

6a-f

Vohāra Suttā

The Discourses on the Modes of Expression

Theme: Wrong ways and right ways of speaking

A 4.247-250 & A 8.67-68

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2018

1 Modes of expression: ignoble and noble

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1.1 The importance of a correct understanding of **the cognition tetrad**—*diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, “the seen, the heard, the sensed, the known”¹—is attested by the existence of 3 pairs of suttas on human expression (*vohāra*). They all have the name **Vohāra Sutta**: two pairs are found in the Book of Fours (*catukka nipāta*) and one pair in the Aṭṭhaka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, that is, **the (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 1-4** (A 4.250-253)² and **the (Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Suttas 1+2** (A 8.67+68).³ When the cognition tetrad are truthfully expressed, they are said to be “noble expressions” (*ariya, vohāra*); when falsely expressed, they are called “ignoble expressions” (*anariya, vohāra*). These 6 short suttas are translated here.

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¹ See *Diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, SD 53.5.

² A 4.250-253/2:246.

³ A 8.67+68/4:307.

A 4.5.5.8-11

Aṅguttara 4, Pañcaka Nipāta 5, Pañcaka Paṇṇāsaka 5, Āpattibhava Vagga 8-11

A 8.2.2.7-8

Aṅguttara 8, Aṭṭhaka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 2, Bhūmicāla Vagga 7-8

SD 53.6a

(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 1

Paṭhama (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta The First Discourse on Expression

A 4.247/2:246 [A:B 4.250]

A 4.5.5.8 = Aṅguttara 4, Pañcaka Nipāta 5, Pañcaka Paṇṇāsaka 5, Āpattibhava Vagga 8

Theme: The 4 ignoble modes of expression

Bhikshus, there are the **4 ignoble modes of expression** (*anariya vohāra*). What are the four?

What one has not seen	one says that one has seen.	<i>adiṭṭhe</i>	<i>diṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has not heard	one says that one has heard.	<i>asute</i>	<i>suta, vāditā</i>
What one has not sensed	one says that one has sensed.	<i>amute</i>	<i>muta, vāditā</i>
What one has not known	one says that one has known.	<i>aviññāte</i>	<i>viññāta, vāditā</i>

These, bhikshus, are the 4 ignoble modes of expression.

— evaṃ —

SD 53.6b

(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 2

Dutiya (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta The (Fours) Second Discourse on Expressions

A 4.248/2:246 [A:B 4.251]

A 4.5.5.9 = Aṅguttara 4, Pañcaka Nipāta 5, Pañcaka Paṇṇāsaka 5, Āpattibhava Vagga 9

Theme: The 4 noble modes of expression

Bhikshus, there are the **4 noble modes of expression** (*ariya vohāra*). What are the four?

What one has not seen	one says that one has not seen.	<i>adiṭṭhe</i>	<i>adiṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has not heard	one says that one has not heard.	<i>asute</i>	<i>asuta, vāditā</i>
What one has not sensed	one says that one has not sensed.	<i>amute</i>	<i>amuta, vāditā</i>
What one has not known	one says that one has not known. ⁴	<i>aviññāte</i>	<i>aviññāta, vāditā</i>

These, bhikshus, are the 4 noble modes of expression.

— evaṃ —

⁴ Or, "What one does not know, one says that one does not know."

SD 53.6c

(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 3

Tatiya (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta The Third (Fours) Discourse on Expressions
A 4.249/2:246 [A:B 4.252]

A 4.5.5.10 = Aṅguttara 4, Pañcaka Nipāta 5, Pañcaka Paṇṇāsaka 5, Āpattibhava Vagga 10
 Theme: The 4 ignoble modes of expression

Bhikshus, there are the **4 ignoble modes of expression** (*anariya vohāra*). What are the four?

What one has seen	one says that one has not seen.	<i>diṭṭhe</i>	<i>adiṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has heard	one says that one has not heard.	<i>sute</i>	<i>asuta, vāditā</i>
What one has sensed	one says that one has not sensed.	<i>mute</i>	<i>amuta, vāditā</i>
What one has known	one says that one has not known.	<i>viññāte</i>	<i>aviññāta, vāditā</i>

These, bhikshus, are the 4 ignoble modes expression.

