

4

(Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta

The Discourse to Koṭṭhita (on Fetters) | S 35.191 [S:B 35.232]

Theme: The Buddha has feelings but is not fettered by them

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1 Sutta notes

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY. In the amazingly simple language of early Buddhism, the (Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta is an alternative teaching to that based on the key verse of **the Nibbedhika Sutta** (A 6.63), which runs thus:

*saṅkappa,rāgo purisassa kāmo
n’ete kāmā yāni citrāni loke*

The thought of lust¹ is a person’s desire:²
there are no sensual pleasures in the diversely beautiful³ in the world.

*saṅkappa,rāgo purisassa kāmo
tiṭṭhanti citrāni tath’eva loke
ath’ettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan’ti*

The thought of lust is a person’s desire.
The diversely beautiful in the world remain just as they are.
So here⁴ the wise remove desire (for them).⁵

(A 6.63,3.2/3:411), SD 6.11

The (Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita opens with Mahā Koṭṭhita’s question to Sāriputta on whether a sense-faculty is the fetter (*saṃyojana*) of its sense-object, or the sense-object the fetter of its sense-faculty [§3]. Sāriputta answers that neither is the case: “The fetter here is the desire or lust (*chanda,rāga*) that arise therein dependent on both the internal sense and its external object, clarifying it with the parable of the twin oxen, that is, neither the black ox nor the white ox is the fetter of either, but “the fetter here is the single harness or yoke that binds them together” [§4].

Sāriputta then declares that since this is the case—it is neither the internal sense nor the external object that is the fetter, but the desire that depends on both—the spiritual life is possible [§§6-7]. In other words, awakening is possible because, craving, the root of suffering, arises in the mind, and can be uprooted therein through spiritual training.

The Sutta closes with Sāriputta’s remarkable statement, that the Buddha has sense-experiences just like anyone else. However, the Buddha has no desire or lust, since he is well freed [§8-9]. In other words, the Buddha has feelings, too, but he does not react negatively to them, and is, in fact, unaffected by them, whether they are wholesome or unwholesome. [3]

1.2 CATECHETIC TEACHINGS. Sāriputta evidently has a great regard for Koṭṭhita. **The Thera,gāthā** (Tha 1006-1008; ThaA 2:117) contains three verses in which Sāriputta proclaims Koṭṭhita’s excellence, namely:

¹ On *saṅkappa,rāga*, “thought of lust” or “lustful intention,” see SD 6.11 (2.2.2.4).

² *Saṅkappa,rāgo purisassa kāmo*. Be Ce Ee Se all give the same 5-line stanza. It recurs in **Na Santi S** (S 1.34), SD 42.6 without line a. Here [§3.4] the stress is in our own thinking or intention, while in S 1.34, it is on the nature of the world. Note how line a flows into b, and line c into d. Line e points to what should be done.

³ “Diversely beautiful,” *citra*: see SD 6.11 (2.2.2.3).

⁴ “So here the wise” (*ath’ettha dhīrā’ti atha etesu ārammaṇesu paṇḍitā chanda,rāgaṃ vinayanti*, “here then the wise removes lust and desire in the sense-objects,” SA 1:63). In other words, “here” refers to our minds.

⁵ On this verse’s significance, see SD 6.11 (2.2.2.1).

| <u>Discourse</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Reference</u> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Naḷa,kalāpī Sutta | karma | S 12.67/2:112-115 |
| Paripucchita Sutta 1-2 | not owning the 5 aggregates | S 22.118-119/3:165 f |
| Sīla Sutta | religious discipline | S 22.122/3:167-169 |
| Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1-3 | ignorance & knowledge | S 22.126-128/3:171-173 |
| Assāda Sutta 1-2 | knowledge & ignorance | S 22.129-130/3:173 f |
| Samudaya Suttas 1-2 | arising (<i>samudaya</i>) | S 22.131-132/3:174 |
| (Assāda) Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-2 | gratification | S 22.133/3:175 |
| (Samudaya) Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-2 | nature of ignorance | S 22.134/3:175 |
| (Koṭṭhita) Avijjā Sutta | nature of ignorance | S 22.135/3:176 |
| (Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta | sense & sense-objects | S 35.232/4:162-165 |
| Sāriputta Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-4 | the undeclared | S 44.3-6/4:380-391 |
| (Āyatana) Koṭṭhita Sutta | the senses and nirvana | A 4.174/2:161-163 |
| (Brahma,cariya) Koṭṭhita Sutta | the purpose of the holy life | A 9.13/4:382-385 ⁶ |

In all these suttas Mahā Koṭṭhita is the questioner and Sāriputta the instructor. Mrs C A F Rhys Davids suggests that these discourses were compiled as “lessons” to be learnt rather than as actual inquiries by Koṭṭhita. The pre-eminent monks were “playing” at teacher and pupil in order to aid Koṭṭhita to win proficiency as a teacher. (S:RD 2:79 n1).

These are, in fact, discourses that record discussions between Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita, conducted in the *saṅgāyanā* (question-and-answer or catechetical) style. They are like an educational talk-show between two experienced teachers for the benefit of monastic students.

2 Mahā Koṭṭhita

2.1 LIFE OF MAHĀ KOṬṬHITA

2.1.1 Mahā Koṭṭhita⁷ or Mahā Koṭṭhika is a disciple of the Buddha, the foremost among monks who are masters of the 4 analytic insights (*paṭisambhida-p, patta*) (A 1:24),⁸ which he attains while still a learner (*sekha*) [4.4].⁹ He is declared to have this pre-eminence on account of the skill showed by him in **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43).¹⁰

The Saṃyutta Commentary records that at the time of his arhathood, he focusses on his faculty of samadhi, helped by the other 4 faculties (that is, faith, effort, mindfulness, and wisdom) (S 2:190).

2.1.2 In our Buddha’s time, he is born into a very wealthy brahmin family of Sāvattihī, his father is Assalāyana and his mother Canda,vatī.¹¹ He is a master of the Vedas but, after hearing the Buddha teach the

⁶ The structure of this Sutta is similar to that of **Ratha Vinīta S** (M 24/1:145-151), SD 28.3, but this is on a smaller scale. There, Sāriputta questions Puṇṇa Mantāni,putta on the purpose of the holy life.

⁷ On Mahā Koṭṭhita, see also SD 30.2 (1).

⁸ Also MA 2:336; AA 1:285 f. “Analytic insights,” *paṭisambhidā*, see [4].

⁹ PmA 6,33 = VbhA 388,27 ≈ Vism 14.27/442,13.

¹⁰ M 43/1:292-298 (SD 30.2). On hsi being foremost in the analytic insights, see Tha 2; Ap 2:479; ThaA 1:31 f; AA 1:285 f; also Avadānas 2:195

¹¹ It is unlikely that Koṭṭhita’s father is the Assalāyana of **Assalāyana S** (M 93/2:147-157), as the latter is only 16 then. For, Comys state that Koṭṭhita becomes a follower after hearing the same discourse given to his father (“at the time when the Buddha disciplined my father in all the purities,” *yadā me pitaraṃ buddho vinayī sabba,suddhiyā*, ThA 1:32; Ap 534/479 f)

Dharma (to his father, says the Apadāna), he renounces the world, engages in meditation, and becomes an arhat.¹²

2.1.3 In the time of Padumuttara Buddha, he was a rich householder who, upon witnessing the Buddha praising a monk as the foremost among those with the analytic insights, wished for the same pre-eminence in the future. To this end, he visited the Buddha and his monks, and hosted them for seven days, giving them three robes each at the conclusion of his almsgiving. (Ap 534/479 f)¹³

2.1.4 The Theragāthā contains three verses in which Sāriputta proclaims his excellence (Tha 1006-1008; ThaA 3:104).¹⁴

2.2 SUTTAS CONNECTED WITH MAHĀ KOṬṬHITA

2.2.1 The Pali Canon also preserves a number of discourses given by the Buddha to Koṭṭhita. This set of three discourses, for example, records how the Buddha admonishes Koṭṭhita to abandon the desire for what is impermanent, suffering and non-self:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| • (Anicca) Koṭṭhita Sutta | abandoning the impermanent | (S 35.162/4:145) | SD 108.10 |
| • (Dukkha) Koṭṭhita Sutta | abandoning the suffering | (S 35.163/4:146) | SD 108.11 |
| • (Anatta) Koṭṭhita Sutta | abandoning the non-self | (S 35.164/4:146) | SD 108.12 |

