

Anicca Saññā Sutta

The Discourse on the Perception of Impermanence | S 22.102/3:155-157

Aniccā Sutta, The Discourse on Impermanence

Theme: The primacy of reflecting on impermanence

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Perception of impermanence

1.1 This series of three suttas on impermanence—the **Anicca,saññā Sutta** (S 22.102), the **Kiñci Saṅkhāra Sutta** (A 6.93),¹ and the **Aniccā Sutta** (A 6.98)²—show their vital significance in the attainment of sainthood (spiritual liberation), for which the contemplation of impermanence has to be complete. In other words, the perception of impermanence should be applied to all the five aggregates, as admonished in the Anicca,saññā Sutta. **The Aniccā Sutta** (A 6.98) declares: one who sees *permanence* in any phenomenon will never be able to realize sainthood. This is a distinctive feature is that of the streamwinner—as stated in **the Kiñci Saṅkhāra Sutta** (A 6.93)³—that he is said to be incapable of believing any phenomenon to be permanent.

1.2 More specifically, **the Anicca,saññā Sutta** explains, using parables, how the perception of impermanence can effectively destroy sensual lust, lust for form (that is, desire form-existence), lust for existence, ignorance, and the conceit of ‘I am.’

Bhikshus, the perception of impermanence, when cultivated, when well developed,		<i>Anicca,saññā bhikkhave</i>
all <u>sensual lust</u>	is exhausted,	<i>bhavitā bahuli,katā</i>
all <u>lust for form</u>	is exhausted,	<i>sabbam kāma,rāgam pariyāḍipati</i>
all <u>lust for existence</u>	is exhausted,	<i>sabbam bhava,rāgam pariyāḍipati</i>
all <u>ignorance</u>	is exhausted;	<i>sabbam rūpa,rāgam pariyāḍipati</i>
all <u>conceit of ‘I am’</u>	is exhausted—	<i>sabbam avijjam pariyāḍipati</i>
they are (all) removed		<i>sabbam asmi,mānam pariyāḍipati—</i> <i>samuhanti</i> [§3]

The operative words here are “cultivated” (*bhavitā*) and “well developed” (*bahuli,katā*), that is, if we have developed these perceptions, they form the basis for destroying all the ten mental fetters,⁴ and that “perception of impermanence” (*anicca,saññā*) is taken in a broad sense to cover a whole range of practices. In fact, **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) lists *anicca,saññā*, *anicce dukkha,saññā*, *dukkhe anatta,saññā*, *pahāna,saññā* and *virāga,saññā* as the 5 “perceptions that conduce to the ripening of freedom” (*vimutti,-paripācanīya saññā*).⁵ Furthermore, with the addition of *nirodha,saññā* to the same set, the same Sutta calls the 6 “perceptions that constitutes penetration (into reality)” (*nibbedha.bhāgiyā saññā*), that is, the practices that conduce to directly seeing through all mundane existence into true reality.⁶

¹ A 6.93/3:439 = SD 12.14.

² A 6.98/3:441 f = SD 12.13.

³ A 6.93/3:439 = SD 12.14.

⁴ **Mental fetters** (*samyojanā*). There are 10 of them: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,dīṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no. 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*) that bind one to the “lower” realm, ie the sense world, and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*) that bind one to the “higher” realms, ie the form and formless worlds.

⁵ D 33.2.1(26)/3:243.

⁶ D 33.2.2(22)/3:251. Furthermore, in **Das’uttara S** (D 34), the 9 perceptions (*nava saññā*) of (1) foulness (*asu-bha,saññā*), (2) death (*maraṇa,saññā*), (3) the loathsomeness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla,saññā*), (4) non-delighting in all the world (*sabba,loke anabhirati,saññā*), (5) impermanence (*anicca,saññā*), (6) suffering in impermanence (*anicce dukkha,saññā*), (7) not-self in suffering (*dukkhe anatta,saññā*); (8) abandonment (*pahāna,saññā*), and (9) fading away (*virāga*) are stated as the “nine states to brought into being” (*nava dhamma uppādetabba*) (D 34.2.2(8)/3:289

This qualification is important, as the perception of impermanence itself is only a preliminary practice, but forms the foundation of further practice of eliminating all the fetters. Sensual lust is destroyed by the path of non-return, lust for existence, ignorance and the “I am” conceit by the path of arhathood.

A parable helps here. It is like a doctor, after giving his athlete patient his diagnosis and medicines, says, “You will get well and play tennis again.” The patient, however, must first take the medicine at the right time and in the proper dosage, rest properly, eat properly, so that, in due course, he recovers and then goes on to play tennis again. He would not recover immediately on merely taking the first dose of medicine, or even after a few doses, but he has to complete taking his medicine.

