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Kosala Sutta 1

(Paṭhama Kosala Sutta) = The First Discourse on Kosala;

(Agga) Kosala Sutta = The Kosala Discourse (on the foremost) | **A 10.29**

Theme: Even the best or highest state, except nirvana, is impermanent

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2006

1 Sutta summary

The First Discourse on Kosala deals with a universal Buddhist teaching: the reflection on impermanence. The reflection has an interesting range of subjects, from the mundane to the heavenly to the philosophical to the spiritual. “There are only uncertainty and change” (*atth’eva aññathattam, atthi vipariṇāmo*) in all the world, that is, to say:

[§1]	in the Kosala kingdom,	even in the mighty rajah Pasenadi himself;
[§2]	in the stable universe,	even in Mahā Brahmā [“creator-God”] himself;
[§3]	in the collapsed universe,	even in the radiant gods of the Ābhassara realm;
[§§4-5]	in the 10 kasina bases (the form dhyanas),	even in the consciousness kasina;
[§§6-7]	in the 8 bases for mastery (the dhyanas & attainments),	even in the white kasina;
[§§8-9]	in those of any mode of spiritual progress,	even in those of pleasant practice with quick direct knowing;
[§§10-11]	in those with any type of perception,	even in those of the perception of nothingness;
[§12]	in the annihilationist (that is, the materialist),	even in those who are not attracted to existence; and
[§§13-14]	in those who believe in “the highest purity,”	even in those of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

And against those who proclaim “nirvana here and now”—that is, salvation in this life—the Buddha proclaims his full awakening, thus:

I do teach the full understanding of sense-pleasures, and I do teach the full understanding of forms, and I do teach the full understanding of feelings.¹

And being stilled, quenched, cooled here and now, I proclaim the utter nirvana that is free from clinging. [§17]

Since all things of the world are impermanent—and as such subject to unsatisfactoriness (suffering) and has no abiding self—it behooves us to work towards the only “non-impermanent,” that is, nirvana that is free from clinging (that is, one that truly destroys the roots of birth and death).

The Buddha gave this discourse to remove the discontent of 500 monks who were dissatisfied with the holy life. On listening to the discourse, they overcame their discontent and gained stream-winning. Later, they cultivated insight and gained arhathood. (AA 5:27)

The vitality of this sutta should not be underestimated in that it simply concludes with the Buddha’s declaration of his own awakening. In fact, a much shorter version of the teaching of this sutta can be found in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1)² or any of the other nine suttas in the Okkanta Saṃyutta.³ The message is very clear: whether one is strong in faith or in wisdom, the constant reflection on impermanence (following any of the ten themes mentioned),

¹ On “full understanding” (*pariññā*), see §17n.

² S 25.1/4:225 f @ SD 16.7.

³ S 25.2-10/4:225-228.

He has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without attaining the fruit of stream-winning. (S 25.1,5/4:226), SD 16.7

2 Pasenadi of Kosala

Pasenadi (Skt Prasenajit)⁴ was the son of the **rajah Mahā Kosala**, under whom the kingdom of Kosala (Skt Kośala, the present-day province of Oudh) expanded to the district of Vārāṇasī (modern Benares) in the south and the Nepalese Terai (occupied by the Sakyas), to the north. His son, **Pasenadi**, was a contemporary and devout friend of the Buddha. Just as rajah **Bimbisāra** was the Buddha's supporter in Magadha, Pasenadi, the rajah of Kosala, was his patron at Sāvattihī. Bimbisāra had, in fact, married a sister of Pasenadi, and when he was killed, she died of grief. The revenue of Kāsi was allocated as part of her dowry, but after Bimbisāra's murder, Pasenadi gave away his daughter to Ajātasattu with the revenue of the village in question as her wedding gift.

As a ruler, Pasenadi did his best to reform his administration, such as attempting to get rid of bribery and corruption in his court (but here he apparently had little success).⁵ He valued the companionship of wise and good men like Pokkharasātī and Caṅkī, to each of whom he respectively gave the villages of Ukkaṭṭhā and of Opasāda as fiefs (*brahma,deyya*), free of all taxes. He set up alms-hall which were always open to anyone in need of food or drink (U 2.6).

Pasenadi's commander-in-chief was **Bandhula**, chief of the Mallas. Afraid that he might become too powerful, the rajah had him and his 32 sons assassinated through a plot with corrupt ministers. In his place, Pasenadi put Bandhula's nephew **Dīgha Kārāyaṇa** (Skt Dīrgha Cārāyaṇa), who understandably harboured secret vengeance against him.⁶

From the Suttas and stories, we can deduce that Pasenadi is a devoted disciple and admirer of the Buddha. When he meets the Buddha, he would bow his head down to his feet, covering them with kisses and stroking them (M 2:120). It is said that Pasenadi goes to see the Buddha thrice a day, sometimes with only a small bodyguard. Pasenadi's devotion to the 3 jewels is attested by **the Kosala Saṃyutta**, a whole section in his name, the third *saṃyutta* of the Sagāthā Vagga (Chapter With Verses) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, comprising a total of 25 discourses.

While Pasenadi was conversing with the Buddha (as reported in **the Dhamma, cetiya Sutta**),⁷ Dīgha Kārāyaṇa thought, "Previously, after conferring in private with the recluse Gotama, the rajah arrested my uncle and his 32 sons. Perhaps this time he will arrest me." Dīgha, who was in secret collusion with his son **Viḍḍabha** (Skt Virūḍhaka), then absconded with the retinue and the royal insignia entrusted to him. The royal insignia, which included the fan, parasol and sandals, were rushed to the capital, Sāvattihī, where Viḍḍabha was enthroned. (MA 3:352; J 4:151; DhA 1:356)

The forlorn Pasenadi, left only with a horse and a female servant, rushed to Rājagaha to get the help of his nephew, Ajātasattu. It was rather late when he arrived at Rājagaha and the city gates were closed. Exhausted he lay down in a hall outside the city, and died of exhaustion and exposure in the night. Ajātasattu arranged a grand funeral for him but did nothing to Viḍḍabha who had just ascended the throne.⁸

⁴ J 2:237, 403, 4:432, SA 1:120. See also Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004:§11-19.

