

## *Jhāna-cittas: Swapping Planes Via Samatha*

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### **Introduction**

The general nature of the mind (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*) is the confused behavior in various mental objects (*ārammaṇa*), making it difficult for the Buddhist practitioner to concentrate on one object that is required for penetrating into the realities of existence. However, with the assistance of a prescribed sensory object functioning as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), one can establish one's mind on one factor, well balanced, without confusion, non-diffused in various objects; this state of mind is called concentration (*samādhi*) or one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ekaggatā*) which is wholesome (*kusala*) and endowed with knowledge (*ñāṇa-sampayutta*). In Theravāda discourse, two schemes of meditation practice are identified: *Samatha* (calm),<sup>1</sup> also called the “cultivation of mind” (*citta-bhāvanā*), and *Vipassanā*,<sup>2</sup> also called the “cultivation of wisdom” (*paññā-bhāvanā*). It is in *Samatha* that one trains one's mind to reach one-pointedness by developing gradually three levels of concentration: preliminary (*parikamma*), access (*upacāra*), and absorption (*appaṇā*). It is this last absorbed level what is called the *jhāna-citta* which itself having several stages of refinement in ascending order: five (as in the *Abhidhamma* scheme) or four (as in the *Sutta* scheme) stages known as *rūpa-jhāna* (fine-material-plane *jhāna*) and four stages known as *arūpa-jhāna* (immaterial-plane *jhāna*),<sup>3</sup> both of which representing varying concentrated states of mind (*samādhi-citta*) at absorption level unobstructed by sensory-impressions and undefiled by hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). All stages of *rūpa-jhāna* are identified to be “here-and-now pleasurable dwellings” (*diṭṭha-dhamma-sukha-vihāra*) and all stages of *arūpa-jhāna*, “peaceful dwellings” (*santa-vihāra*).<sup>4</sup> In all these stages the mind has gone beyond the sensuous plane (*kāma-bhūmi*) and is dwelling either in the fine-material-plane (*rūpa-bhūmi*) or in the immaterial-plane (*arūpa-bhūmi*). *Samatha* meditation, therefore, provides the practitioner with a means to temporarily transcend

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<sup>1</sup> *Samatha* involves the strengthening of the faculty of concentration (*samādhindriya*) and it eliminates all mental distraction to concentration by fixing the mind upon one single selected object. It suppresses the hindrances until the mind becomes fully absorbed in its object.

<sup>2</sup> The word *vipassanā* (insight) denotes the actual Buddhist practice defined as the development of the three perceptions of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), unpleasurableness (*dukkha-saññā*) and not-self (*anatta-saññā*), direct seeing of the true nature of all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhatā-dhammā*), or seeing the reality as it is (*yathābhūta-dassana*). In *Vipassanā* meditation one cultivates mind by contemplating with wisdom the phenomena or the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, unpleasurable and not-self, without viewing them to be either being, person, male and female or to be permanent, beautiful, pleasurable and self. The aim here is to attain paths (*maggā*) and fruitions (*phala*) leading to *Nibbāna*.

<sup>3</sup> The word *jhāna* relates to two roots: “to contemplate” and “to burn up”; hence, the *jhānas* closely contemplate the object and burn up those oppose to contemplation (*Vism* 150 (IV 119): ārammaṇ'upanijjhānato paccanīkajjhāpanato jhānaṃ).

<sup>4</sup> See, MN 8: *Sallekha-sutta*.

the sensuous-plane here itself by temporarily eliminating five unwholesome mental factors, the hindrances—sensuous desire (*kāma-cchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*)—, and by temporarily substituting them with five wholesome mental factors, the *jhāna*-factors (*jhāna-aṅga*)—applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happy feeling (*sukha*), and one-pointedness of mind (*cittakaggatā*)—and then again by eliminating them one by one to transcend even the fine-material-plane to enter into the immaterial-plane, which is the furthest “peace” point that the *Samatha* alone can lead on the worldly meditator to witness. Considering the significance of the *Abhidhammic* analysis of mind (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*) for understanding of the full scope of *Samatha*, this paper aims to introduce the methods and goals of *Samatha* by examining the *jhāna-cittas* as they are detailed in the *Visuddhimagga*<sup>5</sup> and summarized in the *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*, two classics of Theravāda.