1.3 The Vijjā,bhāgiya Dhamma Sutta (A 6.35) elaborates on how the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) should be done, that is, in this sequence:

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| (1) contemplating the impermanence in all formations | <i>anicca,saññā</i> |
| (2) perceiving suffering in impermanence | <i>anicce dukkha,saññā</i> |
| (3) perceiving not-self in suffering | <i>dukkhe anatta,saññā</i> |
| (4) perceiving the abandoning of defilements | <i>pahāna,saññā</i> |
| (5) perceiving the fading away of lust, and | <i>virāga,saññā</i> |
| (6) perceiving the cessation of suffering. | <i>nirodha,saññā</i> ⁷ |

The Ceto,vimutti,phala Suttas 1 and 2 (A 5.71-72) states that the first five practices are conducive to the fruition and the benefits of both liberation of mind and of liberation through wisdom.⁸ Here, we can take the experience of (6) *nirodha,saññā* as referring to the two liberations (*vimutti*) mentioned.

The Okkanti Saṃyutta (S 25) gives ten ways of practising “the perception of impermanent,” that is, in connection with *the 6 sense-faculties, the 6 sense-objects, the 6 sense-consciousnesses, the 6 sense-contacts, the 6 feelings, the 6 perceptions, the 6 volitions, the 6 cravings and the 6 elements*.⁹

2 The parables illustrating perception of impermanence

2.0 THE 10 PARABLES

2.0.1 The Anicca,saññā Sutta makes use of the following ten parables to show the primacy of the perception of impermanence:

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| (1) the ploughman (cutting through buried roots); | §4 |
| (2) the reed-cutter (cutting down reed); | §5 |
| (3) the bunch of mangoes cut off at the stalk; | §6 |

f). With the addition of (10) perception of cessation (*nirodha,saññā*), the set is called “the 10 states to be brought into being” (*dasa dhamma uppādetabba*) (D 34.2.3(8)/3:291). These 10 perceptions are listed in (**Dasa**) **Saññā S 1** (A 10.6) as being of “great fruit and great benefit for immersing and culminating in nirvana” (*amat’ogadhā amata,-pariyosāna*, S 10.6/5:105; cf (**Dasa**) **Saññā S 2**, S 10.7/5:106). The first 9 perceptions are listed in (**Nava**) **Saññā S** (A 9.16) for the same reason (A 9.16/4:387); as also the first 7 perceptions in (**Satta**) **Saññā S 1 & 2** (S 7.45+46/-4:46-53).

⁷ A 6.35/3:34 = SD 23.16(1.2).

⁸ *Ceto,vimutti,phalā ca honti ceto,vimutti,phal’ānisamsā ca, paññā,vimutti,phalā ca honti paññā,vimutti,phal’ānisamsā ca* (A 3.71-72/3:84-86; cf A 4:464). One who is “liberated by wisdom” “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental cankers are destroyed” (M 70.16/-1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into 2 types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated both ways,” ie, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways” (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 1:477 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/ 2:70 f) = SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/-4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

⁹ For the sutta names, etc, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7. The perception of impermanence is briefly def in **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60.5/5:109) = SD 19.16.

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| (4) the ridgepole (to which all the rafters are attached); | §7 |
| (5) the kalanusari as the foremost of fragrant roots; | §8 |
| (6) red sandalwood as the foremost of fragrant heartwoods; | §9 |
| (7) jasmine as the foremost of fragrant flowers; | §10 |
| (8) the wheel-turner as foremost amongst vassal princes; | §11 |
| (9) moonlight far outshine all the star-light; and | §12 |
| (10) the sun blazing through the autumn Indian sky. | §13 |

2.0.2 Heedfulness. Outside of the Anicca,saññā Sutta, its parables are mostly used to illustrate the primacy of being heedful. The last seven parables (4-10) appear separately as short suttas in **the Magga Saṃyutta** (S 45), respectively as

the Kūṭa Sutta	(S 45.141),	the parable of the ridgepole;
the Mūla Sutta	(S 45.142),	the parable of the kalanusari;
the Sāra Sutta	(S 45.143),	the parable of the red sandalwood;
the Vassika Sutta	(S 45.144),	the parable of jasmine;
the Rājā Sutta	(S 45.145),	the parable of the wheel-turning monarch;
the Canda Sutta	(S 45.146),	the parable of moonlight; and
the Suriya Sutta	(S 45.147), ¹⁰	the parable of the autumn sun.

All these suttas highlight the same theme: the primacy of heedfulness (*appamāda*).

Furthermore, five of the Anicca,saññā Sutta's ten parables—numbers 5, 2, 3, 8 and 9 (in that order)—appear in **the (Chakka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 6.53),¹¹ and again, seven of the Sutta's parables, in the sequence 4-10, appear in **the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 10.53):¹² both dealing with the importance of heedfulness.

