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## No Ce'daṃ Sutta

The “If It Were Not For This” Discourse | S 14.33

Theme: The purpose of the spiritual life

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

### 1 Sutta significance

#### 1.1 EARLY BUDDHIST ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

##### 1.1.1 Conceptual background: Beauty and truth

**1.1.1.1 The No Ce'daṃ Sutta** (S 14.33)—the “If it were not for this” Discourse—is a short teaching on the meaning and purpose of the Buddha's teaching. The Sutta theme is that of the 4 great elements (*mahā, bhūta, rūpa*)—earth, water, fire and wind. Philosophically, this is a discourse in Buddhist **axiology**—the early Buddhist theory of value and values. As we shall see, in early Buddhism, the “theory of *values*” (plural) refers to the ethics-based axiology [1.1.1.2], and the “theory of *value*” (singular) refers to the aesthetics-based axiology.<sup>1</sup> [1.1.1.4]

**Axiology**<sup>2</sup> is the philosophical study or theory of *value* and of *values*, an important aspect of Buddhist morality.<sup>3</sup> It is defined as “the study of the nature, types, and criteria of values and of value judgments, especially in ethics.”<sup>4</sup> Axiology studies mainly two kinds of values, that is, those of ethics and of aesthetics. In other words, ethics and aesthetics—goodness and beauty—are closely intertwined. They are like two ways of looking at the same reality: the former sees true peace; the latter, true joy.

**1.1.1.2 Ethics** investigates the concepts of “good” (*kusala*) and “right” (*sammā*) in individual and social conduct. Basically, “good” means what helps us to grow emotionally and spiritually into true individuals (*sappurisa*), that is, emotionally independent persons capable of inspiring happiness and goodness in others. “Right,” when applied to an action, means that it benefits both us and others without hurting the environment, and is of the greatest benefit for the greatest number of beings, if not, all life. For this reason, early Buddhist ethics is said to be based on life-centred ethics.

From here, we go into another important area—**the theory of values** (*dhamma*)—which is the ethics-based axiology underpinning the practice of **the 5 precepts**. The first precept, as we know, is based on the value of life. The other precepts each have their own value, here given within parentheses, thus: not stealing (happiness), abstaining from sexual misconduct (freedom), not lying (truth), and avoiding intoxication and addiction (wisdom).<sup>5</sup>

**1.1.1.3** All this is the first of the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t, taya*) of early Buddhism, that of **training in moral virtue** (*sīla, sikkhā*). Essentially, the early Buddhist moral training concerns the restraint and shaping of our action and speech to be harmonious and conducive towards mental cultivation (*samādhi, sikkhā*), the

<sup>1</sup> On the theory of values applied to the 5 precepts, see SD 1.5 (2.7) esp Table 2.8.

<sup>2</sup> Axiology, from the Greek ἀξία, *axiā*, “value, worth” and λόγος, *logos*, “word; study”: the philosophical study of values.

<sup>3</sup> “Theory of value” (OED).

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster's 11<sup>th</sup> Collegiate Dictionary. For a helpful intro, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiology>.

<sup>5</sup> On the 5 values, see SD 1.5 (2) Table.

second training. Both these trainings are the bases for the training in insight wisdom (*paññā, sikkhā*),<sup>6</sup> all of which (that is, the 3 trainings as a whole) are the bases of right knowledge and right freedom.<sup>7</sup>

**1.1.1.4 Aesthetics** is essentially *the study and theory of beauty*, at least as philosophy. However, for early Buddhist spirituality, aesthetics necessarily encompasses the understanding and cultivation of both beauty and truth. The reason for this necessary unity is quite simple: beauty is truth, truth beauty—*that is all we can know, and all we need to know*.<sup>8</sup> What constitutes **beauty** is that it expresses the truth, that is, *true reality*, which is hidden from us by the very senses that are supposed to reveal them to us.

