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## Saññā Manasikāra Suttā 1+2

The 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Discourses on Attending to Perception | A 11.7 + A 11.8

Common title: **(Ekā,dasaka) Saññā Sutta** The (Elevens) Discourse on Perception [A:B 11.7]

Theme: A meditator in thought-free samadhi is still “percipient”

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

### 1 Summary and highlights

#### 1.1 SUMMARY AND METHOD

**1.1.1 Percipient.** The **Saññā Manasikāra Suttas 1 & 2** (A 11.7 + A 11.8) records the elder Ānanda’s questioning the Buddha whether a meditator in thought-free samadhi (that is, dhyana) is still “percipient” [1.2]. Then, Ānanda goes to the elder Sāriputta and asks him the same question, and he gives the same reply [§§4-10]. Ānanda exults at the fact that both “teacher and disciple” give the same answer<sup>1</sup> [§11].

#### 1.1.2 Mirrored suttas

**1.1.2.1 The Saññā Manasikāra Suttas 1 & 2** (A 11.7 + A 11.8) taken as a single sutta is called the **(Ekā,dasaka) Saññā Sutta**, “the (Elevens) Discourse on Perception.” Like **the Vaccha,gotta Suttas** (S 44.7 + 44.8) (SD 53.14), the Sannā Manasikāra Suttas (A 11.7 + 11.8) also form “mirror suttas,” that is, their teachings reflect one another—Ānanda puts the same question first to the Buddha [§§1-5] and then to Sāriputta [§§6-10], and they both give the very same answer. The Sutta then closes with Ānanda’s exultation [§11].

**1.1.2.2** The two **Vaccha,gotta Suttas** differ in one interesting aspect: each of the two Suttas (A 44.7 + 44.8) for their own “mirror” format, and then the two Suttas mirror one another!

In **A 44.7** (called **the (Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta**), Vacchagotta first asks Moggallāna about the 10 theses, and then approaches the Buddha with the same questions; they both give Vaccha,gotta the very same answers based on *the 6 senses*.

In **A 44.8** (called **the (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta**), Vaccha,gotta first asks the Buddha about the 10 theses, and then approaches Moggallāna with the same questions; they both give Vaccha,gotta the very same answers based on *the 5 aggregates*. Both Suttas end with Vaccha,gotta exulting how teacher and disciple give the very same answers.<sup>2</sup>

**1.1.3 The introductory notes** for these two Suttas (A 11.7 + 11.8) are the same as those for **the (Dasaka) Samādhi Sutta** (A 10.6) [SD 53.18 (2)], which should be read or reviewed with these Suttas—the **Saññā Manasikāra Suttas 1 and 2** (A 11.7 + 11.8), because they form a single discourse. [1.2.1]

**NOTE:** If this is your first time reading this, it is helpful to go right away to **SD 53.18** (3) and be familiar with the “Related suttas,” and see how this Sutta is related to the other 4 in this set of suttas.

<sup>1</sup> Vaccha,gotta responds in the same way at the end of **(Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44.8), SD 53.1b.

<sup>2</sup> On “mirrored suttas,” see SD 54.13 (1.1.2).

## 1.2 ĀNANDA’S EXULTATION

**1.2.1 A single sutta.** Only the European (PTS) version treats §§1-5 as **the Saññā Manasikāra Sutta 1** (A 11.7), and §§6-11 as **the Saññā Manasikāra Sutta 2** (A 11.8). The closing §11 where Ānanda exults at the fact that both the Buddha’s explanation and Sāriputta’s explanation agree verbatim, clearly shows that they both form parts of the same Sutta.

### 1.2.2 Parallels that don’t meet

**1.2.2.1 The (Ekā,dasaka) Saññā Sutta** (A 11.7+11.8) is an expanded parallel of **the (Dasaka) Samādhi Sutta** (A 10.6), which is a “basic” Sutta without the additional section where Ananda discusses the same state of concentration with Sāriputta who gives the same answer as the Buddha’s (that is, the second part of the Sutta, alternatively numbered A 11.8).

