Right Knowledge & Right Liberation

In

Early Buddhism

EBT = Early Buddhist Texts

≈ The Word of the Buddha

Aim of this workshop

- Significance of right knowledge (*sammāñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammāvimutti*)
- Clear away some misunderstandings
- Find out what the Buddha meant by knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and liberation (*vimutti*)

Noble eightfold path vs. tenfold path (?)

Right view *(sammādiṭṭhi)* >
Right intention *(sammāsaṅkappa)* >
Right speech *(sammāvācā)* >
Right action *(sammākammanta)* >
Right livelihood *(sammā-ājīva)* >
Right effort *(sammāpadhāna)* >
Right mindfulness *(sammāsati)* >
Right stillness *(sammāsamādhi)* >
Right knowledge *(sammāñāṇa)* >
Right liberation *(sammāvimutti)*
(AN10.103)

Noble eightfold path vs. ten what?

~~Tenfold path~~

Ten wholesome qualities
Ten foundations for wearing away
Ten noble washes

Place of right knowledge on the path

Right view *(sammādiṭṭhi)* >

…

Right stillness *(sammāsamādhi)* >

Right knowledge *(sammāñāṇa)* >

Right liberation *(sammāvimutti)*

What is *ñāṇa*?

Meaning of *ñāṇa*: knowledge, gnosis -

> “Gnosis in Orthodox Christian ... thought is the spiritual knowledge of a saint … or mystically enlightened human being.” (Wikipedia)

Ñāṇa is often paired with *dassana*, “seeing”.

Thus “insight”, “direct knowledge”.

What is *ñāṇa*?

So it's “knowledge” about reality, truth:
Yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana
“Knowledge and vision according to reality”

But knowledge about what?

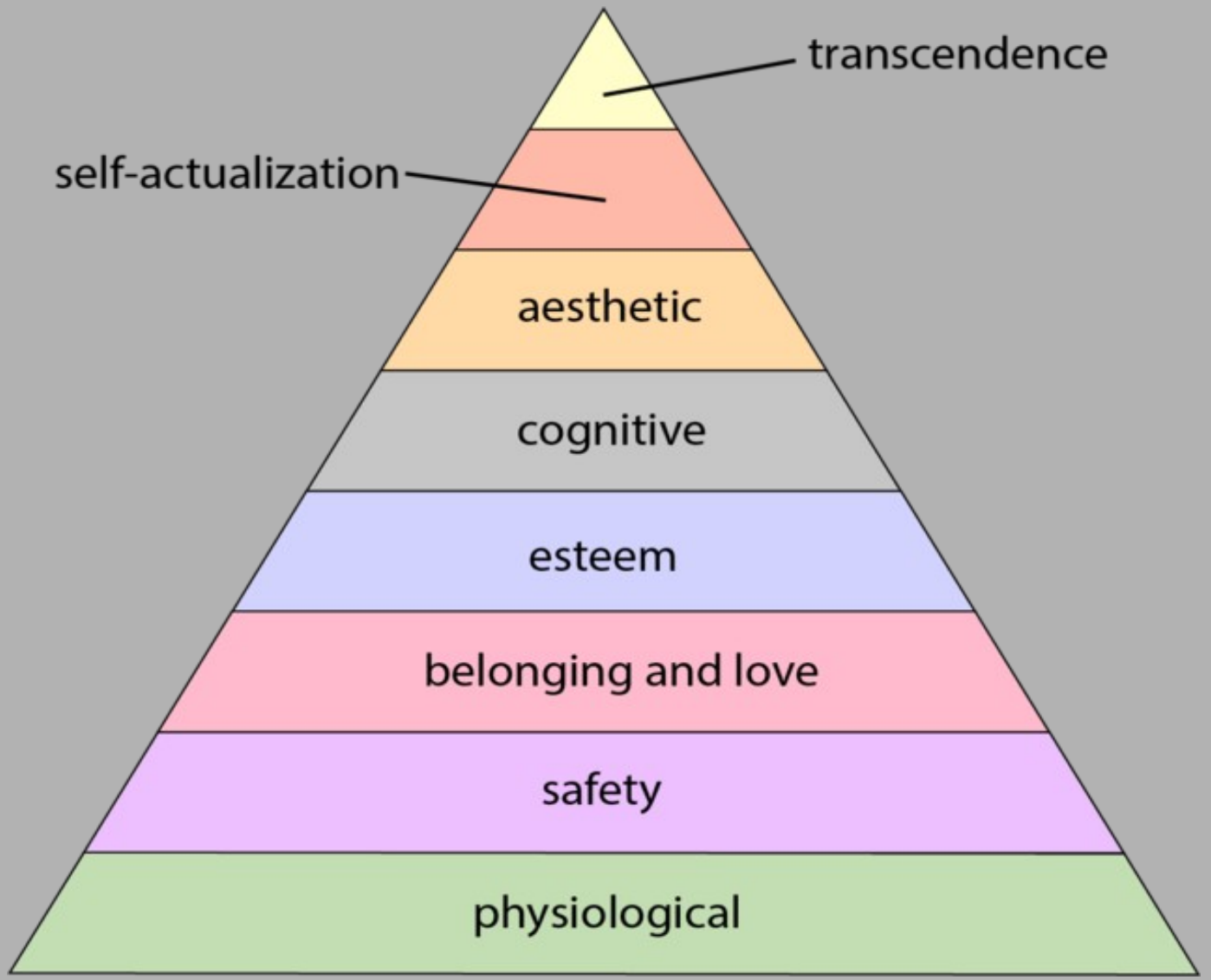
- Four noble truths (*ariya sacca*)
- Experience
- The five aggregates (*khandha*)
- The six sense fields (*saḷāyatana*)
- Dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*)

