?

2. [Question:] – Then, is *nirvāṇa* not really existent (*dravyasat*, *bhūtasat*)?

[Answer:] – That which is called *nirvāṇa* is the entire destruction-cessation of the aggregates (*skandha*). What existence could be found there?

[Opponent:] – No. *Nirvāṇa* really exists. In fact:

- 1) the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*) is what is called *nirvāṇa*. [Since] the other truths are really existent, therefore...;
- 2) the cognition concerned with *nirvāṇa* (*nirvāṇe jñāna*) is what is called cognition of cessation (*nirodhajñāna*). If *nirvāṇa* is a non-existent factor (*dharma*), how could it engender the cognition?;
- 3) in the *sūtra*, the Buddha said to the mendicants: “There are factors (*dharma*) that are born, produced (*bhūta*), made, conditioned (*saṃskṛta*); there are factors that are unborn, unproduced, not made, unconditioned”; and also,
- 4) “There are only two factors (*dharma*): conditioned phenomena and unconditioned factors. The former has ‘arising’, ‘passing away’, ‘change in continuance’; the latter is ‘without arising’, ‘without passing away’, ‘without change in continuance’;” and again,

---

Sanskrit *sūtra*, *Sālistambasūtra*: *tatra praītyasamutpādo nāma yad idam avidyetyādi / idaṃ cābhisamdhāyedaṃ uktaṃ tatra sūtre / utpādād vā tathāgatānāṃ anutpādād vā tathāgatānāṃ sthitaiveyaṃ dharmatā dharmasthītā dharmaniyāmata tathatā avitathatā anayatatathatā bhūtata satyatā tattvaṃ aviparitatā aviparyastatety evamādi bhagavanmaitreyavacanam* (*Kośavyākhyā*, ad iii, 28, p. 293, 26; *Sālistamba*, ed. and annotated in “*Douze Causes*”, 110; *Cosmologie bouddhique*, 165, 23).

Variants: 1. *Sūtra* cited in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, ix, 150 (p. 588); 2. *Daśabhūmaka*, viii, Rahder, 65 (*Madhyamakavṛtti*, 597); 3. *Laṅkāvatāra*, 144 (Taisho, 541, col. 2; 608, col. 3, different); 4. *Mahāvīyutpatti*, 94.

*Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, 273: *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, 14, 236.

- 5) “Of all the conditioned and unconditioned factors that there are, cessation, *nirvāṇa* is the highest (*agra*)”;<sup>43</sup> and also,
- 6) “Form (*rūpa*) is impermanent; through the cessation of form, there is *nirvāṇa*, which is permanent”, and the same for the other aggregates (*skandha*); and also,
- 7) “It is necessary to actualize *nirvāṇa*”<sup>44</sup> if it is a non-existent factor (*dharma*), what factor is to be actualized?; and also,
- 8) in the *Bahudhātuka*:<sup>45</sup> “The wise discern conditioned factors and unconditioned factors in accordance with truth”. The latter is *nirvāṇa*: how can you call non-existent that which is discerned by a ‘cognition that is in accordance with truth’ (*yathābhūtajñāna*)?;
- 9) in the *sūtra*, there is no [text] that says decisively that *nirvāṇa* is a non-existent factor (*dharma*).

Therefore, it is [only based on] your own opinions that you state there is no *nirvāṇa*.

[Answer:] – No:

- 1) if, independently of the aggregates (*skandha*), there is a separate factor (*dharma*) called *nirvāṇa*, you should not give the name of *nirvāṇa* to the destruction or cessation of the aggregates;
- 2) if there is a *nirvāṇa*, you should <209> tell us its nature (Ch.: *t’i*), what it is;
- 3) the concentration (*samādhi*) concerned with *nirvāṇa* is called ‘signlessness’ (*ānimitta*). If the sign of a factor (*dharma*) exists in *nirvāṇa*, why give it the name ‘signlessness’? As is said in the *sūtra*: “The practitioners view the abandonment of the sign of visible form..., of the sign of the factors ” (*rūpa...*, *dharma nimittaprahāṇa*);
- 4) in several places of Scripture, we read: “All the conditioned forces (*saṃskāra*) are impermanent, all the factors (*dharma*) are nonself; *nirvāṇa* is peaceful”. By ‘self’ should be understood the intrinsic nature of factors (Ch.: *t’i-sing*; *svabhāva*). ‘Not viewing the intrinsic nature of factors’ is what is called: ‘Viewing the nonself’. If *nirvāṇa* is a factor (*dharma*), then it is impossible to view [the nonself or] the absence-of-intrinsic-nature [in it], since this factor [that is *nirvāṇa*] does not perish. [For example,] as long as the pitcher exists, for that long there is no factor-of-passing-away of the pitcher (*ghaṭavyayadharma*, *ghaṭavibhava*-): when the pitcher passes away, then we can speak of its passing away; the same applies for the tree that is cut down; likewise, while the conditioned forces

---

<sup>43</sup> *Aṅguttara*, II, 34. – “Documents”, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> *Saṃyutta*, V, 251.

<sup>45</sup> *Majjhima*, III, 63.

(*saṃskāra*) last, we do not give them the name *nirvāṇa*; but when the conditioned forces are destroyed, we speak of *nirvāṇa*;

- 5) the cessation of suffering is not stated to be a separate factor (*dharma*); it is said: “Mendicants, the cessation of this suffering, the non-arising of another suffering, the non-continuation: this place (*pada*) is supreme, calm, safe, namely, the rejection of all body-mind, the destruction of craving (*trṣṇakṣaya*), detachment (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>46</sup> We have: “The cessation of this suffering, the non-arising of another suffering”: what then is the factor called *nirvāṇa*?;
- 6) ‘factors of passing away’ (*vyaya*) do not exist in themselves: when craving that has already arisen is destroyed, and the non-arisen [craving] does not arise, then it is called ‘passed away’. What is the factor one would call ‘passing away’? It is impossible to say [what this factor is];
- 7) ‘existent’ (*sattā*) is another name for ‘factor’ (*dharma*): the non-existence of the five aggregates (*skandha*) is what is called *nirvāṇa*; how could that which is non-existence be called [factor, that is to say,] <210> ‘existence’? That is not acceptable. It is because of destruction that we speak of *nirvāṇa*: for example, destruction of a garment is not a factor in itself. [If non-existence would be ‘existence’], it would be necessary that the factors of the destruction of the garment, etc., should have existed;
- 8) that there is a cognition that is concerned with cessation (*nirodhajñāna*) is not a difficulty: in the same way, there arises a cognition connected with the cutting down of a tree, and, nevertheless, a factor of the cutting-down does not exist. Besides, it is because of the conditioned forces (*saṃskāra*) that the cognition in question arises: when the conditioned forces no longer exist, that is what is called *nirvāṇa*; just as, when certain objects are absent, we cognize that the place is empty of these objects.

