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(Arahatta) Susīma Sutta

The Discourse to Susīma (on Arhathood) | S 12.70

Theme: Attaining arhathood through insight

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 Sutta summary

This sutta records a situation when the order has grown in popularity and wealth [§§1-4]. The wanderer Susīma, on the instigation of his colleagues, joins the order as a “thief of Dharma” (*dhamma thena*), intending to learn the Buddha’s teaching to gain material advantage for his own company of wanderers [§§5-7]. Susīma approaches Ānanda, expressing his wish to join the order [§8]. Ānanda brings the matter before the Buddha who allows Susīma to ordain [§§9-12].

On hearing that some monks have attained arhathood [§§13-14], says the Commentary, Susīma thinks: “Final knowledge (*añña*) must be the supreme standard in this Teaching, the essential personal transmission of the teacher (*añña nāma imasmiṃ sāsane parama-p, pamāṇaṃ sāra, bhūtā acariya, muṭṭhi*).¹ Let me ask and find out about it.” That is, he thinks that the liberating wisdom is handed down secretly “from the teacher’s fist” of the Buddha (SA 2:126), and so he approaches them.

Susīma questions the new arhats if they have attained any superpowers, but is confused by their reply that they have not [§§15-27]. When he questions the Buddha [§§28-32a], he is given a catechism on the five aggregates [§§32b-43a] and dependent arising [§§43b-50]. Listening to the Buddha, he realizes the truth for himself [§§51-57], becomes an arhat² (SA 2:127), and confesses his erstwhile evil intentions [§§58-57].

The Susīma Sutta introduces a class of arhats described as “freed by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutta*), who have won liberation by understanding the Dharma without gaining any superpowers or formless attainment. The sutta also makes it clear that the knowledge of the true nature of reality (*dhamma-ṭ, ṭhiti, -ñāna*), that is, the five aggregates and dependent arising, precedes the knowledge of nirvana [§32a].

Richard Gombrich discusses this sutta in relation to its Chinese counterpart in *How Buddhism Began* (1996:123-127).³

2 Susīma and the wanderers

2.1 Susīma was a wanderer⁴ of Rājagaha. Buddhaghosa says that he was an erudite wanderer skilled in the Vedas.⁵ These peripatetics—or more fully, “the sectarian wanderers of other faiths” (*añña, titthiyā paribbājaka*)—were a special class of ancient Indian mendicants (including women wanderers) who held various beliefs, and wandered around India from pre-Buddhist times.⁶ They were not ascetics except when they were celibate. Such wanderers who were teachers often engaged in debates over a wide range of topics. Special debating halls⁷ and meeting places⁸ were set aside for them and the local inhabitants

¹ *Acariya, muṭṭhi*, lit “the teacher’s fist,” a secret teaching transmission.

² See n at §51.

³ See also Gombrich 1996:127-134. He does not mention the Chinese text, but it is prob SA 347 = T2.96. For Bodhi’s response for Gombrich’s scholastic views, see (3) below.

⁴ *Paribbājaka*; Skt *parivrājaka*.

⁵ *Vedaṅgesu kusalo paṇḍita, paribbājako* (SA 2:124).

⁶ See DPPN: *paribbājaka*; GC Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, 2nd ed 1974:330-337; Uma Chakravarti 1987:36-38, 132.

⁷ Such as those in Mallikā’s park at Sāvattihī (D 1:176) and the Kūṭ’āgāra, sālā at Vesālī (D 1:1:150 ff; M 2:252; S 5:389; A 2:190 ff).

⁸ Such venues were in groves near the wanderers’ settlements (*paribbājaka’ārāmā*), such as those on the shore of lake Gaggarā at Campā (D 1:111), in the Mora, nivāpa at Rājagaha (A 5:326), and on the banks of the river Sappinikā (flowing through Rājagaha) (A 1:185, 2:175).

came to pay their respects and support them. In a few rare instances, wanderers were lay devotees of the Buddha:⁹

Timbaruka	S 12.8/2:22 f	He asks the Buddha about the origin of pleasure and pain.
Puṇṇa Koḷiya.putta	M 57.2/1:387	A naked wanderer (<i>acelaka</i>) who visits the Buddha.
Moḷiya Sīvaka	S 36.21/4:230 f	He asks the Buddha whether all feelings are due to past karma.
Vacchagotta	M 71.2/1:481	He questions the Buddha on omniscience.
Saccaka Nigaṇṭhaputta	M 35/1:227-237	A respected Jain (<i>nigaṇṭha</i>) teacher who offers meals to the monks.
Nandiya	S 45.10/5:11 f	He questions the Buddha on how to attain nirvana.
Poṭṭhapāda	D 9.1/1:178	The Buddha teaches him on consciousness.
Piloṭika (or Piloṭikā)	M 27.1-7/1:175 f	A devotee of the Buddha and monks since young. ¹⁰

2.2 The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1) gives a representative list of the views of the wanderers. Some wanderers claimed that their teachings were the same as the Buddha's but he clearly rejected their claims. Others would challenge the monks who would then ask the Buddha for instructions on how to respond. Some of the suttas that record such wanderer's encounters with early Buddhism include the following:

Cūḷa Sīhanāda Sutta	M 11	The 4 kinds of saints are found only in the Buddha's Teaching.
Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta	M 13	Some wanderers challenge some monks to point out the difference between their own teachings and that of the Buddha's. ¹¹
Bahu,vedaniya Sutta	M 59	The types of joy that can be experienced (M 59,16/1:400).
Sandaka Sutta	M 76	Ānanda teaches the wanderers regarding the fruitless and the fruitful holy life.
Mahā Sakul'udāyi Sutta	M 77	The Buddha explains why his disciples respect him.
Samaṇa,maṇḍika,putta Sutta	M 78	The Buddha explains regarding one who has attained the highest spiritual goal.
Anurādha Sutta	S 22.86	Anurādha declares to the wanderers that the Tathāgata is ineffable.
Sambahulā Bhikkhū Sutta	S 35.81	The wanderers are told of the purpose of the holy life.
(Saḷāyatana) Kim Atthiya Sutta	S 35.152	The wanderers are told of the purpose of the holy life.
Jambu,khādaka Saṃyutta	S 38	The wanderer Jambu,khādaka's questions are answered.
Sāmaṇḍaka Saṃyutta	S 39	The wanderer Sāmaṇḍaka's questions are answered.
(Magga) Kim Atthiya Sutta	S 45.5	The wanderers are told of the purpose of the holy life.
Virāga Sutta	S 45.41	The wanderers are told of the purpose of the holy life.
Pariyāya Sutta	S 46.52	The wanderers falsely claim that they too teach the five mental hindrances and the seven awakening-factors.
Aggi Sutta	S 46.53	Same as preceding but are answered in a different way.
(Haliddavasana) Mettā Sutta ¹²	S 46.54	The wanderers falsely claim that they too teach the four divine abodes (<i>brahma,vihāra</i>).

