

## Attributes of an Arahant

{343} The teaching of Buddhism is practical and emphasizes things that lead to insight and well-being.<sup>1</sup> Buddhism does not encourage conceptualizing and debating over things that should be realised through practical application, unless it is necessary for basic understanding. In relation to the study of Nibbāna, rather than discussing the state of Nibbāna directly, it may be of more value to study those persons who have realized Nibbāna, as well as the benefits of realization apparent in the life and character of such persons.\*

\*In the Thai version of *Buddhadhamma* this passage immediately follows the initial section on Nibbāna. See: 'Nibbāna: the Supreme Peace'; by Robin Moore © 2010.

We can gain some insight into the nature of arahants by looking at the epithets used for them in the scriptures. Here is a selection of these epithets, which express appreciation for their virtue, purity, excellence, and degree of spiritual attainment:

*Anuppatta-sadattha*: one who has attained well-being.

*Arahant*: 'worthy one'; a person far from mental defilement.

*Asekha*: one who has finished training; a person not requiring training; a person possessing the qualities of an adept (*asekha-dhamma*).

*Kata karaṇīya*: a person who has done what had to be done.

*Khīṇāsava*: a person free from mental taints (*āsava*).

*Mahā-purisa*: a person great in virtue; one who acts for the welfare of the manyfolk; one who has self-mastery.

*Ohitabhāra*: one who has laid down the burden.

*Parama-kusala*: a person possessing superior wholesome qualities.

*Parikkhīṇa-bhava-saṃyojana*: one who has destroyed the fetters (*saṃyojana*), which bind people to existence.

*Sammadaññā-vimutta*: a person released through consummate knowledge.

*Sampanna-kusala*: a person perfected in wholesomeness.

*Uttama-purisa*: a supreme person; a most excellent person.

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<sup>1</sup> See some of the Buddha's key principles at: A. II. 172-3; D. III. 134-5; M. I. 395.

*Vusitavant* or *vusita brahmacariya*: a person who has fulfilled the holy life. {344}

Many other terms were originally used by other religious traditions, but their meaning was altered to accord with the essential principles of Dhamma-Vinaya, for example:

*Ariya* (or *ariya-puggala*): a noble person; an excellent person; a person who has developed non-violence towards all beings. Originally, this term referred to members of the first three castes or to those who are ‘noble’ (Aryan) by birth.

*Brāhmaṇa*: a ‘true brahman’; a person who has passed beyond evil by abandoning all unwholesome qualities. Originally, this term referred to members of the highest caste.

*Dakkiṇeyya*: one worthy of offerings. Originally, this term referred to those brahmans who were worthy of a reward for conducting sacrifices.

*Kevalī* or *kebalī*: a ‘whole’ person; a ‘complete’ person. Originally, this term referred to the highest individual in the Jain religion.

*Nahātaka*: one who has been ‘ceremoniously bathed’; one who has ‘bathed in the Dhamma’; one who has purified his or her volitional actions (*kamma*); one who is a refuge for all beings. Originally, this term referred to a brahman who passed through a ritual of bathing and was elevated in status.

*Samāna*: a tranquil person; one who has quelled the defilements. Originally, this term referred to renunciants in general.

*Vedagū*: a person who has arrived at knowledge; one who is well-versed in knowledge and who is released from attachment to sensations (*vedanā*). Originally, this term referred to a brahman who had finished studying the three Vedas.<sup>2</sup>

To understand the nature of an arahant it is necessary to consider the epithets in the context of the teachings in which they are mentioned, for example: the Three Taints (*āsava*), the Three Trainings (*sikkhā*), the Ten Qualities of an Adept (*asekha-dhamma*), the Ten Fetters (*saṃyojana*), and the holy life (*brahmacariya*) as the Eightfold Path.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of these words are frequently used, while others occur infrequently. See, e.g.: M. I. 235, 280, 446-7; M. II. 29; S. III. 61-2; A. V. 16, 221-22; Nd. II. 10. The last few words in particular were adopted from ancient Brahmanistic expressions, although given a new meaning to accord with Buddhist principles. For example, *brāhmaṇa* originally referred to someone who has transcended evil by bathing in holy rivers, e.g., the Ganges. In Buddhism, however, this term refers to being free from evil as a consequence of practising in accord with the Eightfold Path, or is used as a metaphor, in reference to one who has ‘bathed in the Dhamma.’