But, someone will say, then there is no *nirvāṇa*?

It is not that there is no *nirvāṇa*, but rather that [*nirvāṇa*] is not a real factor (*nirvāṇa*). If there were no *nirvāṇa*, one would always remain in transmigration; there would be

<sup>46</sup> Variant of common formulas. – Often there is: *sabbūpadhipaṭinosaḡgo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānam* (*Mahāvagga*, I, 5; *Saṃyutta*, I, 136; III, 133; *Mahāvasatu*, II, 285, etc: *Kośa*, ii, 285). Kumārajīva translated *upadhi* as ‘body-mind’ which is not so foolish.

I [LVP] read: *paramaṃ (uttama, praṇita) śantaṃ kṣemaṃ (āśvastam) idaṃ padam yad idaṃ sarvopadhipratiniṣargaḥ*, according to *Saṃyutta*, V, 226: *santaṃ idaṃ padam paṇitam etaṃ padaṃ yad idaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho...*

*āśvasta* is an equivalent of *ngan-in* (Ch.) which is also the translation for *kṣema*, sometimes *yogakkhema* (cf. *Saṃyutta* II, 195; IV 125). – For *śanta* (peaceful), we have either *tsi-tsing* (Ch.) (solitary-silence) or *tsi-mie* (Ch.) (solitary-destruction).

absolutely no liberation. Likewise, there is the breaking of the pitcher, the cutting down of the tree, but those are not separate factors;

- 9) what you are saying, that the other truths are realities, etc., has already been explained. Because there is the cessation of suffering, it is said that there is an unborn, unproduced, unmade, unconditioned factor. – There is no difficulty.



c. **‘EQUIPOISE OF CESSATION (NIRODHASAMĀPATTI);<sup>47</sup> F 210-222**

[‘Equipose of cessation’, according to (a) the Abhidharma, (b) the Abhidhamma, (c) the non-classical texts that allow the construction of a Buddhism in which concentration is the crucial factor.]

We do not have – and when will we have? – a precise and definite knowledge about the paths that has followed the speculation of the mystical Buddhists. [Yet] the study of the system with which they ended up with makes the following hypotheses quite plausible.

1. The yogins knew four meditations (*dhyāna*): these equiposes, called ‘brahmic practices’, are obviously of ‘Brahmanical’ origin; the heaven of the first meditation (*dhyāna*) is the vedic realm of Brahṃā.
2. According to tradition, Śākyamuni learned from Arāḍa-Udraka the last two formless equiposes (*ārūpya*). <211> It is difficult to doubt that the four formless equiposes of the Buddhists are not an inheritance of Yoga.
3. The yogins certainly practiced a ‘non-conceptual equipose’, ‘equipose free from conception’ (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*) which naturally takes up a position beyond and at the end of the fourth formless equipose, of the ‘equipose where conception (*saṃjñā*) is so reduced that one cannot say that it involves or does not involve conception’ (*naivasaṃjñānāsaṃjñāsamāpatti*).

The Buddhists, who do acknowledge that the non-Buddhists have access to the four meditations and four formless equiposes, also acknowledge that they have access to the ‘equipose of non-conception’ (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*), and admit the existence of a heaven reserved for those practitioners who have practiced this equipose.<sup>48</sup> But the ‘equipose of non-conception’ of the non-Buddhists is not, [within the Buddhist system,] in the place that logically belongs to it,

<sup>47</sup> We indicate only the points of direct interest to our research. Many details on the ‘equipose of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*) will be found in: *Kathāvatthu*, vi, 5; x, 1; xv, 7-10; *Visuddhimagga*, 702-710; *Kośa*, ii, 203-214; vi, 223; viii, 193, 203, 207; *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, 61, 63, 196, 204-214, 405, 409; *Karmasiddhi* by Vasubandhu, 784; Harivarman, chap. 94, 171; Demiéville, *Mélanges chinois*, I, 48; *Majjhima*, I, 301, 400.

The ‘equipose of cessation’, it seems, is not mentioned in the *Dhammasaṅgani* or in the *Vibhaṅga*.

<sup>48</sup> In *Dīgha*, ix (i, 180), the heretics debate the ‘higher cessation of conception’ (*abhiśaṃjñānirodha*), the ‘equipose of non-conception’ that occurs either (i) spontaneously or (ii) by the momentary absence of the self (*āttā* = *saṃjñā*) or (iii) because the gods withdraw the ‘conception’ (*saṃjñā*) from people, [i.e., understand *abhiśaṃjñānirodha*, P.T.D.]. The Blessed One explains how, by the process of earlier equiposes, the practitioners reach the limit of conception (*saṃjñāgga*): how, from there, they reach cessation (*nirodha*). In this way *anupubbābhiśaṃjñānirodhasaṃpajānasampatti* takes place. Poṭṭhapāda confesses that he has never heard speak of it.

This expression, I [LVP] believe, has not been well translated: “Thus is it that the attainment of the cessation of conscious ideas takes place step by step” (Rhys Davids). “So erreicht er das Ende. Auf diese Weise geht also die stufenweise fortschreitende Erreichung des Endes der Bewusstheit vor sich” (O. Franke). Better: “Thus there takes place the conscious entry into the gradually acquired ‘cessation of conception’.”

beyond the four formless equipoises, in the course of which conception (*saṃjñā*) diminishes: the Buddhists bring it down to the level of the fourth meditation, (i.e., the practitioners enter it when they are in possession of the fourth meditation,) and the heaven of non-conception is an annex of the heavens of the fourth meditation.<sup>49</sup>

Buddhists, however, uphold an ‘equipoise of non-conception’ beyond the fourth formless equipoise, an equipoise which is thus ‘the ninth of the nine successive equipoises’ (preceded by the four meditations and by four formless equipoises): but they reserve it for themselves. <212> They think that this ninth equipoise was discovered by the Buddha: they do not call it ‘equipoise of non-conception’ (‘without conception’), but rather ‘equipoise of the cessation of conception and sensation’ (*saṃjñāveditanirodha*) or, simply ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*); they give it a clearly Buddhist nature by defining it as making contact with *nirvāṇa* (or with a mystical entity similar to *nirvāṇa*).

The liberations (*vimokṣa*).<sup>50</sup> – Let us not forget that the ‘equipoise of cessation’, the ninth of the equipoises (four meditations, four formless equipoises), is also the eighth of the liberations (*vimokṣa*) in the old lists.

The interpretation of the first three [liberations] is difficult; but we will not be mistaken if we think that they are three meditations that liberate from form (*rūpa*); the following four are formless equipoises that liberate from the mind and naturally end up in cessation (*nirodha*) of the mind.

The *Kośa* establishes relationships, that seem artificial, between the first three [liberations] and three of the meditations, [i.e., the first two and the fourth]: we have here [in the *Kośa*] a theory of acquisition of the ‘equipoise of cessation’ where the meditations are absent.

