

The Four & Five Jhānas in the Sutta and Abhidhamma

Are there four or five fine-material *jhānas*?

The usual *jhāna* scheme is the **four** fine-material *jhānas* which is sometimes called the 'fourfold scheme' (*catukkanaya*), and which is found abundantly in the Tipiṭaka. But there is another scheme in several Suttas and also in the Abhidhamma with **five** fine-material *jhānas* which is sometimes called 'fivefold scheme' (*pañcakanaya*). In spite of this, there is a widespread opinion that the fivefold scheme is found in the Abhidhamma only, where it is mentioned more often. It is assumed that this is an invention of a later Abhidhamma literature and it thus contradicts the Suttas. It will be shown below, however, that this opinion is untenable and that the Abhidhamma copies it from Suttas where it occurs several times, but it is commonly overlooked by many teachers and students alike. The key term in the Suttas is an additional type of concentration (*samādhī*) which the Buddha calls 'concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**' (*avitakka-vicāra-matto samādhī*). This type of concentration (*samādhī*) is mentioned five times in the whole Suttapiṭaka in the following Suttas:

<i>Saṅgītisuttaṃ & Dasuttarasuttaṃ</i>	—DN (Dīgha Nikāya)
<i>Upakkilesasuttaṃ</i>	—MN (Majjhima Nikāya)
<i>Savitakka-savicāra-suttaṃ</i>	—SN (Saṃyutta Nikāya)
<i>Samkhittasuttaṃ</i>	—AN (Aṅguttara Nikāya)

In DN and SN it is used in a context with two other types of concentration referred to as the 'three types of concentration' (*tayo samādhī*) thus:

"There are three types of concentration (*tayo samādhī*)—

- [1] concentration **with** applied thought and sustained thought
(*savitakka-savicāro samādhī*)
- [2] concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**
(*avitakka-vicāra-matto samādhī*)
- [3] concentration **without** applied thought and **without** sustained thought
(*avitakka-avicāro samādhī*)."

In MN the Buddha says about himself how "I developed (*bhāvesiṃ*)" these three types of concentration thus:

- [1] I developed concentration **with** applied thought and sustained thought
(*savitakkampi savicāraṃ samādhīṃ bhāvesiṃ*).
- [2] I developed concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**
(*avitakkampi vicāra-mattaṃ samādhīṃ bhāvesiṃ*).

[3] I developed concentration **without** applied thought and **without** sustained thought (*avittakkampi avicāraṃ samādhīṃ bhāveyyāsi*).” (MN *Upakkilesasuttaṃ*)

Moreover, in AN the Buddha advises a certain bhikkhu how he should develop (*bhāveyyāsi*) concentration in also three ways:

[1] “You should develop this concentration **with** applied thought and sustained thought (*imaṃ samādhīṃ savitakka-savicāraṃpi bhāveyyāsi*).

[2] You should develop this concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only** (*avittakka-avicāramattampi bhāveyyāsi*).

[3] You should develop this concentration **without** applied thought and **without** sustained thought (*avittakka-avicāraṃpi bhāveyyāsi*).” (AN *Samkhittasuttaṃ*)

In order to understand these three types of concentration and the difference between them, we should first understand the fourfold *jhāna* scheme (*catukkanaya*) where the terms “applied thought” and “sustained thought” (*vitakka*, *vicāra*) occur in the Suttas always in connection with the concentration in the *jhānas*. Especially, the term “with applied thought and sustained thought” (*savitakka-savicāra*) comes always in connection with the 1st *jhāna* and refers to the 1st *jhāna* concentration thus:

1st *jhāna*: “One attains and remains in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought (*savitakka-savicāra*), and consists of rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) born of seclusion.”

(*savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ paṭhamam* (first) *jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*.)

Next, the term “without applied thought and without sustained thought” (*avittakka-avicāra*) occurs always in connection with the 2nd *jhāna* and refers to the 2nd *jhāna* concentration thus:

2nd *jhāna*: “One attains and remains in the second *jhāna*, which is without applied and sustained thought (*avittakka-avicāra*), and consists of rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) **born of concentration** (*samādhī*).”

(*avittakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ duttiyaṃ* (second) *jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*.)