Many Buddhists tend to describe the attributes of an arahant and of other awakened beings from a perspective of negation, by determining those defilements that have been abandoned or dispelled. For example, a stream-enterer has eliminated the first three fetters (*saṃyojana*); a once-returner has eliminated these three fetters and further attenuated greed, hatred, and delusion; a non-returner has eliminated the first five fetters; and an arahant has eliminated all ten fetters. Alternatively, they define an arahant briefly as ‘one who is without greed, hatred and delusion’ or ‘one who is free from defilement.’ Such definitions are useful in that they are clear and provide simple standards of evaluation. But they are limited; they do not clearly demonstrate the exceptional characteristics and prominent features of awakened beings, nor do they describe how such beings live virtuous lives and benefit the world at large.

In fact, there are many terms and passages describing the characteristics of an arahant in affirmative ways. Many descriptions or explanations of arahants, however, cover a wide range of subject material, making it difficult to summarize the positive attributes in a clearly defined, well-ordered way. Otherwise, they recount specific incidents and individuals, but do not describe attributes common to all arahants.

An important term in this context is *bhāvitatta*, which is literally translated as ‘one who has developed himself’ or ‘one who is self-developed.’<sup>3</sup> This term is used for all arahants: the Buddha, the Silent Buddhas (*pacceka-buddhā*), and all arahant disciples of the Buddha. For example, in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, while the Buddha is travelling to the place of his final passing away, he is referred to as the ‘Developed One.’ {345}

*Surrounded by and amidst the group of monks, the Buddha travelled to the river Kakuthā,<sup>4</sup> and bathed in and drank from its clear, bright, clean waters.... He travelled to the Mango Grove and said to the bhikkhu Cundaka: ‘Lay out an outer robe folded into four layers for me to lie upon.’ And thus prompted by the great Adept (bhāvitta), Cundaka quickly laid out an outer robe folded into four layers.<sup>5</sup>*

A similar expression is found in the question by the brahman student Mettagū:

*Blessed One, I wish to make an inquiry. Please tell me the meaning; I will thus consider the venerable sir to be a master of knowledge (vedagū), a fully developed one (bhāvitatta). From where does all this abundant and diverse suffering in the world come?<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> These translations are of the Pali word *bhāvitatto*, which is equivalent in meaning to the phrase: *attānaṃ bhāvetvā vaḍḍhetvā ṭhito*. A *bhāvitatta* refers to one who has developed him- or herself and is established in such cultivation; SA. [1/196].

<sup>4</sup> [The author spells this river Kakudhā.]

<sup>5</sup> D. II. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Sn. 202 (in the ‘sixteen questions’—*soḷasa-pañhā*).

The Buddha compared a ‘fully developed one’—an arahant who is well-versed in the Dhamma (*bahussata*)—to a clever ship captain, who is able to guide many people across the seas and reach their destination in safety, as is illustrated in the *Nāvā Sutta*:

*Just as one who boards a sturdy boat, fully equipped with oars and a barge-pole, who is experienced and skilful, knowing the methods for handling a boat, is able to assist many others to cross over the waters, so too, one who is a master of knowledge (vedagū), a fully developed one (bhāvitatta), a highly learned one (bahussuta), stable and unshaken by worldly things, endowed with wisdom, is able to help those who are prepared to listen in order to investigate the Dhamma and reach fulfilment.<sup>7</sup>*

The *Loka Sutta* is similar to the previous sutta, but covers a broader subject matter, as is evident from the following passage:

*Monks, these three kinds of persons, appearing in the world, appear for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world—for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings. Which three?*

*Here, the Tathāgata appears in the world. He is the Noble One, the Fully Enlightened One, perfect in conduct and understanding, the Accomplished One, the Knower of the worlds, the Peerless Trainer of those to be trained, Teacher of gods and humans, the Awakened One, Bestower of the Dhamma. He teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the Holy Life of complete purity, both in the spirit and in letter. Monks, this first kind of person, when appearing in the world, appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world—for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings. {346}*

*Furthermore, there is a disciple of that same Teacher who is an arahant, one whose mind is free from the taints ... liberated as a consequence of thorough knowledge. That disciple teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the Holy Life of complete purity, both in the spirit and in letter. Monks, this is the second kind of person, when appearing in the world, who appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world—for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings.*

*Furthermore, there is a disciple of that same Teacher who is still in training, still practising, erudite, engaged in virtuous conduct and observances (*sīla-vata*). That disciple also teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the Holy Life of complete purity, both in the spirit and in letter. Monks, this is the third kind of person, when appearing in the world, who appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world—for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings.*

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<sup>7</sup> Sn. 56.