For the Abhidharma, the ‘equipoise of cessation’ of the two lists is the same thing. But for Harivarman, there is, on the one hand, ‘cessation of the mind and mental events’ (*cittacaittanirodha*), and on the other hand, the fruit of the perfected being (*arhat*): the eighth liberation (*vimokṣa*) is the destruction of the fluxes; it is not called ‘cessation of mind and sensation’ (*cittaveditanirodha*); it belongs only to the perfected beings.

---

<sup>49</sup> The non-Buddhists enter into this equipoise (*Kośa*, ii, 198) because they imagine, very wrongly, that it is the ‘exit’, *nirvāṇa*.

Harivarman, chap. 94, denies the ‘equipoise of non-conception’ (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*): “This equipoise does not exist, for ordinary persons (*prthagjana*, non-noble-persons) are not capable of stopping (*nirudh*) the mind and the mental events (*caittadharma*). It is called ‘without conception’ because the mind and mental events are subtle and difficult to perceive in it”.

<sup>50</sup> *Kośa*, viii, 203 and sources cited; Harivarman, chap. 163; *Vibhāṣā*, 84, p. 434; 85 p. 437; 136, p. 704; 141, p. 727. – On the formless equipoises, Franke, *Dīgha*, 212, ZDMG, 1917, 93; Lindquist, *Methoden*, 86; Heiler, *Buddhistische Versenkung*, 45.

CA.

## **'EQUIPOISE OF CESSATION' ACCORDING TO THE ABHIDHARMA OR SARVĀSTIVĀDIN DOCTRINE; F 212-215**

The 'equipoise of cessation' (*nirodhasamāpatti*) is a cataleptic crisis that normally lasts for seven days. It is a state similar to death. But the life-force (*āyus*) is not exhausted, warmth (*uṣman*) has not been dissipated, the sense-faculties are not fully broken but only calmed down... (*Majjhima*, I, 296 and elsewhere). – The mind and all the mental events have disappeared, although the equipoise is called 'cessation of [two <213> mental events, i.e., of] conception (*saṃjñā*) and sensation (*veditā*): the Sarvāstivādins are in conflict with several other schools on this point.<sup>51</sup>

It is on the level of the fourth formless equipoise, that is to say, that the practitioners can only penetrate it by emerging from this fourth equipoise. It therefore presupposes the prior acquisition of the eight equipoises.

It involves great benefits, notably a very high happiness of mystical order and absolute mastery over all the equipoises: it is the ornament and the happiness of the status of a perfected being. Only the never-returners (*anāgāmin*) and perfected beings (*arhat*) have access to it. – But the formless equipoises and the 'equipoise of cessation' (*nirodhasamāpatti*) have no place in the economy of salvation.

The practitioners enter into the 'equipoise of cessation' not to enter into *nirvāṇa* and to arrive at the 'exit', but in order to obtain and taste the 'peaceful abode' (*śāntavihāra*), or 'peaceful concentration'.

Strictly speaking, the 'equipoise of cessation' is a certain mystical entity (a 'formation dissociated from the mind' [*viprayuktasaṃskāra*]) similar to *nirvāṇa* (Cf. *Siddhi*, 406). The practitioners obtain equipoise (*samāpatti*) by taking possession of this entity. – It is not that the practitioners do not have a direct knowledge of *nirvāṇa*: but this knowledge [of *nirvāṇa*] is of discriminating order (*prajñā*) and is independent of the 'equipoise of cessation'.

a. *Dīgha*, 9, *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (I, 180-185).

The practitioners perfect morality, mastery over their senses; they enter into the meditations (*dhyāna*) of which they take possession successively; they enter into the first formless equipoise, into the second, into the third, by the successive expulsion of the conceptions (*saṃjñā*) that characterize the successive stages of purification. They reach the summit or the limit of conception (*saṃjñāgra*) and think: "It would be best for me not to reflect and form

<sup>51</sup> Harivarman, chap. 171, agrees with the Sarvāstivādins. – This question is very important, for, if all mind disappears during the equipoise, how would the mind rearise? Also, the equipoise argues in favor of the thesis of the store-consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Certain Sautrāntikas accept the permanence of a subtle mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) (Hsüan-tsang's *Siddhi*, 204-214).

conceptions". <214> They stop reflecting and forming conceptions, and, therefore, the conceptions come to an end (*nirudhyante*). They attain cessation (*nirodha*).<sup>52</sup>

b. *Kośa*, ii, 43; iv, 56; vi, 43.

ii, p. 203: "The noble persons (*ārya*) enter into this equipoise having attention (*manasikāra*) directed toward the conception of a peaceful abode (*śāntavihāra*) as its antecedent": that is to say, with a view to enjoying the peaceful (*śānta*) abode (*vihāra*), (i.e., 'excellent concentration' [*samādhivīśeṣa*]).

iv. p. 123: The actions committed with regard to certain individuals are necessarily retributed in this lifetime, because of the eminent dignity of these individuals: "The persons emerge (*vyutthita*) from 'equipoise of cessation'. In this equipoise, they have obtained an extreme tranquility (*śānti*) of mind, for this equipoise is similar to *nirvāṇa*. When they emerge from this equipoise, it is as if one had gone to *nirvāṇa* and has returned from it". (See *Vibhāṣā*, 154, p. 782, col.; Saṃghabhadra, 40, p. 572, col. 3 at end.)

vi. p. 224 (Saṃghabhadra, p. 699, col. 2). – Those who are in possession of the 'equipoise of cessation' are called 'those who have acquired cessation (*nirodha*)'. As it is 'made present or actualized' (*sākṣātkaroti*) through their body in view of the absence of mind, a factor (*dharma*) similar to *nirvāṇa*, namely, the 'equipoise of cessation', they are called 'bodily witness' (*kāyasākṣin*): in the absence of mind, this 'making present or actualizing' (*sākṣātkriyā* = *pratyakṣikriyā*) takes place depending on the body. – Such is the theory of the Vaibhāṣikas.

c. Saṃghabhadra, in contrast to the Sautrāntika, establishes the reality of *nirvāṇa* which is not simply a cessation: 'no longer existing after having existed'. In the commentary on the *Kośa*, ii, 55 c-d, Taisho, 39, p. 432, col. 2, l. 5-14:

The Sautrāntika says that *nirvāṇa* has no intrinsic nature (Ch.: *t'i*; *svabhāva*, a way of being) that one can perceive the way one perceives color, sensation, that there is no activity (Ch.: *yong*; *kāritra*) that one can perceive the way one perceives the activity of the visual or auditory sense-faculty. That is true: *nirvāṇa* is not perceived in its intrinsic nature or in its activity, the way it is the case for <215> color and sensation, for the visual or auditory sense-faculty. But it does possess intrinsic nature and activity, of another order, capable of being known. Things produced by causes (*saṃkṣṛta*) exist as a stream; their intrinsic nature and their activity are coarse and easily discerned. *Nirvāṇa*, on the contrary, does not exist as a stream; its intrinsic nature and activity are subtle, hidden, difficult to discern. Nevertheless, the energetic and contemplative practitioners, when the discrimination (*prajñā*) arisen from meditating (*bhāvanāmāyī*) manifests in them, make present (*sākṣātkaroti*, 'actualize') the true intrinsic nature and activity of *nirvāṇa*. Emerging from contemplation, they cry out: "Oh!

