

WHAT IS VIPASSANA & BHAVANA?

MN117 (Mahacattarisaka Sutta)

“In this context Right View comes first. And how does Right View come first? Right View gives rise to Right Thought. Right Thought gives rise to Right Speech... Right Action.... Right Livelihood.... Right Effort.... Right Mindfulness.... Right Concentration.... Right Knowledge.... Right Liberation. Thus, monks, the trainee (sekha) possesses eight factors, the arahant possesses ten factors. “

This sutta makes it obvious that practice of the Ariyan Eightfold Path must follow the above sequence. Attainment of (Ariyan) Right View means attainment of Stream Entry, the 'Stream' being explained in SN55.5 as the Ariyan Eightfold Path, and that makes one an Ariyan, a First Path attainer. To attain liberation/arahanthood one needs to perfect the other seven factors of the Ariyan Eightfold Path, and then attain Right Knowledge and Right Liberation.

MN43 (Mahavedalla Sutta)

“When Right View is supported by five factors it has liberation by mind and liberation by wisdom for its fruit and benefit. When, friend, Right View is supported by Virtue (Sila), Listening to (True) Dhamma (Dhammasavana), Discussion of Dhamma (Dhamma Sakaccha), Tranquillity (Samatha), Contemplation (Vipassana). Right View supported by these five factors has liberation by mind and liberation by wisdom for it's fruit and benefit.”

Comparing the above two sutta quotes, it is obvious that the five factors mentioned in MN43 is equivalent to the remaining seven factors of the Ariyan Eightfold Path in MN117, i.e. Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. Comparing the five and seven factors we see the result below.

Virtue (Sila) means not harming others through body, speech, and mind, and corresponds to Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood.

Listening to Dhamma (Dhammasavana) and Discussion of Dhamma (Dhammasakaccha) fall under Right Mindfulness (mindful of Dhamma, which is one of the four objects of Sati/Mindfulness). These two are specifically mentioned because of their importance. It is because external sect followers do not have the opportunity to listen to the Buddha's Dhamma, that they are unable to attain liberation from the round of rebirths (samsara) even though they meditate, uphold sila, contemplate, practice austerities etc.

Tranquility (Samatha) corresponds to Right Concentration in the Ariyan Eightfold Path. Vipassana (Contemplation) corresponds to the remaining factors, i.e. Right Effort and Right Mindfulness. Right Effort and Right Mindfulness have to be practised together. This is because to practise Right Effort (i.e. get rid of unwholesome states and cultivate wholesome states) we have to be mindful of the four objects of Right Mindfulness:

- (i) Body – body actions that create wholesome or unwholesome Kamma (intentional actions);
- (ii) Feeling – so that they are under control and do not overwhelm us and cause unwholesome states to arise;
- (iii) Mind – so that we do not have unwholesome thoughts, unwholesome perceptions, unwholesome attitudes, etc.;

- (iv) Dhamma – so that we live our lives in accordance with Dhamma everyday in a wholesome way.

Bhavana

In MN108 Ven. Ananda stated that the type of meditation praised by the Buddha is the First Jhana, Second Jhana, Third Jhana, Fourth Jhana. This corresponds to Right Concentration in the Ariyan Eightfold Path. It is also called the practice of Samatha. The Jhanas are called Superhuman States (uttarimanussa dhamma) by the Buddha. MN68 states that when these Jhanas are attained, the Five Hindrances (panca nivarana) are eliminated. Thus Samatha results in Development (Bhavana) of Mind.

Vipassana practice, meaning practising Right Effort and Right Mindfulness, leads to getting rid of unwholesome states and cultivating wholesome states. Thus Vipassana leads to Development of Character.

Thus Bhavana consists of the practice of the last three factors of the Ariyan Eightfold Path, i.e. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. This corresponds to Samatha (practised during meditation) and Vipassana (practised outside meditation).