⁵ SA 1:74, 100.

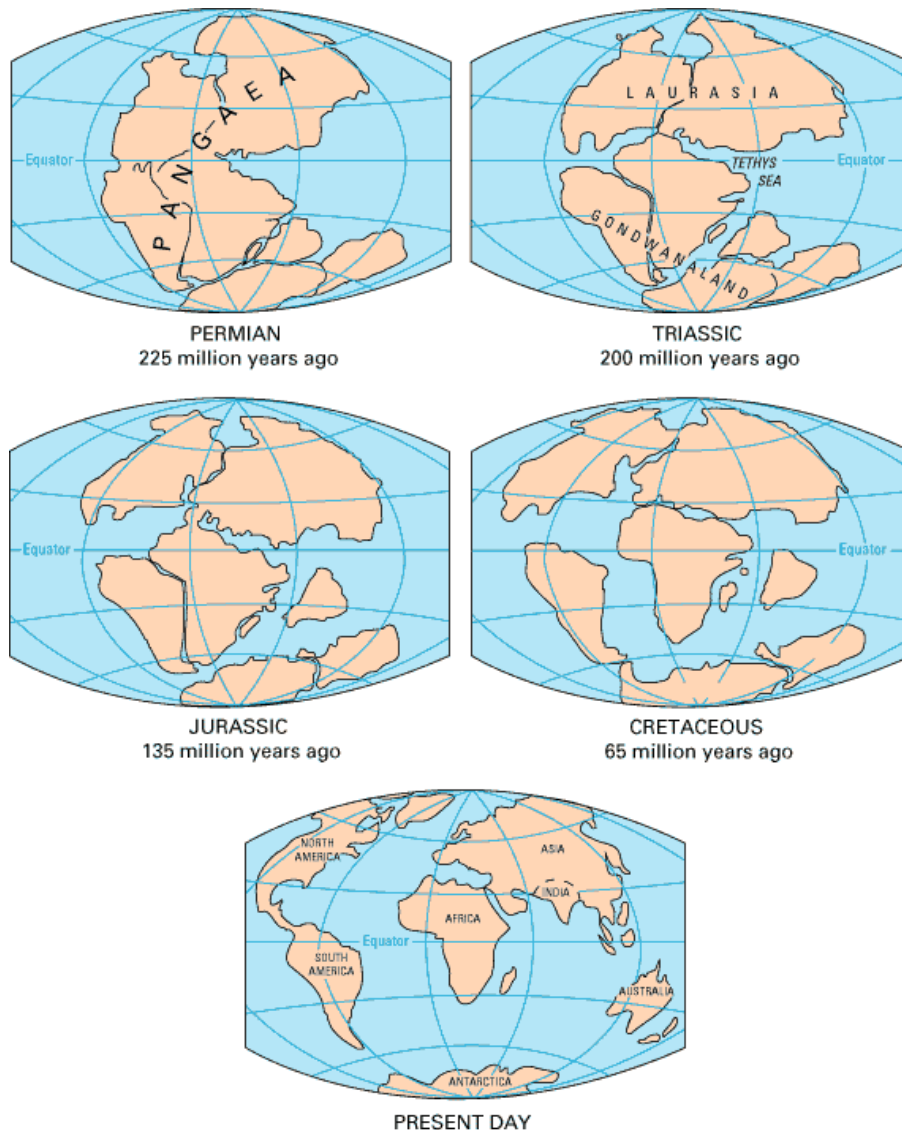
⁶ See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004:§17.

⁷ M 89/2:118-125.

⁸ MA 2:753 f; J 4:131.

3 Jambu, dīpa

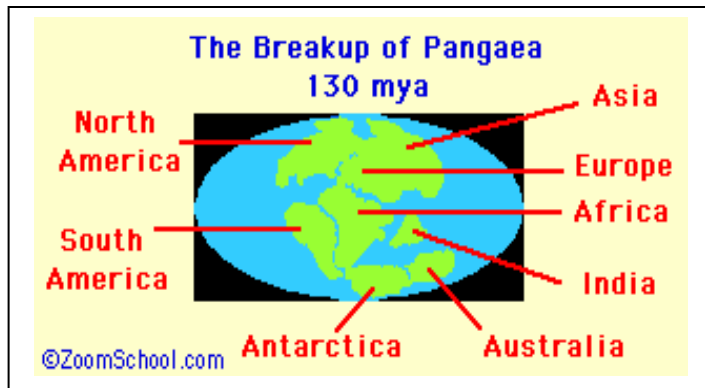
3.1 INDIA AS A “CONTINENT.” *Jambu, dīpa* (Skt *Jambu, dvīpa*), the Jambul Continent,⁹ is the ancient name for the Indian sub-continent. The word *dīpa* (Skt *dvīpa* = *dvi* + *āpa*, “water on both sides”) means “island.” In fact, over 60 million years ago, the Indian subcontinent was indeed an island. In that prehistoric era, she was located near the South Pole, connected with Antarctica, Africa and Australia.¹⁰ Ancient Buddhist cosmology regards the world as arranged in four continents (that is, huge islands) around Mt Neru, Sineru, Meru or Sumeru, the cosmic mountain (sometimes identified with one of the Himalayan mountains). On the south is the Jambu, dīpa; on the west, Aparā, go, yāna; on the north, Uttara, kuru; and on the east, Pubba, videha.¹¹



⁹ Wujastyk (2004) says that *jambu* here is not the “rose-apple” (of Malacca and SE Asia) which was not found in India; it is properly the jambul or black plum.

¹⁰ See Sadakata 1997:36-38.

¹¹ For a recent study of ancient Buddhist cosmology, see Randy Kloetzli 1983:23-72 & Akira Sadakata 1997:25-40, esp 30-38.