2.1 (1) THE PLOUGHMAN PARABLE [§4] here seems to be unique to this Sutta. However there is a famous and comprehensive ploughman parable found in **the Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4), where the Buddha tells Bhāra,dvāja that he (the Buddha) is a “farmer,” too, thus:

Faith is the seed, asceticism the rain,	wisdom is my yoke and plough,
moral shame is the pole, mine the yoke-tie,	mindfulness my ploughshare and goad.
	(Sn 77), SD 69.6 ¹³

Other “farmer or ploughman” (*kassaka*) figures include the following:

<u>Sources</u>	<u>Parables or figures</u>	<u>References</u>
Pāyāsi Sutta	A farmer, with his implements, goes in to the forest, and clears the wild, to plant some crops (on the right conditions for spiritual growth).	D 23,31/2:353 SD 39.4
(Brahma,vihara) Subha Sutta	Farming (<i>kasi</i>) is “hard work” compared to trading, but either one when it fails has little fruit, when successful brings much fruit.	M 99,6/2:198 SD 38.6
Accāyika Sutta	A farmer's 3 urgent tasks: to plough the field; to plant the seeds; and to irrigate his crops (on the 3 trainings).	A 3.91/1:239 f SD 82.14
Paviveka Sutta	A farmer must swiftly harvest his hill rice, thresh, and then dehusk it (a person is morally virtuous, goes into solitary meditation, and destroys his	

¹⁰ S 45.141-148/5:43 f.

¹¹ A 6.53.3/3:365. Cf the parable at **Kūṭāgāra S** (S 46.7/5:75 f).

¹² A 10.15/5:21 = SD 42.23.

¹³ *Saddhā bñjam tapo vuṭṭhi / paññā me yuga,naṅgalam // hiri īsā mano yottam | sati me phāla,pācanam ||* (Sn 1.4/12-16 = Sn 76-82 = S 7.11/1:172 f), SD 69.6.

	mental defilements).	A 3.92/1:241	SD 44.2
Khettūpama Pv	The arhat is like field, the giver like a farmer, the the gift like seeds from which sprouts the fruit (Pv opening verse)	Pv 1.1,1/1	SD 99.1

2.2 (2) THE REED-CUTTER PARABLE [§5] also occurs in **the (Chakka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 6.53) in highlighting that heedfulness (*appamāda*) is a helpful quality both in this life and in the next.¹⁴ The reed-cutter parable seems to be found only here, but related parables include those of grass (*tiṇa*), reed (*naḷa*), or muṅja reed (*muṅja*).¹⁵ In the muṅja reed simile, the reed represents the astral body and its sheath the physical body during meditation.¹⁶

2.3 (3) THE MANGO-BUNCH PARABLE [§6] is also found in **the (Chakka) Appamāda S** (A 6.53), heedfulness is helpful in this life and the next.¹⁷ This parable's best known is in **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1), where it famously describes the Tathagata's nature:

Bhikshus, just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut all the mangoes joined by the stalk go together with it, even so, the Tathagata's body remains cut from the leash of existence. So long as the Tathagata's body stands, gods and humans will see him.

After the breaking up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-faculty, gods and humans do not see him. (D 1.147/1:46)

2.4 (4) THE RIDGEPOLE PARABLE [§7]. The ridgepole (*gopānasi*) is very common in the suttas, especially as a figure for old age, since it looks like Λ, that is, bent (*vaṅka*) with age.¹⁸ It is also found in connection with heedfulness, such as in the following texts:

(Avijjā) Kūṭa S	the primacy of practising heedfulness	S 20.1/2:263	
(Magga) Kūṭa Sutta	cultivating the eightfold path	S 45.141/5:43	
(Bojjh'aṅga) Kūṭa Sutta	cultivating the 7 awakening-factors	S 46.7/5:75	
(Chakka) Appamāda Sutta	on heedfulness being helpful both in this life and the next	A 6.53/3:364	SD 42.22
(Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta	heedfulness is the foremost of good qualities	A 10.15/5:21	
Milinda,paṇha	all the rafters of a house connect to the ridgepole, even so all wholesome states have <u>samādhi</u> as their foremost	Miln 38 qu at DhsA 118	

The Dhammapada, too, alludes to the ridgepole or roof-tree as *gaha,kūṭa* (literally "house-crest")¹⁹ in one of its most famous verses, the first vocal statement of the newly awakened Buddha:

<i>aneka,jāti,samsāraṃ</i>	Through the countless births in samsara
<i>sandhāvissaṃ anibbisam</i>	I ran, not finding,

¹⁴ A 6.53/3:365 = SD 42.22.