*The Teacher, the Supreme Seeker, is first in the world;  
Following him, the disciple, adept (bhāvitatta);  
And then the disciple in training (sekha-sāvaka), still practising, erudite,  
engaged in virtuous conduct and observances.*

*These three kinds of people are supreme among the devas and human beings.  
They radiate light, proclaim the truth, open the door to the Deathless,  
And help to liberate the manyfolk from bondage.*

*Those who follow the noble Path, well-taught by the Teacher, the unsurpassed  
Leader—*

*If they heed the teachings of the Well-Farer—  
Will put an end to suffering in this very life.<sup>8</sup>*

Note, however, that this term *bhāvitatta* is most often used in poetic verses, rather than in prose. This is most likely because it is concise and can be used easily in verse as a replacement for longer, more drawn-out terms and phrases. Another reason why this short term *bhāvitatta* tends not to be used in prose is because its meaning is not clearly defined. As there are not the same constraints in prose as there are in poetic composition, for clarity sake, longer terms and phrases can be used.

At this point it is useful to ask what terms and phrases are used in prose instead of the term *bhāvitatta*. To answer this question let us look at an explanation found in the Tipiṭaka. The thirtieth volume of the Tipiṭaka—the Cūḷaniddesa—which is considered to be a collection of teachings by the ‘commander’ and chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta, elucidates some of the Buddha’s suttas contained in the Suttanipāta. One passage in the Cūḷaniddesa explains the term *bhāvitatta* as it appears in the question by the brahman student Mettagū, cited above: {347}

*How is the Blessed One a Fully-Developed One (bhāvitatta)? Here, the Blessed One has developed the body (bhāvita-kāya), has developed moral conduct (bhāvita-sīla), has developed the mind (bhāvita-citta), has developed wisdom (bhāvita-paññā). (He has developed the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Efforts, the Four Paths to Success, the Five Faculties, the Five Powers, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, the Eightfold Path. He has abandoned the defilements, penetrated the unshakeable truth, realized cessation.)<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> It. 78-9 (also known as the Bahujanahita Sutta). Note that the third type of person refers to awakened disciples who are still in training (*sekha*)—i.e., they not yet arahants; they are not yet ‘fully developed’ (*bhāvitatta*).

<sup>9</sup> Nd. II. 14 (the section in parentheses is considered an elaboration on the main explanation). The passage in Pali: *Kathaṃ bhagavā bhāvitatto bhagavā bhāvitakāyo bhāvitasīlo bhāvitacitto bhāvitapañño (bhāvitasatipaṭṭhāno bhāvitasammappadhāno bhāvitaidhipādo bhāvitindriyo bhāvitabalo bhāvitabojjaṅgo bhāvitamaggo pahīnakilesa paṭividdhākuppo sacchikatanirodho).*

Now let us look at a prose passage by the Buddha describing the four areas of development (*bhāvita*), which are considered an expansion on the concept of a ‘developed one’ (*bhāvitatta*):

*Monks, there are these five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them. What five?*

*In the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Despite being undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom, they will give full ordination to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct (*adhisīla*), higher mind (*adhicitta*), and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā*).<sup>10</sup> These ordainees too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. They in turn will give full ordination to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These ordainees too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Thus, monks, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the discipline, and from corruption of the discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma. This is the first future danger as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize it and make an effort to prevent it.*

*Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Despite being undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom, they will give dependence<sup>11</sup> to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These pupils too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. {348} They in turn will give dependence to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These pupils too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Thus, monks, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the discipline, and from corruption of the discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma. This is the second future danger as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize it and make an effort to prevent it...<sup>12</sup>*

This aforementioned teaching by the Buddha is connected to some essential Dhamma principles:

A. *Bhāvitatta*<sup>13</sup> is a ‘word of praise’ (*guṇa-pada*), a term describing the virtue or superior quality of the Buddha and of arahants, as those who have developed themselves and completed their spiritual training. When one expands on the

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<sup>10</sup> I.e., in *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

<sup>11</sup> I.e., they will formally accept others as their students.

