

How we form views

[Source: Simplified version of §§2.2.2-2.2.4, **Sallekha Sutta** (M 8), SD 51.8, pending]

The Sallekha Sutta tells us that views should be disowned “**wherever** they arise.” “Wherever” refers to the object or basis of our attention (*ārammaṇa*), that is, any of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-khandha*)—

form (“things,” shapes and colours),
feeling (hedonic tones),
perception (recognizing),
formations (deliberate activity through mind, speech and body) and
consciousness (cognizing).

All false views regarding the self and the world refer only to these aggregates or to one of them.

There seems to be a commentarial wordplay here on *ārammaṇa*, which has a primary or literal meaning of “point of support, hold” or “starting-point.” Post-Buddha Abhidhamma gives *ārammaṇa* two key senses:

- (1) as mental condition (*paccaya*) or cause (*hetu*), that is, foundation, base; ground, cause, reason;
- (2) as sense-field (*visaya*) or mental range (*gocara*), that is, the object (of sense or thought).

We can see here a more developed psychological theory of what in the suttas is called **name-and-form** (*nāma,rūpa*). *Nāma* is the mind, the ground, condition or “cause” that is the sense-faculty; *rūpa* is the object of the senses.

In the dependent arising formula, we have this starting sequence of 4 links, as, for example, laid out in **the Kaccā(ya)na,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15):¹

Ignorance → formations → consciousness → name-and-form → ... (suffering).

Our view-formation can be explained as starting with ignorance (*avijjā*), which moves us to act. We are here motivated by *craving* in the form of lust, hate and delusion for sense-objects (body-parts), recognizing them through perception (*saññā*). We are driven by *intentions as formations* (*saṅkhārā*) arising through mind, speech and body to gather the attractive, reject the unattractive, and ignore the rest.

This feeds our consciousness (or “conscious mind”) (*viññāṇa*) making it more sensitive and sophisticated at detecting and “making sense” of experiences. We turn them into name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*) —giving names to forms, giving forms to names, making sense of things, giving our reasons for everything that confronts us.

The view-forming, on a deep level, starts with formations: when we are driven by the intention to form ideas (in our mind), and to speak and act on them. Such views or ideas rise and fall with

¹ **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15/2:16 f), [SD 6.13](#).

the moment, and do not really trouble us if we do not pursue them, or do not store them as memories and images in our consciousness—as “prototypes” or fixed views (conceptions and, later, perceptions) of our experiences: our actions (through mind, speech and body) are somehow dictated by such mental “prototypes.”

This is where we construct views of **self**, identifying with our body and its actions, or feelings (liking and disliking), or perceptions (looking into the past or at the future), or formations (decisions and ideas), or consciousness (general awareness of things).

With this habitual pattern of dependent arising, we form self-views and world-views. And this is where we can and must end such view-forming.

A **view** is a very private idea of our experiences (how we interact with the world) that attracts more of its kind to itself. It is a self-replicating mental process with only the purpose of self-proliferation and construction of the notion of an abiding self. Psychosocially, this is called a meme.²

Once we assimilate views—or rather when views assimilate “us”—they “**lie latent** or dormant” (*anusenti*) like a virus, gathering strength through our continued adherence to them. Our unfettered sense-experiences—liking and disliking them—feed these mental viruses that populate our “unconscious.” In fact, they *are* our unconscious, the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), that control our thought, speech and action, like a puppet-master holding and playing with us with its many and strong strings of lust, hate and delusion.

Our views—or rather, the roots of these views: lust, hate and delusion, and their various forms—lie latent in our unconscious (we do not even know they are there). But at every opportune moment, they **assail** (*samudācaranti*) us tenaciously bending, twisting and crushing us to reinforce our identity with self-view (“This is *mine*”), to measure our self against others with conceit (“This *I am*”), and to relentlessly push us to do this with craving (“This is *mine!*”).

When we grasp a view, we take the shape of that view, we *become* that view: we think, speak and act *of* those views. Each view leads to many more: they proliferate; one thought arouses many others—leading to a **mental proliferation** (*papañca*). We are drowned in our thoughts; they overflow through our speech and actions, dragging others along, too, especially those already drowning in their own thoughts, as most of us are.

And so we become our thoughts, exist through them, and are reborn with them to repeat and replay everything all over again, as long as we are unawakened. In **the Sallekha Sutta** (M 8), the

² Memes, [SD 26.3](#).

Buddha teaches us how to break this vicious cycle and completely free ourselves from suffering and rebirth.³

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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³ **Sallekha Sutta** (M 8): SD 51.8. On not identifying with anything, see **Atam,mayatā**, [SD 19.13](#).