Note here the term **born of concentration** (*samādhijaṃ*) or **concentration** (*samādhī*) which is linked to “concentration without applied and sustained thought” (*avittakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhī*). This refers to the 2nd *jhāna* concentration.

Next comes the 3rd *jhāna* which abandons rapture (*pīti*), hence it is called sometimes “without rapture” (*nippītika*), but has bliss (*sukha*) as its factor described in many Suttas thus:

3rd *jhāna*: “With the fading away of rapture (*pīti*), he remains equanimous, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling bliss (*sukha*) with the body, he attains and remains in the third *jhāna*, on account of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful and blissful.’

(*pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti, yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti – “upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī”ti, tatiyaṃ* (third) *jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*.)

Next comes the 4th *jhāna* which abandons bliss (*sukha*), but has equanimity (*upekkhā*) as its factor described in many Suttas thus:

4th *jhāna*: "With the abandoning of bliss (*sukha*) and discomfort (*dukkha*), and with the previous disappearance of pleasure and displeasure, he attains and remains in the fourth *jhāna*, which is neither painful nor pleasant, and which has purity of mindfulness due to **equanimity** (*upekkhā*).

(*sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā, pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ **upekkhā**-satipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ* (fourth) *jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*.)

These are the four fine-material *jhānas* and are the usual *jhāna* scheme in the Suttas which, as aforesaid, is sometimes called "fourfold *jhāna* scheme" (*catukkanaya*). According to this scheme, the 1st *jhāna* has two main factors:

1st *jhāna*: "with applied thought and sustained thought" (*savitakka-savicāra*)

The 2nd *jhāna* simultaneously abandons here "applied and sustained thought" (*vitakka, vicāra*) and has two main factors, rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*):

2nd *jhāna*: "~~applied and sustained thought (*avitakka-avicāra*)~~, consists of rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) born of concentration (*samādhi*)."

The 3rd *jhāna* abandons rapture (*pīti*):

3rd *jhāna*: "~~With the fading away of rapture (*pīti*)~~ ... still feeling bliss (*sukha*) with the body, he attains and remains in the third *jhāna*."

The 4th *jhāna* abandons bliss (*sukha*) and has equanimity (*upekkhā*):

4th *jhāna*: "~~With the abandoning of bliss (*sukha*)~~ ... he attains and remains in the fourth *jhāna* ... which has purity of mindfulness due to **equanimity** (*upekkhā*)."

Consequently, in regard to the 'three types of concentration' (*tayo samādhi*) the correlation with the *jhāna* concentration should be as follows:

Three Types of Concentration Suttas in DN, MN, SN, AN		Jhāna Suttas with the Fourfold Jhāna Scheme (<i>Catukkanaya</i>)
[1] concentration with applied thought and sustained thought (<i>savitakka-savicāro samādhi</i>)	is	→ 1st <i>jhāna</i> accompanied by applied and sustained thought (<i>savitakka-savicāra</i>)
[2] concentration without applied thought but with sustained thought only (<i>avitakka-vicāra-matto samādhi</i>)	is	→ No mention
[3] concentration without applied thought and with-out sustained thought (<i>avitakka-avicāro samādhi</i>).	is	→ 2nd without applied and sustained thought ... born of concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)." (<i>avitakka-avicāraṃ ... samādhijam</i>)

What is Concentration with Sustained Thought Only (*Vicāra-matta Samādhi*)?

But then, what is here the type of “concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**” (*avitakka vicāra-matta samādhi*)? How does this middle stage of concentration fit between the 1st and the 2nd *jhāna* of the fourfold *jhāna* scheme (*catukkanaya*)? As it can be seen, it doesn’t.

Hence, we should understand here that this is a different or additional scheme (*adhika-naya*), where the 2nd *jhāna* is attained in two different ways. It is attained differently by those who cannot, or do not want to overcome applied and sustained thought simultaneously but eliminate them successively—first applied thought (*vitakka*) and then sustained thought (*vicāra*). Thus they attain:

1st *jhāna* **with** applied thought and sustained thought (*savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ*)

2nd *jhāna* **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought only (*avitakka vicāra-matta*)

3rd *jhāna* **without** applied thought and **without** sustained thought (*avitakka-avicāra*), but with rapture (*pīti*)

4th *jhāna* with bliss (*sukha*), and

5th *jhāna* with equanimity (*upekkhā*)