<sup>12</sup> A. III. 105-106.

<sup>13</sup> Occasionally other terms with a similar meaning are used instead of *bhāvitatta*, in particular the term *atta-danta* (‘one who has trained himself’; ‘self-tamed’), as in the verse praising the Buddha: *manussabhūtaṃ sambuddhaṃ attadantaṃ samāhitaṃ ... devāpi taṃ namassanti* (‘Indeed, although a human being, The Perfectly Enlightened One has achieved self-mastery, whose heart is well-cultivated ... even the devas venerate him.’)—A. III. 345-6.

meaning of this term into the fourfold development of physical development (*bhāvita-kāya*), moral development (*bhāvita-sīla*), mental development (*bhāvita-citta*),\* and wisdom development (*bhāvita-paññā*), this pertains to the teaching on the four kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*): cultivation of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), of virtuous conduct (*sīla-bhāvanā*), of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), and of wisdom (*paññā-bhāvanā*).

\**Citta*: this term is probably impossible to adequately translate into English. The closest translations are 'heart' and 'mind,' or a compound of the two: 'heart-mind.' The author's translations of this term in 'A Dictionary of Buddhist Vocabulary' and in 'A Codified Dictionary of Buddhism' include: 'The aspect of nature that is conscious of sense impressions,' 'state of consciousness,' 'consciousness,' 'state of reflection,' 'thought,' 'heart,' 'mind.'

Here, one needs to know some fundamentals of the Pali language. The term *bhāvita* is used either as an adjective or an adverb, describing the qualities of an individual. The term *bhāvanā*, on the other hand, is a noun, describing an action, a principle, or a form of practice. There is a compatibility between these terms in that *bhāvita* refers to someone who has engaged in *bhāvanā*. Therefore, one who is developed in body (*bhāvita-kāya*) has engaged in physical cultivation (*kāya-bhāvanā*), one who is developed in virtuous conduct (*bhāvita-sīla*) has engaged in moral cultivation (*sīla-bhāvanā*), one who is developed in mind (*bhāvita-citta*) has engaged in mental cultivation (*citta-bhāvanā*), and one who is developed in wisdom (*bhāvita-paññā*) has engaged in wisdom cultivation (*paññā-bhāvanā*).

This is equivalent to saying that an arahant is one who has completed the fourfold cultivation: he or she is accomplished in physical cultivation, moral cultivation, mental cultivation, and wisdom cultivation.

To clarify this matter, here is a brief description of the four kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*):

1. Physical cultivation (*kāya-bhāvanā*): body development; to develop one's relationship to surrounding material things (including technology) or to the body itself. In particular, to cognize things by way of the five faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) skilfully, by relating to them in a way that is beneficial, does not cause harm, increases wholesome qualities, and dispels unwholesome qualities.

2. Moral cultivation (*sīla-bhāvanā*): development of virtuous conduct; to develop one's behaviour and one's social relationships, by keeping to a moral code, by not abusing or injuring others or causing conflict, and by living in harmony with others and supporting one another. {349}

3. Mental cultivation (*citta-bhāvanā*): to develop the mind; to strengthen and stabilize the mind; to cultivate wholesome qualities, like loving-kindness, compassion, enthusiasm, diligence, and patience; to make the mind concentrated, bright, joyous, and clear.

4. Wisdom cultivation (*paññā-bhāvanā*): to develop and increase wisdom until there arises a comprehensive understanding of truth, by knowing things as they are and by gaining a clear insight into the world and into phenomena. At this stage one is able to free the mind, purify oneself from mental defilement, and be liberated from suffering. One lives, acts, and solves problems with penetrative awareness.

When one understands the meaning of *bhāvanā* ('cultivation'), which lies at the heart of the aforementioned ways of practice, one also understands the term *bhāvita* ('developed'), which is an attribute of those who have completed their spiritual practice and fulfilled the four kinds of cultivation:

1. Physical development (*bhāvita-kāya*): this refers to those who have developed the body, that is, they have developed a relationship to their physical environment and to their physical bodies; they have a healthy, contented, and respectful relationship to things and to nature; in particular, they experience things by way of the five senses, say by seeing or hearing, mindfully and in a way that fosters wisdom. They consume things with moderation, deriving their true benefit and value. They are not obsessed or led astray by the influence of preferences and aversions. They are not heedless; rather than allowing sense stimuli to cause harm, they use them for benefit; rather than being dominated by unwholesome states of mind, these individuals nurture wholesome states.