Why right stillness leads to right knowledge

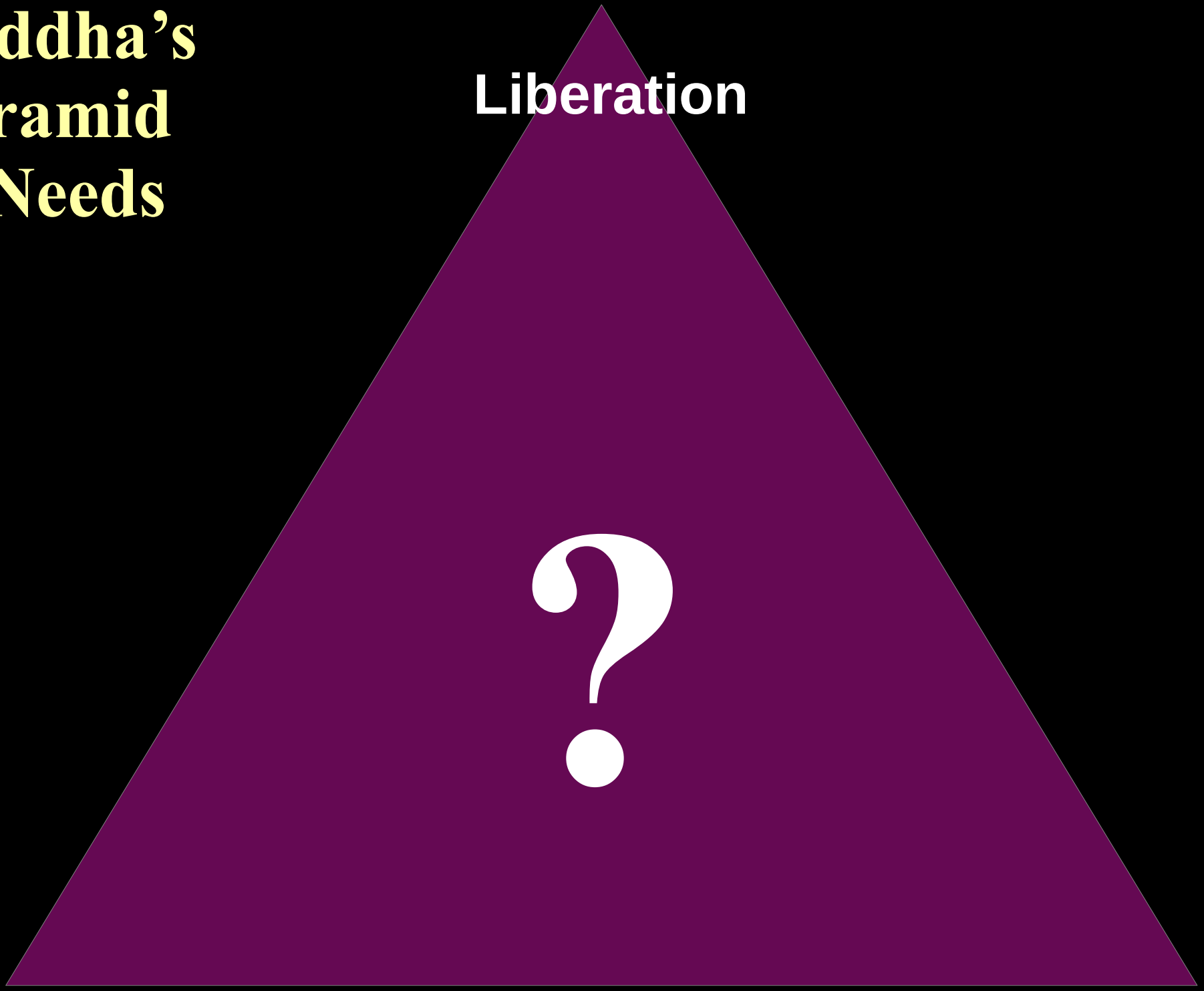
- It clears the mind of distorting defilements
- It sharpens mindfulness to the max
- It enables the mind to stay focused
- It gives the best data for insight
- It strengthens the mind to enable it to deal with insight

Dependent Liberation

Maslow's Pyramid of Needs



Buddha's Pyramid of Needs



Numbered Discourses 11.2
"(You don't have to) intend"

1-2) "Mendicants, if you are virtuous, if you are of ***good behavior*** (*sīla*), you do not have to intend to become ***remorseless*** (*avippaṭisāra*). It is natural to become remorseless if you are virtuous, if you are of good behavior.

