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The Path of Serenity and Insight

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

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The Path of Serenity and Insight Bhante Henepola Gunaratana
In the oldest scriptures of Theravada Buddhism much attention is given to the jhanas, high levels of meditative attainment distinguished by powerful concentration and purity of mind. Ven. Dr. Gunaratana examines these jhanas within the context of Buddhist teaching as a whole and particularly within the meditation disciplines taught by the Buddha. Beginning with the ethical foundation for meditation, the role of the teacher, the classical subjects of meditation, and the appropriateness of these subjects to individual practitioners, the author traces the practice of meditation to the higher reaches of realization. The eight stages of jhana are individually analyzed and explained in terms of their relation to one another and to the ultimate goal of the teaching.

The author makes the critical distinction between the mundane jhanas and supermundane jhanas, pointing out that the lower four, while leading to various mental powers and psychic attainments, are not necessary to full enlightenment and may be developed or bypassed as the meditator wishes. The author goes on to explain the place of the jhanas among the accomplishments of an arahat and elucidate their usefulness for a dedicated meditator.

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