---

<sup>52</sup> O. Franke, *Dīghanikāya*... in *Auswahl übersetzt*, 1913, 149, 150; Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, I, 250; *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* (Ed. Indian Hist. Quart., 18-19): *saññāvedayitānirodhaṃ phusati vindati paṭilabhati*.

*Nirvāṇa*, destruction, calm, excellent, exit!" – Blind people do not see blue and yellow. That does not mean that people who can see do not see colors.

CB. **'EQUIPOISE OF CESSATION' ACCORDING TO THE ABHIDHAMMA DOCTRINE; F 215-217**

The conception of a certain factor (*dharma*) similar to *nirvāṇa* is a scholastic invention. The Pāli school, Buddhaghosa, ignores this invention and represents an older state of the theory: the practitioners enter into contact with *nirvāṇa* itself.

By means of discrimination (*prajñā*; speculative cognition) arisen from meditating (*bhāvanāmāyī*) and the acquisition of the fruits of the status of a perfected being that proceeds from it ('entrance into the stream' ..., successive elimination of the fluxes, *āsravas*), the practitioners attain *nirvāṇa*, but only by means of the discrimination (*prajñā*): "They cognize, see, know, realize, touch by means of discrimination (*paññā*) that destruction or cessation (or *nirvāṇa*) is happiness". – It is to this 'speculative' cognition, that Saṃghabhadra is referring to, above, F 214f.<sup>53</sup> 'Those who are liberated through discrimination' (*prajñāvimukta*), the dry perfected beings, go to *nirvāṇa* just as those who have attained the 'equipoise of cessation' (*nirodhasamāpatti*).

But the practitioners, when they enter into the 'equipoise of cessation', attain, in the absolute silence of mind, an intimate contact with *nirvāṇa*: they touch it with their body; they enjoy *nirvāṇa*-in-this-world (*ditṭhadhammanibbāna*). <216>

The 'equipoise of cessation' does not exist in itself (*sabhāvato natthitā*), being simply the 'non-operation' of mind and mental events (*cittacetāsikānaṃ dhammānaṃ appavatti*) owing to their successive 'cessations' that have preceded (*anupubbanirodhavasena*), *Visuddhimagga*, 702; but, and here is the mystery, this state of non-conception is of a special nature: it gives access to *nirvāṇa*.

- For the Sautrāntikas, the 'equipoise of cessation' is not a 'real entity' (*dravyadharmā*), but only the non-operation (*apravṛttimātra*) of the mind for a certain period of time (*Kośa*, ii, 214). *Nirvāṇa*, which itself is not a real entity either, but the definitive non-operation, has nothing to do with the 'equipoise of cessation'.
- Harivarman expresses himself in the same terms: 'equipoise of cessation' is not a separate real entity, just as *nirvāṇa* is not a separate real entity (Chap. 94).
- The Andhakas and the Uttarāpathakas make an 'unconditioned' phenomenon (*asaṃskṛta*) out of the 'equipoise of cessation', *Kathāvatthu*, vi, 5.

<sup>53</sup> See also *Visuddhimagga*, 660, citing *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, II, 52, the definition of *ditṭhippatto*: he realizes well: 'Happiness, *nirvāṇa*' (*sukho nirodho*), but only by means of discrimination (*prajñā*).

- ‘Equipose of cessation’ is one of six unconditioned phenomena (*asaṃskṛta*) in the list of One Hundred Factors: a way of designating suchness (*tathatā*), *Siddhi* by Hsüan-tsang, 75.
- The Mahāsāṃghikas do not count the ‘equipose of cessation’ in their list of nine unconditioned phenomena (*asaṃskṛta*), but definitely the four formless equiposes (*asaṃskṛtas* 4-7), see Masuda, *Treatise of Vasumitra*, 29 (*Asia Major*, II, 1925).

a. *Aṅguttara*, IV, 454:

What is needed for there to be *nirvāṇa*-in-this-life? – The practitioners enter into the first meditation... into the fourth formless equipose: that is what the Blessed One calls, figuratively, *nirvāṇa*-in-this-life. The practitioners enter into the ‘equipose of cessation’, and their fluxes have been destroyed by the vision of discrimination (*paññāya disvā*): that is what the Blessed One calls, not figuratively (*nippariyāyena*), *nirvāṇa*-in-this-life.

*Aṅguttara*, IV, 414:

Śāriputra says to the monastics: “Happiness is *nirvāṇa*! Happiness is *nirvāṇa*!”

Udayin asks: “But what is happiness in *nirvāṇa* wherein there is no sensation?”

Śāriputra answers: “The happiness of *nirvāṇa* is that there is no sensation in *nirvāṇa*.”

For the monastics who have entered into the first meditation, any <217> conception connected with the world of desire (*kāma*) is trouble, a suffering. [The happiness of the first meditation consists of the elimination of this conception.] By this distinction (*iminā pariyāyena*), we can know how *nirvāṇa* is happiness. – And so on up to the monastics who enter the fourth formless equipose. – Going beyond the fourth formless equipose, the monastics enter into the ‘equipose of cessation’ and their fluxes have been destroyed by the vision of discrimination: by this distinction we also may know how *nirvāṇa* is happiness. [An unexpected conclusion which is at variance, it seems, with *sūtra* IV, 454.]

b. *Visuddhimagga*, 705.

Why do practitioners enter into this equipose? Wishing for the breaking of the procession of existence (or of the conditioning forces, *saṃskāras*), they enter into it hoping: “Already in the present existence, having become free from mind, attaining cessation (*nirodha*), *nirvāṇa*, we will pass the time happily (*diṭṭheva dhamme acittakā hutoā nirodhaṃ nibbānaṃ patvā sukhaṃ viharissāmāti*)”.

c. She Zan Aung, in *Compendium*, 70.

If the practitioners are not satisfied with the mere intuition of *nirvāṇa* that accompanies the possession of the fruit of a perfect being (*arhat*), they can enter into the ‘equipose of cessation’; they can enjoy *nirvāṇa* already in the present existence (*diṭṭhadhammanibbāna*); they can partially enjoy *nirvāṇa*. When the practitioners emerge from concentration in the

course of which they have acquired the fruit of a perfected being, attention occurs which has *nirvāṇa* as its object: this is the mere intuition. In the ‘equipoise of cessation’, a catalepsy, the practitioners enter into contact with *nirvāṇa*, enjoying it then without conception, remembering it in the post-cataleptic state.

