

3b

(Devatā) Nandati Sutta

The (Devatā) Discourse on He Delights | S 1.12

Theme: Acquisitions bring continued suffering

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Sutta significance

1.1 LITERARY FEATURES

1.1.1 Paraphrase

The **(Devatā) Nandati Sutta** (S 1.12) contains only 2 verses. The first is uttered by a deity (*devatā*), praising the blessings of worldly possessions or “acquisitions” (*upadhī*, plural), especially children and wealth, symbolized by cattle, and that it is a blight to be without such acquisitions (*nirupadhī*) [S 22*].

The Buddha basically repeats the same verse, changing only a word each line, reversing its sense, thus:

	S 22 (deity)		S 23 (the Buddha)	
line a	<i>nandati</i> “delights”		<i>socati</i> “grieves”	verbs, simple present
line b	<i>nandati</i> “delights”		<i>socati</i> “grieves”	verbs, simple present
line c	<i>nandanā</i> “delight”		<i>socanā</i> “grief”	noun, feminine
line d	<i>nandati</i> “delights”		<i>socati</i> “grieves”	verbs, simple present

1.1.2 Pun and the verses

1.1.2.1 We see the 2nd verse [S 23*] of **the (Devatā) Nandati Sutta** (S 1.12) a good example of the usage of a **pun or wordplay** (*śleṣa*),¹ the same word can have two contradicting senses. In every line of the 2 verses, we see the Buddha deconstructing the worldly view (S 22*) and counter-defining them in a spiritual way (S 23*), thus:

		S 22 (deity): the worldly view	S 23 (the Buddha): true reality
line a	<i>puttā</i> “sons” (children)	delights	grieves
line b	<i>go</i> “cattle” (property)	delights	grieves
line c	<i>upadhī</i> “acquisitions”	delights	grieves
line d	<i>nirupadhī</i> “without acquisitions”	delights not	grieves not

As a rule, the 2 verses follow the “mirror” rule, playing on the polysemy or double meanings, that is, the secular [S 22*] and the spiritual [S 23*]. **The (Devatā) Nandati Sutta** (S 1.12) puns especially on the word *upadhī*, “acquisitions,” accumulation of things.

In **S 22d***, the deity states that “**one without (material) acquisitions**” (*nirupadhī*) does not rejoice because he lacks children (family) and wealth. This is the 1st sense of *nirupadhī*, the secular one. The Buddha, in his reply, turns the devata’s very same expression “**one without acquisitions**” (*nirupadhī*) [S 23d*] on its head by designating it for the arhat, who is free from all the 4 kinds of *upadhī* (sensuality, the aggregates, defilements and karmic volitions) and thus completely free from suffering.² [2]

¹ On *śleṣa*, see SD SD 10.6 (8.7) & DEB sv.

² See SD 54.2 (3.2.4.1).

1.1.2.2 The pair of verses [S 22*-23*] recur in **the (Māra) Nandana Sutta** (S 4.8) of the Samyutta as **S 461*-462***, with Mara as the interlocutor, speaking the 1st verse and the Buddha retorting with the 2nd verse. Māra is here represented as trying to distract or confuse his audience. When the Buddha gives his reply, Māra, unable to say anything further, simply disappears.

These very same verses, with Māra as the interlocutor recur as the closing verses of **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), SD 50.20. Māra interrupts the dialogue or verse-duel between Dhaniya the herdsman and the Buddha with the 1st verse (Sn 33) [S 22*] and the Buddha retorts with the 2nd verse (Sn 34) [S 23*]. This ancient ballad is probably the source of the 2 verses.³

1.1.2.3 The Sanskrit version of this famous pair of verses is found in **the Mahāvastu**, a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) work:

(Mara:)

<i>nandati putrehi putrimām</i>	<i>gomiko gohi tathaiva nandati </i>	
<i>upadhīhi nandati jano</i>	<i>na hi so nandati yo nirupadhi </i>	(Mvst 3.417,15 ff)

(The Blessed One:)

<i>socati putrehi putrimām</i>	<i>gomiko gohi tathaiva socati </i>	
<i>upadhīhi jano prabādhito</i>	<i>na hi śocati yo nirudhiḥ </i>	(Mvst 3.418,3 ff)

Note that in line b of both these Mvst verses, the reading is **gomiko**, which is hypermetrical (against the metre). Similar hypermetrical readings are found in the Pali parallels. The Pali readings, however, also give the variant *gomā* (S 4.8 = S 461b*-462b*), which fits the metre properly.

Clearly, then, this must have been the reading at a very early date. However, it is more likely that the BHS version preserved this reading from a late source.

