6

Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta
The Discourse on the Purely Spiritual | S 36.29 (S:Be 36.31)
Be Suddhika Sutta The Discourse on the Pure
Ce Suddhika,vedanā Sutta The Discourse on Pure Feelings
Be Ce: Nirāmisa Sutta The Discourse on the Spiritual
Theme: Nirvana the highest spiritual state
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2019

1 Summary and highlights

1.1 Summary and significance

1.1.1 The 3 levels, 12 kinds of experiences

1.1.1.1 The Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta (S 36.29) defines experience in personal or individual terms, that is, as 4 levels of “feeling” (uncountable) or some kind of direct experience, by way of “zest” (or rapture), joy (or happiness), equanimity and liberation, each at 3 levels—the carnal (or worldly), the spiritual and the superspiritual—totalling 12 kinds, summarized graphically, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carnal</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Superspiritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zest [rapture]</td>
<td>1st-2nd dhyanas</td>
<td>the arhat [§7]</td>
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<td>joy [happiness]</td>
<td>1st-3rd dhyanas</td>
<td>the arhat [§10]</td>
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<td>equanimity</td>
<td>4th dhyana</td>
<td>the arhat [§13]</td>
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<td>liberation</td>
<td>formless dhyana</td>
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<td>sense-pleasures</td>
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<tr>
<td>sense-pleasures</td>
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<tr>
<td>form dhyana</td>
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</table>

1.1.1.2 In our own times, we often distinguish between the “religious” and the “spiritual.” The religious refers generally to organized religion or any kind of belief in the supernatural (some kind of external agency) that decides our fate or is able to change it in some way, even in some kind of “reward-punishment” (consequentialist) ethics. Hence, the essence of religion, is invariably, some kind of power. In this sense, religion is “goal-oriented”; hence, worldly (s’āmisa).

1.1.1.3 The spiritual is a convenient word for those who reject religion or who prefer some kind of “individualistic” or “person-centred” latitude in the meaning and purpose of life. There is often an important element of philosophical or intellectual acumen for “spiritual” people that allows them to define their life or “life” in general by their own scale of merits and demerits of things. In short, it may be a psychological reaction against religion. Hence, it may be said to be “purpose-oriented” in rejecting religion or what it signifies (nirāmisa).

1.1.1.4 The superspiritual (nirāmisa nirāmisa,tara, literally, “the spiritual that is more than spiritual”) is, in an important sense, the most “self-centred” of the 3 terms. The “self” here refers to our own mind and how it constructs the ideas of the religious and the spiritual. Hence, this is a kind of exploratory and developmental approach that deconstructs what holds us back by mind-constructed notions and ways.

Such a deconstruction begins with an understanding of what the “constructed” is, and how or why this occurs. Then, there is “spiritual deconstruction,” the dismantling of what hurts and hinders our mind; finally, the deconstructed mind is a self-liberated mind that sees truth and beauty, things as they really are.
1.1.2 The 3 levels of experiences

1.1.2.1 The carnal, that is, the physical or worldly aspects, refers basically to the 5 cords of sense-desire (pañca kāma,guna) and the 5 sense-objects. In other words, this is worldly sense-based joy, experienced by beings of the sense-world. One is liberated from the sense-world by attaining the form dhyana. But this is only a temporary liberation, one that lasts only for the duration of the dhyanic meditation and its emergent (post-dhyanic) effects.

1.1.2.2 The spiritual aspect refers to the dhyana or meditation absorption (jhāna), quite detached and aloof from sensual pleasures. This is the “spiritual” or transsomatic (beyond the body) joy and happiness of the form dhyanas and the formless dhyanas. Such experiences are more characterized by an experience of beauty in its highest sense; hence, attended by commensurate joy. Yet, at this level, our vision of truth still needs significant working.

“A thing of beauty” may be a joy forever, but the idea of “thing” defines the “forever.” There is still the dominance of thinking over feeling, especially thinking in terms of some kind of “self” or abiding essence. Hence, we are still guided by ideas of things, but our own self-projections. There is an effective lack of a truly direct experience of true reality. We are only seeing beauty (which is good in itself), but we have yet to taste, to be, that beauty.

1.1.2.3 The last—spiritual liberation—is the cessation of the 3 roots of worldliness, lust, ill will and delusion, in the arhat who has true joy, happiness, equanimity and liberation by the destruction of the mental influxes (khīṇāsava).1 This is the feeling of the arhats (which includes the Buddha): their joy, happiness and equanimity are of the “highest” or “superspiritual” kind, that is to say: they will not rearise in any of the 3 worlds (the sense-based, the form-based or the formless), or anywhere else. They enjoy nirvanic bliss in this life and attain nirvana after death.

