(Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta
The (Fours) Discourse on Quests | A 4.252 [A:B 4.255]
Theme: Ignoble quests and noble quests
Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1.1 Sutta summary
The (Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta (A 4.252) lists the 4 kinds of ignoble quests (anariya pariyesanā) and their wholesome opposites, the 4 kinds of noble quests (ariya pariyesanā). The comparative goals of these two sets of quests are tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ignoble quests (anariya pariyesanā): the world</th>
<th>The noble quests (ariya pariyesanā): nirvana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quests for what is subject to:</td>
<td>The quests for what is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) decay</td>
<td>jarā, dhamma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) disease</td>
<td>vyādhi, dhamma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) death</td>
<td>marana, dhamma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) defilement</td>
<td>sānkiliṭṭha, dhamma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of the noble quests—for the non-decaying, the non-diseased, the death-free and the non-defiled—they all actually refer to the one same goal, that is, nirvana.

1.1.2 Related sutta
1.1.2.1 At the heart of the (Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta (A 4.252) is the “pariyesanā pericope,” also found in the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26), which lists 6 quests.1 The “ignoble quest” (anariya pariyesanā) passage of the latter, in other words, has two more quests. Its first is the quest for what is subject to birth (jāti, dhamma), and the second last is the quest for what is subject to sorrow (soka, dhamma).2 These are quests for worldly things, or, collectively, the quest for the world. An exposition of each of these ignoble quests then follow.

1.1.2.2 Conversely, the noble quest (ariya pariyesanā) passage, too, has 6 kinds of quest—for the birth-free (ajāta), decay-free (ajarā), disease-free (avyādhi), death-free (amata), sorrow-free (asoka) and defilement-free (asaṅkiliṭṭha)—all referring to nirvana. This set of 6 noble quests, then, is a positive expansion of the 4 signs: an old man, a sick man, a dead body and a renunciant [2.2.1.2]. After the 4 signs prompt the Bodhisattva to renounce the world, he then sets out on the 6 kinds of noble quest. The Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta list combines all the types of quests into a comprehensive list of 6 noble quests. In reality, there is only one quest—the one for awakening. [2.2.3.4]

1.1.3 The Sutta’s age
1.1.3.1 Both the set of 4 bases for quests of the (Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta (A 4.252) and the 6 bases for quests in the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26) are based on the 3 great bāds—decay, disease and death—what we can colloquially call “the 3 D’s.” Historically, the visions of decay, disease and death, personified in the 3 sights, respectively, of an old man, a sick man and dead man, arouse samvega (sāmi-vega)—spiritual angst or urgency—in the young Siddhattha. [2]

---

1 M 26,5-13/1:161-163 (SD 1.11).
2 M 26,5 with expository sections for each of the quests at M 26,6-11.

http://dharmafarer.org
1.1.3.2 The set of the 3 great bads or the 3 D’s (decay, disease and death) clearly go back to the earliest days of Buddhism. These are the most palpable evidence of an inherently troubling world, but they are only the physical manifestations of its unsatisfactoriness. There are even more troubling aspects of worldly existence, more deeply rooted than we are aware of.

To the 3 great bads is added a fourth bad—that of “defilement” (kilesa)—in the set of 4 kinds of quest as recorded in the (Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta (A 4.252). The set of 6 signs probably formed a part of an old set of teachings, but it is later than that of the 3 great bads. The rule of thumb is that a smaller set of teachings of a similar nature is likely to be the older one.

1.1.3.3 The set of 6 kinds of quest—found in the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26)—is probably an expansion of the set of 4 kinds of quest, found in the (Catukka) Pariyesanā Sutta, which is likely to be older than the M 26 set. Of course, there is the possibility that both Suttas are of about the same age, and that both are variations based on a common ancient source, that is, that of the 3 great bads.

Then, the set of 6 kinds of quests adds on the first quest—that for what is subject to birth (jātī, dhamma) —and a fifth—that for what is subject to sorrow (soka, dhamma). This idea here is evidently to give a more complete set of goals for the quests that the unawakened are likely to embark on. Hence, it is likely that the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta—at least, the passage on the 6 kinds of quest—is the later of the 2 sets of teachings.