2 Upadhi

2.1 MEANINGS

2.1.1 Subjective and objective senses

2.1.1.1 “Acquisitions” (*upadhi*, ts) is a helpful concept that helps us understand what the Buddha means in **S 22c* + 23d*** and their recurrences elsewhere [1.1.2]. The verb for “acquisition” is **to acquire**, “to gain, obtain, or get as one’s own, to gain the ownership of (by one’s own exertions or qualities)” (OED). *Upadhi*, then, is whatever we acquire, physically and mentally—or wish to acquire (a mental aspect of *upadhi*), which feeds our being and rebirths. In other words, it is craving in action, motivated by ignorance.⁴

2.1.1.2 *Upadhi*, “acquisitions” (from *upa* + √DHĀ, “to rest on”) means literally “that upon which something rests,” that is, the “foundations” or “trappings” of existence. This is the literal and subjective sense (which is often confused with *upādi*), that is, the *act* of appropriation rooted in craving. On this account, it is sometimes translated as “substrate (of existence),” “elements of existence” and so on. These translations better fit *upādi*, which has a narrower compass referring to the 5 aggregates.

³ It is also possible that these pair of punning verses existed independently: see Sn:N 161 n33-34.

⁴ See SD 54.2c (2.2).

2.1.1.3 Objectively, it refers to the *things* acquired, that is, our assets and possessions, that is, the action of adding and that which is added. This is the usage found in the oldest texts, where, such as in **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), it means “wife and children, bhikshus, are subject to birth; men slaves and women slaves, goats and sheep, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses and mares, gold and silver.”

“These **acquisitions** are subject to birth [etc] and one is tied to these things, infatuated with them, addicted to them, being himself subject to birth, seeks what is also subject to *birth* [etc].”

The Sutta goes on to lay out the rest of the “acquisition cycle” by highlighting, in turn (in place of the “**etc**,” “decay ... disease ... death ... sorrow ... defilement.” Such acquisitions are those of “the ignoble quest” (*anariya pariyesanā*) since they do not bring us to the path of awakening. (M 26,5-11/1:161 f), SD 1.11

2.1.1.4 In many cases, the two senses overlap, and often both senses are intended. This is, of course, the rule of Pali polysemy.⁵ **Polysemy** means “(a word, phrase, etc) having more than one meaning.” It is similar to a homograph, where each of two or more words are *spelled* the same way but not necessarily pronounced in the same way, and they have different meanings and origins; for example,

- “bow” /bəʊ/, (1) “(verb) to move your head or the top half of your body forward and downward as a sign of respect or as a greeting,” (2) (noun) “the front end of a ship”; and
- “bow” /bəʊ/, (1) “(n) a weapon used for shooting arrows, etc,” (2) “(n) a knot with two loops and two loose ends used as a decoration on clothes, in hair, etc, or for tying shoes”; (3) a bend or curve in a river.”

Note that each of these 2 words has more than one meaning. Hence, either of them is said to be polysemic. In this case (in English), how we pronounce the word (according to the phonetics given) will determine which set of meanings are likely or both intended (this is called a wordplay, pun or double entendre, or even multiple senses that apply simultaneously), and finally the actual meaning is determined by its context. (Technically, in Pali, each of these 2 words will be spelled phonetically. Hence, we will know which word as it is spelt, and have a better idea of its range of meanings, whose final sense or senses is then decided by the context.) [1.1.2.1]

2.1.2 Upadhi and upādāna

2.1.2.1 The word *upadhi* (*upa* + √DHĀ) [2.1.1.2] functions as a close counterpart of ***upādāna*** (*upa*, “up close,” + *ā* + √DĀ, “to give”), “clinging,” but to which it is not etymologically related. Like *upadhi*, *upādāna* has 2 important meanings:

- (1) to provide, fuel (with);
- (2) grasping, holding, clinging (to).⁶

Meaning (1) overlaps with *upadhi*, but meaning (2) applies specifically to the 5 aggregates, as “the 5 aggregates of clinging” (*pañc’upādāna-k,khandha*).

⁵ On Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2).

⁶ ***Upādāna***, lit, that (material) substratum by means of which an active process is kept alive or going. As a suffix, it has 2 important senses: (1) “supported by, drawing one’s existence from” (S 1:69, 5:284); S 2:85, *aggi-k,khandho ~assa pariyaḍānā*, “the mass of blaze (burns) by means of taking up fuel,” S 4:399, “provided with fuel”; (2) “drawing up,” grasping, holding on, attachment, clinging; of which there are 4: clinging through: sensuality (*kām~*), views (*diṭṭh~*), rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata~*), and self-views (*atta,vād~*) (D 2:58, 3:230; M 1:51, 66; S 2:3, 5:39; Dhs 1213; Pm 1:129, 2:46, 47; Vbh 375).

