(Udāna) Satta Sutta 1
The First (Udāna) Discourse on the Stuck | U 7.3
Theme: How not to be stuck to suffering
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Overview

1.1 COMMON THEMES

The following three suttas centre on the same polysemous word satta\(^1\) as a play on its senses of “a being” (n) and “stuck or attached” (past participle of sajjiṭṭi: “hanging, clinging, attached or stuck to”).\(^2\)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(Rādha) Satta Sutta</th>
<th>S 23.2/3:189 f</th>
<th>SD 52.2e</th>
<th>on satta as “being” and as “stuck”</th>
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<td>(Udāna) Satta Sutta 1</td>
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<td>(Udāna) Satta Sutta 2</td>
<td>U 64/7.4/75 f</td>
<td>SD 52.2g</td>
<td>we are caught in sense-desires</td>
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1.2 THE (Udāna) SATTA SUTTAS

1.2.1 The two (Udāna) Satta Suttas (U 7.3 + U 7.4) are based on the same background—a festival of sensual indulgence in Sāvatthī. The (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 records the monks witnessing the excitement in the city [1.2.2], while in the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 2, it is the Buddha himself who witnesses the orgy.

Such an account reminds us of the highly urbanized state of central Gangetic plains in the Buddha’s time. Sāvatthī, the capital of Kosala, was ruled by king Pasenadi. Together with Magadha, ruled by king Bimbisāra, and then his son, Ajāta,sattu, the two kingdoms unified much of the plains, to bring wide-spread peace, a prospering economy and a rise in population inhabiting the cities and market-towns.\(^3\)

1.2.2 The Sutta Commentary tells us that the Sutta background is that of an occasion when the residents of Sāvatthī, except for the noble disciples, have proclaimed a festival and are readying a drinking-area (āpāna,bhūmi) according to their means, and then indulging in sensual pleasures by way of eating, drinking and gratifying their senses, openly and secretly.

The monks, on their almsround in Sāvatthī, see those people, here and there, such as in their houses, in the parks and gardens, indulging in sensual pleasures. These monks, upon returning to the monastery (vihāra), report the matter to the Buddha, hoping to receive some subtle and profound Dharma-teaching. (UA 365)\(^4\)

1.3 TEACHINGS OF THE (Udāna) SATTA SUTTA 1

1.3.1 Teaching

1.3.1.1 Both the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 (U 7.3) and 2 (U 7.4) have teachings in both prose and verse. Hence, they belong to the category or “limb” (añga) of geyya (mixed prose and verse) in the ninefold limbs of the Teacher’s teaching (nav’añga satthu,sāsana). The 9 limbs of the Teacher’s teaching are:

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\(^1\) See SD 52.2 (4.1).
\(^2\) V 1:185; D 2:246; Nm 1:23, 24; Dh 342; J 1:376.
\(^3\) On the condition of the central Gangetic plains during the Buddha’s time, see SD 52.1 (2.2.1.9-2.2.1.11).
\(^4\) On the possibility that (Udāna) Satta Ss 1+2 once formed a single sutta, see SD 52.2g (1.2.3).
1.3.1.2 The prose section of the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 describes how most of the citizens (nāgaraka) of Sāvatthī “excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They dwelt soaked in them, hankering after them, fettered by them, stupefied by them, infatuated with them, utterly intoxicated by them” [§3]. The Commentary gives some explanation for each of the key words in this statement. (These descriptions are given in the footnotes in the text) [§3].

1.3.1.3 Hence, the background of both the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 and 2 are exactly the same. They differ only in two ways:

(1) while in Sutta 1, it is the monks who witness the orgy in Sāvatthī, in Sutta 2, it is the Buddha himself; and

(2) that they each have their own closing verse: while the Sutta 2 verse has 6 lines, that of Sutta 1 has only 4 lines. [§8]

1.3.2 The kāmesu sattā verse [§8]

1.3.2.1 [§8a] “Beings are stuck by the bonds of the senses to sensual pleasures” (kāmesu sattā kāma, saṅga, sattā). This line is interesting because it has both senses of kāma (the objective and the subjective), that is, as sense-object (vatthu, kāma) and as sense-pleasure or defilement (kilesa, kāma).5

The sense-objects—those of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, that is, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts—are “neutral.” They are neither good nor bad, rising and falling away as our senses—consciousness, to be exact—cognizes them. Even the Buddha and the arhats, too, experience these sense-objects, but they show no clinging (upadāna) whatsoever to them or on their account.

