

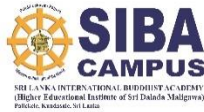
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**The Authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta* of the  
*Majjhima-nikāya***

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## The Authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*

Mark Edsel Johnson

### Abstract

Objections have been made to the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*. In the *Anupada-sutta*, the Buddha recounts how his disciple, Ven. Sāriputta went through all the *jhānas* in the period of two weeks and attained *nibbāna*. Significantly, this *sutta* seems to indicate that Ven. Sāriputta was open, aware and relaxed in each of the *jhānas* and that he was able to have insight culminating in *nibbāna* while practicing *jhāna*. His experience indicates a union of *samatha* and *vipassanā*. This is a very different approach from the method outlined in the *Visuddhimagga*, so this *sutta* is key for those who are restoring the *suttas* as the main instructional guides for *samatha-vipassanā* meditation. Due to the widespread assumption in the world of *Theravāda* that the *Visuddhimagga* clarifies the original meditation instructions of the Buddha and is true to the *sutta* account, the *Anupada-sutta* creates a problem as it does not fit into the scheme of the *Visuddhimagga*. Thus, the *Anupada-sutta* is often ignored by meditation teachers or considered to be inauthentic by scholars who propound the *Visuddhimagga*. The consideration of inauthenticity is based on five arguments, only the first of which seems to bear close examination. That argument alone is not conclusive. Therefore, our conclusion is that the *Anupada-sutta* bears the same degree of authenticity as most other *suttas* in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, and should not be dismissed as inauthentic. With the *sutta* holding up positively as an authentic teaching of the Buddha in the light of critical examination, it is to be taken as an important text in understanding the original meditation method as taught by Gotama Buddha.

### The Question of Authenticity

In their book *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts*, Bhikkhu Sujato and Bhikkhu Brahmali define authenticity in relation to Buddhist texts as follows: ‘An authentic text is one whose provenance is what it says it is. In this case this means that texts that purport to be the words of the historical Buddha and his immediate disciples were in fact spoken by them.’<sup>1</sup>

Scholars differ about how much of the Pali Canon is considered to be authentic according to this definition, but a broad consensus has been reached that there was, in fact, a historical Buddha, and that much of what is in the *sutta-piṭaka* and *vinaya-piṭaka* is either his direct teaching (or that of his immediate disciples) or an edited version of that teaching. Within the *sutta-piṭaka*, with which we are concerned in this paper, exactly how much of the *suttas* can be directly attributed to the Buddha and how much to later editors is an open question. Certainly, no single part of the *sutta-piṭaka* can be proven to be part of the original teachings, but that does not mean there is not authenticity to the texts.<sup>2</sup>

Typical of the critical attitude maintained by mainstream scholars is the view of A.K. Warder,

“Do the ancient texts available to us contain any of the actual teaching of the Buddha? Many of them purport to do so, but there is a certain amount of conflict among them in matters of doctrine, and in any case, we are not prepared to accept them at their face value without checking their authenticity.”<sup>3</sup>

Warder is calling for careful checking of authenticity, which is fair enough. Much recent research, bolstered by the comparison of the Pali *suttas* to the Chinese *Āgamas*, have shown the likelihood of a core of fairly reliable Early Buddhist Texts (EBTs) that can be considered authentic. The translator of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, Maurice Walsh, states it in such a way that most scholars can agree,

“Certainly, not all parts of the Pali Canon are equally old or can literally be taken to be the Buddha’s precise words. This is plain common sense and does not mean completely rejecting their authenticity. Recent research has gone far to vindicate the claim that the Pali Canon holds at least a prime place among our sources in search for ‘original’ Buddhism, or, in fact, ‘what the Buddha taught’...Personally, I believe that all, or most *doctrinal* statements put directly into the mouth of the Buddha can be accepted as authentic, and this seems to be the most important point.”<sup>4</sup>

The majority of the material in the four Pali *nikāyas* and some small portions of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* (such as *Sutta-nipāta*) are now taken to be authentic by most scholars.<sup>5</sup> This would include the *Majjhima-nikāya* among which *suttas* is found the *Anupada-sutta*, the subject of our study in authenticity.<sup>6</sup>

However, within the *Majjhima-nikāya* itself and even within particular *suttas*, there may be material that is early or late. So the inclusion of the *Anupada-sutta* in the *Majjhima-nikāya* is a point in its favor in terms of consideration as early (authentic) material, but such inclusion alone is not conclusive. We must have a closer look. Before doing so, let us consider the message of the *Anupada-sutta* and have a look at its importance in terms of Buddhist theory and practice.

### **The Importance of the *Anupada-sutta***

The question of the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta*, which is *sutta* 111 of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, is not only of academic interest. This *sutta* is an important instructional *sutta* as pertains to Buddhist meditation. Whether it is considered to be an authentic teaching of the Buddha or not may affect how it is used (or ignored) in meditation instruction.

The *Anupada-sutta* tells of how the Buddha recounted the attainment of arahantship by his renowned disciple Sāriputta in the brief time of two weeks. The Buddha explains how Sāriputta went through all of the *jhānas* and thereby attained *nibbāna*. The Buddha tells how in each successive *jhāna*, Sāriputta is aware of the arising and cessation of phenomena. By not clinging or identifying with what arose in his mind, he purified his mind and attained deliverance. Near the end of the *Anupada-sutta*,

the Buddha gives the following description of Ven. Sāriputta to the assembled monks,

“Bhikkhus, rightly speaking, were it said of anyone: ‘He has attained mastery and perfection in noble virtue, attained mastery and perfection in noble concentration, attained mastery and perfection in noble wisdom, attained mastery and perfection in noble deliverance,’ it is of Sāriputta indeed that this rightly should be said.”<sup>7 8</sup>

From the account given by the Buddha of Ven. Sāriputta’s experience in each of the *jhānas*, and from the above quote, a number of interesting points emerge. First, in each of the *jhānas*, Ven. Sāriputta is aware and open to the arising of phenomena. Second, by not clinging to what arises, he gains insight leading to liberation. Ven. Sāriputta is having insight while in *jhāna*. Third, Ven. Sāriputta is practicing both *samādhi* (rendered as ‘concentration’ in Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation) and insight at the same time. In other words, his practice is a union of *samatha* and *vipassanā*.

When Ven. Buddhaghosa wrote the *Visuddhimagga*, he separated *samatha* from *vipassanā*, and created a practice where they would be done in a sequential manner. He laid out a method of *samādhi* that was a state of intense concentration on one object to the exclusion of all else. He developed a vocabulary to describe the successive stages of intense concentration, words such as ‘access concentration’. The result of the *Visuddhimagga* method is a state of absorption concentration not described in the *sutta-piṭaka* and clearly not the method described by the Buddha in the *Anupada-sutta*.

In contrast to the method of the *Visuddhimagga*, the account given in *Anupada-sutta* makes it clear that Ven. Sāriputta’s practice as recounted by the Buddha and recommended by him to the assembled Bhikkhus is a union of *samatha* and *vipassanā*, which he practices synergistically at each step of the way, through the *jhānas*, leading to *nibbāna*. In the *Anupada-sutta*, the *samādhi* practiced by Ven. Sāriputta is not a state of intense concentration to the exclusion of various phenomena, but rather open, aware, and relaxed, allowing phenomena to arise, and without attaching to such appearances, allowing phenomena to disappear.