3) If you are remorseless, you do not have to intend to become ***glad*** (*pāmojja*). It is natural to become glad if you are remorseless.

4) If you are glad, you do not have to intend to become ***delighted*** (*pīti*). It is natural to become delighted if you are glad.

5) If you have a delighted mind, you do not have to intend for your body to become ***tranquil*** (*passaddhi*). It is natural for your body to become tranquil if your mind is delighted.

6) If your body is tranquil, you do not have to intend to experience ***bliss*** (*sukha*). It is natural to experience bliss if your body is tranquil.

7) If you experience bliss, you do not have to intend for your mind to ***unify*** (*samādhi*). It is natural for your mind to unify if you experience bliss.

8) If your mind gets unified, you do not have to intend to get to ***know and see things as they really are*** (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*). It is natural to get to know and see things as they really are if your mind gets unified.

9) If you know and see things as they really are, you do not have to intend to become ***disillusioned*** (*nibbidā*). It is natural to become disillusioned if you know and see things as they really are.

10) If you are disillusioned, you do not have to intend to ***lose desire*** (*virāga*). It is natural to lose desire if you are disillusioned.

11) If you lose desire, you do not have to intend to get to ***know and see liberation*** (*vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana*). It is natural to get to know and see liberation if you lose desire.

Remorselessness → gladness → samādhi

"As a noble disciple you recollect your own good behavior: flawless, pure, unbroken, unblemished, freeing, praised by the wise, natural, and conducive to unification of the mind. When you recollect your good behavior, your mind is not preoccupied by desire, anger, or delusion, but becomes centered on your good behavior. With a centered mind you get inspired by this subject and its meaning, and you become glad because of it. When you are glad, you become delighted. With a delighted mind, your body becomes tranquil. With a tranquil body, you will experience bliss. When you experience bliss, your mind will unify."

(AN6.10)

Samādhi → insight

Discussed in next session.

Insight → disillusionment → liberation

"Further, a brahmin might say: 'All states of existence are temporary, suffering, bound to change.' What that brahmin says is true, not false. […] And having comprehended that truth, he practices just to get disillusioned with existence, to make it fade away, and to make it cease."

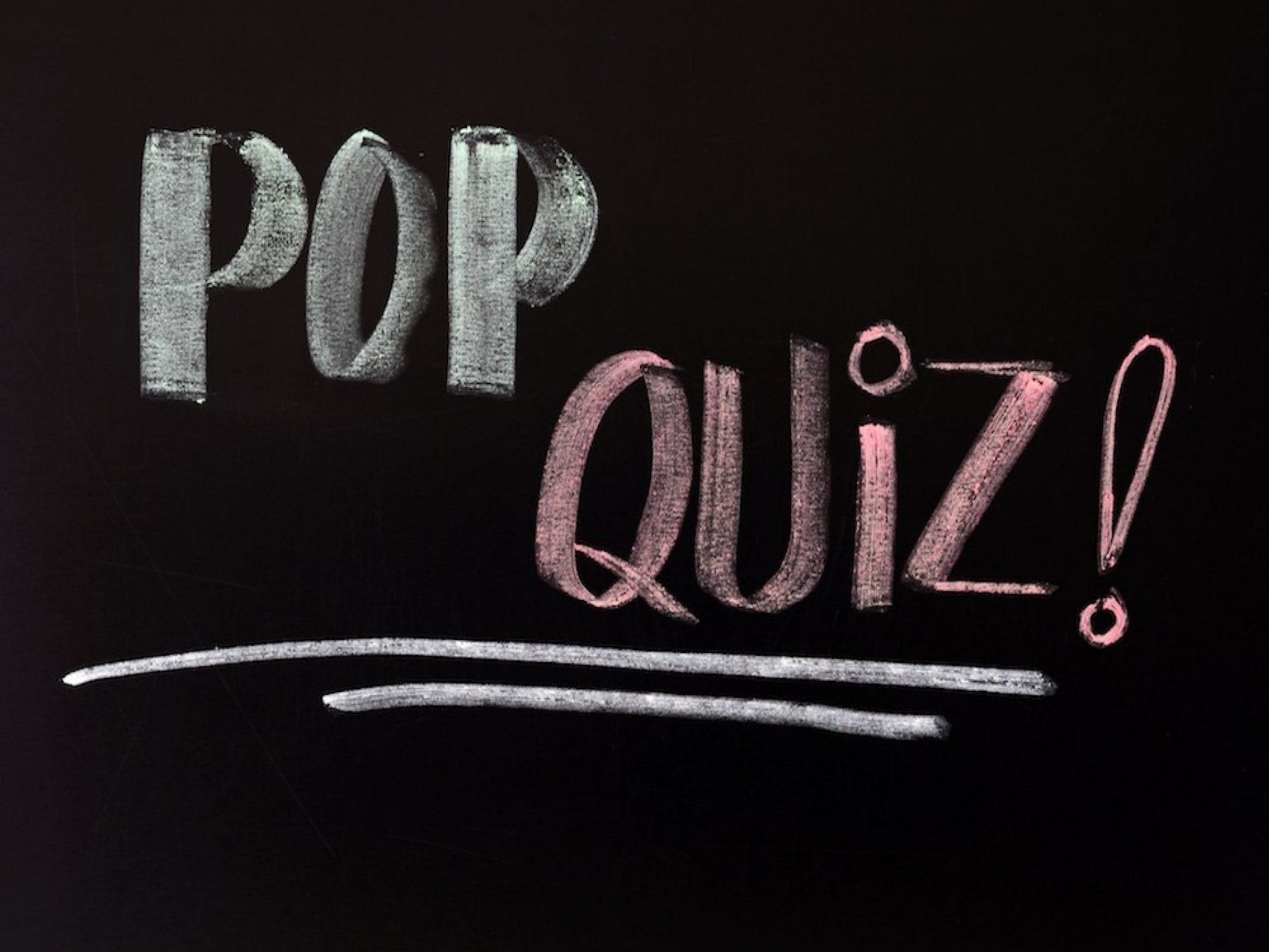
(AN 4.185)