Hence, their being is said to comprise simply of the 5 aggregates (pañca-khandha), that is, merely of form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. However, the unawakened (like us) are still “stuck” (satta) to them; hence, our being comprises the 5 aggregates of clinging (pañc’upadāna-k, khandha).6 In other words, this is our “sense-pleasures as defilements” (kilesa, kāma). In a simple term, this is our craving (taṇhā).

1.3.2.2 [§8b] “Not seeing the fault in the fetters” (saṁyojane vajjam appassamānā). “The fetters” (saṁyojana) here probably refers simply to all the defilements preventing awakening. As a later technical

5 For details, see SD 30.10 (4); SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3).
6 See SD 38.4 (3.1.2); SD 41.4 (2.3.1).
7 For a summary of the 5 aggregates, see SD 52.2e (1.2.1.3).

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term, it refers to the “10 fetters” (dasa saṁyojana). The connection between the 10 fetters and the 4 influxes (āsava) can be seen in the table below.

The 5 lower fetters are subsumed under the influx of sense-desire. The first 2 “higher” fetters (they bind us to the form and the formless realms respectively), subsumed under the influx of existence refers to the fetters of desire for form existence and for formless existence. And the last 3 of the higher fetters — conceit, restlessness and ignorance—are subsumed under the influx of ignorance. This diagram helps us visualize these connections in a graphic manner:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(1) self-identity view</th>
<th>sakkkāya,dītthi</th>
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<tr>
<td>(2) spiritual doubt</td>
<td>vicikicchā</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) attachment to rituals and vows</td>
<td>sīla-b.bata,parāmāsa</td>
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<td>(4) sensual lust</td>
<td>kāma, rāga</td>
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<td>(5) repulsion</td>
<td>pāṭighā</td>
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<td>(6) lust for form existence</td>
<td>rūpa, rāga</td>
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<td>(7) lust for formless existence</td>
<td>arūpa, rāga</td>
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<td>(8) conceit</td>
<td>māna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) restlessness</td>
<td>uddhacca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) ignorance</td>
<td>avijjā</td>
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(4) influx of views (dītthāsava)

(1) influx of sense-desire (kāmāsava)

(2) influx of existence (bhavāsava)

(3) influx of ignorance (avijjāsava)

Table 1.3.2.2. The fetters and the mental influxes

1.3.2.3 [§8c] “For, surely, those who are stuck to the fetters’ bonds” (na hi jātu saṁyojana,sāṅga,-sattā). There is a play on the word “stuck” (satta), which can also mean “being.” All unawakened beings are stuck to samsara (cycle of suffering) by way of the mental influxes, also known as the “bonds” (sāṅga), which has the same meaning as yoga (another word for āsava, “influxes”).

“The bonds” (sāṅga) here are the 3 mental influxes (āsava), that is, those of (1) sensual lust (kāmāsava), (2) existence (bhavāsava), and (3) ignorance (avijjāsava) [1.3.2.2]. The better known, but later, set of 4 influxes, has the influx of views (dītthāsava) added as (3), making it a set of 4 “bonds” or “yokes” (yoga = sāṅga) or “floods” (ogha).

1.3.2.4 [§8d] “cannot cross the flood that is vast and great!” (ogham tareyyum vipular̥ mahantar̥). This line continues from the preceding [1.3.2.3]. When we are burdened with sensual lust, existence, views and ignorance—these are the 4 influxes [1.3.2.3] that flood our senses and being—we “cannot cross the flood.” These sensual lust, existence, views and ignorance are the “floods” that overwhelm and drown us in this life, and life after life to come.

The “floods” also refer to samsara (samsāra), that is, our cycle of suffering as we live this life, and cycle of rebirths and redeaths to come. Even if we are doubtful whether or not there are future lives, we

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8 See SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.68); Kīṭagiri S (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1.4); (Sekha) Uddessa S (A 4.85) SD 3.3 (2). See DEB: saṁyojana 10.
9 In some places, pāṭighā is replaced by ill will (vyāpāda).
10 Compare this with the fetters and suffering (SD 50.11, Table 0.2). On how the set of 3 influxes expands into a set of 4 influxes, see SD 50.7 (1.3.2.4).
11 See also SD 30.3 (1.3.2).
12 See respectively, D 16.2.4 (SD 9) & Ogha Pañha S (S 38.11) SD 30.3(1.4).

