13

(Khandha) Paţisallāna Sutta

The (Aggregate) Discourse on Mental Solitude | **S 22.6** Theme: Understanding the 5 aggregates with a free mind ends suffering Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Key word

1.1 VIVEKA

1.1.1 Three kinds of solitude. **The native Commentary** explains that the Buddha notices that the monks are falling away from physical solitude ($k\bar{a}ya,viveka$), but does not elaborate (SA 2:262). The Commentaries generally speak of the 3 basic kinds of <u>solitude</u> or seclusion (viveka), that is, physical solitude ($k\bar{a}ya,viveka$), mental solitude (citta,viveka), and solitude from the substrates (citta,viveka).

1.1.2 Physical solitude ($k\bar{a}ya,viveka$) is the removal of our physical body from an unconducive environment to a conducive one, or, more simply, going into meditative retreat. In the well known 1st-dhyana pericope:

Here, <u>quite detached from sense-objects</u> (*vivicc'eva kāmehi*), <u>detached from unwholesome</u> <u>mental states</u> (*vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*), a monk enters and dwells in the first dhyana that is accompanied by initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy <u>born of solitude</u> (*viveka,ja*).¹

In fact, in this 1st dhyana pericope, all the 3 kinds of solitude are referred to, thus:

"quite detached from sensual pleasures" physical solitude;

"detached from unwholesome mental states" mental solitude; and

"born of solitude" solitude from the substrates. (Vism 4,82)

The native Commentary explains that the Buddha speaks to the monks about physical solitude in this Sutta because he knows that this would help them to succeed in their meditation (SA 2:262). In other words, the Buddha is exhorting them to go into solitary retreat for the sake of attaining arhathood.

1.1.3 Mental solitude (*citta*, *viveka*) generally refers to the keeping the mind to the meditation object so that it lets go of the processing of external sense-data, and specifically refers to <u>dhyana</u>, when all the 5 mental hindrances² have been overcome, and the mind is fully calm and clear. The attaining of dhyana means that we have transcended the body and its limitations, that is, we have completely removed ourselves from the power and gravity of sensual pleasures, and enjoying a kind of pleasure that is good and safe.³

Such a dhyana experience cleanses our minds of all distractions, so that it completely settles in profound peace (samatha). Such a peace clarifies our minds so that we are truly and fully blissful in a spiritual sense. Emerging from such calm and clear mental state, we then direct the mind to insight into true

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¹ D 22,21/2:313 f, M 141,31/3:252; also D 2,75-81/1:73-75, M 27,19-22/1:181 f.

² <u>The 5 mental hindrances</u> (pañca nīvaraṇa) are: sensual desire (kāma-c,chanda); ill will (vyāpāda); sloth and torpor (thīna,middha); restlessness and worry (uddhacca,kukkucca); and spiritual doubt (vicikicchā). See **Nīvaraṇa Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12, **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1, & **Listening beyond the ear**, SD 2.2(5).

³ On a pleasure that is "not to be feared," see Mahā Saccaka S (M 36,21-32/1:236 f), SD 1.12.

reality.⁴ Here, dhyana is attained and used with right view, that is, reflection on the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of all conditioned things ($sa\dot{n}kh\bar{a}r\bar{a}$), and the principle (dhamma) of non-self (Dh 277-179).⁵

1.1.4 Solitude from the substrates (*upadhi*, *viveka*) is arhathood or nirvana itself. It is the total abandoning of the substrates of life, of which there are 4 kinds, that is, the 5 aggregates, ⁶ sensual desires, ⁷ mental defilements, ⁸ and karma. ⁹ It is an ancient term for nirvana, ¹⁰ which is said to be "the abandoning of all substrates" (*sabbûpadhi*, *paṭinissagga*), found in this well known *upadhi* pericope:

the stilling of all formations,
the relinquishing of all substrates [acquisitions], sabba,sankhāra,samatha
sabbûpadhi,paṭinissagga
the destruction of craving,
taṇhā-k,khaya
virāga
the ending (of suffering),
nirvana.
nibbāṇa¹³