— evaṃ —

SD 53.6d

(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 4

Catuttha (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta The Fourth (Fours) Discourse on Expressions
• A 4.250/2:246 [A:B 4.253]

A 4.5.5.11 = Aṅguttara 4, Pañcaka Nipāta 5, Pañcaka Paṇṇāsaka 5, Āpattibhava Vagga 11
 Theme: The 4 noble modes of expression

Bhikshus, there are the **4 noble modes of expression** (*ariya vohāra*). What are the four?

What one has seen	one says that one has seen.	<i>diṭṭhe</i>	<i>diṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has heard	one says that one has heard.	<i>sute</i>	<i>suta, vāditā</i>
What one has sensed	one says that one has sensed.	<i>mute</i>	<i>muta, vāditā</i>
What one has known	one says that one has known. ⁵	<i>viññāte</i>	<i>viññāta, vāditā</i>

These, bhikshus, are the 4 noble modes of expression.

— evaṃ —

⁵ Or, “What one knows, one says that one knows.”

The teachings of the (Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta 1 combines those of:

the **(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 1** (A 4.247), SD 53.6a and

the **(Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 3** (A 4.249), SD 53.6c.

SD 53.6e

(Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta 1

Paṭhama (Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta The First (Eights) Discourse on Expressions • **A 8.67/4:307**

A 8.2.2.7 = Aṅguttara 8, Aṭṭhaka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 2, Bhūmicāla Vagga 7

Theme: The 8 ignoble modes of expression

1 Bhikshus, there are the **8 ignoble expressions** (*anariya vohāra*). What are the eight?

2 What one has not seen	one says that one has seen.	<i>adiṭṭhe</i>	<i>diṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has not heard	one says that one has heard.	<i>asute</i>	<i>suta, vāditā</i>
What one has not sensed	one says that one has sensed.	<i>amute</i>	<i>muta, vāditā</i>
What one has not known	one says that one has known.	<i>aviññāte</i>	<i>viññāta, vāditā</i>

3 What one has seen	one says that one has not seen.	<i>diṭṭhe</i>	<i>adiṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has heard	one says that one has not heard.	<i>sute</i>	<i>asuta, vāditā</i>
What one has sensed	one says that one has not sensed.	<i>mute</i>	<i>amuta, vāditā</i>
What one has known	one says that one has not known.	<i>viññāte</i>	<i>aviññāta, vāditā</i>

4 These, bhikshus, are the 8 ignoble expressions.

— evaṃ —

The teachings of the **(Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta 2** combine those of:
the (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 2 (A 4.248), SD 53.6b and
the (Catukka) Vohāra Sutta 4 (A 4.250), SD 53.6d.

SD 53.6f**(Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta 2**

Dutiya (Aṭṭhaka) Vohāra Sutta The Second (Eights) Discourse on Expressions • **A 8.68/4:307**
 A 8.2.2.8 = Aṅguttara 8, Aṭṭhaka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 2, Bhūmicāla Vagga 8
 Theme: The 8 noble modes of expression

- 1 Bhikshus, there are the **8 noble modes of expression** (*ariya vohāra*). What are the eight?

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What one has not seen	one says that one has not seen.	<i>adiṭṭhe</i>	<i>adiṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has not heard	one says that one has not heard.	<i>asute</i>	<i>asuta, vāditā</i>
What one has not sensed	one says that one has not sensed.	<i>amute</i>	<i>amuta, vāditā</i>
What one has not known	one says that one has not known.	<i>aviññāte</i>	<i>aviññāta, vāditā</i>

- 3

What one has seen	one says that one has seen.	<i>diṭṭhe</i>	<i>diṭṭha, vāditā</i>
What one has heard	one says that one has heard.	<i>sute</i>	<i>suta, vāditā</i>
What one has sensed	one says that one has sensed.	<i>mute</i>	<i>muta, vāditā</i>
What one has known	one says that one has known.	<i>viññāte</i>	<i>viññāta, vāditā</i>

- 4 These, bhikshus, are the 8 noble modes of expression.

— evaṃ —

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