1.2 Esanā AND Pariyesanā

1.2.1 Esanā

Both the nouns esanā (fem, Skt ēsanā) and esana (nt, Skt ēsana) mean “seeking, searching, desiring.” Its verb, esati, means “to desire, long (for), wish (for).” It is derived from ēs (1), “to wish for”3 or ēs (1), “to search for, desire”4 (CPD).5 The adjective esana (mfn; Skt ēsana), meaning “seeking, wishing” is less common. The word has been discussed at greater length, along with references, elsewhere.6

1.2.2 Pariyesanā

The word pariyesanā is resolved as pari (a prefix denoting completion or fulfillment, “all around”) + y (sandhi infix) + esanā, “search, quest” [1.2.1]. Its verb is pariyesati (BHS paryesate), “he investigates,” denoting a sustained outer search, that is, noticing what is lacking in ourselves, we seek “outside,” as it were (for example, from other teachers or methods) for our answer or liberation.7

2 Seeking and intoxication

2.1 Roots of seeking

2.1.1 Spiritual language. We have already noted that there are 2 kinds of quests: the ignoble (anariya pariyesanā) and the noble (ariya pariyesanā) [1.1.2]. The ignoble quest, or properly, quests, comprise those for worldly goods (which are ironically and really “bads”) [2.1.3]. Christian ideas have dominated

3 The Skt root is ēs or ēch, “to desire, wish.”
4 The Skt root is ā -ēs > es SED 232c.
5 CPD gives the roots respectively as ēs and ēs: sv esati.
6 See SD 43.10 (2.2).
7 D 1:223; S 1:177, 181, 4:62; A 2:23, 25, 247; Sn 482; Nm 262; Nc 427; J 1:3, 138; Miln 109, 313; Dha 3:163; Pva 31. For other forms, see PED: pariyesati. There is also the neut form “na: Nm 262; Dha 1:76, 3:256. For details, see SD 43.10 (2.2.3.3). On its relation to samannesanā and samannesati, see SD 35.6 (2.3).
the English language for so long (since the Dark Ages), and darkened it with insidious words like “sin,” which is almost synonymous with “evil.”

These two words are so deeply rooted in the God-idea that it makes little, even no, sense to be used in other contexts. In fact, we can say that the word “sin” (which means “falling short of God’s glory”) makes no sense at all in non-Christian contexts. It certainly has no place in pre-Christian English and in Buddhist language, especially Pali literature.\(^8\) The notion of sin is best left alone, even when it barks in its manger, away from the masses.

### 2.1.2 Good and goods

2.1.2.1 We should not think of the “goods” (an uncountable noun) in the phrase “bad goods” as referring only to material things, but to our mental qualities behind them. Essentially, they are manifestations of the 3 unwholesome roots: greed, hate and delusion.

2.1.2.2 Notice that we never speak of “good goods.” This is not because of redundancy, but, if we follow the drift of Dharma language, we must understand that no “goods” as material things can ever be really good in any spiritual sense. Such “goods” can only have attributes all rooted in greed, hate and delusion.

2.1.2.3 The true “good” (as an adjective) can also be used as an uncountable noun (without the plural “s”). The morally good is uncountable; they are boundless and pervasive. The worldly good and goods are limited and self-centred. The truly good brings true satisfaction, happiness and peace, while worldly goods bring dissatisfaction, sorrow and strife.

### 2.1.3 Bad and bads

2.1.3.1 We are used to the English word, “goods.” However, we may feel somewhat bemused to see the word “bad” used as an opposite of “good.” But both bad and bads are good old English words in pre-Christian times, and became disused on account of Christian hegemony, when “sin” became insidiously prominent. Indeed, we have no use for sin in our common language today; its use is effectively relegated and cloistered to the theistic realm.

2.1.3.2 On the other hand, English as a living language, changes and evolves. How we use words—at first perhaps by a single person, and then a group—if more widely or regularly used, in time becomes a familiar part of the language. After all, the English word bad once had a meaning similar to what we today understand of the word dukkha.

Words like “good” and “bad” are very ancient words—they pre-date Christianity—when English was more “innocent” and never “sinned.” With our translating of early Buddhist texts into English, there is a vital necessity to resurrect or reinstate the wholesome and useful meanings of such simple vital words of this global language, especially if we are to use it as a means of spiritual learning and change.

