

Factors of Stream-Entry

So far the discussion has focused on those who have reached the highest stage, of complete realization of Nibbāna. It is worthy, however, to recognize the many individuals, especially householders, who have ‘entered the stream’ to Nibbāna or have caught a glimpse of Nibbāna. These individuals often have spouses and children, conducting their lives virtuously in the wider world.

In modern times, people’s understanding of and feeling for Nibbāna and enlightened beings has changed considerably. The view held by many people in the past of Nibbāna as a heavenly city of eternal bliss has changed into a view of extinction. Having less contact with Buddhist teachings and being influenced more by materialism has led people to see Nibbāna in a negative light, as something to be avoided. At the very least they see Nibbāna as something distant and without relevance for their lives. To address this problem, apart from instilling a correct understanding of Nibbāna, people should be encouraged to take special interest in the first stage of enlightenment—of stream-entry. The importance of stream-entry goes beyond an academic interest in Nibbāna and enlightened beings, but it often gets overlooked. The Buddha repeatedly taught:

*Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and those who are receptive—whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen—these you should exhort, settle and establish in the four factors of stream-entry.*¹

The life of a stream-enterer does not appear alien or frightening to contemporary people; rather, it appears admirable. Many of the stream-enterers at the time of the Buddha were lay disciples and were exemplary people. They were virtuous, led contented family lives, and were engaged in society, helping their community and the Buddhist religion. Although stream-enterers have reached a level of realization, they still possess a subtle degree of defilement. They still grieve and lament when encountering separation.² They still have preferences and aversions like unawakened people, although these are attenuated and do not lead to serious misconduct. Their suffering is minor compared to the suffering they have abandoned. [396] They are firmly established and secure in a happy, wholesome and faultless life. Prominent stream-enterers from the Buddha’s time include: Bimbisāra, King of Magadha, who offered Veḷuvana, the first Buddhist monastery, and who kept the weekly Observance Day precepts;³ Anāthapiṇḍika, founder of the famous monastery of Jetavana and incomparable benefactor to the monastic

¹ S. V. 364-5; the ‘four factors of stream-entry’ (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) refer in some cases to the factors that bring about stream-entry and in other cases to the qualities of a stream-enterer.

² For example, the story of Visākhā at: Ud. 91-2; UdA. 417; DhA. III. 278.

³ Important sources at: Vin. I. 35-9; PvA. 209. (Translator: the Observance Day precepts include celibacy and fasting after midday.)

community and to the poor;⁴ Visākhā, foremost lay-woman supporter, who was renowned in the Kosala country—she was very active in promoting social welfare despite having twenty children of her own;⁵ Jīvaka-Komārabhacca, celebrated physician of King Bimbisāra, of the Buddha, and of the monastic community, who is revered by traditional medicine practitioners to this day;⁶ Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā, husband and wife who were utterly faithful to each other into old age and vowed to meet again in future lifetimes.⁷

The attribute of a stream-enterer that was mentioned earlier is the abandonment of the first three fetters (*saṃyojana*)—personality-view, doubt, and attachment to rules and vows. Freedom from these fetters focuses on the absence of certain qualities. There is, however, much emphasis in the scriptures on positive, active qualities. There are many of these active qualities, but essentially they can be incorporated into a group of five qualities: faith (*saddhā*), moral conduct (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Below is a description of the attributes of stream-enterers, both in terms of active, present qualities and of abandoned qualities.⁸

A. Active Qualities

1. Faith: stream-enterers possess a firm trust in truth, goodness, and the law of cause and effect. They have confidence in wisdom—that it is possible for human beings to overcome suffering by realizing the conditioned nature of reality. They have faith in the virtuous people who follow this path of wisdom and have a profound respect for the ‘triple gem’ (*ratanattaya*).⁹ Their faith is secure and unshakeable because it is rooted in true understanding.
2. Moral Conduct: their behaviour through body and speech is appropriate and their mode of livelihood is honest and upright. [397] Their conduct is

⁴ Important sources at: Vin. II. 154-9; A. I. 25-6; AA. I. 384.

⁵ Important sources include: Vin. I. 290-4; A. I. 26; AA. I. 404; DhA. I. 384.

⁶ Important sources at: Vin. I. 71-2, 267-82; Vin. II. 119; A. I. 25-6; AA. I. 398.

⁷ Important sources at: A. I. 25-6; A. II. 61-2; A. III. 295-6; A. IV. 268-9; S. III. 1; S. IV. 116; AA. I. 399.

⁸ Unlike the Pali, which first lists the absent, abandoned qualities, I list here the positive, active qualities first, which is a more contemporary format. In any case, the absent and active qualities are directly linked with one another.

⁹ The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

‘free’—it is not enslaved by craving.¹⁰ They act in accord with truth to promote virtue, simplicity, dispassion, peace and concentration. Generally speaking, this means following the five precepts, which is considered perfect moral conduct.

3. Learning: ‘those learned in spiritual knowledge’ (*sutavant*); they have studied the ‘noble teachings’ (*ariya-dhamma*).¹¹
4. Generosity: they delight in giving and sharing; they are not stingy.
5. Wisdom: they possess the knowledge of a ‘learner’ (*sekha*): they see clearly into the four noble truths, dependent origination, and the three characteristics; they abandon all wrong view (*micchā-ditṭhi*); they have no doubt concerning the four noble truths; they know the world as it truly is.
6. Social Action: stream-enterers abide by the ‘virtues conducive to communal life’ (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*), which engender social unity and concord. They do this perfectly because they maintain the last virtue (of right view, below), which connects all the others. These virtues are as follows:
 - 1) Physical acts of loving-kindness (*mettā-kāya-kamma*); mutual assistance and respect.
 - 2) Speech expressing loving-kindness (*mettā-vacī-kamma*); well-intentioned advice and instruction; well-mannered speech.
 - 3) Thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā-mano-kamma*); thinking well of others; wishing to assist others; cheerful demeanour.
 - 4) Distributing lawful gains with others (*sādhāraṇa-bhogitā*).¹²
 - 5) To possess a similar virtuous conduct as one’s companions (*sīla-sāmaññatā*); acting in an agreeable manner.
 - 6) To share right, noble views with one’s companions (*ditṭhi-sāmaññatā*), which lead to the end of suffering.

¹⁰ ‘Free’ conduct is conduct from which one does not wish for personal gain, say worldly pleasure or a heavenly birth. Note that good conduct always includes right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)—see: VbhA. 88 = Vism. 511. Of the many Pali words describing the moral conduct of stream-enterers, there are two words in particular that have been introduced into the Thai language: *ariya-kanta-sīla*: conduct cherished or praised by enlightened beings; and *aparāmaṭṭha-sīla*: conduct that has not been ‘grasped onto’; conduct untainted by craving and fixed views; conduct that springs naturally from virtue—one need not attach to this conduct since no impurities exist that would lead to its violation.

