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Soṇa (Kolivāsa) Sutta

The Soṇa Kolivāsa Discourse | A 6.55

Viṇūpam'ovāda Sutta The Discourse on the Admonition on the Veena Parable

Theme: How to balance our spiritual practice

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2007

1 Soṇa Kolivāsa

The elder **Soṇa Kolivāsa** (or Kolivāsa), nicknamed **Sukhumāla Soṇa**,¹ was born in Campā,² the only son of a vaishya seth,³ named Usabha.⁴ The Apadāna mentions an elder named **Soṇa Koṭi, vīsa**, so called because he gave away wealth totalling 20 crores (*vīsa koṭi*). From the time of his conception, his father's wealth began to grow and, on the day of his birth, the whole town broke into festivity. (Ap 1:298, ApA 2:266).

Buddhaghosa gives a variant of his name, **Koṭi, vessa**, perhaps an epithet or wordplay, explaining this refers to his being a member of the mercantile (*vessa*) class, and that his family was worth a crore (AA 1:231). He is called **Kolivāsa**, evidently because he is a Koliya.⁵ [3.1]

2 Soṇa in the Vinaya and the suttas

2.1 SOṆA'S FEET

The Vinaya (ch 5 of the Mahā,vagga) gives some details on the life of Soṇa Kolivāsa in Rāja,gaha. The account opens with an introduction to his sheltered life as a “delicate son of a seth”⁶ (*setṭhi,putta sukhumāla*). His hands and feet, it is said elsewhere, were soft like a hibiscus flower,⁷ and a fine down grew on them (to a length of four fingers wide on his feet) curved “like ear-rings.”⁸

¹ AA 3:388; ThaA 2:266; ApA 478; cf UA 307 (distinguished from Soṇa Kuṭi,kaṇṇa).

² Or Campā,purī, capital of Aṅga, situated on the confluence of the river Campā (prob modern Candan) and the Ganges. Today is represented by the two villages of Campa,nagara and Campa,pura, 34 km (21 mi) east of modern Bhagalpur. The Buddha, when visiting Campā, often stays on the bank of the beautiful Gaggara Lake (named after an early queen of Campā), and where the renowned brahmin, Soṇa,daṇḍa, has a famous dialogue with him (**Soṇa,-daṇḍa S**, D 4/1:111-126).

³ “Vaishya seth”: A “**vaishya**” (P *vessa*; Skt *vaiśya*) was a born member of the business or merchant class in the brahminical four-class social system that leaves others, esp the local dark-skinned autochthonous (local native) people as “outcastes.” A “**seth**” (P *setṭhi*; Skt *śreṣṭhī*) was what we would today call a “fund entrepreneur” or someone running a sort of merchant bank that funded large commercial enterprises.

⁴ Ap 386.5/1:198. A *koṭi* is 10 million, ie, 10,000,000; *visa,koti* is 20,000,000. Such a large number prob refers to the coins of the time.

⁵ Ap 42.21/1:95.

⁶ On “seth” (*setṭhī*), see n above on “vaishya seth.”

⁷ *Bandhu,jīvaka* (PED: Pentapetes phœnicea, but prob Hibiscus rosa-sinensis) (D 2:111; M 2:14; J 4:179; Vism 174; VvA 43, 161; DhsA 14). The hibiscus or red hibiscus, belongs to the Malvaceae family (a large group of dicotyledonous flowering plants), and is also called Chinese hibiscus or “shoe flower.” The Sinhalese call it bandu. It is a shrub common in tropical Asia, now widely planted, frequently as a hedge. When crushed, the red flowers turn black, yielding a dark purplish dye that is used in India for blackening shoes. In China, the dye is used for the hair and eyebrows. It is also used to color liquor and to dye paper a bluish-purple tint that reacts with litmus. Hawaiians eat raw flowers to aid digestion; the Chinese pickle and eat them.

⁸ Ap 386.7/298.

He lived in great luxury in three palaces, each having its own season. Hence, his sobriquet “Sukhumāla” (“delicate”).⁹ King Bimbisāra, wishing to see this for himself, convenes his 80,000 village headmen, and summons Soṇa, so that he saw Soṇa’s feet for himself (Mv 5.1.1-2 @ V 1:179).