In general, Theravādin meditation has followed the method of the *Visuddhimagga* and it has become standard method of meditation to gain power of concentration through the practice of *samatha*, followed by insight or *vipassanā* practice. In fact, *samatha* practice may be skipped over altogether in ‘dry *vipassanā*’.<sup>9</sup> Typical of the approach taken by methods which are primarily based upon the *Visuddhimagga* rather than the *suttas* is the method taught by Ven. Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva, which can be considered a variation on the *Visuddhimagga*-based methods that have arisen in Myanmar such as that of Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. He lays emphasis upon the absorption of the mind in the object of meditation, which in this case is the in and out flow of the breath (*ānāpānasati*). He explains as follows,

“With well-established mindfulness, a yogi will have sustained attention on the in-breath and on the out-breath. Throughout the period of meditation, the noting and observing mind will be directly focused on the object. When mindfulness is aligned with the object, a yogi has a certain

level of security and hindrances such as sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), anger (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna middha*), doubts (*vicikicchā*), and restlessness and worry (*uddhacca kukkuccha*), will no longer be present, because the mind is now occupied with the object of meditation.”<sup>10</sup>

This can be considered Ven. Buddhaghosa’s great innovation, to lay out a “Path of Purity” based upon strong concentration (absorption concentration) based on strongly holding the object of meditation to the exclusion of all other phenomena. That this is only a temporary sort of purity based upon repression of the hindrances is clear from William Hart’s book *The Art of Living*, which is based upon the teaching of Mr. S.N. Goenka who learned the method from Sayagyi U Ba Khin in Myanmar. Mr. Goenka shows how the mindfulness of breath is to be used to gain strong concentration. Referring to *ānāpānasati*, he explains,

“This is not a breathing exercise; it is an exercise in awareness. The effort is not to control the breath but to remain aware of it as it naturally is: long or short, heavy or light, rough or subtle. For as long as possible, one fixes the attention on the breath, without allowing any distractions to break the chain of awareness.”<sup>11</sup>

When a student asks Mr. Goenka why it is that *samādhi* alone is not sufficient for liberation, Mr. Goenka answers thusly,

“Because the purity of mind achieved through *samādhi* is achieved primarily through suppression, not elimination of conditioning...These latent impurities must be removed in order to reach liberation.”<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to methods based upon absorption concentration and suppression of the hindrances, the *Anupada-sutta* demonstrates a method taught by the Buddha and used by Ven. Sariputta in which there is no suppression and no absorption concentration. Other *suttas* also follow this method, but the *Anupada-sutta* is especially explicit in showing the method of open, aware *jhāna* which results in insight and liberation.

An example in the *Anupada-sutta* of Ven. Sāriputta’s open and aware meditation while in *jhāna* is the account given by the Buddha of the fourth *jhāna*. The Buddha recounts Ven. Sāriputta’s experience as follows:

“Again, bhikkhus, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

And the states in the fourth *jhāna*-the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, the purity of mindfulness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention- these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus, ‘There is an escape beyond,’ and with the cultivation of that attainment he confirmed that there is.”<sup>13 14</sup>

Upon examining this passage, it is evident that Ven. Sāriputta, while in *jhāna*, is open and aware. His *samādhi* is of the nature that phenomena rise, abide, and cease, while he maintains full awareness without indulging in craving or identifying with what appears. He is also abiding in ‘mental unconcern due to tranquility’, in other words he is relaxed. His mind while in *jhāna* is thus open, aware, and relaxed.

This *sutta* may be puzzling to those who view or experience *jhāna* only through the method of absorption concentration. It is generally held that *jhāna* is a state of supreme concentration in which phenomena are excluded due to the power of concentration on one object. This is clearly not the case in this *sutta*, and there are claims that the *Anupada-sutta* represents not the original teaching of the Buddha, but an add-on from a later time. In other words, it is viewed by some scholars and practitioners as being not authentic, and that its characterization of the *jhānas* as being levels of understanding and states of mind in which the meditator is open, aware, relaxed and balanced are not an authentic teaching of the Buddha, nor presumably do they represent the actual meditative experience of Ven. Sāriputta.

The *Anupada-sutta* is not the only place in the *sutta-piṭaka* where an open, aware, relaxed *jhāna* is described. In the *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas* there are also teachings by the Buddha concerning this type of *jhāna*.<sup>15</sup> We can designate these *jhānas* as ‘tranquil wisdom *jhānas*’ in order to differentiate them from the *jhānas* associated with absorption concentration methods. So pervasive is the influence of the *Visuddhimagga* method within Theravādin tradition, that it is assumed that *jhāna* is no other than a state of absorption concentration. It is to correct this that the term ‘tranquil wisdom *jhāna*’ is introduced, but in fact, there is no other type of *jhāna* described in the *sutta-piṭaka* other than tranquil wisdom *jhānas*, so the phrase is only necessary as a corrective measure.

In keeping with the teachings in *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas*, the *Anupada-sutta* recounts an open, aware, relaxed state of mind which can also be termed a ‘tranquil wisdom’ *jhāna*. This *sutta* is very instructive and explicit in some of its teachings and proves to be quite helpful to the meditator following the method of tranquil wisdom *jhānas* such as meditators who are following the Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM) method. Thus, this *sutta* assumes not only theoretical but also practical importance to meditators who are following the *sutta* instructions for meditation rather than the instructions as given in the *Visuddhimagga*.

The question of whether the *jhānas* as taught by the Buddha are a state of deep absorption concentration as opposed to an open, aware, relaxed mind is a notion that can affect how one views the *Anupada-sutta*. If the account of absorption concentration *jhāna* as given in the *Visuddhimagga* is in accord with the instructions in the *suttas*, then the five aggregates will not appear to the deeply absorbed meditator. Thus, in this view, the *Anupada-sutta* would not make sense.

However, the *Anupada-sutta* as well as the *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas* indicate that the meditator is, indeed, aware of the five aggregates. *Anupada-sutta* is especially clear in this account of open awareness of the five aggregates into the *arūpa jhānas* and this inconsistency with the account given in the *Visuddhimagga*

can be confusing to those who assume the *Visuddhimagga* is in accord with the *sutta* teachings. This inconsistency between *Anupada-sutta* and *Visuddhimagga* may lead those who assume the *Visuddhimagga* method to be the correct one to view the *Anupada-sutta* as confused and perhaps as inauthentic, not an original teaching of the Buddha.

The evidence given in the *Anupada-sutta* is especially important as the inconsistencies between the *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas* and the *Visuddhimagga* can be less than clear. This is due to the fact that Ven. Buddhaghosa effectively reinterpreted the original meditation instructions as given by the Buddha in these two *suttas* and made numerous changes and introduced innovations without any critical voices being raised. Ven. Buddhaghosa's account has been looked upon as completely reliable, and when it comes to the actual practice of meditation within the Theravādin tradition, it may be said that the *Visuddhimagga* actually supersedes the *suttas*. Until recent times it has never been considered that there might be any kind of contradiction between Buddhaghosa's work and the *suttas* themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the inconsistencies are there. This becomes apparent with a careful comparison of the *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas* with the *Visuddhimagga*. It is beyond our scope to carry out such a comparison here, but we can summarize Buddhaghosa's treatment of the two *suttas* as follows:

The *Ānāpānasati-sutta* is adapted by Ven. Buddhaghosa to create concentration on the breath as a method whereby to attain deep absorption concentration. With such intense absorption concentration form of *samādhi*, there will be no arising or ceasing of the five aggregates for the meditator. Therefore, there will be no attending insight. Rather, once absorption concentration is attained, the meditator shifts to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). Thus, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* is given a very different treatment in the *Visuddhimagga* than what the text of the *sutta* itself suggests. The aspect of concentration on the breath is selected from the *sutta*, and the majority of the *sutta*, which includes the observation of the arising and passing of the aggregates, is set aside.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* is treated by Ven. Buddhaghosa in a similar way. Clearly, this *sutta* is concerned with the development of insight, but in the *Visuddhimagga* method, it is treated solely as insight, and no attempt is made to integrate it with *samatha* practice. Rather, it is practiced after the requisite concentration is attained, that is *samatha* and *vipassanā* are practiced sequentially in Ven. Buddhaghosa's account.

Thus, for Ven. Buddhaghosa, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* becomes the method for *samatha* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* becomes the basis for insight, or *vipassanā*. There is no attempt to integrate the two practices, and the result is that the methods based on the *Visuddhimagga* separate *samatha* from *vipassanā* and the methods are practiced sequentially rather than in harmony, as in the *Anupada-sutta*.

We will note that for those with unquestioned loyalty to the *Visuddhimagga* method, the easiest solution to resolve the apparent inconsistencies between the *sutta* instructions and those of the *Visuddhimagga* is to uncritically adopt Ven.