¹¹ The teachings of the noble ones; virtuous qualities.

¹² (Translator: As this teaching was given to bhikkhus, this virtue refers to sharing alms and other donations, which can be a source of conflict and disharmony.)

In the scriptural passages that describe ‘noble views’ (of virtue 6) there are two special characteristics mentioned of stream-enterers: [398]

- 1) If they have transgressed the discipline (*vinaya*), it is their nature to confess this transgression without delay to their teacher or wise companions and show restraint in the future. This restraint is similar to that shown by a young child who has touched a burning coal and immediately retracts his hand.
 - 2) Although stream-enterers endeavour to assist their companions with various activities, they have a keen interest for training in the higher virtue, the higher mind, and the higher wisdom. Just as a cow with a new calf, while she grazes watches her calf, so too does a stream-enterer look to both the collective good and to personal progress on the path.¹³
7. Happiness: stream-enterers have begun to experience transcendent happiness, which is profound and independent of material things. They have realized ‘noble liberation’ (*ariya-vimutti*).

B. Abandoned Qualities

1. Three Fetters

- 1) *Sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*: the delusion in ‘self’; the mistaken belief in a ‘self’ which leads to selfishness, conflict and suffering.
- 2) *Vicikicchā*: doubts and uncertainties concerning, for example, the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and the training. These doubts prevent the mind from rousing energy and advancing on the path.
- 3) *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*: the misapplication of moral precepts, rules, observances, and traditions; these rules are not used as they are intended, as tools for developing such qualities as tranquillity and concentration. Instead, they are tainted by craving and fixed views, by seeking personal reward, enhancing self-stature, or blindly following others.

¹³ These special characteristics are attributes of right-view, which fall under the heading of wisdom, but due to their detailed explanations I have created a separate heading. The Buddha gave this sermon (M. I. 320-25) in reference to bhikkhu stream-enterers, but it is applicable to lay stream-enterers as well. For transgressions of the *vinaya*, see: A. I. 231-4. The Buddha said that even arahants are subject to minor transgressions. Enlightened beings of all stages of enlightenment, however, are incapable of transgressing fundamental rules of the holy life and their minor transgressions are unintentional. See Vin. V. 117 and see examples of transgressions at AA. II. 348.

2. Five Kinds of Selfishness (*macchhariya*)¹⁴

- 1) Possessiveness in regard to one's dwelling (*āvāsa-macchhariya*).
- 2) Possessiveness in regard to one's family, group, institution, etc.; partisanship (*kula-macchhariya*).
- 3) Possessiveness in regard to one's wealth and good fortune (*lābha-macchhariya*); to prevent others from sharing these gains. [399]
- 4) Jealousy about one's reputation and social standing (*vaṇṇa-macchhariya*); displeasure when someone else competes with us for gain or beauty; intolerance when hearing praise for others.
- 5) Possessiveness in regard to the truth (*dhamma-macchhariya*): possessive of knowledge and attainments; a fear that others will gain knowledge or attain realizations that match or excel our own.¹⁵

3. Four Biases (*agati*)¹⁶

- 1) Bias caused by desire (*chandāgati*).
 - 2) Bias caused by aversion (*dosāgati*).
 - 3) Bias caused by delusion or stupidity (*mohāgati*).
 - 4) Bias caused by fear (*bhayāgati*).¹⁷
4. Defilement: they have abandoned coarse or acute greed (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), which lead to an unhappy existence; stream-enterers do not commit any serious misdeeds which would lead to perdition; they are secure from rebirth in 'states of woe' (*apāya*).¹⁸
5. Suffering: they have quelled mental suffering and misfortune arising from transgressions of the five precepts; the suffering remaining for stream-enterers is minor.¹⁹

¹⁴ Also translated as 'stinginess,' 'narrow-mindedness,' and 'envy.'

¹⁵ A. III. 272-3 (while possessing these five kinds of selfishness, even the first jhāna is unreachable); Vism. 683, 685.

¹⁶ Also translated as 'misconduct.'

¹⁷ Vin. II. 285; Vism. 683, 685.

¹⁸ S. III. 225; A. III. 438.

¹⁹ S. II. 133-40; S. V. 388, 441-2, 457-65.

The active qualities and the abandoned qualities are two sides of the same coin. The abandonment of personality-view occurs with a profound understanding of the conditioned nature of reality. With the arising of this understanding, doubt vanishes and a solid confidence based on wisdom remains. At the same time, moral precepts are observed appropriately, leading to ‘conduct pleasing to awakened beings’ (*ariya-kanta-sīla*). The attachment to rules and observances ends. When a person develops generosity, selfishness wanes. Wisdom weakens the force of greed, hatred and delusion, which in turn frees a person from bias and clinging. The reduction of clinging leads to a release from suffering and an experience of great joy.

Stream-enterers are endowed with virtue and happiness. There is adequate virtue to ensure that one will not cause danger, distress or harm to anyone; on the contrary, one’s behaviour will benefit both oneself and others. [400] This virtue is secure because it stems from thorough knowledge, which leads to a new way of seeing the world. As for happiness, stream-enterers have encountered a profound inner happiness that is of tremendous value. Although they still experience sensual or mundane pleasure, they are not carried away by this coarser form of happiness; they will not sacrifice the refined happiness to increase mundane happiness. Mundane happiness is balanced by transcendent happiness. This transcendent happiness is both a consequence of and a supporting factor for virtue; it is confirmation that a person will not regress and it supports further spiritual growth. Stream-entry is of great value to the person who has realized it and to society. The Buddha assigned stream-entry to the first stage of enlightenment; it is the point where life as an awakened being begins. Stream-enterers are ‘true disciples’; they are part of the ‘noble community’ (*ariya-saṅgha*), which is the ‘crucible’ in which humanity is refined.

The Buddha greatly emphasized the importance of stream-entry and urged his disciples to set it as a goal for their lives. He said that the realization of stream-entry is better than going to heaven, being an emperor, or attaining jhāna. A teacher who is free from sensual lust due to the power of concentrative attainments and who leads his many disciples to ‘merge with Brahmā’ in heaven is considered excellent, but he is surpassed by the stream-enterer who still has sensual lust.²⁰

*Better than ruling the whole world, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over the universe, is the fruit of stream-entry.*²¹

Those people who feel that Nibbāna is too distant to reach, too esoteric, too desolate or ethereal, should use the state of stream-entry as a bridge for understanding, because stream-entry is closer to their experience and easier to understand. At the same time, stream-entry is directly linked to Nibbāna, as it is an entry into the ‘stream leading to Nibbāna’ or a ‘first glimpse’ (*paṭhama-dassana*) of

²⁰ A. III. 371-4; cf.: A. IV. 135-6.