Formation of the continents

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/publications/text/historical.html>¹²

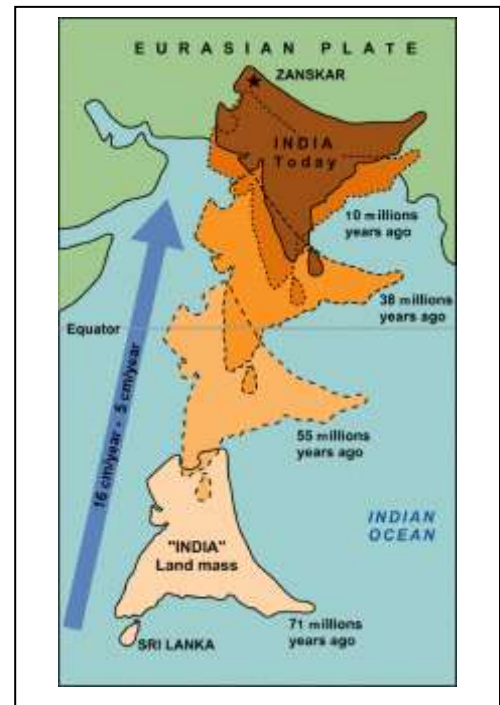
The Dīgha Commentary says that when it is sunrise in Jambu,dīpa, it is the middle watch (10 pm-2 am) in Aparā,goyāna; when it is sunset in Aparā,goyāna, it is midnight in Jambu,dīpa. So they are about 12 hrs apart. When it is sunrise in Aparā,goyāna (the western continent), it is noon in Jambu,dīpa, sunset in Pubba,vidēha (eastern continent), and midnight in Uttara,kuru (the northern continent) (DA 3:868). Jambu,dīpa and Uttara,kuru apparently share the same time zone (the same longitudes).

What we have here is probably a collective memory of a palaeogeography of primordial times, perhaps of Jurassic and Cretaceous periods, 135-65 million years ago. As such, we could surmise that the northern continent could have referred to Asia hinterland; the western continent was Europe; and the eastern continent was Australia.

3.2 CONTINENTAL DRIFT. According to *the continental drift theory*—the forerunner to *the theory of plate tectonics*—the supercontinent Pangaea began to break up about 225-200 million years ago, eventually fragmenting into the continents as we know them today.¹³

According to Saṃyutta Commentary, in the time of Kassapa Buddha¹⁴ (who came immediately before our own Buddha Gotama), the Boar-dug Cave (*sūkara,khata,leṇa*, on the side of Mt Vulture Peak, outside Rāja,gaha) was a hollow in the ground, when the earth was yet growing. In our Buddha's time, the cave entrance was high up on the hill-side and was deep.¹⁵

According to the Majjhima Commentary, between the times of Kassapa Buddha and Gotama Buddha, the surface of the earth grew enough to cover the Boar-dug Cave, on the side of Mount Vulture Peak (MA 3:203). Such remarks are interesting in that they reflect an awareness that the earth as a whole was still



The Himalayan orogeny. The northward drift of India from 71 million years ago (mya) to the present. Note the simultaneous counter-clockwise rotation of India. Collision of the Indian continent with Eurasia occurred at about 55 mya.

Source: www.usgs.org (edited)

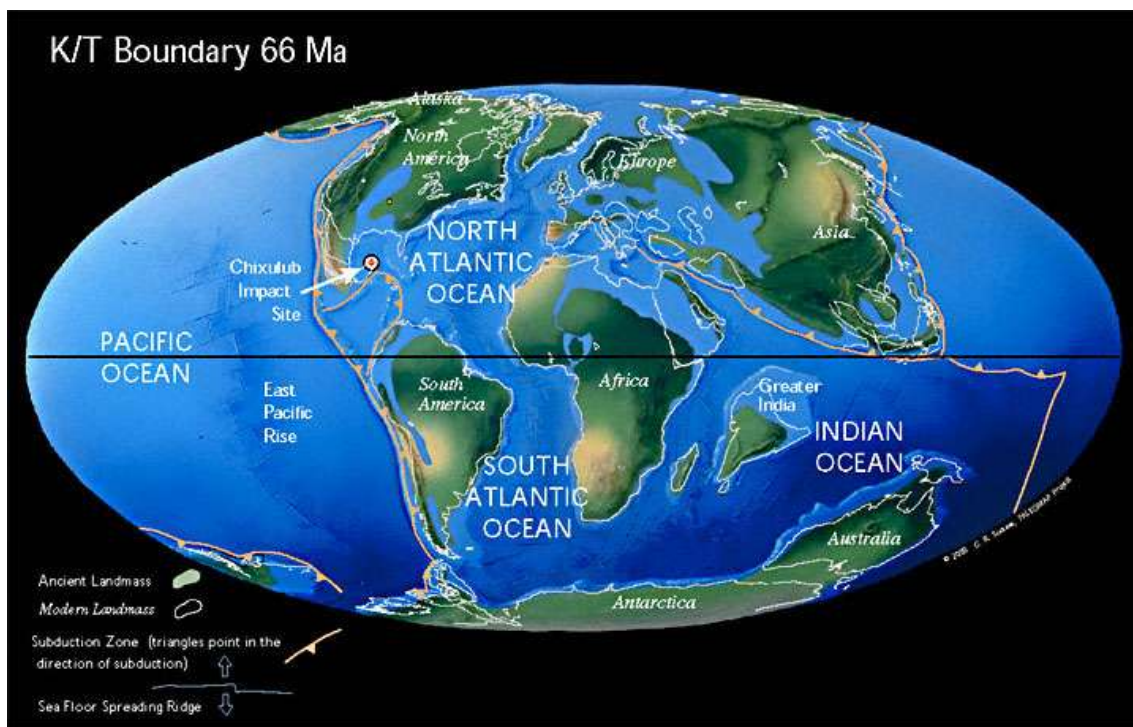
¹² Last updated 5/5/1999.