### ***Jhāna-cittas***

The Theravāda *Abhidhamma* uses the Pāli word *citta* referring to consciousness and identifies that there are three planes of *cittas*: the sensuous-plane *cittas* (*kāmāvacara-citta*), fine-material-plane *cittas* (*rūpāvacara-citta*), and immaterial-plane *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-citta*).<sup>6</sup> *Cittas* belonging to sensuous-plane experience sense-objects through the five sense-doors (*pañca-dvāra*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue and body—and the mind-door (*mano-dvāra*). We first see, hear, smell, taste, experience sensory objects through the sense-doors and then think about them through the mind-door. To experience a sensory object through an appropriate door-way, a series or process of *cittas* (*citta-vīthi*) is required. When that sense-door process is over, the object is experienced by *cittas* through the mind-door. In life, sense-door processes (*pañca-dvāra-vīthi*) of *cittas* and mind-door processes (*mano-dvāra-vīthi*) of *cittas* arise and fall away continuously. In each sense-door process and each mind-door process there occur some seven *cittas* called *javana*, those *cittas* that “run through the object.” All the *javana-cittas* in one process are either wholesome or unwholesome: if the first *javana-citta* is wholesome the succeeding six *javana-cittas* are also wholesome; if the first is unwholesome, the remaining six are also unwholesome. However, our *javana-cittas* are often unwholesome because of our tendency to cling to the objects that we experience through the sense-doors and the mind-door.<sup>7</sup> There are twelve unwholesome *cittas* performing the function of *javana*: eight *cittas* rooted in greed, two in hatred, and two in delusion. In the wholesome side, there are eight sensuous-plane wholesome *cittas* performing the function of *javana*. All these wholesome and unwholesome *javana-cittas* are involved with sensory-pleasure, and are of the sensuous-plane (*kāmāvacara-citta*).

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<sup>5</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*) presents the *Samatha* scheme under the purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*), the second factor of its sevenfold purification of the *Vipassanā* scheme: purification of virtue, purification of mind, purification of view, purification by overcoming doubt, purification by knowledge and vision of path and not path, purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and purification by knowledge and vision.

<sup>6</sup> In addition, there are transcending *cittas* (*lokutta-citta*) which have *Nibbāna* as their object, experienced by the enlightened beings.

<sup>7</sup> We cling to visible objects and seeing, to sound and hearing, to all the objects we experience. We cling to life and we want to go on living and receiving sensory objects.

There are nine more wholesome *javana-cittas* that are not involved with sensory pleasure, hence, not belonging to the sensuous-plane, but could be experienced by the worldly person by developing *Samatha*. These nine wholesome *javana-cittas* constitute the five fine-material-plane *jhāna-cittas* and the four immaterial-plane *jhāna-cittas*. They are attained by temporarily being free from the sensory pleasure and are experienced through the mind-door. They belong to two different planes of existence—fine-material-plane and immaterial-plane—that transcend the sensuous-plane; hence they are identified as the fine-material *jhānas* (*rūpa-jhāna*) or the fine-material-plane wholesome *cittas* (*rūpāvacara-kusala-citta*) and the immaterial *jhānas* (*arūpa-jhāna*) or the immaterial-plane wholesome *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-kusala-citta*). Immaterial *jhānas* are more refined than fine-material *jhānas*, since the meditation subjects of the former are no longer dependent on materiality.

The *jhāna-cittas* do not have as their object any sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch. The object of a *jhāna-citta* is a mental image called counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) which is defined to be a conceptual object (*paññatti*), though it arises based on a visible object like a colored disk.<sup>8</sup> The *jhāna-citta* arises in a process of *cittas* experiencing a meditation subject through the mind-door. In this process, there are first sensuous-plane *cittas* which experience the meditation subject and then, in that same process, the *jhāna-citta* or absorption *citta*, arises, as the last of a series of *javana-cittas*. As the *Visuddhimagga* explains, this process constitutes either five or four sensuous-plane *cittas* prior to absorption (*appanā*).<sup>9</sup> This process given in the *Visuddhimagga* could be summarized as: (1) the mind-door advertent *citta* (*mano-dvāra-āvajjana-citta*), a sensuous-plane *javana-citta*; (2) the preparatory *citta* (*parikamma*), a sensuous-plane *javana-citta* that prepares the mental continuum for the attainment to follow; (3) access (*upacāra*), a sensuous-plane *javana-citta* that arises in proximity to the attainment; (4) conformity or adaptation (*anuloma*), a sensuous-plane *javana-citta* that arises in conformity with both preceding moments and the subsequent attainment; (5) ‘change-of-lineage’ (*gotrabhū*) that which overcomes the sensuous-plane and evolves the lineage of sublime consciousness, which is still a sensuous-plane *javana-citta*; and (6) absorption (*appanā*), the moment of *citta* that attains *jhāna*,

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<sup>8</sup> The meditator first meditates fixing one’s attention on the original physical device (*kaṣiṇa*); as she advances the physical device gives rise to the learning sign (*uggaha-nimitta*), a visualized replica of the device, which in turn gives rise to the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) apprehended as the object of *jhāna*.