Buddhaghosa's reinterpretation of the *Ānāpānasati* and *Satipaṭṭhāna suttas* and to ignore the *Anupada-sutta* or to discount the *Anupada-sutta* as inauthentic.

This is not a case of intellectual dishonesty, but rather a case of not being able to make sense of the instructions as given in the *Anupada-sutta* if the preconceived assumption is that the *jhānas* are a state of concentration absorption in which the five aggregates do not appear. To those who are inclined to the absorption concentration view of the *jhānas*, Ven. Sāriputta's experience as recounted in the *Anupada-sutta* will contradict the experience of absorption concentration. The lists of factors that arise and pass with each *jhāna* will likely appear to be a confused mishmash of factors edited in by later generations. In such a view, the *Anupada-sutta* is not to be trusted as being the authentic teaching of the Buddha and cannot be relied upon for meditation instruction.

In view of the above, it should be clear that there is more at stake in the view of this *sutta* than pure academic research. The *Anupada-sutta* can be taken as meditation instruction, or not, due to whether we take it as an authentic teaching of the Buddha or consider it as a rather confused addition of later generations. Therefore, we will turn to some of the criticisms of the *sutta* and consider whether it should be considered aside from other, presumably more authentic *suttas*. Then we will have a look at how *Anupada-sutta* is instructive to the meditator who is following the method of tranquil aware *jhānas*.

### **The Content of the *Anupada-sutta***

*Anupada-sutta* is *Majjhima-nikāya* number 111. It is titled *One by One as They Occurred* in Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation.<sup>17</sup> In this *sutta*, the Buddha describes the Venerable Sāriputta's development of insight when he was training for the attainment of arahantship. The title is suggestive of the process, for the *sutta* recounts how Venerable Sāriputta proceeds from the first *jhāna*, one by one all the way to the cessation of perception and feeling at which point the *sutta* says, "and his taints were destroyed by his seeing with wisdom."<sup>18 19</sup> Within two weeks of practice, Ven. Sāriputta had attained arahantship.

What is instructive about this *sutta* is that it shows how, in seven of the eight levels of *jhāna* that Ven. Sāriputta went through, he saw the arising and cessation of the aggregates, states of mind, mind objects, and remained "unattracted, unrepelled, and detached", and thereby gained understanding, insight, and wisdom leading to freedom (*nibbāna*). Ven. Sāriputta went through this training while maintaining tranquil aware *jhānas*. To see this arising and cessation of mental states with such clarity and openness would have been quite difficult in a state of deep absorption. In this *sutta*, by recounting Ven. Sāriputta's experience, the Buddha is demonstrating the use of tranquil aware *jhānas* to attain the deathless.

### **The Question of Authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta***

Ven. Bhikkhu Sujato and Ven. Bhikkhu Brahmali in their book *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts* question the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta*. Their book is an excellent defense of the authenticity of the bulk of the *sutta-piṭaka* and they



are formidable scholars whose opinion warrants consideration. They discuss *Anupada-sutta* in their chapter *Later Texts Are Obvious* and use it as an example of the texts that are *not* to be attributed directly to the Buddha. They give five reasons:

1. No known parallels in non-Pali EBTs [Early Buddhist Texts];
2. Extravagant praise of Sāriputta, not found elsewhere in the EBTs and akin to flowery and exaggerated language of other Buddhist texts;
3. Textual duplication and redundancy, such as *upekkhā* being mentioned twice as a *jhāna* factor for both the third and the fourth *jhāna*;
4. *Abhidhamma* type vocabulary, not found elsewhere in the EBTs, such as the compound word *anupadavavaṭṭhita*;
5. Juxtaposition of different literary styles, specifically of *sutta* style list of *jhāna* factors connected with “*ca*” and of an *Abhidhamma* style list of factors without the connecting word “*ca*”.

It is certainly possible that in the light of the above evidence Ven. Bhikkhu Sujato and Ven. Bhikkhu Brahmali are correct, and that this *sutta* is a later addition. However, I find their case to be unpersuasive and will consider their arguments point by point below. This *sutta* seems a genuine teaching of the Buddha, and its inclusion in the *Majjhima-nikāya* warrants it being taken as authentic unless the evidence to the contrary is very persuasive.

It may be noted that Venerables Sujato and Brahmali are not the first to challenge the authenticity of this *sutta*. Mrs. Rhys-Davids in the 1920’s suggested points 2-5 above to which the venerables have added point number one reformulated and reformulated the others.

Research of recent decades has enabled us to compare the Pali *sutta*-piṭaka with the Chinese *Āgamas*. This research was not available to Mrs. Rhys-Davids in the early twentieth century so she was unaware that there is no counterpart to the *Anupada-sutta* in the *Āgamas*. Thus, point number one among the five listed by Venerables Sujato and Brahmali is one they have added due to the perspective offered by comparison of the Pali and Chinese literature. In our opinion, it is the strongest of the five points they have offered in arguing against the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta*, with the other four points being less than persuasive.

Using criterion such as the above is how scholars attempt the very difficult job of determining what is early and what is late in the collections of *suttas*. It is amazing that we even have either the Pali *suttas* or their Chinese *Āgama* counterparts. The Pali *suttas* were passed on through centuries of oral tradition and then written down on palm leaves in Sri Lanka and then faithfully and diligently copied and recopied due to the ravages of humidity, insects, and war.

The *Āgamas*, which are the Chinese versions of these early *suttas* were transmitted to China across dangerous seas, rugged mountains, and deserts from India to China, where they were translated and preserved through tenuous times in that country. At one point all the wood blocks on which the *sūtras* (Pali: *sutta*, Sanskrit: *sūtra*) were

carved, along with all the copies of the *sūtras*, were burned along with their temples by an anti-Buddhist emperor and the *sūtras* had to be retrieved from Korea once conditions were again peaceful.

The *suttas* as we have them are the product of more than two millennia of transmission, which speaks to the dedication of those who understood the preciousness of these teachings and labored for their preservation. Lacking original manuscripts or reliable dating systems, scholars must piece together what tenuous clues they have into a viable picture. Of course, any such picture may be controversial, and Venerables Sujato and Brahmali have written their book largely to answer those who present a case that we can't really know what the Buddha did or didn't say, and to argue that what we have in the *suttas* and *Āgamas* is largely the product of later generations.

The venerables have written their admirable book in response to this skepticism of the authenticity of the *suttas*. They believe in the reliability and authenticity of the bulk of the *sutta-piṭaka*. On this point, we are in agreement, and I thank them for their carefully considered book.

Let us consider their arguments against the authenticity of *Anupada-sutta*, MN 111. Their point number one is that there is no equivalent *sutta* to *Anupada-sutta* in the Chinese. *Suttas* that appear in both the Pali and the Chinese are usually considered “core” material from an era of early Buddhism that predated the geographical divergence of Buddhism and its development into various schools. Thus, any *sutta* that appears in a similar form in both the Chinese and the Pali is considered part of the earliest material in the Buddhist tradition and is likely either the direct teaching of the Buddha or a close rendition of such teaching that may have been edited by later generations.

In the case of the *Anupada-sutta*, the Chinese is lacking. As far as creating doubt about the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta*, this seems the most telling of the five points listed, but caution is needed before rejecting the authenticity of a *sutta* solely on this account.

The lack of an equivalent *sutta* in Chinese is not unusual, as there is a considerable amount of material in the Pali *Suttas* that does not appear in the Chinese *Āgama* literature. There are six *suttas* in the Pali *Majjhima-nikāya* for which no direct equivalents can be found in the Chinese, and others for whom the equivalents are not exact or considerable amounts of material are missing.<sup>20</sup> However, the comparison of the Pali *Suttas* with the *Āgamas* overall gives a picture of a coherent and reliable core of materials that can be considered as early Buddhism. We would agree with Venerables Sujato and Brahmali that it is most likely that this material can be traced directly or indirectly to the Buddha himself.