²¹ Dh. verse 178.

Nibbāna.²² This approach with double benefit is appropriate for contemporary people and still accords with the Buddha’s principles. Stream-entry should be the goal of individual practitioners and of the Buddhist community as a whole. [401] In the meantime, one can reach an intermediate stage, as either a ‘faith-devotee’ (*saddhānusārī*) or a ‘truth-devotee’ (*dhammānusārī*),²³ whose members are considered to ‘have approached stream-entry,’ ‘dwell in the Path,’ and ‘progress without falling back,’ and are sometimes included as ‘noble’ (*ariya*) or ‘true disciples’ (*sāvaka-saṅgha*). Those who hesitate or for some reason are delayed can dwell in the preparatory stages of ‘virtuous person’ (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*),²⁴ ‘possessing beautiful qualities,’²⁵ or ‘learned noble disciple’ (*sutavā ariya-sāvaka*).²⁶ These individuals have studied the ‘noble teachings’ (*ariya-dhamma*); they have responded to the ‘call’ of the truth. They have escaped from the ‘jungle’ (of confusion) and recognized the starting point of the path. Although they may still falter, they possess the necessary factors to begin the journey. At the outset, these virtuous persons, whose faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom is not yet truly secure, can generate the quality of ‘learning’ (*suta*)—of having ‘listened’—until they reach the stage of ‘great learning’ (*bahussuta*), of being steadfast in knowledge. It is precisely this learning that helps to recognize the start of the path, because

²² E.g.: MA. I. 74; SA. III. 55; KhA. 188; SnA. I. 193; PsA. I. 282; DhsA. 43; for *sotāpatti-magga* referred to as *dassana*, see, e.g.: M. I. 7-8; Dhs. 182, 220.

²³ See the earlier section describing faith- and truth-devotees. Later, the term ‘small stream-enterer’ (*cūḷa-sotāpanna*) was coined, referring to those disciples who had great love for and faith in the Buddha but whose wisdom was not yet developed (see: M. I. 141-2). The commentaries say this refers to those practitioners who have developed insight and reached ‘knowledge of recognition’ (*ñāta-pariññā*) and the ‘purity of transcending doubts’ (*kaṅkhāvitarāṇa-visuddhi*), and who have attained an ease and sense of security. See: MA. II. 120; VbhA. 254; Vism. 606; VismṬ.: *Kaṅkhāvitarāṇa-visuddhi-niddesa-vaṇṇanā*, *Paccayapariggaha-kathā-vaṇṇanā*. See also the discussion on ‘settled confidence’ (*okappanā-saddhā*) at: DA. II. 529; DA. III. 1029; MA. III. 326; AA. III. 257.

²⁴ This term is used frequently in the commentaries and is paired with *andhabāla-puthujjana*. In the Pali Canon it is found at: Nd. I. 131, 138, 232, 313-4, 477-8. In some locations it is spelled *puthujjana-kalyāṇaka*, e.g.: Ps. I. 176; Ps. II. 190, 193. In the Pali Canon *andhabāla-puthujjana* is only found at: S. III. 140 & Thag. verse 575; more often the term *assutavā puthujjana* is used, meaning ‘unlearned, ordinary person,’ e.g.: M. I. 1; Nd. II. 44; Ps. I. 149; Dhs. 182; Vbh. 364, 368, 375; this term is frequently used as a pair with *sutavā ariya-sāvaka*. The commentaries include these ‘virtuous persons’ (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*)—especially those who make great effort in their spiritual practice and whose virtues indicate they will attain stream-entry imminently—as ‘trainees’ (*sekha*), along with the other seven kinds of (awakened) trainees; these virtuous persons are included in this classification from the level of faith-devotees and truth-devotees (see: VinA. I. 242; MA. I. 40; VbhA. 329; AA. II. 147; ItA. I. 60; VinṬ.: *Pārājīkakaṇḍaṃ*, *Bhikkhupadabhājanīya-vaṇṇanā*, and compare with the ‘small stream-enterer’ mentioned in the previous footnote.

²⁵ A. I. 74.

²⁶ For learned noble disciples who are *kalyāṇa-puthujjana*, see: M. I. 8; MA. I. 72; for those who are stream-enterers or higher, see below.

correct understanding leads to faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom.²⁷ [402] These five qualities—learning, faith, morality, generosity and wisdom—are called the five mundane ‘accomplishments’ (*sampadā*)²⁸ or five mundane ‘treasures’ (*vaḍḍhi*).²⁹ With the attainment of stream-entry, these five accomplishments or treasures become transcendent qualities.

A notable feature of stream-enterers is that they are not possessive of their material wealth:

*(Stream-enterers) dwell at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous ... delighting in giving and sharing.... Whatever there is in their family that is suitable for giving, all that they share unreservedly among those who are virtuous and of good character.*³⁰

Because of this unbounded generosity, stream-enterers grow in virtue but may diminish in material wealth, and the Buddha established a training rule as a result of this trait. If the bhikkhu *saṅgha* sees that members of a family have increasing faith but diminishing wealth, it can formally assign them the title of *sekha* (‘learner’), regardless of whether they are actually enlightened or not. (It is usually not possible to determine the level of realization in another—here, behaviour is used as the standard.) If a monk who is not ill and has not been previously invited goes to members of this family and eats their food, he transgresses one of the training rules.³¹

Stream-enterers do not seek reward for their good deeds—they do not chase after pleasurable sense objects for gratification. These questions do not arise for them: ‘I have done good; why don’t good things come back to me?’ or: ‘I have been generous; why am I not rich? I haven’t got what I wanted.’ [403] They possess not only the physical eye, which sees material things, but they have developed the ‘eye

²⁷ In reference to the two factors for right view, learning (*suta*) is knowledge derived from others (*paratoghosa*)—it relies on wise and trustworthy companions. This learning leads to faith and wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).

²⁸ A. III. 53.

²⁹ A. III. 53; these five treasures are also known as the five noble treasures (*ariya-vaḍḍhi*), although the more common group of noble treasures contains two more qualities, of moral shame (*hiri*) and fear of wrong-doing (*ottappa*), e.g.: D. III. 251; A. IV. 5-6.

³⁰ S. V. 351-2.

³¹ Vin. IV. 180; even if he visits their house and they offer food, he should not receive it, not to mention going and asking for food as this is an offence under any circumstance (except with relatives or one who has given a formal invitation); see: Vin. I. 45; Vin. IV. 87, 193. It is the same with the other three requisites (see: Vin. III. 148, 212, 256; Vin. IV. 102-3). See also: D. III. 224-5; S. II. 195; A. II. 27-8; A. III. 108-9; Nd. I. 495; Nd. II. 59; Vism. 39-42.

of Dhamma' (*dhamma-cakkhu*)³² or the 'wisdom eye,' which sees clearly into the truth. Stream-enterers have complete confidence in the power of goodness, a confidence that can never be shaken regardless of unfavourable material circumstances. When they have clearly seen the truth and walked the virtuous path, no one including devas can tempt them to deviate. They are steadfast in virtue. The commentaries use the example of Anāthapiṇḍika to show the degree of a stream-enterer's rectitude.³³ They cannot be enticed or intimidated by devas; on the contrary, devas pay respect to them.