2.1.3.3 We have referred to “worldly goods” [2.1.2]—what are subject to birth, disease, decay, loss or theft (and punishment), death and defilement. In other words, these are the bases for “bad goods.” This odd juxtaposition of words will sound meaningful in due course from usage and familiarity. We should consider the meaning of the expression and discount its present awkwardness.

Similarly, it makes sense to speak of such quests as looking for “bads,” that is, what are subject to birth, disease, decay, loss or theft, death and defilement. This sounds odd to some of us, but we need to start using it right here, and in time, we will get used to this idiom.

Dharma language is a living expression and communication which naturally evolve so that we can feel (directly experience) the truth and beauty of reality in a liberating way. Language should neither limit nor

---

\(^8\) On the psychological and ethical difference between “bad” and “evil,” see Beyond good and evil, SD 18.7 esp (3).
stifle the expression and experience of the Dharma, but to allow us to fully show and feel its meaning, purpose and joyful effect.⁹

2.2 The 3 intoxications and the sights

2.2.1 The Sukhumāla Sutta (A 3.38)

2.2.1.1 In the case of the Bodhisattva (our future Buddha), his noble quest (ariya pariyesanā) is famously prompted by the 4 signs (nimitta) or sights (pubba,nimitta)—those of an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a renunciant (or holy man). The oldest reference to this set of 4 signs is related in connection with the renunciation of the past buddha, Vipassī,¹⁰ in the Mahā'padāna Sutta (D 14).¹¹ This episode, in due course, forms part of the Buddha’s biography that is very familiar to us today.¹²

2.2.1.2 The deepest roots of the 4 signs arguably go down to the Bodhisattva’s reflections on the 3 intoxications—those of youth, health and life. This is recorded in the Sukhumāla Sutta (A 3.38), where the Buddha recounts how, as a bodhisatta, powerful religious emotion (saṁvega), a kind of spiritual angst, overcame him when he reflected on the true nature of life:

(1) Bhikshus, amidst such splendour and wealth,¹³ and because of such an exceedingly delicate life, this thought arose in me:

“An untutored [ignorant] ordinary person, though by nature would himself age [decay] and being unable to escape ageing [decay], feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted¹⁴ when seeing an old or aged person, being forgetful of himself [of his own situation].

Now I, too, by nature, will age and cannot escape ageing. If, bhikshus, when seeing an old or aged person, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my intoxication with youth (yobbana,mada) vanished.

(2) (Again I reflected:)

“An untutored ordinary person, though by nature would himself suffer disease and being unable to escape disease, feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted when seeing an ill person, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature, will suffer disease and cannot escape disease. If, bhikshus, when seeing an ill person, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my intoxication with health (ārogya,mada) vanished.

(3) (Again I reflected:)

“An untutored ordinary person, though by nature will himself die and being unable to escape dying, feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted when seeing a dead person, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature will die and cannot escape dying. If, bhikshus, when seeing a dead person, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my intoxication with life (jīvita,mada) vanished.

(A 3.38)¹⁵

———

⁹ On the 3 great bads (decay, disease, death), see (Abhabba) Tayo,dhamma S (A 10.76) headers A, B, C = SD 2.4.
¹⁰ Vipassī is the 6th past buddha from our Gotama: in other words, he is the first of the “7 buddhas.” See SD 36.2 (3.4); also SD 49.8b (8.2.4; Table 1.0.4).
¹¹ D 14.2.1-2.14 + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4+1.0.4.5).
¹² See SD 36.2 (1; 3.3.2.3); SD 48.10 (2.2.4).
¹³ “Splendour and wealth,” iddhi, or in a word “majesty.”
¹⁴ “Would feel troubled, ashamed, disgusted,” attiyeyyāni harāyeyyāni jeguccheyyāni. For fuller analyses of these terms, see Kevaḍḍha S (D 11.5/1:213), SD 1.7 n sv.
¹⁵ http://dharmafarer.org
2.2.1.3 The 3 intoxications (mada)—with youth, with health, with life—epitomizes the quest for what are of the nature to decay, to disease, to death, respectively. These are the “3 D’s” or the 3 great bads that characterize life, or any kind of conscious existence. In a significant way, their opposites are the 3 characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

2.2.1.4 Impermanence (aniccatā) underlies all existence, giving it meaning: whatever exists must change. And change entails decay (aging, ripening, digestion, oxidation, etc). If we neither understand nor accept impermanence, then, we are more likely to want to grasp at what we deem as desirable and cling to them when we think that we have them. Invariably, all things change, they are lost or stolen, or they simply break up with time.