⁹ See U Chakravarti 1987:132 & 220.

¹⁰ **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27.1-7/1:175 f) records his praises of the Buddha which inspires the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi to visit the Blessed One. Piloṭika's family name was Vacchāyana (Skt Vatśyāyana) (MA 2:195), where same Comy also gives his name as Piloṭikā. He is not mentioned in Chakravarti's list.

¹¹ M 13/1:84-89 = SD 6.9.

¹² Also called **Metta,sahagata S**.

2.3 Many Buddhist monastics were wanderers before, the two most notable being Sāriputta and Moggallāna.¹³ Besides Susīma, there were other wanderers who joined the order and became distinguished, such as:

Magandiya	M 75/1:501-513	He is initially antagonistic towards the Buddha.
Vacchagotta	S 44.8/4:395-397	He shows his amazement at finding that the Buddha and Moggallāna teach the same Dharma.
Sabhiya ¹⁴	Sn 3.6/pp91-102	Sabhiya asks the Buddha to define <i>bhikkhu</i> and other spiritual terms.
Subhadda	D 16.5.23-30/2:149-153	Last monk to be ordained by the Buddha himself.

2.4 The Susīma Sutta suggests that the purpose of the wanderers' religious life was not always spiritual. Interestingly, although the Buddha knows of Susīma's true intention in joining the order, he still accepts him. **Bhikkhu Bodhi** notes:

It is puzzling that here, when it was most necessary do so, the Buddha makes no mention of the probationary period normally imposed on wanderers of other sects who wish to enter the Buddhist order; perhaps the Buddha had foreseen that Susīma would have been discouraged by such a stipulation and would not have applied for admission, thus losing the chance to gain liberation.

(S:B 784 n206)

Bodhi may well be right because **the Puris'indriya Sutta** (A 6.62) says that the Buddha is capable of knowing another's mind, whether it is good or evil, and whether one is capable of spiritual progress at that time. Susīma is cited by its Commentary as one who is capable of spiritual progress.¹⁵

3 The dry-insight practitioner

3.1 The Visuddhi, magga, in distinguishing between the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhana but does not use it as a basis for insight, clearly admits the possibility of attaining nirvana by insight alone (Vism 21.111 f/666 f).

The Susīma Sutta and its commentaries are sometimes cited as textual evidence to show that there can be arhats even without any mundane dhyana. When the monks in the sutta are asked how they become arhats without any super powers of the formless attainments, they reply: "We are freed by wisdom" (*paññā, vimuttā kho mayam*). The Commentary explains this reply, thus: "We are ponderers, dry-insight practitioners, freed by wisdom alone."¹⁶

3.2 The Commentary also states that the Buddha gives a long discourse on insight in the sutta "to show the arising of knowledge without even concentration."¹⁷ The Sub-commentary (Porāṇa Tīkā) says that "without even concentration" (*vinā pi samādhim*) "is said in reference to the insight-vehicle practitioner, that is, one earlier accomplished, reaching the characteristic [mark] of calm without concentration."¹⁸

¹³ V 1:39-44; Ap 1:24 f; J 1:85; SnA 1:326 ff; DhA 1.8/1:83-114 (on Dh 11-12), 5.15/2:84; Mvst 2:56, 3:60 f, 3:328; T1444 = T2.1026a-c; *Gilgit MSS* 3,4:20-25; cf E Lamotte, *The History of Indian Buddhism*, 1988:659; R Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India*, 1994:139 f. See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* 2004 ch 5.

¹⁴ Both Sabhiya and Piloṭika were said to be "wise wanderers" amongst the "wise recluses" (*samaṇa, paṇḍitā ti asabhiya, piloṭikādayo paṇḍita, paribbājakā*) (SA 2:258).

¹⁵ *Aparihāna, dhammo ti evaṃ bhagavatā ko nāto? Susīmo paribbājako aññe ca evarūpā*, "who does the Blessed One know as 'one of the nature not to decline'? He knows the wanderer Susīmo as such a one." (SA 3:406)

¹⁶ *Mayam nijjhānakā sukkha, vipassakā paññā, matten'eva vimuttā ti*, SA 2:127.

¹⁷ *Vinā pi samādhim evaṃ nān'uppatti, dassan'attham*, SA 2:127.

¹⁸ *Samatha, lakkhana-p, pattam purima, siddham vinā pi samādhin ti vipassanā, yānikam sandhāya vuttam*, SAṬ 2:125.

While the texts are clear that there is always concentration as a path-factor they also make it clear that in the case of the *sukkha, vipassaka* this can be “momentary samadhi” (*khaṇika samādhi*).¹⁹ The objects for this type of concentration are the 5 aggregates (*khandha*), the 6 sense-bases (*āyatanā*) and the 18 elements (*dhātu*), and not the 40 meditation-objects leading to normal samatha.

3.3 AN APPARENT PROBLEM

3.3.1 §25 of the Sutta presents an interesting problem. The Saṃyutta Commentary on the Sutta seems to be saying that these monks have *not* attained any dhyanas. The Commentary explains the sentence, “We are free by wisdom, avuso Susīma (*paññā, vimuttā kho mayam āvuso susīma*) [§25] as meaning: “Avuso, we are without dhyana, dry-insighters, freed merely by wisdom” (*āvuso mayam nijjhānakā sukkha, vipassakā paññā, matten’eva vimuttā*) (SA 2:127). The Porāṇa Ṭīkā then glosses “freed merely by wisdom” (*paññā, matten’eva*) as “not freed both-ways” (*na ubhato, bhāga, vimuttā*) (SAṬ:Be 2:124).