**Art**, in the sense of aesthetics, then, is the exploration, discovery, expression and enjoyment of what are truly beautiful and beautifully true. The “*truly beautiful*” is how the Artist expresses his vision and experience of true reality. The “*beautifully true*” is the quality and essence of what has been expressed by **the Artist**, the creator of beauty that expresses truth.<sup>9</sup>

**1.1.1.5 Early Buddhist aesthetics** is closely related to the ethical and the moral—that is, the “beautiful that is also good” (*kalyāṇa*). We can see the idea of beauty as the dynamic process and spiritual state connected with training in moral virtue (*sīla, sikkhā*) and with the calmness (*samatha*) aspect of mental training (*samādhi, sikkhā*). While moral training beautifies the *body* as a source of inspiration, calmness beautifies the *mind* which then generates joy. [1.1.1.6]

A person who is morally virtuous is said to be “cultivated in body” (*bhāvita, kāya*).<sup>10</sup> An important sense here is that those who look upon such a person—just as Sāriputta first looks at the arhat Assaji<sup>11</sup>—is inspired with joyful faith (*pasāda*). The friendship between two persons, especially a teacher and a pupil, based on moral virtue, is said to be “beautiful (or spiritual) friendship” (*kalyāṇa, mittatā*).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the whole of “the holy life,” the Buddhist training, is said to be beautiful friendship or the friendship with the beautiful,<sup>13</sup> a word which also means “good” in the broad moral and aesthetic sense of the word.<sup>14</sup>

**1.1.1.6 Moral virtue** is a vital basis and catalyst for effective meditation. It helps in the harmonizing of the mind—of knowing, shaping and freeing our mind—that is, being free of the mental hindrances.<sup>15</sup> Such a mind is said to be “calm” (*sama*), which also means “tranquil” in a broad sense.<sup>16</sup> Such a practice is said to bring about **meditative calm** (*samatha*).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

<sup>7</sup> All this gives full expression to the noble eightfold path, making it the 10 rightness (*sammatta*): SD 10.16, esp (1.2.2). On right knowledge (*sammā, ñāṇa*) and right freedom (*sammā, vimutti*), see SD 10.16 (9-10).

<sup>8</sup> This is from Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819), where he writes: “‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’ – that is all | Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” See SD 40a.4 (8.2); SD 40a.1 (8.1.2); also Piya Tan, Reflection, “No views frees,” R255, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> On Buddhist aesthetics (beauty and truth), see SD 46.5 (2.4.2).

<sup>10</sup> See **Pinḍola Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127, 7/4:111), SD 27.6a(2.4).

<sup>11</sup> On Sāriputta’s first meeting with Assaji, see SD 42.8 (1.2).

<sup>12</sup> See **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness**, SD 8.1.

<sup>13</sup> See **Upaḍḍha S** (S 45.2), SD 34.9.

<sup>14</sup> *Kalyāṇa* means “good,” functioning both as a n and an adj. *Kalyāṇa* also has the sense of the “morally good,” as in **Isayo Samuddaka S** (S 11.10), where it is said, “Good comes to the good-doer” (*kalyāṇa, kāri kalyāṇam*) (S 903 = S 11.10,1), SD 39.2.

<sup>15</sup> Ie the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) of sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt: see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

<sup>16</sup> Sn 896; J 4:172.

<sup>17</sup> On “calm” (*samatha*), see SD 41.1 (3.1).

To know our mind is to see it as being habitually *impermanent, changing, becoming other*; to shape it means to train it to avoid energy-sapping distractions and wisdom-sapping *hindrances*; and to free it is to let it naturally rise beyond *the physical senses*, so that the mind fully focuses on itself: this is known as **dhyana** (*jhāna*).<sup>18</sup> This is the pinnacle of the calm mind—the mind of true beauty. Such a person is said to be “cultivated in mind” (*bhāvita, citta* or *subhāvita, citta*).<sup>19</sup>

**1.1.1.7** We have already noted that “**beauty**” refers to our moral virtue that is *the cultivated body* [1.1.1.5], and “**truth**” to the experience of *the cultivated mind* [1.1.1.6]. These are the first two of the 3 trainings, and these two are the bases for wisdom training, which embodies both beauty and truth. The cultivation of wisdom entails the arising of both calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).<sup>20</sup> The **truth** aspect is found both in the “insight” (*vipassanā*) of mental training<sup>21</sup> and in the wisdom training (*paññā, -sikkhā*) itself.