2.1.2.2 We see the interplay of *upadhi* and *upādāna* in **the Sammasa Sutta** (S 12.66), where the Buddha says:

*So sammamāno evaṃ jānāti ||
Yam kho idam aneka,vidham nāna-p,pakārakaṃ
dukkhaṃ
loke uppajjati jarā,marañam ||
Idam kho dukkhaṃ upadhi,nidānam
upadhi,samudayam
upadhi,jātikam
upadhi,pabhavam ||
upadhismim sati jarā,marañam hoti
upadhismim asati jarā,marañam na hotīti ||*

*so jarā,marañam ca pajānāti ||
jarā,marāṇa,samudayāṃ ca pajānāti ||
jarā,marāṇa,nirodham ca pajānāti ||
Yā ca jarā,marāṇa,nirodha,sāruppa,gāminī
paṭipadā tañ ca pajānāti || ||
Tathā paṭipanno ca hoti anudhammacārī || ||*

*Ayam vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu
sabbaso sammā,dukkha-k,khayāya paṭipanno
jarā,marāṇa,nirodhāya. || ||*

As he explores, he understands thus:

These many diverse kinds of suffering that arise in the world (such as) decay-and-death: this suffering has acquisition as the source, arising from acquisition, born from acquisition, produced from acquisition; When there is acquisition, there is decay-and-death; When there is no acquisition, there is no decay-and-death.

He understands decay-and-death, too.

He understands the arising of decay-and-death, too.

He understands the ending of decay-and-death, too.

He understands the way leading to the ending of decay-and-death that conforms with its ending.

Thus he is a practitioner, living in keeping with the Dharma.

This, bhikkhus, is called a “monk” [a meditator] who practises for the ending of decay-and-death, for the right and complete destruction of suffering.

(S 12.66/2:108,4-11), SD 107.9

2.1.2.3 The Commentary to **the Sammasa Sutta** (S 12.66) says that all sufferings have their source in “acquisition as the aggregates” (*khandhūpadhi,nidānam*). For, here “acquisition” refers to the 5 aggregates (*khandha,pañcakaṃ h’ettha upadhīti adhippetam*, SA 2:119,24 f).

As explained below [2.2.1], **upadhi** is fourfold, that is, they are (1) sensuality, (2) the 5 aggregates, (3) defilements, and (4) volitional formations. Since *upadhi* is conditioned by craving (*taṇhā*), we may surmise that here *upadhi* is synonymous with *upādāna*. The Commentary, however, does not support this interpretation. On the other hand, the fact that *upadhi* is said to be the basis for decay-and-death and the other forms of suffering supports the commentarial gloss that *upadhi* here refers to the 5 aggregates (*khandhūpadhi*).

Clearly, there is a wordplay [1.1.2] here: *upadhi* as the aggregates is the immediate condition for decay-and-death, while *upadhi* as the equivalent of *upādāna* is the remote condition for birth and existence, which is, in turn, the remote condition for decay-and-death. “**Remote**” here refers to the past, including the previous life, and to the future in this life itself. In other words, *past acquisition* as clinging brought about our birth and existence, and *present acquisition* brings about our decay-and-death.

2.2 SETS OF UPADHI

2.2.1 The 4 kinds of *upadhi*

2.2.1.1 The Saṃyutta Commentary gives this well-known set of 4 kinds of *upadhi* (*cattāro upadhī*):

- (1) Acquisitions as sensual pleasures and material possessions (*kāmūpadhi*). The Commentary quotes **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha Sutta** (M 14) which says: “Now, Mahānāma, the (physical) joy and (mental) pleasure⁷ arise on account of these 5 cords of sensual pleasure. This is the gratification with regards to sense-desires” (*yaṃ kho mahānāma ime pañca, kāma, guṇe paṭicca uppajjati sukhaṃ somanassaṃ, ayaṃ kāmānaṃ assādo*).⁸ This sense of *upadhi* is said in terms of happiness as the determining basis (*adhiṭṭhāna, bhāvato*), thus: “To acquire is happiness here!” (*upadhīyati ettha sukhaṃ*). Loosely, this can be said to be “philosophical acquisitions,” the ideas that spur us to seek and pile up things.
- (2) Acquisitions as **the 5 aggregates** (*khandhūpadhi*). This refers to the aggregates as the root of suffering as the determining basis. Loosely, these are “epistemological acquisitions,” that is, *how* we know and *what* we can know, and how these underlie our seeking and piling tendencies.
- (3) Acquisitions as **defilements** (*kilesūpadhi*), the conditions for suffering in the realm of misery. Here, the determining basis is the suffering of the “descents” (*apaya*), that is, the subhuman states.⁹ Loosely, these are “psychological acquisitions,” that is, the way we *think* shapes how we live.
- (4) Acquisitions as **volitional formations** (*abhisankhārūpadhi*), karmic accumulations, which are the conditions for all suffering in samsara. The determining basis is the suffering that *is existence* itself (*bhava, dukkha*). Loosely, these are “ontological acquisitions,” that is, our mental growth and spiritual health depends on how true our idea of reality is. (SA 1:31,23-25)¹⁰