1.1.2.4 The Buddha and the arhats have feelings, too. In a sense, they can experience whatever we experience, good and bad. They can experience our human or unawakened emotions in the sense that they know the true nature of these emotions, and are in no way overwhelmed, defined or defiled, by them.

We can use an analogy to illustrate this: imagine an experienced doctor examining a sick person: the doctor sees all the symptoms and understands what is going on, but is not lustful, hateful or deluded by them (in a professional sense at least). When the patient recovers, the doctor is happy (in a professional way). Even when the doctor fails to heal the patient and he dies, the doctor professionally remains calm and goes on working. [1.2.1.2]

1.2 RELATED TEACHINGS

1.2.1 Nirāmisaṁ sukhāṁ vedanāṁ

1.2.1.1 This phrase meaning, “spiritual pleasant feeling,” is found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22), the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), the Pañca-t, taya Sutta (M 102) and the Vibhaṅga.2 Here nirāmisa

1 Khīṇa (destroyed) + āsava (influxes). The mental influxes are those of sensual lust, existence, ignorance; later lists add “views” as the 3rd: see SD 30.3 (1.3.2).
2 Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S (D 22/2:298,17), SD 13.2; Satipaṭṭhāna S (M 10,32(2)/1:59,17), SD 13.3; Pañca-t, taya S (M 102/2:236,9 etc), SD 40a.12; Vbh 195,33, 196,13+32. See also A 1:81, 3:412; Pm 2:233. See also Sue Hamilton, Identity and Experience, 1996:43 f.
means “non-sensual,” “non-carnal” or “spiritual,” which according to the Majjhima Commentary refers to the 6 joyful feelings connected with the sense-doors, but not dependent on sense-desire (MA 1:279).

1.2.1.2 Arhats (including the Buddha), insofar as they are humans, as a rule, have the 6 sense-faculties: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. In fact, their faculties function much better than those of the unawakened since the arhats are always mindful. To have senses also means to feel, that is, to experience the pleasant, unpleasant and the neutral.

Hence, the arhats, too, feel and experience these 3 kinds of feelings. However, unlike the unawakened, they are always mindful and naturally free from lust, hate and delusion. Hence, they merely experience these feelings and do not react negatively or unwholesomely to them. [1.1.2.4]

The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21) records the Buddha appreciating the gandharva Pañca,sikha’s recital of verses accompanied by his veena, saying:

“The sound of your strings, Pañca,sikha, blended [harmonized] well with your singing, and your singing blended well with the sound of your strings. Moreover, Pañca,sikha, neither did your veena out-pace your song, nor your singing out-pace your veena.” (D 21,1.6).³

1.2.2 The 7 aspects of feelings

1.2.2.0 The Paṭisambhidā, magga (Pm) (an Abhidhamma work preserved as one of the 15 books of the Khuddaka Nikāya) can be a difficult text to read, but it gives detailed explanations, even instructions, on practical aspects of Buddhist meditation. Here are excerpts from Pm defining and describing the contemplation of feelings (vedanā’nupassanā). Pm, near its very end, in its “Wisdom” chapter (pañḥā, vagga) on “Talk on Satipatthana” (satipaṭṭhāna,kathā), explains that it comprises the following 7 aspects (with the preamble):

“How does one dwell contemplating feelings as feeling?

1.2.2.1 (1) Here, one contemplates pleasant feeling (sukhaṁ vedanāṁ)

as impermanent, not as permanent;
as suffering, not as pleasant;
as nonself, not as self;
one is revulsed (at it), one delights not;
one makes it (lust) fade away, not inflame it;
one makes an end (of suffering); not let it arise;
one relinquishes (defilements); not cling to them”

One contemplates feelings in these 7 aspects:

(1) The feeling is the establishment, not the mindfulness.
(2) Mindfulness is both the establishment and the mindfulness.
(3) By means of that mindfulness and that knowledge, he contemplates that feeling.

Hence, it is called “the cultivation of satipatthana consisting in contemplating the feelings as feeling.”

In terms of cultivation, there are 4 kinds:⁴ therein, cultivation by way of:

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³ See esp the related discussion at SD 54.8 (5.2). On “How saints feel,” see SD 55.20.
⁴ This tr is based on that of Bh āṇamoli (Pm:Ñ 1982:399).
non-excess of ideas [thoughts] arising therein;  

single function (rasa) of the spiritual faculties;  

effectiveness of the appropriate effort;  

repetition resorted to that practice.