"Transmigration (*saṃsāra*) has no discernible beginning. You will find no start to the transmigration of beings who roam around obstructed by ignorance and chained by craving. For a long time you have been undergoing suffering, malady, and loss, and have been expanding the cemeteries. Just that [insight] should be enough to get disillusioned with all that is created, to lose desire for it, and to be liberated from it." (SN 15.1; cf. SN 48.50)

- So knowing and seeing liberation is the purpose and beneficial outcome of losing desire.
- Losing desire is the purpose and beneficial outcome of disillusionment.
- Disillusionment … of knowing and seeing things according to reality.
- Knowing and seeing things according to reality … of unification of the mind.
- Unification of the mind … of bliss.
- Bliss … of calm.
- Tranquillity … of delight.
- Delight … of gladness.
- Gladness … of remorselessness.
- Remorselessness is the purpose and beneficial outcome of good behavior.

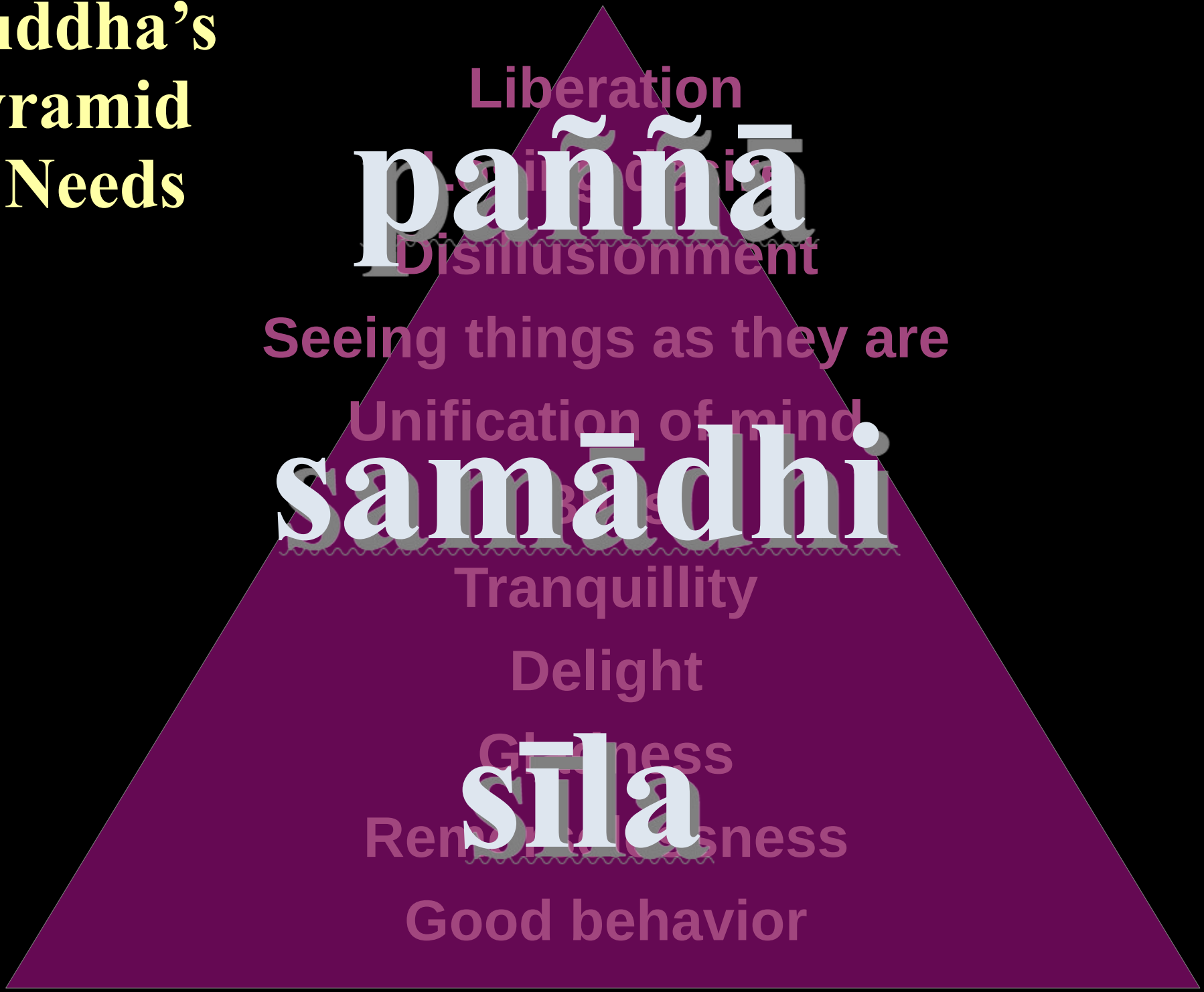
That is how, for you to go from this shore to the other shore, certain qualities flow on to and fulfil other qualities.”