2.2.1.2 This set of **4 acquisitions** is briefly stated elsewhere in the Sutta Nipāta Commentary: “Acquisitions are of **4 kinds**: (those of) the aggregates, defilements, the cords of sense-pleasures, and volitional formations” (*upadhīti khandha, kilesa, kāma, guṇābhisankhāra, bheda cattaro*, SnA 2:436,6-7 ad Sn 546). This is an explanation for *upadhi* occurring in **the Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6), SD 107.14, thus in this sloka¹¹:

<i>Upadhi te samatikkantā¹²</i>		You have let acquisitions pass by you.
<i>āsavā te padalitā</i>		Your influxes have been torn apart.
<i>sīho’si anupādāno</i>		A lion are you, unclinging,
<i>pahīna, bhaya, bherava</i>	(Sn 546)	who has abandoned fear and dread.

2.2.2 The 10 kinds of *upadhi*

2.2.2.1 The Mettagū, māṇava Pucchā, “the question of the youth Mettagū” (Sn 5.5) records the interview between the Buddha and Mettagū, one of the 16 brahmin “youths,” pupils of Bāvārī of the Deccan (*dakkhiṇā, patha*). This verse is from the 4th question in the series of 16:

<i>Dukkhasa ve [vl ce] maṃ pabhavaṃ apucchasi</i>		“You asked me about the coming into existence
<i>mettagūti bhagavā</i>		of suffering, Mettagū,” said the Blessed One,
<i>taṃ te pavakkhāmi yathā pajānaṃ</i>		“I shall tell it to you, as one who knows.
<i>upadhi, nidānā pabhavanti dukkhā</i>		Sufferings—of which are many in the world—
<i>ye keci lokasmim aneka, rūpā</i>	(Sn 1050)	arise in the world <u>with acquisitions as their cause</u> . c

⁷ “(Physical) joy and (mental) pleasure,” *sukha, somanassa*.

⁸ M 14/1:92,19-20 (SD 4.7).

⁹ The descents (*āpaya*) are the asuras, the animals, the pretas and the hell beings: see SD 53.4a (Diagram 3.5).

¹⁰ Details at SA 1:23-32; SnA 1:44,24-45,15,11; Nm 3-5; ItA 1:64; SnA 2:512 f (as Sn 766+767). For details, see CPD sv *upadhi*.

¹¹ A sloka (P *śloka*; Skt *śloka*) is a popular quatrain (4-line verse) of 8 syllables each. See SD 49.13 (2.2).

¹² Lit, “Acquisitions have been by-passed by you.”

2.2.2.2 From the context of **Sn 1050** [2.2.2.1], it is clear that *upadhi* can have either or both its objective or its subjective sense. Objectively, it can mean “material things”; or subjectively, “elements of existence” [2.1.1]. This is, in fact, reflected in the gloss on *upadhi* by **the Cūḷa Niddesa**, the canonical commentary on the Sutta, thus:

“*Upadhi* means **the 10 acquisitions**: (1) the acquisition of craving, (2) the acquisition of views, (3) the acquisition of defilements, (4) the acquisition of karma, (5) the acquisition of misconduct, (6) the acquisition of food, (7) the acquisition of repulsion, (8) the acquisition of the 4 elements of clinging, (9) the acquisition of 6 internal sense-bases, (10) the acquisition of the 6 bodily consciousnesses, that is, by way of the misfortune of all kinds of sufferings. These are called the 10 acquisitions.”¹³ (Nc 73,25 f)

2.3 NIRUPADHI

2.3.1 *Nirupadhi* as qualifier

2.3.1.1 The term *nirupadhi*, “without acquisitions,” occurs twice in **the (Devatā) Nandati Sutta** (S 1.12), that is, at S 22d* and 23d*. We have already noted that there is a wordplay [2.2.1.4] on *upadhi* here [1.1.2.1]. While in S 22*, the deity sings on the benefits of “acquisitions,” the Buddha replies in S 23* with just the opposite effect that we will be happier without any “acquisitions,” that is, without any basis for rebirth. It is in this sort of situation that *upadhi* is often confused with *upādi*, “substrate, birth-basis.”¹⁴

Upādi is very close, a near-synonym, to the “clinging” (*upādāna*) of the 5 aggregates—all our 6 sense-bases contribute to them. *Upādi*, then, is our “birth-bases” that keeps *this* life going, and keeps *it* going life after life. While we live, this refers to them as **the 5 aggregates**—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—and rebirth or “survival” is consciousness itself—technically, the rebirth consciousness or the subconscious—in which, as it were, lies the seeds or “genes” of the rest of the aggregates, of life itself.