CC. **NON-STANDARD TEXTS; F 217-222**

Several documents say more or less clearly that the ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*) is not only, as the Abhidhamma-Abhidharma teaches it, an ornament of the status of perfected being, but that it is necessary for the very acquisition of the complete status of a perfected being.

The other eight of the ‘nine successive equipoises’, which are pure Yoga, being of secondary importance in the historical schools, were perhaps, in some practitioner circles, an essential discipline. <218>

a. *Āṅguttara*, III, 355, above, F 191.

b. The *Musilasūtra* (or *Mūsila*, *Saṃyutta*, II, 115; *Saṃyukta*, 2, 98: *Akunama*) shows that, according to Saviṭṭha, Musila (a ‘dry perfected being’, above, F 201) is a perfected being (*arhat*); but that Nārada, who possesses the same cognitions as Musila, does not consider himself as a perfected being because contact with *nirvāṇa* (obtained in the ‘equipoise of cessation’) is lacking in him.

Saviṭṭha questions Musila, who replies that he has acquired personal and intuitive cognition of all the clauses of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpāda*) (“old-age-and-death comes into being dependent on birth; birth comes into being dependent on existence (*bhava*); ...”; “Dependent on the cessation of birth, there is cessation of old-age-and-death”, up to, “Dependent on the cessation of ignorance, there is cessation of *karma*-formations (*saṃskāra*)”, in other words, the two cognitions above, F 207.

[Saviṭṭha:] – Have you acquired personal and intuitive cognition: “Destruction of existence (*bhava*), *nirvāṇa*?” – Yes.

[Saviṭṭha:] – Then, O Musila, you are a perfected being (*arhat*) free from fluxes. – And Musila then remains silent.

Nārada, who was listening, invites Saviṭṭha to ask him the same questions. Saviṭṭha questions as before. Nārada answers as had Musila. Saviṭṭha concludes as before: You are then, O Nārada, a perfected being free from fluxes.

But Nārada answers: I have properly seen with perfect discrimination and in accordance with truth: “Cessation of existence is *nirvāṇa*”, but I am not a perfected being free from fluxes. This is like when a traveler tormented by thirst would find a well in the desert, [with neither rope nor water bucket], and would look down into the well: he indeed would have the cognition: ‘Water’, but he would not be able to reach it with his body. Likewise, I



have properly seen: “Cessation of existence is *nirvāṇa*”, but I am not a perfected being free from fluxes.<sup>54</sup>

- c. The stanzas of the *Itivuttaka*, § 73, are less clear. – However, making bodily contact with *nirvāṇa* is praised there. <219>

The sentient beings who head towards the meditations (*dhyāna*) with form (*rūpa*) and those who reside in the formless (*ārūpa*) equipoises—not knowing cessation (*nirodha*) (or *nirvāṇa*)—continue to transmigrate.

Those who—knowing the meditations with form, not settling in the formless equipoises—are liberated in cessation (*nirodha*): these are the ones who escape death.

Having touched with their bodies the deathless element (*amatā dhātu*) that is free from all body-mind (*nirūpadhi*),<sup>55</sup> having made present or actualized the rejection of all body-mind (*upadhipaṭṭhisagga*), free from the fluxes, the perfect Buddha teaches the state (*pada*) without sorrow (*asoka*) or without stain (*virāja*).

- d. *Āṅguttara*, IV, 438-448. – How Śākyamuni attained the status of a perfected being.

Śākyamuni ascends the successive equipoises by considering the disadvantages of the lower stage, the advantages of the higher stage, (i.e., the mundane path, above, F 199). Thus he passed over from the desire realm (*kāma*) into the four meditations (*dhyāna*), into the four formless equipoises (*arūpyas*).

He stayed in the fourth [formless equipoise]: I was dwelling in the ‘perception-sphere (*āyatana*) of neither conception nor non-conception’, but the conceptions connected with the ‘perception-sphere of nothingness’, (i.e., third formless equipoise,) were active, which tormented me like suffering can torment a happy man. And I thought: “What if, going completely beyond the ‘perception-sphere of neither conception nor non-conception’, I entered into the ‘cessation of conceptions and sensations’ and abided there?” But however much I saw: “It is the peace”, my mind was not raised up, was not delighted with this cessation... . Why? Because I had not seen the disadvantages of [the ‘perception-sphere of] neither conception [nor non-conception’] ... And, going beyond the ‘perception-sphere of neither conception nor non-conception’, I entered and abided in cessation, and I saw by discrimination, that the fluxes in me were extinguished.

---

<sup>54</sup> This text has drawn the attention of M. Anesaki, *Katam Karaniyam*, 162: “Suppose a traveler perishing of thirst found a well by the way-side; if he saw the water but had no rope or bucket to fetch it, could he quench his thirst? The answer is evident. The essential aim of any discipline or exercise is ‘to touch the immortal region by the body’, i.e., by personal experience and actual realization”.

<sup>55</sup> *upadhi* is a word that is difficult to translate. I [LVP] am adopting the translation by Kumārajīva above, F 209. – The last two stanzas (with variants) in *Itivuttaka*, § 51, on the three realms (*dhātu*), *rūpadhātu*, *arūpadhātu* and *nirodhadhātu*.



As long as I had not entered into the nine successive equipoises (*viḥārasamāpatti*) in ascending order, and as long as I had not emerged from them in descending order, I did not know myself as being enlightened in supreme enlightenment...; but, when I had entered..., I knew myself... . And the cognition-vision arose in me: the liberation of my mind is unshakeable; this birth is my last; there is no further rebirth for me. <220>

This *sūtra* says that Śākyamuni did not know himself to be a perfected being (*arhat*) – did not acquire the fifth ‘group’ (*skandha*) of the noble person, ‘cognition of liberation’ (*vimuktijñāna*) (above, F 190, footnote) – until after having gone in ascending and descending order through the nine equipoises. As for liberation (*vimukti*), the destruction of the fluxes, he places it at the moment when Śākyamuni abides in the ninth equipoise: “The fluxes came to extinction”. Actually, the text that we are reading does not attribute the destruction of the fluxes to the fact alone of entering into this equipoise: “and as I saw by discrimination, my fluxes were extinguished” (*paññāya ca me disvā āsavā parikkhayaṃ agamaṃsu*).<sup>56</sup> – It is clear that Śākyamuni sees during the ninth equipoise in which the mind is excluded. Śākyamuni had seen earlier that which one sees by means of discrimination (*prajñā*): he had seen things as being suffering... . But just because of that alone, he was not a complete perfected being.

According to the ‘Westerners’ and master Upagupta, Śākyamuni entered into the ninth equipoise before realizing the cognition of the destruction of the fluxes (*Kośa*, ii, 205). – This hypothesis is perhaps not unrelated to the thesis of the necessity for equipoise.