Here are some passages from the Pali Canon concerning stream-enterers:

A. Epithets and Descriptions

Buddha: *Sāriputta, this is said: 'The stream, the stream.' What now, Sāriputta, is the stream?*

Sāriputta: *This noble eightfold path, venerable sir, is the stream; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.*

Buddha: *Good, good, Sāriputta.... This is said: 'A stream-enterer, a stream-enterer.' What now, Sāriputta, is a stream-enterer?*

Sāriputta: *One who possesses this noble eightfold path, venerable sir, is called a stream-enterer: this venerable one of such a name and clan.*

Buddha: *Good, good, Sāriputta.*³⁴

This noble disciple is called a person who is accomplished in view (diṭṭhi-sampanna), accomplished in vision (dassana-sampanna), who has arrived at this true Dhamma, who sees this true Dhamma, who possesses a trainee's knowledge, a

³² See, e.g.: Vin. I. 12, 16; in most cases the Dhamma eye refers to knowledge resulting in stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*), e.g.: VinA. V. 973; DA. I. 278; AA. II. 356; AA. IV. 102; UdA. 283; NdA. 8. Sometimes the term includes the path of once-returning and the path of non-returning, e.g.: VinA. III. 537; DA. I. 237; PsA. I. 77; DhA. 306. Sometimes it refers to the three paths and the three fruits, e.g.: SA. III. 297. And in some places it refers to all four paths and all four fruits, including the fruit of arahantship, e.g.: NdA. 83; MA. III. 92; MA. V. 99; SA. II. 392; VinṬ.: Mahākhandaḥkaṃ, Dhammacakkappavattanasutta-vaṇṇanā. One passage in the Pali Canon refers to two occasions for the arising of the Dhamma eye; the first is the path of stream-entry and the second the path of non-returning (A. I. 242).

³³ DhA. III. 9; J. I. 226.

³⁴ S. V. 347-8.

*trainee's true knowledge, who has entered the stream of the Dhamma, a noble one with penetrative wisdom, one who stands squarely before the door to the Deathless.*³⁵ [404]

*A well-taught noble disciple (sutavā ariya-sāvaka), who has encountered the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma (ariya-dhamma), who has encountered true men (sappurisa) and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma.*³⁶

*They have seen, attained, realized and penetrated the Dhamma, passed beyond doubt, did away with confusion, and gained perfect confidence, and become independent of others in the Teacher's dispensation.*³⁷

*A variation of this passage is: One who carries out [the Buddha's] instruction, who responds to his advice, who has crossed beyond doubt ... in the Teacher's dispensation.*³⁸ *Alternatively: One who is firmly established and at ease in this Dhamma and Discipline, who has crossed beyond doubt ... in the Teacher's dispensation.*³⁹

*A noble disciple who has arrived at the fruit, [realized the Dhamma], and understood the teaching.*⁴⁰

³⁵ S. II. 45, 58, 79-80. The terms *diṭṭhi-sampanna* and *dassana-sampanna* are frequently used alone as synonyms for a stream-enterer; for *diṭṭhi-sampanna* see, e.g.: M. I. 322-5; M. III. 64-5; S. II. 80, 133-9; S. V. 441-2, 457-65; A. I. 26-7; A. III. 373, 438-40; A. V. 119-20; Ps. I. 161; Vbh. 335-6; (commentarial explanations at e.g.: SA. II. 59; MA. IV. 107; AA. III. 387; AA. IV. 185); *dassana-sampanna* is only found in verses, e.g.: A. I. 151; A. III. 34; Thag. verses 45, 174; (commentarial explanations at e.g.: AA. III. 244). *Ariyo nibbedhika-pañño* (a noble one with penetrative wisdom) can also be translated as 'a noble one with wisdom that penetrates defilement,' 'a noble one with liberating wisdom,' or 'a noble one with unimpeded wisdom' (see: Ps. II. 201-2; DA. III. 1029, [3/300]; MA. III. 31, 326; MA. IV. 85; SA. I. 122; AA. II. 86; AA. III. 223, 258, 406; NdA. I. 232; NdA. II. 285, 289; Vism. 88; VismT.: *Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇa-niddesa-vaṇṇanā*, *Samādhicatukka-vaṇṇanā*).

³⁶ E.g.: M. I. 8, 135, 300, 310, 433; M. III. 17-18, 188-9; S. III. 3-4, 16-17, 42-6, 96, 102, 113-4, 137-8, 151, 164-5; S. IV. 287. For more information on *sutavā ariya-sāvaka*, *ariya-dhamma*, and *sappurisa*, see Appendix 3.

³⁷ This passage tends to follow the description of someone attaining the 'Dhamma eye,' e.g.: Vin. I. 12, 16, 19, 20, 23, 37, 181, 225-6, 242, 248; Vin. II. 157, 192; D. I. 110, 148; D. II. 41; M. I. 379-80, 501; M. II. 145; A. IV. 186-7, 209-10; Ud. 49. *Aparappaccaya* ('independent of others') can also be translated as: 'no need to believe others.'

³⁸ M. I. 234, 491 (includes once-returners).

³⁹ A. III. 297; cf. D. III. 39, 52; S. IV. 254.

⁴⁰ Vin. III. 189; A. III. 284; words in parentheses only found in the Vinaya-Piṭaka.

*One who has utter confidence in the Tathāgata, who sees the deathless, who realizes the deathless.*⁴¹

*No longer subject to perdition, bound [for deliverance], headed for enlightenment.*⁴² [405]

B. General Criteria

Householder (Anāthapiṇḍika), when five fearful retributions are stilled in a noble disciple, and he possesses the four factors of stream-entry, and he has clearly seen and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom the noble method, if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself: ‘I am one finished with hell, finished with the animal realm, finished with the domain of ghosts, finished with the plane of misery, the bad destinations, the place of ruin. I am a stream-enterer, no longer bound to perdition, sure in destiny, with enlightenment as my destination....

1. *Stilling the five fearful retributions: On account of his behaviour, one who destroys life encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future, and he experiences mental pain and anguish. For one who abstains from destroying life, this fearful retribution is stilled....*

One who steals encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from taking what is not given, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who engages in sexual misconduct encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from sexual misconduct, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who speaks falsely encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from false speech, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who indulges in wine, liquor and intoxicants encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from intoxicants, this fearful retribution is stilled....