2.2.2 The Kāya,sakkhi Sutta (A 3.21) records a discussion at Jetavana amongst Savittha, Kotthita and Sāriputta, as to who is the most excellent: the body-witness (*kāya,sakkhī*), the view-attainer (*ditṭhi-p-patta*), or the faith-freed (*saddhā,vimutta*). The Buddha tells them that this is no easy task, as each of them is on the way to awakening. (A 3.21/1:118 f)¹⁵

2.2.3 The Citta Hatthi,sāriputta Sutta (A 6.60) recounts a dispute between Koṭṭhita and Citta Hatthi,sāriputta. Citta is constantly interrupting the elder monks who are gathered at Isi,patana for a discussion regarding the Dharma (*abhidhamma*), and is instructed by Koṭṭhita to bide his time and not interrupt. Citta's friends protest, claiming that Citta is well qualified to take part in the discussion, too. Koṭṭhita, however, declares that, far from being wise enough, Citta would in no long time leave the Order. And it so happens. However, he later rejoins the order and in due course becomes an arhat. (A 6.60/3:392-399).¹⁶

3 Does the Buddha have feelings?

3.1 There is a common misconception that the Buddha and the arhats do not have any feelings since they have overcome all defilement; but not all feelings are defilements. **The Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), for example, recounts the Buddha recalling how he has meditated and attained dhyana as a 7-year-old child under a jambu tree during the ploughing festival, and realizes that there is "a pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states."¹⁷ This wholesome pleasure is that of dhyana (*Pjhāna*), which the Buddha attains by using the breath meditation.

¹² ThaA 1:32*; Ap 534/479 f; cf AA 1:285.

¹³ For more details, see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (1).

¹⁴ See SD 30.2 (2.7).

¹⁵ For defs of these saint-types, see **Kiṭṭā,giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1(5.2(2B)).

¹⁶ See also **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (1+2).

¹⁷ M 36.32/1:246 f (SD 49.4); also SD 1.12

3.2 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16) records how the 80-year-old Buddha is attacked by severe sickness and sharp pains, which he can only overcome through deep meditation.¹⁸ **The Junhā Sutta** (U 4.4) records, with a slight touch of humour, that when a yaksha strikes Sāriputta's newly shaven head while he is meditating, he only tells Moggallāna that his head "hurts a bit."¹⁹

3.3 In the (Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta (S 35.232), Sāriputta explains that the Buddha is able to experience sense-objects just like any normal human, but "there are no desire or lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind."²⁰

3.4 One of the most interesting facts the Suttas tell us about the Buddha is perhaps that *he feels for his disciples*. **The Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), for example, shows how the Buddha gives the teaching on the three bases of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) (which is different from the better known set of 4 focuses of mindfulness). These three bases of mindfulness are about how the Buddha responds to three types of situations when he teaches. The Buddha teaches out of compassion for the welfare and happiness of his disciples and responds accordingly in this manner:

- (1) His disciples do not wish to listen, do not pay attention, do not make an effort to understand the Teaching, and deviate from the Teaching.
As such, the Buddha is not pleased, but although not feeling pleased, he dwells untroubled, mindful and fully aware.
- (2) Some of his disciples listen, pay attention, make an effort to understand the Teaching, and do not deviate from the Teaching.
As such, the Buddha is pleased, but although feeling pleased, he dwells untroubled, mindful and fully aware.
- (3) His disciples listen, pay attention, make an effort to understand the Teaching, and do not deviate from the Teaching.
As such, the Buddha is pleased, but although feeling pleased, he dwells untroubled, mindful and fully aware.²¹

It is clear from this Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta passage that the Buddha (and the other saints) do have feelings towards how others behave. This is only natural, and indeed it would be very strange if the Buddha and the arhats had no feelings at all! The "negative" feelings are simply a reflection of the reality of the situation, but none of these feelings affect or trouble the Buddha or the saints in any way: they only see the arising of great compassion to remove the suffering and ignorance of these beings.

3.5 This is the true meaning of equanimity. We do feel disappointed when others do not seem to respond positively to the good we have done. Or, sometimes, people may seem overwhelmed by the kindness we have shown. Either way, we should be mindful and remain unaffected by them.²²

It means that we should not depend on external conditions for our true happiness. We should cultivate the kind of inner happiness that is good in itself, that is independent of any condition. This is called unconditional joy. When this joy is shown to others, it is the basis for **unconditional love**.²³

¹⁸ D 16.2.26/2:100 f (SD 9).

¹⁹ U 4.4/5/40 (SD 24.9).

²⁰ S 35.232.8/4:164 f (SD 28.4).

²¹ M 127,21-24/2:221 f @ SD 29.5 (2.3), (3.2).

²² See also M 127 @ SD 29.5 (3.2) The Buddha *has* feelings.

²³ See further **How the saints feel**, SD 55.20.

4 The 4 analytic insights

4.0 THE ANALYTIC INSIGHTS

4.0.1 Sources

4.0.1.1 Owing to the teaching skill that Mahā Koṭṭhita shows, as recorded in **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), the Buddha declares him as the foremost among those with analytic insights (*paṭisambhida-p,-patta*).²⁴ The analytic insights or wise discrimination (*paṭisambhidā*) are fourfold, as follows:²⁵

| Traditional definitions | Modern applications | |
|--|----------------------------|--|
| (1) the analytic insight in ²⁶ <i>meaning</i> | connotative meaning | <i>attha,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (2) the analytic insight in <i>truth</i> | denotative meaning | <i>dhamma,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (3) the analytic insight in <i>language</i> | verbal expression | <i>nirutti,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (4) the analytic insight in <i>ready wit</i> | analytic insight | <i>paṭibhāna,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| | | (A 4.173/2:160; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294; MA 1:119) ²⁷ |

4.0.1.2 In **the (Sāriputta) Paṭisambhidā Sutta** (A 4.173), Sāriputta declares that within a fortnight (*aḍḍha,māsa*) of his ordination he is able to master the 4 analytic insights both “specifically and literally” (*odhiso vyañjanaso*) [4.5n]. Of the analytic insight in effects, he declares:

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it [the analytic insight in effects] in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right here before us, he who is well-skilled in dharmas [states].²⁸

(A 4.173/2:160), SD 28.4(4.5)

Sāriputta then says the same for each of the other 3 analytic insights—that he has mastered the analytic insights in causes, language and ready wit—but, even then, the Teacher is still the best source of wisdom whenever he is around, and we should learn from him [4.5]. Let us have some basic idea of the nature and usefulness of the 4 analytic insights. Please note that although I have employed philosophical terms, they are used *in a Buddhist sense*, and without reflecting their usage in western philosophy.²⁹

Following this are overviews of the technical aspects the 4 analytic insights, first according to the Paṭisambhidā,magga [4.0.2], then according to the Vibhaṅga [4.0.3], and after that, a modern explanation of them [4.1-4.4].

²⁴ M 43/1:292-298 (SD 30.2); A 1.218/1:24; Tha 2; ThaA 1:31f; AA i.159; Ap 534/479 f; Avadāna 2.195.

²⁵ For a brief but practical discussion in the significance of these 4 analytic insights, see SD 41.6 (2).

²⁶ The tr “the analytic insight *in...*” rather than “the analytic insight *into...*” reflects the fact that they include practical skills, not just theoretical insights.

²⁷ See Kvu:SR, *Points of Controversy*, 1915:377-382; Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:311 f.

²⁸ *Tam ahaṃ aneka,pariyāyena ācikkhāmi desemi pakāsemi paññāpemi paṭṭhapemi vivarāmi vibhajāmi uttānī,-karomi. Yassa kho pan’assa kaṅkhā vā vimati vā so maṃ pañhena ahaṃ veyyākaraṇena sammukhī,bhūto no satthā yo no dhammānaṃ sukusalo.*

²⁹ This is a complicated and confusing area of philosophical terminology which various ad hoc definitions by different authorities. The explanation here is restricted only to Buddhist philosophy.