¹³ See *continental drift*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Drift; Pangaea: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pangaea> & the Himalayan orogeny: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology_of_the_Himalaya.

¹⁴ See SD 49.3 (2).

¹⁵ SA 3:249; also DA 3:882; MA 3:203; AA 1:161; DhA 1:96; UA 189; ThaA 3:95; ApA 212. Its *entrance* (*dvāra*) is mentioned as DA 3:883; MA 4:87; SA 2:234; AA 2:136. Its *slope* (*pabbhāra*) is mentioned at DA 2:418.

evolving. However, more research is needed to find out if the ancient texts or teachers knew or mentioned continental drift.¹⁶



The end of the dinosaurs. The bull's eye marks the location of the Chicxulub impact site. The impact of a 10 mile wide comet caused global climate changes that killed the dinosaurs and many other forms of life. By the Late Cretaceous the oceans had widened, and India approached the southern margin of Asia. (<http://www.scotese.com/K/t.htm>)

The First Discourse on Kosala

A 10.29

Rajah Pasenadi of Kosala

1 Bhikshus, as far as **Kāsi-Kosala**¹⁷ extends, as far as the realm¹⁸ of rajah Pasenadi of Kosala¹⁹ extends, rajah Pasenadi of Kosala is regarded as the foremost.

Yet even in rajah Pasenadi the Kosalan there still is uncertainty,²⁰ there is change.²¹ Seeing this, the wise [instructed] noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate towards the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

¹⁶ On early Buddhist cosmology, see SD 49.8 (5.1.3).

¹⁷ **Kāsi** (whose capital was Bārāṇasī, modern Benares) was one of ancient India's 16 great states (*mahā-jana-pada*). During the Buddha's time, it was absorbed into **Kosala** under the rajah Pasenadi. Around or just before the Buddha's time, a process of integration was slowly gathering momentum amongst these great states, as is revealed in the pairing of their names in Buddhist sources, for example, Kuru-Pañcāla, Kāsi-Kosala, Malla-Vajjī, Aṅga-Magadha, Cedi-Vaṃsa and Maccha-Sūrasena. For the 16 states, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 (16).

¹⁸ *Vijitam*, "that which is conquered."

¹⁹ See (1).

Parallel universes

2 Bhikshus, as far as the sun and the moon revolve, illuminating the quarters with their light,²² there extends **the thousandfold world-system**.²³ In that thousandfold world-system there are²⁴

- a thousand moons,
- a thousand suns,
- a thousand Sinerus, the kings of mountains,
- a thousand Jambu,dīpas [Jambul Continents],²⁵
- a thousand Western Goyāna continents [Apara,go,yāna],
- a thousand Northern Kuru continents [Uttara,kuru],²⁶
- a thousand Eastern Videha continents [Pubba,videha],
- four thousand oceans,
- four thousand maharajahs [emperors],
- a thousand heavens of the Cātum,mahārājika [the 4 great guardian kings],
- a thousand heavens of Yāma [the Yāma devas],²⁷
- a thousand heavens of Tusita [contented devas],
- a thousand heavens of Nimmāṇa,ratī [the devas who delight in creating],²⁸

²⁰ *Atth'eva aññathattam.*

²¹ “There is still uncertainty, there is change,” *atth'eva aññathattam, atthi vipariṇāmo. Aññathatta* is abtr n of *aññathā* and means “difference, alteration, variation, change”: it can refer to physical states (M 1:83, 2:106, 110; S 3:37, 4:4, 5:216; A 1:152, 222, 5:59 f), or to mental states, esp into delusion, depression, anxiety, remorse, etc (A 3:66 = 179 = 256 ≠ V 1;45 = 2:2 = 3:21 ≈ It 11; M 1:457 ≠ S 3:91; M 1:334, 366, 448, 2:51; S 4:329; C 2:2). *Vipariṇāma* (*vi* + *pariṇāma*) means “change (neg sense), reverse, vicissitude” (D 3:216; M 1:457 (as disappointment); S 2:274, 3:8, 4:7 f, 67 f; A 2:177, 3:32, 5:59 f; Vbh 379; Vism 499; VbhA 93; PvA 60). *Vipariṇāma*, too, can apply to either mental or physical states. Apparently, here *aññathatta* refers to physical change, while *vipariṇāma* refers to mental changes. Comy however glosses *vipariṇāma* as “death” (*maraṇa*) (AA 5:26).

²² With reasonable imagination, we should understand this as covering astronomically vast distance, as far as the their light can be seen (as we today are able to see the astronomically distant heavenly bodies and remote space phenomena).

²³ *Yāvata bhikkhave candima,sūriyā pariharanti disā bhanti virocāmānā, tāva sahasadhā loko.* In the term “thousandfold world-system,” *sahasadhā loka* (late & Comy: *sahassa loka,dhātu* (Ap 2:576*), “thousand” (*sahassa*) is not an exact number but alludes to astronomical “large numbers” and size of such a universe. See Reflection, “Parallel universes,” R450, 2016. A good intro to ancient Buddhist cosmology is Gethin 1998:112-132 (ch 5).

²⁴ On (Ānanda) **Abhibhū S** (A 3.80), this systema is described as a “minor” (*cūlanika*) one. On parallel universes, see also Kvu 13.1/476.

²⁵ *Jambu,dīpa* (Skt *Jambu,dvipa*) (the Jambu Continent) is the ancient name for the Indian sub-continent. See (3).