(AN11.2, suttas.github.io)


POP
Quiz!

Buddha's Pyramid of Needs

Buddha's Pyramid of Needs



HAVE
A
BREAK
MACCHIATO
MACCHIATO

The jhanas and contemplation

"MEDITATION
NIRVANA
SILENCE
REIKI
THETA HEALING
SUCCESS
MANIFESTING
JOB
MONEY
CAR..."

"....."

By: Andrea Dandolo

Emerging from jhāna

"I enter this unification of mind (*samādhi*) mindfully and I emerge from it mindfully."

(AN 5.27)

"When you enter and emerge from any of these meditative attainments [including the jhānas], your mind becomes malleable and workable. … With limitless, well-developed unification, you become capable of realizing any realizable special power to which you may direct the mind, to whatever extent."

(AN 9.35)

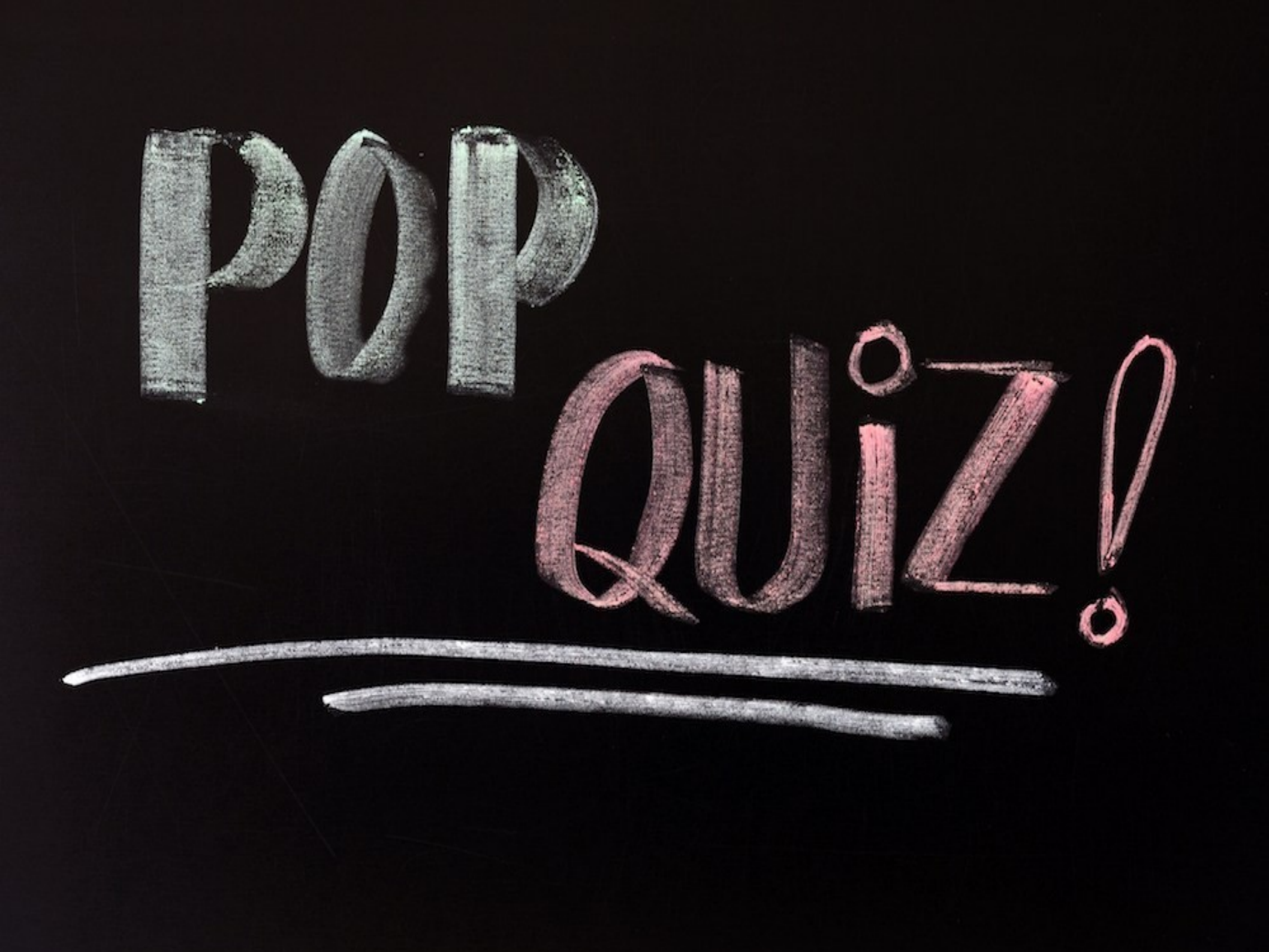
"… they attain the fourth jhana. When the mind has been unified and purified in that way ... they direct it to the recollection of past lives." (MN 51)