<sup>9</sup> *Viism* 137-138 (IV 74-75): “There arises in the meditator mind-door advertent with that same earth *kaṣiṇa* as its object, interrupting the occurrence of *citta* as life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), and evoked by the constant repeating of “earth, earth.” After that, either four or five *javanas* impel on that same object, the last one of which is a *javana* of the fine-material-plane. The rest are of the sensuous-plane, but they have stronger applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, bliss, and one-pointedness of mind than the normal ones. They are called the preliminary work because they are the preliminary work for absorption; and they are also called “access” because of their nearness to absorption because they happen in its neighborhood...; and they are called “adaptation” because they adapt to those that precede the “preliminary work” and to the absorption that follows. And the last of these is called “change-of-lineage” because it transcends the limited sensuous-plane lineage and brings into being the exalted fine-material-plane lineage.”

a fine-material-plane *javana-citta*.<sup>10</sup> For some—those with keen faculties—the preparatory *javana-citta* (*parikamma*) is not necessary. In this case, there are only four sensuous-plane *javana-cittas* (*kāmāvacara-citta*) with ‘change-of-lineage’ as the last sensuous-plane *javana-citta* arising in the process before the arising of the *jhāna-citta*. As the *Visuddhimagga* says, only one single moment of *jhāna-citta* arises, which is then lapses into the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga-citta*).<sup>11</sup> After that there is a process of sensuous-plane *cittas* (*kāmāvacara-citta*), reviewing, through the mind-door, the *jhāna* which has just occurred.

The *Visuddhimagga* says further that absorption can last only when it is absolutely purified from states which obstruct concentration.<sup>12</sup> One must first suppress lust by reviewing the dangers of sensuous desires and then suppress the other hindrances. “But when he enters upon a *jhāna* after [first] completely purifying his *citta* of states that obstruct concentration, then he remains in the attainment even for a whole day, like a bee that has gone into a completely purified hive, like a king who has gone into a perfectly clean park.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The first *jhāna* and the *jhāna*-factors**

*Jhāna-citta* is a high degree of calm attained by practicing *Samatha*. In its attainment, one is temporarily free from sense-impressions and the defilement bound up with them. The *jhāna-citta* constitutes mental factors (*cetasika*) that are called *jhāna*-factors (*jhāna-aṅga*). The first *jhāna* contains five: the applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, bliss and one-pointedness, as clearly stated in the textual passage on the first *jhāna*: “Quite secluded from sensuous desires, secluded from unwholesome states the meditator enters upon and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and bliss born of seclusion.”<sup>14</sup> These *jhāna*-factors can eliminate the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) for the *Visuddhimagga* says: the first *jhāna* “abandons five factors, possesses five factors.”<sup>15</sup>

Applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*) are the first two *jhāna*-factors the meditator comes to possess with the attainment of the first *jhāna*. As they are mental factors (*cetasika*), they arise with many other kinds of wholesome *cittas* (*kusala-citta*) and unwholesome *cittas* (*akusala-citta*). However, when the wholesome kind of applied thought and sustained thought are developed in *Samatha*, they become *jhāna*-factors. Explaining the applied thought, the *Visuddhimagga* states that applied thought (*vitakka*) is ‘applied thinking’ (*vitakkana*) which means “hitting upon” (*ūhana*), “directing the *citta* onto an object (mounting the *citta* on its

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<sup>10</sup> See, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Kandy: BPS, 1999, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup> *Vism* 138 (IV 78).

<sup>12</sup> *Vism* 151 (IV 123).

<sup>13</sup> *Vism* 152 (IV 125).

<sup>14</sup> *Vibhaga* 245.

<sup>15</sup> *Vism* 139 (IV 79).

object)”<sup>16</sup> or “leading of the *citta* onto an object.” Explaining the function of the applied thought, the *Visuddhimagga* says: it is “to strike at and thresh—for the meditator is said, in virtue of it, to have the object struck at by applied thought, threshed by applied thought.”<sup>17</sup> Applied thought, when it is a *jhāna*-factor, is opposed to sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*). In ‘thinking’ of the meditation subject, the applied thought helps inhibit temporarily the hindrance called sloth and torpor temporarily.<sup>18</sup>

As explained in the *Visuddhimagga*, the sustained thought (*vicāra*) is ‘sustained thinking’ (*vicaraṇa*); continued sustainment (*anusañcaraṇa*), continued pressure on or occupation with the object. The sustained thought keeps constant mental states occupied with that. It keeps “consciousness anchored on that object.”<sup>19</sup> In *Samatha*, the sustained thought keeps the mind anchored on the meditation subject. When we continue to think of wholesome subjects such as the Buddha’s virtue or his teachings, doubt (*vicikicchā*) disappears. Therefore, the sustained thought helps inhibit temporarily the hindrance ‘doubt’.