1.2.2.2 This whole template [1.2.2.1] is then applied to each of the following 9 kinds of feelings:

(2) dukkhāṁ vedanāṁ  
(3) adukkhāṁ-asukkhāṁ vedanāṁ  
(4) s'āmisāṁ sukhaṁ vedanāṁ  
(5) nirāmisāṁ sukhaṁ vedanāṁ  
(6) s'āmisāṁ dukkhāṁ vedanāṁ  
(7) nirāmisāṁ dukkhāṁ vedanāṁ  
(8) s'āmisāṁ adukkhāṁ-asukkhāṁ vedanāṁ  
(9) nirāmisāṁ adukkhāṁ-asukkhāṁ vedanāṁ

(a) cakkhu,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ  
(b) sota,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ  
(c) ghāna,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ  
(d) jīvha,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ  
(e) kaya,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ  
(f) mano,samphassa,jaṁ vedanāṁ

For our purpose, which is the reflection on feeling (vedanā’nupassanā), we can reflect on each of the 6 kinds of sense-based feelings (a)-(f) in “feeling cycle” (*vedanā,vāra) (1)-(4), (6) and (8). As for the cases of the “spiritual” feelings (5), (7) and (9), as stated here, only (f) “feeling arising from mental contact” applies, since “spiritual” refers to the form dhyanas and formless attainments. The arhat’s “superspiritual” feelings [1.2.3] are not listed here.

1.2.3 Wholesome meditative experiences

1.2.3.1 In the Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta (M 137), s’āmisa and nirāmisa refer to the household life and to the renounced life respectively. Here, too, these two terms are clearly translated as “worldly, religious” and “spiritual.” In early Buddhist terms, even religious experiences, as long as they are rooted in some kind of external agency or abiding essence (like God or Soul), they are regarded as “worldly.”

1.2.3.2 Only a wholesome experience which is not rooted in greed, hate or delusion, and sees non-self is said to be spiritual. This is the case in the Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta (S 36.29), where we find the terms “spiritual zest” (nirāmisā pītā), “spiritual joy” (nirāmisā sukha) and “spiritual equanimity” (nirāmisā upekkhā), which are terms for the feelings experienced in the dhyanas [§§8-15].

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5 On the “non-excess of ideas,” see Pm 1:31 f (Pm:Ñ 31-33).
6 On the “single function” of the faculties, see Pm 1:33 f (Pm:Ñ 33 f).
7 These are the 5 spiritual faculties (pañc’indriya), those of: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, see: Pañc’indrya (SD 10.4); also SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).
8 On effective effort, see Pm 1:34 (Pm:Ñ 33 f).
9 On “repetition,” see Pm 1:30, 34 (Pm:Ñ 31, 34).
10 See M 137/3:217-219 (SD 29.5); MA 279; VbhA 268.

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1.2.4 Awakened feelings

1.2.4.1 The Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta (S 36.29) introduces a remarkable term: “superspiritual” (nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara), which describes the feelings of the arhats, fully self-awakened ones, including the Buddha. This is a category in itself—or better, it is a “non-category,” since it refers to the awakened state. It is literally said to be “more spiritual than the spiritual” (nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara). In other words, it goes beyond the dichotomy of the worldly (s’āmisa) and the spiritual (nirāmisa), where the “religious” straddle the two. [1.1.1.4]

1.2.4.2 This phrase nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara (superspiritual) is found only here in the Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta (S 36.29), the Paṭisambhidā, magga [1.2.3.3] and their respective Commentaries. However, the terms s’āmisa (carnal) and nirāmisa (spiritual) are common throughout the Nikāyas. We have already mentioned nirāmisa [1.2.3]. Here we will examine mostly s’āmisa, as defined in the Paṭisambhidā, magga, where s’āmisa as “should be directly understood” (abhiññeyya) as characterizing the 1st truth (suffering) or the “worldly,” and nirāmisa as referring to the 3rd truth (ending of suffering) or the “spiritual,” as follows, of which the first sentence reads:

“It should be directly understood: arising is worldly, non-arising is spiritual [non-worldly],” thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>worldly</th>
<th>spiritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>arising</td>
<td>non-arising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occurrence</td>
<td>non-occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the sign</td>
<td>the signless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accumulation</td>
<td>non-accumulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rebirth-linking</td>
<td>non-rebirth-linking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destiny</td>
<td>non-destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generation</td>
<td>non-generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rebirth</td>
<td>non-rebirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth</td>
<td>non-birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decay [aging]</td>
<td>non-decay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disease</td>
<td>non-disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death</td>
<td>non-death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sorrow</td>
<td>non-sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamenting</td>
<td>non-lamenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despair</td>
<td>non-despair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pm 1:14)

The “worldly” clearly are names for samsara (the cycle of lives and deaths), while the “spiritual” refers to nirvana.