2.3.1.2 *Nirupadhi* occurs thrice in **the Therī,gāthā**, in the form *nirupadhi* (that is, the stem form), as noted in the PED (sv *nirupadhi*). All 3 occurrences of *nirupadhi* are found in **the Sundarī Therī,gāthā**, that is, at Thī 318, 320 and 334. In all 3 verses, the form is *nirupadhīm*, metri causa; it occurs as *nirupadhi* in **the Mahā,panthaha Thera,gāthā** (Tha 516d) and **the Upāli Ther’āpadāna** (Ap 3.6).¹⁵ These are interesting cases because they show how the term applies both to a state as well as to people.

(1) *Tassāham brahme*¹⁶ *arahato*¹⁷
*dhammaṃ sutvā nirūpadhīm*¹⁸

I, O brahmin, having heard that arhat’s
Dharma, acquisition-free,¹⁹

¹³ *Upadhīti* dasa upadhī – *taṅhūpadhi*, *diṭṭhūpadhi*, *kilesūpadhi*, *kammūpadhi*, *duccaritūpadhi*, *āhārūpadhi*, *paṭi-gghūpadhi*, *catasso upādinna*, *dhātuyo upadhī*, *cha ajjhattikāni āyatanāni upadhī*, *cha viññāṇa*, *kāyā upadhī*, *sabbam pi dukkhaṃ dukkham anaṭṭhena* [Se *dukkhaṭṭhena*] *upadhi*. *Ime vuccanti dasa upadhī*. (Nc 73,25 f; Nc:Be 68), cf SnA 2:590,19.

¹⁴ On *upadhi* or *upādi*, see SD 53.5 (4.2.3.2).

¹⁵ Ap 3.6.69/42,8.

¹⁶ Be *tassa brahme*; Ce Se *tassa brāhmaṇa*; Ee *tassāham brāhmaṇa*.

¹⁷ To get 8 syllables, we need to scan *ar^ahato* (resolution in the 2nd syllable). Or we can read *tassa* for *tassāham* (with Be Ce) or *brahme* (with Be) or *brāhmaṇ’* (Thī:N §67(d) + §58(a)(xiii)).

¹⁸ Metri causa (mc): Be Ce Ee Ke Se ThīA; see ThīA:N §§59(b) + 70(e).

	<i>tattha viññāta, saddhammā, putta, sokaṃ byapānudim</i>	(Thī 318)	knowing the true Dharma there, pushed away the grief for children.	
(2)	<i>Addasa brāhmaṇo buddhaṃ vipparamuttamā nirūpadhiṃ²⁰ sv-assa²¹ dhammam adesesi muni dukkhassa pāragū</i>	(Thī 320)	The brahmin saw the Buddha, fully released, <u>acquisition-free</u> . The sage who has reached the far shore taught him the Dharma.	<i>d</i> <i>c</i>
(3)	<i>Passa sundarim āyantim vipparamuttamā nirūpadhiṃ vīta, rāgaṃ visamyuttamā kata, kiccā anāsavaṃ</i>	(Thī 334)	See Sundarī coming, fully released, <u>acquisition-free</u> , rid of lust, unfettered, her task done, influx-free.	

In **Thī 318**, *nirupadhi* refers to the Dharma (*dhamma*) as truth and teaching. In the other 2 verses, *nirupadhi* qualifies people: in **Thī 320**, it refers to the nun Sundarī, and in **Thī 334**, to the Buddha.²²

2.3.2 Nirupadhi referring to a state: *Ñatvā dhammam nirupadhi(m)*

This is a brief look at a phrase where *nirupadhi* is related to *dhamma*.

2.3.2.1 *Ñatvā dhammam nirupadhi*. This line is from a verse of uplift (*udāna*) uttered by the Buddha in connection with the elder Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa at the close of **the Soṇa Kuṭi,kaṇṇa Sutta** (U 5.6) and the Vinaya:

<i>disvā ādīnavaṃ loke ñatvā dhammam nirūpadhi²³ ariyo na ramatī pāpe pape na ramatī sucīti [sāsane ramati sucīti]²⁴</i>	Seeing the perils in the world, <u>knowing the Dharma on the acquisition-free</u> , the noble one delights not in bad [evil], the pure delights not bad. [the pure delights in the teaching.] ²⁵ (U 5.6/59,33-34), SD 92.1 = (Mv 5.13.10 @ V 1:197,8-9)
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The Pali of both the Vinaya and the Udāna read *nirupadhi* in line b. Here, it makes good sense to translate it, like *dhammam*, as an accusative. This is supported by the Commentary which glosses *nirupadhi* as “the state of nirvana that is without acquisition” (*nirūpadhiṃ nibbana, dhammam*, UA 2:314,2).