Two canonical commentaries, the Mahāniddeśa and Cūḷaniddeśa, refer also to the “concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**” as ‘a *jhāna* **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**’ (*avitakka-vicāra-matta jhāna*) thus:

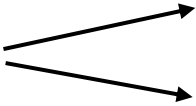


“[1] he meditates with the *jhāna* accompanied **with** applied thought and sustained thought (*savitakka-savicārenapi jhānena jhāyī*),

[2] he meditates with the *jhāna* accompanied **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only** (*avitakka-vicāra-mattenapi jhānena jhāyī*),

[3] he meditates with the *jhāna* that is **without** applied thought and **without** sustained thought (*avitakka-avicārenapi jhānena jhāyī*).”¹

Hence, this additional scheme (*adhika-naya*) in the abovementioned Suttas rennumbers the order of *jhānas* of the fourfold scheme thus:

¹ Mahāniddeśa, *Tuvaṭṭakasuttaniddeso*; Cūḷaniddeśapāḷi, *Udayamāṇavapucchāniddeso*.

Usual Fourfold Jhāna Scheme (Catukkanaya)		Additional Scheme in DN, MN, SN, AN
2 nd jhāna		becomes 2 nd jhāna without applied thought but with sustained thought only (avitakka- <i>vicāra-matta</i>)
		becomes 3 rd jhāna without applied and without sustained thought (avitakka <i>avicāra</i>)
3 rd jhāna		becomes 4 th jhāna with bliss (<i>sukha</i>)
4 th jhāna		becomes 5 th jhāna with equanimity (<i>upekkhā</i>)

The additional scheme (*adhika-naya*) can be more clearly seen when we read the Buddha's full explanation in MN *Upakkilesasuttaṃ* thus:

MN *Upakkilesasuttaṃ*

- I developed concentration **with** applied thought and sustained thought (*savitakkampi savicāraṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*)
- I developed concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought only (*avitakkampi vicāramattaṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*)
- I developed concentration **without** applied and sustained thought (*avitakkampi avicāraṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*)
- I developed concentration **with** rapture (*sappītikampi samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*)
- I developed concentration **without** rapture (*nippītikampi samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*)
- I developed concentration **with** pleasure (*sāta*) = bliss (*sukha*)
sātasahagatampi samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ,
- I developed concentration **with** equanimity (*upekkhāsahagatampi samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*).

Here the correlation with the *jhānas* and the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*) is as follows:

Additional Scheme in MN & AN		Correlation with the Jhānas
• with applied thought and sustained thought (<i>savitakka-savicāraṃpi</i>)	is	→ 1 st jhāna with applied thought and sustained thought (<i>savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ</i>)
• without applied thought but with sustained thought only (<i>avitakka-vicāramattaṃpi</i>)	is	→ 2 nd jhāna without applied thought but with sustained thought only (<i>avitakka-vicāramattaṃ</i>)
• without applied and sustained thought (<i>avitakka-avicāraṃpi</i>) • with rapture (<i>sappītikampi</i>)	is	→ 3 rd jhāna without applied and sustained thought (<i>avitakka-avicāraṃ</i>), but with rapture (<i>sappītikam</i>)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • without rapture (<i>nippītikampi</i>) • with pleasure (<i>sātasahagatampi</i>) 	is	→ 4 th <i>jhāna</i> without rapture (<i>pīti</i>) but with bliss (<i>sukha</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with equanimity (<i>upekkhāsahagatampi</i>) 	is	→ 5 th <i>jhāna</i> with <i>upekkhā</i>

According to the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*), there are five factors employed in the *jhānas*:

1. applied thought (*vitakko*), **2. sustained thought** (*vicāro*), **3. rapture** (*pīti*), **4. bliss** (*sukha*), **5. equanimity** (*upekkhā*).