¹⁵ For other reed parables, see **Naḷa,kalāpī S** (S 12.67), 2 sheaves of reeds (*naḷa,kalāpī*) stand leaning on one another, showing the interconnection btw name-and-form and condition (S 12.67/2:114), SD 83.11; **Avassuta Pariyāya S** (S 35.243, a shed of dried reeds or grass (*naḷāgāraṃ vā tīṇāgāraṃ sukkam*) easily catches fire, illustrating how Māra easily gains access through our 6 senses (S 35.243,13/4:185,16), SD 60.6; (**Jālinī) Taṇha S** (A 4.199), craving ensnarls the world like a tangle of muṅja and reeds (*muṅja,babbaja,bhūto*) (A 4.199/2:213), SD 31.15.

¹⁶ **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.86/1:77,13), SD 8.10; **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.54/1:71), SD 1.7; (**Sāla,vatikā) Lohicca S** (D 12.66/1:66,233), SD 34.8.

¹⁷ A 6.53/3:365 = SD 42.22

¹⁸ **V** 3:65, 81; **D** 2,1 ≈ **M** 3:180,14; **D** 2:22, 25 (both as *gopānasi,vaṅka*); **M** 1:80, 81, 2:93, 212; **S** 1:117, 118 (both as *gopānasi,vaṅka*); 2:263, 3:156; 5:43, 75, 228; **A** 1:261; 3:264; 5:21; **Ap** 389.72/1:321.

¹⁹ On *kūṭ'āgāra* or *kūṭāgāra* [+*agāra*], see **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35,1/1:227), SD 26.5.

<i>gaha,kāraṅgaṃ gavesanto dukkhā jāti punappunam</i>	though seeking, the house-maker: painful is birth over and again.	(Dh 153)
<i>gaha,kāraṅga diṭṭho'si puna geham na kāhasi sabbā te phāsuka bhaggā gaha,kūtāṃ visañkhitaṃ²⁰ visañkhāra,gatāṃ cittaṃ taṇhānaṃ khayam ajjhagā</i>	House-builder, you are seen! No more shall you build a house! All your rafters are broken! Your <u>roof-tree</u> broken apart! The mind is free from formations: it has come to the end of craving.	(Dh 154)

The Commentary explains *gaha,kūtāṃ visañkhitaṃ*²¹ as follows: “Destroyed by me, too, is the roof-plate (*kaṇṇika,maṇḍala*)²² of this house of selfhood built by you, formed of ignorance.²³” Here, obviously the Commentary is using “roof-plate” as a synonym for roof-tree and ridge-pole (which represents spiritual ignorance).

2.5 (5) THE KALANUSARI PARABLE [§8]. The Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta (M 107) contains 3 of the Anicca,saññā Sutta’s parables (that is, the plant parables)—namely, numbers 5-7—where the accountant (*gaṇaka*) Moggallāna declares of the primacy of the Buddha’s teaching:

Master Gotama, just as amongst fragrant roots, *kalanusari* is declared the foremost; amongst fragrant heartwood, *red sandalwood* is declared the foremost; amongst fragrant flowers, *jasmine* is the foremost—even so, Master Gotama’s advice is supreme amongst today’s teachings.²⁴

(M 107.16/3:6 f), SD 56.3

“Kalanusari” or Pali, *kālānusāri*,²⁵ is “a kind of dark fragrant sandalwood” (DPL; V:O 2:51); “gum benzoin...some kind of sandalwood...yellow sandalwood” (BHSD 180, qv); “black orris” (S:B 962; but this is not found in India). The term however has been applied to a number of plants in different parts of India, and it is possible some of these names or attributions were given after the Buddha’s time. One vital clue we have from the suttas is that *kalanusari* is “a fragrant root” (*mūla,gandha*).

Another possibility is *Valeriana wallichii* or valerian (a fragrant rhizome indigenous to India), also called *kalanusari* or *tagar* (P *tagara*). *Tagara* [ts] is the shrub *Tabernaemontana coronaria*, and the fragrant powder made from it is also called *tagara*.²⁶ However, we have no documentation to show that *kālānusāri* and *tagara* are synonyms or refer to the same plant.

It is possible that *kalanusari* may be “benzoin or benjamin [an obsolete term]” (SED), that is, any plant of the *Styrax* genus from which we obtain benzoin resin (dried exudation from the pierced bark). *Styrax* incense is used in the Middle East, south Asia and southeast Asia, as an air freshener or in religious rituals or folk practices; and as freshener and disinfectant in the Papier d’Arménie (Armenian Paper).