2.2 SĀGATA

Bimbisāra, along with his 80,000 village overseers (*gāmika*), then visits the Buddha, who has **Sāgata** as his personal attendant. The overseers, very impressed by Sāgata (probably mistaking him for the teacher), gaze at him in admiration, ignoring the Buddha. The Buddha thereupon asks Sāgata to show them his superhuman powers, which he does. After that, he bows and salutes the Buddha’s feet, declaring that the Buddha is his teacher. The assembly then goes for refuge. (Mv 5.1.3-10 @ V 1:179-181).

2.3 SOṆA RENOUNCES THE WORLD

On listening to the Buddha instructing the Dharma, Soṇa is inspired to practise it, but realizes that it is difficult to do so fully while living a household life. So the thought of renunciation arises in him. Soon after the 80,000 village headmen have left, says the Vinaya, Soṇa approaches the Buddha and declares his wish to renounce. (Mv 5.1.11)

The Soṇa (Kolivīsa) Sutta (A 6.55), too, says that while in Rājagaha, he hears the Buddha teaching, and, gaining faith, enters the order with his parents’ consent. He must have approached his parents at this juncture (that is, just after the king and his retinue have departed). The Buddha admits Soṇa, and soon after that, after receiving a meditation subject from the Buddha, he retreats to the Cool Forest (Sīta,vana)¹⁰ (Mv 5.1.12 = V 1:179) [§1.1-2].

2.4 A MUSIC LESSON

2.4.1 Soṇa’s excessive striving

While Soṇa is staying in **the Cool Forest**, many people visit him, so that he is unable to get mental concentration. He strives hard, and, through pacing up and down in walking meditation, painful sores grow on his feet. His feet bleed so badly that the meditation walkway (*caṅkamaṇa*) is covered with blood “like a slaughter-house for oxen.”¹¹ Failing to progress, he despairs, even thinking of returning to lay-life and doing work of merits. (Mv 5.1.13)

The Buddha, knowing this, visits him to instruct him. **The Soṇa (Kolivīsa) Sutta** says that Soṇa was a skilled player of **the veena** or arched harp (*vīṇā*)¹² before he joined the order¹³ [§1.3]. The Buddha then teaches him how to balance energy with calmness [§1.4], so that he puts forth fresh effort and attains arhathood¹⁴ [§2.1]. The Thera.gāthā refers to Soṇa’s famous veena parable (Tha 638 f).

2.4.2 A balanced practice

The need for balance in meditation can be seen from the case of the monk **Soṇa Kolivīsa**, as related in **the Soṇa (Kolivīsa) Sutta** (A 6.55). After putting forth excessive effort, Soṇa is depressed because he

⁹ AA 3:388; ThaA 2:266; ApA 478.

¹⁰ **Sīta,vana** is a sprawling and frightful forest cemetery (*bherava,susāna,vana*) just outside Rājagaha (SA 2:368; AA 1:236, 3:388; ThaA 1:48; cf Divy 264, 268), where Anātha,piṇḍika first meets the Buddha (V 2:155 f; SA 1:212). Once, when the Buddha is staying there, Māra invites him to pass away (D 2:116).

¹¹ Mv 5 = V 1:179-198 (passim).

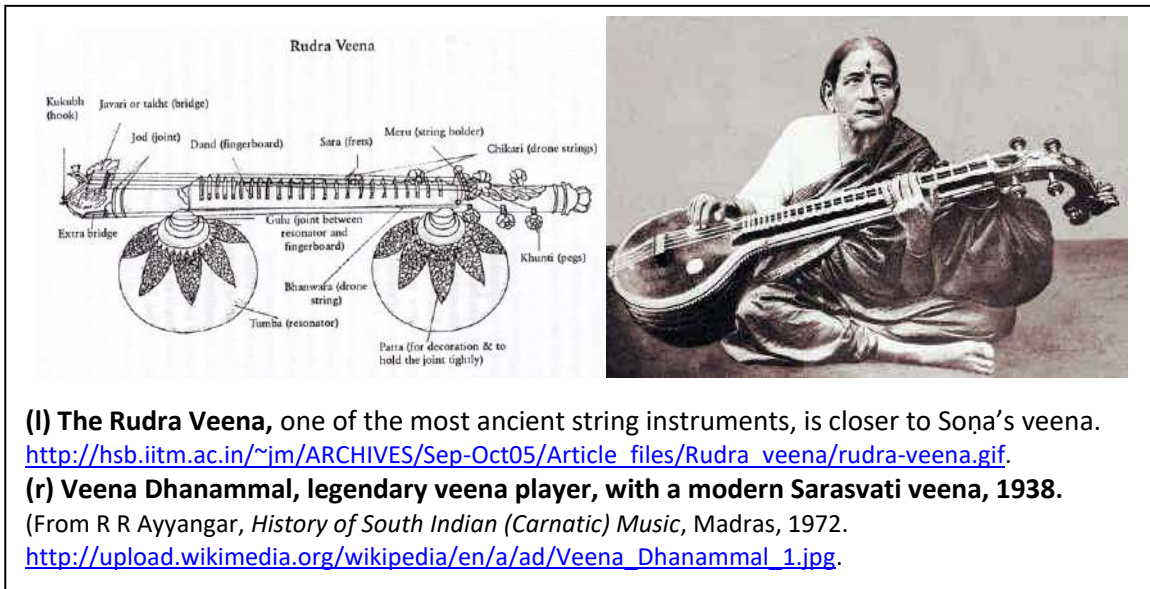
¹² On **the veena**, see SD 54.8 (1.4.4 n).