4.0.2 Paṭisambhidā,magga

4.0.2.1 There is a whole Abhidhamma work, **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** (“the path of discrimination”), that deals with the 4 analytic insights. Interestingly, although it is an Abhidhamma work,³⁰ it is placed as no. 12 in the Khuddaka Nikāya, the Small Collection. This is probably because it was compiled (attributed to the elder Sāriputta) before the compilation of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka itself was completed.³¹

The Paṭisambhidā,magga gives us a detailed analysis or discrimination (*paṭisambhidā*) of how we will understand the Buddha’s teachings. There are 4 kinds of analyses or “analytic insight” (*paṭisambhidā*). Here is an overview of the related teachings in the Paṭisambhidā,magga.

4.0.2.2 The 1st analytic insight is that of **attha**, “meaning, purpose,” of the *dhamma*, which can either mean “teaching(s)” (*pariyatti,dhamma*) or as “condition(s).” On a simple level, then, **attha,paṭisambhidā** refers to understanding the meaning and purpose of teachings; on a deeper level, it refers to examining the nature of conditionality (*hetu,paccaya*), a study of “causes and effects,” that is, these teachings on a deeper level. In practical terms, we can render *attha,paṭisambhidā* as “**the analytic insight into meaning.**” Basically, it functions to discover and analyze all the components or nuances of a word, expression, passage or teaching.

4.0.2.3 In theoretical terms, *attha* has the sense of “**effect,**” that is, how the sutta-texts *appear* to us as we understand language [4.0.2.7]. **Pali** is a textual and spiritual language, specially “designed,” as it were, for the transmission of the Buddha’s teachings on his experience of awakening and how we, too, can experience it, on theoretical, experiential and salvific levels—that is, as theory, practice and realization.³²

On a **theoretical** level, we understand a sutta on the word level: the text, the figures, the stories, the myths and the silence. We need to read them as they are without our colouring them in any way with our views. The sutta needs to be seen in its own light: we need to accept it just as it is, at least, provisionally. Only then, having unconditionally accepted the sutta, does its teachings speak to us.

This brings us to the next level: that of the sutta experience. We can now relate the suttas with other suttas and to our own life: it’s like one sutta talking with another, and we are also part of this conversation with the Buddha. As we look closer, we see further connections, more suttas connect with one another, like jigsaw pieces falling into their right places, and a picture begins to form before our mind’s eye. This is the **experiential** level of the sutta experience.

4.0.2.4 By this time, we would better understand how the words of the sutta are like earth, rock, water, trees, hills, the sky, the wind, animal sounds, and the light, all working in rhythm with the day as it shifts with the light and warmth of the sun, the weather and the seasons. Like nature, the sutta words and passages are the landscape of true reality expressed in human language. It is a language as a window through which we directly see true reality.

Language is a conditioned set of symbols, sounds and senses. They have no fixed senses of their own but are mere mirrors, a kaleidoscope of shifting images of true reality, depending on how well we understand language and work with it. Once we begin to understand that Pali words are fluid and fertile in

³⁰ See E Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidhamma Literature and the Origins of Buddhist Philosophical Systems*, tr S F Kidd, NY, 1995:42.

³¹ See Frauwallner, op cit, 1995:42, 87.

³² These are “3 good truths” (*saddhamma*): *pariyatti,dhamma, paṭipatti,dhamma, paṭivedha,dhamma*: see **The levels of training**, SD 40a.4 esp (2); **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (3.4).

holding and giving sense, sight and space (meaning, understanding and purpose)—we then appreciate it polysemy.

Polysemy means that a word or phrase, even passages and stories, have a number of facets that reflect true reality in various ways. Once we align these facets together, the bits and pieces of reality begin to fall into a bigger and clearer picture that we can read and understand so that we grow beyond what limits us. This, then, is the *dhamma*—as text, teaching and truth. The dead dry words shine in living light.

The *dhamma* of ***dhamma,paṭisambhidā***, as we have just noted, can mean either “teaching” (simple level) or “conditions,” that is, respectively, the *dhamma* as text (suttas) or as truth (conditionality). Hence, *dhamma,paṭisambhidā* is “**the analytic insight into truth**.” On a simple level, these truths are a theoretical understanding of teaching, such as the sense-faculties, perception, knowledge, and insights into the 4 noble truths (*sacca*), the 5 spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and 5 powers (*bala*), the 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*) and the 8 path-factors (*magg’āṅga*).

These insights are seen as objects of thought, so that they work as tools for awakening with which we ascend the path to awakening. In this connection, Gombrich has noted how “[t]he meditator moves from thinking *about* those teachings to thinking *with* them: he learns ... to see the world through Buddhist spectacles.”³³

4.0.2.5 It should also be noted that, in reality, these “**conditions**” (*dhamma*) are always in the plural (*dhammā*),³⁴ but when analyzed, they are often referred to in the singular purely to expedite our understanding. It is like explaining a molecule or atom using a model with the parts properly labelled. Or, better, we peer into an electron-microscope to see actual atoms and molecules spinning about. Like the moving atoms and molecules that neither remain the same exist nor exist in themselves, so too are the causes changing and working together, bringing about effects, which in turn become causes, ad infinitum. This is samsara as a microcosm. [4.1]

4.0.2.6 The ***attha,paṭisambhidā*** (the 1st analytic insight in the traditional list), on a deeper level, discriminates or analyzes the “meanings, purposes or effects” (*attha*) of these conditions (*dhamma*). ***Attha*** here refers to how these conditions (or “factors”) function, for the enumerated effects or meanings (*attha*) are those of establishing (*upaṭṭhān’attho*),³⁵ of investigating (*pavicay’attho*), of calm (*upasam’-attho*), of non-distraction (*avikkhep’attho*) and others, all with reference to their respective dhammas.³⁶

The 2nd analytic insight—***dhamma,paṭisambhidā***—then, is concerned with what conditions do or how they act, that is, as mental processes and constructions—“an aspect fit for the processual construal of the *dhammas* as dynamic occurrences,” as Noah Ronkin puts it.³⁷ [4.2]. While the 1st analytic insight is analytical—examining the various aspects of a word, passage, teaching or sutta—the 2nd (despite its name) is synthetical: it puts together all these parts into an organic whole, and sees how it is connected with other words, passages, teachings or suttas.

4.0.2.7 The 3rd analytic insight is ***nirutti,paṭisambhidā***, that of language (*nirutti*), especially as the means of expressing causes (*dhamma*) and their effects (*attha*), that is conditionality. Here, we learn to be skilled in understanding and using **language** as a means of communication both in its literal sense — words expressing *truth and beauty*; and freeing words from their letters to evoke *meaning and purpose*.

³³ R Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*, London, 1996:36.

³⁴ The usual convention is to give the stem-word (as in the dictionary headers), regardless it is sg or pl.

³⁵ Historically, the *atthā* with cerebral ṭ is used mainly in cpds, frequently ifc: see DP: *atthā*¹.

³⁶ See eg Pm 1:16, 90.

³⁷ N Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics*, Abingdon (Oxford), 2005:88.

This insight, then, is a deeper, fuller, understanding (*ñāṇa*) and application of all the 4 analytic insights. [4.3].

4.0.2.8 The 4th analytic insight is *paṭibhāna, paṭisambhidā*, the discrimination of perspicuity or penetration (*paṭibhāna*), and as an applied or practical skill, we may call it “ready wit.” Technically, this 4th analytic insight is meta-knowledge, the knowledge of knowledges, that is, discerning the instances of the first 3 analytic insights, which are its supporting object (*ārammaṇa*) and its sense-field (*go, cara*). The analytic insight of *ready wit*, then, is an understanding of the differences amongst the various types of causes (*dhamma*) and effects (*attha*), their functions and the language in which they are articulated.³⁸ [4]

4.0.3 Vibhaṅga

4.0.3.1 The 4 analytic insights are also discussed in another Abhidhamma work, **the Vibhaṅga**, chapter 15 (Vbh 293-305). While Paṭisambhidā, magga presents the 4 analytic insights from the sutta viewpoint, the Vibhaṅga presents them from the Abhidhamma viewpoint. As such, their explanations differ in some significant ways. The Vibhaṅga, however, gives both sutta explanations and Abhidhamma explanations of the teachings.