Neither these things in themselves nor impermanence itself cause us suffering (dukkhatā). It is our ignorance of this truth and craving for such things that bring about our suffering.16 Our untutored and unawakened minds see what is merely sensory (arising from our sense-experiences) as being sensual (as being pleasurable and desirable).17

2.2.1.5 What is impermanent is necessarily unsatisfactory—we can only enjoy them in the present moment as they arise—that is, when we are present to them. When we understand and accept this truth, then, we will also understand that neither is there any abiding essence behind our body or mind (or anything else) nor have we any real control over them. Lacking any control over “our” body and mind, how can we really say there is an abiding “self” or “soul”? Surely our happiness must lie in understanding this.

2.2.2 Mental devolution and evolution

2.2.2.1 We may try our best to care for our body but it cannot really be controlled. It comprises only the 5 elements—earth (solidity), water (fluidity), fire (heat), wind (movement) and space—and takes its natural course of arising, growth and decay. These elements may be, in some limited way, manipulated with medical treatment or a health regime, but like all physical states, they all must decay and then disintegrate (return to these primal elements).

2.2.2.2 The mind, on the other hand, being an “internal” process arising in the moment, seems to give us some sense of continuity, mainly from our memory. In this sense, the mind is on-going or eternal—it keeps on sensing and minding in a physical body (in the sense-world), or in some form (in the form world),18 or in itself (in the formless world). In other words, the mind is constantly either evolving (attaining higher human states or higher transhuman states—the form and the formless births) or devolving (falling into lower human states or the subhuman states).19

2.2.2.3 However, it is possible for us not to fall into subhuman states or into suffering even in a human state. For this, we must think and act in ways that merit good karma. Rebirth, in other words, can be bettered through merits and a wholesome mind. Rebirth occurs in two ways:

(1) through the result of accumulated good or merits (puñña); and
(2) on account of attaining the path of wholesomeness (kusala).

The first case—rebirth through merits—entails at least living a moral life and practising charity. This is especially the case for rebirths in the sense-world. For rebirths in the form and the formless worlds,

15 For full text, see A 3.38/1:145 f (SD 63.7). For further discussion, see SD 1.11 (3.2.1); SD 5.16 (19.4.2).
16 See esp the famous quote, “There is no sensuality in what is beautiful in the world. The thought of passion is a person’s sensuality,” in Nibbedhika (Parīyāya) 5 (A 6.63,3.4), SD 6.11.
17 It may be said here that the saints may find certain sensory experiences pleasurable (pleasing, comforting, even ecstatic) but they never find them to be desirable.
18 An exception, however, is in the case of the “non-conscious beings” (asañña, satta): see SD 3.4 (1.4).
19 See Rebirth in early Buddhism, SD 57.11.
besides moral virtue, we must also have a well-cultivated mind that is able to attain dhyana, that is, when the mind is fully free of the physical senses.\textsuperscript{20}

No matter how high a rebirth such a being may attain, once his supporting karma is exhausted, he will surely devolve again, and fall into a lower state, even into a hell-state. The devas, it is said, are able to recognize the signs of their impending death, and, without spiritual training and still having mental fetters,\textsuperscript{21} they will be deeply troubled by them, which acts as the terminal momentum pushing them downward to some lower, even subhuman, rebirth.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{2.2.2.4} The second case—rebirth by attainment—on the other hand, entails living a wholesome life consistent in moral virtue, mental concentration and insight wisdom. A streamwinner or a once-returner will surely attain a wholesome rebirth that is conducive to his spiritual cultivation or living as a wholesome being.\textsuperscript{23} A non-returner will be reborn in one of the pure abodes (suddh'āvāsa)—the highest of the form realms—not returning to this world, but attaining arhathood there.\textsuperscript{24} The arhat, the fully liberated saint, like the Buddha, will not be reborn but pass utterly away into nirvana.\textsuperscript{25}

In the cases of both the streamwinner and the once-returner, after death, they will always have some good rebirth amongst humans, which conduces to their spiritual life, or amongst the higher realms. They may be reborn in some lower realms, even amongst humans, but they will never fall into any of the subhuman states. The streamwinner has only seven more lives at the most, by which time the potential of his bad karma would be exhausted or ineffective, while the once-returner will attain arhathood in the following life.