For the eight equipoises taken in ascending order, etc., *Kośa*, viii, 173.

e. The *Milinda*, 176, glorifies two gifts as being superior to all the others, because Śākyamuni, having accepted them, entered, in ascending order and descending order, into the nine equipoises: Śākyamuni therefore twice went through the successive equipoises in ascending and descending order.

In what circumstances?

The second time—there is no doubt about it—immediately before [*pari*]nirvāṇa. The Blessed One entered into the first meditation, ascended <221> up to the ‘equipoise of cessation’, descended again to the first meditation, ascended again to the fourth [meditation], and, immediately, when emerging from it, he passed away.

As for the first gift, according to Rhys Davids, “the author must have thought that the nine *anupubbavihāras*, [i.e., successive equipoises,] occurred also after the alms given to Gautama before he sat under the Bo Tree, but I know of no passage in the Piṭakas which would

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the phrase *paññāya cassa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti* (and not *parikkhayaṃ agamaṃsu*), *Majjhima*, I, 175, 479. “And, as he had seen by means of discrimination (*prajñā*), his fluxes had been exhausted”.

support this belief” (*Milinda*, I, p. 245, n. 3). – This interpretation is certainly a good one: it concerns Sujātā’s offering (*Jātaka*, I, 68), the ‘solid food’ of *Majjhima*, I, 247.

The *Milinda* undoubtedly depends on a biography following which—as in *Aṅguttara*, IV, 438-448, as also in the tradition of the ‘Westerners’—Śākyamuni ascended to the ‘equipoise of cessation’ (*nirodhasamāpatti*) before becoming a perfected being (*arhat*), could we say, in order to become a perfected being?

We can cite a text relating, not to the ascent and descent, but rather to entry into the ninth formless (or at least so it seems) and to emergence from it, *Aṅguttara*, IV, 421. – By means of this practice, the practitioners acquire a very manageable (*kammañña*) mind which allows an immeasurable equipoise (*appamāṇa samādhi*): this gives absolute mastery over the six ‘super-knowledges’ (*abhiññā*) including the sixth: When the practitioners wish: “May I be able to spend my time by realizing pure liberation already in this present existence... by means of the destruction of the fluxes”, they attain what they want to realize.

So far as I [LVP] know, nobody has studied the similar but divergent descriptions of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment, *Mahāvagga*, *Mahāsaccaka* (*Majjhima*, 36), *Aṅguttara*, IV, 448; *Lalitavistara*, xxii, etc. – Among very odd documents, those that state (i) that the Buddha, after enlightenment (*pathamābhisambuddha*), is not perfect; (ii) that he must venerate the Dharma, take it as his basis, in order to complete his morality, his equipoise, etc. – *Saṃyutta*, I, 138; *Aṅguttara*, II, 21 (Cf. *Aṅguttara*, I, 124; *Itivuttaka*, § 104). – Also, after enlightenment, the Śākyamuni of the *Mahāvagga* continues to study dependent origination. Enlightenment is a complex operation: a vision of the Dharma (the truths) which brings it about that the practitioner is an *abhisambuddha* [but not completely], a re-vision of the Dharma which completes <222> arhathood: in a word, the path of vision and of cultivation. This is a minor problem to be cleared up.

f. The *Kāśyapaparivarta* should be cited:

“Enter into the equipoise of cessation; nothing remains to be done by the mendicant who has entered into the equipoise of cessation” (*MVṛtti*, 48; Staël-Holstein, 144; *Mélanges*, II, 55).

D.

**[ADDENDUM]**

1. *Kosambī Sutta* or *Musila*
2. *Susīma Sutta*

DA.

**[SAMĀYUTTA NIKĀYA II.68: KOSAMBĪ SUTTA: AT KOSAMBĪ (ON KNOWING DEPENDENT CO-ARISING)]**

**Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.**

<http://www.accesstosight.org/canon/sutta/samyutta/sn12-068.html>

On one occasion Ven. Musila, Ven. Saviṭṭha, Ven. Nārada, and Ven. Ānanda were staying in Kosambī at Ghosita's monastery.<sup>57</sup>

Then Ven. Saviṭṭha said to Ven. Musila, "Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, 'From birth as a requisite condition come aging and death'?"

"Yes, Saviṭṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, 'From birth as a requisite condition come aging and death'."

[Similarly with 'From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth'... 'From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming'... 'From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance'... 'From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving'... 'From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling'... 'From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact'... 'From name-and-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media'... 'From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-and-form'... 'From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness'.]

"Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, 'From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications'?"

"Yes, Saviṭṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, 'From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications'."

---

<sup>57</sup> **Bhikkhu Bodhi:** *Sāratthappakāśini*: The elder Musila was an arahant. [...] Nārada stands on the path of nonreturning. DB.782

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging and death?’”

“Yes, Saviṭṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging and death’.”

[Similarly with ‘From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth’... ‘From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming’... ‘From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance’... ‘From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving’... ‘From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling’... ‘From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact’... ‘From the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of the six sense media’... ‘From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form’... ‘From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness’.]

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications?’”

“Yes, Saviṭṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications’.”

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘The cessation of becoming is Unbinding’ (*nibbāna*)?”

“Yes, Saviṭṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘The cessation of becoming is Unbinding’.”

“Then, Ven. Musila, you are an arahant whose fermentations are ended.”

When this was said, Ven. Musila was silent.<sup>58</sup>

Then Ven. Nārada said, “Saviṭṭha my friend, it would be good if I were to get that question. Ask me that question and I will answer it for you.”

---

<sup>58</sup> According to the Commentary, Ven. Musila’s silence here is a sign of affirmation.

“Then Ven. Nārada will get that question. I will ask Ven. Nārada that question, and may he answer that question for me.”

[Ven. Saviṭṭha asks the same questions of Ven. Nārada, who gives the same answers as Ven. Musila.]

“Then, Ven. Nārada, you are an arahant whose effluents are ended.”

“My friend, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it actually is present, that ‘The cessation of becoming is Unbinding’ (*nibbāna*), still I am not an arahant whose fermentations are ended.<sup>59</sup> It’s as if there were a well along a road in a desert, with neither rope nor water bucket. A man would come along overcome by heat, oppressed by the heat, exhausted, dehydrated, and thirsty. He would look into the well and would have knowledge of ‘water’, but he would not dwell touching it with his body.<sup>60</sup> In the same way, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it actually is present, that ‘The cessation of becoming is Unbinding’, still I am not an arahant whose fermentations are ended.”<sup>61</sup>

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Saviṭṭha, “When he speaks in this way, friend Saviṭṭha, what do you have to say about Ven. Nārada?”

“When Ven. Nārada speaks in this way, friend Ānanda, I have nothing to say about Ven. Nārada except that [he is] admirable and skillful.”