4.0.3.2 The Vibhaṅga, for example, in its “**sutta analysis**” (*suttanta, bhājaniya*), in its “truth (*sacca*) section” collates the 4 noble truths and the 4 analytic insights, as follows:

Noble truths

suffering
the arising of suffering
the ending of suffering
the way to the ending of suffering
knowledge of expressing them in language³⁹
knowledge of these knowledges
paṭibhāna, paṭisambhidā

Analytic skills

the analytic insight in effects
the analytic insight in causes
the analytic insight in effects
the analytic insight in causes
the analytic insights in language
the analytic insight in ready wit

attha, paṭisambhidā
dhamma, paṭisambhidā
attha, paṭisambhidā
dhamma, paṭisambhidā
nirutti, paṭisambhidā

(Vbh §719/292)

4.0.3.3 Further, the Vibhaṅga, in its “teaching (*dhamma*) section,” applies the analytic insights to the Dharma by saying:

Here, bhikshus, a monks knows the teaching, that is, the suttas, the verses with prose, the expositions, the gathas, the udanas, the iti-vuttaka, the jatakas, the marvellous qualities and the catechisms.⁴⁰ This is called the analytic insight in causes (*dhamma, paṭisambhidā*)

He knows the meaning of this and that of what is said, thus: “This is the meaning of what is said. This is the meaning of what is said.” This is called the analytic insight in effects [meanings] (*attha, paṭisambhidā*).

Therein, the knowledge of expressing them in language—this is called the analytic insight in language (*nuritti, paṭisambhidā*).

³⁸ See Pm 1:88-91 (esp 1.417/88) & 2:149-158 (esp 16.4/150).

³⁹ *Tatra dhamma, niruttabhilāpe ñāṇaṃ nirutti, paṭisambhidā*. The tr, “knowledge of the actual philological definition of these...” (Vbh:T 387) unduly limits the Pali sense.

⁴⁰ Respectively, *sutta, geyya, veyyākaraṇa, gāthā, udāna, iti, vuttaka, jātika abbhuta, dhamma, vedalla*. These are the traditional 9 “limbs of the Teacher’s teachings” (*nav’āṅga satthu, sāsana*): see SD 30.10 (4) & SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3).

The knowledge of these knowledge—this is called the analytic insight in ready wit (*paṭibhāna, paṭisambhidā*). (Vbh §724/294)

4.0.3.4 In its “**Abhidhamma analysis**” (*abhidhamma, bhājanīya*), the Vibhaṅga deals with various aspects of the teachings, such as wholesome states, unwholesome states, and the dhyanas, in a meta-physical manner. The wholesome and the unwholesome states are defined in terms of the 3 worlds: the sense-world, the form world and the formless worlds. Then the 4 dhyanas are dealt with in various ways. In each case, the knowledge of the nature of such states (the wholesome, the unwholesome, the dhyanas, etc) is called the analytic insight in causes. The knowledge of the fruiting (*vipāka*) of these states is called the analytic insight in effects. The knowledge of expressing such states in language is called the analytic insight in language. The knowledge of such knowledges is called the analytic insight in ready wit.

Now follows a modern explanation and application of the 4 analytic insights, aimed at giving us a better understanding of how we can use modern learning to explicate and expound the Dharma.

4.1 ATTHA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ

4.1.1 Meaning, sense and reference. The word *attha* usually has the senses, “meaning, purpose,” which also includes “sense, association.” Let us examine the meaning of “sense.” Take, for example, the names, *the Buddha* and *the Blessed One*: they both refer to the same person, so that the Buddha and the Blessed One are identical. As such, the statement “The Buddha is the Blessed One” is an informative statement, unlike the tautology, “The Buddha is identical with the Buddha” (which tells us nothing).

Furthermore, to say that the Buddha is the Blessed One is *to discover something* about Buddhism: it is not merely to discover the meaning of a word. It is different to discover that the Blessed One is identical with *bhagavā*: this is merely to discover the Pali equivalent of an English phrase.

The expressions “the Buddha” and “the Blessed One” are said to have the same reference, but each with a different sense. Another example is that of “Vesak Day” and “first full-moon day of May”: they clearly differ in *sense* but have the same *reference*.⁴¹

4.1.2 Denotation. The first of the analytic insights—*attha, paṭisambhidā*—deals with meaning (that is, the *effect* or *value* of a word), which is, in fact, an important or main sense of the word *attha*, and this is found in **the Vibhaṅga**, where it quite clearly says that *attha, paṭisambhidā* means “the meaning of what is spoken,” namely, of words and sentences:⁴²

He comprehends the meaning of whatever is spoken, such as, “This is the meaning of this sentence,” “That is the meaning of that sentence”—this is called the analysis of meaning.⁴³

(Vbh 724/294)

As such, an important aspect of *attha, paṭisambhidā* is an examination of meaning and an act of disambiguation (the clearing of ambiguities). This is known as the denotation or denotative meaning (such as, by way of referring to something).

⁴¹ See A W Sparks, *Talking Philosophically: A word book*, 1991: 56 f. “Sense and reference” is the usual tr for Gottlob Frege’s German phrase *Sinn und Bedeutung*: see Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 1968a: 147-155. See also **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11 (5.4+8.5), on words and meaning.

⁴² Shwe Zan Aung & CAF Rhys Davids (Kvu:SR 378) thinks that here it does not refer verbal meaning or dictionary (lexical) definition, which Jayatilleke disagrees with (1963: 311).

⁴³ *So tassa tass’eva bhāsītassa attham jānāti, ayam imassa bhāsītassa attho, ayam imassa bhāsītassa atthō ti. Ayam vuccati attha, paṭisambhidā.*

The term *attha,paṭisambhidā*, on a more technical level, refers to the insight in analyzing meanings “in extension.” This means listing a “class” of things, that is, all the names or words encompassed by that word, expression, sentence or idea. Since a complete enumeration of the things to which a general term applies would be very cumbersome, inconvenient, or impossible, in many cases, it is more useful and effective to list smaller groups of things, or by giving a few examples or at least one example instead. Understandably, the most common and most primitive denotative definition in any language is that of *pointing at a single example* to which the term properly applies.

4.1.3 Extension. There are, however, times when the same words and ideas do not present us with definite meanings. For example, although we know the *meaning* of the phrases “my family” or “the world” or “everything,” we may not know their *sense* or usage. The definition needs *extension* (more details)⁴⁴ or *ostension* (all the details), that is, by giving examples, or listing their components.⁴⁵

One of the best known examples of a denotative definition is that of “everything” (*sabba*), as found in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), thus:

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| And what, bhikshus, is the all? | | | |
| The eye | and | forms, | |
| the ear | and | sounds, | |
| the nose | and | smells, | |
| the tongue | and | tastes, | |
| the body | and | touches, | |
| the mind | and | mind-objects. ⁴⁶ | |
| This, bhikshus, is called the all. | | | (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1 |

Here, we can say that “the all” (*sabba*) and the “sense-bases” (*āyatana*) refer to the same thing/s but they have different senses [4.1.1]. We can also say that “the all” denotes “the sense-bases and sense-objects,” or that “the all” denotes “the eye and forms, etc.”

4.1.4 Denotation and connotation

4.1.4.1 An understanding the nature of denotation and connotation is useful here. In language generally, except for technical language, the **denotation** of a word is *all of the individual things* which that word can be used to refer to. It is the meaning conveyed by objects or instances to which a word refers or, by extension, by the generic idea or concept that is represented by that word.⁴⁷

The **connotation** of a word is the set of characteristics a thing must have to be included in the denotation of that word. Simply put, it is an implied, suggested, signified, or abstract meaning of the word.