"In this passage there is no suggestion at all that the meditator should leave the fourth jhāna to attain these understandings." *– Ven. Gunaratana*

"… catutthaṁ jhānaṁ upasampajja vihārati. So evaṁ samāhite citte parisuddhe ... pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇāya cittaṁ abhininnāmeti."

"[In such cases] the locative absolute is used in a general way to denote *the time* ***since*** *or* ***after*** *which* some action is supposed to take place."

– Wijesekera, Syntax of the Pāli Cases


POP
Quiz!

“James got in his car, drove to work,
got a cup of coffee from the cafeteria,
sat down at his desk, and turned on his PC.”

Did James do it all in his car?

“The Buddha attained the fourth jhana, remembered his past lives, contemplated suffering, and got enlightened.”

Did the Buddha do it all in the fourth jhana?

“There are four kinds of people found in the world. What four?

Firstly, a person, becoming fully separated from sensual experiences and unskillful qualities, attains the first jhana … **They contemplate the phenomena there** … as temporary, as suffering, as a disease, a tumor, an arrow, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as falling apart, as empty, and as without a self.

After their body breaks down, after death, they get reborn among the gods of the pure abodes. …

Further, after the mind’s moving and holding (*vitakka-vicāra*) subside, they attain the second jhana … third jhana … fourth jhana … They contemplate the phenomena there … as temporary, as suffering, … as without a self.

After their body breaks down, after death, they’re reborn among the gods of the pure abodes. …

These are four kinds of people found in the world.”

(AN 4.124)

“It’s when a mendicant, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters and remains in the first absorption … second absorption … third absorption … fourth absorption. …

While a mendicant is practicing such meditation [Bodhi: “when a bhikkhu abides thus”], if their mind inclines to talking, they think: ‘I will not engage in the kind of speech that is low, crude, ordinary, ignoble, and pointless.’ …

While a mendicant is practicing such meditation, if their mind inclines to thinking, they think: ‘I will not think the kind of thought that is low, crude, ordinary, ignoble, and pointless.’”

(MN 122, Sujato)

Anupada Sutta (MN 111)

“This discourse has regularly been quoted in support of the ability to contemplate [...] absorption while being in the actual attainment. [This sutta] does **not** depict insight into impermanence practiced while a practitioner is immersed in an absorption.”

– Anālayo, *Early Buddhist Meditation Studies*

Anupada Sutta (MN 111)

"One by One ~~as They Occurred"~~, or "Step by Step"

"Sariputta is wise. […] In a fortnight Sariputta clearly understood things step by step. ... Sāriputta attained the first jhana ...

Now, those things **related to** the first jhāna—the moving and holding, delight (*pīti*), and bliss (*sukha*) (plus the oneness of mind, sense impression (*phassa*), sensation, and perception, the intention, thought, wanting, and resolution, the energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and focus)—he analyzed them by step by step. He was aware of them as they arose, as they were present, and as they disappeared. He then understood: 'So these things first aren't, then originate, and then vanish again.'