1.3 Related terms

1.3.1 Paṭisambhidā, magga explanations

1.3.1.1 The Paṭisambhidā, magga, in its comprehensive list of “liberations” (vimokkha), defines the 3 terms of the Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta (S 36.29) as follows:

11 “The sign” of a formation (sankhāra).
“Carnal [worldly] liberation” (s’āmiso vimokkho) is “liberation connected with form [matter]” (rūpa-p, paṭisaṅñuto vimokkho).

“Spiritual liberation” (nirāmiso vimokkho) is “liberation connected with formlessness [the non-material]” (arūpa-p, paṭisaṅñuto vimokkho).

“Superspiritual liberation” (nirāmisā nirāmisataro vimokkho) is “the 4 noble paths, the 4 fruits of recluseship, and nirvana” (cattāro ca ariyamaggā, cattāri ca sāmañña, phalāni, nibbānañ ca). (Pm 2:40 f)

1.3.1.2 The Paṭisambhidā, magga Commentary tersely confirms these textual explanations as follows:

Rūpa, saṅkhātena saha āmisenāti s’āmiso
sabbaso rūpārūpa-p, paṭisaṅñuto nirāmisato pi
nirāmisā, tara’ti nirāmisā nirāmisā nirāmisā, tara.

S’āmiso means the carnal, in connection with form; nirāmisā abandons all, both form and the formless; nirāmisā, tara is beyond (even) the “spiritual.”

(PmA 3:552, 29-31)

1.3.1.3 Interestingly, “form” (rūpa) in the 1st line, defining the “carnal or worldly” (s’āmiso) [1.3.1.2] is pregnant with both the sense of “material form” (rūpa as the 1st of the 5 aggregates, as a khandha)12 and “fine-material form” (rūpa of the 3 worlds, as a loka).13 Hence, s’āmiso here has the sense of “the worldly.”

The “spiritual” (nirāmisā), then, is beyond all the worldliness of rūpa thus understood. We have transcended neither the form dhyanas nor the formless attainments. When, as dhyana-meditators, we have attained these high mental states, we understand them as “mind-made,” and hence, unsatisfactory and nonself.

We need to cultivate further as taught by the Buddha. When we have truly understood the true nature of these meditation, or on a simpler level, our own mind, then we take the very first step on the path, that is, streamwinning. The “superspiritual” liberation refers to any of the stages of the path from streamwinning to arhathood [1.3.1.1].

1.3.2 Āmisa and dhamma

1.3.2.1 There is also the term āmisa (material, worldly), which is contrasted with dhamma (adj, “spiritual”; n “the Dhamma”), as in the Duka Nipāta (the book of twos) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, that is, the Dve Dāna Sutta (A 2.13.1or A 2.141):

Dve’māni bhikkhave dānāni.
Katamāni dve?
Āmisa, dāna ca dhamma, dāna ca.
Imāni kho bhikkhave dve dānāni
Etadaggam, bhikkhave, imesa dvinnam
dānānam yad idam dhamma, dānan’ti.

Bhikshus, there are these 2 kinds of giving, What are the two?
Material [worldly] giving and dharma-giving.
These, bhikshus, are the 2 kinds of giving.
Of these 2 kinds of giving, bhikshus, the foremost is dharma-giving. (A 2.13.1/1:91), SD 55.6(1.2)

1.3.2.2 Here, we can take dhamma (adj), “dharma,” as synonymous with nirāmisā, “the spiritual.” This kind of giving ranges from teaching, translating, disseminating to preserving the Buddha Dhamma, that is, those teachings that clarify the noble eightfold path and how we can attain it, that is, by at least aspiring for streamwinning.

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12 On the aggregate rūpa (rūpa-k, khandha), see SD 17.2a.
13 On the 3 worlds (loka)—sense-world (kāma-loka), form world (rūpa-loka) and formless world (arūpa-loka)—see Viññāṇa-t, thiti, SD 23.14; SD 29.6a (5.2); SD 29.6b (7.2).
2 The (Vedanā) Āgāra Sutta (S 36.14), SD 74.10

2.1 Commentarial Explanation of s'āmisa and nirāmisa (SA 3:79,9-17)

2.1.1 Pleasant feelings

Carnal (s'āmisa) pleasant feeling is pleasant feeling arisen dependent on carnal sensuality.