⁴⁴ An **extensional definition** of a word or concept defines its meaning by specifying its *extension*, ie, every object that falls under its definition; eg, an extensional definition of the term “the three jewels” (*ti, ratana*) might be given by listing “the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha,” See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensional_definition.

⁴⁵ An **ostensive definition** conveys the meaning of a word by pointing out examples. This type of def is often used where the term is difficult to define verbally, either because the words will not be understood (as with children and new speakers of a language) or because of the nature of the term (such as colors or sensations). It is usually accompanied with a gesture pointing out the object serving as an example, and for this reason is also often referred to as “definition by pointing.” Ostensive definitions rely on an analogical or case-based reasoning; eg, defining “red” by pointing to red objects: a rose, a stop sign, blood. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostensive_definition.

⁴⁶ “Mind-objects,” *dhammā*, alt tr “mental phenomena.”

⁴⁷ The last def is from A S Reber, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, London, 1985: meaning, denotative.

Thus, the denotation of the word “mother” is *all* the individual existing mothers that there are, while its connotation is the abstract definition or meaning “female parent of a human or non-human being.”

(In fact, the same distinction can be drawn from the use of the words “extension,” instead of denotation, and “intension,” instead of connotation.)⁴⁸ [4.1.5]

In certain cases, however, as for example, “unicorn,” there is no *denotation* (we cannot refer or point to a particular existing unicorn), although there is a *connotation* (a horse-like animal with a single horn on its crown).

4.1.4.2 It should be noted that this philosophical usage is different from ordinary, even literary, usage of denotation and connotation. For example, where of “mother” denotes “a human parent or female animal,” and the word *connotes*, for most people, associations or overtones with home-maker, maternal love, security, etc).⁴⁹

We see this kind of “philosophical” usage on a spiritual level, especially in regard to the two levels of language used in Dharma discourse. The teaching where the meaning “has been drawn out” (*nīṭ’attha*) can be said to be *denotative* because it directly refers to the nature of true reality (eg, “form is impermanent”). The teaching where the meaning “needs to be drawn out” (*neyy’attha*) is regarded as *connotative*, that is, they are imageries, examples and stories, “associations and overtones,” that bring you the meaning of the passage (eg “in the past when I was still a bodhisattva ...” or “once there was a lion ...”).

4.1.4.3 This distinction can also be taken as “Dharma language” and “worldly language.” When the Suttas state that “All conditioned things are impermanent,” the expression “conditioned things” is used on a Dharma level or denotative sense to refer to *all* things in this world. On a worldly (or conventional) level (or literary usage, or connotative sense), “the world” could refer to only human beings (such as “the tallest man in the world”) or to a physical realm (such as “the tallest building in the world”).⁵⁰

4.1.5 Extension and intension. Now let us examine the difference between the difference between extension and intension. The same object may be described in many ways, and so has the same *extension* or denotation [4.1.4]. For example, the number “12” is the extension of the following statements: “what follows 11,” “the number of months in a year,” “the number of causal links.” But they all differ, not only in word, but also in meaning, that is, in *intension* or denotation.

On the other hand, many meaningful expressions lack *extension*. For example, the expression, “a cat with nine lives,” and the definite statement, “the largest number,” have this property: they refer to *something*, but nothing definite. We know its *meaning*, but we do not know the real *intention* behind it. The intention of the expression or idea would depend on the speaker or writer. Hence, it is vital to know the original intention of the expression or idea, before we are likely to meaningfully respond to it.

Moreover, the extension of an expression can vary over time without the expression itself changing in meaning. The extension of “flower” changes as it *blossoms, wilts and dies, and new ones bloom*, but the word does not change in meaning. In terms of extension, therefore, a word, expression or idea can have a range of *senses*, which are part of a set of qualities or states that refer to it.

Take this famous simile, for example: A lamp (or candle) burns in the three watches of the night. Is the flame the same or different during each watch? “It is not the same, and it is not another.” (Miln 40).⁵¹

⁴⁸ See A W Sparks, *Talking Philosophically: A word book*, 1991: 56 f.

⁴⁹ Anthony Flew (ed), *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed, 1984: sv denotation.

⁵⁰ For further reading on denotation and connotation, see Ermanno Bencivenga, *Logic, Bivalence, and Denotation*, Ridgeview, 1991.

⁵¹ See Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998: 138-146; also Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, 2007: 32-35.

4.2 DHAMMA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ

4.2.1 Relationship between *attha, paṭisambhidā* and *dhamma, paṭisambhidā*

4.2.1.1 The second analytic insight is that of causes and causal relations, or better, conditionality (*dhamma, paṭisambhidā*). According to **the Vibhaṅga**, while *attha, paṭisambhidā* deals with the resultant situation, *dhamma, paṭisambhidā* is an insightful or skillful analysis of the antecedent states or causes. In other words, while *dhamma, paṭisambhidā* is the knowledge of causes, *attha, paṭisambhidā* is the knowledge of effects (Vbh §718/293).⁵²

As such, these two analytic insights deal with two interlinked aspects of a statement or idea. **Dhamma, paṭisambhidā** deals with the understanding of the nature of *intension* (the denotation or sense of the word) or *intention* (the moral motivation behind the state or action) and *denotation* (the meaning of the state or action), while **attha, paṭisambhidā** deals with the understanding of the nature of its *extension* (the purpose) and *connotation* (effect or implication).

4.2.1.2 Dhamma, paṭisambhidā, the second analytic insight, works to denote (from Latin *de-*, apart), analyze a state or situation, taking it *apart*, as it were, to reveal to us the causes or conditions that brought it about: hence, it is called the “analytic insight of causes.”

In terms of language and linguistics, **denotation** refers to the meaning of a word or expression in relation to everyday life and to other words and expressions. For example, colours can be described in terms either of wavelengths of reflected energy, or of such relationships as, in English, *red* with blood, *white* with snow, *green* with grass, *blue* with sea and sky. By virtue of their **connotations**, the same colours have further associations: *red* with anger or irritation, *white* with purity and innocence, *green* with inexperience or envy, *blue* with sadness and depression.⁵³

Attha, paṭisambhidā, as such, works to make us appreciate what a state or situation connotes (from Latin *con-*, “together”). It synthesizes or “brings together” our experiences, memories of them, and inferences from them to give us a more whole, wholesome and clearer vision of our true self, of what we really are. As such, we cannot really separate the experience from which the analytic insights of causes or effects. It is how we see with insight into our experiences, whether we see them as causes or as effects, and work from there. Either way, as long as we habitually and constantly look directly into the present moment of reality, we continue to hone and deepen our insight.

Dhamma, paṭisambhidā denotes to us the meanings of things (whatever is or occurs) through the working of our senses—what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch, how we think of them, and how we react to our own thoughts. All this, in fact, creates cognitive meanings for us, how we react to the connection or relationship between a word, a term a name or an idea (*nāma*) to the object, another idea or action it present before us (*rūpa*).⁵⁴

Dhamma, paṭisambhidā as connotation, then, is usually a very personal experience, each of us with our own view, often projecting a very personal *meaning* to an experience. “Swimming,” for example, may connote for one person an idea of recreation or training for some competitions, for another a fear of drowning. Even our perception of Buddhism differs from person to person. A spiritual person associates it with meditation and mental calm; a pious devotee sees it as pleasant and powerful rituals; a scholar looks at it through academic lenses; a sociable person may see Buddhism as a fellowship of friendly people; a

⁵² *Hetumhi ñāṇaṃ dhamma, paṭisambhidā, hetu, phale ñāṇaṃ attha, paṭisambhidā.*

⁵³ These examples are from *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, Oxford, 1992: connotation and denotation.

⁵⁴ For a study on *nāma, rūpa*: as aggregate (*khandha*), see SD 171.12 (a2); as a link the dependent arising, see **Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2, 11/2:3 f) n, SD 5.15.

zealous preacher sees Buddhism as supporting his pious or personal views; a crafty opportunist calculates how he can lure in devotees and milk them.