Considering the difficulties of the transmission of this material over the centuries, it is very possible for authentic material to be in one tradition but not the other. In his introduction to *The Questions of King Milinda*, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi has pointed out that both the *Milindapañhā* and the *Nettipakaraṇa* contain a great number of

quotations and references to the *suttas* that cannot be found in the Pali *suttapiṭaka*. In referring to those missing references, he states,

“To account for these passages we might be equally justified in assuming that the Pali canon, in an older recension, contained texts that have somehow been lost except for a few preserved fragmentarily in some extra-canonical works.”<sup>21</sup>

In light of the above suggestion of the possibility of lost material, we need to be cautious in assuming that any *sutta* not appearing in both the Pali and Chinese traditions is inauthentic.

There is also the possibility of sectarianism having affected what we find in the various collections. As we have noted above, those devoted to the absorption concentration method of meditation may not want to deal with the *Anupada-sutta* and may prefer to set it aside. This setting aside of this *sutta* could have happened as the *sutta* was transmitted over vast geographical distances.

So point number one alone does not disqualify *Anupada-sutta*. But if the other evidence in points two through five appears to be against the authenticity of the *sutta*, the weight of point number one becomes more considerable. Let us examine those points.

In criticism number two the authors are claiming the praise of Sāriputta is exaggerated in the *Anupada-sutta*, and it contains language more characteristic of later times than of the time of the Buddha. However, we must keep in mind that even the *suttas* which are widely attributed to the Buddha also sometimes exhibit a change in language and styles. For instance, sections of the *Sutta-nipāta* use a more archaic form of Pali, and may be traceable to a very early period of time in the teaching career of the Buddha.<sup>22</sup> The language of the *suttas* changed even during the time the Buddha was still alive, and it is difficult to use the presence of only one or two words to give a definite date to a *sutta* as early or late.

As far as the presumed “extravagant praise of Sāriputta”, let us quote that section of *Anupada-sutta* :

“Bhikkhus, Sāriputta is wise; Sāriputta has great wisdom; Sāriputta has joyous wisdom; Sāriputta has quick wisdom; Sāriputta has keen wisdom; Sāriputta has penetrative wisdom; During half a month, bhikkhus, Sāriputta gained insight into states one by one as they occurred.”<sup>23 24</sup>

My disagreement with the skepticism of the authors on this point is twofold. First, the Buddha’s admiration for his great disciple Sāriputta is well known and such language of praise is not out of place, especially considering that the Buddha was using this occasion to tell of Ven. Sariputta’s attainment of arahantship and to use the narrative to clarify some important points regarding the union of *jhāna* and *vipassanā* practice. We find praise of Sāriputta and of other accomplished monks and nuns, some of it lavish, throughout the *suttas*.

Sāriputta was known for his wisdom as his *dhamma* brother Moggallāna was known for his miraculous power. It is precisely this attribute of wisdom that is here being

praised by the Buddha. His wisdom is described variously as “great”, “joyous”, “quick”, “keen”, and “penetrative”. This appears to be neither repetitive nor flowery, but rather descriptive in the kind of way we find the Buddha bringing out various facets of a subject. All of these are useful attributes to have with reference to wisdom leading to *nibbāna*, and would be attributes to recommend Ven. Sāriputta and for others to emulate. Such a list of positive attributes is a teaching tool in the hands of the Buddha.

Ven. Sāriputta was one of a handful of monks and nuns who were trusted by the Buddha to give teachings in his stead. For instance, we have in the *Sangāti-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* an instance where the Buddha had a backache and told Sāriputta,

“As soon as the Mallas had gone the Lord, surveying the monks sitting silently all about, said to the Venerable Sāriputta: The monks are free from sloth and torpor, Sāriputta. You think of a discourse on dhamma and give it to them. My back aches and I want to stretch it.”<sup>25 26</sup>

And at the end of the same discourse,

“And when the Lord had stood up, he said to the Venerable Sāriputta: “Good, good, Sariputta! Well indeed have you proclaimed the way of chanting together for the monks!” These things were said by the Venerable Sāriputta, and the teacher confirmed them. The monks were delighted and rejoiced at the Venerable Sāriputta’s words.”<sup>27 28</sup>

An instance of elaborate praise being heaped on Ven. Sāriputta occurs in *Rathavināta-sutta* of *Majjhima-nikāya*. In this *sutta*, Ven. Puṇṇa Mantāniputta is discussing *dhamma* with Ven. Sāriputta, not knowing the identity of his fellow monk. Upon discovering with whom he has been talking, he says,

“Indeed, friend, we did not know that we were talking with the Venerable Sāriputta, the disciple who is like the teacher himself. If we had known this was the Venerable Sāriputta, we should not have said so much. It is wonderful, friend, it is marvelous! Each profound question has been posed, point by point, by the Venerable Sāriputta as a learned disciple who understands the Teacher’s Dispensation correctly. It is a gain for his companions in the holy life, it is a great gain for them that they have the opportunity to see and honor the Venerable Sāriputta. Even if it were by carrying the Venerable Sāriputta about on a cushion on their heads that his companions in the holy life would get the opportunity to see and honor him, it would be a gain for them, a great gain for them. And it is a gain for us that we have the opportunity to see and honor the great Sāriputta.”<sup>29 30</sup>

This praise from a fellow monk may be considered by some as “flowery”, but we would consider it to be very descriptive in that the Ven. Sāriputta is being acknowledged as a teacher such as the Buddha himself. That this praise is coming from a monk points out the reputation held by Ven. Sāriputta within the *saṅgha*. Such reputation could only rest on the attainment of great wisdom by Ven. Sāriputta and praise to that effect by the Blessed One himself, in the presence of the *saṅgha*. It is only natural that the Buddha would publicly praise a disciple who was acting as a teacher with the Buddha’s approval. In fact, there are six *suttas* within the

*Majjhima-nikāya* that are taught by Ven. Sāriputta, three of which are basic texts for the study of monastic doctrine throughout the Theravādin Buddhist world.<sup>31 32</sup>

Other instances of the Buddha praising his prominent disciples are too numerous to list but here is another pertinent passage for comparison from the *Saccavibhanga-sutta*,

“Cultivate the friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, bhikkhus, associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. Sāriputta is like a mother; Moggallāna is like a nurse. Sāriputta trains others for the fruit of stream-entry, Moggallāna for the supreme goal. Sāriputta, bhikkhus, is able to announce, teach, describe, establish, reveal, expound, and exhibit the Four Noble Truths.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>34</sup>

Notice that in this passage another impressive list of attributes is given by the Buddha to describe his great disciple. The previous list is similar to this one. The assertion that this kind of language does not occur elsewhere in the early Buddhist texts (EBTs) seems inaccurate.

Ven. Vimalaramsi, who is a teacher of the open, aware method of *jhāna* within the Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM) form of *samatha-vipassanā* points out the significance of the Buddha using so many descriptions of wisdom as a description of Ven. Sāriputta in one of his *dhamma* talks. Quoting the *sutta* and then commenting on it, he points out,

“Monks, Sāriputta is wise; Sāriputta has great wisdom; Sāriputta has wide wisdom; Sāriputta has joyous wisdom; Sāriputta has quick wisdom; Sāriputta has keen wisdom; Sāriputta has penetrative wisdom.” ...

BV: All of these different qualities that he’s talking about for Sāriputta, who was his first chief disciple, he was second to the Buddha in wisdom. If you’ll remember last night, I said anytime you hear about “wisdom” in the *suttas*, it’s talking about seeing, knowing, and understanding Dependent Origination, and you will be able to see that at the end of this *sutta* also.”<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, we think point number two, criticism based on presumed ‘unusually flowery language that does not occur elsewhere in the EBTs (Early Buddhist Texts), is not a persuasive criticism of *Anupada-sutta* and not grounds for rejecting its authenticity.

In raising point number three, the authors feel that redundancy in language is grounds for dismissal of this *sutta* as being an Early Buddhist Text (EBT). They point out that the word *upekkhā* (equanimity), is mentioned twice in each of the third and fourth *jhānas*. The authors point to this as a case of textual redundancy and duplication.