3.3.2 Without *abhiññā* and *āruppa*. Bodhi notes that while the Saṃyutta Commentary seems to be saying that those monks do not have any dhyanas the Sutta itself establishes only that they lack the superknowledges (*abhiññā*) and formless attainments (*āruppā*). Nothing is said about whether or not they had achieved the 4 dhyanas. Clearly here, *abhiññā* refers to only the mundane superknowledges that are also known as the “**5 superknowledges**,” “super powers” or “supernatural faculties” (*pañcābhiññā*), namely:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) multifarious psychic power, | <i>iddhi, vidhā</i> or ° <i>vidham</i> |
| (2) the divine ear, | <i>dibba, sota</i> |
| (3) mind-reading, | <i>para.citta, vijānanā</i> |
| (4) recollection of past lives, and | <i>pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa</i> |
| (5) the divine eye (<i>dibba, cakkhu</i>), also called the knowledge of death and rebirth or the knowledge of how beings fare according to their karma. ²⁰ | <i>cut’upapāta ñāṇa</i>
<i>yathā, kammūpaga ñāṇa</i> |

Bodhi adds,

It is significant that Susīma’s questions do not extend to the jhānas, and it is even possible (though contrary to the Commentaries) that *nijjhānika* should be understood, not as the deprivative “without jhāna,” but as an agent noun from *nijjhāna*, pondering, hence “ponderers.” In any case, the sutta goes no further than to distinguish the *paññāvimutta* arahant from other arahants who have the six *abhiññās* and the formless attainments, and thus it offers nothing radically different from the Nikāyas as a whole. (S:B 785 n210)

3.3.3 Supermundane dhyana. The Commentaries say that *paññā, vimutta* arhat are of 5 kinds: those who attain one of the 4 dhyanas (that is, one or more 4 form dhyanas), and the “dry-insight one” (*sukkha, vipassaka*) who lacks mundane dhyana, but still has the supermundane dhyanas (*lok’uttara jhāna*) inseparable from the noble path.²¹ This is a helpful resolution of an apparent problem: although the “dry-insight” arhats do not attain mudnane dhyanas (the ones that we often refer to), they do attain the dhyanas of the path, that is, as a saint.

Neither the suttas nor the commentaries seem to give us any more information on this (although further textual research, confirmed by personal meditative experience. may in due course throw more light on this). For the moment, we can make an educated surmise that first attained streamwinning, and progress to attain the other stages of sainthood with mindfulness and some samadhi, not ammounting to dhyana. In due course, they attain arhathood. The undefiled mind of an arhat easily meditates and focuses into dhyana—this is, of course, a supermundane dhyana, that of an awakened being.

¹⁹ This term, however, is post-canonical.

²⁰ See SD 27.5a (5).

²¹ See DA 2:512,19-28. On the contrast between *paññā, vimutta* and *ubhato, bhāga, vimutta* arhats, see M 70,15-16/1:477-478 (SD 11.1); Pug 1.30-31/14.

4 Realization without meditation?

4.1 As already mentioned, the Susīma Sutta is sometimes cited, albeit erroneously, as evidence that a meditator can attain awakening (arhathood) without having attained dhyanas. In fact, it is sometimes cited as evidence for the notion of awakening without meditation. R Gombrich's book, *How Buddhism Began* (1996:123-127) is a good example of such an attempt. **Bhikkhu Bodhi**, in his review of Gombrich's book, published in *The Journal of Buddhist Ethics* has this to say:

Chapter 4, "Retracing An Ancient Debate," is the meatiest in the book, but also the most controversial. Gombrich proposes that two developments in the early Sangha led to major changes in the canon. One was scholastic literalism, the practice of seizing upon differences in terminology as marking real distinctions; the other was debates among the monks. Gombrich envisions a contest being waged in the early Sangha between monks who advocated meditation as the most effective means to attain Nibbāna and those who favoured insight.

He also supposes that the proponents of insight prevailed, so that texts were admitted into the canon which allowed "that Enlightenment can be attained without meditation, by a process of intellectual analysis (technically known as *paññā*) alone." (p 96).

While it is hard to deny that the canon depicts the relationship between concentration and insight in diverse ways, I cannot follow Gombrich to his conclusion that these diversities are indicative of unresolvable differences. Though a full-length paper would be needed to show in detail the flaws in his arguments, I would briefly object to two methods he uses to establish his position. One is an apparent arbitrariness in distinguishing between those texts he is ready to accept as genuine and those he regards as the work of later exegetes, an impregnable device that can allow one to assign virtually any inconvenient text to the latter class.

This line of argument appears most obtrusively when he claims, on the basis of two inconclusive texts, that *dhammānusārin* and *saddhānusārin* were originally descriptions of a single type of disciple, a claim he can maintain only by ascribing to "scholastic literalism" the more numerous suttas (in all four Nikāyas) that define them differently (pp 107-110). We again find the same style of argument used to defend his thesis that the differentiation among the various types of *cetovimutti* was a scholastic innovation (pp 116-18). Again, this requires him to dismiss as products of later scholasticism, without cogent grounds, the many suttas that draw such distinctions.

My second objection is to his insistence on interpreting alternative approaches to the path advocated in the suttas as competitive opposites. Thus, because the canon recognizes two types of arahants, those "freed in both ways" and those "freed by wisdom," Gombrich holds that a debate was underway between those monks who favoured meditation and those who thought insight was so far superior that meditation could be dispensed with. He appeals for support to **the Susīma Sutta** (S 12.70), which he reads as implying that enlightenment can be attained without meditation (pp 125-126). But if we turn to the sutta itself, we would see that all it shows is that there is a class of arahants who do not possess the supernormal powers (*abhiññā*) and the formless meditative attainments (*āruppa*).