Spiritual (nirāmisa) pleasant feeling is pleasant feeling arisen by way of the 1st dhyana, etc, or by way of insight, or by way of recollection (of the Buddha, etc).

2.1.2 Painful feelings

Carnal painful feeling is painful feeling arisen through carnal sensuality. (This is the painful feeling of those who undergo suffering because of sensuality. SAPṬ:Be 2:358.)

Spiritual painful feeling is the feeling of displeasure (domanassa) arisen through yearning for the supreme liberation (namely, the fruition of arhathood. SAPṬ)

2.1.3 Neutral feelings

Carnal neutral feeling is the neutral feeling arisen through carnal sensuality.

Spiritual neutral feeling is the neutral feeling arisen by way of the 4th dhyana.

2.2 The (Vedanā) Discourse on the House (S 36.14), SD 55.4(2.2)

(Vedanā) Āgāra Sutta

SD 55.4(2) The (Vedanā) Discourse on the House | S 36.14/4:219 = SD 74.10 (qv)

or, (Vedanā) Āgantuk'āgāra Sutta, The (Vedanā) Discourse on the Guest-house

Traditional: S 4.2.2.4 = Saṁyutta Nikāya 4, Saḷāyatana Vagga 2, Vedanā Saṁyutta 2, Rahogata Vg 4

Theme: The 3 kinds of feeling: the carnal and the spiritual

The Parable of the Guest-house

1 Bhikshus, suppose there is a guest-house (āgantuk'āgāra).

2.2 People coming from the east lodge there.
people coming from the west lodge there;
people coming from the north lodge there;
people coming from the south lodge there.

2.3 Kshatriyas [nobles], too, lodge there;
brahmins [priests], too, lodge there;
vaishyas [merchants], too, lodge there;
shudras [workers], too, lodge there.

2 Even so, bhikshus, various feelings arise in the body:

14 S 36.14/4:219.9-23 (SD 74.10), tr 190720. A fuller study is found at SD 74.10.

15 This last (anussati,vasena ca uppannā vedanā) is omitted from SA:Ee, but found in SA:Be 3:119.
3 THE 3 KINDS OF FEELING

pleasant feeling arises, too;  
puṇṇikā-vedanā uppajjanti
painful feeling arises, too;  
āsā-vedanā uppajjanti
neither painful nor pleasant [neutral] feeling arises, too.  
ānīvā-vedanā uppajjanti

4 THE 2 KINDS OF FEELING

4.1 CARNAL FEELINGS
Carnal pleasant feeling arises, too;  
s'āmisā-vedanā s'āmisa pi sukhā vedanā uppajjanti
Carnal painful feeling arises, too;  
s'āmisā-vedanā s'āmisa pi dukkha vedanā uppajjanti
Carnal neither painful nor pleasant feeling arises, too.  
s'āmisā-vedanā s'āmisa pi adukkham-asukha vedanā uppajjanti

4.2 SPIRITUAL FEELINGS
Spiritual pleasant feeling arises, too;  
nirāmisa-vedanā nirāmisa pi sukhā vedanā uppajjanti
Spiritual painful feeling arises, too;  
nirāmisa-vedanā nirāmisa pi dukkha vedanā uppajjanti
Spiritual neither painful nor pleasant feeling arises, too.  
nirāmisa-vedanā nirāmisa pi adukkham-asukha vedanā uppajjanti

— evam —

Suddhika Nirāmisa Sutta
The Discourse on the Purely Spiritual
S 36.29

The 3 levels of spiritual experiences

I Bhikshus, there is **carnal zest** [rapture];  
s'āmisa piṭī
there is **spiritual zest**;  
nirāmisa piṭī
there is the zest that is **superspiritual** [more than spiritual].  
nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara piṭī

II There is carnal **joy** [happiness];  
s'āmisa sukha
there is **spiritual joy**;  
nirāmisa sukha
there is the **joy** that is **superspiritual** [more than spiritual].  
nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara sukha

III Bhikshus, there is carnal **equanimity**;  
s'āmisa upekkhā
there is spiritual equanimity;  
nirāmisa upekkhā
there is the **equanimity** that is suppspiritual [more than spiritual].  
nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara upekkhā