Let us quote the Buddha’s account of Ven. Sāriputta’s experiences in the fourth *jhāna* as an example.

“Again, bhikkhus, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, Sāriputta entered upon and abided

in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and the purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

And the states in the fourth *jhāna*- the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, the purity of mindfulness, and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the enthusiasm<sup>36</sup>, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention- those states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: “So, indeed, these states, not having been, came into being; having been, they vanish.” Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers. He understood: “There is an escape beyond,” and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is.”<sup>37 38</sup>

Above is the text that is under discussion in English translation with the Pali original footnoted. The Buddha’s teaching as given in the *suttas*, often used duplication and redundancy. There are numerous cases in which he lists all of the salient factors, even more than once, as necessary. This particular *sutta* has a profound teaching that justifies the usage of the lists of factors as they occur. As the Buddha is demonstrating how aware *jhāna* works, he is using the language in a way to enhance his illustration of this point.

In assessing the implications and purport of this passage, it is important to understand that in aware *jhāna* the meditator can see the five aggregates, the four foundations and the *jhāna* factors as they occur. In a *dhamma* talk, Bhante Vimalaramsi, explains it thus,

“Now, this next little bit is very interesting because this is the description of the five aggregates. OK? The five aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness are just different ways of saying the same thing. You have five aggregates: you have the body, you have feeling, you have perception, you have thoughts, you have consciousness. You have the four foundations of mindfulness: you have body, the same in both the aggregates and four foundations; feeling, the same in both; perception is part of feeling and it is also part of consciousness; and you have dhammas; and you have consciousness. So those four foundations of mindfulness and the five aggregates are just different ways of saying the same thing. So the point being - these states in the *jhāna* - while you’re in the *jhāna* you are able to practice the four foundations of mindfulness at exactly the same time. Now, the way that this is described is a little bit different than the five aggregates. Instead of “body” it says “contact” here because when you get into the later *jhānas* you don’t feel your body unless there is contact. OK?

When you get to the fourth *jhāna*, you’re not going to be able to radiate loving kindness from your heart anymore because you won’t feel it. The feeling of loving kindness will come up into your head. The only thing that you will feel in your body is if there is contact, if something touches. So he just uses “contact” and changes it with... changes “body” into “contact” because of the later meditations.”<sup>39</sup>

The *sutta* is listing what was seen by Ven. Sariputta, “one by one as they occurred”. It is also listing the factors in addition to the usual list of *jhāna* factors that are helping Ven. Sāriputta to be deep enough in meditation and sharp enough with mindfulness to see these things occur one by one. Ven. Vimalaramsi explains,

“MN: 111. “And the states in the fourth *jhāna*—the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, the purity of mindfulness, and unification of mind;...

BV: Your mind begins to stay on your object of meditation for a longer period of time, and your mind becomes very tranquil, very much at ease. Any little movement of mind’s attention you’re able to see, and when you see that is... when your mind is on your object of meditation, what happens is - a thought, or sensation, or whatever a distraction is - will start your mind to wobble. And then it wobbles, and it gets bigger and bigger until finally there’s a distraction. But now, when you get into the fourth *jhāna*, you’ll start to see your mind wobble, and you 6R right then, and then your mind stays on your object of meditation. You’re starting to learn what it is to have a still mind, a composed mind.”<sup>40</sup>

Bhante is pointing out how staying on the object of meditation produces tranquility and ease. There is a clarity that allows one to see HOW mind’s attention begins to move, what it looks like and feels like when that happens. In a tranquil aware *jhāna* this is what happens. It happened to Ven. Sāriputta, and it happens to anyone who with diligence pursues the practice.

What is being seen here through practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* while in the fourth *jhāna* is impermanence, *anicca*. Bhante Vimalaramsi explains how that works while reading from the *sutta* and offering commentary,

“MN:111: “And the states in the fourth *jhāna*—the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, purity of mindfulness, and unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, formations, and mind; ...

BV: You still have the five aggregates here, and this is important to realize because if you’re practicing a one-pointed kind of concentration where your mind stays on one object only, you’re not able to see these five aggregates because your mind is glued to that thing, whatever you put your attention on.

MN:111 ... the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention - these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. ...

BV: So he’s still seeing impermanence. You’re seeing change continually; you’re seeing it with a very balanced mind. Now, for people that practice straight *vipassanā*, seeing impermanence is a major thing, and they focus on seeing impermanence, suffering, and the impersonal nature of things, and when they do that, they don’t see how dependent origination arises, they don’t see Dependent Origination at all. But when you’re practicing the way that I’m showing you, you are able to see more deeply how these

links arise, and how they are there for a moment and disappear. So what you're seeing is Dependent Origination, and you're seeing the impermanence at a much finer level. It's not this big, gross level up here (gesture), it's at a much deeper level that you're seeing impermanence happening all the time, and it happens with each link of the Dependent Origination."<sup>41</sup>

In light of the above points, we can understand why the Buddha compiled these lists of factors in the way that he did. It fits the purpose of this teaching. Hence, criticism number three seems to be inaccurate.

The fourth point made by the authors as criticism of the *sutta* is that there is *abhidhamma* type vocabulary not found elsewhere in the EBTs. The word they are referring to is *anupadavavatthita*. They claim this as a word not belonging to the time period in which the authentic *suttas* were composed, that the use of this word indicates language from a later time period. Hence, in their view, the *sutta* is a product of later times. Mrs. Rhys Davids in her book also makes the same point, so the venerable authors seem to be following her analysis.

The word they characterize as being unlikely for the Buddha to have used is a compound word composed of *anupada* and *vavatthita*. *Anupada* appears three times in the beginning of the same *sutta*, as the title, as part of the compound word *anupadadhammavipassanā* in verse two, and as part of the compound word, the word under examination, *anupadavavatthita* in verse three.

Let us have a look at these words. First, the title of the *sutta* is *Anupada-sutta*. *Anu* is a prefix which is commonly used. Some of the compound words formed by using *anu* can be quite long and complex, and are found in numerous places in the *suttas*, for instance, the prefix *anu* begins the compound word *anupubbābhisaññānirodhasampajānasamāpatti*, which is found in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* and is translated by Maurice Walshe as “proceeds from stage to stage till reaching the limit of perception”.<sup>42</sup> This word gives us a clue as to how ‘*anu*’ is often used to give the idea of going from one thing to the next thing, or step by step. It would be difficult to find this particular compound word outside of this one *sutta*, yet this *sutta*, the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*, seems an authentic teaching of the Buddha.

When combined with *pada*, step, we have *anupada*, with the meaning of “step by step” or “one by one”. This is a very appropriate title for MN 111 as it is about letting go of mental states one by one as they occur. The connection with *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* is interesting, as we also have a complex compound word using the prefix *anu* in that *sutta* denoting how the illusory “I” is let go of at every stage (“one by one”) until it ceases altogether. So we have two examples of the Buddha giving teachings and constructing compound words including the prefix *anu* to get his meaning across. These teachings both have the “one thing at a time” aspect and the Buddha employs the prefix *anu* in both cases to get a similar but slightly different meaning across.

In the second verse of the *Anupada-sutta*, *anu* is again used in the compound word *anupada* and in this case combined with two other very common Pali words to give



a unique meaning. The word is *anupadadhammavipassanā*, and here we can consider *anupada* to mean at every step, continuous, repeated, and uninterrupted. The next word, *dhamma* means phenomena or in this case “mental states”. The next word is *vipassanā*, insight. The compound word *anupadadhammavipassanā* is followed by an active verb, *vipassati*, which is related to *vipassanā* and means to “have insight”. Putting the components together with the active verb that follows, we have “insight into states in a continuous, uninterrupted manner”. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates this as “insight into states one by one as they occurred”.

That brings us to the next passage, where we again find usage of *anupada* in a compound word, and this is the particular Pali word, *anupadavavatthita*, that the authors are referring to. Here, *anupada* is combined with *vavatthita* which can mean, “alternatively arranged”, “fixed”, “determined” or “separated”. It is a past participle, indicating something that has been done. It has the idea of having sorted things out.