This position is hardly unique to the Susīma Sutta but is met with throughout the Pāli Canon. True, the commentary describes these arahants as "dry insight practitioners, without jhāna." But even this does not mean that they reach the goal by mere "intellectual analysis," without meditation. It means, rather, that they have followed the path of **bare insight meditation** (*suddhāvipassanā*), a strenuous system of meditation that does not rely on the jhānas, the meditative absorptions, but involves direct contemplation of mental and material phenomena with only a minimal base of concentration. While this system is not explicitly recognized in the canon, its proponents point to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as its original source, a claim that stands on good grounds.

(Bodhi, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4 1997:292-296; highlights added)

4.2 Bodhi restates his caution in a footnote to his translation of the Susīma Sutta [§32a], and which should be read with his above comment:

If understood on its own terms, the text [the Susīma Sutta, especially §32a] establishes only that arahantship can be attained without the supernormal powers and the formless attainments. Read in the light of [SA and SAṬ], it may be seen to affirm the existence of a “vehicle of bare insight” which begins directly with mindful contemplation of mental and physical phenomena, without depending on a base of concentration by means of the jhānas or access concentration (*upacāra, samādhi*). Though the suttas themselves say nothing about a system of bare insight meditation, some contemporary teachers regard the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as propounding such a method and appeal to [SA and SAṬ] for additional support.” (S:B 786 n212)

4.3 In fact, the new arhats mentioned in the Susīma Sutta [§§13-27] do not deny that they have attained any of the four form dhyanas (*rūpa, jhānā*) that defines “right concentration” (*sammā, samādhi*).²² The arhats simply deny that they have attained any superpower or the formless attainments. This is, in fact, the well known “freedom by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*) described in **the Paññā, vimutta Sutta** (A 9.44).²³ As such, **Thanissaro**, in the introduction to his translation of the Sutta, concludes:

Taken in the context of the Buddha’s many other teachings on right concentration, there’s every reason to believe that the new arhats mentioned in this discourse had attained at least the first dhyana before attaining awakening. (Access to Insight website; emphasis added)²⁴

5 The ease of awakening

5.1 The discussion so far, it should be noted, centres around the attainment of arhathood. This can be very academic since most Buddhists, monastic or lay, view the prospect of becoming arhats a very dim one. In fact, the status of the awakened saint—the arhat—is often conferred to well known meditating monastics by pious lay followers without the “saint” themselves proclaiming it. These followers then shower their piety and support upon these saints. In many cases, such followers do lead exemplary and moral lives, and even become serious meditators themselves.

However, they rarely think they are capable of becoming awakened in this life itself. One likely reason for this is that these pious followers generally think in terms of arhathood as the ideal, one that clearly demands renunciation of worldly pleasures and a profound level of mental focus. Somehow here we seem to have failed to see the forest of awakening for the trees of arhathood. Many suttas have shown how numerous lay followers have become stream-winners, and even speak of the ease of entering the stream, so that one is fully awakened at the end of seven lives at most, if not in this life itself.²⁵

5.2 In the **Sa, upādisesa Sutta** (A 9.12), the Buddha, on being questioned by Sāriputta regarding the destiny of other sectarian wanderers, gives a teaching of the nine kinds of saints (three kinds of non-returners, the once-returner, and three kinds of stream-winner, and concludes with these words, on the ease of becoming a streamwinner:²⁶

(7) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person fulfills moral virtue, but does not gain concentration completely, does not gain wisdom completely. With the total destruction of the three fetters, he is a **Single-seeder**,²⁷ having taken only one more human birth, makes an end of suffering.

²² For def of right concentration (*sammā, samādhi*), see eg **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.21(vii)/2:313), SD 13.2.

²³ Cf defs of “body witness” (*kāya, sakkhī*, A 9.43/4:451 f) and “one released both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimitta*, A 9.45/4:453). See also **Kitagiri S** (M 70), SD 11.1.

²⁴ http://www.accesstoinsight.org/atibulk05/Bulk/ati_website/html/canon/sutta/samyutta/sn12-070.html.

²⁵ See esp **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3, & **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6.

²⁶ See **Sa, upādisesa S** (A 9.12), SD 3.3(3).

²⁷ *Eka, bījī*.

This, Sāriputta, is the seventh person, who having died with the aggregates of existence remaining is freed from hell, freed from the animal kingdom, freed from the ghost realm, freed from the state of misery, the evil destination, the suffering state.

(8) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person fulfills moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom. With the total destruction of the three fetters, he is a **Clan-to-clan-goer**,²⁸ having re-arisen and wandered amongst two or three families, makes an end of suffering.

This, Sāriputta, is the eighth person...

(9) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person fulfills moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom. With the total destruction of the three fetters, he is a **Seven-at-most**,²⁹ having re-arisen and wandered amongst gods and humans for seven lives at the most, makes an end of suffering.

This, Sāriputta, is the ninth person who having died with the aggregates of existence remaining is freed from hell, freed from the animal kingdom, freed from the ghost realm, freed from the state of misery, the evil destination, the suffering state.

Sāriputta, some of the wanderers of other faiths are foolish and unintelligent; some will know those with the aggregates of existence remaining as those with the aggregates of existence remaining; some will know those without aggregates remaining as those without aggregates of existence remaining.

Sāriputta, these are the nine persons who, having died with the aggregates of existence remaining, are freed from hell, freed from the animal kingdom, freed from the ghost realm, freed from the state of misery, the evil destination, the suffering state.

Not until now, Sāriputta, has this Dharma discourse been declared to monks, nuns, laymen or laywomen. What is the reason for this?

So that after hearing this Dharma discourse, they do not bring heedlessness upon themselves! Moreover, Sāriputta, this Dharma discourse has been given by me simply because of my being questioned. (A 9.12/4:381 f)

What is interesting about the Sa,upādisesa Sutta is that it does not mention arhathood as a goal, and concludes with the mention that if such a teaching were openly promoted the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen would not be “heedless,” that is, not consider arhathood when they are capable of doing so. In fact, if one makes some survey of the early suttas, one can discover a tenth “saint,” as it were, one which the later authorities called “the lesser stream-winner” (*cūḷa, sotāpanna, culla, sotāpanna*).

5.3 The best known sutta that speak of winning the stream here and now, that is, as a lesser streamwinner, is the short but remarkable **the Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1),³⁰ whose key passages runs as follows:

Monks, the eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The ear is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The nose is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The tongue is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The body is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

Monks, one who has faith thus, who firmly believes these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called a **faith-follower**,...