- **1.2** The (Khandha) Paţisallāna Sutta (S 22.6)—as in the (Khandha) Samādhi Sutta (S 22.5) which precedes it in the Khandha Samyutta (S 22)—is about the benefit of a still mind (one that experiences samadhi). It will see true reality, that is, the real nature of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness), that is, our body-mind existence. In other words, we will awaken to some level of spiritual liberation.
- **1.3** These two Suttas are practically identical for the most part, differing only two ways. The first is in the Buddha's opening remark on the Sutta's theme [§2]. Here, in the (Khandha) Paṭisallāna Sutta, the theme is: "**Devote yourself to the practice of solitude**" (*Paṭisallāṇe yogam āpajjatha*) [§2], that is, practise meditation for the arising of wisdom—that is, a true understanding of the 5 aggregates (that is, our existence and the nature of life)—and so gaining liberation.
- **1.4** The second difference is in the key word. Here, in the (Khandha) Paţisallāna Sutta, the emphasis is on mental solitude (paţisallāna), which is another word for meditation, including samadhi and dhyana (jhāna). In the (Khandha) Samādhi Sutta, the key word is "samadhi" (samādhi) or mental stillness,

⁴ On this emerging from dhyana to gain insight, see **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.2).

⁵ On spiritual application of the 3 characteristics, see **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8.

⁶ On the 5 aggregates (pañca-k,khandha), see **Dve Khandha S** (S 22.48), SD 17.1a.

⁷ On <u>sensual pleasures</u> (*kāma*), see *Kama-c,chanda*, SD 32.2.

⁸ On levels of defilements (kilesa), see SD 21.6 (5.1). On categories of defilements, see SD 32.1 (3.7).

⁹ See **Karma,** SD 18.1.

¹⁰ Sn 33c, 34c, 364a | | 33d, 374c, 546a = 572a, 728ce = 1051ac; cf 749c, 1057b.

¹¹ Nm 27, 140, 157, 341; DA 169; MA 2:142; UA 163, 206, 231, 396; SA 3:122; DhA 2:103, 3:129. See SD 29.6a (1.5) & **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4 esp (4).

¹² Virāga also "fading away of lust" or "dispassion" (see §21).

¹³ This pericope, sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho sabbûpadhi,paṭinissaggo taṇha-k,khayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ, is found at Vinaya (V 1:5,3), Mahā'padāna S (D 14,3.1/2:36), Alaggadûpama S (M 22,20/1:136 + 21/1:137), Āyācana S (S 6.1/1:136), Channa S (S 22.90/3:133, 134), Āpaṇa S (S 48.50/5:226), (Duka) Padhāna S (A 2.1.2/1:49 ×3), (Dasaka) Samādhi S (A 10.6/5:8), (Ekā,dasaka) Saññā S (A 11.7/5:320), Mahā Niddesa (Nm 1:27 = 424). Comy: "The settling of all formations—all this is itself nirvana (sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho ti ādi sabbaṁ nibbānam eva," DA 464).

¹⁴ On samadhi, see **Samādhi**, SD 33.1a. On *jhāna*, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

which is a word for <u>meditation</u> that includes the experience of dhyana. The two terms are practically synonyms in this case.

2 Related suttas

- **2.1** The central teaching of this Sutta is a stock meditation formula on the 5 aggregates found in the two **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**¹⁵ and in several places in the **Samyutta Nikāya**. Here, the arising (*samudaya*) and the passing away (*atthangama*) of the aggregates are explained from the standpoint of diachronic ("across time" or distal) conditionality (ie over many lives). In **the (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta** (S 22.56)¹⁷ and **the Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57)¹⁸ the aggregates are examined from the standpoint of synchronic ("a point in time" or proximal) conditionality at (ie within a single life-time).
- **2.2** There are two ways of examining the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*):¹⁹ within the same life-time (synchronic or proximal model) and over many lives (diachronic or distal model).²⁰ Here, in the (Khandha) Samādhi Sutta, we shall examine the diachronic model of the aggregates. The other model, the synchronic, is found in **the (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭā Sutta** (S 22.56)²¹ and **the Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57).²²
- **2.3** The Paţisallāna Sutta (It 45) gives us some details on the nature of "solitude" (paţisallāna), especially in terms of meditation and dhyana (jhāna). The meditator is described as one "enjoying solitude, delighting in solitude" (paţisallān'ārāmā...paţisallāna,ratā), and one "not neglecting meditation [dhyana],²³ accomplished in insight" (anirākata-j,jhānā vipassanāya samannāgatā).²⁴