2. Moral development (*bhāvita-sīla*): this refers to those who have developed virtuous conduct and developed their behaviour. They act virtuously in regard to society, by keeping to a moral code and living harmoniously with others. They do not use physical actions, speech, or their livelihood to oppress others or to create conflict, but instead they use these activities for self-development, for assisting others, and for building a healthy society.

3. Mental development (*bhāvita-citta*): this refers to those who have developed their minds. As a result, their minds are lucid, joyous, bright, spacious, and happy. Their minds are full of virtuous qualities, like goodwill, compassion, confidence, gratitude, generosity, perseverance, fortitude, patient endurance, tranquillity, stability, mindfulness, and concentration.

4. Wisdom development (*bhāvita-paññā*): this refers to those who have trained in and developed wisdom, resulting in an understanding of the truth and a clear discernment of things according to how they really are. They apply wisdom to solve problems, to dispel suffering, and to purify themselves from mental impurities. Their hearts are liberated and free from affliction.

B. A noteworthy passage in this sutta is where the Buddha states that those monks who have failed to develop their body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom, will become preceptors and teachers, but will be unable to guide their pupils in higher virtue, higher mind, and higher wisdom (i.e., in moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)).



It is interesting that, when he describes the qualities of a teacher, he mentions the four kinds of development (*bhāvita*), but when he describes the subject of study—the teaching or the principles of practice—he mentions the threefold training, of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom. (In full, these are referred to as the ‘training in higher virtue’ (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), the ‘training in higher mind’ (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and the ‘training in higher wisdom’ (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*.)

This distinction may raise several doubts. First, why doesn’t the Buddha use complementary or corresponding terms here? Wouldn’t it have made more sense for him to say that one who is not developed (*bhāvita*) in the four ways is unable to guide someone else in the fourfold cultivation (*bhāvanā*), or conversely, one who hasn’t completed the threefold training is unable to guide someone else in moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom? {350}

Moreover, the factors in these teachings are nearly identical. The dual teaching on cultivation (*bhāvanā*) and the attributes of development (*bhāvita*) contains the four factors of body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. The Threefold Training, on the other hand, contains the factors of virtuous conduct, concentration (i.e., ‘mind’—*citta*), and wisdom. Therefore, wouldn’t it have been less confusing if the Buddha had stuck to one or the other of these two teachings, rather than combine them?

Many Buddhists are familiar with the sequence of practice of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, and this threefold practice is considered to be complete in itself. They are generally unfamiliar, however, with this extra factor of ‘body’ (*kāya*), and may wonder why it is added and what it means.

Here, let us simply conclude that the Buddha presented these two distinct teachings in the same context: in reference to the attributes of a teacher he mentioned the four aspects of development (*bhāvita*), while in reference to the subject of teaching he mentioned the threefold training (*sikkhā*).

In the next section we can look at the reason why he made this distinction.

C. A simple, short answer for why the Buddha used these two distinct teachings in the same context is that they have different objectives or goals. The teaching on the attributes of a teacher aims to describe the discernible characteristics of a teacher, in the manner of evaluating whether someone has completed spiritual training and is ready to teach others. The teaching on the subject of study on the other hand aims to describe the content and system of practice—to describe what and how to train in order obtain desirable results.

Most importantly, a true study or training entails a natural process of developing one’s life; this process accords with laws of nature and therefore the system of training must be established correctly in harmony with causes and conditions found in nature.

Let us first examine the subject of study, that is, the threefold training. Why is this training composed of only three factors? Again, one can answer this simply by

saying that this training pertains to the life of human beings which has three facets or three spheres of activity. These three factors combine to make up a person's life, and they proceed and are developed in unison.

These three factors are as follows:

1. Communication and interaction with the world: perceptions, association, relationships, behaviour, and responses vis-à-vis other people and external objects by way of the *dvāra*—the doorways or channels—which can be described in two ways:

A) Doorways of cognition (*phassa-dvāra*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise six doorways).<sup>14</sup>

B) Doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*): body and speech (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise three doorways).