The third *jhāna*-factor is rapture or happiness (*pīti*) which arises also with unwholesome *cittas* (*akusala-citta*). Like in the applied thought and sustained thought, it becomes a *jhāna*-factor when it is developed in *Samatha*. It is the ‘pervading happiness’ which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption.<sup>20</sup> When rapture is developed in *Samatha* it inhibits the hindrance called ill-will (*vyāpāda*). As this mental happiness refreshes the mind in the meditation subject, there is no aversion, no boredom as to wholesome. The *Visuddhimagga* recognizes this as it says, it is called happiness (*pīti*) because “it refreshes” (*pīnayati*); it refreshes the body and the mind. Happiness has the quality of endearing (*sampiyāyanā*). It is elation and it pervades thrill with rapture. The *Visuddhimagga* further says that happiness is of five kinds: minor happiness, momentary happiness, showering happiness, uplifting happiness, and pervading (rapturous) happiness.<sup>21</sup> When this fivefold happiness is conceived and full-grown, it perfects twofold tranquility (*passaddhi*), that is bodily and mental. When tranquility is conceived and full-grown, it perfects twofold bliss (*sukha*): bodily and mental. When bliss is conceived and full-grown, it perfects the threefold concentration (*samādhi*): momentary, access, and absorption.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See also *Atthasālinī* 114: *so hi ārammaṇe cittaṃ āropeti*.

<sup>17</sup> *Vism* 142 (IV 88).

<sup>18</sup> See *Atthasālinī*, *Expositor*, Part V, chapter I, 165.

<sup>19</sup> *Vism* 142 (IV 88).

<sup>20</sup> *Vism* 144 (IV 99).

<sup>21</sup> *Vism* 143 (IV 94).

<sup>22</sup> *Vism* 144 (IV 99).

Bliss (*sukha*) is the fourth *jhāna*-factor. It is not bodily pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), but it is mental happiness (*somanassa*). Bliss (*sukha*) developed in *Samatha* is happy feeling about a meditation subject. As it is wholesome bliss, it inhibits the hindrance called restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*). When there is wholesome happy feeling about a meditation subject there is neither restlessness nor worry. As the *Visuddhimagga* defines: “pleasing (*sukhana*) is bliss (*sukha*).” Giving an alternative meaning, the *Visuddhimagga* says: “it thoroughly (*suṭṭhu*) devours (*khādāti*), consumes (*khaṇāti*), bodily and mental affliction, thus it is bliss (*sukha*). It has gratifying as its characteristic. Its function is to intensify associated states. It is manifested as aid.”<sup>23</sup>

Even though both rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) are types of mental happiness, they are not the same for they belong to two different aggregates. Bliss is happy feeling (*somanassa*) and is of the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā-kkhandha*), but rapture is not of the aggregate of feeling but is of the aggregate of formations (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*), the aggregate composed of all the mental factors (*cetasika*) except feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*). In explaining this difference between rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) the *Visuddhimagga* states: “And wherever the two are associated, rapture is contentedness at getting a desirable object, and bliss is the actual experiencing of it when got. Where there is rapture there is bliss (pleasure); but where there is bliss there is not necessarily rapture. Rapture is included in the formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*); bliss is included in the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-kkhandha*).”<sup>24</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* provides a beautiful illustration to understand this difference: “If a man, exhausted in a desert, saw or heard about a pond on the edge of a wood, he would have rapture; if he went into the wood’s shade and used the water, he would have bliss.”<sup>25</sup>

The fifth and final *jhāna*-factor is concentration (*samādhi*), a mental factor (*cetasika*), which is called one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). This mental factor arises with every *citta* and its function is to focus on an object. Each *citta* can have only one object and the mental factor one-pointedness makes the *citta* focus on that one object. One-pointedness mental factor or concentration can be either wholesome or unwholesome. However, when it is developed in *Samatha*, it is wholesome concentration on a meditation subject. Together with concentration there must be right understanding which knows when the mind is a wholesome *citta* and when it is an unwholesome *citta*; which knows how to develop calm for without the right concentration, *Samatha* will not grow. Without the presence of right understanding, one may develop attachment to one’s effort to become concentrated and through the process, one may likely to develop aversion which is a hindrance to calm. As such right understanding is a condition for concentration to develop. The *Visuddhimagga* explains concentration as: “It puts (*ādhīyati*) *citta* evenly (*samaṃ*) on the object, or it puts it rightly (*sammā*) on it, or it is just the mere collecting (*samādhāna*) of the *citta*, thus it

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<sup>23</sup> *Vism* 145 (IV 100).