Here, "not neglecting meditation" means that he is devoted to meditation, to mental solitude, as stated in the (Khandha) Paṭisallāna Sutta [§2]. The term "meditation" (jhāna) here includes both calm and insight (samatha,vipassanā). However, insight is specifically mentioned because, on emerging from samadhi or from dhyana, the meditator directs his mind to reflect on the 3 characteristics, especially on impermanence.²⁵

The Paţisallāna Sutta, however, adds that if such a meditator is diligent, he can expect one of two fruits, "either direct knowledge here and now, or non-return, if there is some trace of clinging." ²⁶ In other words, such a meditator is able to attain arhathood, if he has abandoned all clinging. However, if there is a "trace of clinging" (*upādi,sesa*), ²⁷ that is, some subtle concern for the Dharma or for others, then he would become a non-returner.

¹⁵ D 22,14/ 3:301 f = M 10,38/1:61.

¹⁶ S 12.21, 12.23, 22.78, 22.89, 22.101.

¹⁷ S 22.56/3:58-61 @ SD 3.7.

¹⁸ S 22.57/3:61-65.

¹⁹ See **Dve Khandha S** (S 22.48), SD 17.1a.

²⁰ See S:B 1049 n30.

²¹ See SD 3.7.

²² S 22.57/3:61-65. See SD 3.7 (3).

²³ Here, "meditation" includes dhyana: on anirākata-i, jhāna, see SD 33.1b (4.4.3.2); SD 41.4 (2.1.2).

²⁴ It 45/38 f, SD 41.4.

²⁵ See (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

²⁶ Diṭṭhe'va dhamme aññā, sati vā upādi,sese anāqāmitā'ti. On the tr of upādi,sesa, see SD 45.18 (2.5.2.4).

²⁷ On the significance of this "trace of clinging" (*upādi,sesa*), see SD 41.4 (2.2.1).

2.4 The Paţilīna Sutta (A 4.38) defines the true meditator as"one who is withdrawn" (paţilīna). ²⁸ The Sutta describes him as one who

(1) has put aside personal [private] truths,²⁹ panuṇṇa,pacceka,sacco
 (2) has completely given up seeking,³⁰ and samavaya,saṭṭh'esano
 (3) has stilled bodily formation [activity],³¹ passaddha,kāya,saṅkhāro

One who "has put aside personal [private] truths" has given up all speculative views³² and private truths, that is, personal views about the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, especially those that are not taught by the Buddha. Such views are not helpful to our spiritual development, and hinder us from ever attaining awakening and liberation.

One who "has completely given up seeking," according to the Esanā Sutta 1 and 2 (It 54+55) (1) has abandoned seeking sensual pleasures (that is, attained dhyanas, or lives the celibate life for the attaining of dhyana); (2) has given up seeking existence, that is, has no desire to be reborn in any realm, even the form world or the formless world, but works towards his awakening in this life itself; and (3) has stopped seeking ("shopping around") the holy life, that is, he is committed to the monastic life or, as a lay practitioner, to Dharmafaring or keeping to the 5 precepts or more and practising right livelihood.

One who "has stilled bodily formation" has reached the fourth dhyana, when breathing totally ceases. On a worldly level, this refers to an attainer of the fourth dhyana. In the Paţilīna Sutta, all these qualities are those of an arhat, one who is "withdrawn" (paţilīna) from the world by the total uprooting of the "I am" conceit. In other words, he has fully understood the nature of non-self.

(Khandha) Paţisallāna Sutta The (Aggregate) Discourse on Mental Solitude s 22.6

1 Originating at Sāvatthī.³³

Meditating on the aggregates

2 There the Blessed One said this:

²⁸ A 4.38 + SD 43.10 (2.1). Comy glosses **paţilīna** as "hidden, gone into solitude" (*nilīno ekī,bhāvaṁ upagato*, AA 3:79).