If we are diligent seekers, carefully discerning the causes and effects of things with insight, then our visions of these bits and pieces of true reality would, in time, triangulate our goal and the direction we should take. Every step we take then brings us ever nearer to the open door of awakening.

4.2.1.3 Words, expressions, sentences or ideas do not arise or exist in themselves but always in *relation* to other things; they are all *conditioned* by other things (A), and in turn *condition* other things (C). This set of conditionality is the *context* of the words, expressions or ideas. When words, expressions, sentences, or ideas have no useful meaning, except in their *context*.

However, if we understand the context, we only have an idea of *antecedents* (or causes) of the situation or the *intention* of the act, but we still need to know their *effect* or implication. The analytic insight in determining the former is *dhamma,paṭisambhidā*, while the analytic insight in determining the latter is *attha,paṭisambhidā*.

4.2.1.4 The Mahôsadha (or Mahā Ummaga) Jātaka (J 546) provides many remarkable episodes of how the Bodhisattva is able to skillfully analyze the antecedents of a problem situation, and understanding its effect, puts them to his benefit and of others. The episode of “the piece of meat” is an excellent example.

One day, a hawk carries off a piece of meat. Some boys saw it flying and were determined to make it drop the meat. The hawk flew in different directions, and they, looking up at the bird, followed it, throwing sticks, stones and other objects, and falling over one another.

Then, Mahôsadha (the young Bodhisattva) told them that he would make the hawk drop the piece of meat. He ran like the wind, looking down and following its shadow. When the shadow was largest, he stepped on it and gave a loud shout. The frightened bird dropped the meat and Mahôsadha caught just before it touched the ground. (J 546/6:334 f). Now discuss how he did this in terms *attha,paṭisambhidā* and *dhamma,paṭisambhidā*.

4.2.1.5 One last note on the analytic insights of causes (as denotation) and of effects (as connotation). On a very general level of human communication, we can see the analytic insight of conditions (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*)—what our experiences *denote*—is the “dictionary” meaning of words or our fixed “conventional” ways of seeing things, often a reactive way of living. It is a “what you see is what you get” way of looking at the surface of persons and events.

While it is true that a dictionary “gives meanings of words,” or is “a book dealing with the individual words of a language” (OED), the meanings are not created by the dictionary itself, but comes from the common speech or recorded usages by us or those before us. In other words, we are those who define the words as we use them in daily life, in our writings, communications and human interactions. Hence, a dictionary is only a temporary record of how words are used and generally accepted in conventional or literary usages.

There are a couple of ways in which new words arise. We can invent them as the need arises, say, in a technical environment, such as in the case of the computer terms and lingo—but these only help us to do things faster and easier; nothing more. Or, on a more aesthetic level, we could use words as tools for the expression of joy, beauty, and, above all, truth: this is the task of the writer, poet, wordsmith, and one in love. On an even higher level, that of spiritual experience (such as the bliss of deep meditation), we would initially be at a loss for words to describe such a state, but under the right circumstance (such as during a meditation instruction or Dharma teaching session), the teacher would speak common words and expressions, but exude them with a new, yet deeper, meaning, inspiring us with renewed purpose to work for awakening in this life itself.

As unawakened worldlings, we are defined by the words we use or others use on us. When we work to cultivate our inner stillness and clarity, we redefine the words, or even silence them. Then, when we emerge from the joy and light of even just a glimpse of awakening, we must find the words and ways to define ourself to share the truth and beauty of our spirituality.

4.3 NIRUTTI, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ

4.3.1 Nirutti as spoken language. Not much can be culled from the Pali Canon on the nature of the third analytic insight, that concerning language, that is, *nirutti, paṭisambhidā*. Only **the Vibhaṅga** gives any clue at all, even then just barely: it says that *nirutti, paṭisambhidā* deals with “the designation of states” (*dharmānaṃ paññatti*) and “the knowledge regarding utterance” (*abhiḷāpe ñāṇaṃ*) (Vbh 295).

Let us look at *nirutti, paṭisambhidā* as “the knowledge regarding utterance” first, as this definition is more general and easier. One of the first things that comes to mind would be the Buddha’s advice on language and communicability. In **the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139), for example, the Buddha admonishes us, “You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject common usage.” That is to say, when teaching Dharma or communicating, we should use the local dialect or the language of the audience so that they can better understand us.

The Sutta deals with various other aspects of language and communication, such as, talking in terms of *situations* rather than *persons* (that is, people with problems, not problem people), speaking ethically and beneficially, and not speaking hurriedly. Indeed, the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta is a discourse that deals with the more common aspects of *nirutti, paṭibhāna*.⁵⁵

The Buddha’s amazing and compassionate capacity for “going native” is attested in his manner of appearing before the “eight assemblies” to effectively admonish them, so that he appears before any class of society (whether kshatriya, brahmin, houselord or recluse) or amongst other beings, looking and sounding just like them, so that “Whatever their colour was then, so was my colour, too. Whatever was their voice then, so was my voice, too. I instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk.”⁵⁶

Although the Buddha has discovered the ultimate truth and is fully freed from suffering and the world, he does not impose his awakening and teachings onto others. The point is simply that awakening is not a *thing* that could be transferred like cash from one to another. We must first find a conducive environment for mental cultivation; we then go on to cultivate inner stillness and clarity; this then helps us to straighten our views and free our minds.

To this end, the Buddha stresses on presenting the Teaching in a wholesome manner so that the listener is moved to spiritual action. In **the Abhaya Rāja, kumāra Sutta** (M 58), for example, the Buddha teaches us to identify and deal with trick questions, and how and when to present to the liberating truth to others so that they readily benefit from our teachings.⁵⁷

4.3.2 Nirutti as discourse. Language, speech and writing are the most common ways we try to communicate religion and truth, but these media often hide as much as they convey the truth. Or, these media could be used to communicate false teachings or harmful information. Or, the recipient or audience could misconstrue or misuse such teachings or information on account of their own ignorance and craving.

Human language is based on a naming process (*nāma*) in relation to a form (*rūpa*), so that such an idea is communicable to other humans or beings (such as animals). However, instead of understanding

⁵⁵ M 139/3:230-236 @ SD 7.8.

⁵⁶ D 16,3.21-23/2:109 f), SD 9; see also **Wanderers of today**, SD 24.6b (3).

⁵⁷ M 58/1:392-396 @ SD 7.12.

language as merely sounds and references to which we *attribute* meanings, we tend to *reify* those sounds and references. *We tend to regard the name as the thing named.* But the name is *not* the thing named.⁵⁸

Discourse is how we present our ideas and feelings through language to communicate with others—it is how we use language to record our thoughts, and to inform or influence others in a wholesome manner. Dharma discourse then is about *how* the Buddha teaches the Dharma, and about how *we* should teach the Dharma.⁵⁹

Language is understood and used differently in each religion, depending on whether it is *word-based* or *truth-based*. **Word-based religions** are also book-centred (*bibliocentric*), such as the Abrahmic religions (especially the more evangelical sects of Christianity). They tend to use or take both *literal* language and *figurative* language—truths and parables—are taken as literally true. Indeed, it is common to hear such believers claim that *every word* in their holy book is correct and true.⁶⁰

Here, “correct” refers to the claim that their scripture has been handed down without any error, and “true” in the sense that what is stated therein actually happened or will happen. This is a clearly and highly problematic claim, since it is the basis for **sectarianism**. This is highly problematic because a lot of “inspired” or religiously powerful people make the same claim, but each of them say that only *they* are right and everyone else wrong! Such self-righteous and quarrelsome God-believers are like the blind men and the elephant.⁶¹ On a more extreme level, this is often a basis for sociopathy (antisocial personality disorder).