IV There is carnal **liberation**;  
s'āmisa vimokkha
there is spiritual **liberation**;  
nirāmisa vimokkha
there is the **liberation** that is super-[more than spiritual].  
nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara vimokkha

I. The 3 levels of zest (piṭī)

I a. THE 5 CORDS OF SENSE-PLEASURES

5 And what, bhikshus, is **carnal zest**?  
s'āmisa piṭī

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There are, bhikshus, the 5 cords of sense-pleasures.\(^{16}\) \(\text{pañca kāma, guna}\)

1. Visual forms cognizable by the eye
   that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.\(^{17}\)

2. Sounds cognizable by the ear
   that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

3. Smells cognizable by the nose
   that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

4. Tastes cognizable by the tongue
   that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

5. Touches cognizable by the body
   that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

These, bhikshus, are the 5 cords of sensual pleasure.\(^{18}\)

5.2 Bhikshus, the zest that arises dependent on these 5 cords of sensual pleasure—this, bhikshus, is called carnal zest.\(^{19}\) [236]

I b. The first 2 dhyanas

6. And what, bhikshus, is spiritual zest?\(^{20}\)

6.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk, quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects,\(^{20}\) secluded from unwholesome mental states, he attains and dwells in the 1\(^{st}\) dhyanas, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and with zest and joy born of solitude;\(^{21}\)

6.3 with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he attains and dwells in the 2\(^{nd}\) dhyanas, free from initial application and sustained application,

\(^{16}\) The 5 cords of sensual pleasure (pañca kāma, guna), so called because they are the objects of the 5 physical senses, eg: V 1:3, 17, 225, 293, 3:111; D 8:1/172 (the 6 sense-bases); M 13,7/1:47 n (SD 6.9), 13,7/1:85; S 36.19/-:4/225, 6.31/4:235+237, 45.30/5:22, 45.176/5:60, 47.6/5:148, 47.7/5:149; A 6.63/3.411,4, 9.35/4:415,4, 9.42/4:449,13, 9.65/4:458,15, 10.99/5:203,22,; Dh 48, 415; Sn 436; Tha 254; J 423/3:466, 467/4:172+173, 507/4:469, 542/6:127; Ap 547; Nm 1; Vbh 256; Mvst 3:417.2; MA 1:199, 131, 2:261; listed at D 33,2.1(3)/3:234; ref to at D 21,11/-:2:217,26; 29,23/3:131,5, S 12.63/2:99, S 35.117/4:97 Kāma,guna S A 6.26/3:315,3, 4.122/2:125,17, 5.34/3:40,23, 6.25/3:312,25+ 313,16, 6.63/3.2 + SD 6.11 (2.2.2.6), 7.65/4:118,9, 8.35/4:239,10, 5.55/3:69,8*, 5.148/3:172,26, 6.26/3:315,12, 7.48/4:55,18, 10.177/5:272,15+273,1, 35.241/4:180. They are both objects of desire as well as the qualities of desire, ie, that which brings pleasure to the senses, or desirable sense-experience, as listed in the passage here. They are “cords” (guna) because they bind one to them, and they “multiply” (guna) themselves as a result, binding one ever tighter to them. Kāma is also desire personified, ie the god of love, sometimes identified with Māra (Tha 3.88; BA 289). It is interesting to note here that there is no “mental pleasure” (somanassa) in the list. Such mental pleasures generally arise through mental focus or meditation, and as such are not regarded as guna, insofar as they provide a lasting sense of satisfaction and inner peace that lead to letting-go.

\(^{17}\) Cakkhu, viññeyyā rūpa iṭṭhā kantā maṇḍā piya, rūpa kāmūpasamhitā rajaniyā.

\(^{18}\) At Mahā Dukkha-k, khanda S (M 13,7), this whole passage on the 5 cords of sense-pleasure define “the gratification (assāda) with regards to sense-desires” (SD 6.9).

\(^{19}\) Yā kho bhikkhave ime pañca kāma, guna paṭicca uppajjati pīti, ayaṁ vuccati bhikkhave s’āmisā pīti. See (1.1.1.2).

\(^{20}\) On the tr of kāma (pl), see SD 8.4 (5.1.1).

\(^{21}\) “Born of solitude,” viveka, ja; ie, it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see The body in Buddhism, SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (cittassa ek’agatā) and “stillness” (samādhi) here, see The layman and dhyanas @ SD 8.5. The 1\(^{st}\) dhyanas is described more elaborately, with a parable, in Sāmañana, phala S (D 2,77), SD 8.10.