²⁹ "Who has put aside personal truths," panuṇṇa,pacceka,sacco, For a word analysis, see SD 43.10 (1.2).

³⁰ "Completely given up seeking," samavaya,saṭṭh'esano. For a word analysis, see below §2 n. See SD 43.10 (1.3).

³¹ "Stilled bodily formation," passaddha,kāya,saṅkhāro. See SD 43.10 (1.4).

³² A 4.38,1.2 @ SD 43.10. For a detailed analysis of <u>these 10 undetermined (avyākata) points</u>, see **Māluṅkya,-putta S** (M 63), SD 5.8 (2); Vbh 919. For a philosophical discussion, see K N Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 350 & P Kügler, "The logic and language of nirvāna: A contemporary interpretation." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 53 2003:100 f. For the set of <u>10 doubtworthy points</u>, see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65,3-14), SD 35.4a. On "private language," see SD 21.15 (3.2).

³³ 1-2 only in Ee Se; Be Ce omit.

"Bhikshus, **devote yourself to the practice of solitude**.³⁴ Bhikshus, a monk in solitude [who is secluded] understands true reality [things as they really are].³⁵

3 THE THESES. 36 And **what is the true reality that he understands**? 37 It is the arising and passing away of <u>form</u>, and $r\bar{u}pa^{38}$ the arising and passing away of <u>feeling</u>, and [S 3:14] $vedan\bar{a}$ the arising and passing away of <u>perception</u>, and $sa\tilde{n}n\bar{a}^{39}$ the arising and passing away of <u>mental formations</u>, and $sankh\bar{a}r\bar{a}^{40}$ the arising and passing away of <u>consciousness</u> $vi\tilde{n}n\bar{a}na^{41}$

The arising of the aggregates

4 ⁴²And, bhikshus,

what is the arising of form?
What is the arising of feeling?
What is the arising of perception?

What is the arising of mental formations? What is the arising of consciousness?

5 Here, bhikshus, he **seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping**. And what is it that he seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping?

6 He seeks pleasure in **form**, approves of it, goes on grasping it.

From his finding pleasure in form,

approving of it, going on grasping it, arises delight.

Delight in <u>form</u> is clinging.

³⁴ Paţisallāne bhikkhave yogam āpajjatha.

³⁵ Paţisallīṇo bhikkhave bhikkhu yathā,bhūtaṁ pajānāti.

³⁶ From here on, the text follows (Khandha) Samādhi S (S 22.5,4) onwards, see SD 7.16.

³⁷ Kiñ ca yathā,bhūtaṁ pajānāti, alt tr: "And what does he understand as they really are?" The following is a stock meditation formula on the 5 aggregates found in the 2 **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22,14/3:301 f = M 10,38/1:61) and in the **Saṁyutta** (S 12.21, 12.23, 22.6, 22.78, 22.89, 22.101). Here, this Sutta (S 22.5) explains the arising (samudaya) and the passing away (atthaṅgama) of the aggregates from the standpoint of diachronic ("across time" or distal) conditionality (ie over many lives), and at **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56/3:58-61) & **Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S** (S 22.57/3:61-65), from the standpoint of synchronic ("a point in time" or proximal) conditionality (ie within a single life-time).

 $^{^{38}}$ $R\bar{u}pa$, Defined as "the 4 great elements and form derived from them" (S 22.56). In the term $r\bar{u}pa$, $k\bar{a}ya$, both components can be translated as "body", but while $r\bar{u}pa$ is material, especially visible, form, $k\bar{a}ya$ is body as an aggregate, as in "a body of form, a body of men." Often contrasted with $n\bar{a}ma$, $k\bar{a}ya$, that is, the mental component of the term $n\bar{a}ma$, $r\bar{u}pa$, "mind and body." See BDict: $k\bar{a}ya$.

³⁹ Saññā, defined as "distinguishing a thing by its marks" (S 22.79).