Thus we have: In the fourfold *jhāna* scheme (*catukkanaya*)

The 2nd *jhāna* abandons → **1. applied thought** (*vitakko*), **2. sustained thought** (*vicāro*), □ but it has **3. rapture**, **4. bliss**

The 3rd *jhāna* abandons → **3. rapture** (*pīti*), □ but it has **4. bliss** (*sukha*)

The 4th *jhāna* abandons → **4. bliss** (*sukha*), □ but it has **5. equanimity** (*upekkhā*)

However, in the additional scheme (*adhika-naya*)

The 2nd *jhāna* abandons → **1. applied thought** (*vitakko*), -□ but it has **2. sustained thought**, **3. rapture**, **4. bliss**

The 3rd *jhāna* abandons → **2. sustained thought** (*vicāro*), -□ but it has **3. rapture**, **4. bliss**

The 4th *jhāna* abandons → **3. rapture** (*pīti*), □ but it has **4. bliss** (*sukha*)

The 5th *jhāna* abandons → **4. bliss** (*sukha*), □ but it has **5. equanimity** (*upekkhā*)

The Sutta Commentaries

The Sutta Commentaries call the additional scheme ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcaka-naya*) and are explicit that the 2nd *jhāna* concentration is “without applied thought but with sustained thought only” (*avitakka-vicāramattaṃ*). The Dīghanikāya Commentary explains it thus:

“In the three types of concentration, the first *jhāna* concentration is **with** applied and sustained thought (*savitakka-savicāra*). The second *jhāna* concentration is, according to the ‘fivefold scheme’, **without** applied thought but with sustained thought **only**” (*avitakka-vicāramatta*). The rest is **without** applied and sustained thought (*avitakka-avicāram*).”

“*Samādhīsu paṭhamajjhānasamādhī savitakkasavicāro. Pañcakanayena dutiyajjhānasamādhī avitakkavicāramatto. Seso avitakka-avicāro.*”²

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* Commentary explains it similarly:

“Concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only** means, except for sustained thought (*vicāra*), it has no connection with applied thought (*vitakka*). This is the second *jhāna* concentration of the fivefold scheme.”

“*Avitakka-vicāramatto samādhī, vicārato uttari vitakkena sampayogaṃ na gacchatīti attho. So pañcakanaye dutiya-jjhāna-samādhī.*”

The Majjhimanikāya Commentary explains it likewise but explains also the terms “**with** rapture” (*sappītikampi*), “with pleasure” (*sātasahagatampi*) and “with equanimity” (*upekkhāsahagatampi*) according to the fourfold and fivefold scheme (*catukkanaye’pi, pañcakanaye’pi*) thus:

² Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā, *Saṅgītisuttavaṇṇanā*.

“**Without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**’ means the second *jhāna* concentration of the fivefold scheme. **With rapture** means the second *jhāna* (of the fourfold scheme) and the third *jhāna* (of the fivefold scheme). **With happiness** means the third *jhāna* (of the fourfold scheme) and the fourth *jhāna* (of the fivefold scheme). **With equanimity** means the fourth *jhāna* of the fourfold scheme (*catukkanaye*) and the fifth *jhāna* of the fivefold scheme (*pañcakanaye*).”

“*Avitakkampi vicāramattanti pañcakanaye duttiyajjhānasamādhim.*

Sappītikanti dukatikajjhānasamādhim.

Sātasahagatanti tikacatukkajjhānasamādhim.

Upekkhāsahagatanti catukkanaye catutthajjhānasamādhim pañcakanaye pañcamajjhānasamādhim.”

The Abhidhamma

As in the Suttas, so also in the Abhidhamma the ‘fourfold scheme’ (*catukkanaya*) is the most common one, but the additional scheme, which is the ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcakanaya*), appears numerous times as well. In fact, the terms *catukkanaya* and *pañcakanaya* come from *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (Dhs), the first book of Abhidhammapiṭaka,³ which terms the Pāli Commentaries copy and use. Nevertheless, the ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcakanaya*) is based on the abovementioned Suttas in DN, MN, SN and AN regarding the additional scheme with the “concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**” (*avitakka-vicāramatto samādhī*) and the renumbering of the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*).

As for the ‘fourfold scheme’ (*catukkanaya*), it is said in Abhidhamma that there are four *jhānas*:

“There are four *jhānas* (*cattāri jhānāni*)—[1] *paṭhamam jhānam*, [2] *dutiyaṃ jhānam*, [3] *tatiyaṃ jhānam*, [4] *catuttham jhānam*.”⁴

These are explained in the same way as in the Suttas but with more details as to the concomitant mental factors that accompany them.