**1.2.2.2 In the (Dasaka) Sāriputta** (A 10.7), Ānanda further questions Sāriputta, “But how was the venerable Sāriputta percipient at that time?” Sāriputta explains further, with additional information not found in the Buddha’s answer. (SD 53.19)

**1.2.2.3 Both A 10.6 and 10.7 [SD 53.19]** are also dialogues on *samadhi*: the former is between Ānanda and the Buddha, and the latter between Ānanda and Sāriputta, but they lack any connecting passages that unites them as in A 11.7 and A 11.8. [1.2.1]

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## SD 53.20a

## Saññā Manasikāra Sutta 1

The 1<sup>st</sup> Discourse on Attending to Perception | A 11.7/5:318 f  
or **(Ekā,dasaka) Saññā Sutta** The (Elevens) Discourse on Perception (with A 11.8)  
Theme: Ānanda questions the Buddha on perception during dhyana

### Ānanda’s 1<sup>st</sup> question (to the Buddha)

**1** Then, the venerable Ānanda approached **the Blessed One**, saluted him and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One:

1.2 “**Can it be**,<sup>3</sup> bhante, that a monk<sup>4</sup> attain samadhi in such a manner that:<sup>5</sup>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) he would not perceive <u>earth</u> as [in] earth; | <i>n’eva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavi,saññī assa<sup>6</sup></i> |
| (2) he would not perceive <u>water</u> as water;      | <i>na āpasmim āpo,saññī assa</i>                       |
| (3) he would not perceive <u>fire</u> as fire;        | <i>na tejasmim tejo,saññī assa</i>                     |
| (4) he would not perceive <u>wind</u> as wind;        | <i>na vāyasmim vāyo,saññī assa</i>                     |

<sup>3</sup> “Can it be (that),” *siyā*: see n on *siyā* ... *assa* below.

<sup>4</sup> Here, “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) refers to any meditator: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) n, SD 13.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Siyā nu kho bhante bhikkhuno tathā,rūpo samādhi,paṭilābho yathā.*

<sup>6</sup> On the Pali form “Can it be ... (that) he would,” *siyā* ... *assa*, see Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1963, 1974:86 f.

- (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space; *na ākāśānañc'āyatane ākāśānañc'āyatana'saññī assa*
- (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness; *na viññāṇañc'āyatane viññāṇañc'āyatana,saññī assa*
- (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness; *na ākiñcaññ'āyatane ākiñcaññ'āyatana,saññī assa*
- (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; *na n'eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatane n'eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatana,saññī assa*
- (9) he would not perceive this world as this world; *na idha loke idha loka,saññī assa*
- (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds; *na para,loke para,loka,saññī assa*
- (11) and so, too, regarding whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained [encountered], sought after, examined by this mind<sup>7</sup>;  
—and yet he would still be **percipient**?<sup>8</sup>

### The Buddha's reply

2 “It can be, Ānanda, that a monk attain samadhi in such a manner that:

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;  
 (2) he would not perceive water as water;  
 (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;  
 (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;  
 (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;  
 (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;  
 (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;  
 (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;  
 (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;  
 (10) he would not perceive other worlds [319] as other worlds;  
 (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;  
 —and yet he would still be **percipient**.”

### Ānanda's 2<sup>nd</sup> question (to the Buddha)

3 “But **how**, bhante, **can it be said** that a monk attain samadhi in such a manner that:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Yam p'idaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutam mutam viññātam pattam pariyesitam anuvicaritam manasā, tatrāpi na saññī assa, saññī ca pana assāti. This phrase also in **Anāthapiṇḍik'ovāda S** (M 143,14), SD 23.9. On the phrase, “what is seen ... examined by this mind” (diṭṭhaṃ sutam mutam viññātam pattam pariyesitam anuvicaritam manasā), see SD 3.13 (5.2). On diṭṭhaṃ sutam mutam viññātam, see **Diṭṭha suta muta viññāta**, SD 53.5.

<sup>8</sup> Saññī ca pana assāti.

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;
- (2) he would not perceive water as water;
- (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;
- (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;
- (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;
- (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;
- (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;
- (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
- (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;
- (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds;
- (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;  
—and yet he would still be **percipient?**”

### The Buddha’s answer

4 “Here, Ānanda, a monk<sup>10</sup> is one who perceives thus:<sup>11</sup>

‘This is peaceful [real], this is sublime,<sup>12</sup> that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, **nirvana**.’<sup>13</sup>

5 This is how, Ānanda, it can be that a monk attain samadhi in such a manner that:

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;
- (2) he would not perceive water as water;
- (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;
- (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;
- (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;
- (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;
- (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;
- (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
- (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;
- (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds;
- (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;  
—and yet he would still be **percipient.**”

<sup>9</sup> Yathā,katham pana bhante siyā bhikkhuno tathā,rūpo samādhi,paṭilābho, yathā ... .

<sup>10</sup> See §1.2 n on “a monk.”

<sup>11</sup> Idh’ānanda bhikkhu evaṃ saññī hoti.

<sup>12</sup> Santam ... paṇitam, as at M 102,17/2:235, 106,6/2:263; A 5:110. For the whole formula, see foll n.