Monks, one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus,³¹ is called a **truth-follower**,

²⁸ *Kolaṃ, kola.*

²⁹ *Satta-k, khattu, parama.*

³⁰ S 25.1/3:225 = SD 16.7. See also Gethin 2001:133-138.

³¹ *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānani khamanti.*

he has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.³²

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal world, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without attaining the fruit of stream-winning.³³ (S 25.1/3:225)

The message of this short but remarkable sutta is clear: whether one merely has faith in the impermanence of the six senses (that is, as a faith-follower, *saddhā'nusārī*), or accepts this truth after wisely examining (that is, as a truth-follower, *dhammānusārī*), one is assured of becoming a stream-winner. One would not die without having realized the fruit of stream-winning.

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The Discourse to Susīma (on Arhathood)

S 12.70

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying near in the squirrels' feeding ground in the Bamboo Grove near Rājagaha.

I

Popularity of the Buddha and the order

2 Now at time, the Blessed One was honoured, respected, esteemed, venerated, revered, and obtained robes, almsfood, lodgings and medical requisites for the sick.

3 The community of monks, too, was honoured, respected, esteemed, venerated, revered, and obtained robes, almsfood, lodgings and medical requisites for the sick.

4 But the wanderers of other faiths were not honoured, not respected, not esteemed, not venerated, not revered, and did not obtain robes, almsfood, lodgings nor medical requisites for the sick.

II

The covetous wanderers

5 Now at that time the wanderer Susīma was staying at Rājagaha with a large company of wanderers. [120]

6 Then, his company said this to the wanderer Susīma:

“Come, avuso Susīma, lead the holy life under the ascetic Gotama. Master his Dharma and teach it to us. We will master his Dharma and teach it to the lay people. So we too will be honoured, respected, esteemed, venerated, revered, and obtain robes, almsfood, lodgings and medical requisites for the sick.”

7 “Very well, avuso,” the wanderer Susīma replied to his own company.

Then, he approached the venerable Ānanda and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, he sat down at one side.

³² *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayaṃ vuccati saddhā'nusārī okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vīvatto putthajjana, bhūmiṃ.* The operative verbs here are *saddahati* (“he has faith (in)”) and *adhimuccati* (“he resolves, adheres to, is sure of”). I have rendered *adhimuccati* here as “(he) firmly believes...”.

³³ *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna, yoniṃ vā petti, visayaṃ vā uppajjeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti, phalaṃ sacchikaroti.*

III

Susīma joins the order

8 Sitting thus as one side, he said this to the venerable Ānanda:

“Avuso Ānanda, I wish to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Vinaya [the teaching and discipline].”

9 Then the venerable Ānanda took the wanderer Susīma and approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and sat down at one side.

10 Seated thus at one side, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, this wanderer Susīma says this:

‘Avuso Ānanda, I wish to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Vinaya.’”

11 “In that case, Ānanda, give him the going-forth.”

12 The wanderer Susīma then received the going-forth and the higher ordination under the Blessed One.³⁴

Many monks won final knowledge

13 Now at that time, a number of monks declared before the Blessed One that they had obtained final knowledge,³⁵ saying:

“We know thus: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for us) no more of arising in any state of being.’”

IV

The arhats who do not possess psychic powers

14 Now the venerable Susīma heard that a number of [121] monks had declared before the Blessed One that they had obtained final knowledge, saying:

“We know thus: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for us) no more of arising in any state of being.’”

15 Then the venerable Susīma approached the monks. Having approached them, he exchanged greetings with them. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, he sat down at one side.

16 Seated thus at one side, the venerable Susīma said this to the monks:

“Is it true that you, venerables, have declared **final knowledge** before the Blessed One himself, saying: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for us) no more of arising in any state of being.’?”³⁶

³⁴ Comy: Susīma approaches the venerable Ānanda, thinking, “He is the most learned disciple, and also the Teacher frequently reports to him the Dharma he has spoken on various occasions. Under him I will be able to learn the Dharma quickly.” Ānanda brings him to the Buddha because he knows that Susīma has been a teacher in his own right and he is apprehensive that after going forth he might try to bring discredit to the Teaching. The Buddha knows that Susīma’s motive in taking ordination is that of “theft of the Dharma,” which makes his entry into the Teaching impure, but he foresees that Susīma will shortly undergo a change of heart and attain arhathood. Hence, he instructs Ānanda to let him go forth (SA 2:125 f). **Bodhi**: “It is puzzling that here, when it was most necessary do so, the Buddha makes no mention of the probationary period normally imposed on wanderers of other sects who wish to enter the Buddhist order; perhaps the Buddha had foreseen that Susīma would have been discouraged by such a stipulation and would not have applied for admission, thus losing the chance to gain liberation.” (S:B 784 n206)

³⁵ “Final knowledge,” *añña* (BHS *ājñā*), an old name for “arhathood”: M 1:445,2; S 1:24,11*; A 3:192; It 104,-10*; V 1:183. See CPD: añña.

³⁶ Comy: Those monks, having received a meditation subject from the Teacher, entered into the three-month rains-retreat, and during the rains, exerting and striving, they attained arhathood. At the end of the rains, they went to the Teacher and informed him of their attainment. When Susīma heard about this, he thought: “Final knowledge (*añña*) must be the supreme standard in this Teaching, the essential personal transmission of the teacher (*añña nāma imasmiṃ sāsane parama-p, pamāṇaṃ sāra, bhūta acariya, muṭṭhi*, lit ‘the teacher’s fist’). Let me ask and find out about it.” Therefore he approached those monks (SA 2:126). In other words, Susīma here thought that the monks

“Yes, avuso.”

(1) PSYCHIC POWER (THAUMATURGY)

17 Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, possess³⁷ the manifold **psychic power**,³⁸ that is,

having been one you become many; having been many you become one;
 you appear, and vanish;
 you go unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space;
 you dive in and out of the earth as if it were water;
 you walk on water without sinking as if it were earth;
 sitting cross-legged, you fly through the air like a winged bird;
 with your hand you touch and stroke even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful;
 you have power over your body up to as far as the Brahmā worlds?”