---

<sup>59</sup> In other words, he has attained one of the preliminary levels of awakening (stream-entry, once-returning, or nonreturning), but not full arahantship. As Mv.I.23.5 shows, even the level of stream-entry affords a vision of the deathless.

<sup>60</sup> The image refers to two common similes for the full experience of Unbinding (*nibbāna*): (a) it is refreshing and nourishing, like drinking water (see Dh 205); and (b) some arahants experience it as if touching it with the body (see AN IX.45).

<sup>61</sup> **Bhikkhu Bodhi:** *Sāratthappakāsinī*: The seeing of water in the well represents the seeing of Nibbāna by the nonreturner. The man afflicted by heat represents the nonreturner; the water bucket, the path of arahantship. As the man oppressed by heat sees water in the well, the nonreturner knows by reviewing knowledge, “There exists a breakthrough to the path of arahantship”. But as the man lacking the bucket cannot draw out the water and touch it with the body, so the nonreturner, lacking the path of arahantship, cannot sit down and become absorbed in the attainment of the fruit of arahantship, which has Nibbāna as its object.

It would be a misunderstanding of Nārada’s reply to take it as a rejoinder to Musila’s tacit claim that he is an arahant (the interpretation adopted by Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*, pp. 128-29). The point is not that Musila was unjustified in consenting to that title, but that Saviṭṭha drew an incorrect inference, for he held the wrong belief that the defining mark of an arahant is the understanding of dependent origination and the nature of Nibbāna. This understanding, rather, is common property of the trainee and the arahant. What distinguishes the arahant from the trainee is not his insight into dependent origination (and other principles of the Dhamma) but the fact that he has used this insight to eradicate all defilements and has thereby gained access to a unique meditative state (called in the commentaries *arahattaphalasamāpatti*, the fruition attainment of arahantship) in which he can dwell “touching the deathless element with his body.” DB.782f.

DB. **[SAMĀYUTTA NIKĀYA. II.70: SUSĪMA SUTTA: THE WANDERING ASCETIC SUSĪMA]**

Translated by Bhikkhuni Uppalavanna

<http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/3Samyutta-Nikaya/Samyutta2/12-Abhisamaya-Samyutta/07-Mahavaggo-p.htm>

1. At one time the Blessed One lived in the squirrels' sanctuary in the bamboo grove in Rajagaha.

I

2. At that time the Blessed One was duly attended, esteemed, honored and revered and the Blessed One was a gainer of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill.

3. The Community of monks too were duly attended, esteemed, honored and revered and were the gainers of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill.

4. The wandering ascetics of other sects were not duly attended, not esteemed, not honored and not revered, were not the gainers of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill.

II

5. At that time the wandering ascetic Susima lived in Rajagaha with a large gathering of wandering ascetics.

6. Then the wandering ascetics who were in the gathering said to the wandering ascetic Susima: "Friend Susima, you lead the holy life in the dispensation of the Blessed One, learn his teaching and preach it to us. We will learn it and preach it to the lay disciples. By that we too will be duly attended, esteemed, honored and revered and will be the gainers of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill."

7. The wandering ascetic Susima agreeing with the idea of his gathering approached venerable Ānanda, exchanged friendly greetings and sat on a side.

III

8. Sitting on a side the wandering ascetic Susima said to venerable Ānanda: "Friend, I desire to lead the holy life in this dispensation."

9. Then venerable Ānanda, approached the Blessed One with the wandering ascetic Susima, worshipped the Blessed One and sat on a side.

10. Sitting on a side venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, this wandering ascetic Susima says 'Friend, Ānanda, I desire to lead the holy life in this dispensation.'"

11. "Then Ānanda, ordain Susima."

12. Susima obtained the going forth and the higher ordination in the dispensation of the Blessed One.

13. At that time many monks were acknowledging that they had attained perfection in the presence of the Blessed One: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, duties are done, I know there is nothing more to wish."

#### IV

14. Venerable Susima heard a lot of monks declaring their perfection in the presence of the Blessed One as "Birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, duties are done, I know there is nothing more to wish."

15. Then venerable Susima approached those monks, exchanged friendly greetings and sat on side.

16. Sitting venerable Susima said to those monks: "Is it the truth that you venerable ones declare, 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, duties are done, I know there is nothing more to wish'?"

"Yes, friend."

17. "So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, do you experience various kinds of psychic powers? Such as being one, becoming many and being many becoming one. Appearing in the world and disappearing from the world. Do you go unhindered through walls, embankments and mountains as though in space? Do you dive into and come out of earth as though in water?

"Do you go on water unbroken as though walking on earth? Do you sit in space like birds large and small? Do you touch with your hands, this powerful moon and sun? And do you wield power with the body as far as the world of Brahma?"

"Friend, that is not so."

18. "So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, with the ear element purified beyond human do you hear sounds heavenly and human far or near?"

"Friend, that is not so."

19. "So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, do you know the minds of others, with penetrating insight? Do you know the mind with greed and the mind without greed? Do you know the mind with hate and the mind without hate? Do you know the mind with delusion and the mind without delusion? Do you know the concise mind and the distracted mind? Do you know the exalted mind and the unexalted mind? Do you know the mind with a compare and the mind without a compare? Do you know the concentrated mind and the not concentrated mind? Do you know the released mind and the not released mind?"

“Friend, that is not so.”

20. “So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, do you recollect the manifold previous births? Such as one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, innumerable forward world cycles, innumerable backward world cycles, innumerable forward and backward world cycles of births. There I was of this name, this clan, this disposition, these supports, experiencing these pleasant and unpleasant feelings with such a life span, disappearing from there was born here. With all characteristics and details do you recall previous births in this manner?”

“Friend, that is not so.”

21. “So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, with the purified heavenly eye beyond human do you see beings disappearing and appearing in un exalted and exalted states, beautiful and ugly, in good and evil states, do you see beings according to their actions. These good ones not conducting themselves rightly by body, words and mind, blaming noble ones, with wrong view and with the wrong view of action after death are born in loss, in evil states, in hell. As for these good ones for conducting themselves rightly by body, words and mind, not blaming noble ones, with right view and with the right view of action after death are born in increase, in good states, in heaven?”

“Friend, that is not so.”

22. “So then, you venerable ones, who know and see thus, do you experience the peaceful immaterial releases with the body and abide?”

“Friend, we do not.”

23. “So then you venerable ones are without attainments in this Teaching?”

24. “Friend, we are that.”

25. “Then what are you?”

“Friend, Susīma, we are released through wisdom.”

26. “Venerable friends, I do not understand the detailed meaning of this short exposition. Good, if the venerable ones explain this short exposition to me, so that I may know its meaning.”

27. “Friend, Susīma, whether you understand it or not understand it, we are released through wisdom.”

## V

28. Then venerable Susīma got up from his seat and approached the Blessed One, worshipped and sat on a side.

29. Seated, venerable Susīma related the complete conversation that took place between those



monks and himself.