¹⁹ It is more appropriate that “acquisition-free” (*nirupadhiṃ*) refers to Sundarī (“I” in line a) and in connection with line d. Anyway, it seems odd that the *dhamma* should be *nirupadhi*, which Comy glosses as “sorrow-free” (*niddukham*, ThīA 233,32). For philological details, see Thī:N 129 n318.

²⁰ The phrase *vipparamuttamā nirupadhiṃ*, *nirupadhi vipparamutto*, etc, are common: Tha 516, S 1:194,28 f. 195,11 (S 750*); Ap 3.6.69/42, 3.23.16/75,13.

²¹ Be *sv-assa*; Ce *so’assa*; Ee Se *tassa*.

²² For a study of *nirupadhi*, see Norman 1971B:334-336.

²³ Be *nirupadhiṃ*; Ee *nirupadhiṃ*.

²⁴ V 1:197,9.

²⁵ Comy cites the Khandhaka (Vinaya) (UA 2:314,21). However, this only suggests that the Comy is later than the Khandhaka. The Udāna version is likely to be the older.

2.3.2.2 *Ñatvā dhammaṃ nirupadhiṃ.* This line is from the closing verses of the **Mada Sutta** (A 3.39), where the Buddha recollects his delicate youth and how he overcomes the 3 intoxications (*mada*), as stated here:²⁶

<p>12 <i>Sôham evaṃ viharanto ñatvā dhammaṃ nirupadhiṃ ārogye yobbanasmiñ ca jīvitasmiñ ca ye madā.</i></p>	<p>While I'm dwelling so, having known the acquisition-free state— whether intoxication with health, or with youth, or with life, too—</p>
<p>13 <i>Sabbe made abhibhōsmi²⁷ nekkhamme daṭṭhu khemataṃ tassa me ahu ussāho nibbānaṃ abhipassato.</i></p>	<p>all intoxications have I overcome. Having seen security in renunciation, there is zeal for me, on account of directly seeing nirvana.</p>

(A 3.39/1:147,13), SD 42.13

From the context, the phrase *dhamma nirupadhiṃ*, “the acquisition-free state,” clearly refers to nirvana [S 12b*]. Objectively, *upadhi* refers to those material things that we run after and accumulate in life, and that “fuels and fills” our life [2.1.1.3]. Here, *upadhi* has its subjective sense simply meaning “that which fuels,” and hence overlaps with *upādāna* [2.1.2] and *upādi*²⁸ [2.3.1.1].

2.3.2.3 The confusion between *upadhi* and *upādi* arises when we translate *upadhi* as “substrate; birth-basis” or some similar word. It is best to render *upadhi* as “acquisition” throughout, and keep *upādi* as “substrate” or the like. It is often impossible to find an exact English word to translate either term *exactly* (if that is ever possible in translation).

Following **the rule of context**, we first determine the context of the occurrence of *upadhi* and translate it as “acquisition” (objectively or subjectively), or the context of *upādi* and translate it as “substrate” or the like. If we would like to be more “specific,” we may add an amplification, such as “acquisition (as birth-basis)” or even add the Pali: “substrate (*upādi*).”

2.3.3 Where *nirupadhi* qualifies persons²⁹

2.3.3.1 *Amataṃ dhātuṃ ... nirupadhiṃ ... upadhi- ... anasavo.* These words come from the **(Iti) Dhātu Sutta** (It 3.1.2) and the **Santatara Sutta** (It 3.3.4) where the Buddha describes an arhat as one who is “free from acquisition” (*nirupadhi*), thus:

<p><i>Kāyena amataṃ dhātuṃ phassayitvā nirupadhiṃ upadhi-p, paṭinissaggaṃ sacchikatvā anāsavo </i></p>	<p>Who, with the body,³⁰ having touched the death-free element,³¹ <u>free from acquisition</u>, having realized the abandoning of acquisition, influx-free,³²</p>
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²⁶ A 3.38/1:145 f @ SD 5.16(19.4.2) (abr), SD 63.7 (full). On the term ***mada***, see SD 42.22 (2.2.2).

²⁷ Ke *atīto'smi*, “I have crossed over.”

²⁸ On *upādi*, see (2.1.1.2). On *upadhi* or *upādi*, see SD 53.5 (4.2.3.2).

²⁹ On these 2 examples, see Norman 1971B:335.

³⁰ “With the body” (*kāyena*): since all physical experiences have shut down in the dhyanas, “body” here should be understood as the “mental body” (*nāma, kāya*), ie, the group of mental factors associated with consciousness. But Comy explains this as referring to attaining the paths and fruitions (SA 2:4,16).