Also possibly (in modern times), *kalanusari* is *Trigonella foenum-graecum* or fenugreek (Skt: *kālānusāri, kuñjikā, methi, methikā, methinī, gandha,phala, vallari*; Hindi *meti, mutti*; Tamil *uluhall*; Sinh *helba*; Malay *halba*), but this is a common spice and an Ayurvedic plant (not a root): an annual herb that

²⁰ On *visañkhitaṃ* and *visañkhāraṃ*, see foll n.

²¹ On *visañkhitaṃ* and *visañkhāraṃ* (Dh 154e), see BHSD: *visam̐skṛta* (ppp) “destroyed, fallen to nothing” and *visam̐skāra* (m), “dissolution, annihilation” (J 1:76,27 ff; Uv 31.7)

²² A roof-plate is a horizontal timber laid on a wall or supported on posts or corbels to carry the trusses of a roof or the rafters directly.

²³ *Imassa tayā katassa atta,bhāva,gehassa avijjā,sañkhātāṃ kaṇṇika,maṇḍalam pi mayā viddhamsitaṃ* (DhA 3:129)

²⁴ *Seyyathāpi, bho Gotama, ye keci mūla,gandha kālānusārikaṃ tesam̐ aggam̐ akkhāyati, ye keci sāra,gandham lohita,candanam̐ tesam̐ aggam̐ akkhāyati, ye keci puppha,gandhā vassikaṃ tesam̐ aggam̐ akkhāyati: evam̐ eva bhoto Gotamassa ovādo param̐'ajja,dhammesu.* On the jasmine, see §10n below.

²⁵ BHS & Skt, *kālānusāri* ← *kāla*, “black” + *anusāri*, “a fragrant substance.”

²⁶ V 1:203,15; Dh 15; It 68,13*; J 6:100,5*, 100,18’ f, 535,20*; Ap 246,5. Cp *tagara,mallikā*, “The scent of *tagar* and jasmine”: A 1:116,28* = Dh 54 (DhA 1:422,18), qu at J 3:291,14*+Miln 333,19*; Ap 100,6.

grows up to 60 cm, with compound leaves, small and round, trifoliate, imparipinnate; with yellowish white flowers found in leaf axils; the fruit pod has a long beak; it has 10-15 seeds per pod, which is brown with a groove in one corner.

As mentioned, the best we know of *kālānusāri* is that it is “a fragrant root” (*mūla, gandha*). Without other details or evidence (textual or traditional), it is difficult to identify it correctly. In such a case, it is helpful to adopt an anglicization of the word, that is, *kalanusari*, and to remind ourselves that it is “a fragrant root” and reflect on its various contexts and usages in the suttas and ancient texts.

2.6 (6) THE RED SANDALWOOD PARABLE [§9]. Red sandalwood is the literal translation for *lohita, candana*,²⁷ that is, *Pterocarpus santalinus*, also called *Pterocarpi lignum*, *Santalum rubrum*, *Santalum ligni*, *Lignum rubrum*, or more commonly *rubywood*, *rasura*, *red santal wood*, or *sappan*. In Malay: it is known as *cendana*. Even today, red sandalwood is a prized commodity in India and southeast Asia. The red sandalwood also features prominently in the background story of Puṇṇa of the Punn’ovāda Sutta (M 145).²⁸

That red sandalwood is the foremost “amongst fragrant heartwood” (*ye keci sāra, gandhā lohita, candanam tesam aggam akkhāyati*) is found in **the Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 107), **the Anicca Saññā Sutta** (S 22.102), **the Sāra, gandha Sutta** (S 45.144), **the Sāra Sutta** (S 48.55) and **the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 10.15).²⁹ Sandalwood, as such, is a highly prized commodity both for its fragrance and its cooling quality. Sandalwood powder smeared all over the body is said to quickly bring down the fever. “A small branch, the size of four fingers, is worth a hundred thousand (pieces of money)!” (*catur’āṅgula, mattā ghaṭikā sata, saḥassaṃ agghati*). Here, *catur’āṅgula, matta* (“the size of four fingers”) can mean either 4 fingers’ breadth or circumference about that of four fingers together; very likely it is the latter.³⁰

2.7 (7) THE JASMINE PARABLE [§10]. The jasmine is known in Pali as *vassika* (m) or *vassikā* (f) (BHS *varṣika*), the “Arabian jasmine” (from Iranian *yasmin*), *Jasminum sambac*. There are some 150 species of jasmine, forming a genus of the olive (Oleaceae) family. In Thailand, it is one of the most popular flowers, locally called *mali*.

Using the jasmine figure, the Dhammapada says:

<i>Vassikā viya pupphāni madda, vāni pamuñcati evaṃ rāgaṇ ca dosaṇ ca vipamuñcetha bhikkhavo</i>	Even as the jasmine sheds its withered flowers, even so, O monks, should you shed lust and hate.	Dh 377
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The commentary at Dh 377 glosses it as *sumanā*, “delighting the mind” (DhA 4:112).

