The Samantha Jhanas (Pure Concentration States)

- 1st and 2nd: Applied and sustained attention (aiming and rubbing), rapture, happiness, concentration.
- 3rd: Rapture dropped, so mindfulness and equanimity predominate with “bodily” bliss present.
- 4th: Equanimity predominates, with neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling predominating, basis for jhanas 5-8.
- 5th: Boundless Space, equanimity.
- 6th: Boundless Consciousness, equanimity.
- 7th: Nothingness (out of phase with phenomena), equanimity.
- 8th: Neither Perception Nor Yet Non-perception.
- 9th: Nirodha Samapatti: Cessation of Perception and Feeling, only attained by Anagamis with good samatha skills.

The Tibetan Five Path and Ten Bhumis Models
- Path of Accumulation: corresponds to 1st-4th Jhanas.
- Path of Renunciation/Unification: corresponds to 5th-8th.
- Path of Concentration: corresponds to 9th.
- Path of Meditation: corresponds to 10th.
- Path of No-Learning: Buddhahood, the 11th.

The Three Doors

- Nahanas 12-14 and subsequent entrances into Fruition involve the complete understanding of two of the Three Characteristics.
- Nahanas 16-17 are for those who have sufficient insight and precision, one of The Three Doors arises naturally.
- Nahanas 18-20 are for those who have attained the rest of the vipassana jhanas and significant stages of insight.

Advice for Diagnosing “Where You Are”

Please be careful with all of this map terminology. It is extremely easy to be wrong. Work with good teachers who know this territory and have traversed it back and forth for many years. Train a habit of skepticism. If an event occurs, keep investigating with good concentration, mindfulness, precision, and equanimity. If it repeats itself many times, perhaps you will begin to get a good sense of what it is, what proceeds it and follows it, what has changed and not changed by its arising and passing. Even the most profound experiences come and go.

The Four Paths of Enlightenment

- Stream Entrner/Sotapanna: changes relationship to attachment to rites and rituals, personality belief, and skeptical doubt.
- Once Returner/Sakadagami: changes relationship to part of everyday fundamental attraction and aversion.
- Twice Returner/Arahant: changes relationship to the rest of everyday fundamental attraction and aversion.

The Samathas: 

- Transcendence. You can’t have the one without the other.
- Profound and direct intimacy with life leads to the rest of everyday fundamental attraction and aversion.
- The Three Doors repeat itself many times, perhaps you will begin to get a sense of what it is, what proceeds it and follows it, what has changed and not changed by its arising and passing.

Do Not Be Fooled

The Arising and Passing Away is very prone to fooling people into thinking they are enlightened, as it brings so many friends and is generally rather spectacular. Beware. In fact, there are a very large number of experiences that can fool even seasoned meditators into thinking they are something much higher and more profound than they actually are. The states of mind are not limited to those that are attainments, judgment, comparison and competition are simply unhelpful and potentially destructive.

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The Ten Corruptions of Insight of the 4th Jhana

- The Four Paths correspond to the rest of the vipassana jhanas and 11th.
- The Four Paths are controversial and not essential to investigation or progress.
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That said, when trying to diagnose which jhana you are in, pay very careful attention to just a few key criteria, particularly the frequencies of vibrations, what preceded it, what follows it, what the emotional, physical and mental qualities associated with it are, and the narrowness or width of your attention during it. These can often but not always give you a sense of “where you are”. This will be gone instantly, so do not get stuck in your map trap; it is not you. These stages and experiences are not yours. They are a natural, causal part of the universe doing its thing.

Remember, continued investigation of the Three Characteristics of whatever arises is the key to wisdom.

Models of the Stages of Enlightenment

- Often contain implied or explicit promises of limiting the emotional range, the experiential range or the range of possible actions that can occur.
- These models all err to various degrees and can cause some substantial problems for those that believe them.
- They are more prone to cause ugly shadow sides and serious denial of the obvious nature of the human condition than awakening.
- We are born human, and we have to learn to deal with that. Realizations can change a fundamental aspect of how we relate to phenomena. How phenomena manifest are subject to the laws of cause and effect that have always been in place. Deny the wide ranges of the heart and mind at your peril.
- Take care how you use your body and words in the face of these. Transcendence comes hand in hand with a profound and direct intimacy with life. Cultivating a profound and direct intimacy with life leads to Transcendence. You can’t have the one without the other.

These maps are merely tools to help keep us from getting stuck, sidetracked, damaged or fooled on our journey.

Go to www.interactivebuddha.com for an extensive reading list, free online writings on this and other topics, a list of local groups that promote wisdom and places to go on retreat, and other useful things. The free online book Mastering the Core Teachings of The Buddha, gives a very in-depth treatment of these maps and practices that are conducive to progress and insight.

Simple kindness to yourself and others, a sense of humor, and clear awareness of the experiences of life are treasures to be cultivated without restraint. Do not be afraid to exert yourself in these areas.

Best wishes on your adventure into your own heart, mind and body.