… But he understood that there is a further escape. And ***after repeated cultivation***, he confirmed that there is. When the moving and holding subsided, Sariputta attained the second jhana, …

Anupada Sutta (MN 111)

"repeated cultivation"

- 1st jhāna > contemplate > 2nd jhāna > contemplate > etc.

- 1st jhāna > emerge > contemplate > (repeat) > 1st jhāna > 2nd jhāna > emerge > contemplate > etc.

[After the four jhānas:]

"Further, the aspect of reviewing [the jhānas] is well grasped, focused on, remembered, and penetrated by your understanding of it. It is like one person may look at another—like one standing may look at one sitting or one sitting may look at one lying down. …

That is the fifth step in the development of the noble five-factored right unification of the mind."

(AN 5.28)

Samādhi → insight

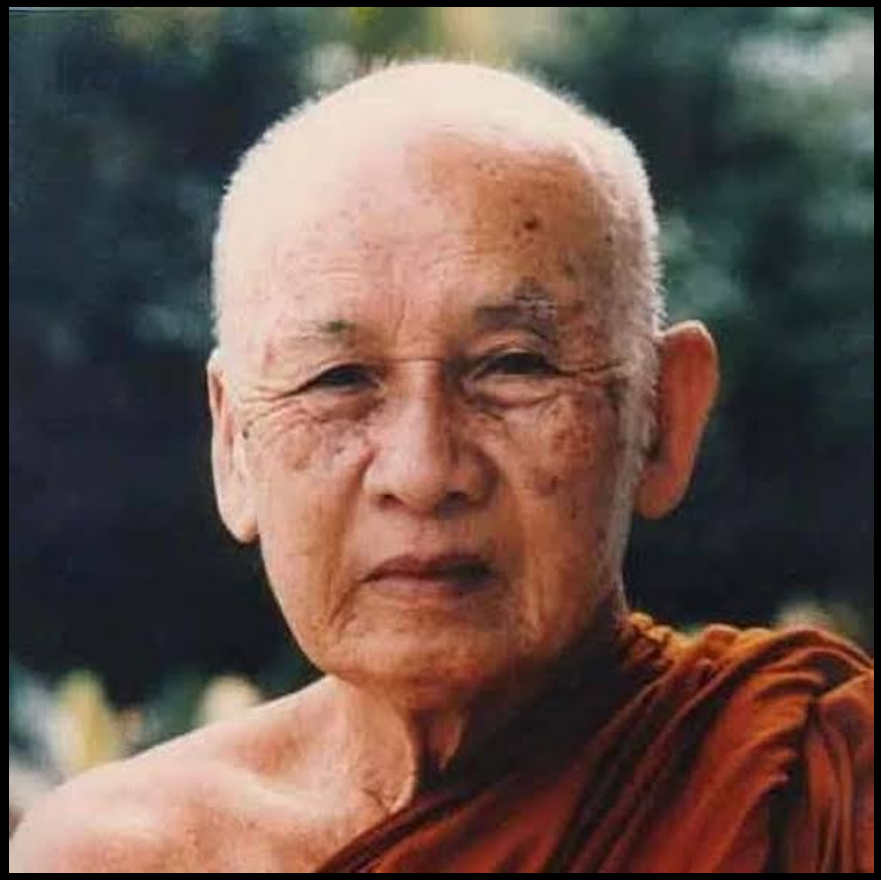
"After you get fully separated from sensory experiences and unskillful states of mind, you attain the first jhana, where there is de[illegible] by the separation, to which the mind moves and holds on.

If, while meditating like that, you begin to perceive or focus back on sensory experiences, that will be an affliction to you. Just like pain that might come up is more affliction to one who feels pleasure, if, while meditating like that, you begin to perceive or focus back on sensory experiences, that will be an affliction to you. And the Buddha said that whatever is an affliction is suffering.