Another flower, the *mallikā* (Dh 54), is often translated as “jasmine,” but is really not a jasmine, only resembling it in colour and shape. Palihawadana identifies it as *idda, sinidda, or bōlidda* in Sinhala (Dh:CP 444 n25). The *bolidda* (also a Malayalam flower) is *Jasminum auriculatum*.

2.8 (8) THE WHEEL-TURNER PARABLE [§11]. The efficacy of the perception of impermanence in destroying all kinds of lust is so significant that it is compared to a wheel-turner (*cakka, vatti*) as being the foremost, the leader, of all the other lesser kings and tributary rulers. In Buddhist mythology and social teachings, the wheel-turner or world emperor is the person who is able to unify the world, or at least significant parts of the world non-violently and peacefully, and under whose rule his realm prospers both materially and spiritually.³¹

²⁷ “Red sandalwood,” *lohita, candana* (MA 5:88); *ratta, candana* (ThaA 1:168). The Skt versions give it as “cow’s-head sandalwood” (*go, śīrṣa candana*, Pūrṇavadāna 19.1 :: tr J Tatelman, *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrṇa*, 2000:53), yellow or brass-coloured (SED: *gośīrṣa* Chandra 1997:143); or “divine sandalwood” (*divya, candana*, Bodhisattvāvadāna, kalpa, latā).

²⁸ M 145 @ SD 20.15 (1.5 & passim).

²⁹ Respectively: M 107.16/3:6 f = SD 56.3; S 22.102/3:156 = SD 12.12; S 45.144/5:44 = SD 42.24; S 48.55/5:231 = SD 42.25; A 10.15/5:22 = SD 42.23.

³⁰ Tatelman gives it as “four fingers in length” (2000:182). See also Tatelman 2000: 111.

³¹ See **Cakka, vatti Sihanāda S** (D 26) @ SD 36.10 (2).

2.9 (9) THE MOONLIGHT PARABLE [§12] says that “the light of all the stars do not amount to a sixteenth [an iota] of moonlight” (*yā kāci tāraṅka, rūpānam pabhā sabbā tā candima, pabhāya kalaṃ nāgghanti soḷasim canda-p, pabhā*). Even so, the perception of impermanence outshines all other reflections or meditations in overcoming the lust for sense-pleasures, for form and for formlessness.

A number of suttas apply the parable to highlight the primacy of heedfulness (*appamāda*) as being the most vital amongst all wholesome qualities. These suttas include **the Candimā Sutta** (S 45.146), **the (Chakka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 6.63), and **the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 10.15).³²

In **the Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta** (It 27), the moonlight parable is the first of 3 parables used to highlight that of all the grounds for merit-making (*puñña, kiriya, vatthu*), the attainment of the liberation of mind through lovingkindness (*mettāya ceto, vimutti*) is the foremost. The other 2 parables are those of the clear autumn sun [2.10] and the evening star (*osadhi tārakā*, literally, “medicine star”) (Venus).³³

The expression “not amount to [nor worth] a sixteenth part” (*kalaṃ nāgghanti soḷasim*) is a common Pali expression meaning that the object compared to is simply incomparable.³⁴

2.10 (10) THE AUTUMN SUN PARABLE [§13] is popular and appears in a number of contexts. In **the Suriya Sutta** (S 45.147) and **the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 10.15), it is said that just as the sun in the cloudless autumn sky dispels all darkness, even so, of all wholesome states, heedfulness (*appamāda*) is the foremost, and the diligent cultivates the eightfold path.³⁵

The Sarada Sutta (A 3.92)³⁶ declares that just as the cloudless autumn sun dispels all darkness, even so, with the destruction of the 3 fetters—self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows³⁷—there arises the dust-free stainless Dharma-eye (streamwinning).³⁸ With the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances,³⁹ such a one attains the first dhyana. If he were to die in such a state, he would attain non-return.⁴⁰

As already stated in **the Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta** (It 27) [2.9], the autumn sun parable is the second of 3 parables used to highlight that of all the grounds for merit-making (*puñña, kiriya, vatthu*), the attainment of the liberation of mind through lovingkindness (*mettāya ceto, vimutti*) is the foremost.⁴¹

The Mahā Sudassana describes the blinding radiance of king Mahā Sudassana’s Dharma palace in Kusa, vatī as follows:

Ānanda, just as in the last month of the rains, in autumn, when the sky is clear of thunder-clouds and rain, the sun ascending the skies, is difficult to look at, dazzling to the eyes, even so, Ānanda, the Dharma palace is difficult to look at, dazzling to the eyes. (D 17,1.30.2:184 f), SD 36.17

The autumn sun parable is found in **the Susīma Sutta** (S 2.29), but in a mundane context:

Just as in autumn, when the sky is clear, free of rain clouds, the sun, going through space, dispelling darkness, shines and burns and beams;
even so, the young devas in Susīma’s host—beautiful, radiant, happy-minded, glad, full of zest and joy—displayed various lustrous colours.⁴² (S 2.29,11/1:65), SD 86.8⁴³

³² S 45.146/5:44 = SD 78.5; A 6.53/3:365 = SD 42.22; A 10.15/5:22 = SD 42.23.