\textbf{2.2.3 The divine messengers}

\textbf{2.2.3.1} If we follow the rule of thumb that, in any connected set of teachings, the smaller the figure, the older it is; then, we may deduce that the teaching of the 3 intoxications (mada)—those of youth, of health and of life—is probably the oldest of teachings related to quests (esanā). As a corollary, we may add that the “3 D’s” of decay (jarā), disease (vyādhī) and death (marana) are also a similarly ancient set of teachings, as presented in the Sukhumāla Sutta (A 3.38) [2.2.1.2].

\textbf{2.2.3.2} The 3 D’s of decay, disease and death are allegorized by the first 3 signs of an old man, a sick man and a dead man, as given in the (Yama) Deva, dūta Sutta (A 3.35).\textsuperscript{26} These are also synecdoches (shorthands) for the 3 universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self [2.2.1], yet unknown or not fully understood by the Bodhisattva, but who, by his deep reflections, senses their overwhelming impact on all life, dramatically highlighted by the first three sights.

For the young spiritually precocious Siddhattha, these 3 visions are like fire ravaging his 3 palaces, one each for the three Indian seasons: summer, the rains and winter. He is compelled to at once flee from the burning palaces for the safety of the free open space of renunciation. This secure freedom is allegorized in the vision of the fourth sign, the holy man or renunciant, a portent of the path he must now take—if he is to find the way to douse these flames, to awaken from the sleep of ignorance and the nightmare of craving. He renounces the world. This means that he has given up the false or ignoble quests for the worldly—for what is subject to disease, decay and death.

\textbf{2.2.3.3} When the story of the Bodhisattva’s great renunciation is told, it is natural that a fourth sign is added to the 3 signs allegorizing the 3 intoxications [2.2.1.2]. Understandably, this fourth sign is that

\begin{itemize}
  \item On dhyana (jhāna), see Dhyana, SD 8.4.
  \item On the 10 mental fetters (dasa saṁyojana), SD 10.16 (1.2.1).
  \item On devas, after death, falling into hell, see (Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala S 1 (A 4.123) SD 23.8a.
  \item On the streamwinner, see SD 10.16 (11); on the once-returner, SD 10.16 (12).
  \item On the kinds of non-returners, see Niṭṭha S (A 10.63.3), SD 3.3(1.2); SD 10.16 (1.3.3); SD 2.17 (4-5). On the pure abodes, see SD 10.16 (1.6.7.2; 13.1.6); SD 1.7 (Appendix) or DEB Appendix 3.
  \item On the arhat, see SD 10.16 (14).
  \item A 3.35,3-18 (SD 48.10).
\end{itemize}
of a holy man or renunciant—the most positive and hopeful of the 4 sights—as related in the Mahā' padāna Sutta (D 14) [2.2.1.1]. The set of the 4 signs work very well to highlight the drama of the Bodhisattva’s epiphany of the 3 intoxications. These allegories—the 4 signs—work well to illustrate the meaning of life and the purpose of renunciation.27

2.2.3.4 However, for worldlings who choose to remain in the world, or are unwittingly caught up in it, a stronger teaching is needed. The worldly may discount the significance of the 4 signs—symbolisms related to renunciation—because they are either unwilling or unable to renounce the world. However, the dangers that stalk the unrenounced worldly are even greater than the 3 intoxications. A more powerful imagery is needed to impress such worldlings of these greater dangers.

