

9

(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:

The ignoble quests (*anariya pariyesanā*): the world

The quests for what is *subject* to:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) decay | <i>jarā,dhamma</i> |
| (2) disease | <i>vyādhi,dhamma</i> |
| (3) death | <i>maraṇa,dhamma</i> |
| (4) defilement | <i>sāṅkiliṭṭha,dhamma</i> [2.2.3.4] |

The noble quests (*ariya pariyesanā*): nirvana

The quests for what *is*:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) decay-free (the non-decaying) | <i>ajarā</i> |
| (2) disease-free (the non-diseased) | <i>avyādhi</i> |
| (3) death-free (the non-dying) | <i>amata</i> |
| (4) defilement-free (the non-defiled) | <i>asāṅkiliṭṭha</i> |

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 (*asāṅkiliṭṭha*)—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 bads**—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 (*sarivēga*)—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.

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 (*jāti,- 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 *eṣāṇā*) and *esana* (nt, Skt *eṣāṇa*) mean “seeking, searching, desiring.” Its verb, *esati*, means “to desire, long (for), wish (for).” It is derived from \sqrt{is} (1), “to wish for”³ or \sqrt{ES} (1), “to search for, desire”⁴ (CPD).⁵ The adjective *esana* (mf; Skt *eṣāṇa*), meaning “seeking for, 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 *paryeṣate*), “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 \sqrt{is} or \sqrt{ich} , “to desire, wish.”

⁴ The Skt root is $\bar{a}-\sqrt{is} > eṣ$ SED 232c.

⁵ CPD gives the roots respectively as ${}^2\sqrt{is}$ and ${}^1\sqrt{ES}$: 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 $\sim na$: 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 bodhisattva, powerful religious emotion (*samīvega*), 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,” *aṭṭiyeyyam harāyeyyam jeguccheyyam*. For fuller analyses of these terms, see **Kevaddha S** (D 11,5/1:213), SD 1.7 n sv.

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 still 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 (Pariyāya) S** (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.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,²¹ they will be deeply troubled by them, which acts as the terminal momentum pushing them downward to some lower, even subhuman, rebirth.²²

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-returned will surely attain a wholesome rebirth that is conducive to his spiritual cultivation or living as a wholesome being.²³ A non-returned 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.²⁴ The arhat, the fully liberated saint, like the Buddha, will not be reborn but pass utterly away into nirvana.²⁵

In the cases of both the streamwinner and the once-returned, 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 sub-human 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-returned will attain arhathood in the following life.

2.2.3 The divine messengers

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 (*maraṇa*) are also a similarly ancient set of teachings, as presented in **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) [2.2.1.2].

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).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 signs.

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*.

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

²⁰ On dhyana (*jhāna*), see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

²¹ On the 10 mental fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*), SD 10.16 (1.2.1).

²² On devas, after death, falling into hell, see **(Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123) SD 23.8a.

²³ On the streamwinner, see SD 10.16 (11); on the once-returned, SD 10.16 (12).

²⁴ On the kinds of non-returned, 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.

²⁵ On the arhat, see SD 10.16 (14).

²⁶ A 3.35,3-18 (SD 48.10).

of a holy man or renunciant—the most positive and hopeful of the 4 sights—as related in **the Mahā’pa-dāna Sutta** (D 14) [2.2.1.1]. The set of **the 4 signs** work very well to highlight the drama of the Bodhisat-tva’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 worldling may discount the significance of **the 4 signs**—symbol-isms related to renunciation—because they are either unwilling or unable to renounce the world. How-ever, the dangers that stalk the unrenounced worldling 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 worldling’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, relig-i-ous quest, including religion-hopping). Hence, the arhat is said to have “completely given up seeking” (*samavaya,satth’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 (<i>mada</i>)	Sukhumāla Sutta	A 3.38	SD 63.7	[2.2.1.2]
(2) the 3 signs (<i>nimitta</i>)	(Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta	A 3.35,3-18	SD 48.10	[2.2.3.2]
(3) the 4 signs (<i>nimitta</i>)	Mahā’padāna Sutta	D 14,2.1-2.14	SD 49.8b	[2.2.1.1-2.2.1.2]
(4) the 4 quests (<i>esanā</i>)	Ariya,vāsa Sutta 2	A 10.20	SD 43.15	[2.2.3.4]
(5) the 5 portents (<i>pubba,nimitta</i>)	(Majjhima) Deva,dūta S	M 130,4-8	SD 2.23	[2.2.3.5]
(6) the 6 quests (<i>esanā</i>)	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

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The (Fours) Discourse on Quests

A 4.252

1 Bhikshus, there are **the 4 ignoble quests** (*anariya pariyesanā*). What are the four?

Here, bhikshus, someone³¹

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) being himself <u>subject to decay</u> , | seeks what is also subject to <i>decay</i> ; |
| (2) being himself <u>subject to disease</u> , | seeks what is also subject to <i>disease</i> ; |
| (3) being himself <u>subject to death</u> , | seeks what is also subject to <i>death</i> ; |
| (4) being himself <u>subject to defilement</u> , | seeks what is also subject to <i>defilement</i> . |

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 <u>subject to decay</u> ,	knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to <i>decay</i> , seeks the security from the yoke, in the decay-free , that is, nirvana.
Being himself <u>subject to disease</u> ,	knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to <i>disease</i> , seeks the security from the yoke, in the disease-free , that is, nirvana.
Being himself <u>subject to death</u> ,	knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to <i>death</i> , seeks the security from the yoke, in the death-free , that is, nirvana.
Being himself <u>subject to defilement</u> ,	knowing the disadvantage in what is subject to <i>defilement</i> , seeks the security from the yoke, in the defilement-free , that is, nirvana.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 noble quests.

— evaṃ —

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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.