<sup>24</sup> *Vism* 145 (IV 100).

<sup>25</sup> *Vism* 145 (IV 100).

is concentration (*samādhi*).”<sup>26</sup> It further says: Concentration has the qualities of “non-wandering” and “non-distraction.” It is the steadiness of the mind, like the steadiness of a lamp’s flame when there is no draught. Concentration conglomerates conascent states as water does bath powder. It is manifested as peace. Usually its proximate cause is bliss.<sup>27</sup> Concentration inhibits the hindrance called sensuous desire (*kāma-cchanda*). When there is right concentration on a wholesome subject of meditation, one is at that moment not hindered by sensuous desire. Thus, the *jhāna*-factors must be developed to temporarily eliminate the hindrances. For the person who wants to develop the *jhāna*-factors and attain *jhāna-citta* a great deal of preparation is required.

### **Five or four stages of *jhāna***

*Jhāna* is developed in stages, with each succeeding stage being more refined than the preceding one. There are five stages of *rūpa-jhāna* in all. Therefore, those who attain the *rūpa-jhāna* can have five types of fine-material plane wholesome *cittas* performing the function of *javana*. For the first stage of *rūpa-jhāna* it is still necessary that all five *jhāna*-factors arise with the *jhāna-citta*, but at each higher stage, when one has become more advanced, the *jhāna*-factors are successively abandoned. When one attains to the second *rūpa-jhāna*, one does not need the *jhāna*-factor applied thought (*vitakka*). At this point the *jhāna-citta* can experience the meditation subject without applied thought, which has the characteristic of directing the mind upon an object and the function of ‘touching’ the object. The other four *jhāna*-factors still arise with the *jhāna-citta* of the second *jhāna*. At the third *jhāna*, ‘sustained thinking’ (*vicāra*) is abandoned. At this stage, one does not need both applied thought and sustained thought any longer to become absorbed in the meditation subject. Now there are three factors remaining: rapture, bliss, and concentration. However, some can, at the second *jhāna*, abandon both applied thought and sustained thinking. Consequently, they can in the third stage, abandon rapture and in the fourth stage bliss. Thus, for them, there are only four stages of *rūpa-jhāna* instead of five. That is the reason why *rūpa-jhānas* can be counted as four stages (fourfold scheme) as in the *Suttas* or as five stages (fivefold scheme) as in the *Abhidhamma*.<sup>28</sup> The *Vibhaṅga* introduces the second *jhāna*, following the *Sutta* scheme: “With the stilling of applied thought and sustained thought he enters upon and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and singleness of mind without applied thought, without sustained thought, with happiness and bliss born of concentration.”<sup>29</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* adds: “so he has attained the second *jhāna*, which abandons two factors, possesses three factors.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Vism* 464 (XIV 139).

<sup>27</sup> *Vism* 464 (XIV 139).

<sup>28</sup> See, *Vism* 168-169 (IV 198-202).

<sup>29</sup> *Vibh* 245.

<sup>30</sup> *Vism* 155 (IV 139).

At the fourth or third *jhāna*, rapture (*pīti*) is abandoned. There is still bliss (*sukha*) accompanying the *jhāna-citta*, but rapture does not arise. Without rapture, the *jhāna-citta* is quieter and more refined. The *vibhaṅga* passage on the third *jhāna* reads: “With the fading away of happiness as well he dwells in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, he feels bliss with his body; he enters upon and dwells in the third *jhāna*, because of which the Noble Ones announce: ‘He dwells in bliss who has equanimity and is mindful.’”<sup>31</sup> At the fifth or fourth *jhāna*, bliss (*sukha*) too is abandoned, and there is neutral feeling (*upekkhā-vedanā*) accompanying the *jhāna-citta* instead of bliss. The *jhāna*-factor which is concentration (*samādhi*) remains. The *Vibhaṅga* passage on this *jhāna* reads: “With the abandoning of pleasure and pain and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.”<sup>32</sup>