2. *Possessing the Four Factors of Stream-Entry:*⁴³ *Here, the noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha thus: ‘The Blessed One is an*

⁴¹ A. III. 451; this passage mentions the names of twenty-one laymen, some of whom are non-returners.

⁴² E.g.: Vin. III. 10; D. II. 92-3, 155; M. I. 34; S. V. 193; A. I. 231-2.

⁴³ The four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) here refer to the four qualities of a stream-enterer; see SA. III. 278. There are three distinct groups of *sotāpattiyaṅga* (each with four factors) —see below.

*arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be trained, teacher of devas and humans, the Awakened One, the Blessed One.*⁴⁴ [406]

He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Dhamma thus: ‘The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, timeless, inviting to come and see, to be brought within, to be experienced individually by the wise.’

He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Saṅgha thus: ‘The community of the Blessed One’s disciples is practising well, practising uprightly, practising correctly, practising properly; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals—this community of the Blessed One’s disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of respect, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.’

He possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones—unbroken, untorn, unblemished, untainted, free, praised by the wise, unambiguous,⁴⁵ and leading to concentration.

3. To see and penetrate with wisdom the noble method: *The noble disciple carefully analyzes dependent origination thus: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness comes to be.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless elimination and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’*

⁴⁴ *Aveccappasāda* is sometimes translated as ‘unshakeable faith.’ I have used the translation ‘firm confidence with wisdom’ to expand the meaning and show the relationship of faith to wisdom. Wisdom is an inherent component to a balanced spiritual practice that expresses itself with ever greater clarity, until one no longer needs to refer to the term ‘faith.’ At least one should understand that faith here is based on wisdom. *Avecca* can be translated as ‘knowing,’ ‘examining,’ and ‘penetrating with wisdom’—see: D. III. 158; Kh. 4; Sn. 40, 66; (explained at: DA. III. 933; KhA. 185; SnA. I. 277, 368). Compare with *avicca* in the *Rūpa-Siddhi-Pakarāṇa* [16/17], and with *anuvicca* at A. V. 88 (explained at AA. IV. 98). For commentarial passages on this interpretation of *aveccappasāda*, see: AA. II. 333; AA. III. 363; DA. II. 544. A concise definition equates *aveccappasāda* with *acalappasāda*, e.g.: DA. II. 646; DA. III. 1021; SA. II. 74; SA. III. 90, 276; AA. I. 396; AA. V. 44. See also the relationship between *aveccappasāda* and the abandonment of the sixteen *upakkilesa* at M. I. 37.

⁴⁵ Following DA. II. 537; AA. III. 345; VinṬ.: *Parivāra-tīkā*, *Antarapeyyālaṃ*, *Katipucchāvāra-vaṇṇanā*, etc., the term *aparāmaṭṭha* can be translated two ways: first, as ‘irreproachable’: a person’s conduct is flawless and no-one can find true fault with it. Second, a person’s conduct is not defiled by craving and fixed views—it is pure and practised according to how moral conduct should be practised—it has no ambiguity or hidden agenda, e.g., to gain personal advantage or to attain status. This conduct is cherished by enlightened beings (*ariyakanta-sīla*); the Buddha said this is the supreme mode of conduct (A. III. 36).

When these five fearful retributions are stilled in a noble disciple, and he possesses the four factors of stream-entry, and he has clearly seen and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom the noble method, if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself... 'I am a stream-enterer ... with enlightenment as my destination.'⁴⁶ [407]

Of these three criteria, the four factors of stream-entry are direct attributes of stream-enterers. The remaining two criteria are a cause and an effect of these four factors, respectively. Understanding the 'noble method' (the law of dependent origination) is a cause for these factors of stream-entry, because when wisdom sees this law of nature, faith is stable and based on reason, and conduct is in accord with moral principles. The first criterion is an effect, because when faith and conduct reach this stage, the 'fearful retributions' cease. Therefore, the Pali Canon generally refers solely to the four factors of stream-entry, as the constant attribute of stream-enterers:

Bhikkhus, a noble disciple who possesses four things is a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the lower world.... A noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha ... the Dhamma ... the Saṅgha.... He possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones ... leading to concentration.⁴⁷

The four factors of stream-entry are sometimes called a 'Dhamma-lens' or 'Dhamma-mirror' (*dharmādāsa*) for stream-enterers to use for inspection and self-assessment.⁴⁸ They are sometimes called an 'ocean of merit,' 'ocean of good fortune,' and 'food for joy.'⁴⁹ At other times they are referred to as supreme abidings for living happily in the present (*diṭṭha-dhamma-sukha-vihāra*).⁵⁰ Virtuous conduct is sometimes expanded into the three pure physical actions and the four pure verbal

⁴⁶ S. II. 68-70; S. V. 387-9; A. V. 182-3 (this last reference has 'contemplates thus' rather than 'analyzes dependent origination thus'). A. IV. 405-8 contains the same self-examination and declaration, but only mentions the five fearful retributions and the four factors of stream-entry—there is no mention of the noble method. A. III. 211-12 is an alternative presentation: instead of the five retributions are the 'deeds of restraint concerning the five precepts' and the four factors of stream-entry are called the 'four supreme mental abidings for dwelling in happiness in the present.' There are many references to stream-enterers specifically linked to understanding dependent origination (the 'noble method'), e.g.: S. II. 43, 59, 80 (they are usually referred to here as 'perfected in view'—*diṭṭhi-sampanna*). Stream-enterers are considered to be 'true knowers of the world' (S. II. 80; A. IV. 238; Dh. verse 44). At S. II. 59, stream-enterers are said to possess two forms of knowledge: 'truth-knowledge' (*dhamma-ñāna*) and 'conformity knowledge' (*anvaya-ñāna*), which are both related to dependent origination.

⁴⁷ This presentation occurs frequently in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Mahāvāra-Vagga, from S. V. 343 to S. V. 405. The four factors of stream-entry are usually referred to as the 'four things'; they are specifically referred to as the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) in the preceding quotation and at S. V. 345 & S. V. 364-5.

⁴⁸ D. II. 93; S. V. 357-60.

⁴⁹ S. V. 391-2, 399-402 (the fourth factor of *sīla* is sometimes changed to *cāga* or *paññā*).

⁵⁰ A. III. 211.

actions, together referred to as the seven essential qualities (*saddhamma*), and the factors of stream-entry are in this case called the four 'desirable states' (*ākāṅkhiya-ṭhāna*).⁵¹ In some passages the factors of stream-entry are divided into the ten 'right states' (*sammatta*): the eightfold path plus right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).⁵²

An alternative presentation of the four factors of stream-entry replaces moral conduct (*sīla*) with generosity (*cāga*):

A noble disciple who possesses four things is a stream-enterer.... A noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha ... the Dhamma ... the Saṅgha.... He dwells at home devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, delighting in relinquishment, one devoted to the requests of others, delighting in giving and sharing....