“No, avuso.”

(2) CLAIRAUDIENCE (THE DIVINE EAR ELEMENT)³⁹

18 Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, by means of the **divine-ear element**, purified and surpassing the human, hear both kinds of sounds, divine and human, whether near or far?”

“No, avuso.”

(3) MIND-READING

19 Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, direct and incline the mind to the knowledge of mind-reading: you know the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with your own mind,⁴⁰

you know a mind with lust as	a mind with lust,
and a mind without lust as	a mind without lust;
you know a mind with aversion as	a mind with aversion,
and a mind without aversion as	a mind without aversion;
you know a mind with delusion as	a mind with delusion,
and a mind without delusion as	a mind without delusion;
you know a contracted mind ⁴¹ as	a contracted mind,
and a distracted mind ⁴² as	a distracted mind;
you know an exalted mind ⁴³	as an exalted mind,
and an unexalted mind ⁴⁴ as	an unexalted mind;
you know a surpassable mind as	a surpassable mind,
and an unsurpassable mind as	an unsurpassable mind; ⁴⁵
you know a concentrated mind as	a concentrated mind,
and an unconcentrated mind as	an unconcentrated mind;
you know a released mind as	a released mind,

received awakening through some sort of secret teaching directly from the Buddha. The stock description of the 5 super-knowledges (*abhiññā*) that follows is commented upon in detail in Vism chs 12-13.

³⁷ “Do you ... possess,” *paccanubhotha*, 2nd pl of *paccanubhoti* (*paṭi + anu + BHU*), BHS *pratyānubhavati*; to enjoy one by one (DPL); to experience, undergo, realize (M 1:295; S 5:218, 264 f, 286 f, 353; A 3:425 f; It 38) (PED).

³⁸ Cf **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,5), SD 1.7 esp Intro (3) on the Buddhist attitude to miracles.

³⁹ “Divine-ear element,” *dibba, sota, dhātu*, clairaudience.

⁴⁰ The following section (italicized) is a list of mental states are apparently taken from the **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.12/2:299 = M 10,34/1:59), where it fits more appropriately. (Walshe, D:W 546 n131)

⁴¹ Due to sloth and torpor.

⁴² Due to restlessness and worry.

⁴³ Through the lower or higher dhyana.

⁴⁴ Not developed by dhyana.

⁴⁵ Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind?”

“No, avuso.”

(4) THE KNOWLEDGE OF ONE’S PAST LIVES⁴⁶

20 Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, recollect your manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion,⁴⁷ [recollecting],

‘There we had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was our food, such our experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of our life. Passing away from that state, we re-rose there. There too we had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was our food, such our experience of pleasure and pain, such our life-span. Passing away from that state, we re-rose here.’

Thus you recollect your manifold past lives in their modes and details?”⁴⁸

“No, avuso.”

(5) THE KNOWLEDGE OF REBIRTH OF BEINGS

21 Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, see—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],⁴⁹ purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, faring in accordance with their karma:

‘These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—after death, when the body has broken up, have re-appeared in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

Thus, by means of the divine eye, you see beings passing away and re-appearing, and *how they fare according to* their karma?”

“No, avuso.”

22 “Then, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, venerables, dwell in those peaceful freedoms that transcend forms, the formless attainments, having touched them with the body?”⁵⁰

“No, avuso.”

23-24 “Here now, venerables, this answer and the non-attainment of those states—how could this be, avuso?”⁵¹

25 “We are freed by wisdom, avuso Susīma.”⁵²

⁴⁶ *Pubbe, nivāsanānussati*, lit “recollection of past abodes.”

⁴⁷ “Contraction and expansion,” ie, *saṃvaṭṭa, kappa* (the aeon that rolls in), the devolving universe; *vivaṭṭa, kappa* (the aeon that rolls out), ie, the evolving universe. This is the Buddhist conception of a pulsating universe. For more details, see **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19.

⁴⁸ This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

⁴⁹ *Dibba, cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma, cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

⁵⁰ “Having touched with the body” (*kāyena phusitvā*), which Comy glosses as, “attaining by having touched the mental faculties” (*nāma, kāyena phusitvā paṭilabhitvā*), meaning that one has personally experienced those states (SA 2:127). In explaining the formless attainments, Porāṇa Ṭikā glosses *aruppa, vimokkhā* as “the formless dhyanas and deliverance from perception (*aruppa-j, jhāna-saññā, vimokkhā*)” (SAT:Be 2:124).

⁵¹ *Ettha dāni āyasmanto idaṃ ca veyyākaraṇaṃ imesaṃ ca dhammānaṃ asamāpatti, idaṃ no āvuso kathan ti*, following Bhikkhu Bodhi who says that “[t]he text enclosed in brackets in Ee [PTS] should be deleted and the question read as in Be and Se ... I take the *no* to be merely an interrogative particle (= *nu*).” (S:B 784 n209).

⁵² *Paññā, vimuttā kho mayam āvuso susīma*. Comy: He says: “Avuso, we are without dhyana, dry-insighters, freed merely by wisdom” (*āvuso mayam nijjhānaka sukkha, vipassakā paññā, matten’ eva vimuttā*) (SA 2:127). Porāṇa

26 “Avuso, I do not fully understand the meaning of what has been stated in brief by the venerables. It would be good if the venerables would explain to me in such a way that I can fully understand what has been stated in brief.” [124]

27 “Whether or not you understand, avuso Susīma, we are freed by wisdom.”

Susīma sees the Buddha

28 Then the venerable Susīma rose from his seat and approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and sat down at one side.

29 Seated thus at one side, he reported the whole conversation he had had with those monks.

30 [Blessed One:] “Susīma, first comes the knowledge of the stability of the Dharma, then the knowledge of nirvana.”⁵³

31 “Bhante, I do not fully understand the meaning of what has been stated in brief by the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would explain to me in such a way that I can fully understand what has been stated in brief.”

32 “Whether or not you understand, Susīma, first comes the knowledge of the true nature of reality,⁵⁴ then the knowledge of nirvana.⁵⁵

Reflection on the aggregates

32.2 (1) What do you think, Susīma, is form permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, bhante.”⁵⁶

Ṭikā glosses “freed simply by wisdom” (*paññā, matten’eva*) as “not both-ways-freed” (*na ubhato, bhāga, vimuttā*) (SAT:Be 2:124). For details, see (3.3).