### *Arūpa-jhānas*

Those who have attained to the highest stage of *rūpa-jhāna* and see the disadvantage of *rūpa-jhāna* for it is still dependent on materiality might wish to cultivate immaterial *jhāna* (*arūpa-jhāna*) which consists of four stages. The first stage of *arūpa-jhāna* is the sphere of boundless space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*). To attain this stage, the meditator must attain first the highest stage of *rūpa-jhāna* by means of any one of the *kasīna* meditations, except the *kasīna* of limited space—*kasīnas* are among the meditation subjects of *rūpa-jhāna*—, and achieve mastery in it. The *Visuddhimagga* states: “When he has seen the danger in that *jhāna* (the fourth *rūpa-jhāna* in the *Sutta* scheme) in this way and has ended his attachment to it, he gives attention to the sphere of boundless space as peaceful. Then, when he has spread out the *kaṣiṇa* to the limit of the world-sphere, or as far as he likes, he removes the *kaṣiṇa* (materiality) by giving his attention to the space touched by it, regarding that as ‘space’, or ‘boundless space.’”<sup>33</sup> Concerning the removal of *kaṣiṇa* for attaining this *arūpa-jhāna*, the *Visuddhimagga* says: “And when the *kaṣiṇa* is being removed, it does not roll up or roll away. It is simply that it is called ‘removed’ because of his non-attention to it, his attention being given to ‘space, space’. This is conceptualized as the mere space left by the removal of the *kaṣiṇa* (materiality).”<sup>34</sup> In this way, the meditator can surmount the materiality of the *kaṣiṇa* and attain the first *arūpa-jhāna*, the sphere of boundless space.

After the first, there are three more stages of *arūpa-jhāna*, each one of which is more peaceful than the preceding one. The second stage is the sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇaṇcāyatana*). The meditation subject of this stage is the consciousness. One who wishes to attain this stage of *arūpa-jhāna* must first achieve mastery in the sphere of boundless space. He must see the disadvantage of the sphere of boundless space and end his attachment to it. The *Visuddhimagga* states: “So, having ended his attachment to that, he should give his attention to

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<sup>31</sup> *Vibh* 245.

<sup>32</sup> *Vibh* 245.

<sup>33</sup> *Vism* 322 (X 6).

<sup>34</sup> *Vism* 322 (X 8).



the sphere of boundless consciousness as peaceful, adverting again and again as ‘consciousness, consciousness’ to the consciousness that occurred pervading that space as its object.”<sup>35</sup> The third stage of *arūpa-jhāna* is the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*). The *Visuddhimagga* (X, 32) states that the person who intends to attain this stage must give his attention to the present non-existence of the past consciousness which pervaded the boundless space and which was the object of the second stage of *arūpa-jhāna*, the sphere of boundless consciousness.<sup>36</sup> It further states: “Without giving further attention to that consciousness, he should now advert again and again in this way: ‘There is not, there is not’ or ‘Void, void’ or ‘Secluded, secluded’, and give his attention to it, review it, and strike at it with thought and applied thought.”<sup>37</sup> In this way, as the *Visuddhimagga* says, the meditator dwells seeing only the non-existence or absence of the boundless consciousness that was there in the previous stage of absorption.

The fourth stage of *arūpa-jhāna* is the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). The object of this *jhāna* is the four *nāmakkhanda*—*citta* and the accompanying *cetasikas*—which attained in the sphere of nothingness, the object of the third stage of *arūpa-jhāna*. The *Visuddhimagga* states: “The word meaning here is this: that *jhāna* with its associated states neither has perception nor has no perception because of the absence of gross perception and presence of subtle perception, thus it is neither-perception-nor-non-perception.” It also gives an alternative meaning: “the perception here is neither perception, since it is incapable of performing the decisive function of perception, nor yet non-perception, since it is present in a subtle state as a residual formation, thus it is neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”<sup>38</sup> Further, it says that the feeling arising with this *jhāna-citta* is neither-feeling-nor-non-feeling since it is present in a subtle state as a residual formation; the same applies to consciousness contact (*phassa*) and the other *cetasikas* arising with the *jhāna-citta*.

### ***Jhāna-vipāka***

There can be up to five stages of *rūpa-jhāna* in all and thus, there are five types of fine-material-plane wholesome *cittas* (*rūpa-jhāna-kusala-citta*). *Jhāna-citta* is wholesome action of higher degree and thus its resultant *citta* is wholesome result (*kusala-vipāka*) of a higher degree. *Jhāna-cittas* do not produce results in the same lifespan: the result is rebirth in a happy plane of existence. The resultant of the fine-material plane wholesome *cittas* is rebirth in *rūpa-brahma* planes. If fine-material wholesome *citta* is to produce the next rebirth, there are fine-material wholesome *cittas* arising shortly before the dying consciousness. The rebirth-linking (*paṭisandhi*) *citta* of the next life is a fine-material resultant *citta* which arises in the appropriate fine-material *brahma* plane. It experiences the same meditation subject as the fine-material plane wholesome *cittas* arising shortly before the dying consciousness. The rebirth-linking *citta* of the next life is

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<sup>35</sup> *Vism* 326 (X 25).

<sup>36</sup> *Vism* 328 (X 32).

<sup>37</sup> *Vism* 328 (X 33).