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can see how suffering overwhelm even this life itself, which is bad enough. We can only rise above the “floods” by abandoning sensual lust, existence, views and ignorance.

Of course, this is a very tall order, even when we are good meditators. It is like we have to climb over a high mountain to find freedom on the other side. We begin with simply walking forward, step by step, as far as we can, and taking breaks and rests whenever we need to. We begin our spiritual journey by the practice of the perception of impermanence, which is seeing and understanding how everything in this world is Impermanent. Over time, this practice builds up our understanding of the true nature of reality, and in this life itself, we will be able to reach the path of awakening.\(^\text{13}\)

1.4 SAMAJJA

1.4.1 Origin

1.4.1.1 The prose section of the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 simply tells us of how the people of Sāvatthī are all caught up in festive orgy of eating, drinking and indulging in sensual pleasures—a bacchanalia. We are not told exactly what kind of festival it is. It is clearly a samajja, such as the well-known “hill-top festival” (gir’agga sāmajja), held in Rājagaha,\(^\text{14}\) celebrated by the inhabitants (nāgaraka) themselves.

1.4.1.2 The hill-top festival (gir’agga samajja) was held from time to time (kōlānukālāni, SnA 1:326) in Rāja,gaha, and probably elsewhere, too. The Commentaries tell us that it was an annual festival held all over Jambu,dīpa (BA 126), and was also celebrated during the time of Dipankara Buddha (J 3:538). It was held in the open air in the afternoon and was attended by people of all levels of society from Aṅga and Magadha. Special seats were prepared for the prominent members of the audience, and the festivities seem to have consisted chiefly of nautch dances (SnA 1:326).

1.4.1.3 Buddhaghosa explains that it was a great or foremost festival celebrated on a hill or a festival in the most prominent place (of the city).\(^\text{15}\) He tells us that it was announced for seven days before it started, and was held on level ground under a shadow of a hill and outside the city. It was probably a popular secular festival, similar to a modern fun-fair, a circus or a popular music festival.\(^\text{16}\)

1.4.2 Buddhist connections

1.4.2.1 According to the Vinaya accounts, there were also singing and music, and the festival was attended not only by the laity, but also by members of religious orders.\(^\text{17}\) Probably, for that reason, it is said that the “group of 17 monks” (satta,rasa vaggiyā),\(^\text{18}\) and the “group of 6 nuns” (cho-b, boggiya)\(^\text{19}\) were recorded as visiting the event. These were occasions for declaring such actions as entailing the offence of “expiation” (pācittiya).

\(^\text{13}\) See esp (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.
\(^\text{14}\) V 4:85,12.
\(^\text{15}\) Gir’agga,samajjo’ti girimhi agga,samajjo girissa vā agga,dese samajjo (VA 831,33).
\(^\text{16}\) See all V:H 2:335 n1; Vinaya Texts 1885 3:71 n3 & D:RD 1:7 n4.
\(^\text{17}\) V 2:107f, 150, 4:85, 267; VA 4:948.
\(^\text{18}\) Pāc 37 (V 4:85 f).
\(^\text{19}\) Bhī Pāc 10 (V 4:267 f).
1.4.2.2 It was at such a festival that Upatissa (Śāriputta) and Kolita (Moggallāna) decide to renounce and see the truth.20

The Sanskrit equivalent of āṭṭha, saññajja is āṭṭha-vagga, saññasa (Avadāna Sātaka 2:24).