Regarding the ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcakanaya*), the term “**with** applied and sustained thought” (*avitakka-savicāra*) is given as the first *jhāna*. But the term “**without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**” (*avitakkaṃ vicāramattaṃ*) is given as the second *jhāna* thus:

“One attains and abides in the **second** *jhāna* which is **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only** and with rapture and bliss born of concentration.” (Dhs §168)

“*Avitakkaṃ vicāra-mattaṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*”

As for the other *jhānas*, the term “**without** applied and sustained thought” (*avitakka-avicāra*) which is accompanied by rapture (*pīti*) is given as the third *jhāna* thus:

““With the stilling of applied and sustained thought ... one attains and remains in the **third** *jhāna* **without** applied and sustained thought and with rapture and bliss born of concentration.” (Dhs §170)

“*Vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ... avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ tatiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*”

Consequently the third *jhāna* of the ‘fourfold scheme’ (*catukkanaya*) which abandons rapture (*pīti*) but retains bliss (*sukha*) becomes the fourth *jhāna* thus:

³ “*Rūpāvacarakusalaṃ catukkanayo pañcakanayo.*” (Dhs §160, 167).

⁴ Vibhaṅgapāli § 623.

“With the fading away of **rapture** (*pīti*), he remains equanimous, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling **bliss** (*sukha*) with the body, he attains and remains in the **fourth** *jhāna*, on account of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful and blissful.’
(Dhs §172)

“*Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, **sukhañca** kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti, yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti – “upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī’ti, **catuttham** jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.”*

Then the fourth *jhāna* of the ‘fourfold scheme’ (*catukkanaya*) which eliminates **bliss** (*sukha*) but retains equanimity (*upekkhā*) becomes the fifth *jhāna* thus:

“With the abandoning of **bliss** (*sukha*) and discomfort (*dukkha*), and with the previous disappearance of pleasure and displeasure, he attains and remains in the **fifth** *jhāna*, which is neither painful nor pleasant, and which has purity of mindfulness due to **equanimity** (*upekkhā*).
(Dhs §174)

“*Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā, pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅga-mā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ **pañcamam** jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.”*

Thus the Abhidhamma explanation is based on the Sutta regarding the additional “concentration **without** applied thought but **with** sustained thought **only**” (*avītakka-vicāramatto samādhī*) and the renumbering of the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*). As in the Suttas, here also, according to the ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcakanaya*):

The 2nd *jhāna* abandons → 1. applied thought (*vitakko*), □ but it has 2. sustained thought, 3. rapture, 4. bliss

The 3rd *jhāna* abandons → 2. sustained thought (*vicāro*), □ but it has 3. rapture, 4. bliss

The 4th *jhāna* abandons → 3. rapture (*pīti*), □ but it has 4. bliss (*sukha*)

The 5th *jhāna* abandons → 4. bliss (*sukha*), □ but it has 5. equanimity (*upekkhā*)

It should be reiterated here that this ‘fivefold scheme’ (*pañcakanaya*), shows that the 2nd *jhāna* can be attained in two different ways. It is attained differently by those who cannot, or do not want to overcome applied and sustained thought simultaneously but eliminate them successively—first applied thought (*vitakka*) and then sustained thought (*vicāra*). Therefore, the widespread opinion that the fivefold *jhāna* scheme (*pañcakanaya*) is found in the Abhidhamma only and it thus contradicts the Suttas is untenable because it occurs several times in the Suttas which the Abhidhamma copies.

Modern Scholars

Ven. Nyanatiloka

In his famous *Buddhist Dictionary*, Ven. Nyanatiloka acknowledges also that the fivefold *jhāna* scheme (*pañcakanaya*), which he calls the ‘fivefold division’, is based on Sutta texts and is not an Abhidhamma invention. Thus he writes:

“In the Abhidhamma, generally a fivefold instead of a fourfold division of the fine-material absorptions is used: the 2nd absorption has still the constituent ‘discursive thinking’ ([*vicāra*] but without thought-conception [without *vitakka*]), while the 3rd, 4th and 5th correspond to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th, respectively, of the fourfold division (s. Tab. I, 9- 13) . This fivefold division is based on Sutta texts like A. VIII, 63.”⁵

⁵ *Buddhist Dictionary*, explanation of **Jhāna**.