⁵³ *Pubbe kho Susīma dhamma-ṭṭhiti, nāṇam pacchā nibbāṇe nāṇan ti.* Nāṇamoli defines *dhamma-ṭṭhiti, nāṇa* as “knowledge of the relationship of ideas (or states), knowledge of structure of ideas (or states) (term for dependent origination)” (*A Pali-English Glossary of Buddhist Technical Terms*, 1994:53). Comy: Insight knowledge is the “knowledge of the true nature of reality,” which arises first. At the end of the course of insight, the path knowledge arises, that is, the “knowledge of nirvana,” which arises later. Porāṇa Ṭikā: The “true nature of reality” is the stability of reality, their intrinsic nature (*dhammānaṃ ṭhitatā taṃ, sabhāvatā*), namely, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not-self. Knowledge of that is “knowledge of the true nature of reality” (SAT:Be 2:124). **Paṭisambhidā, magga** has a whole chapter on *dhamma-ṭṭhiti, nāṇa*, explained as the knowledge of the relationship between each pair of links in dependent arising (Pm 1:50-52). See also S:B 741 n51, 755 n105.

⁵⁴ “The knowledge of the true nature of reality,” *dhamma-ṭṭhiti, nāṇa*, alt tr, “the stability of the Dharma.” Here this is expressed as the 5 aggregates [§§32-43.1] and dependent arising [§§43.2-50]. More commonly, the term refers to the 3 characteristics (*ti, lakkhaṇa*) of existence—impermanence (*aniccatā*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkhatā*), and not-self (*anattatā*)—which in this sutta is taught to Susīma by the Buddha by way of “the three turns” (*te, pari-vaṭṭa*) [§§32.2-43.1].

⁵⁵ Comy: Why is this said? For the purpose of showing the arising of knowledge thus even without concentration. This is the meaning: “Susīma, the path and fruit are not the result of concentration (*samādhi, nissanda*), nor the benefit of concentration (*samādhi, anisamsa*), nor the outcome of concentration (*samādhi, nipphatti*). They are the result of insight (*vipassanā*), the benefit of insight, the outcome of insight. Therefore, whether you understand or not, first comes knowledge of the reality of thing, then the knowledge of nirvana.” (SA 2:127). SAT: *Even without concentration* (*vinā pi samādhim*) mean “even without previously established (concentration) that has acquired the characteristic of calm (*samatha, lakkhaṇa-p, pattam*); this is said in reference to one who takes the vehicle of insight (*vipassanā, yānika*)” (SAT:Be 2:125). **Bodhi**: “If understood on its own terms, the text establishes only that arahantship can be attained without the supernatural powers and the formless attainments. Read in the light of [SA and SAT], it may be seen to affirm the existence of a ‘vehicle of bare insight’ which begins directly with mindful contemplation of mental and physical phenomena, without depending on a base of concentration by means of the jhānas or access concentration (*upacāra, samādhi*). Though the suttas themselves say nothing about a system of bare insight meditation, some contemporary teachers regard the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as propounding such a method and appeal to [SA and SAT] for additional support.” (S:B 786 n212)

⁵⁶ Comy: Having known him to be capable of realization, the Buddha speaks thus giving a Dharma teaching with three turns, at the conclusion of which the elder attained arhathood (SA 2:127). Porāṇa Ṭikā: The “3 turns” (*te, pari-*

33 “Is what is impermanent suffering [unsatisfactoriness] or happiness?”

“Suffering, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self?’”

“No, bhante.”

34 (2) “Is feeling permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering [unsatisfactoriness] or happiness?”

“Suffering, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self?’”

“No, bhante.”

35 (3) “Is perception permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering [unsatisfactoriness] or happiness?”

“Suffering, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self?’”

“No, bhante.”

36 (4) “Are formations permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering [unsatisfactoriness] or happiness?”

“Suffering, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self?’”

“No, bhante.”

37 (5) “Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?” [125]

“Impermanent, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering [unsatisfactoriness] or happiness?”

“Suffering, bhante.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self?’”

“No, bhante.”

Seeing all aggregates with right wisdom

38 (1) “Therefore, Susīma, any kind of **form** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all forms should be seen as it really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’”

39 (2) Any kind of **feeling** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all feelings should be seen as it really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’”

40 (3) Any kind of **perception** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all perceptions should be seen as it really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’”

41 (4) Any kind of **formation** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all formations should be seen as it really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’”

vaṭṭam) are by way of the turning over of the 3 characteristics in relation to the 5 aggregates (SAT:Be 2:125). The catechism on the 3 characteristics (*ti, lakkhaṇa*) recurs throughout **Khandha Sāmyutta**: S 22:49, 59, 79, 80, 82, etc.

42 (5) Any kind of **consciousness** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all consciousnesses should be seen as it really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

Result of seeing with right wisdom

43 Seeing thus, Susīma, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed at [disenchanted towards] form, towards feeling, towards perception, towards formations, towards consciousness.

Feeling revulsed, he becomes dispassionate.

Through dispassion, (his mind) is freed.

When it is freed, there comes the knowledge: ‘It is freed.’

He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for us) no more of arising in any state of being.’

Dependent arising

43.2 (1) Do you see, Susīma, ‘With birth as condition, there is decay-and-death’?’

“Yes, bhante.”

44 (2) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With existence as condition, there is birth’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

45 (3) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With clinging as condition, there is existence’?’”

“Yes, bhante.” [126]

46 (4) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With craving as condition, there is clinging’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

47 (5) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With feeling as condition, there is craving’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(6) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With contact as condition, there is feeling’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(7) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the six sense-bases as condition, there is contact’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(8) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With name-and-form as condition, there are the six sense-bases’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(9) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(10) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With formations as condition, there is consciousness’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(11) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With ignorance as condition, there are formations’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

Dependent ending

48 (1) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of birth, decay-and-death ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

49 (2) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of existence, birth ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

50 (3) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of clinging, existence ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(4) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of craving, clinging ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(5) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of feeling, craving ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

(6) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of contact, feeling ends’?’”