<sup>38</sup> *Vism* 332 (X 49-50).

the fine-material plane resultant *citta* which arises in the appropriate fine-material *brahma* plane. It experiences the same meditation subject as the fine-material plane wholesome *citta* arising shortly before the dying-consciousness of the preceding life. The five types of fine-material plane wholesome *cittas* produce five types of fine-material plane resultant *cittas*. The fine-material resultant *citta* can only perform the function of rebirth-linking (*paṭisandhi*), life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*) and death (*cuti*). The Arahants too attain *jhānas*. The *cittas* of the Arahants who attain *rūpa-jhānas* are called fine-material-plane functional *cittas* (*rūpāvacara-kiriya-citta*). Unlike the non-Arahants, they do not have wholesome *cittas*, but functional *cittas* instead. Thus, there are fifteen fine-material-plane *cittas* (*rūpāvacara-citta*) in all: five wholesome *cittas*, five resultant *cittas*, and five functional *cittas*.

Since there are four stages of *arūpa-jhāna*, there are four types of immaterial-plane wholesome *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-kusala-citta*). They produce results (*vipāka*) in the form of rebirth in the happy planes of existence which are the immaterial-brahma-planes (*rūpāvacara-brahma-loka*). The four types of immaterial-plane wholesome *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-kusala-citta*) produce four types of immaterial-plane resultant *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-vipāka-citta*). Immaterial-plane resultant *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-vipāka-citta*) can only perform the functions of rebirth (*paṭisandhi*), life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), and death (*cuti*). There are four types of *arūpāvacara-kiriya-cittas* which are the *cittas* of the *arahats* who attain *arūpa-jhāna*. Thus, there are twelve immaterial-plane *cittas* (*arūpāvacara-citta*) in all.

Those who have cultivated *jhāna* can develop various types of direct knowledge (*abhiññā*). They should attain the highest stage of *rūpa-jhāna* in the *kaṣiṇa* meditation, and they should exercise complete mind-control in fourteen ways as described in the *Visuddhimagga* (XII) like the attainment of the *jhāna* stages in different *kaṣiṇa* meditations in order and in reverse order of *jhāna*. In developing the kinds of direct knowledge or supernormal powers, one's concentration will become more advanced. The supernormal powers are: magical powers such as passing through walls, walking on water, travelling through the air while sitting cross-legged; divine ear, by which one hears sounds both heavenly and human, far and near; knowledge of the minds of other people; divine eye, by which one sees the deceasing and rebirth of beings; and remembrance of one's former lives. These are the five mundane supernormal powers that a worldly person can attain after mastering *jhānas* via *Samatha*.

### **Right Conditions**

One who wishes to attain *jhāna-cittas*, as discussed above, must first develop *jhāna*-factors, and to develop them a great deal of preparation is required. The *jhāna-citta* cannot be attained if one were to lead a worldly life, full of sense-pleasures, for the *jhānas* are ways of swapping planes here and now: transcending the sensuous-plane (*kāma-bhūmi*) and moving into fine-material or immaterial-planes, within this life itself by means of practicing *Samatha*. The *Visuddhimagga* states that one who intends to cultivate *Samatha* must establish oneself in morality (*sīla*) by purifying such qualities as fewness of wishes, contentment, effacement, seclusion, energy and

modest needs.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, the observing of some ascetic practices (*dhutāṅga*) that pertain mostly to the monk's use of his robes, alms-food and place of dwelling are also recommended.<sup>40</sup> By observing these practices with a great resolution and commitment, the observer's virtue (*sīla*) gets perfected. The *Visuddhimagga* emphasizes the need for removing impediments to concentration; highlighted among the impediments are those that concern one's dwelling, travelling and health.<sup>41</sup> The meditator, for instance, is to avoid living in a monastery which, for various reasons, is unfavorable to concentration.

Further, for the development of *Samatha*, one must select an suitable meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Though some forty meditation subjects are recommended for the practice of *Samatha*,<sup>42</sup> not all forty subjects can facilitate the meditators to reach all three developments: preliminary, access and absorption. It is understood that all the forty can bring in the preliminary stage of development but that too not for all types of persons. The recollections of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha*, morality, generosity, the god, peace and death, the perception of the repulsiveness in food, and the analysis of the four great elements can facilitate attaining the access stage of development only because in them the mind is engaged in reflecting upon a wide variety of qualities and themes by way of an intense application of thought (*vitakka*). Such intellectual thinking, though wholesome prevents one-pointedness from gaining the fixity required to attain and remain in absorption. The remaining thirty meditation subjects—the ten *kaṣiṇas*, the ten kinds of foulness, the mindfulness occupied with the body (*kāyagatāsati*)—that is, meditation on the thirty-two body parts—, the mindfulness of breathing, four illimitables, and the four immaterial states—can facilitate to reach the absorption stage of development. Of these, twenty-six subjects produce *rūpa-jhānas*: the ten *kaṣiṇas* and mindfulness of breathing produce five *jhānas*; the ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness occupied with the body produce only the first *jhāna*; the first three illimitables—loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy—produce the first four *jhānas*; the equanimity produces only the fifth *jhāna*. The four formless states produce *arūpa-jhānas*. Both the ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness occupied with the body require the exercise of thought (*vitakka*), and as such they are incapable of producing *jhānas* higher than the first, which are free from thought (*vitakka*). The first three illimitables arise in association with joyful feeling (*somanassa*). Therefore, they can lead on only to the four lower *jhānas* of the five *rūpa-jhānas* (or first three *jhānas* of the *Sutta* scheme) which are accompanied by joyful feeling. The fourth illimitable, the equanimity (*upekkhā*), arises in association with neutral feeling