If we put it all together, we get a word which means something like “having defined or sorted out things in a continuous manner”. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates it as [these states] “were defined by him one by one as they occurred”.

As far as I know, these particular compound words are unique to the *Anupada-sutta*. Does this mean the *sutta* is not an authentic teaching of the Buddha? This seems an unwarranted assumption. Similar to *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* and many other *suttas*, we have a teaching here that is not without parallel in other *suttas*, but that contains enough unique elements to warrant some creative use of vocabulary and compound words befitting the particular emphasis of the teaching.

As Richard Gombrich points out, uniqueness should not disqualify a *sutta* teaching as authentic as long as the sentiment is broadly in harmony with teachings in other parts of the *suttas*. He states it thusly,

“If the Buddha was continually arguing *ad hominem* and adapting what he said to the language of his interlocutor, this must have enormous implications for the consistency, or rather the inconsistency, of his mode of expression. He had a clear and compelling vision of the truth and was trying to convey it to a wide range of people with different inclinations and presuppositions, so he had to express this message in many different ways.”<sup>43</sup>

This variety of expression that Gombrich refers to would presumably include the creative usage of language, at which the Buddha was especially adept.

There is also the chance the word was grafted onto the *sutta* by a later generation, but this explanation seems unnecessary.

Venerable Nyanaponika Thera devotes an appendix to his book *Abhidhamma Studies* to the defense of the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta*. Ven. Nyanaponika is responding to Mrs. Rhys-Davids as the book by Venerables Suciitto and Brahmali was not published at that time. He specifically takes up the argument that the use of the word *anupadavavatthita* suggests, as Mrs. Rhys-Davids puts it, “a latter editing”. He writes,

“Though *anupada* does not occur frequently in the Piṭakas, it is also not at all an expression characteristic of any later period of Pāli literature; so we cannot draw any conclusions from the mere fact of its rare occurrence. With regard to the other word, it is true that derivatives of the verb *vavattheti*, *vavatthita*, and particularly *vavatthāna* are found very frequently in later canonical books such as the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Vibhaṅga*, and especially in the commentaries and the *Visuddhimagga*. But *vavatthita*, “determined” or “established,” is likewise not such a highly technical term that the dating of a text could be determined on that evidence alone. There are many other words too which occur only once or sporadically in the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Even if one of these words, for example *vavattheti*, became the fashion in later idiom in preference to its synonyms, such a development (very frequent in the history of words) does not exclude the occasional use of the same word in an earlier period too...

In conclusion, we repeat that we do not see any reason why the *Anupada-sutta* should not be regarded as an authentic discourse of the Buddha.”<sup>44</sup>

Whether the word *anupadavavatthita* is an original word used by the Buddha in this *sutta*, or this word dates from a later time period, it communicates exactly what Buddhist practice is all about. That is, whatever arises, the practitioner must let it go. One by one as they occur, whatever mental states that arise, they are let go. In the process, the practitioner sees how they have arisen, and how they disappear, and through direct observation and experience understands how to escape them. If the meditator continues doing this, the practice brings insight wisdom. For Ven. Sāriputta, it resulted in his rapid attainment of *Nibbāna*.

In a *dhamma* talk on this *sutta*, Ven. Vimalaramsi makes clear the language of this *sutta* is precisely pointing out what happened to Ven. Sāriputta and what happens to a meditator who maintains his practice through tranquil aware *jhānas*. Reading from the *Anupada-sutta*, he explains,

“MN 111: ... the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention— these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred;...

BV: They didn’t all happen at the same time, they happened separately.”<sup>45</sup>

Which leads us to the final point the authors raise in objection to the discourse being included in the EBTs. This has to do with how the lists are tied together with or without linking words.

The authors believe the use of “*ca*” (and) in one series and no use of “*ca*” in the next shows inconsistency. This would be akin in English to saying “We ate with plates and bowls and spoons, but then we had to clean up the plates, bowls, spoons.” The authors believe to use the “*ca*” in one list and not in the following list indicates a different source for the two lists. They are saying, the use of “*ca*” is characteristic of *sutta* and Early Buddhist Texts, and a list without “*ca*” indicates the passage dates to a period of time after the passing of the Buddha.

I don't think it is quite so cut and dried as that. In reading works that were composed after the passing of the Buddha, such as *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, a proto-abhidhammic work in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, it is true that the lists rely less on the usage of “ca” and more on mere listing. However, “ca” does occur in some of the lists in that work, so the division between *sutta* and later works is not so strict in that regard.

I think there is a very obvious reason for using “ca” in the list of *jhāna* factors in *Anupada-sutta*, and dropping it in the second list in the same passage. The Buddha (or the reciters of the *Majjhima-nikāya*) first gave the usual *jhāna* factors as a series linked with “ca”. In *jhāna*, these factors are co-dependent and synergistic. The word “ca” can denote things that are linked together in time and space. It is a good word to indicate factors that arise simultaneously. The latter list has a different purpose. It is designed to indicate sequence, not simultaneity. By listing factors without ‘ca’ the effect of communicating a sequence (rather than simultaneity) is enhanced. Hence the title of the *Anupada-sutta*, with the idea of sequence of mental states being one of the main points being taught. They occurred one by one, not at the same time. I would not consider *Anupada-sutta* to be inauthentic due to “ca” not being used in both lists. Rather, this seems a skillful use of language, and can explain any redundancy of factors in the lists.

Rather than focusing on such small details which do not seem to be very persuasive in this case, it is worth reading the *sutta* as a whole. When the *Anupada-sutta* read in this way does not have any of the feel of a later work. I find the *sutta* to be as authentic as other *suttas* in the *Nikāyas*, and will take it as such.

The *Anupada-sutta* as a guide to practice;

Bhikkhu SuJato and Bhikkhu Brahmali. (2014). *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication society.

Bodhi, B. (1995). *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, B. (2015). *Investigating the Dhamma*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.

Buddhaghosa. (1956). *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) (Bhikkhu Nanamoli translation)*. Taipei: Corporate Body of Buddha Educational Foundation.

Dhammajiva, V. U. (2009). *In This Life Itself*. Nugegoda: Lithira.

Gombrich, R. F. (2007). *How Buddhism Began*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

Hart, W. (2008). *The Art of Living*. Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute.

Hirakawa, A. (2007). *A History of Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Mendis, N. e. (2007). *The Questions of King Milinda*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Nanamoli. (2015). *Mindfulness of Breathing*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Nyanaponika, T. (2007). *Abhidhamma Studies*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
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- Pande, G. C. (2006 ). *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Vimalaramsi, V. B. (2011). *Breath of Love*. Annapolis: Ehipassiko Foundation.

Walshe, M. (1995). *Digha Nikaya*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

Warder, A. (2004). *Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Now that we have described the importance of the *Anupada-sutta*, laid out our case for its authenticity, and contrasted it with the meditation methods based on the *Visuddhimagga*, it may be helpful to have a look at how the *sutta* is actually used in the practice of tranquil wisdom *jhānas* leading to liberation. To accomplish this, we will again turn to the teachings of Ven. Vimalaramsi who has brought forward one of the most prominent methods that are primarily based on the *suttas* rather than on the *Visuddhimagga*.

Whether this *sutta* is a reliable guide for meditation and *jhāna*, ultimately must be decided by practice rather than by scholarship. In light of the above discussion, I find it most plausible to take the *sutta* as the words of the Buddha, perhaps slightly altered by later generations of reciters as many *suttas* were. It is certainly a guide for practice in the TWIM tradition. In talking of the *Anupada-sutta*, section 4, and of Ven. Sāriputta's experience, Bhante Vimalaramsi comments (Vim.2012-13),

“A “mind rid of barriers” means the mind has become pure and has no hindrance or personality belief in it. When Sāriputta got into the first *jhāna*, he knew there was still more work to be done. But while he was in the *jhāna*, he was seeing impermanence. Anyone that sees impermanence sees a lot of unsatisfactoriness because we want things to be permanent, and when they are not, there's this little dissatisfaction that arises.