²⁶ **Uttara,kuru.** According to Indian Buddhist mythology, this is a region in Central Asia, where the lifespan is 120 years. In the early canon, it is described as a continent (*mahā.dīpa*) (north of Jambu,dīpa) along with Apara,go-yāna, and Pubba,videha (A 3.80/1:227, 10.29/5.59). **Āṭānāṭiya S** (D 32), in its detailed description, refers to Uttara,kuru (Skt *uttaraḥ Kuravaḥ*, “northern Kuru”) as a city (*pura*) (D 32.7/3:199). Along with 4 × 500 smaller “islands” (*dīpa*) surrounding them constitute a world system (*cakka,vaḷa*) (DA 2:678; SA 1:74; AA 2:34 f; KhA 176; SnA 2:443). Apparently, this is a metaphorical description in an ancient Buddhist conception of a world system. In later literature, Uttara,kuru is described as a land of plenty, and it is often said that ascetics and monks would go there by their psychic power to obtain alms (SA 1:117 = AA 3:88; ThaA 1:42 ≈ AA 1:273; J 5:316, 6:100; BA 187). See DPPN sv & CPD sv for more refs. See also E W Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Strasbourg, 1905:186; R Kloetzli, *Buddhist Cosmology*, 1983: 25 f, 52-59, 81.

²⁷ The term *Yāma* refers to a class of devas. Comys explain the term as “those who have attained divine bliss” (*dibbam sukham yātā payātā sampattā ti yāmā*, ThaA 169; PmA 3:613; VbhA 519). In some context, *Yāma* seems to derive from Yama, the ruler of the underworld, eg *Yāmato yāva Akaniṭṭham* (“from the underworld to the highest heaven” (KhA 166 = SnA 1:278). The Buddhist Yama is clearly related, if not identical to, the Vedic Yama: see Bhattacharji 1970:48-108.

²⁸ Be & Ce have this line and the next, missing from Se.

a thousand heavens of Para,nimmita,vasavatti [the devas who lord over the creation of others], and a thousand Brahma worlds. [60]

And in that thousand-fold world-system, **Mahā Brahmā** is regarded as the foremost.

Yet even in Mahā Brahmā *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that.

Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

The radiant gods

3 There comes a time, bhikshus, sooner or later, after a long period of time, when this world contracts [dissolves].²⁹ When the world is contracting [dissolving], beings are mostly³⁰ reborn in **the Ābhassara** [streaming radiance] Brahmā world.³¹ There they dwell, mind-made, feeding on zest,³² self-luminous,³³ moving about through the air, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time.³⁴ When the world is contracting [dissolving], bhikshus, the Ābhassara devas are reckoned as the foremost.

Yet even in the Ābhassara devas, *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

²⁹ “Contracts,” *saṃvaṭṭati*, lit “rolls back” or devolves. See **Aggañña S** (S 27), SD 2.19 Appendix 2. For parallel of this passage, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.2.2). At this point, it is interesting to look at (**Agga**) **Kosala S** (A 10.29/5:59-65) where the Buddha applies *agga* on two contrasting levels—the worldly and the spiritual—by declaring that is Kāsī-Kosala “Pasenadi is *agga*, but even Pasenadi changes; in the ten-thousand-world-system, Brahmā is *agga*, but even Brahmā changes; when the world contracts, Ābhassara is *agga*, but the Ābhassara gods change—a monk who sees this, turns away from what is *agga*, and is disinterested in it”—and each time with the refrain “how much more so in what is lesser” (*pag’eva hīnasmim*) (cf **Alagaddûpamā S**: “Bhikshus, having known the parable of the raft, you should abandon even the Dharma, how much more that which is not Dharma.” (M 22.14/1:135).) The (**Agga**) **Kosala S** concludes with the Buddha declaring that the foremost (*etad-agga*) of all these things (mentioned earlier) is “nirvana here and now” (*diṭṭh’eva dhamme...nibbuto*).

³⁰ “Mostly” (*yebhuyyena*). Commenting on this passage, **Buddhaghosa** says that “‘mostly’ (*yebhuyyena*) is said because the other beings are born either in higher Brahmā realms or in the formless realms” (DA 1:110). **Dhammapāla**, in his subcommentary on Buddhaghosa’s texts, adds: “‘or in world-systems other than those in the process of contracting’ is the alternative to be understood by the word *or*. For it is not possible to consider that all beings in the descents at that time are born in the form or formless existence, since it is impossible for those beings in the descents with the longest life span to be reborn in the human realm” (DṬ 1:201, qu by Rupert Gettin, 1997:198 f). Dhammapāla’s problem with Buddhaghosa’s failure to take into account of beings such as those who have committed one of the 5 karmas “with immediate result [arising in the following birth]” (*ānantariya,kamma*, ie matricide, parricide, killing an arhat, wounding the Buddha, splitting the Sangha) at the end of the aeon (*kappa*). If the karma of such beings have not run out, then surely, concludes Dhammapāla, they must be reborn in the hells of other world systems. Cf Kvu 13.1/ 476.

³¹ “Ābhassarā.” This celestial world, the highest of the form worlds, constituting the 2nd dhyana, is populated by luminescent beings who live on zest (*pīti*) and emanate lightning-like radiance. Their lifespan is 2 aeons (*kappa*) for those who develop the 2nd dhyana; 4 aeons for those who develop it in an intermediate degree; and 8 aeons for those who develop in to a superior degree. Although the Theravāda cosmology fixes their lifespan at 8 aeons, in **Nānā Karaṇā S 1** (A 4.123.2/2:127 @ SD 23), their lifespan is stated as 2 aeons, as if referring to those reborn through an inferior 2nd dhyana. When the physical universe devolves or “contracts” (*saṃvaṭṭati*) due to “fire,” it reaches up to Ābhassara (CA 11; Vism 13.41/416 f). On the Ābhassara devas’ self-luminosity and *pabhassara*, see Harvey 1995: 177 f & **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19 (9).

³² “Zest,” *pīti*, alt tr “rapture, joy”; this term refers to a factor of the first 2 absorptions of meditation. It is not a sensation and hence does not belong to the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-k,khandha*) but a mental factor (*cetasika*) belonging to the formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*), and it may be described as “joyful interest.”

³³ On the Ābhassara devas’ self-luminosity and *pabhassara*, see Harvey 1995:177 f & **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19 (9).

³⁴ This whole passage up to here, as at **Aggañña S** (D 27,10.1/3:84), SD 2.19.