<sup>13</sup> Etam santam etam paṇitam yad idam sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho sabbūpadhi,paṇinissaggo taṅha-k,khayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan ti. Here, saṅkhārā is pl, reflecting the unawakened state; but is sg (saṅkhāro) when it describes an arhat’s mind: see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,13-15/1:301) + SD 40a.9 (2.4). For this stock as ref to nirvana: M 64,9.3/1:-436,34 (SD 21.10); A 3.32/1:133,1, 9.36/4:423,3+21, 424,18, 425,11 pe, 426,4 pe, 10.6/5:8,8, 10.60/5:110,23, 111,1, 11.7/5:319,15, 11.8/5:320,21, 11.9/5:322,15, 11.19/5:354,9, 11.20/5:355,27, 11.21/5:357,1, 11.22/5:358,14; Nm 2:424; Miln 325. Not ref to nirvana: M 102/2:230,18, 231,17, 235,18+20+23 (all pe), 236×2, 237: all to diṭṭhi and kappa, 106/2:263,18 (ākiñcaññāyatana), 264,11 (n’eva,saññā.nāsaññāyatana), M 152/3:299,12+24+33 (all upekhā), 300,3+6+ 9+12+ 15+19+2 (all upekhā); It 49/2.2.12/44; Pm 1:159.

**SD 53.20b****Saññā Manasikāra Sutta 2**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Discourse on Attending to Perception | **A 11.8/5:319-321**  
or **(Ekā,dasaka) Saññā Sutta** The (Elevens) Discourse on Perception (with A 11.7)

Theme: Ānanda questions Sāriputta on perception during dhyana

**Ānanda's 1<sup>st</sup> question (to Sāriputta)**

6 Then,<sup>14</sup> the venerable Ānanda, having approved and rejoiced in the Blessed One's word, rose from his seat, saluted [320] him by circumambulating him (keeping his right shoulder to him), approached the venerable **Sāriputta**.

Having approached the venerable Sāriputta and exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with him. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the venerable Ānanda said to the venerable Sāriputta:

6.2 "Can it be,<sup>15</sup> avuso Sāriputta, that a monk attains samadhi in such a manner that:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) he would not perceive <u>earth</u> as [in] earth;   | <i>n'eva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavi,saññī assa<sup>16</sup></i>                |
| (2) he would not perceive <u>water</u> as water;  | <i>na āpasmim āpo,saññī assa</i>                                       |
| (3) he would not perceive <u>fire</u> as fire;  | <i>na tejasmim tejo,saññī assa</i>                                     |
| (4) he would not perceive <u>wind</u> as wind;  | <i>na vāyasmim vāyo,saññī assa</i>                                     |
| (5) he would not perceive <u>the base of infinite space</u> as the base of infinite space;  | <i>na ākāśānañc'āyatane ākāśānañc'āyatana'saññī assa</i>               |
| (6) he would not perceive <u>the base of infinite consciousness</u> as the base of infinite consciousness;                                    | <i>na viññāṇañc'āyatane viññāṇañc'āyatana,saññī assa</i>               |
| (7) he would not perceive <u>the base of nothingness</u> as the base of nothingness;  | <i>na ākiñcaññ'āyatane ākiñcaññ'āyatana,saññī assa</i>                 |
| (8) he would not perceive <u>the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception</u> as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;      | <i>na n'eva,saññānāsaññāyatane n'eva,saññānāsaññāyatana,saññī assa</i> |
| (9) he would not perceive <u>this world</u> as this world;  | <i>na idha loke idha loka,saññī assa</i>                               |
| (10) he would not perceive <u>other worlds</u> as other worlds;   | <i>na para,loke para,loka,saññī assa</i>                               |
| (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is <u>seen, heard, sensed, known</u> , attained, sought after, examined by this mind; <sup>17</sup> |  |

<sup>14</sup> It is clear from the ending of the prec Sutta (A 11.7) that this is its continuation, the two forming a "mirrored" sutta. Two other "mirrored" suttas—both closely related—are **(Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna S** (S 44.7), SD 53.14a & **(Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44.8), SD 53.14b.

<sup>15</sup> For comy nn, see the mirrored passages at **Saññā Manasikāra S 1** (A 11.7), SD 53.20a above.

<sup>16</sup> On the Pali form "Can it be ... (that) he would," *siyā ... assa*, see Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1963, 1974:86 f.

