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Assāda Sambodha Sutta
The Discourse on Gratification and Self-awakening | A 3.101/1:258 f
Theme: The suffering world and the way out
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 Sukha, somanassa
The second noble truth, that is, the conditions for the arising of suffering, is here called sukha, somanassa (bodily pleasure and mental joy) [§1b], the literal opposite of which is dukkha, domanassa (physical pain and mental pain). In meditation terms, that is, on a deeper level, it is another antonym, that is, abhijjhā, domanassa (covetousness and displeasure). There is an interesting related passage from the Pubba or Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta (A 3.101) referring to sukha, somanassa (physical and mental pleasure):

Monks, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me…

Whatever bodily pleasure and mental joy (sukha, somanassa) there are in the world, that is the gratification (assāda) in the world; that the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, that is the danger (ādīnava) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, that is the escape from the world.” (A 3.101/1:258)

We see the close connection that abhijjhā, domanassa has with the two negative terms—assāda and ādīnava—have here. Both has the sense of being hindrances to spiritual development. My own understanding here regarding the naming of the first two mental hindrances as abhijjhā, domanassa is to show that with their elimination the other hindrances are eliminated, too. This is further confirmed by the Commentaries:

But here since taking abhijjhā [covetousness] includes kāma-c, chanda [sense-desire], and taking domanassa [mental pain] includes vyāpāda [ill will], therefore it should be understood that the abandoning of the hindrances is spoken of by indicating the pair that is strong among those items that make up the hindrances.2

(Brahmavamso3 agrees with this interpretation. Here, Gethin adds a parenthetical note: “The taking of domanassa includes vyāpāda because all citt[ā] rooted in aversion is accompanied by unpleasant mental feeling.” (2001:49 f & n95).4

As there is another discourse in the Saṅiyutta with the same name and a similar teaching, I have disambiguated our discourse here as the (Assāda) Pubbe Sambodha Sutta (A 3.101), and the Saṅiyutta discourse as the (Dhātu) Pubbe Sambodha Sutta (S 14.31), reflecting their respective themes.

2 Assāda, ādīnava, nissarana
The three terms—assāda, ādīnava and nissarana—often appear as a set in the texts. The Commentaries relate them to the four noble truths thus:

danger (ādīnava) refers to the truth of suffering;
gratification (assāda) refers to the truth of the arising of suffering, that is, craving; and escape (nissarana) refers to the ending of suffering, nirvana. (DA 2:512; MA 2:11)

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1 Pointed out to me by Robert Eddison (through email communication).
2 Yasma pañ’etha abhijjhā, gahanena kāma-c, chando domanassa-g, gahanena vyāpādo sangahāṃ gacchati tasmā nīvaraṇa, pariyojana, balaya, dhama, bava, dassanena, nīvaraṇa-p, pahānaṃ vuttam hiti ti veditabbaṃ. “The taking of domanassa includes vyāpāda because all citt[ā] rooted in aversion is accompanied by unpleasant mental feeling.” (Gethin 2003:50 n)
3 Personal communication, 30 March 2003.
4 See SD 13.1(4.2e).

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It is interesting to see that the sequences are reversed here. In fact, understandably, the \textit{assāda} model is an experiential one, used to show suffering as \textit{cause} first: one seeks various forms of gratification, and this leads to suffering. Whereas the \textit{sacca} model is a sort of therapeutic list: the ailment, the cause, the cure, and the prescription. Although the fourth truth, that of the path, is not directly mentioned here, it is implied as the means of escape. Among the suttas that specifically deal with these three truths are:

- **Upādāna Sutta** (S 12.52/2:84 f): dependent arising by way of the parable of the bonfire;
- **(Dhātu) Pubba Sutta** (S 14.31/2:169-171): applied to the four elements;
- **Assāda Sutta 1** (S 22.26/3:27 f): applied to the five aggregates (as questions);
- **Assāda Sutta 2** (S 22.27/3:29): applied to the five aggregates (as a quest);
- **Satta-ṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57/3:61-65): applied to the five aggregates (synchronic);
- **Pubbe Sambodha Sutta** (A 3:101/1:158 f): the world can never satisfy us completely = SD 14.6;

Indirect but important mention of the three truths are also found in the following suttas:

- **Cūja Sīhanāda Sutta** (M 11.7/1:65): in terms of arising and disappearance of wrong views;
- **Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109.12/3:18 = S 22.82.12/3:102 f): applied to the five aggregates = SD 17.10.
- **Cha,chakka Sutta** (M 148.28-39/3:285-287): the latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses;
- **Devadaha Sutta** (S 22.2.11-13/3:7 f): applied to the five aggregates;
- **Pubba Bodha Sutta 1** (S 35.13/4:6-8): applied to the six internal sense-bases = SD 14.9;
- **Pubba Bodha Sutta 2** (S 35.14/4:8): applied to the six external sense-bases = SD 14.10; and
- **(Ānanda) Santaka Sutta 1** (S 36.15.2-4/4:219 f): applied to feelings.