*Whatever there is in the family that is suitable for giving, all that is shared unreservedly among those who are virtuous and of good character.*⁵³ [408]

All of the attributes of stream-enterers fall under the qualities of faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom. For this reason, the Buddha frequently encouraged his disciples to develop these qualities and to use them as a measuring stick for the progress of awakened beings. Likewise, he suggested they be used to measure the progress of all his disciples, including those not yet enlightened:

Bhikkhus, growing in five areas of growth, a male noble disciple grows with a noble growth (ariyā vaḍḍhi), and he acquires the essence, acquires the best, of this bodily existence. What are the five? He grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom.

When he grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, the virtuous and knowledgeable male disciple acquires right here the essence for himself.

Bhikkhus, growing in five areas of growth, a woman noble disciple grows with a noble growth, and she acquires the essence, acquires the best, of this bodily existence. What are the five? She grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom.

*When she grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, the virtuous and knowledgeable woman disciple acquires right here the essence for herself.*⁵⁴

⁵¹ S. V. 354-6.

⁵² S. V. 382-5.

⁵³ S. V. 351-2, 396-7; S. IV. 304.

⁵⁴ A. III. 80; S. IV. 250; cf. A. V. 137. *Ariyā vaḍḍhi* can also be spelled *ariyā vaḍḍhanā* or *ariyā vuḍḍhi*.

*A bhikkhu possesses faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom. He thinks: ‘Oh, that by realizing for myself with direct knowledge, I may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints!’ And by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints.*⁵⁵

Even if a person has not mastered these five qualities, recollecting someone else who has mastered them brings ease of mind and acts as an incentive for spiritual practice:

*A bhikkhunī hears thus: ‘The bhikkhunī named so-and-so has died; the Blessed One has declared of her: “She was established in final knowledge (of arahantship).”’ And she has either seen that sister for herself or heard it said of her: ‘That sister’s moral conduct was thus, her qualities were thus, her wisdom was thus, her virtues were thus, her deliverance was thus.’ Recollecting her faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, she directs her mind to such a state. In this way a bhikkhunī has a happy abiding.*⁵⁶ [409]

Bhikkhus, I do not praise standing still, not to mention declining in wholesome qualities. I praise only growth in wholesome qualities—not standing still, not declining.

*And what is the decline of wholesome qualities, not standing still, not growth? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith, conduct, learning, generosity, wisdom and discernment, these qualities do not remain constant and are not developed. This I call the decline of wholesome qualities, not the standing still, not the growth.... And what is the standing still of wholesome qualities...? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith ... discernment, these qualities neither decrease nor increase.... And what is the growth of wholesome qualities...? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith ... discernment, these qualities do not remain constant nor do they decline.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ M. III. 103; earlier in this sutta (M. III. 99-103), it says that someone possessing these five qualities can choose to be reborn in any level of deva or Brahmā realm according to his wishes.

⁵⁶ M. I. 466. This sutta mentions bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, lay-men and lay-women who have heard the reputations of enlightened beings, from arahants down to stream-enterers; here, I have offered an example (see: M. I. 465-8).

⁵⁷ A. V. 96. These five qualities of faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom are sometimes called the five ‘accomplishments’ (*sampadā*)—see: A. III. 53, 118. Sometimes they are called the five ‘treasures’ (*dhana*)—e.g.: A. III. 53. They are mentioned in many different contexts, e.g.: D. III. 164-5; M. II. 179; A. I. 210-11; A. III. 181, 314; A. V. 333-4; Ud. 50. Occasionally, learning (*suta*) is left out and the remaining qualities are called the ‘four accomplishments’; this indicates that these four are the essential qualities (see, e.g.: A. II. 66; A. IV. 281, 285-6, 324-5, 363-4). And sometimes these qualities are not referred to by name (e.g.: A. IV. 270-2).

There are several instances when the Buddha presented variant definitions for some of these five qualities:

1. Faith: apart from the firm confidence with wisdom in the three ‘jewels’ as found in the four factors of stream-entry, the Buddha often presented another definition:

And what is the accomplishment in faith? Here, a noble disciple has faith; he has faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Awakened One, the Blessed One.’⁵⁸

2. Moral Conduct: on many occasions, the Buddha defined moral conduct very simply, as the five precepts:

Here, a noble disciple abstains from the destruction of life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquors and intoxicants which are a basis for negligence.⁵⁹

From the surrounding material it is fair to say that these two passages on faith and conduct refer to ‘noble’ disciples who have not yet reached a stage of awakening, as will become clear from additional quotations below. [410]

3. Learning: in addition to having encountered the noble ones and being skilled in the noble teaching (*ariya-dhamma*), as mentioned earlier, the Buddha gave an alternative definition:

And what is the treasure of learning? Here, a noble disciple is one of great knowledge, and bears in mind and retains what he has learned. In these teachings, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end, which in spirit and letter proclaim the absolutely perfected and purified holy life, he is erudite, he remembers them, recites them, is well-versed in them, and penetrates them with vision.⁶⁰

4. Wisdom: apart from an understanding of dependent origination, the Buddha presented definitions that can also be applied to ‘noble’ disciples who are not yet awakened:

⁵⁸ E.g.: A. II. 66; A. III. 53; A. IV. 284, 288, 324-5, 363-4. Faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata is also found in the factors of one who exerts effort (*padhāniyaṅga*); see: D. III. 237; M. II. 128; A. V. 15. And it is a definition for the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*); see: S. V. 197-8, 199.

⁵⁹ Same as preceding endnote.

⁶⁰ A. III. 53. This definition of learning is often included in other groups of spiritual qualities.

And what is the treasure of wisdom? Here, a noble disciple is wise, he possesses wisdom that penetrates arising and passing away, which is noble and pierces defilement, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.⁶¹

And what is accomplishment in wisdom? One who dwells with a heart overcome by covetousness and greed, by ill-will, by sloth and torpor, by restlessness and worry, and by doubt does what he should avoid and fails in his duty; as a consequence his fame and happiness diminish. When a noble disciple thus understands that these qualities are defilements of the mind, he abandons them. When he has abandoned them, he is called a noble disciple of great wisdom, of vast wisdom, one who sees the path of prosperity, one endowed with wisdom. This is called accomplishment in wisdom.⁶²

One passage from the Pali Canon enumerates six qualities of a stream-enterer:

By possessing six qualities, the householder Tapussa [and twenty other lay disciples] has reached certainty about the Tathāgata, has seen the deathless, has realized the deathless, and conducts his life accordingly. He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. He possesses noble moral conduct, noble knowledge, and noble deliverance.⁶³ [411]

C. Abandoned Qualities and Qualities of Fruition*

*For additional quotations, see Appendix 8.