(Udāna) Satta Sutta 1
The First (Udāna) Discourse on the Attached

U 7.3

1 Thus have I heard.21
2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s monastery-park in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvatthī.
3 At that time, the people22 in Sāvatthī23 were,24 for the most part, excessively25 attached to sensual pleasures.26 They dwelt soaked27 in them, hankering28 after them, fettered29 by them, stupefied30 by them, infatuated31 with them, utterly intoxicated32 by them.33
4 Then, at dawn, some monks, having dressed themselves, taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthī for alms.
5 A large number of monks, having entered Sāvatthī and walked around for alms, returned from their alms-round, after their meal,

21 §§1-3 are as at (Udāna) Satta S 2 (U 7.2), SD 52.21g.
22 “The people,” manussā (masc, 3 pl). Although the n is masculine, there is nothing in the context to indicate that the activities were restricted only to males.
23 Ee Se sāvatthiyaṁ (loc); Be Ce sāvatthiyā (gen).
24 “Were,” honti (Be omits, but found in many MSS): see U:M 161 n10.
25 “Excessively,” ātivelāṁ, “passing the proper limit, too much, improper.”
26 Tena kho pana samayena sāvatthiyaṁ manussa yebhuyya kāmesu ativelāṁ sattā honti [Be Ke omit].
27 “Soaked,” rattā. Comy: “Rattā means imbued with, impassioned by, yearning and lusting by altering consciousness, just as cloth is altered by dying” (SnA 364,23).
29 “Fettered,” gathitā. Comy: “As if knotted (gathita), so that it is difficult to be released, bound up (patibaddha)” (UA 364,26).
30 “Stupefied,” mucchitā. Comy: “On account of defilements, fallen into dullness, delusion, on account of unknowing, as if misperceiving things” (UA 364,27).
31 “Infatuated,” ajjhopannā (not to be confused with ajjhāpannā), persistently consummating, such as by swallowing, regarding them as if they are not to be shared with others” (UA 365,2).
32 “Utterly intoxicated,” sammattaka, jātā (soṁ + matta + ka & jāta), ie, “completely drunk” (sammattā suṭṭhu mātta), as a result of just a mere bit of pleasure from gulping down sensual pleasures (kāmesu pātavyatā) (UA 365,3). Pātavyatā (Be pātabyatā) usu means “bringing to fall, downfall, destroying,” but Comys often take it as derived from pi, to drink, hence, “imbibing, indulging (in), gulping down.” See MA 2:371 (M:H 1:369 n2); AA 2:359, pātavyattā ‘i pivittabbatam paribhuññabbatam ‘A:W 1:244 n2 where correct reading to “pīviv, to drink”).
33 Rattā giddhā gathitā [Be Ce; Ee Se godhitā] mucchitā ajjhopannā [Ee Se; Be Ce ajjhosannā] sammattaka, jātā [Be Ce Se Comy; Ee sampattaka, jātā] kāmesu vihantī. Comy glosses sammattaka, jātā as “having become (jāta) completely (soṁ) intoxicated (mattaka); ie, sammattā = suṭṭhu. (UA 365)
approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

6 Sitting at one side, those monks\(^{34}\) said to the Blessed One:

“Here, bhante, the people in Sāvatthī were, for the most part, excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They dwelt soaked in them, hankering after them, fettered by them, stupefied by them, infatuated with them, utterly intoxicated by them.”

7 Then, the Blessed One, understanding the significance of the occasion, uttered this udana:

The kāmesu sattā verse\(^{35}\)

8 Kāmesu sattā kāma, saṅga, sattā\(^{36}\) Beings are stuck to sensual pleasures by the bonds of desire,\(^{37}\)

\[ \text{samyojane vajjam apassamānā} \]
\[ \text{na hi jātu samyojana, saṅga, sattā} \]
\[ \text{oghāṃ tareyyuṃ}^{40} \]

Beings are stuck to sensual pleasures by the bonds of desire,\(^{37}\)
not seeing the fault in the fetters.\(^{38}\)
For, surely, those who are stuck to the fetters’ bonds\(^{39}\)
cannot cross the flood\(^{41}\) that is vast and great!

— evaṁ —

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\(^{34}\) “Those monks,” te bhikkhu (only in Be).

\(^{35}\) This verse qu in Peṭk 10, 51, 153.

\(^{36}\) Ke kāme saṅga, sattā.

\(^{37}\) In this line, we have both senses of kāma (the objective and the subjective): as sense-object (vatthu, kāma), and as sense-pleasure or defilement (kilesa, kāma) [1.3.2.1].

\(^{38}\) On “the fetters” (samyojana) here (1.3.2.2).

\(^{39}\) On “the bonds” (saṅga), see (1.3.2.3).

\(^{40}\) Se oghan, tareyyuṃ.

\(^{41}\) On the “flood” (oghā) as the “influxes” see (1.3.2.4).