The 10 kasina bases

- 4 Bhikshus, there are these **10 kasina bases** [bases of totality].³⁵ What are the ten?³⁶
- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) One perceives the earth kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (2) One perceives the water kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (3) One perceives the fire kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (4) One perceives the wind kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (5) One perceives the blue kasina, ³⁷ | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (6) One perceives the yellow kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (7) One perceives the red [copper-red] kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (8) One perceives the white kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (9) One perceives the space kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |
| (10) One perceives the consciousness kasina, | above, below, in between, undivided, unbounded. |

These, bhikshus, are the ten kasina bases.

5 Among these 10 kasina bases, bhikshus, this is the foremost, that is, the one who perceives **the consciousness kasina** above, below, in between, undivided,³⁸ unbounded. Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, there still is uncertainty, there is change. [61] Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

The 8 bases for mastery

6 Bhikshus, there are these **8 bases for mastery** (*abhibh'āyatana*).³⁹ What are the eight?

(1) Perceiving form internally [within oneself], one sees forms externally [in another], limited, beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, 'I know, I see.'

This is the first base for mastery.

(2) Perceiving form internally [within oneself], one sees forms externally [in another], immeasurable, beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, 'I know, I see.'

This is the second base for mastery.

(3) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one sees forms externally [in another], limited, beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, 'I know, I see.'

This is the third base for mastery.

³⁵ "Kasina bases" (*kaṣiṇ'āyatana*: *kaṣiṇa* is perhaps related to Skt *kṛtsnā*, "whole, complete, entirely, all"), alt tr "bases of totality," here referring to the meditation state attained through kasina meditation. The term *kaṣiṇa* refers to an external device (like a colour or one of the 4 primary elements) used to produce and develop mental concentration and attainment of four dhyanas (*jhāna*). The space kasina and the consciousness kasina are, respectively, the objective supports of the first and the second formless attainments: the base of the infinity of space and the base of the infinity of consciousness. *Kaṣiṇa* meditation leads only to calm (*samatha*), but properly used can be helpful to the realization of insight (*vipassanā*). See *Vism* chs 4-5; *DhsA:PR* (*Expositor*) 248-251.

³⁶ Kasina nos 1-3, 9-10 are suitable for all personality types; kasina nos 4-8 are best for those with a hating temperament (*dosa, carita*). They all can lead to all the 4 form dhyanas. See *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1(8) & 15.12(9.1).

³⁷ On blue (*nīla*), yellow (*pīṭa*), copper-red (*lohita*) and white (*odāta*) kasinas, see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.12 (9.1).

³⁸ *Advayaṃ*, alt tr: "non-dual."

³⁹ "Bases of mastery" (*abhibh'āyatana*, Skt *abhibhv-āyatana* = *abhibhū* + *āyatana*, D 16.3.24/2:110, 33.3.1(10)-/3:260; M 77.23/2:13 f; S 35.96/4:77; A 8.65/4:305 f, 8.90/349; Nm 143; *Dhs* §§235-247; *DhsA* 191), ie modes of mastering the kasina meditations. This teaching is given to Udāyi in **Mahā Sakul'udāyi S** (M 77.23/2:13 f). These are powers gained through *kaṣiṇa* (Skt *kṛtsna*) meditation as a means of transcending the sense-sphere. In **Parihāna Dhamma S** (S 35.96), the term is applied to 6 "mastered bases" (*cha abhibh'āyatanāni*) and refer to the mastery of the senses: when a sense-object impinges on the sense-base, "there do not arise in him evil unwholesome states, nor any memories and intentions connected with the mental fetters" (S 35.96/4:76 f). See *Buddhist Dictionary: abhibhāyatana* & *Ency of Buddhism*, sv.

(4) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one sees forms externally [in another], immeasurable, beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see.’

This is the fourth base for mastery.

(5) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one seeks forms externally, that are blue [indigo], of blue colour, blue in appearance, with a blue glow.⁴⁰

Just as a flax flower⁴¹ that is blue, of blue colour, blue in appearance, with a blue glow; or just like Benares cloth smoothed on both sides, that is blue, blue in appearance, with a blue glow; even so, not perceiving form internally, one seeks forms externally, blue, of blue colour, blue in appearance, with a blue glow.

By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see.’

This is the fifth base for mastery.

(6) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one seeks forms externally, that are yellow, of yellow colour, yellow in appearance, with a yellow glow.

Just as a cassia⁴² flower that is yellow, of yellow colour, yellow in appearance, with a yellow glow; or just like [62] Benares cloth smoothed on both sides, that is yellow, yellow in appearance, with a yellow glow; even so, not perceiving form internally, one seeks forms externally, yellow, of yellow colour, yellow in appearance, with a yellow glow.

By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see.’

This is the sixth base for mastery.

(7) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one seeks forms externally, that are red [copper-red], of red colour, red in appearance, with a red glow.

Just as a hibiscus⁴³ flower that is red, of red colour, red in appearance, with a red glow; or just like Benares cloth smoothed on both sides, that is red, red in appearance, with a red glow; even so, not perceiving form internally, one seeks forms externally, red, of red colour, red in appearance, with a red glow.

By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see.’

This is the sixth base for mastery.

(8) Not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one seeks forms externally, that are white, of white colour, white in appearance, with a white glow.

⁴⁰ On blue (*nīla*), yellow (*pīta*), copper-red (*lohita*) and white (*odāta*) kasinas, see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.12(10.1).

⁴¹ *Ummā, puppha*.