This factor can be simply called 'interaction with the world' and represented by the word *sīla* ('conduct').

2. The mind: the activity of the mind, which has numerous attendant factors and properties. To begin with, one must have intention, also referred to as volition, deliberation, determination, or motivation. Moreover, people's minds usually contain positive and negative qualities, strengths and weaknesses. The mind experiences feelings of pleasure and discomfort, ease and dis-ease, and feelings of indifference and complacency. There are reactions to these sensations, like pleasure and aversion, and desires to acquire, obtain, flee, or get rid of, which influence how one experiences things and how one acts, for example whether one looks at something or not, what one chooses to say, and to whom one speaks. This factor is simply called the 'mind' (*citta*) or the domain of concentration (*samādhi*). {351}

3. Wisdom: knowledge and understanding, beginning with *suta*—knowledge acquired through formal education or by way of the news media—up to and including all forms of development in the domain of thought (*cintā-visaya*) and the domain of knowledge (*ñāṇa-visaya*), including: ideas, views, beliefs, attitudes, values, attachments to various ideas and forms of understanding, and specific perspectives and points of view. This factor is called 'wisdom' (*paññā*).

These three factors operate in unison; they are interconnected and interdependent. A person's interaction with the world by way of the sense faculties—by way of the doorways of cognition—and through physical and verbal behaviour (factor #1) is dependent on intention, feelings, and various other conditions in the mind (factor #2). And this entire process is dependent on the guidance by wisdom

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<sup>14</sup> When referring to their function or benefit for practical application these six doorways of cognition are generally called the six 'sense spheres' (*āyatana*); when referring to them while they are functioning or operative they are generally called the six 'sense faculties' (*indriya*).

and intelligence (factor #3). The extent of one's knowledge determines the range of one's thoughts and actions.

Similarly, the mental factors of say determination and desire (factor #2) rely on an interaction by way of the sense faculties and physical and verbal behaviour (factor #1) in order to be fulfilled and satisfied. And this process is determined and regulated by one's beliefs, thoughts, and understanding (factor #3), which are subject to change and adjustment.

Again, the operation and development of wisdom (factor #3) depends on the sense faculties, say of seeing or hearing, depends on the movement of the body, say of walking, seizing, organizing, seeking, etc., and applies speech to communicate and inquire (factor #1). And this process relies on mental properties, for example: interest, desire, fortitude, perseverance, circumspection, mindfulness, tranquillity, and concentration (factor #2).

The nature of human life is comprised of these three interrelated, interdependent factors. They comprise an integrated whole, which cannot be added to or subtracted from. As life is comprised of these three factors, any training designed to help people to live their lives well must address the development of these three areas of life.

Spiritual training is thus divided into three sections, known as the threefold training. This training is designed to develop these three areas of life to be complete and in harmony with nature. These three factors are developed simultaneously and in unison, resulting in an integrated system of practice.

From a rough perspective one may see these three factors in a similar way as to how they are sometimes outlined in the scriptures, of representing three major stages in practice, of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom. This perspective gives the appearance that one practices these factors as distinct steps and in an ordered sequence, that is, after training in moral conduct one develops concentration, which is then followed by wisdom development.

By viewing the threefold training in this way one sees a system of practice in which three factors are prominent at different stages, beginning with a coarse factor and leading to more refined factors as one progresses through the stages:

- The first stage (moral conduct) gives prominence to the relationship to one's external environment, to the sense faculties, and to physical actions and speech.
- The second stage (concentration) gives prominence to a person's inner life, to the mind.
- The third stage (wisdom) gives prominence to knowledge and understanding.

Note, however, that at each stage the other two remaining factors always function and participate. {352}

This perspective provides an overview, in which one focuses on the chief activity at each stage of the process. One gives prominence to each of the three

factors respectively, so that coarser factors are ready to support the growth and promote success of more refined factors.

Take for example the task of cutting down a large tree. First, one must prepare the surrounding area so that one is able to move about easily, safely, and securely (= *sīla*). Second, one must prepare one's strength, courage, serious-mindedness, mindfulness, resolve, non-distractedness, and skill in handling an axe (= *samādhi*). Third, one must have a proper tool, like a good quality sharpened axe of the correct size (= *paññā*). If one fulfils these three requirements one succeeds in cutting down the tree.