<sup>17</sup> *Yam p'idaṃ diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṃ manasā, tatrāpi na saññī assa*. This phrase also in **Anāthapiṇḍik'ovāda S** (M 143,14), SD 23.9. On the phrase, "what is seen ... examined by this

—and yet he would still be **percipient?**<sup>18</sup>”

### Sāriputta’s reply

7 “It can be, Ānanda, that a monk attain samadhi in such a manner that:

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;
  - (2) he would not perceive water as water;
  - (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;
  - (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;
  - (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;
  - (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;
  - (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;
  - (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
  - (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;
  - (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds;
  - (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;
- and yet he would still be **percipient.**”

### Ānanda’s 2<sup>nd</sup> question (to Sāriputta)

8 “But **how**, avuso Sāriputta, **can it be said** that a monk attains samadhi in such a manner that:<sup>19</sup>

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;
  - (2) he would not perceive water as water;
  - (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;
  - (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;
  - (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;
  - (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;
  - (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;
  - (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
  - (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;
  - (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds;
  - (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;
- and yet he would still be **percipient.**”

### Sāriputta’s answer

9 “Here, Ānanda, a monk<sup>20</sup> is one who perceives thus:<sup>21</sup>

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mind” (*diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṃ manasā*), see SD 3.13 (5.2). On *diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ*, see *Diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, SD 53.5.

<sup>18</sup> *Saññī ca pana assāti.*

<sup>19</sup> *Yathā, kathaṃ pana bhante siyā bhikkhuno tathā, rūpo samādhi, paṭilābho, yathā ...*

<sup>20</sup> See §1.2 n on “a monk.”

‘This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, **nirvana**.’<sup>22</sup>

**10** This is how, Ānanda, it can be that a monk attains samadhi in such a manner that:

- (1) he would not perceive earth as earth;
  - (2) he would not perceive water as water;
  - (3) he would not perceive fire as fire;
  - (4) he would not perceive wind as wind;
  - (5) he would not perceive the base of infinite space as the base of infinite space;
  - (6) he would not perceive the base of infinite consciousness as the base of infinite consciousness;
  - (7) he would not perceive the base of nothingness as the base of nothingness;
  - (8) he would not perceive the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
  - (9) he would not perceive this world as this world;
  - (10) he would not perceive other worlds as other worlds;
  - (11) and so, too, regarding whatever that is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, examined by this mind;
- and yet he would still be **percipient**.”

### Ānanda’s exultation

**11** “It is amazing, avuso! It is wonderful, avuso! How the explanation of both the teacher and the disciple coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost points!<sup>23</sup>

Just now, I approached the Blessed One [321] and questioned him about this matter. And **the Blessed One**, too, answered regarding this matter in these very same words and phrases—just like **the venerable Sāriputta**!<sup>24</sup>

It is amazing, avuso! It is wonderful, avuso! How the explanation of *both the teacher and the disciple* coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost point!<sup>25</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>21</sup> *Idh’ānanda bhikkhu evaṃ saññī hoti.*

<sup>22</sup> For comy nn, see the mirrored passages at **Saññā Manasikāra S 1** (A 11.7), SD 53.20a above.

<sup>23</sup> *Acchariyaṃ bho gotama, abbhutaṃ bho gotama, yatra hi nāma satthussa ca sāvakassa ca atthen’attho vyañjanena vyañjanaṃ saṃsandissati samessati na viḥāyissati\* yad idaṃ aggapadasmim̃.* Be *virodhayissati*; Ce Ee Se *viḥāyissati* [but Ee *virodhayissati* at S 4:379,26]. AA:Ee read **viggayhissati**, which Comy glosses “The words do not contradiction,” *na viruddhaṃ padaṃ* (Ce *viruddha, saddaṃ*) *bhavissati* (SA 3:114,3). This passage recurs in **Khemā Therī S** (S 44.1/4:379,34-27), SD 63.6. **Agga, padasmim̃** recurs in **Saññā Manasikāra S 1** (A 11.7/5:320,32), which is glossed as “nirvana’ (*nibbāna*, AA 5:79,12).

<sup>24</sup> *Idānāhaṃ bho gotama, samaṇaṃ moggallānaṃ upasaṅkamitvā etam atthaṃ āpucchim̃, samaṇ’opi me moggallāno etehi padehi etehi vyañjanehi etam atthaṃ vyākāsi seyyathā’pi bhavaṃ gotamo.*

<sup>25</sup> Mutatis mutandis, spoken by Vaccha, gotta at the end of (**Vaccha, gotta**) **Moggallāna S** (S 44.7,32), SD 53.14a & (**Moggallāna**) **Vaccha, gotta S** (S 44.8,31), SD 53.14b. Comy glosses the “foremost point” (*agga, pada*) with “nirvana” (AA 5:79,13).