⁴² “Cassia,” *kaṇṇikāra* or *kaṇikāra* (Skt *karṇikāra*) (PED: *Pterospermum acerifolium*, but this is not the cassia tree), the tree (J 5:295, 420, 422, 6:269; Ap 167, 183; B 17.19; Mahv 73.123), or *~puppha*, its flower (D 3:111 = M 2:14 = A 5:61; J 2:25; Vism 173). The *kaṇṇikāra*, also called cassia, pudding-pipe, golden shower tree, or *kinihirimal* in Sinhalese, has long drooping pods and large racemes or clusters of star-shaped yellow flowers. It is often featured in ancient Indian literature, such as the *Buddha, carita*. Almost every part of the cassia tree is useful. The leafy shoots are cut and steamed as a fresh vegetable. The leaves steeped in water provide a laxative tea, or ground into a paste soothe skin irritations, and 4 grams of the sticky black seeds boiled in salted water drunk before bedtime is said to relieve “heart congestion.” Its bark when macerated becomes a good leather cleaner. This beautiful tall hardwood is also used in construction, and is so durable that it can be made into the spokes of wheels and handles for plows. Indians often plant a *kaṇṇikāra* for each child born to the family as an investment for their future, but also as a kind of sympathetic magic, that the child would grow tall and strong like the tree.

⁴³ “Hibiscus,” *bandhu, jīvaka* (PED: *Pentapetes phœnicea*, but prob *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) (D 2:111; M 2:14; J 4:179; Vism 174; VvA 43, 161; DhsA 14). The hibiscus or red hibiscus, belongs to the Malvaceae family (a large group of dicotyledonous flowering plants), and is also called Chinese hibiscus or “shoe flower.” The Sinhalese call it *bandu*. It is a shrub common in tropical Asia, now widely planted, frequently as a hedge. When crushed, the red flowers turn black, yielding a dark purplish dye that is used in India for blackening shoes. In China, the dye is used for the hair and eyebrows. It is also used to color liquor and to dye paper a bluish purple tint that reacts with litmus. Hawaiians eat raw flowers to aid digestion; the Chinese pickle and eat them.

Just as a the morning star⁴⁴ flower that is white, of white colour, white in appearance, with a white glow; or just like Benares cloth smoothened on both sides, that is white, white in appearance, with a white glow; even so, not perceiving form internally, one seeks forms externally, white, of white colour, white in appearance, with a white glow.

By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see.’

This is the eighth base for mastery.

These, bhikshus, are the eight bases for mastery.

7 Among these eight bases for mastery, bhikshus, this is the foremost, that is, the one who, not perceiving form internally [within oneself], one seeks forms externally, that are **white**, of white colour, white in appearance, with a white glow. Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, *there still is [63] uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

The 4 modes of progress

8 Bhikshus, there are these **four modes of progress** (*paṭipadā*). What are the four?⁴⁵

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (1) Painful progress with | slow direct knowledge. ⁴⁶ |
| (2) Painful progress with | quick direct knowledge. ⁴⁷ |
| (3) Pleasant progress with | slow direct knowledge. ⁴⁸ |
| (4) Pleasant progress with | quick direct knowledge. ⁴⁹ |

These, bhikshus, are the four modes of practice.

9 Among these four modes of progress, bhikshus, this is the foremost, that is, **the one with pleasant practice with quick direct knowing**. Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

The 4 perceptions

10 Bhikshus, there are these **four perceptions** (*saññā*). What are the four?

- (1) The one who perceives the limited.⁵⁰
- (2) The one who perceives the exalted.⁵¹
- (3) The one who perceives the immeasurable [the mind in the divine abodes].⁵²

⁴⁴ *Osadhī, tāra*, lit “the medicine star” (D 2:111; M 2:14; S 1:65; J 1:23). Also tr as “the star of healing.” *Osadhīsa* is the moon (Abhp 52; Sadd 380), which Indian mythology regards as the lord of healing. DPL says this is Venus (but without evidence).

⁴⁵ For an analysis of these four, see **Vitthāra Paṭipadā S** (A 4.162/2:149 f), SD 18.3. See also **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50), SD 10.4.

⁴⁶ *Dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*. One with strong unwholesome roots (lust, hate, and delusion) and weak spiritual faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom), resulting in difficult and slow progress.

⁴⁷ *Dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*. One with strong unwholesome roots but strong spiritual faculties, resulting in difficult but quick progress.

⁴⁸ *Sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*. One with weak unwholesome roots and weak spiritual faculties, resulting in pleasant but slow progress, as in the case of Moggallāna (**Sāriputta Moggallāna S 1**, A 4.167/2:154 f).

⁴⁹ *Sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*. One with weak unwholesome roots and strong spiritual faculties, resulting in pleasant but quick progress, as in the case of Sāriputta (**Sāriputta Moggallāna S 2**, A 4.168/2:155).

⁵⁰ *Parittam sañjānāti*. Limited perception is ordinary perception, ie, that of the sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*). See related nn in this section.

⁵¹ *Mahaggatam sañjānāti*. The mind “become great” (*mahaggatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See related nn in this section.

(4) The one who perceives the base of nothingness thus: “There is nothing whatsoever.”⁵³

11 Among these four perceptions, bhikshus, this is the foremost, that is, the one who perceives the base of nothingness thus: “**There is nothing whatsoever.**” Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

The annihilationist

12 Bhikshus, among the views of outsiders, this is the foremost: “**I might not be, and there might be not mine; I will not be, and there will not be mine.**”⁵⁴

12.2 Bhikshus, for one who has such a view, it is possible [can be expected] that he will not feel attracted to existence, and will have no aversion towards the ending of existence.⁵⁵ **[64]** Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

12.3 But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

“The highest purification”

13 Bhikshus, there are some ascetics and brahmins who teach [proclaim] “**the highest purification.**”⁵⁶

14 Bhikshus, those ascetics and brahmins teaching [proclaiming] “the highest purification,” regard it as the highest, after transcending the base of nothingness, one reaches and dwells in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**. They teach their doctrine for the direct knowing and realizing of that. Indeed, bhikshus, there are beings who perceive in this way.

⁵² *Appamāṇaṃ sañjānāti*. Immeasurable perception, says Comy, is supramundane perception (of the 4 paths and 4 fruits) (AA 5:26; cf AA 3:231); but cf *catu, brahma, vihāra, samādhi pi magga, phala, samādhi pi appamāṇo samādhi nāma* (AA 4:195). Cf AA 2:74; ItA 1:92. See prec 2 & esp foll n.