³³ It 27,3+5+7/20 f = SD 30.7.

³⁴ See **Sudatta S** (S 837-839/10.8/1:211*×3), **Rāmaṇeyyaka S** (S 913/11.15/1:233*); **Ācāma Dāyikā Vv** (Vv 2.3,9/192/24), **Mañjeṭṭhaka Vv** (Vv 4.4/721 f/61, 723/62); **Cv** 6.4.3 @ V 2:156*.

³⁵ S 45.147/5:44; A 10.15/5:22.

³⁶ A 3.92,4/1:242 [A:B 3:94], SD 70.14.

³⁷ On the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.

³⁸ On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

³⁹ On the 5 mental hindrances, see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

⁴⁰ On non-return, see M 118,10/3:80), SD 7.13 & SID: anāgāmī.

⁴¹ It 27,5/20 = SD 30.7.

⁴² *Seyyathāpi nāma sarada, samaye viddhe vigata, valāhake deve ādicco nabham abbhussukkamāno sabbam ākāsa, gataṃ tamaṃ abhivhacca bhāsate ca tapate ca virocati ca: evam evaṃ Susīmassa deva, puttassa deva, putta. - parisā āyasmato Sāriputtassa vaṇṇe bhaññamāne atta, manā pamuditā pīti, somanassa, jātā uccā, vacā vaṇṇa, nibhā*

— — —

The Discourse on the Perception of Impermanence

S 22.102/3:155-157

1-2 At Sāvattihī. It was spoken there.

The perception of impermanence

3 “Bhikshus, when **the perception of impermanence**, is cultivated, often developed,⁴⁴
completely destroys all sensual lust,
completely destroys all lust for form,
completely destroys all lust for existence,
completely destroys all ignorance,
abolishes all ‘I am’ conceit.⁴⁵

(1) The parable of the ploughman

4.1 Bhikshus, just as in autumn, **a farmer** [ploughman] ploughing with a great ploughshare cuts through all the straggling roots even as he ploughs⁴⁶—

4.2 even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all ‘I am’ conceit.

(2) The parable of the reed-cutter

5.1 Bhikshus, just as **a reed-cutter** would cut down a bunch of reeds [bulrushes], [156] grab it by the top, shake it down, shake it about, thresh it about⁴⁷—

5.2 even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.

(3) The parable of the mango bunch

6.1 Bhikshus, just as when **a stalk of a bunch of mangoes** has been cut, [156] all the mangoes attached to the stalk would go with it⁴⁸—

upadamseti. Comy says the colours are blue, yellow, red, and white (Comy (SA 1:125): these colours are mentioned in connection with the Licchavī youths in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.2.15/2:96) = SD 9.

⁴³ On the autumn sun parable, see also VvA 134; ThaA 197; BA 15, 37,45, 57, 163, 209, 284; J 2:322.

⁴⁴ “Often developed,” *bahulī, katā*, lit “made much.” This qualification is important, as the perception of impermanence itself is only a preliminary practice, but forms the foundation of further practice. Sensual lust is destroyed by the path of non-return, lust for existence, ignorance and the “I am” conceit by the path of arhathood. See Intro (1.2).

⁴⁵ *Anicca, saññā bhikkhave bhāvitā bahulī, katā sabbam kāma, rāgam pariyādiyati, sabbam rūpa, rāgam pariyādiyati, sabbam bhava, rāgam pariyādiyati, sabbam avijjam pariyādiyati, sabbam asmi, mānam samūhanati.*

⁴⁶ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave sarada’ samaye kassako mahā’ naṅgalena kasanto sabbāni mūla’ santiānakāni sampadā-lento kasati.* See Intro (2.1).

⁴⁷ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave babbaja, lāyako babbajam** [Ce Ee] *lāyitvā agge gahetvā odhunāti niddhunāti nicchoṭeti.*
*Be Se *pabbaja, lāyako pabbajam.* See Intro (2.2).