30. "Susima, first there should be knowledge of a footing in the Teaching and afterwards knowledge about extinction."

31. "Venerable sir, I do not understand the detailed meaning of this short exposition of the Blessed One. Good if the Blessed One would explain it to me so that I may know its meaning."

32. "Susima, whether you understand it or not understand it, first it should be knowledge of a footing in the Teaching and afterwards knowledge about extinction.

"Susima, is matter permanent or impermanent?"

"Venerable sir, it is impermanent."

33. "Is that which is impermanent, unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Venerable sir, it is unpleasant."

"That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing, is it suitable to be considered, this is mine, this I am, this is my self?"

"No, venerable sir, it is not suitable"

34. "Are feelings permanent or impermanent?"

"Venerable sir, they are impermanent."

35. "Are perceptions permanent or impermanent?"

"Venerable sir they are impermanent."

36. "Are determinations permanent or impermanent?"

"Venerable sir, they are impermanent."

37. "Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?"

"Venerable sir, it is impermanent."

"Is that which is impermanent, unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Venerable sir, it is unpleasant."

"That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing, is it suitable to be considered, this is mine, this I am, this is my self?"

"No, venerable sir, it is not suitable."

38. "Therefore, Susima, whatever matter in the past, future or at present internal or external hard or fine, unexalted or exalted, far or near, it is not mine, I am not that, it is not my self, should be seen, as it really is with right wisdom

39-42. "Therefore, Susima, whatever feelings, ... perceptions, ... determinations, in the past, future or at present internal or external hard or fine, unexalted or exalted, far or near, is not

mine, I am not that, it is not my self, should be seen, as it really is with right wisdom.

42. "Therefore, Susima, whatever consciousness in the past, future or at present internal or external hard or fine, unexalted or exalted, far or near, is not mine, I am not that, it is not my self, should be seen, as it really is with right wisdom.

43. Susima, when the noble disciple sees thus he turns away from matter, turns away from feelings, turns away from perceptions, turns away from determinations and turns away from consciousness. Turning away fades and is released. When released knowledge arises, I am released. He knows, birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, my duties are done, there, is nothing more to wish.

"Susima, do you see that decay and death is on account of birth?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

44. "Susima, do you see that birth is on account of being?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

45. "Susima, do you see that being is on account of holding?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

46. "Susima, do you see that holding is on account of craving?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

47. "Susima, do you see that on account of feelings there is craving. On account of contacts there are feelings. On account of the six spheres there are contacts. On account of name and matter are the six spheres. On account of consciousness is name and matter. On account of determinations is consciousness. On account of ignorance are determinations?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

48. "Susima, do you see that the cessation of birth is cessation of decay and death?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

49. "Do you see that the cessation of being is cessation of birth?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

50. "Susima, do you see that the cessation of holding is the cessation of being, the cessation of craving is the cessation of holding, the cessation of contacts is the cessation of feelings, the cessation of perceptions is the cessation of contacts, the cessation of name and matter is the cessation of the six spheres, the cessation of consciousness is the cessation of name and matter, the cessation of determinations is the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of ignorance, is the cessation of determinations."

"Yes, venerable sir."

51. "Yet, Susima, you, who know and see thus, do you experience various kinds of psychic powers? Such as being one, becoming many and being many becoming one. Appearing in the world and disappearing from the world. Do you go unhindered through walls, embankments and mountains as though in space? Do you dive into and come out of earth as though in water?

"Do you go on water unbroken as though walking on earth? Do you sit in space like birds large and small? Do you touch with your hand, this powerful moon and sun? And do you wield power with the body as far as the world of Brahma?"

"No, venerable sir."

52. "So then Susima, do you, who know and see thus, with the ear element purified beyond human hear sounds heavenly and human far or near?"

"No, venerable sir."

53. "So then Susima, you who know and see thus, do you know the minds of others, with penetrating insight? Do you know the mind with greed and the mind without greed? Do you know the mind with hate and the mind without hate? Do you know the mind with delusion and the mind without delusion? Do you know the concise mind and the distracted mind? Do you know the exalted mind and the unexalted mind? Do you know the mind with a compare and the mind without a compare? Do you know the concentrated mind and the not concentrated mind? Do you know the released mind and the not released mind?"

"No, venerable sir."

54. "So then Susima, you who know and see thus, do you recollect the manifold previous births? Such as one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, innumerable forward world cycles, innumerable backward world cycles, innumerable forward and backward world cycles of births. There I was of this name, this clan, this disposition, these supports, experiencing these pleasant and unpleasant feelings with such a life span, disappearing from there was born here. With all characteristics and details do you recall previous births in this manner?"

"Not so, venerable sir."

55. "So then Susima, you who know and see thus, with the purified heavenly eye beyond human do you see beings disappearing and appearing in un exalted and exalted states, beautiful and ugly, in good and evil states, do you see beings according to their actions. These good ones not conducting themselves rightly by body, words and mind, blaming noble ones, with wrong view and with the wrong view of action after death are born in loss, in evil states, in hell. As for these good ones for conducting themselves rightly by body, words and mind, not blaming noble ones, with right view and with the right view of action after death are born in increase, in good states, in heaven?"

"Not so, venerable sir."

56. "So then Susīma, you who know and see thus, do you experience the peaceful immaterial releases with the body and abide?"

"Not so, venerable sir."

57. "Susīma, that's all. This is the explanation. This is the Teaching without attainments. Susīma, of these what are you?"

## VI

58. Then venerable Susīma put his head down at the feet of the Blessed One and said: "Venerable sir, pardon me for my foolish, deluded demerit. In a so well declared dispensation of the Teaching, I went forth to steal the doctrine. Venerable sir, accept my pardon for future restraint."

59. "Susīma, do you ask pardon for your foolish, deluded demerit. Haven't you gone forth to steal, in a well declared dispensation of the Teaching?

60. "Susīma, it's like they have taken hold of a robber while offending and showing him to the king asked: 'Lord this is a robber caught while offending, mete the suitable punishment you desire for him.' Then the king tells them 'Go bind this man's hands tightly behind his back, give a close shave to his head and with the sound of rough drums take him from street to street and from junction to junction then go out of the city through the southern gate and slay him cutting his neck'. Then those men bound this man's hands tightly behind his back, gave a close shave to his head and with the sound of rough drums took him from street to street and from junction to junction then went out of the city through the southern gate and slayed him cutting his neck.

61. "Susīma, would this man feel unpleasant on account of it?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

62. "Susīma, whether that man feels unpleasant or does not feel unpleasant, why did you go forth in this well declared dispensation of the Teaching for the purpose of stealing the Teaching? It will come to you as sharp acute unpleasant feelings and as decrease.

63. "Susīma, since you ask for pardon seeing your fault according to the Teaching, we accept pardon. It is growth in the discipline of the noble ones to ask for pardon seeing one's own fault. It is for future restraint."