When both body and mind are beautifully cultivated, we are ready to face the truth of true reality, so to speak. With body and mind in harmony with truth and beauty, we live *insightful* and *joyful* lives, heading for the path of awakening. When the calm mind becomes utterly clear, it is able to fully understand the 4 noble truths, and with that arises arhathood.<sup>22</sup>

**1.1.1.8** Here is a diagram to show how beauty and truth are related to the 3 trainings—that is, what we have discussed here on the subject:

(3) wisdom training ( <i>paññā, sikkhā</i> )	}	<b>truth</b>	[1.1.1.3]
			[1.1.1.1]
(2) concentration training ( <i>samāhi, sikkhā</i> )	}	<b>truth</b>	[1.1.1.7]
			[1.1.1.6]
(1) moral training ( <i>sīla, sikkhā</i> )	}	<b>beauty</b>	[1.1.1.5]
			[1.1.1.4]
			[1.1.1.2]

**Table 1.1.1.8.** The 3 trainings in terms of truth and beauty

### 1.1.2 Early Buddhism as living truth

**1.1.2.1** Purists and puritans—those who see the letter as supreme above the spirit, and those who see Buddhism as a fixed, even dead, way of the past—may claim that we should view and vent Buddhism as a teaching given by the Buddha in India 2500 years ago, that is, as a religion limited in space and time. Some scholars even think that, in our study and teaching of early Buddhism, we should not intro-

<sup>18</sup> See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

<sup>19</sup> See **Pinḍola Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127, 7/4:111), SD 27.6a(2.4); **Mahā, pañha S 1** (A 10.27/5:56 f), SD 85.15; M 1:239×2, 240×2. See also as *cittam subhāvitam* in (**Magga**) **Saṅgāra S** (A 10.169, 7; Dh 89), SD 18.7(8.2a). See also SD 40a.4 (8.1).

<sup>20</sup> On calm and insight, see **Samatha and Vipassanā**, SD 41.1.

<sup>21</sup> Here, basically, we practise the reflection on impermanence; more broadly, the reflections on suffering and on non-self; that is, on the 3 universal characteristics: see SD 1.2 (2).

<sup>22</sup> On how arhathood is attained in this way, see SD 8.4 (12.6).

duce into it any new categories or concepts that are “alien” to what has been historically and culturally defined in the early Canon.

**1.1.2.2** The **purist** approach is to see Buddhism as a kind of museum-piece, an artefact fixed in time and place. It is the purist notion that we must only study or use what we can find in the texts, to catalogue, analyze and discuss them—essentially, we must merely interpret Buddhism as a word-based or artefact-based tradition. This is often the way of the scholars or academic Buddhism. There is no interest in taking up Buddhism as a method of personal cultivation and path of awakening.

The **puritan** approach is to see Buddhism—or what is defined so—as the “ultimate” truth. These ultimate truths are clearly categorized, catalogued and defined. Often this “ultimate teaching” is taken to be the Abhidhamma (or, in later Buddhism, some late scripture or guru-based teaching). Any other vision of the teaching of the “Buddha” is likely to be scorned upon as being false or unacceptable—simply because they have not been authorized by the “Teacher” or some authority figure in the group.

**1.1.2.3** Anyone of us who, with an open mind and eager heart, studies early Buddhism, will surely be surprised by its simple language, and marvel at its profound truths and related teachings. If we have some experience and love for **meditation**, we will also see how the truth and beauty of sutta teachings help us better our meditation, and how our meditation, in turn, deepen our understanding of the historical Buddha’s teachings—all of which transform our life into the noble path.

**1.1.2.4** If we are trained in some academic or specialized discipline, or steeped in some artistic or human-centred pursuits—the cultivation and expression of human goodness—we are likely to be drawn to the natural coherence and profound implications of the suttas and their teachings, even from the perspectives of our academic training.

A philosophy student or scholar is likely to see the philosophical wealth and depth of early Buddhism. A psychologist will at once be drawn to the teachings, theories, case histories, therapy methods and meditation systems of early Buddhism. A religion specialist will be fascinated at how Buddhism—well accepted as a religion—also shows natural tendencies to challenge the very nature of religion itself.