6.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.*

(4) The parable of the ridgepole

7.1 Bhikshus, just as all the rafters of a house with a peaked roof lead to **the ridgepole**, slope towards the ridgepole, converge at the ridgepole, and the ridgepole is said to be their peak⁴⁹—

7.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.*⁵⁰

(5) The kalanusari parable

8.1 Bhikshus, just as amongst fragrant roots, **kalanusari**⁵¹ is said to be the foremost—

8.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.*



Red sandalwood

(6) The red sandalwood parable

9.1 Bhikshus, just as amongst fragrant heartwoods, **red sandalwood**⁵² is said to be the foremost—

9.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.*

(7) The jasmine parable



Jasmine (Thailand)

10.1 Bhikshus, just as amongst fragrant flowers, **jasmine**⁵³ is said to be the foremost—

10.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.*

(8) The wheel-turner parable

11.1 Bhikshus, just as petty princes are all the vassals of **the wheel-turning monarch**, and the wheel-turning monarch is said to be the foremost⁵⁴—

⁴⁸ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave amba,piṇḍiya vaṇṭa-c,chinnāya yāni tatra ambāni vaṇṭa,paṭibaddhāni sabbāni tāni tad-anvyāni bhavanti.* See Intro (2.3).

⁴⁹ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave kūṭāgārassa yā kāci gopānasiyo sabbā tā kūṭāngamā kūṭa,ninnā kūṭa,samosaraṇā kūṭaṃ tāsaṃ aggam akkhāyati.* Alt tr: “Bhikshus, just as all the rafters of a pinnacle house meet up at the pinnacle, slope towards the pinnacle. and the pinnacle is said to be their peak [foremost].” See Intro (2.0.2).

⁵⁰ The parables of §§7-13 are found elsewhere. See Intro (2).

⁵¹ *Kālānusār*: see Intro (2.5).

⁵² *Lohita,candanam*: see illus & Intro (2.6).

⁵³ *Vassikam*: see illus & Intro (2.7).

⁵⁴ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave ye keci kuḍḍa,rājāno* [Be *kuṭṭa,rājāno*; Ee *khudda,rājāno*; Ce *kuḍḍa,rājāno*; Se *khudda-ka,rājāno*] *sabbe te raññō cakkavattissa anuyāntā bhavanti.* See Intro 2.8.

11.2 so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, completely destroys all sensucompletely destroys all lust for form, completely destroys all lust for existence, completely destroys all ignorance, abolishes all “I am” conceit.

(9) The moon-light parable

12.1 Bhikshus, just as the light of all the stars do not amount to a sixteenth [an iota] of **moonlight**⁵⁵—

12.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, all sensual lust is exhausted, all lust for form is exhausted, all lust for existence is exhausted, all ignorance is exhausted; all conceit of ‘I am’ is exhausted —they are (all) removed.*

(10) The sun parable

13.1 Bhikshus, just as in autumn, when the sky is clear, free of rain clouds, **the sun**, going through space, dispelling darkness, shines and burns and beams⁵⁶—

13.2 *even so, bhikshus, when the perception of impermanence is cultivated, often developed, all sensual lust is exhausted, all lust for form is exhausted, all lust for existence is exhausted, all ignorance is exhausted; all conceit of ‘I am’ is exhausted —they are (all) removed.*

The perception of impermanence

14 And how, bhikshus, is **the perception of impermanence** cultivated, how is it [157] often developed, so that

all sensual lust,	is completely destroyed,
all lust for form	is completely destroyed,
all lust for existence	is completely destroyed,
all ignorance	is completely destroyed,
all ‘I am’ conceit	is abolished?

15 (It is thus:)

‘Such is <u>form</u> ;	such is the arising of form; s	such is the ending of form.
Such is <u>feeling</u> ;	such is the arising of feeling;	such is the ending of feeling.
Such is <u>perception</u> ;	such is the arising of perception;	such is the ending of perception.
Such are <u>formations</u> ;	such is the arising of formations;	such is the ending of formations.
Such is <u>consciousness</u> ;	such is the arising of consciousness;	such is the ending of consciousness.’

16 Bhikshus, this is how the perception of impermanence, when cultivated, often developed,

all sensual lust,	is completely destroyed,
all lust for form	is completely destroyed,
all lust for existence	is completely destroyed,
all ignorance	is completely destroyed,
all ‘I am’ conceit	is abolished.”

— evaṃ —

050522; rev 060908; 080405a; 081221a; 121016; 130318

⁵⁵ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave yā kāci tāraka,rūpānam pabhā sabbā tā candima,pabhāya kalam nāgghanti soḷasim canda-p,pabhā tāsam aggam akkhāyati. See Intro 2.9.*

⁵⁶ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave sarada,samaye viddhe vigata,valāhake deve ādicco nabham abhussakkamāno sabbam ākāsa,gatam tama,gatam abhivhacca bhāsate ca tapate ca virocate ca. See Intro 2.10.*