In regard to one's regular, daily life, however, a closer analysis reveals that these three factors are constantly functioning in an interrelated, interdependent way. Therefore, in order for people to truly engage in effective spiritual practice, one should encourage them to be aware of these three factors. They should develop these factors in unison, by including skilful reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which helps to increase understanding, and mindfulness (*sati*), which helps to bring about true success.

In regard to one's spiritual practice, no matter what activity one is involved in, one is able to inspect and train oneself according to the principles of the threefold training. One thus aims to engage in all three of these factors—virtuous conduct, concentration, and wisdom—simultaneously and in all situations. When involved in an activity, one considers whether one's actions result in the affliction or distress of others, whether they cause harm, or whether they are conducive to assistance, support, encouragement, and development of others (= *sīla*). During such activities, what is the state of one's mind? Is one acting out of selfishness, malice, greed, hatred, or delusion, or is one acting say with kindness, well-wishing, faith, mindfulness, effort, and a sense of responsibility? While engaged in an activity, is the mind agitated, anxious, confused, and depressed, or is it calm, happy, joyous, content, and bright? (= *samādhi*). When engaged in an activity, does one act with clear understanding? Does one discern its purpose, objective and related principles? Does one recognize its potential benefits and drawbacks, and fully understand the way to adjust and improve the activity? (= *paññā*).

In this way skilled persons are able to train and inspect themselves, and evaluate their practice, at all times and in all situations. They cultivate all three factors of the threefold training in a single activity.

Meanwhile, the development of the threefold training from the perspective of three distinct stages unfolds automatically. From one perspective a person develops the threefold training in an ordered sequence. But from another perspective the simultaneous, unified practice of these three factors is taking place and assisting in the successful advancement of the so-called 'three-stage' training.

In this context, someone who delves deeply into the details of spiritual practice will know that at the moment of awakening—at the moment of realizing Path, Fruit, and Nibbāna—all eight factors of the Noble Path, which are classified

into the three groups of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, are completed and operate as one, acting to eliminate the defilements and to bring about fulfilment. {353}

To sum up, the system of Buddhist spiritual training—the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*)—is based on a relationship between requisite factors and accords with specific laws of nature. Human life is comprised of three factors—of conduct with the outside world (*sīla*), mental activities (*citta*), and understanding (*paññā*)—which act in unison and are interdependent in bringing about spiritual development.

When describing the principles of spiritual practice, the Buddha referred to these three aspects of training (*sikkhā*). We now arrive at the question: ‘Why did the Buddha adopt a new model of the four factors of development (*bhāvita*) when he described the attributes of a teacher?’

As mentioned earlier, this question can be answered easily by saying that these two models have different aims and objectives. The threefold training is to be applied in real life—to be practised in accord with a system in harmony with nature. The factors of development are intended for self-examination. Here, one need not be concerned with the order of nature. The emphasis here is on getting a clear picture of one’s personal qualities. If one discerns these clearly, they will by their very nature be connected to the three factors of training.

This is obvious by inspecting the first factor of *sīla*, which refers to one’s interaction and communication with the world, one’s apprehension of the world, and one’s actions in relation to the world.

As mentioned above, we interact with the world by way of two sets of ‘doorways’ (*dvāra*): the first set entails the doorways of cognition (*phassa-dvāra*), usually referred to as the sense faculties (*indriya*)—our awareness of the world by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The second set entails the doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*), through which we act towards and respond to the world (towards people, towards society, and towards other objects in our external environment) by physical and verbal gestures.

Here lies the distinction. In regard to interacting with the world, at any one moment (or to speak at a more refined level, at any one mind-moment) we only communicate with the world through one of the specific doorways, and one can examine this process by applying either of the two sets of doorways.

In respect to the threefold training, in which *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are part of an integrated system, the interaction with the world by way of any one of the various doorways comprises the training in ‘conduct’ (*sīla*); the factors of the mind (*samādhi*) and understanding (*paññā*) constitute distinct factors. The entire interaction with the world through the various doorways—both the doorways of cognition and the doorways of volitional action—is included here in the factor of *sīla*. For this reason the threefold training is comprised of three factors.