A social scientist will see the social system of the early sangha and its later developments a worthwhile field of closer study. A language specialist, such as the philologist, is at once able to discourse on some interesting or special features of Pali and languages related to early Buddhism. Even a scientist will find little to object regarding the essential teachings of early Buddhism, and may find science helpful in explaining and understanding key early Buddhist concepts. A computer engineer will notice how the suttas are structured (especially in their concatenations, repetitive and recursive cycles), reflecting the way a computer programme works.

The Artist—one of creative and wholesome talents, dedicated to experiencing and expressing beauty by way of art, music, architecture, education, health and so on—will be inspired by the aesthetics and vitality of the **joy** in Buddhist life.<sup>23</sup> A true seeker will find himself overwhelmed by the beauty and truth of early Buddhist doctrine and meditation as taught by the Buddha. A truly good person will naturally be drawn to the true teachings of the Buddha Dharma. In short, this is what is essentially meant by the last of the 6 qualities of the Buddha Dharma: that it is “**to be personally known by the wise**” (*paccattam vedītabbo viññūhi*).<sup>24</sup>

**1.1.2.5** If we—whether renunciant or laity—are drawn to the historical Buddha’s teachings as our way of life, studying and practising them, even translating the suttas, we are somehow moved to ex-

<sup>23</sup> On the centrality of joy in early Buddhism, see Reflection, “Joy as food,” R197 (2011).

<sup>24</sup> See SD 15.9 (2.6).

press our understanding of such teaching in contemporary terms. To us, then, the Buddha Dharma is a living spiritual experience.

As a living truth and tradition, Buddhism—the Buddha Dharma presented to our contemporaries—easily articulates itself through any kind of useful or wholesome language and learning of our times. Indeed, we will discover that some of the theoretical ideas and practical structures of other systems, even other religions, clearly work better in Buddhism itself. This is especially true, for example, in the theories and vocabulary of psychology, so that both specialists and traditionalists will see “Buddhist psychology” encompassing authentic means of meditation and self-healing therapy, and as a basis for the Buddhist life.<sup>25</sup>

## 1.2 THE 4 GREAT ELEMENTS

### 1.2.1 The elements as “meaning” of life

**1.2.1.1 The No Ce’daṃ Sutta** (S 14.33) is not only a statement on the 4 primary elements and how our reactions to them bring about suffering in us and others. It is the basis for a study of the nature of **value and values**—about the kinds of things that are good, beautiful and valuable, how we react to them, and how they influence or mould our lives. It is the basis of early Buddhist axiology [1.1.1.1].

One of the central questions in **early Buddhist axiology** is this: What elements contribute to the intrinsic value of a state of affairs? [1.1.1.2]. Philosophically, we can use a theory of axiology to examine the teaching of **S 14.33** from a “consequentialist” (by way of consequences) angle, which tells us what things we tend to see as valuable or desirable, why so, the consequences of such a tendency, and what we can or should do about it.

**1.2.1.2** The No Ce’daṃ Sutta applies the *assāda ādīnava nissaraṇa* (the “gratification, danger and escape”) formula to each of the 4 primary elements.<sup>26</sup> These three terms—*assāda*, *ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa*—often appear as a set in the suttas—forming what we may call **the “nissaraṇa (“escape”) formula.”** This is exactly what the Commentary to the Sutta actually says, that is, these three factors are related to the 4 noble truths,<sup>27</sup> as explained in other Commentaries, thus [§14]:

danger	( <i>ādīnava</i> )	refers to	the truth of suffering;
gratification	( <i>assāda</i> )	refers to	the truth of the arising of suffering, that is, craving; and
escape	( <i>nissaraṇa</i> )	refers to	the ending of suffering, nirvana.

(DA 2:512; MA 2:11)

**1.2.1.3** The “danger” (*ādīnava*) or disadvantages, and “gratification” (*assāda*) regarding our wrong attitudes towards the 4 elements constitute **the meaning of life**. To *live* means to understand how the physical elements of our being (our body) are impermanent, changing and becoming other, and, with such understanding, to grow out of suffering and gain full mental freedom so that we live in selfless peace and joy.