We're seeing the impersonal nature of all these different states as they arise and pass away. You don't have any control over these; they happen when the conditions are right for them to arise. There's no “me”, there's no “my”, there's no “I”.

You're seeing *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* while you are in the *jhāna*. You're also seeing the Five Aggregates. This is very key. Seeing these things, and we shall see that Sāriputta saw these things all the way up to the Realm of Nothingness.

About seeing the Five Aggregates; in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, there's a section on the Five Aggregates, and it says that the Five Aggregates and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are the same thing. When you're practicing and getting into the *jhāna*, by adding that extra step of relaxing, you're practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, while you're in the *jhāna*.” (pp. 130-131)

We can see from the above why *Anupada-sutta* is such a valued text in the TWIM method. Using Ven. Sāriputta's experience as example, Bhante is showing how an aware meditator in *jhāna* sees *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* as well as the Five Aggregates and is practicing the *satipaṭṭhāna* while in *jhāna*. That Ven. Sāriputta was practicing while in aware *jhāna* is clear from the *sutta*. For those who have no experience of abiding in an aware *jhāna*, this can be quite difficult to understand. It may be that the *sutta* is rejected by the aforementioned authors in part because it is nonsense to them. It may be outside of their realm of experience.

As Bhante Vimalaramsi says, “This particular *sutta* is very important because it’s showing you that there is full awareness while you’re in *jhāna*.” (ibid, p. 132) This idea of open, aware *jhāna* is going against the stream of those advocating absorption concentration *jhānas*. That the content of this *sutta* was challenging to the prevailing methods of meditation at the time might explain why it was not transmitted to China. There could have been sectarianism at work.

Bhante makes it clear that all of this understanding and insight comes as the meditator begins to see clearly the links of Dependent Origination. In discussing Ven. Sāriputta’s experience of self-confidence in the second *jhāna*, Bhante asks,

“Why do you have self-confidence when you’re starting to develop your deeper stages of meditation? Because you’re really starting to understand the process of Dependent Origination and you’re starting to see it as being an impersonal process; you’re starting to *see*.

Yesterday [during a dhamma talk at a retreat] I was telling everyone I want you to see how the movement of mind’s attention works. What happens? How does it happen? As you start seeing that, you start seeing individual parts of Dependent Origination, and you see that there is a cause and effect; when this arises then that arises.

When you let go of the craving, when you let go of that tension and tightness caused by mind’s attention and its movement, then there’s no clinging. There’s no habitual tendency (*bhava*) arising. At that moment, you have a very clear mind. It’s alert, there are no thoughts, and you bring your mind’s attention back to your object of meditation.

You can see how Sāriputta’s experience, while he was in each one of those *jhānas*, is a lot different than the ones that are being described as absorption concentration.” (ibid, p. 132-3)

Bhante is showing us that we must have acute mindfulness and full awareness in the *jhānas* in order to see the arising and passing of phenomena and how that happens, which is seeing the links of Dependent Origination. It is this seeing of mental states one by one as they arise, not grasping them but rather letting them go, that leads on progressively deeper and deeper into the *jhānas*.

As in *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*, each of these illusory selves is in turn abandoned. Each is in turn realized to be the illusory appearance of compound phenomena. Only with the attainment of the base of neither perception nor non-perception and the attainment of cessation of perception, feeling, and consciousness, does awareness of phenomena drop away. All the *jhānas* up to that point are aware *jhānas*. *Anupada-sutta* states that up to those two *jhānas*, there is awareness of the rise and fall of the five aggregates and of additional factors (such as enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention) that arise in the *jhānas*. Seeing this with insight wisdom is the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* through understanding the Four Noble Truths, the links of Dependent Origination, and the Three Characteristics of Existence.

For instance, in the *jhāna* of the Base of Nothingness, it is said,

“And the states in the base of nothingness-the perception of the base of nothingness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention-these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: There is an escape beyond.’ And with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is.”<sup>46</sup>

47

Even in the Base of Nothingness there are the five aggregates and the five factors of enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention. States of mind and mental factors arise and subside.

### Conclusion

We consider that the evidence shows that the *Anupada-sutta* is an authentic teaching of the Buddha and represents the meditative experience of Ven. Sāriputta in his attainment of *nibbāna* in a mere two weeks of practice. It seems prudent for scholars to accord the *Anupada-sutta* the same authenticity as they would other *suttas* in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. For those meditators intending to follow the original instructions of the Buddha as their guidance in their practice this *sutta* is a key guide for practicing the method of tranquil, aware *jhāna*.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu Sujato and Bhikkhu Brahmali (2014), p. 11

<sup>2</sup> Pande's *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* devotes a chapter to 'The Stratification of Sutta-Nipāta & Other Texts' in which the parameters for dating texts as early or late are well laid out. However, his work, first published in 1957 is now dated and not all his conclusions are fully acceptable.

<sup>3</sup> Warder (2004), p. 2

<sup>4</sup> Walshe (1995), p. 50

<sup>5</sup> Bhikkhu Sujato and Bhikkhu Brahmali (2014), p.11-12

<sup>6</sup> Japanese scholars such as Hirakawa Akira generally agree with the assessments of Warder and Walshe quoted above. See, for instance, Hirakawa's *A History of Indian Buddhism*, p.38-39 for his assessment of 'Early Buddhist doctrine'.

<sup>7</sup> *Anupada Sutta*, Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, p.902

<sup>8</sup> *Yaṃ kho taṃ bhikkhave, sammā vadamāno vadeyya: vasippatto pāramippatto ariyasmiṃ sīlasmiṃ, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyasmiṃ samādhismiṃ, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyāya paññāya, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyāya vimuttiyāti. Sāriputtameva taṃ sammā vadamāno vadeyya vasippatto pāramippatto ariyasmiṃ sīlasmiṃ, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyasmiṃ samādhismiṃ, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyāya paññāya, vasippatto pāramippatto ariyāya vimuttiyāti.*

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter VIII of Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification*, to see how he uses *ānāpānasati* as a tool to go into *jhāna* (that is, as a method of *samatha*) by way of one-pointed concentration on a single sensation leading to absorption.

<sup>10</sup> Dhammajiva (2009), p.7

<sup>11</sup> Hart (2008), p.73

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.79

<sup>13</sup> *Anupada Sutta*, Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, p.900

<sup>14</sup> *Puna ca paraṃ bhikkhave, sārīputto sukhasa ca pahānā dukkhasa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati, ye ca catutthe jhāne dhammā upekkhā adukkhamasukhā vedanā passaddhattā cetaso anābhogo satipārisuddhi cītekkaggatā ca phasso vedanā saññā cetaṇā cittaṃ chando adhimokkha viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro. Tyāssa dhammā anupadavavathitā honti. Tyāssa dhammā Viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthamā gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: 'evaṃ kira me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti. Hutvā paṭiventī'ti. So tesu dhammesu anupayo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto viṣaṃyutto vimariyādīkatena cetasā viharati. So atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇa'nti pajānāti. Tabbahulīkārā atthitvevassa hoti.*

<sup>15</sup> An account of how the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* relates to the *jhānas* is given in Ven. Vimalaramsi's book *The Breath of Love*, p.81 relates the *jhānas* to the practice of *ānāpānasati*, and p. 106 etc. explains how *jhāna* relates to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, here is the view of Ven. Nānamoli. In his forward to his book *Mindfulness of Breathing* (Nānamoli, 2015) he explains, 'In the *Vinaya* and *Sutta Piṭakas*, the description, or as it might be termed, "the statement," of *ānāpānasati* appears as a fixed formula; it is repeated unchanged in many different *suttas*. Instructions for the 'practice' are detailed in the Ven. Buddhaghosa's work, the *Visuddhimagga*. The canonical work, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, a technical work dealing with the analysis of different kinds of knowledge, devotes a self-contained treatise to it, the *Ānāpānakathā*, which could be called "the Theoretical Analysis." (p. vii) Thus, Ven. Nānamoli upholds the *Visuddhimagga* explanation as the one to be actually practiced, not the *sutta* version.