³¹ “The death-free element” (*amata dhātu*), ie nirvana, where there is neither birth nor death.

deseti sammā,sambuddho the fully self-awakened one teaches
asokaṃ virajaṃ padan'ti || a state that is sorrow-free, stainless. (It 3.1.2; 3.3.4)³³

The Commentary glosses *upadhi* in the phrase, “**free from acquisition**” [line b], as “without any acquisition, such as the aggregates and so on” (*nirupadhin'ti khandhâdi,sabbûpadhi,rahitam*, ItA 2:4,18). The phrase refers not to *a thing or state*, “the death-free element,” but to *a person*, the arhat who is “**influx-free**” [line d].

The terms *nirupadhim* and *anāsavo* are practically synonymous since they both refer to sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance (the 4 influxes)³⁴ abandoned by the arhat. *Upadhi* differs from *āsava* in that *upadhi* also refers to objective aspects of these influxes, that is, the material things and people we desire.

2.3.3.2 Kusalaṃ katvā appamāṇaṃ nirupadhi. This line is from **the Pañca Pubba,nimitta Sutta**, “the discourse on the 5 omens” (It 3.4.4), where it appears in this verse:

Kāyena kusalaṃ katvā Having done the wholesome with the body,
vācāya kusalaṃ bahurū much wholesomeness with speech,
manasā kusalaṃ katvā having done the wholesome with the mind—
appamāṇaṃ nirūpadhim. he is measureless, rid of acquisition. (It 3.4.4)³⁵

The Commentary explains *nirupadhi* here as follows: “*nirupadhi* means lacking in the acquisition that is defilement, meaning that it is quite purified, quite stainless” (*nirupadhin'ti sankilesaka,sankilesûpadhi,-rahitam suvisuddhim sunimmalan'ti*, ItA 2:80,13-14). Here, as in the Santatara Sutta verse [2.3.3.1], *nirupadhi* qualifies a person, not a thing.

3 Related suttas

3.1 THE KĀMA SUTTA (Sn 4.1)

In connection with the line “**acquisitions are sorrowful for man**” (*upadhī hi narassa socanā*) [S 23c*], the Commentary quotes **the Kāma Sutta** (Sn 4.1), where the Buddha describes the state of such a person:

*Tassa ce kāmāyāmanassa*³⁶ If those sensual pleasures decrease
chand,jātassa jantuno for that person in whom desire has arisen,
te kāmā parihāyanti they waste away [come to ruin] because of sensuality—
salla,viddho'va ruppati (Sn 767)³⁷ he is hurt as if pierced by a dart [a barb].

The point of this verse is that sensual pleasures only serves itself. When we allow them into our lives, and we are unmindful and unwise, they will enslave us so that we become dependent on them and lose touch with what is truly good for us and our spiritual development. Sensual pleasures blinds and entice

³² “Influx-free” (*anāsava*), ie, free of the influxes (*āsava*), ie, the floods (*ogha*) of sense-desires, views, existence and ignorance. The influxes are the roots and fruits of samsara, bringing on continued sufferings and rebirths.

³³ It 3.1.2/46,3-4 = It 3.3.4/62,12-13 (SD 24.20).

³⁴ SD 30.3 (1.4.2).

³⁵ It 3.4.4/78,9-10 (SD 23.8a(1.2)).

³⁶ On the difficulties with *kāmāyanassa*, see Sn:N 324 n767.

³⁷ SnA 2:512 f (on Sn 766+767): see n on *upadhi* [2.2.1.1].

us away from the path by keeping us forever, as it were, on the body level, a slave to it, at the cost of cultivating the mind.

3.3 THE DVĀYATĀNUPASSANĀ SUTTA (Sn 3.12)

3.3.1 The Dvāyatānupassanā Sutta (Sn 3.12) is instructive in helping us understand how *upadhi* works as the root of suffering. The Sutta records the Buddha as saying: “**Whatever suffering arises, all that is because of acquisition**” (*yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti sabbaṃ upadhi, paccayā*, Sn p141,7-8). All suffering arises conditioned by acquisition (*upadhi*), our seeking, collecting, grasping, clinging, and doing this ceaselessly in a loop of never-ending dissatisfaction, an ignoble quest [2.1.1.3].