What is impermanent, by its very nature, is unsatisfactory—we can only enjoy the present as it arises, and then passes away. We have no control whatsoever over what is impermanent and unsatisfactory—it is without any self, eternal soul or abiding essence.<sup>28</sup> In essence, this is the meaning of life.

<sup>25</sup> See, eg, SD 1.3 (2).

<sup>26</sup> See **Assāda Sambodha S** (A 3.101) + SD 14.6 (2).

<sup>27</sup> *Iti tīsu’pi imesu suttesu catu, saccam eva kathitaṃ* (SA 2:155).

<sup>28</sup> These, essentially, are the 3 universal characteristics: see SD 1.2 (2).

**1.2.1.4** When we understand the meaning of life, we would then naturally ask: What do I do about this? This is the kind of questioning that put us on the right quest from self-understanding to self-mastery to self-liberation. Only when we understand this we will be able to help others. In other words, to save the world, *we must save ourselves first*.

The reason for this is simple: we *are* the world. We are our 6 sense-bases: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. We create our own world with these sense-experiences. In order to change or better the world, we must understand—or, at least, work to understand—what this means, that *we are the world*. This is **the purpose of life**.<sup>29</sup>

## **1.2.2 The world as a “barrier”**

**1.2.2.1** The No Ce’daṃ Sutta equates one of its key terms, **(na) vimariyādi,kata**, “(not) freed from the barriers” [§14.2], with “this world” of beings. The Sutta states that on account of not seeing “as they really are” the gratification, the danger and the escape regarding the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind),

“beings dwell with a mind not freed from them, not released from them, and are not freed from **the barrier** (*mariyāda*) that is this world with its devas, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans” [§14].

**1.2.2.2** However, when we *do* see “as they really are” the gratification, the danger and the escape regarding the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind), then we

“dwell with a mind freed from them, are released from them, and are freed from **the barrier** that is this world with its devas, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans” [§15].

**1.2.2.3** The phrase “freed from the barrier” (**vimariyādi,kata**) is found in the following suttas, which give us clues to its meaning and usage:

		<b><u>freed from</u></b>
<b>No Ce’daṃ Sutta</b>	(S 14.33/2:172+172)	the 4 elements
<b>Assāda Sutta 3</b>	(S 22.28/3:31)	the 5 aggregates
<b>Bāhuna Sutta</b>	(A 10.81/5:151 f)	the 5 aggregates; birth, decay, death, suffering, defilements

In both **the Assāda Sutta 3** (S 22.28) and **the Bāhuna Sutta** (A 10.81), we see the phrase “free from the barriers,” that is, the 5 aggregates. The Bāhuna Sutta, besides the 5 aggregates, mentions five more “boundaries,” that is, those of *birth, decay, death, suffering* and *defilements*. From such a comparison of sutta contexts, we can surmise that “the 4 elements” are not merely *physical* elements, but represent the first aggregate, that is, form (*rūpa*).<sup>30</sup>

The second clue is from the No Ce’daṃ Sutta itself, where the terms “gratification” (*assāda*) and “danger” or “disadvantages” (*ādīnava*) are mentioned [1.2.1]. Gratification from the 4 elements arises from feelings (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*), and from which there are formations (*saṅkhara*) or karmic activities—and all this occurs on account of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are, of course, the 5 aggregates.

<sup>29</sup> On the meaning and purpose of life, see SD 1.1 (4.0).

<sup>30</sup> On form (*rūpa*), see SD 17.2a.

**1.2.2.4** We see the phrase, *vimariyādi,kata* [1.2.2.1], in the *Thera,gātha* in a variant form as *vipariyādi,kata*, “(of the mind) torn asunder, (figuratively) ‘be blown about’,” that is, “disintegrated, cease to be” (Tha 184e). In the *Dhammapada*, we see its near-synonym, *visaṅkhāra,gata*, “(of the mind) reached the unconditioned” (Dh 154e). The term, *visaṅkhārā* (literally, “without *saṅkhārā*-s; formations removed”) is an allusion to nirvana.

**1.2.2.5** Although Buddhaghosa speaks of the “3 worlds” (*loka*) as *those of space, of beings and of formations*,<sup>31</sup> in sutta context, the reference is to both the world of beings and of formations: they are only differentiated in the Commentaries for exegetical purposes.