Such believers swear by their God, and swear at each other by the same God! I’m sure no right thinking person would want to join such quarrels or such a dysfunctional family! God-belief is essentially tribalism: *if you are not with us, you are against us.* However, if you are not part of such a quarrel, it is easier to show true agapē, true lovingkindness, to all of them and everyone else. There is an important discussion on how the truth is better learned and preserved when we do not claim that “only this is true, anything else is false.”⁶²

4.4 PAṬIBHĀNA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ is defined in **the Vibhaṅga** as “knowledge about knowledge,” or better, “knowledge about knowing” (*ñāṇesu ñānam*) (Vbh 293-296). As such, notes **Jayatileke**, “all analyses of knowledge from a psycho-ethical or epistemological standpoint, as for instance in the *Ñāṇa-vibhaṅga* of the *Vibhaṅga* (pp 306-334) or in the *Ñāṇa-kathā* of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (pp 4-134) would fall under it.” (1963: 312). In simpler terms, this is perspicuity or ready wit, that is, a mastery of language and communication in term of the Dharma.

The monk poet **Vaṅgīsa** is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who are of ready wit (*paṭibhāṇavanta*) (A 1:24).⁶³ Vaṅgīsa, a gifted poet, has a penchant for ready expression, especially expressing in beautiful verse what the Buddha has taught, such as **the (Vaṅgīsa) Subhāsita Sutta** (S 8.5).⁶⁴ Many of his poems are preserved in **the Vaṅgīsa Saṃyutta** (S 8/1:185-196) and his own **Thara, gāthā** (Tha 1209-1279), the last poem of the book.

⁵⁸ See eg **Saṅkhāra (Formations)**, SD 17.6 (2).

⁵⁹ See **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11; on discourse, see **The gradual way**, SD 56.1 (1).

⁶⁰ On “open language” and “private language”: **Caṅkī S** (M 95), SD 21.15 (3.2); **Mahā Nidāna Sutta** (D 15), SD 5.17 (7); **Aggi Vaccha, gotta S** (M 72), SD 6.15 (6); **Two levels of religious language**, SD 10.6, on the nature of religious language and ultimate meaning.

⁶¹ See **Nānā Titthiyā S 1** (U 6.4/66-99), SD 40a.14.

⁶² This are the 12 steps of spiritual learning: see **Caṅkī S** (M 95.15-33/2:171-176), SD 21.15, also Intro (4) on belief and knowledge.

⁶³ See **(Vaṅgīsa) Ānanda S** (S 8.4), SD 16.12.

⁶⁴ S 8.5/1:188 f.

Clearly, *paṭibhāna* as ready expression refers to beautiful words (*subhāsita*), that is, literally, well spoken words, which bring joy to the listener. The Buddha and his disciples are often reported as having “instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened (the audience) those monks with a Dharma talk,”⁶⁵ and then goes on to give deeper teachings or instructions.

Of the laymen, the one foremost in ready wit would surely be **Citta Gaha,pati** [the houselord], who is, in fact, declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of the laymen who teach the Dharma (A 1:26). Many of Citta’s teachings (some to monks) are preserved in **the Citta Saṃyutta** (S 41/4:281-304), especially **the Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta Sutta** (S 41.8), where Citta declares that he “does not go by faith” in the Buddha’s teaching. Nāta,putta mistakes this as his meaning that he has no faith in the Buddha. Nāta,putta is badly embarrassed only to discover that Citta means that he has understood the Buddha’s teaching by his own wisdom!⁶⁶

Besides the houselord Citta, other disciples, namely, Ānanda, the layman Upāli (the erstwhile Jain) the layman Dhammika, and they laywoman Khujj’uttarā, have also gained the analytic insights (*paṭisambhidā*) while still on the level of a learner (*sekha, bhūmi*),⁶⁷ that is, as a saint but not yet an arhat.

4.5 THOSE FOREMOST IN THE ANALYTIC INSIGHTS. The importance of the analytic insights is attested by the fact that a whole chapter in **the Vibhaṅga** of the Abhidhamma, which analyses them, that is, the Paṭisambhidā, magga Vibhaṅga. Furthermore, there is a whole book in the Khuddaka Nikāya, **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**, dedicated to them, and the work is attributed to none other than **Sāriputta**, whose wisdom is second only to the Buddha’s. Sāriputta is well accomplished in analytic insights, too:

This is understandable because, in the final analysis, the 4 analytic insights are most fully developed in the arhat, on account of his full awakening, as recounted in the (Sāriputta) Paṭisambhidā Sutta, which follows:

— — —

SD 28.4(4.5)

(Catukka) Paṭisambhidā Sutta

The (Fours) Discourse on Analytic Insights | A 4.173/2:160

Theme: Sāriputta’s attainment of the 4 analytic insights

Then the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks,

“Avuso, bhikshus.”

“Avuso,” the monks replied in assent.

⁶⁵ “The Blessed One then **instructed** (*sandassetvā*), **inspired** (*samādapetvā*), **roused** (*samuttejetvā*) and **gladdened** (*sampahamsetvā*) ... with a Dharma talk.” This action sequence reflects the basic structure of the Buddha’s teaching method: (1) the Dharma is shown; (2) the listeners are filled with enthusiasm; (3) they are fired with commitment; and (4) filled with joy. Comys (eg DA 1:293; UA 242; cf VA 1:65; MA 2:35) explain that by **instructing**, the Buddha dispels the listener’s delusion; by **inspiring him**, heedlessness is dispelled; by **rousing** him, indolence is dispelled; and by **gladdening**, brings the practice to a conclusion. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy to the listener. These 4 qualities are, in fact, the 6th or last of the ideal skills of a sufficiently capable monastic: (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Alaṃ S** (A 8,62,2), SD 46.5. See SD 11.4 (4) & also L S Cousins, in his review of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (tr. Ñāṇamoli) in JBE 4 1997: 272, where he gives a slightly different listing of the above. See also Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, 1992:65-67. On *ācikkhanti deseti*, etc, see also A 4.92.5(4a) n, SD 14.11b.

⁶⁶ See S 41.8/4:297-300 (SD 40a.7); see also **Caṅkī S** (M 95) (4.3) Supremacy of knowledge over belief.

⁶⁷ PmA 6,33 = VbhA 388,27 ≈ Vism 14.27/442,13.

The venerable Sāriputta said this:

“(1) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic insight in meaning (*attha,paṭi-sambhidā*), both specifically and literally.⁶⁸

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right here before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(2) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic insight in truth (*dhamma,paṭi-sambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right here before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(3) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic insight in language (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right here before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(4) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic insight in ready wit (*paṭibhāna,paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right here before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

— evaṃ —

Sāriputta is especially adept in at least two ways in his teachings. He is able to present the Dharma in novel ways, approved by the Buddha himself, and secondly, he is able to present the Dharma in a comprehensive and encyclopaedic manner. In terms of *methodology*, these discourses are the outstanding works of Sāriputta, or are attributed to him as reflective of his genius.⁶⁹

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta | M 9/1:46-55 ⁷⁰ | the 4 noble truths explained in terms of the courses of action, the 4 foods, and dependent arising; |
| Mahā Hatthi,padôpama Sutta | M 28/1:184-191 ⁷¹ | analyses of the 4 noble truths and suffering, the 5 aggregates and form, and the 4 primary elements; |
| Sama,citta Sutta | A 2.4.6/1:64 f ⁷² | on the rebirth of the learners. |

⁶⁸ *Odhiso vyañjanaso*, which Comy explains as “in meaning” (*kāraṇaso*) and “in the letter” (*akkharaso*) (AA 3:149). CPD (*sv odhiso*) however says that this is “hardly correct.” CPD (id) tr it as “piece by piece and expression by expression.” See BHSD (*sv vyañjana*) which says that **Sūtrāṅkāra 18.32** glosses *vyañjanasya* with *yathā,rutārthasya*. “according to the meaning of the sound” (*sv ruta* 2). As such, it can be said that Sāriputta has mastered *each* of the 4 analytic insights in (one by one) as well as in practice, using them in his *talks*.

⁶⁹ See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997: 39-42.

⁷⁰ SD 11.14.

⁷¹ SD 6.16.