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<sup>39</sup> *Vism* 59 (II 1); 84 (III 1).

<sup>40</sup> See the *Vism* II

<sup>41</sup> *Vism* 84f (III) & 118f (IV).

<sup>42</sup> They are presented classified into seven groups: (1) ten *kaṣiṇas*: meditation on, for example, disks, piece of earth, and light; (2) ten kinds of foulness (*aśubha*): cemetery meditations; (3) ten recollections: meditation on, for example, the qualities of the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Saṅgha*; (4) four illimitables: meditation on, for example, loving-kindness and compassion; (5) one perception: meditation on the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment; (6) one analysis: meditation on the four elements—earth, water, fire and wind; and (7) four immaterial states: meditation on specific immaterial subjects such as space and consciousness.

(*adukkha-m-asukha*). Therefore, it can occur only at the level of the fifth *jhāna*, which is accompanied by feeling of equanimity.

Further, one must know one's character type for selecting the most appropriate meditation subject because not all meditation subjects will work for all types to bring about the highest fruitions. For example, for the lustful temperament (*rāga-carita*), the ten kinds of foulness meditations and the meditation on the mindfulness occupied with the body are prescribed; for the hateful temperament (*dosa-carita*), the four illimitables and the four colored *kasinas*; for the deluded temperament (*moha-carita*) and discursive temperament (*vitakka-carita*), mindfulness of breathing; for the faithful temperament (*saddhā-carita*), the six recollections of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha*, morality, generosity and gods; for the intellectual temperament (*buddhi-carita*), the two recollections of death and peace, the perception of loathsomeness in food, and the analysis of the four elements; and for the discursive temperament (*vitakka-carita*), the *kasina* meditations of earth, water, fire, air, space, light, and the four immaterial states. Considering all these complications in attaining the *jhāna-cittas*, the practice of *Samatha* has always been a master-disciple affair: mind-training under the direction of a teacher.

## Conclusion

As discussed above, the attainment of *jhānas* by practicing *Samatha* alone is a wholesome and wise act which help the worldly person transcend here and now the sensual-plane together with the afflictions and defilements involved with it at least for the duration of the attained *jhāna-cittas*, and immediately after death be born in the refined planes of existence known as the *Brahma*-worlds, while remaining as a worldly person. To develop *Samatha* for becoming temporarily free from hindrances, however, one must cultivate the right conditions: most importantly, one must acquire right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of what is wholesome (*kusala*) and what is unwholesome (*akusala*); one must know when the mind is wholesome that it is a wholesome mind (*kusala citta*); which realities the *jhāna*-factors are, whether within oneself the *jhāna*-factors are developed or not, whether the mental factors (*cetasika*) such as the five faculties (*indriya*)—confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are sufficiently developed or not, whether those faculties are balanced or not. The meditator must be skillful in balancing confidence with wisdom so that they are neither too strong nor too weak; balancing concentration with energy because too much energy and not enough concentration lead to agitation and too much concentration but not enough energy yield to idleness. If one were to not have the right understanding concerning such conditions that are necessary for the attainment of both the access concentration and the *jhāna-cittas*, one is in danger of mistaking for access concentration what is not access concentration and for *jhāna* what is not *jhāna*. Neither access concentration nor *jhāna* can be attained without having cultivated the right conditions. If one were to merely try to concentrate on a meditation subject without such understanding and fulfilling the right conditions, *Samatha* will not be developed. Even though the level of understanding required for the practice of *Samatha* does not eradicate the defilements once and for all, even to achieve such level of understanding required for the attainment of *jhāna*, the practitioners of *Samatha* must establish themselves well in the teachings of the Buddha by

acquiring a profound knowledge of particularly those teachings found in the *Abhidhamma* texts and commentaries.

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