The two terms *vitakka/vitarka* and *vicāra* are crucial to the understanding of the stages of *samādhi* in both the Buddhist tradition and in the influential *yoga* tradition attributed to Patañjali. However, at present interpretation is often dominated by notions derived from later commentarial sources. Such notions, although in themselves of great interest, create an artificial appearance of difference between the two traditions which is probably unjustified. It suffices to note the marked difference in English renderings of these two words in translations from Sanskrit and from Pali.

This is exacerbated by the, no doubt inevitable, tendency to treat the Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions as if they operated in complete isolation from one another. In fact it is clear that each has both influenced and been influenced by the other in numerous ways. Buddhist origins are obviously from a milieu in which both orthodox and heterodox Brahmanical ideas and practices were ubiquitous. Not surprisingly influences from and reactions to Vedic traditions pervade the early Buddhist texts. Subsequently, after Buddhism’s rapid growth and early creative period, influences are for a while mainly, but not exclusively, from Buddhism to Brahmanism. After the formation of classical Hinduism and during the gradual decline in importance of Buddhism and Jainism which took place from the Gupta period onwards, it is clear that Buddhism borrows much more than it contributes. No doubt this is what one would expect, but it seems surprisingly little recognised.

The present issue is a case in point. Influences from Buddhist sources (to my mind, very frequent) on the *Yoga-sūtra* are often minimized or ignored. In the particular example with which we are concerned here the *Yoga-sūtra* is often seen as having a distinctive analysis of the stages of *samādhi*. I think this is a mistake, partly due to focussing on later Buddhist literature rather than on the canonical account. The reason for this is possibly the fact that the canonical material often needs to be approached through the early *abhidhamma* literature which is less studied than the *sutta* material.

The most important source for this purpose is the first book of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, the *Dhammasaṅgīti*. This gives mnemonic registers for both *vitakka* and for *vicāra*. For the nature and function of these registers I refer the reader to my article: “Pali Oral Literature”. It is
sufficient to note that these registers give us a clear picture as to what these terms were understood to mean at this time once the *suttanta* contexts to which they refer have been examined.

**VITAKKA IN THE DHAMMASAÑGAÑI**

The *dhammuddesa* for *vitakka* in the *Dhammasañgañi* is as follows:

1. *takka*  
2. *vitakka*  
3. *saṅkappa*  
4. *appanā*  
5. *vyappanā*  
6. *cetaso abhiniropanā*  
7. *sammā-saṅkappa*

Unusually for the *Dhammasañgañi* the complete register for *vitakka* is already to be found in a single location in the *nikāyas*, namely in the *Mahācatattārīśaka-sutta*.³ This discourse is an *abhidhamma*-style analysis of the Eightfold Path. In fact the *sutta* reads suspiciously as if it were itself based on the *Dhammasañgañi*, but if so it is difficult to explain why no additional sources can be found for some of the terms. We must then assume that this *sutta* is the source of this *Dhammasañgañi* register and presumably of much of the methodology of the *Dhammasañgañi*, but it is surprising that no additions have been made. Perhaps the list was already too established in the tradition to allow of amendment. It would be interesting to know if the corresponding *sutta* preserved in Chinese contains the same passage.

Taking the terms of the register in order:

1. **Takka**

This occurs in a number of contexts in the earlier literature, but can always be rendered by 'speculation'. The more specific later meaning of (systematic) logic would be anachronistic, while the translation sometimes given of 'doubt' is incorrect for the *nikāyas*. The context which the *Dhammasañgañi* or its source probably has in mind is one which occurs in the *Brahmajāla-sutta*:⁴

> ... some mendicant or brāhmaṇa is speculative (*takkin*) and inclined to investigation (*vīmamsin*). He says that which is beaten out by speculation, that which is attended by investigation ... .

In the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* we find the statement that one should not believe anything by reason of speculation (*takka-hetu*).⁵ Another important *sutta* formula also occurs in the *Brahmajāla-sutta*:⁶

There are, monks, still further truths (*dhamma*) — deep, hard to see, hard to comprehend,