“Yes, bhante.”

- (7) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of the six sense-bases, contact ends?’”
 “Yes, bhante.”
- (8) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of name-and-form, the six sense bases end?’”
 “Yes, bhante.”
- (9) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of consciousness, name-and-form ends?’”
 “Yes, bhante.”
- (10) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of formations, consciousness ends?’”
 “Yes, bhante.”
- (11) “Do you see, Susīma, ‘With the ending of ignorance, formations end?’”
 “Yes, bhante.”

Susīma becomes an arhat without psychic powers

(1) NO PSYCHIC POWER

51 ⁵⁷Now, knowing thus, seeing thus,⁵⁸ do *you*, Susīma, possess the manifold psychic power, that is, having been one you become many; having been many you become one; you appear, and vanish; you go unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space; you dive in and out of the earth as if it were water; you walk on water without sinking as if it were earth; sitting cross-legged, you fly through the air like a winged bird; with your hand you touch and stroke even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful; you have power over your body up to as far as the Brahmā worlds?” [127]
 “No, bhante.”

(2) NO CLAIRAUDIENCE (THE DIVINE EAR ELEMENT)

52 Now, Susīma, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you, by means of the divine-ear element, purified and surpassing the human, hear both kinds of sounds, divine and human, whether near or far?”
 “No, bhante.”

(3) NO MIND-READING

53 Now, Susīma, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you direct and incline the mind to the knowledge of mind-reading: you know the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with your own mind,
 you know a mind with lust as a mind with lust,
 and a mind without lust as a mind without lust;
 you know a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,
 and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion;
 you know a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,
 and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion;
 you know a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,
 and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and worry] as a distracted mind;
 you know an exalted mind [through the lower or higher dhyana] as an exalted mind,
 and an unexalted mind [not developed by dhyana] as an unexalted mind;
 you know a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,
 and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind;⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Comy: This query is started in order to make it clear that those monks are practitioners of dry-insight without dhyana or “dry-insight ponderers.” This is the meaning here: “You are not the only ones of dry-insight without dhyana; the monks are so, too.” (SA 2:127)

⁵⁸ Comy says that Susīma becomes an arhat on account of the teaching on the three turns (ie the three characteristics) (*te,parivaṭṭa,desanā,vasāne pana thero arahattam patto*) (SA 2:127). However, that probably marks the beginning of his entry into sainthood and he actually attains arhathood only at this point.

⁵⁹ Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

you know a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,
and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind;
you know a released mind as a released mind,
and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind?"

"No, bhante."

(4) NO KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S PAST LIVES

54 Now, Susīma, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you recollect your manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, [recollecting],

'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of our life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.'

Thus you recollect your manifold past lives in their modes and details?"

"No, bhante."

(5) NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE REBIRTH OF BEINGS

55 Now, Susīma, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you see—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance], purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, faring in accordance with their karma:

'These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—after death, when the body has broken up, have re-appeared in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.'

Thus, by means of the divine eye, you see beings passing away and re-appearing, and *how they fare according to* their karma?"

"No, bhante."

56 "Now, Susīma, knowing thus, seeing thus, do you dwell in those peaceful freedoms that transcend forms, the formless attainments, having touched them with the body?"

"No, bhante."

57 "Here now, Susīma, this answer and the non-attainment of those states—how could this be, Susīma?"

VI

Susīma's confession

58 Then the venerable Susīma bowed down with his head at the Blessed One's feet and said this to the Blessed One:

"Bhante, I have transgressed—just as one foolish, as one confused, as one unskillful—that I went forth as a thief of the Dharma in such a well-taught Dharma and Vinaya [Teaching and Discipline] as this!⁶⁰

Bhante, may the Blessed One accept my transgression as a transgression, so that I may show restraint henceforth!"⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Accayo maṃ bhante accagamā yathā, bālaṃ yathā, mūlhaṃ yathā, akusalaṃ, svāhaṃ evaṃ svākhyāte dhamma, -vinaye dhamma-t, thena ko pabbajito.* On renunciants as thieves, see SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2).

59 “Indeed, Susīma, you have transgressed—just as one foolish, as one confused, as one unskillful—that you went forth as a thief of the Dharma in such a well-taught Dharma and Vinaya [Teaching and Discipline] as this. [128]

60 It is as if, Susīma, they were to catch a thief, a criminal, and bring him before the rajah, saying: ‘Your majesty, he is a thief, a criminal! Punish him as you please!’

The rajah would say thus to them:

‘Come, men,⁶² bind this man’s arms tightly behind his back with a strong rope, shave his head, and take him from cross-road to cross-road, beating a harsh-sounding drum! Then take him through the southern gate, to the south of the city and there behead him!’

Then the rajah’s men, having bound this man’s arms tightly behind his back with a strong rope, shaves his head, takes him from cross-road to cross-road, beating a harsh-sounding drum. Then, taking him through the southern gate, to the south of the city, and there beheads him.

61 What do you think, Susīma, would that man experience pain and displeasure [physical pain and mental pain]⁶³ because of that?”

“Yes, bhante.”

62 “No matter how much pain and displeasure that man would experience because of that, going forth as a thief of the Dharma in such a well-taught Dharma and Vinaya as this has results that are far more painful, far more bitter, and, moreover, it leads to the lower world.

63 But, Susīma, since you see your transgression as a transgression, and make amends in accordance with the Dharma, we⁶⁴ accept it.

For, Susīma, it is progress in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as a transgression, one makes amends in accordance with the Dharma, and shows restraint henceforth.”

— evaṃ —

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⁶¹ *Tassa me bhante bhagavā accayam accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatim saṃvarāyā ti*. On confession, see **Sāmañña,-phala S** (D 2) @ SD 8.10 (5).

⁶² “Men,” *bho*, a familiar address to equals or inferiors, often tr as “sir,” but less refined than *āvuso*.

⁶³ *Dukkham domanassam*

⁶⁴ “We forgive,” *paṭiggaṇhāma*, lit “we accept”; here the 1st pl is not the royal pronoun, but the Buddha, on behalf of the Sangha, forgives the transgression.

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