In respect to the attributes of a teacher, one need not consider the integrated functioning of the three factors contained in the threefold training. Here, one is distinguishing between different factors for the purpose of investigation. It is

precisely here at the factor of conduct (*sīla*) where a separation is made, that is, one distinguishes a person's interaction with the world according to one or the other of the two sets of doorways:

A) Doorways of cognition (*phassa-dvāra*; usually referred to as the sense faculties—*indriya*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise six doorways); these doorways enable seeing/looking, hearing/listening, smelling, tasting, and tangible contact (culminating at the mind as cognition of mental objects—*dhammārammaṇa*).

B) Doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*): body and speech (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise three doorways); these enable physical actions and speech (and by designating the starting point of volitional action—the mind—this also includes thinking).

The Buddha separated these two subsidiary factors of conduct (*sīla*), determining them as the first two factors in the four kinds of development (*bhāvita*). He distinguished the first factor, of interaction with the world by way of the doorways of cognition or the sense faculties, and labeled it as 'development of the body' (*bhāvita-kāya*). (The term 'body'—*kāya*—here refers to the 'collection of five doorways'—*pañca-dvārika-kāya*). The Buddha thus gave great emphasis to one's interaction with the world, in particular to cognition by way of the five senses. {354} People tend to overlook this first factor, but in relation to spiritual practice it is considered of paramount importance in Buddhism, especially in regard to measuring a person's development.

This is particularly relevant to the present era, which is referred to as the Age of Information or the IT Age. The development of people in regard to this factor determines the fork in the road between direct wisdom cultivation and getting bogged down in delusion. This principle of 'physical development' can be used as a sign warning people from losing their way, and encouraging them to use information technology to advance civilization in a proper direction.

In reference to measuring people's spiritual development, the second subsidiary factor, of interacting with the world by way of the doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*), constitutes 'moral development' (*bhāvita-sīla*), and is equivalent to the second part of the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*). 'Mental development' (*bhāvita-citta*) and 'wisdom development' (*bhāvita-paññā*) correspond to the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*) and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*), respectively.

Note that this concept of 'physical development' (*bhāvita-kāya*), which here has been defined as a development of one's interaction with the world by way of the five sense faculties, is sometimes explained differently, by defining the term *kāya* literally as the 'body' or as referring to material objects.

If one expands the meaning of *bhāvita-kāya* in this way, then the definition of the second factor of 'moral development' (*bhāvita-sīla*) is adjusted accordingly, as

follows: ‘moral development’ refers to the cultivation of one’s relationship to other human beings or to one’s engagement with society, to promoting peaceful coexistence, cooperation, harmony, and mutual support.

These alternative definitions of these two factors are connected to the teaching on fourfold virtuous conduct—on the four kinds of ‘pure conduct classified as virtue’ (*pārisuddhi-sīla*):

1. *Pāṭimokkha-saṁvara-sīla*: virtue as restraint in regard to the Pāṭimokkha, the chief disciplinary code of the monastic sangha.
2. *Indriya-saṁvara-sīla*: virtue as sense restraint; to receive sense impressions, like sights and sounds, mindfully, in a way conducive to wisdom and true benefit, and not to be dominated by unwholesome qualities.
3. *Ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*: virtue as purity of livelihood: to earn one’s living righteously and in a pure manner.
4. *Paccaya-paṭisevana-sīla* (or *paccaya-sannissita-sīla*): to use the four requisites wisely, benefiting from them by understanding their true purpose and value; to know and consume in moderation; not to consume with craving.

Those aspects pertaining to one’s relationship to the world by way of the body, or to one’s engagement with material objects and with nature, are part of the factor on ‘physical development’ (*bhāvita-kāya*). Those aspects pertaining to one’s relationship to society or to one’s community are part of the factor on ‘moral development’ (*bhāvita-sīla*).<sup>15</sup>

Having introduced these principles, the following description of the attributes of arahants corresponds to the teaching on the four kinds of development (*bhāvita*): physical, moral, mental, and wisdom development.

Be aware, however, that, although these four kinds of attributes are distinguished from one another, they are not completely separate. Their main features are highlighted for the purpose of understanding, but in the actual process of development they are interconnected and are cultivated in an integrated way. In particular, they are never independent from wisdom. {355}

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<sup>15</sup> For more on this subject, see Appendix 2.