3.3.2 The phrase “**Whatever suffering arises, all that is because of acquisition**” [3.3.1] is found in this passage:

- 1 *Siyā aññena pi pariāyena sammā dvayatānupassanā’ti, iti ce bhikkhave pucchitāro assu; siyā’ti ’ssu vacanīyā.*
- 2 *Kathañ ca siyā? Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti sabbaṃ upadhi, paccayāti, ayam ekānupassanā.*
- 3 *Upadhīnaṃ tv-eva asesa, virāga, nirodhā n’atthi dukkhassa sambhavoti, ayam dutiyānupassanā.*
- 4 *Evaṃ sammā dvayatānupassino kho bhikkhave bhikkhuno appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataraṃ phalaṃ pāṭikaṅkham: diṭṭh’eva dhamme aññā, sati vā upādi, -sese anāgāmitāti.*
- 5 *Idam avoca bhagavā. Idam vatvāna sugato athāparaṃ etad avoca satthā –*

1 “If, bhikshus, there are those who ask, “May there be some other way of rightly considering the pairs?” They should be answered, thus: “There may be.”

2 “And how may this be?”

“Whatever suffering arises, all that is because of acquisition.” This is a right consideration of the one.

3 “Because of the complete abandoning and ending of acquisitions, suffering arises not. This is a right consideration of the pairs.”

4 For a monk, bhikshus, who dwells rightly considering the pairs in this way, vigilant, ardent, resolute, one of two fruits is to be expected: true knowledge here and now, or, if there is any remnant of clinging, non-returning.

5 The Blessed One said this. Having said this, the well-farer, the teacher, added thus:

*Upadhī, nidānā pabhavanti dukkhā
ye keci lokasmim aneka, rūpā
yo ve avidvā upadhīm karoti
puna-p, punaṃ dukkham upeti mando
tasmā pajānaṃ upadhīm na kayirā³⁸
dukkhassa jāti-p, pabhavānupassīti* (Sn 728)

Whatever sufferings in many forms there are *b*
in the world, they are with acquisition as their cause. *a*
Truly, the foolish, unknowing, builds acquisitions,
he comes to suffering again and again.
Therefore, seeing birth as the arising of suffering, *f*
the knowing should build no acquisitions. *e*

— — —

³⁸ On *kayirā*, see Sn:N 316 n728 & Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994: §192A(1).

(Devatā) Nandati Sutta

The (Devatā) Discourse on He Delights

S 1.12

- 1 Originating at Sāvattḥī.
- 2 Standing at one side, the deity uttered this verse before the Blessed One:³⁹

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3 <i>Nandati puttehi puttīmā
gomā⁴⁰ gohi tath'eva nandati
upadhī hi narassa nandanā
na hi so nandati yo nirūpadhī⁴¹</i> (S 22)</p> | <p>One with children delights in children;
the herdsman truly delights in cattle.
For, acquisitions are a delight to man;
one without acquisitions delights not.</p> |
|---|--|

[The Blessed One:]⁴²

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>4 <i>Socati puttehi puttīmā
gomā⁴³ gohi tath'eva socati
upadhī hi narassa socanā
na hi so socati yo nirūpadhī</i> (S 23)</p> | <p>One with children grieves over children;
the herdsman truly grieves over cattle.
For, acquisitions are sorrowful for man⁴⁴—
but one without acquisitions grieves not.</p> |
|--|---|

— evam —

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³⁹ Both verses (S 22-23) recur in **(Māra) Nandana S** ((S 4.8 = S 461*-462*), SD 54.3a), the 1st verse spoken by Māra, followed by the Buddha's response; Mvst 3.417 + 418, the same. On Sn 33-34, see comy 16-17, also (1.2.1.4).

⁴⁰ (Also at S 23b*.) Be *gomā*; Ce Ee Se Ke Sn:Ee 33b *gomiko*. Ke Se *gopiko*: see **SD 50.20** comy 1-2 (9). All the readings here go against the metre: *gomā* (f) (vl at S 4.8 = S 461b*-462b*) is better metrically, and forms a better parallel with *puttīmā*, "those who have sons": *go-mā* | *putt-i-mā*. The 2 verses recur as Sn 33-34. **Mahāvastu**, however, has the reading *gomiko*, with vl *gopiko* (Mvst 3:417,16 + 417,3). Clearly, then, this must have been the reading at a very early date, but more likely, the Skt version preserved this reading from a late source. See **SD 50.20** comy 16-17 (1).

⁴¹ Ee *nirupadhī*; Be Ce *nirūpadhī*. On *upadhī*, see (2).

⁴² Comy: Hearing this, the Teacher thought: "This deity is only making what sorrowful into something delightful. Thinking, 'Let me show him the state of what are sorrowful,' like one may bring down a fruit by throwing another fruit at it, retorted with this verse to counter (break up) just that verse of his, said *Socati* and so on." (*Idaṃ sutvā satthā cintesi: Ayam devata soka, vatthukam eva nandana, vatthum karoti. Soka, vatthuka, bhavam assa dipessamiti phalena phalam patento viya tay'eva upamaya tassā vadam bhindento tam eva gatham parivattetvā socatīti āha.* SA 1:32,7-11).

⁴³ See S 23a* n.

⁴⁴ On S 23c*, see (3.1).