⁷² SD 68.5

Sāriputta is also said to have composed the following encyclopaedic works:⁷³

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---|
| Saṅgīti Sutta | D 33/3:207-271 | doctrinal terms arranged in sets of 1 to 10; |
| Das'uttara Sutta | D 34/3:272-292 | groups of 10 single doctrines, then 10 twofold doctrines, and so on up to 10 tenfold; |

and the following works are also ascribed to Sāriputta:

- Niddesa** (Nm & Nc) — The Niddesa (composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE) is a collection of two ancient canonical commentaries, **the Mahā Niddesa** (Nm) and **the Cūḷa Niddesa** (Nc), in the Khuddaka Nikāya. Nm is a commentary on the Aṭṭhaka, vagga (Sn 766-975), and Nc on the Pārāyana, vagga (Sn 976-1149) and the Khagga, visāṇa Sutta (Sn35-75): all these texts are part of the Sutta Nipāta. (PmA 1:1,18*)⁷⁴
- Paṭisambhidā, magga** (Pm) — Pm is the only Abhidhamma text found in the Khuddaka Nikāya (probably composed 2nd century). It lists 73 aspects of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) which are then detailed. It is not as systematic as the seven books of the Abhidhamma, and is probably a forerunner to the more organized Vimutti, magga and Visuddhi, magga. (PmA 1:1,18*)⁷⁵

The Sangha fathers who compiled the Abhidhamma piously attributed it to Sāriputta.⁷⁶ Buddhist legend has it that the Buddha was said to have taught the whole Abhidhamma in the Tāvātimsa heaven, to his mother, the devaputra Mahā, māyā (who had come down from Tusita). The Buddha then recounted the teachings to Sāriputta, who formulated it into the form we have it today.⁷⁷ Those choice of Sāriputta as the Abhidhamma author is understandable, as he is the wisest of the monks after the Buddha, and also endowed with the 4 analytic insights.

Those who have mastered the 4 analytic insights are said “to be held in great esteem” (*garu ca bhāvanīyo ca*, A 3:113) by their colleagues, and “to attain the imperturbable⁷⁸ state in no long time” (*na cirass'eva akuppaṃ paṭivijjhati*, A 3:119). The great disciple, **Sāriputta**, the wisest of the monks after the Buddha,⁷⁹ is said to have mastered these 4 analytic insights in a relatively short time (A 2:160). However, the monk declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of those monks with the 4 analytic insights is **Mahā Koṭṭhita** (A 1:24). The monk poet **Vaṅgīsa**, as already noted [4.4], is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who are of ready wit (*paṭibhāṇavanta*) (A 1:24).⁸⁰

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⁷³ See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997: 42-44.

⁷⁴ See Otto von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:58 f (§II.2.5.11).

⁷⁵ See Otto von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:59 f (§II.2.5.12); also Noa Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics*, 2005:87-95.

⁷⁶ See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997:45f.

⁷⁷ See **Dhamma and Abhidhamma**, SD 26.1 (6+7).

⁷⁸ The “imperturbable” (*anīñjita*) is a canonical term for the 4th dhyana and the 4 formless attainments. See **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,9d/3:112), SD 11.4 (3.1) & **Laṭukikôpama S** (M 66,22-34/1:454-456), SD 28.11; also MA 3:171.

⁷⁹ Sāriputta and Moggallāna are declared by the Buddha to be the standard and ideal (*esā tulā etarā pamāṇarā*) of his disciples (A 2:164).

⁸⁰ For a broader and more practical description of the 4 analytic insights, see SD 46.5 (1.3).

(Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta The Discourse to Koṭṭhita (on Fetters)

S 35.191

Mahā Koṭṭhita meets Sāriputta

1 At one time the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were dwelling in the deer park in Isipatana, near Benares

2 Then in the evening, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, having emerged from solitary retreat, approached the venerable Sāriputta. Having approached, he exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, Mahā Koṭṭhita sat down at one side.

Are the senses fetters?

3 Seated thus as one side, Mahā Koṭṭhita said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“How is it, avuso Sāriputta:

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Is the eye | the fetter of forms, or | are forms | the fetter of the eye? |
| Is the ear | the fetter of sounds, or | are sounds | the fetter of the ear? |
| Is the nose | the fetter of smells, or | are smells | the fetter of the nose? |
| Is the tongue | the fetter of tastes, or | are tastes | the fetter of the tongue? |
| Is the body | the fetter of touches, or | are touches | the fetter of the body? |
| [163] Is the mind | the fetter of mind-objects, or | are mind-objects | the fetter of the mind?” |

Desire-or-lust is the fetter

4 “Avuso Koṭṭhita:

The eye is not the fetter of forms

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

The ear is not the fetter of sounds

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

The nose is not the fetter of smells

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

The tongue is not the fetter of tastes

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

The body is not the fetter of touches

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

The mind is not the fetter of mind-objects

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust

nor are forms the fetter of the eye.

that arises therein dependent on both.

nor are sounds the fetter of the ear.

that arises therein dependent on both.

nor are smells the fetter of the nose.

that arises therein dependent on both.

nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue.

that arises therein dependent on both.

nor are touches the fetter of the body.

that arises therein dependent on both.

nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind.

that arises therein dependent on both.

5 PARABLE OF THE TWIN OXEN. Suppose, avuso, a black ox and a white ox were tied together by a single harness or yoke. Would one be speaking rightly if one were to say,

‘The black ox is the fetter of the white ox; or, the white ox is the fetter of the black ox?’⁸¹

“No, avuso. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox; the white ox is not the fetter of the black ox. The fetter here is *the single harness or yoke that binds them together.*”

⁸¹ This parable, without §6, as at **Saṅḅojana S** (S 41.1,9/4:282 f), SD 32.11.

“Even so, avuso:

The eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The nose is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The tongue is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The body is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The mind is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind. The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The possibility of the holy life

6 If, avuso, the eye were the fetter of forms, or if forms were the fetter of the eye, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.⁸²

But since the eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye [164] —the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the ear were the fetter of sounds, or if sounds were the fetter of the ear, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear—the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the nose were the fetter of smells, or if smells were the fetter of the nose, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the nose is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose—the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the tongue were the fetter of tastes, or if tastes were the fetter of the tongue, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the tongue is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue—the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the body were the fetter of touches, or if touches were the fetter of the body, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the body is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body—the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the mind were the fetter of mind-objects, or if mind-objects were the fetter of the mind, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

⁸² As long as we have the sense-bases, we would always be fettered to their objects, and so liberation would be impossible. (S:B 1422 n168)

But since the mind is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind—the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

In a manner of speaking

7 In this way, too, avuso, in a manner of speaking (*pariyāyena*),⁸³ it should be understood how the eye is not the fetter of forms, and how forms are not the fetter of the eye. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the eye and forms).

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the ear is not the fetter of sounds, and how sounds are not the fetter of the ear. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the ear and sounds).

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the nose is not the fetter of smells, and smells are not the fetter of the nose. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the nose and smells).

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the tongue is not the fetter of tastes, and tastes are not the fetter of the tongue. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the tongue and tastes).

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the body is not the fetter of touches, and touches are not the fetter of the body. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the body and touches).

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the mind is not the fetter of mind-objects, and mind-objects are not the fetter of the mind. For, the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the mind and mind-object).

The Blessed One's senses

8 Now, avuso, the Blessed One has eyes. The Blessed One sees a form with his eyes. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.⁸⁴

The Blessed One has ears. The Blessed One hears a sound with his ears. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.

The Blessed One has a nose. The Blessed One smells a smell with his nose. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.

The Blessed One has a tongue. The Blessed One tastes a taste with his tongue. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.

The Blessed One has a body. The Blessed One feels a touch with his body. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.

The Blessed One has a mind. The Blessed One cognizes [165] a mind-object with his mind. There is no desire-or-lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well freed in mind.

⁸³ See *Pariyāya Nippariyāya*, SD 68.2.

⁸⁴ See (3): Does the Buddha have feelings?

In a manner of speaking (reprise)

9 (1) In this way, indeed, avuso, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the eye** is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the eye and forms).

(2) In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the ear** is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the ear and sounds).

(3) In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the nose** is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the nose and smells).

(4) In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the tongue** is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the tongue and tastes).

(5) In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the body** is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the body and touches).

(6) In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how **the mind** is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind.

The fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both (the mind and mind-objects).

— evaṃ —

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