⁴⁰ Saṅkhāra, one of the difficult Buddhist terms to translate as it is polysemous. Here it applies to the group of mental formations. The Abhidhamma traditionally lists 50 of them, embracing various factors, the most important of which is volition (cetanā), that is, karma itself. Formations include what we call emotions (ie expressed feelings). See D:W n293.

⁴¹ Viññāṇa, "consciousness", divided into six, namely, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.

⁴² Only Ce gives the text in full, follows **(Khandha) Samādhi S** (S 22.5,6) onwards, see SD 7.16. Be Ee Se: *Yathā paṭhama,sutte*, *tathā vitthāretabbo*, "to be laid out in full according to the first sutta," but it is actually the prec one).

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence. Conditioned by existence, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death:

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure] and despair come to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

7 He seeks pleasure in **feeling**, approves of it, goes on grasping it.

From his finding pleasure in feeling,

approving of it, going on grasping it, arises delight.

Delight in <u>feeling</u> is clinging.

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence.

Conditioned by existence, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death:

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental

pain and despair come to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

8 He seeks pleasure in **perception**, approves of it, goes on grasping it.

From his finding pleasure in perception,

approving of it, going on grasping it, arises delight.

Delight in <u>perception</u> is clinging.

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence.

Conditioned by existence, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death:

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental

pain and despair come to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

9 He seeks pleasure in **mental formations**, approves of them, goes on grasping them.

From his finding pleasure in mental formations,

approving of them, going on grasping them, arises delight.

Delight in mental formations is clinging.

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence.

Conditioned by existence, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death:

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental

pain and despair come to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

10 He seeks pleasure in **consciousness**, approves of it, goes on grasping it.

From his finding pleasure in consciousness,

approving of it, going on grasping it, arises

Delight in <u>consciousness</u> is

Conditioned by clinging, there is

Conditioned by existence, there is

birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death:

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair come to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

11 This, bhikshus, is the arising of form.This is the arising of feeling.This is the arising of perception.

This is the arising of mental formations.

This is the arising of consciousness. 43

The ending of the aggregates

12 And, bhikshus,

what is the ending of form?
What is the ending of feeling?
What is the ending of perception?

What is the ending of mental formations? What is the ending of consciousness?

Here, bhikshus, he does not find pleasure in, does not approve of, does not go on grasping. And what is it that he does not find pleasure in, does not approve of, does not go on grasping?

13 He does not find pleasure in form, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it.

From his not finding pleasure in form,

not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in <u>form</u> ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.
With the ending of clinging, existence ends.
With the ending of existence, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death end: sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain

[displeasure] and despair do not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

14 He does not find pleasure in feeling, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it.

From his not finding pleasure in feeling, [\$ 3:15]

not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in feeling ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.
With the ending of clinging, existence ends.
With the ending of existence, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death end: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and

despair do not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

⁴³ The closing section [§10] is a summary of dependent arising. The phrase "he seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping" (abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati) refers to craving (taṇhā). The pleasure (nandi) gained is clinging (upādāna), from which the remaining links of the series continue. The passage thus shows how craving for the present 5 aggregates (internal and external) is the efficient cause for the arising another round of 5 aggregates in the next life. The following section on "the ending" should be understood in the converse manner: when craving for the present aggregates ends, one has destroyed the efficient cause for the further arising of the 5 aggregates. See S:B 1049 n30.

15 He does not find pleasure in **perception**, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it.

From his not finding pleasure in perception,

not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in perception ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.
With the ending of clinging, existence ends.
With the ending of existence, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death end: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and

despair do not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

16 He does not find pleasure in **mental formations**, does not approve of them, does not go on grasping them.

From his not finding pleasure in mental formations,

not approving of them, not going on grasping them, delight in mental formations ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.
With the ending of clinging, existence ends.
With the ending of existence, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death end: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and

despair do not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

17 He does not find pleasure in consciousness, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it.

From his not finding pleasure in consciousness,

not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in <u>consciousness</u> ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.

With the ending of clinging, existence ends.

With the ending of existence, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death end: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and

despair do not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

18 Bhikshus,

this is the ending of form.

This is the ending of feeling.

This is the ending of perception.

This is the ending of mental formations.

This is the ending of consciousness."

— evaṁ —

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