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with zest and joy born of stillness [samadhi]—this, bhikshus, is called spiritual zest.

I. AN ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

7 And what, bhikshus, is superspiritual zest [more than the spiritual]? Bihkshus, when a monk, whose influxes are destroyed, reviews his mind liberated from greed, reviews his mind liberated from hate, reviews his mind liberated from delusion—zest arises—this, bhikshus, is called superspiritual zest.

II. The 3 levels of joy (sukha)

II a. THE 5 CORDS OF SENSE-PLEASURES

8 And what, bhikshus, is carnal joy [worldly happiness]? There are, bhikshus, the 5 cords of sense-pleasures.

(1) Visual forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(2) Sounds cognizable by the ear that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(3) Smells cognizable by the nose that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(4) Tastes cognizable by the tongue that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(5) Touches cognizable by the body that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust. These, bhikshus, are the 5 cords of sensual pleasure.

8.2 Bhikshus, the happiness and mental joy that arise dependent on these 5 cords of sensual pleasure—this, bhikshus, is called carnal joy.

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22 The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (ariya.tunhī,bhāva) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, vitakka,vicāra) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where vitakka and vicāra are called verbal formation (vacī,saṅkhāra), the mental factors responsible for speech. In Ariya Pariyesanā S (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie either talk Dharma or meditate). See Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12. The 2nd dhyana is described more elaborately, with a parable, in Sāmañña,phala S (D 2,79, SD 8.10).

23 See (1.1.1.3).

24 The whole passage up to here: Yā kho bhikkhave khīṇ’āsavassa bhikkhuno rāgā cittāṁ vimuttāṁ paccavekkhato, dosā cittāṁ vimuttāṁ paccavekkhato, mohā cittāṁ vimuttāṁ paccavekkhato, uppajjati pīti. This is “more spiritual than” the spiritual zest of the dhyanas (nirāmisa,tarā’ti nirāmīsāya jhāna,pīti pi nirāmīsa.-tarā) (SA 3:84,25).

25 Cakkhu,viññeyyā rūpā itthā kantā manāpā piyo,rūpā kāmupasaṁghitā rajaniyā. This is “more spiritual than” the spiritual zest of the dhyanas (nirāmisa,tarā’ti nirāmīsāya jhāna,pīti pi nirāmīsa.-tarā) (SA 3:84,25).

26 At Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S (M 13,7), this whole passage on the 5 cords of sense-pleasure define “the gratification (assāda) with regards to sense-desires” (SD 6.9).

27 “The happiness and mental joy,” sukha,somanassa; alt, “the joy that is mental bliss.” These are purely mental states. Omitted in S:B 1284.
II b. The First 3 Dhyanas

9 And what, bhikshus, is spiritual joy (nirāmisa sukha)?

9.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk, quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects, secluded from unwholesome mental states, he attains and dwells in the 1st dhyana, [§6.2]
accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and with zest and joy born of solitude;

9.3 with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he attains and dwells in the 2nd dhyana, [§6.3]
free from initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy born of stillness [samadhi];

9.4 and with the fading away of zest, he remains equanimous, mindful and clearly understanding, and feels joy with the body. He attains and dwells in the 3rd dhyana, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness’—this, bhikshus, is called spiritual joy.

II c. An Arhat’s Review Knowledge

10 And what, bhikshus, is superspiritual joy [superspiritual joy] (nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara sukha)? Bhikshus, when a monk, whose influxes are destroyed, reviews his mind liberated from greed, reviews his mind liberated from hate, [237] reviews his mind liberated from delusion—happiness and mental joy arise [§8.2]—this, bhikshus, is called superspiritual joy.

III. The 3 Levels of Equanimity (upekkhā)

III a. The 5 Cords of Sense-Pleasures

11 And what, bhikshus, is carnal equanimity? s’āmisa upekkhā
There are, bhikshus, the 5 cords of sense-pleasures. pañca kāma,guṇa