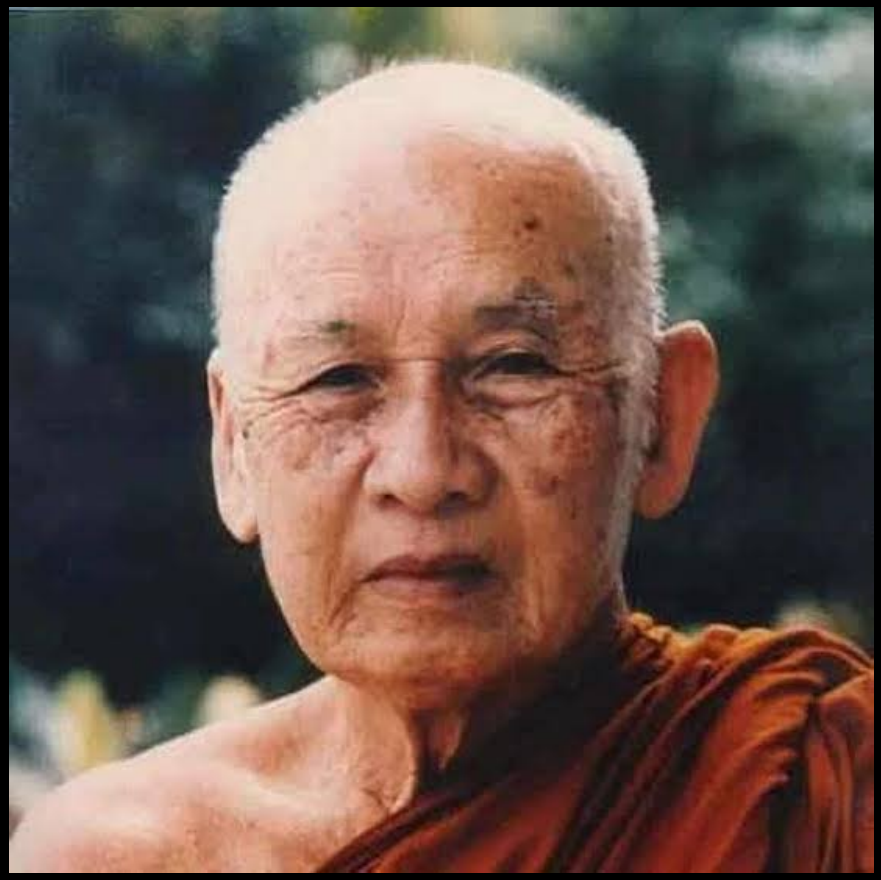
So that is one way you can come to understand that extinguishment is pleasant." (AN 9.34, suttas.github.io)

“At that moment [of jhāna] you'll feel as if you are in another world (the world of the mind), with a sense of ease and solitude to which nothing else in the world can compare. When the mind withdraws from concentration, you'll regret that that mood has passed, and you'll remember it clearly. All that we say about concentration comes from the mind that has withdrawn from that state.”

— Ajahn Thate, ‘Buddho’



“[In jhana] the mind will simply have a separate calm and peace that isn't in this world or another world or anything of the sort. There’s no one and nothing at all, just the mind’s own separate state, which is called the world of the mind. In that state there won't be the word ‘world’ or anything else. The conventional realities of the world won't appear there, and so no insight of any sort will arise in there at all.”



Sammāñāṇa in practice

Good ethics >
No regrets >
Joy >
Rapture >
Tranquillity >
Bliss >
Stillness >
Knowing and seeing according to reality >
Aversion and dispassion >
Knowledge and vision of freedom
(AN 10.1)

Sammāñāṇa in practice

"The meditation (*jhāna*) that is a foundation for reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa*) is properly grasped (*suggahitaṁ*), properly focused on (*sumanasikataṁ*), properly borne in mind (*sūpadhāritaṁ*), & properly penetrated with wisdom (*suppaṭividdhaṁ paññāya*).
A mendicant then becomes capable of realising anything that can be realised by insight ..." (AN5.28)

Sammāñāṇa in practice

“When the mind is stilled in *samādhi* … they extend it toward (*abhininnāmeti*) knowledge (*ñāṇa*) of the ending of defilements.
They truly understand: ‘This is suffering’ … ‘This is the origin of suffering’ … ‘This is the cessation of suffering’ … ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.’” (MN27)

Sammāñāṇa in practice

“When a mendicant enters and remains in the first absorption ...
Then they reflect (*paṭisañcikkhati*):
‘Even this first absorption is produced by choices (*abhisaṅkhataṁ*) and intentions (*abhisañcetayitaṁ*).’
They understand: ‘But whatever is produced by choices and intentions is impermanent and liable to cessation.’
Abiding in that they attain the ending of defilements.” (MN52)

Sammāñāṇa in practice

“When a mendicant ... enters and remains in the first absorption …
They contemplate (*samanupassati*) the phenomena there—
included in form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness—
as impermanent, as suffering, as diseased, as a boil, as a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as falling apart, as empty, as not-self.

Sammāñāṇa in practice

“They turn their mind away (*cittaṁ paṭivāpeti*) from those things, and apply it (*upasaṁharati*) to the quality of freedom from death: ‘This is peaceful; this is sublime—that is, the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments, the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment.’ Abiding in that they attain the ending of defilements.” (MN64)

Sammāñāṇa in practice

“They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out freeing the mind.’ (*jhāna*)
They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing impermanence.’
They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing fading away.’
They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing cessation.’
They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing letting go.’” (MN118)

Knowledge and conduct go together

"In the same way, brahmin, a Realized One arises in the world, perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct (*vijjācaraṇasampanno*), holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those who wish to train, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed." (MN27)

See you next week!