One who is perfect in view (diṭṭhi-sampanna)⁶⁴ has abandoned six things. He has abandoned personality view, doubt, attachment to rules and vows, lust that leads to ruin, anger that leads to ruin, and delusion that leads to ruin.... It is impossible that one perfect in view could give rise to these six things. [413]

There are these six impossibilities (abhabbatṭhāna): it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will live disrespectfully and without regard for the Teacher⁶⁵ ... the

⁶¹ A. III. 53. Referred to as an ‘accomplishment’ (*sampadā*) at: A. IV. 284-5, 288, 324-5. Called an ‘ocean of merit’ at S. V. 392. ‘Penetrates arising and passing away’ (*udayatthagāminiyā*) can also be translated as ‘understands growth and decline.’ ‘Pierces defilement’ (*nibbedhikā*) can also be translated as ‘penetrates the truth.’

⁶² A. II. 67. The gist of this teaching is to be able to reflect on things without being overwhelmed by the five hindrances.

⁶³ A. III. 451-2.

⁶⁴ A stream-enterer.

⁶⁵ The Buddha.

Dhamma ... the Saṅgha ... the training.... It is impossible that he will cling to that which should not be clung to ... It is impossible that he will give rise to an eighth birth.⁶⁶

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will believe that any conditioned phenomenon is permanent ... is pleasurable ... is a 'self'.... It is impossible that he will perform a heinous crime (anantariya-kamma)⁶⁷... that he will believe purity is gained through auspicious rituals ... that he will seek one truly worthy of offerings (dakkhiṇeyya) outside of this teaching.

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will perform matricide ... will perform patricide ... will kill an arahant ... will with evil intent draw the blood of the Tathāgata ... will split the Saṅgha ... will follow another teacher.⁶⁸

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will believe that pleasure and pain are self-created ... are created by an external agent ... are both self-created and created by an external agent ... that pleasure and pain arise randomly, not self-created ... arise randomly, not created by an external agent ... arise randomly, neither self-created nor created by an external agent.... And what is the cause (for this non-belief)? One perfect in view clearly sees both cause and the produced effect.⁶⁹

One who can abandon these five qualities is capable of realizing stream-entry: selfishness in regard to one's dwelling, selfishness in regard to one's family, selfishness in regard to one's wealth, selfishness in regard to one's social standing, and selfishness in regard to truth.⁷⁰*

* *Macchhariya*: also called 'stinginess' or 'meanness.'

Shortly before the first council after the Buddha's death, four hundred and ninety-nine arahants were selected to attend along with Venerable Ānanda, who was still a stream-enterer. He was invited because he had spent a long time learning the Dhamma-Vinaya directly from the Buddha, and because he was a stream-enterer:

⁶⁶ (Translator: stream-enterers can only be reborn a maximum of seven times.)

⁶⁷ Acts with immediate results, e.g.: matricide (see below).

⁶⁸ These last two groups of *abhabbaṭṭhāna* also occur at: M. III. 64; A. I. 26-7; Vbh. 335-6.

⁶⁹ A. III. 438-40. Compare with the nine *abhabbaṭṭhāna* and the five *abhabbaṭṭhāna* of an arahant, at: D. III. 133, 235; for example, an arahant is incapable of intentionally killing a living creature.

⁷⁰ A. III. 272-3 (the same holds for realizing the first four jhānas and the remaining three stages of enlightenment). The next sutta (A. III. 273) is identical, except selfishness (*macchhariya*) is replaced with ingratitude (*akataññutā akataveditā*).

*It is not possible that he could be biased due to likes, dislikes, delusion or fear.*⁷¹

Mahānāma the Sakyan approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: ‘Venerable Sir, this city of Kapilavatthu is rich and prosperous, populous, crowded, with congested roads. In the evening, when I am entering Kapilavatthu after visiting the Blessed One or the bhikkhus who are dear to the heart, I come across a bustle of elephants, horses, chariots, carts and people. On that occasion, my mindfulness regarding the Buddha becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the Dhamma becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the Saṅgha becomes muddled. [414] The thought then occurs to me: “If at this moment I should die, what would be my destination, what would be my future state (abhisamparāya)?”’

‘Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your passing away will not be a bad one. When a person’s mind has been refined over a long time by faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, his body, consisting of form, composed of the four elements, born from mother and father, built up from rice and pudding, requiring scrubbing and massaging,⁷² subject to impermanence, to breaking apart and dispersal, is devoured by crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, jackals and various creatures. But his mind, refined over a long time by faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom—that elevates and reaches distinction.... Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your passing away will not be a bad one. A noble disciple who possesses four things⁷³ inclines towards Nibbāna, is devoted to Nibbāna....’⁷⁴

There are these six blessings in realizing the fruit of stream-entry: one is firm in the good Dhamma; one is unable to fall back; one’s suffering is limited; one is endowed with exceptional knowledge; one has clearly seen into causes and the products of causes.⁷⁵

The person who is accomplished in view, freed from the vast plain of misery, understands as it really is: ‘This is suffering....’ ‘This is the origin of suffering....’ ‘This is the end of suffering....’ ‘This is the path leading to the end of suffering.’ Therefore, you

⁷¹ Vin. II. 285.

⁷² (Translator: Bhikkhu Bodhi translates this clause as: ‘subject to being worn and rubbed away.’)

⁷³ The four factors of stream-entry.

⁷⁴ S. V. 369-71.

⁷⁵ A. III. 442. The passage translated as ‘one’s suffering is limited’ is literally translated as ‘one’s suffering is finished.’ This passage in the Thai edition has the word *na* inserted, but this seems to be redundant—the Burmese edition does not contain this word.

should endeavour to (understand as it really is): ‘This is suffering....’ ‘This is the path leading to the end of suffering.’⁷⁶

‘Bhikkhus, suppose that the great ocean would dry up and be destroyed except for two or three drops of water. What do you think, which is more: the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed or the two or three drops that remain?’

‘Venerable sir, the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed is more. The two or three drops of water that remain are trifling. They do not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed.’ [415]

‘So too, bhikkhus, for a noble disciple, a person accomplished in view who has reached the truth, the suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated is more, while that which remains is trifling. It does not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part ... as there is a maximum of seven more lives. Of such great benefit is the realization of the Dhamma, of such great benefit is it to obtain the Dhamma eye.’⁷⁷

The bliss of worldly pleasures and the bliss of heaven equal not one-sixteenth of the bliss of craving’s end.⁷⁸

‘Bhikkhus, suppose that a man would place seven stones the size of mung beans next to Mount Sineru. What do you think, which is more: the seven stones the size of mung beans placed by that man or Mount Sineru?’