⁵³ *N’atthi kiñcī ti ākiñcaññ’āyatanam sañjānāti*. Comy says this is the perception of the base of nothingness (the 3rd formless attainment) (AA 1:129). Bodhi: “...but it seems improbable that the Buddha would declare a mundane perception superior to supramundane perceptions. More likely, the ‘measureless’ perception refers to the perception of the measureless forms, or to the divine abodes (where lovingkindness, etc, are extended to measureless beings), or to the first of the formless attainments (which take infinities as objects)” (A:ÑB 311 n29). Cf **Mahā Kaccāna S** Comy which explains *appamāṇena* as “immeasurable by way of unlimited radiation” (*appamāṇena ti pharaṇa, appamāṇatāya appamāṇena*, AA 3:355; cf *appamāṇan ti pharaṇ, vasena appamāṇam*, AA 4:68; also: *catu, brahma, vihāra, samādhi pi magga, phala, samādhi pi appamāṇo samādhi nāma*, AA 4:195). Cf MA 4:58; AA 4:155; ItA 1:92, 2:27 (which says that the physical eye is “limited,” *paritta*, the divine eye is exalted,” *mahaggata*, and the others, immeasurable, *appamāṇa*); DhsA 358.

⁵⁴ *No c’assam no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi na me bhavissatī ti*. Bodhi: “It is problematic how the optative clause in the annihilationist version should be interpreted; perhaps it can be read as an assertion that personal existence, along with its experienced world, is utterly fortuitous (‘I might not have been and it might not have been mine’). The clause in the future clearly asserts that personal existence and its world will terminate at death.” (S:B 1061 n75). For an important discussion, see **Udāna S** (S 22.55), SD 17.16 (2).

⁵⁵ *Bhave appaṭīkulyatā...na bhavissatī*, lit “there will not be non-disgust towards existence.” *Bhava, nirodhe paṭīkulyatā...na bhavissatī*, lit “there will not be disgust towards existence.” Bodhi: “As annihilationism arises from a repulsion towards existence, the annihilationist welcomes the cessation of existence, though he generally ‘goes too far’ in misinterpreting such cessation as the annihilation of a real self, an existent person (see It 49).” (A:ÑB 312 n31).

⁵⁶ *Paramattha visuddhi*. Comy says that this is a name for the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. For the base of nothingness is the foremost as the basis for insight, but the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is highest in terms of long lifespan. (AA 5:27)

But even beings who perceive in this way, bhikshus, *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that. Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior.

Nirvana here and now

15 Bhikshus, there are some ascetics and brahmins who teach [proclaim] “**the supreme state of nirvana here and now.**”⁵⁷

16 Bhikshus, for those who teach [proclaim] “the supreme state of nirvana here and now,” the foremost is the clinging-free liberation attained after seeing the six bases of contact as they really are, namely, their arising and passing away, their gratification and their danger, and the escape from them.⁵⁸

16.2 But, bhikshus. even though I say thus and teach thus, some ascetics and brahmins wrongly, baselessly, falsely and untruly misrepresent me, thus:

“The ascetic Gotama does not teach the full understanding of sense-pleasures, nor does he teach the full understanding of forms, nor does he teach the full understanding of feelings.” [65]

17 But, bhikshus,

I do teach the full understanding⁵⁹ of sense-pleasures,⁶⁰ and

I do teach the full understanding of forms,⁶¹ and

I do teach the full understanding of feelings.⁶²

And being stilled, quenched, cooled here and now, I proclaim **the utter nirvana that is free from clinging** [that is fuel-free].⁶³

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁷ *Parama, diṭṭha, dhamma, nibbāna*. **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1) list 62 bases for wrong view, and the last 5 of these are the versions of this false view as those held by non-Buddhist ascetics: the first identifies sensual pleasure as supreme nirvana here and now; the other identify the 4 dhyanas with supreme nirvana (D 1.3.20-24/1:37 f).

⁵⁸ On the arising and passing away, gratification and danger, and escape with regard to sense-desires, see **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 13,7-15/1:85-88 @ SD 6.9) = **Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 14,6-14/1:91 f @ SD 4.7).

⁵⁹ Comy glosses “full understanding” (*pariññā*) here with “transcending” (*samatikkama*). The full understanding (or transcending) of sense-pleasures occurs through the 1st dhyana; of forms; through the formless attainments; and of feelings, through the attainment of clinging-free nirvana (*anupādā, nibbāna*), wherein all the modes of feeling (*sabba, vedayita*) have been abandoned (AA 5:27). Here it should be understood “feeling” (*vedanā*) refers to the reaction to sense-contacts. The Buddha and the saints, however, do feel profound joy and happiness, independent of any internal or external stimuli, wholesome or unwholesome.

⁶⁰ See eg **Taṇhā (Vicārita) S** (A 4.199), SD 31.15.

⁶¹ See eg **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140), SD 4.17 & **Rūpa**, SD 17.2a.

⁶² See eg **Dīgha, nakha S** (M 74), SD 16,1; (**Indriya) Vibhaṅga S 1** (S 48.35): see SD 17.3(4.4), & **Aṭṭha, sata S** (S 36.22): see SD 17.3(4.1).

⁶³ “Utter nirvana that is clinging-free” (*anupādā, parinibbāna*): *anupādā* is mostly used before nouns, as it were a substantive in cpd, while *an-upādāya* (qv) is preferred before finite verb forms, cf M 3:227,25 with 227,26 (CPD). Comy says that this is the final nirvana that is free from any condition (*appaccaya*). The Buddha gave this discourse to remove the discontent of 500 monks who were dissatisfied with the holy life. On listening to the discourse, they overcame their discontent and gained stream-winning. Later, they cultivated insight and gained arhathood. (AA 5:27). The components *upādā* and *upādāya* are adjs of *upādāna* (n), usu tr as “clinging,” but can also be rendered as “fuel”: see (**Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56), SD 3.7(5). Cf *anupādā, parinibbān’attham* (**Gilāna S 2**, S 35.75,11/-4:48): see S:B 1404 n41.

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