¹³ Comy says that he was “an adept in the art of the gandharvas” (*gandhabba,sippe cheko*, AA 3:389). Here, *gandhabba* refers to the heavenly minstrels, alluding to his musical prowess. Clearly here it is an allusion to “divine music,” ie, beautiful music. On the meanings of *gandhabba*, see SD 7.10 (3).

¹⁴ Tha 632; Mv 5.13-18.

has not progressed. The Buddha, to help him realize that he has to keep to the middle path, uses the imagery of a lute (*vīṇā*), an instrument with which Soṇa is familiar from his erstwhile lay life as a musician (A 3:375).

If the strings of a lute are too taut, the sound will become shrill, but if it is too loose, it would make a poor sound. Just as the lute's strings need to be properly adjusted, representing a middle position between laxity and tenseness, similarly Soṇa has to walk the middle way in order to progress. In his case, this requires giving up excessive striving and its resultant restlessness. Keeping to the Buddha's advice, Soṇa soon enough attains the final goal which earlier has eluded him due to his excessive striving.



2.5 SOṆA THE ARHAT

Soon after awakening, Soṇa reports to the Buddha (Mv 5.19), and his Dharma teachings are recorded both in the Vinaya and the Soṇa (Koliṇisa) Sutta,¹⁵ thus:

	Sona (Koliṇisa) Sutta	Vinaya (Mv 5)
(1) The 6 things an arhat is dedicated to	§§3-9	Mv 5.20-24/1:183 f
(2) Wise attention regarding sense-objects	§§10	Mv 5.25/1:184
(3) Parable of the rocky mountain	§11	Mv 5.26/1:184
(4) Soṇa's verses (Tha 632-644)	§12	Mv 5.27/1:184 f

His verses of uplift are recorded as **the Soṇa Koliṇisa Thera, gāthā** (Tha 632-644). They generally summarize in verse what is related in prose in the Soṇa Koliṇisa Sutta, but with a lyrical beauty all their own.¹⁶ **Tha 640-644** (his last 5 verses) also appear at the end of the Sutta.

2.6 BOON FOR SOṆA

On account of Soṇa's delicate feet, the Buddha permits him, after his awakening, to use sandals of a single lining. Soṇa, however, protests, claiming that he has abandoned 80 cartloads of gold and a retinue

¹⁵ The Vinaya account is more detailed than the Sutta, which shows that the former is a later version. Moreover, it is well known that the Vinaya is generally later than most of the suttas.

¹⁶ Tha 632-644 @ SD 44.8.

of 7 elephants. People would criticize him for being attached to such comfort. As a monk, he does not wish to have any such allowances which his colleagues do not share. The Buddha then allows *all* monks to wear shoes with a single lining. (Mv 5.29-30 @ V 1:185)

It is Soṇa Kolivīsa's example that inspires Nandaka and his brother, Bharata, to renounce the world (ThaA 1:299). Soṇa is also declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of the monks who exert effort (A 1.205/1:24).

3 Soṇa's past lives

3.1 THE APADĀNA, a hagiography or collection of pious legends of past good deeds of the saints, contains two poems on Soṇa. A recurrent theme in these stories is that of the various good karma that a saint has done in his past lives, usually for a past Buddha, and the benefits he thereby received for himself.¹⁷

The first poem is called **the Koliya,vessa Therāpadāna** (Ap 1:93 f) in 20 verses.¹⁸ From this name, we can surmise that he is from the vaishya (*vessa*) or merchant class.