⁷⁶ S. V. 442. The beginning of this sutta offers a comparison to demonstrate the vastness of the plane of misery (*apāya*). At S. V. 342, there is a comparison between a world-turning monarch and a stream-enterer: a world-turning monarch, who is ruler of the four continents and after death experiences the delights of heaven, but is not a stream-enterer, is not safe from the hell realms or other planes of misery. A stream-enterer, however, even if he lives on almsfood and is dressed in threadbare robes, is safe from these planes of misery.

⁷⁷ This is one of ten suttas comparing the suffering that remains for a stream-enterer with the suffering that has been eliminated (S. II. 133-9). Other comparisons include dirt under a fingernail with the entire earth, water on the tip of a blade of grass with water in a lake hundreds of miles long and hundreds of miles deep, seven tiny balls of clay with the entire earth, and seven tiny pieces of gravel with the Himalayas. The same ten suttas (plus two more) occur at S. V. 457-65, which differ only with the final section: A noble disciple, a person accomplished in view who has reached the truth understands as it really is: ‘This is suffering’.... ‘This is the way leading to the end of suffering’.... The suffering that remains is trifling. Compared to the former mass of suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated, the latter is incalculable, does not bear comparison, does not amount even to a fraction, as there is a maximum of seven more lives. Therefore, you should endeavour to (understand as it really is): ‘This is suffering....’

⁷⁸ Ud. 11; the bliss of craving’s end = *taṇhakkhaya-sukha*.

‘Venerable sir, Mount Sineru is more...’

‘So too, bhikkhus, the extraordinary achievements of ascetics, brahmans, wanderers, and followers of other sects do not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the achievement of a noble disciple, a person accomplished in view. So great in achievement is a person accomplished in view, so great in direct knowledge.’⁷⁹

D. Attributes and Conduct before Attaining Stream-Entry

Compare the qualities here of faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom with these same qualities described earlier in passages directly relating to stream-enterers:

One in whom the four factors of stream-entry are completely and totally absent is an ‘outsider, one who stands among the worldlings.’⁸⁰ [416]

King Mahānāma: Venerable sir, in what way is one a lay follower?

Buddha: When one has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, one is then a lay follower.

Mahānāma: In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in moral conduct?

Buddha: When a lay follower abstains from the destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquor and intoxicants that are a basis for negligence, the lay follower is accomplished in moral conduct.

Mahānāma: In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in faith?

Buddha: Here, a lay follower is a person of faith; he has faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Awakened One, the Blessed One. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in faith.

Mahānāma: In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in generosity?

Buddha: Here, a lay follower dwells at home devoid of the stain of stinginess ... delighting in giving and sharing. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in generosity.

⁷⁹ S. II. 139.

⁸⁰ S. V. 397. The definitions for ‘worldlings’ (*putthujjana*) and enlightened beings (*ariya-puggala*) seem to get progressively more restricted and inflexible in the commentaries and sub-commentaries.

Mahānāma: *In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in wisdom?*

Buddha: *Here, a noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom that ... penetrates the truth, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in wisdom.*⁸¹

Let us have another look at faith devotees (*saddhānusārī*) and truth devotees (*dhammānusārī*), who rank just below stream-enterers:

Bhikkhus, the eye (ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, the six sense-objects, the six kinds of consciousness ... the five aggregates) is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. One who trusts these teachings and is devoted to them thus is called a faith-devotee....

*One for whom these teachings are accepted after being investigated to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a truth-devotee....*⁸²

There is another group of four factors of stream-entry, but here, rather than referring to the qualities of a stream-enterer, they are modes of spiritual practice that lead to stream-entry: [417]

Buddha: *Sāriputta, this is said: 'A factor for stream-entry.' What now, is a factor for stream-entry?*

*Sāriputta: Association with superior persons (sappurisa-saṃseva) is a factor for stream-entry. Hearing the teachings of superior persons (saddhamma-savana) is a factor for stream-entry. Proper reflection (yoniso-manasikāra) is a factor for stream-entry. A comprehensive spiritual practice (dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti) is a factor for stream-entry.*⁸³

⁸¹ S. V. 395; cf.: A. IV. 220-23. For the complete definitions of these qualities, see earlier quotations, above.

⁸² S. III. 225-8. At S. V. 201-2, noble beings are ranked according to the strength of the five faculties: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Here, someone with a strength of faculties just below a stream-enterer is a faith-devotee, with the next lower level a truth-devotee. A person without any degree of these spiritual faculties is an 'outsider, one who stands among the worldlings.'

⁸³ S. V. 347.

*Bhikkhus, there are these four factors for stream-entry: association with superior persons, hearing the teachings of superior persons, proper reflection, and a comprehensive spiritual practice.*⁸⁴

*Bhikkhus, these four things, when developed and cultivated, lead to the realization of the fruit of stream-entry. What four? Association with superior persons, hearing the teachings of superior persons, proper reflection, and a comprehensive spiritual practice.*⁸⁵

These four qualities lead not only to stream-entry but to all levels of wisdom, ending in the realization of arahantship. They could be referred to by many other names, but because the Buddha emphasized them in this context they are called the ‘factors for stream-entry.’⁸⁶

⁸⁴ S. V. 404; D. III. 227. The first three factors are factors for right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*). *Sappurisa-saṁseva* = *kalyāṇa-mittatā*; *saddhamma-savana* = wholesome ‘learning from others’ (*parato-ghosa*). These factors for right view are explained in the latter half of *Buddhadhamma*. *Dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* is gradual, systematic and correct practice: preliminary spiritual practices are conducive to subsequent accomplishments. A correct practice of *sīla*, for example, leads to the realization of *Nibbāna*; one does not follow rules blindly or act from fixed views. The *Cūḷaniddesa* (Nd. II. 70) offers examples of preliminary practices (e.g.: moral conduct, sense restraint, moderation in eating, and wakefulness) as well as subsequent accomplishments (or ‘primary teachings’), e.g.: the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Eightfold Path (i.e., the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment—*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*). One should observe the preliminary practices with a goal in mind, to act in harmony with and be conducive to later stages of practice.

⁸⁵ S. V. 410-11; referred to at Ps. II. 189.

⁸⁶ See the passages following from the previous footnote (i.e.: S. V. 411-13). At Ps. II. 189, it says that these four qualities are conducive for the realization of once-returning up to the realization of arahantship, and that they benefit wisdom in many ways, for example to cultivate wisdom, to complete wisdom, to sharpen wisdom, and to bring about ‘penetrative wisdom’ (*nibbedhika-paññā*). As factors for cultivating wisdom, these four are also called ‘qualities conducive to wisdom’ (*paññā-vuddhi-dhamma*) or simply the four *vuddhi* (or *vuddhi-dhamma*). At A. II. 245-6 these qualities are referred to as conducive to wisdom and of great service to human beings—they can also be called ‘qualities of great service’ (*bahukāra-dhamma*).