Hence, the renunciant’s first 3 signs—those of the 3 D’s (decay, disease and death) [2.2.3.2]—are expanded into the worldly’s 4 ignoble quests—those for what are subject to decay, disease, death and defilement. While the first three quests are for material things, the fourth is the quest for non-material things, such as fame and honour. Technically, this non-material quest is the “seeking” (esanā) for sensual pleasures (kām’esanā), for existence (bhav’esanā), and for the holy life (brahma,cariy’esanā) (or, religious quest, including religion-hopping). Hence, the arhat is said to have “completely given up seeking” (samavaya,saṭṭh’esanā), such as in the Ariya,vāsa Suttas 1 and 2 (A 10.19-20).28

2.2.3.5 In the (Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta (M 130), the symbolism of the 4 quests is expanded into the 5 portents (pañca pubba,nimitta), that is, those of

(1) the helpless infant (birth),
(2) an old man or woman (decay),
(3) a sick man or woman (disease),
(4) a criminal being punished (defilement, or, specifically, loss and suffering), and
(5) the dead (death) [2.2.3.5].29

These 5 portents are, in turn, an extension of the 4 signs [2.2.1.1-2.2.1.2], which are, in turn, an extension of the 3 signs [2.2.3.2], which are an allegorization of the effects of the 3 intoxications [2.2.1.2].

All these teachings serve to illustrate the futility and dangers of the ignoble quests—the quests for what is subject to birth, decay, disease, loss and suffering, and death. However, only in the last of the 4 signs do we see a hint of the noble quest—represented by the figure of the renunciant.

2.2.3.6 Briefly, then, we can deduce this simple (but tentative) chronology of the development of the teachings on the signs (nimitta) or portents (pubba,nimitta), and their relationship to the quests (esanā):

| (1) the 3 intoxications (mada) | Sukhumāla Sutta | A 3.38 | SD 63.7 | [2.2.1.2] |
| (2) the 3 signs (nimitta) | (Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta | A 3.35,3-18 | SD 48.10 | [2.2.3.2] |
| (3) the 4 signs (nimitta) | Mahā’padāna Sutta | D 14.2.1-2.14 | SD 49.8b | [2.2.1.1-2.2.1.2] |
| (4) the 4 quests (esanā) | Ariya,vāsa Sutta 2 | A 10.20 | SD 43.15 | [2.2.3.4] |
| (5) the 5 portents (pubba,nimitta) | (Majjhima) Deva,dūta S | M 130,4-8 | SD 2.23 | [2.2.3.5] |
| (6) the 6 quests (esanā) | Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta | M 26,5-13 | SD 1.11 | [1.1.2] |

Chronologically, this is not a final listing. For example, (1) and (2) could have arisen simultaneously or around the same time; so, too, (3), (4) and (5). However, in terms of ideas and teaching, it is helpful to

---

27 Further see SD 48.10 (2.2.2).
28 This is the 6th of the 10 noble abidings (ariya,vāsa): A 10.19 (SD 43.14) and A 10.20 (SD 43.15).
29 M 130,4-8 + SD 2.23 (2). See further SD 48.10 (2.2.3).
highlight (1) as the root of the various signs and portents. It is also helpful to understand and reflect on how and why their numbers grew, as we have discussed here.\(^{30}\)

---

The (Fours) Discourse on Quests
A 4.252

1 Bhikshus, there are the 4 noble quests (anariya pariyesanā). What are the four? Here, bhikshus, someone\(^{31}\)

   (1) being himself subject to decay, seeks what is also subject to decay;
   (2) being himself subject to disease, seeks what is also subject to disease;
   (3) being himself subject to death, seeks what is also subject to death;
   (4) being himself subject to defilement, seeks what is also subject to defilement.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 ignoble quests.

2 Bhikshus, these are the 4 noble quests (ariya pariyesanā). What are the four? Here, bhikshus, someone

   being himself subject to decay, knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to decay,
   seeks the security from the yoke,
   in the decay-free, that is, nirvana.

   Being himself subject to disease, knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to disease,
   seeks the security from the yoke,
   in the disease-free, that is, nirvana.

   Being himself subject to death, knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to death,
   seeks the security from the yoke,
   in the death-free, that is, nirvana.

   Being himself subject to defilement, knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to defilement,
   seeks the security from the yoke,
   in the defilement-free, that is, nirvana.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 noble quests.

---

\(^{30}\) For a similar chronology of the development of the teachings on the signs and portents, see SD 48.10 (2.4.2).

\(^{31}\) Ariya Pariyesanā S (M 26) elaborates these 4 D’s into the 6 conditions for the “ignoble quest,” ie, birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow and defilement, and then they are explained (M 26,6-11), SD 1.11.