(1) Visual forms cognizable by the eye

(2) Sounds cognizable by the ear

(3) Smells cognizable by the nose

29 On the tr of kāmehi (pl), see SD 8.4 (5.1.1.1).
30 On this point, see The Buddha discovers dhyana @ SD 33.1b (6.4.1): On coming out of dhyana.
31 The 3rd dhyana is described more elaborately, with a parable, in Sāmañña,phala S (D 2,81), SD 8.10.
32 The whole passage up to here: Yathā kho bhikkhave khīṇāsavassa bhikkhu no rāgā cīttaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, dosā cīttaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, mohā cīttaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, uppajjati sukham somanas-sam.
33 Nirāmisa nirāmisa, tara pīti. Comy explains nirāmisa here as meaning “More spiritual than the spiritual zest of the dhyanas,” ie, surpassing dhyanic zest (SA 3:84,25 f). See (1.1.1.4).
34 Cakkhu, viññeyyā rūpā īṭthā kantā manāpā piya, rūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajāniyā.
that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(4) **Tastes** cognizable by the tongue
that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(5) **Touches** cognizable by the body
that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

These, bhikshus, are the 5 cords of sensual pleasure.¹¹

11.2 Bhikshus, the **equanimity** that arises dependent on these 5 cords of sensual pleasure—this, bhikshus, is called **carnal equanimity**.

III b. **THE 4TH DHYANA**

12. And what, bhikshus, is **spiritual equanimity**? (*nirāmisa upākkhā*)

12.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk, with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,³⁶ and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure, he attains and dwells in **the 4th dhyana**
that is neither painful nor pleasant, and
with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity—this, bhikshus, is called **spiritual equanimity**.

III c. **AN ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE**

13. And what, bhikshus, is **superspiritual equanimity**? (*nirāmisa nirāmisatarā upākkhā*)

13.2 Bhikshus, when a monk, whose influxes are destroyed, reviews his mind liberated from greed,
reviews his mind liberated from hate,
reviews his mind liberated from delusion—**equanimity** arises³⁸ [§8.2]—this, bhikshus, is called **superspiritual equanimity**.

IV. **The 3 levels of liberation (vimokkha)**

IV a. **LIBERATION FROM FORM**

14. And what, bhikshus, is **carnal liberation**?
Carnal liberation is liberation connected with **form**.³⁹

¹¹ At Mahā Dukkha-k,handha S (M 13,7), this whole passage on the 5 cords of sense-pleasure define “the gratification (assāda) with regards to sense-desires” (SD 6.9).
³⁶ “Joy and pain,” *sukha-dukkha*: this refers to the physical feelings. The next phrase—“pleasure and displeasure,” *domanassa-somanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the physical sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see Sall’atthena S (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.
³⁷ Here, Vibhaṅga gives 3 factors of the 4th dhyana—equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’agga*)—according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), and 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164; Vism 4.183/165). The 4th dhyana is described more elaborately, with a parable, in Sāmañña,phala S (D 2,83), SD 8.10. See also Dhyana @ SD 8.4 (5.4).
³⁸ The whole passage up to here: Yā kho bhikkhave khin’āsavassa bhikkhuno rāgā cittam vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, dosā cittam vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, mohā cittam vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, upajjati upākkhā.
³⁹ Rūpa-p,patisāmyutto vimokkho s’āmiso vimokkho. Herem “form” (*rūpa*) has a broad sense encompassing the sense-sphere and the form-sphere. See (1.1.2.1) and foll n.
IV b. LIBERATION FROM THE FORMLESS SPHERE

15 And what, bhikshus, is spiritual liberation (nirāmisa vimokkha)?

Spiritual liberation is liberation connected with formlessness [the formless sphere].

IV c. AN ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

16 And what, bhikshus, is superspiritual liberation (nirāmisā nirāmisa, tāro vimokkho)?

16.2 Bhikshus, when a monk, whose influxes are destroyed,
reviews his mind liberated from greed,
reviews his mind liberated from hate,
reviews his mind liberated from delusion—liberation arises—this, bhikshus, is called superspiritual liberation.

— evam —

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40 Arūpa-patīsāmyutto vimokkho nirāmiso vimokkho. Here, “form” (rūpa) refers to both the sense-sphere as well as the form-sphere. It seems that having described dhyanic zest, etc, as “spiritual” (nirāmisa, lit, “non-carnal”), it seems contradictory to say that form-sphere liberation is “carnal.” Comy explains that form-sphere is described as “carnal” because one’s object is a carnal form (attano ārammaṇa, bhūtena rūp’āmisa, vasen’-eva s’āmiso nāma, SA 3:85,3 f). However, a better explanation surely would be that “form” is a broad term encompassing both the sense-sphere and the form-sphere. See (1.1.2.2).

41 The whole passage up to here: Yo kho bhikkhave khīṃ ‘asavassa bhikkhuno rāgā cittaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, dosā cittaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, mohā cittaṁ vimuttaṁ paccavekkhato, uppajjati vimokkho. See (1.1.2.3).