<sup>17</sup> MN 111, BB trans, p. 899 (PTS iii 25)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 902, verse 19

<sup>19</sup> *Paññāya cassa divsā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti.*



- <sup>20</sup> <https://suttacentral.net/mn> The other five *suttas* in *Majjhima-nikāya* that have no equivalent in the Chinese are: MN 48 *Kosambiya-sutta*, MN 53 *Sekha-sutta*, MN 71 *Tevijjavacchagota-sutta*, MN 103 *Kinti-sutta*, MN 110 *Cūḷapaṇṇama-sutta*. These *suttas* appear to be authentic teachings of the Buddha. It is unclear as to why they do not appear in the Chinese *Āgamas*.
- <sup>21</sup> Mendis (2007), p.13
- <sup>22</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutta\\_Nipata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutta_Nipata)
- <sup>23</sup> MN 111:2, Anupada Sutta, BB trans., p. 899, (PTS iii 25)
- <sup>24</sup> *Paṇḍito bhikkhave, sāriputto, mahāpaṇṇo bhikkhave, sāriputto puthupaṇṇo bhikkhave sāriputto, hāsupaṇṇo bhikkhave sāriputto, javanapaṇṇo bhikkhave sāriputto, tikkhapaṇṇo bhikkhave sāriputto, nibbedhikapāṇṇo bhikkhave sāriputto. Sāriputto bhikkhave, addhamāsaṃ anupadadhamnavipassanaṃ vipassati.*
- <sup>25</sup> Sangīti Sutta 1.5, MW. Trans., p.480, (PTS iii 211)
- <sup>26</sup> *Atha kho bhagavā acirapakkantesu pāveyyakesu mallesu tuṅhībhūtaṃ tuṅhībhūtaṃ bhikkhusaṅghaṃ anuviloketvā āyasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ āmantesi, 'vigatathinamiddho kho sāriputta bhikkhusaṅgho. Paṭibhātu taṃ sāriputta bhikkhūnaṃ dhammi kathā. Piṭṭhi me āgilāyati, tamahaṃ āyamissāmi' ti.*
- <sup>27</sup> Sangīti Sutta 3.4, DN 33.3.4, MW trans., p.510, (PTS iii 271)
- <sup>28</sup> *Atha kho bhagavā vuṭṭahitvā āyasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ āmantesi: "sādhu sādhu sāriputta, sādhu kho tvaṃ sāriputta, bhikkhunaṃ saṅgītipariyāyaṃ abhāsī' ti. Idamavoca āyasmā sāriputto. Samanuñño sathā ahoṣi. Attamaṇā ca te bhikkhū āyasmato sāriputtassa bhāsitaṃ abhinanduntī.*
- <sup>29</sup> Rathavinīta Sutta, MN 24:17, BB trans., p.245, (PTS i 151)
- <sup>30</sup> *"Satthukappena vata kira bho sāvakena saddhiṃ mantayamānā na jānimha 'āyasmā sāriputto' ti. Sace hi mayaṃ jāneyyāma 'āyasmā sāriputto' ti ettakampi no nappaṭibhāseyya. Acchariyaṃ āvuso, abbhutaṃ āvuso, yathā taṃ sutavatā sāvakena sammadeva sathusāsanaṃ ājānanta, evamevaṃ āyasmatā sāriputtana gambhīrā gambhīrā pañhā anumāssa anumāssa pucchitā. Lābhā sabrahmacārīnaṃ, suladdhalābhā sabrahmacārīnaṃ, ye āyasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ labhanti dassanāya. Labhanti payirupāsanaṃ. Cetaṇḍukena cepi sabrahmacārī āyasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ muddhanā pariharantā labheyyuṃ dassanāya, labheyyuṃ payirupāsanaṃ, tesampi lābhā, tesampi suladdhaṃ. Amhākampi lābhā, amhākampi suladdhaṃ, ye mayaṃ āyasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ labhāma dassanāya. Labhāma payirupāsanaṃ' ti.*
- <sup>31</sup> Bodhi (2009), p.20-21
- <sup>32</sup> Of the 152 *suttas* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the nine *suttas* spoken by Ven. Sāriputta are: *Anagaṇa Sutta* (MN 5), *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* (MN 9), *Mahāhatthipadopam Sutta* (MN 28), *Gulissāni Sutta* (MN 69), *Saccavibhanga Sutta* (MN 141), *Anāthapiḍḍikovāda Sutta* (MN 143). Ven. Sāriputta also participates in significant dialogues in other *suttas*.
- <sup>33</sup> *Saccavibhanga Sutta*, MN 141:5, BB trans, p.1097 (PTS iii 248), also at SN 17:23
- <sup>34</sup> *Sevetha bhikkhave, sāriputtamoggallāne. Bhajatha bhikkhave, sāriputtamoggallāne. Paṇḍitā bhikkhū anuggāhakā sabrahmacārīnaṃ. Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, janetti evaṃ sāriputto. Seyyathāpi jātassa āpādetā evaṃ kho moggallāno. Sāriputto bhikkhave, sotāpattiphale vineti. Moggallāno uttamathe. Sāriputto bhikkhave, pahoti cattāri ariyasaccāni vitthārena ācikkhituṃ desetū paññāpetuṃ paṭṭhapetuṃ vivarituṃ vibhajituṃ uttānīkātuntī.*
- <sup>35</sup> Dhamma talk, 4 March 08, <http://talks.dhammasukha.org/mn-111-jt3-080304.html>, referenced Feb. 2016
- <sup>36</sup> Bhante Vimalaramsi favors “enthusiasm” as a translation of *chanda* rather than Bhikkhu Bodhi’s “zeal”, as the word zeal in English has strong Christian overtones.
- <sup>37</sup> Anupada Sutta, MN 111:9-10, BB trans., p.900, (PTS iii 27)
- <sup>38</sup> *Puna ca paraṃ bhikkhave, sāriputto sukhasa ca pahānā dukkhasa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati, ye ca catutthe jhāne dhammā upekkhā adukkhamasukhā vedanā passaddhattā cetaso anābhogo satipārisuddhi cūṭekaggatā ca phasso vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro. Tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti. Tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: 'evaṃ kira me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti. Hutvā paṭiventī' ti. So tesu dhammesu anupayo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vippamutto visaṃyutto vimariyādīkatena cetasā viharati. So atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇa'nti pajānāti. Tabbahulīkārā atthitvevassa hoti.*

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- <sup>39</sup> MN 111, 18-Mar-2012, <http://talks.dhammasukha.org/mn-111-jt7-120318.html>, referenced Feb. 2016
- <sup>40</sup> <http://talks.dhammasukha.org/mn-111-ana-100328.html>.
- <sup>41</sup> <http://talks.dhammasukha.org/mn-111-ana-100328.html>.
- <sup>42</sup> DN 9:17, MW trans. p.162, (PTS i 184)
- <sup>43</sup> Gombrich (2007), p.18
- <sup>44</sup> Nyanaponika (2007), pp.126-127
- <sup>45</sup> 4 March 08, <http://talks.dhammasukha.org/mn-111-jt3-080304.html>, referenced Feb. 2016
- <sup>46</sup> Anupada Sutta, MN.111.16, BB trans., p.901, (PTS iii 28)
- <sup>47</sup> *Puna ca paraṃ bhikkhave, sāriputto sabbaso viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma 'natthi kiñci'ti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ye ca ākiñcaññāyatane dhammā ākiñcaññāyatanasaññā ca cittekaḅgatā ca phasso. Vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkhaṃ viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti. Tyāssa dhammā viditā uppañjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. So evaṃ pajānāti: 'evaṃ kira me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā paṭiventī'ti. So tesu dhammesu anupayo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vip̄pamutto viṣaṃyutto vimariyādīkatena cetasā viharati so atthi uttariṃ nissaraṇanti pajānāti. Tabbahulīkārā atthitvevassa hoti.*