### 3 Two suttas or one?

All the traditional Tipiṭakas of Sri Lanka and SE Asia, except for the Pali Text Society (PTS) edition, list two discreet texts here: the **Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta** (A 3.101a = SD 14.6a) and the **Paṭhama Assāda Sutta** (A 3.101b = SD 14.6b). The reason for the PTS edition combining the two texts is clearly because the materials are closely connected.

In fact, both these texts are also connected with another “split” pair of suttas, namely: the **Dutiya Assāda Sutta** and the **Samāṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta**. Again, the PTS edition, however, combined the two texts into a single sutta, without giving the combined text any name.

All the four suttas form a coherent sequence, and may be studied together as such. In summary, here are the four suttas in their proper set sequence:

- **Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta** “Just Before the Self-awakening” Discourse
- **Paṭhama Assāda Sutta** The Discourse on Gratification 1
- **Dutiya Assāda Sutta** The Discourse on Gratification 2
- **Samāṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta** The Discourse on Recluses and Brahmins

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**SD 14.6a**

**Pubbe’va Sambodha Sutta**

The “Just Before the Self-awakening” Discourse  |  A 3.101a/1:258 f

A 3.3.1.1 Ānguttara Nikāya 3, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 1, Sambodha Vagga 1

Theme: The world can never satisfy us completely

**The questions**

1a Bhikshus, before my self-awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, it occurred to me:

“Now what is the gratification (assāda) in the world?

What is the danger (ādinava) in the world?

What is the escape (nissaraṇa) from the world?”

1b Then, bhikshus, this occurred to me:

‘Whatever bodily pleasure and mental joy that arise in the world, this is the gratification in the world. That the world is impermanent, unsatisfactory, subject to change, this is the danger in the world. The removal of sensual lust, the abandoning of sensual lust, this is the escape from the world.’

**The knowing**

2 Bhikshus, so long as I did not directly know, as they really are, thus—the world’s gratification as gratification, and the danger as danger, and the escape as escape—

for that long I did not claim that I had awakened to the supreme full self-awakening in this world with its devas, Māra and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans.

But, bhikshus, when I directly knew, as they really are, thus—the world’s gratification as gratification, and the danger as danger, and the escape as escape—

then I claimed that I had awakened to the supreme full self-awakening in this world with its devas, its maras [archetypal evil ones], its brahmas, its ascetics and brahmins, this generation with its rulers and people. The knowledge and vision arose in me:

‘Unshakable is my liberation of mind—this is my last birth. There is now no more rebirth!’

**SD 14.6b**

**Assāda Sutta 1**

**Paṭhama Assāda Sutta** The First Discourse on Gratification  |  A 3.101b/1:258 f

A 3.3.1.1 Ānguttara Nikāya 3, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 1, Sambodha Vagga 2

Theme: The way out of the suffering world

**The quest**

3 Bhikshus, I went in search of gratification in the world. Whatever gratification there is the world, that gratification I have found.

Bhikshus, to whatever extent there is gratification in the world, that gratification I have clearly seen by wisdom.

Bhikshus, I went in search of danger in the world. Whatever danger there is the world, that danger I have found.

Bhikshus, to whatever extent there is danger in the world, that danger I have clearly seen by wisdom.

Bhikshus, I went in search for an escape from the world. Whatever escape there is the world, that escape I have found.

Bhikshus, to whatever extent there is an escape from the world, that escape I have clearly seen by wisdom.

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5 On these 3 terms—assādam ādinava and nissaraṇa—see above Intro (1).
6 “Physical pleasure and mental joy,” sukham somanassa, alt tr, “bodily comfort and mental pleasure.” See above Intro (2).

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The awakening

Bhikshus, so long as I did not directly know, as they really are, the world’s gratification as gratification, and the danger as danger, and the escape as escape,

for that long I did not claim that I had awakened to the supreme full self-awakening in this world with its devas, Māra and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans.

But, bhikshus, when I directly knew, as they really are, thus—the world’s gratification as gratification, and the danger as danger, and the escape as escape—

then I claimed that I had awakened to the supreme full self-awakening in this world with its devas, Māra and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans.

The knowledge and vision arose in me:

‘Unshakable is my liberation of mind—this is my last birth. There is now no more rebirth!’”

— evaṭṭhi —