Of course, it helps to say that the “world of beings” (*satta,loka*) is not the real problem (this is only the “situation”). It is the “world of formations” (*saṅkhāra,loka*) that is the real “problem,” the barrier (*mariyāda*), the hindrance to spirituality, to progress out of the conditioned world to the unconditioned, nirvana.

The world of formations is a **hindrance** or limitation (*mariyāda*) in the sense of its being of the nature of ceaselessly moving in a loop: it is a cyclic existence, and cycles tend to follow a fixed and predictable pattern, repeating itself. This is the real problem: we keep repeating ourselves. Or, rather, by the habit of repeating gives us the false notion that that this is our “self,” an abiding entity, an eternal soul.

The world as “space” (*okāsa,loka*) refers to the physical world, comprising the 5 elements (*dhātu*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), wind (*vāyo*) and space (*ākāsa*).<sup>32</sup> Note here the two usages of the same word, “**space**.” In the first case, space means “location,” and in the second, “emptiness (in the sense of space that can ‘be taken up’).”

**1.2.2.6** Buddhaghosa, in his commentary to the No Ce’daṃ Sutta, explains that the world—or, rather, our **attitudes** to the world—appears in two ways, that is, as the barrier of defilements (*kilesa,mariyāda*) and the barrier of the round (*vaṭṭa,mariyāda*). It is as if these are two halves of the “world” that we must fully abandon, that is, not only the defilements (our minds), but also the rounds of samsara (our bodies) (SA 2:155).

The term “**defilements**” (*kilesa*) refers to our own unwholesome way of thinking, speaking and acting, especially how we think, which conditions all our actions, good and bad. For the purposes of self-awakening, the Buddha has taught us that the 10 mental fetters hold us back in samsara, the cycle of rebirth and redeath.<sup>33</sup> When we overcome these fetters, we gain the wisdom with which to free ourselves from suffering.

We free ourselves from suffering by becoming at least streamwinners in this life itself—this is attained by overcoming *the first 3 fetters*. By overcoming more of the other fetters, we become once-returners, or even non-returners. However, only after breaking *all* the 10 fetters—by becoming arhats—that we are fully free from samsara itself: we attain nirvana.

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<sup>31</sup> I.e., *okāsa,loka, satta,loka* and *saṅkhāra,loka*, respectively (Vism 7.37/204 f; DA 1:173 f; MA 1:397, 2:200): SD 15.7 (3.5 (2)).

<sup>32</sup> See **Mahā Rahu’ovāda S** (M 62,8-12), SD 3.11.

<sup>33</sup> The 10 fetters (*dasa samyojana*) are: (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt, (3) attachment to rituals and vows, (4) sensual lust, (5) repulsion, (6) greed for form existence, (7) greed for formless existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance. See SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8).

## The “If It Were Not For This” Discourse

S 14.33

(The Buddha was) residing at Sāvattihī.

### The earth element

**2** “Bhikshus, if it were not for this gratification in **the earth element**, then, beings would not be *attached* to the earth element.<sup>34</sup>

2.2 But, bhikshus, because there is gratification in *the earth element*, beings are *attached* to the earth element.<sup>35</sup>

**3** Bhikshus, if it were not for this danger in **the earth element**, then, beings would not feel *revulsion* towards the earth element.<sup>36</sup>

3.2 But, bhikshus, because there is danger in *the earth element*, beings feel *revulsion* towards the earth element.

**4** Bhikshus, if it were not for this escape from **the earth element**, then, beings would not escape from the earth element.<sup>37</sup>

4.2 But, bhikshus, because there is escape from *the earth element*, beings *do escape* from the earth element.

### The water element

**5** “Bhikshus, if it were not for this gratification in **the water element**, then, beings would not be *attached* to the water element.

5.2 But, bhikshus, because there is gratification in *the water element*, beings are *attached* to the water element.

**6** Bhikshus, if it were not for this danger in **the water element**, then, beings would not feel *revulsion* towards the water element.

6.2 But, bhikshus, because there is danger in *the water element*, beings feel *revulsion* towards the water element.

**7** Bhikshus, if it were not for this escape from **the water element**, then, beings would not escape from the water element.