Table I, 9- 13

Fine-material Sphere (Absorptions)	(9) 1st Jhāna (Imp.)
	(10) 2nd Jhāna (Imp.)
	(11) 3rd Jhāna (Imp.)
	(12) 4th Jhāna (Imp.)
	(13) 5th Jhāna (Imp.)

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi too acknowledges that the fivefold *jhāna* scheme (*pañcakanaya*) is based on Sutta texts. Thus he writes:

“While, in the *jhāna* scheme of the Nikāyas, the transition from the first to the second *jhāna* is marked by the simultaneous elimination of thought [*vitakka*] and examination [*vicāra*], other texts distinguish *samādhi* as threefold: as with thought [*vitakka*] and examination [*vicāra*], without thought [*avitakka*] but with examination [*vicāra*], and without thought [*avitakka*] and examination [*vicāra*] (see DN 33.1.10, III 219,19–20; MN 128.31, III 162,13–16; SN 43:3, IV 360,11–13). This middle stage of *samādhi* gave rise, in the Abhidhamma, to a fivefold scheme of *jhānas* that inserts, after the first *jhāna*, a second *jhāna* that is without thought [*avitakka*] but with examination [*vicāra*]. This scheme then renumbers the second, third, and fourth *jhānas* of the fourfold scheme as the third, fourth, and fifth *jhānas* to obtain a fivefold scheme.”⁶

Bhante Henepolla Gunaratne

In his *A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas*, Bhante H. Gunaratne admits that the fivefold *jhāna* scheme (*pañcakanaya*) is based on Suttas. Thus he writes:

“The fivefold reckoning of *jhāna* first appears in the Abhidhammapiṭaka and remains as a distinctive feature of the “Abhidhamma method,” yet this system has a definite basis in the suttas. Though the suttas always speak of four *jhānas*, they divide concentration (*samādhi*) into three types: a concentration with applied thought and sustained thought [*savitakko savicāro samādhi*], a concentration without applied thought but with sustained thought [*avitakkavicāramatto samādhi*], and a concentration without either applied thought or sustained thought [*avitakko avicāro samādhi*].

In following the fivefold system of *jhānas*, a meditator who has mastered the first *jhāna* and aspires to go higher reviews its factors and finds only applied thought (*vitakka*) to be gross. Thus he endeavors to eliminate only applied thought, and attains a second *jhāna* which is devoid of applied thought (*avitakka*) but still associated with sustained thought (*vicāramatta*). This second *jhāna* of the fivefold scheme is the addition which is not present in the fourfold scheme. After mastering the second *jhāna*, the meditator finds sustained thought to be gross, eliminates it, and attains a third *jhāna* which is identical with the second *jhāna* of the fourfold system. The fourth and fifth *jhānas* of the fivefold system are the same as the third and fourth *jhānas* of the fourfold system, respectively.

The two different systems seem to answer to the differing capacities of meditators for progressing along the scale of mental unification. This difference in capacity could stem either from their differing abilities

⁶ Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012), *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, note 1765.

to comprehend vitakka and vicāra simultaneously or from their differing abilities to abandon them simultaneously. The progress of one following the fourfold method is more rapid, as he eliminates two factors in moving from the first to second jhāna. Yet both start from the same place, move through the same range of spiritual experience, and (providing they succeed in reaching the highest jhāna in their respective systems) arrive in the end at the same destination.

The two meditators can be compared to two mountain climbers. Both start out at the foot of a mountain at the same time. Both may reach the same initial rest station at the same time. But then their rates of progress may show a difference. The stronger may continue on more quickly, bypass the second rest station, and go right on to the third before stopping. The weaker will advance more slowly and have to make separate stops at the second and third rest stations. Both will stop at the fourth and at the fifth station at the top. Thus for both mountain climbers their position is the same when starting out at the bottom of the mountain, at the first station, and when reaching the top. They differ only in their rates of progress and in the number of stops they have to make to arrive at the top. Similarly for the two meditators of the fourfold and fivefold systems. Their first jhāna is the same, and their final achievement is the same. But the follower of the fivefold system has made an additional stop passed over by the follower of the fourfold system. This stop is the added second jhāna of the fivefold system, free from applied thought but having sustained thought."⁷

⁷ Bhante H. Gunaratne (1980) *A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas*, The American University, p. 125-6.