7.2 But, bhikshus, because there is escape from *the water element*, beings *do escape* from the water element.

### The fire element

**8** “Bhikshus, if it were not for this gratification in **the fire element**, then, beings would not be *attached* to the fire element.

8.2 But, bhikshus, because there is gratification in *the fire element*, beings are *attached* to the fire element.

<sup>34</sup> *No ce’daṃ bhikkhave pathavī,dhātuyā assādo abhaviṣṣa, na-y-idaṃ sattā pathavī,dhātuyā sārājjeyyuṃ.*

<sup>35</sup> *Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi pathavī,dhātuyā assādo, tasmā sattā pathavī,dhātuyā sārājanti.*

<sup>36</sup> *No cēdaṃ bhikkhave pathavī,dhātuyā ādīnavo abhaviṣṣa, na-y-idaṃ sattā pathavī,dhātuyā nibbindeyyuṃ.*

<sup>37</sup> *No cēdaṃ bhikkhave pathavī,dhātuyā nissaraṇaṃ abhaviṣṣa, na-y-idaṃ sattā pathavī,dhātuyā nissareyyuṃ.*



9 Bhikshus, if it were not for this danger in **the fire element**, then, beings would not feel *revulsion* towards the fire element.

9.2 But, bhikshus, because there is danger in *the fire element*, beings feel *revulsion* towards the fire element.

10 Bhikshus, if it were not for this escape from **the fire element**, then, beings would not escape from the fire element.

10.2 But, bhikshus, because there is escape from *the fire element*, beings *do escape* from the fire element.

## The wind element

11 “Bhikshus, if it were not for this gratification in **the wind element**, then, beings would not be *attached* to the wind element.

11.2 But, bhikshus, because there is gratification in *the wind element*, beings are *attached* to the wind element. [173]

12 Bhikshus, if it were not for this danger in **the wind element**, then, beings would not feel *revulsion* towards the wind element.

12.2 But, bhikshus, because there is danger in *the wind element*, beings feel *revulsion* towards the wind element.

13 Bhikshus, if it were not for this escape from **the wind element**, then, beings would not escape from the wind element.

13.2 But, bhikshus, because there is escape from *the wind element*, beings *escape* from the wind element.

## No escape

14 So long, bhikshus, as beings have not directly known these 4 elements as they really are,  
 the gratification as *gratification*,<sup>38</sup>  
 the danger as *danger*, and  
 the escape as *escape*,

14.2 to that extent, bhikshus, these beings dwell with a mind not free from them, not released from them—

they are *not freed* from **the barrier**<sup>39</sup> that is this world with its devas, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans.<sup>40</sup>

## Escape

15 But, bhikshus, when beings have directly known **the 4 elements** as they really are,  
 their gratification as *gratification*,  
 their danger as *danger*, and  
 the escape (from them) as *escape*,

<sup>38</sup> On how gratification, danger and escape regarding the 4 elements are related to the 4 noble truths, see (1.1.2.2).

<sup>39</sup> “(Not) freed from the barrier,” (*na*) *vimariyadi, kata* = *vi* (“away”) + *mariyāda* (“limits”) + *kata* (“made”), meaning “delivered, set free”: see (1.2.2).

<sup>40</sup> §14.2: *N’eva tāv’ime bhikkhave sattā sadevakā lokā samārakā sabrahmakā sassamaṇa, brāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadeva, manussāya nissaṭā visamyuttā vipparamuttā vimariyādi, katena cetasā viharimsu.*

15.2 then, bhikshus, these beings dwell with a mind that is *free* from them, detached from them, released from them—,

they are freed from the barriers<sup>41</sup> that is this world with its devas, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans.<sup>42</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>41</sup> *Vimariyādi, katena cetasā*. Comy: The barriers (*mariyādā*) are twofold: those of defilements and of samsara. Here, because of the abandoning of both, it is said that they dwell with a mind freed from barriers. (SA 2:155)

<sup>42</sup> These two closing passages [§§14-15] recur in **Assāda S 2** (A 3.102a) which condenses the 4 elements into the term “world” (*loka*) treating it in the same manner of teaching (A 3.102a/1:259), SD 14.7a.