The second poem is **the Soṇa Koṭi,vīsa Therāpadāna** (Ap 386) in 14 verses.¹⁹ Besides the Apadāna, Soṇa Kolivīsa is also mentioned in the Commentaries. This name is given to him because he gave away wealth equal in value to 20 crores or 200 million (*vīsa,koti*).²⁰

The Apadāna and the Commentaries give stories of Soṇa's encounters with various past Buddhas.²¹

3.2 In the time of **Anoma,dassī Buddha**,²² he was a very rich seth,²³ who, having gone with others to the vihara and heard the Buddha teach, decorated a meditation walkway for the Buddha and a long hall (*dīgha,sālā*) for the monks. On the walkway, he scattered various flowers, and, above it, he hung canopies.

3.3 In the time of **Padum'uttara Buddha**,²⁴ he was a seth of Haṃsa,vatī named Sirivaḍḍha. It was then that he resolved to gain eminence as the foremost of those who strive energetically (*aggam āradḍha,-viriyānaṃ*), and in this he is successful (A 1:24).

3.4 Soṇa's eminence is ascribed to the fact that, in the time of **Vipassī Buddha**,²⁵ he made a cave (*leṇa*) for the Buddha and his monks, and spread it with rugs and setting up a canopy to shelter them (outside the cave). (Ap 386.1-14/298).

¹⁷ Such stories seem to give us a consequentialist idea of karma (that good begets good), a notion which some modern Buddhists have difficulty accepting. Amongst those who reject or have reservations about the doctrine of karma (and along with this, rebirth) are Steven Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs*, 1997 and Roger Jackson, in *Buddhist Theology* (edd R Jackson & J Makransky), 2000:218. These two scholars also reject the Buddha's "awakening" as a transcendental notion. See Martin Kovičić, *The Buddha's Second Renunciation* (MPhil thesis), 2009:35 f.

¹⁸ Ap 42.1-20/1:93 f.

¹⁹ Ap 386.1-14/1:298.

²⁰ The amount here prob refers to (*kaḥāpana; Skt kārṣāpaṇa*), the earlier ones of which were silver, but the later ones of copper. Prob the latter is meant here. Again, we need to give allowance for ancient Indian hyperbole here. See SD 4.19 (1).

²¹ On the past Buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3); for a list of the 28 Buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

²² Anoma,dassī is the 10th of the 24 Buddhas, or the 18th before our Buddha Gotama: see SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

²³ *Seṭṭhi* (Skt *śreṣṭhi*), a financial entrepreneur who functions like a modern banker in giving loans to large businesses and enterprises.

²⁴ Padum'uttara is the 13th of the 28 Buddhas, or the 15th before our Buddha Gotama: see SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

²⁵ The first of the 7 Buddhas, who are Vipassī, Sikhī, Vessabhū, Kakusandha, Konāgamana, Kassapa and Gotama (a canonical list: V 2:110; D 14,1.10/2:5 f; S 12.4-10/2:5-10; cf Tha 490 f; J 203/2:147). See **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14) @ SD 49.8 (2).

3.5 After the death of **Kassapa Buddha**,²⁶ Soṇa was a householder in Benares, who built a hut by the river for a pratyeka-buddha, whom he looked after, supplying the four supports (almsfood, robes, shelter and health-care), during the rainy season. He was reborn as the king of the gods for twenty-five world-cycles, and seventy-seven times king among humans by the name of Yasodhara.²⁷

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Soṇa (Kolivīsa) Sutta

The Soṇa (Kolivīsa) Discourse

A 6.55

1 Thus have I heard.

Soṇa struggles with his practice

At one time the Blessed One was staying on Mount Vulture Peak at Rājagaha. At that time, the venerable Soṇa was dwelling in the Cool Forest (Sīta,vana) near Rājagaha.²⁸

Then, while the venerable Soṇa was alone in retreat, this thought arose in his mind:

1.2 “I am one amongst the Blessed One’s disciples who dwell putting forth effort. Yet my mind is not freed by non-clinging from the mental influxes.²⁹

Now, my family is wealthy, and I will be able to enjoy wealth and make merit. What now if I give up the training and return to the low life, enjoy wealth and make merit?”

The Buddha intercedes

1.3 Then the Blessed One, knowing by his own mind, the mind of the venerable Soṇa, just as a strong man would stretch his flexed arm, or flex his stretched arm, disappeared from Mount Vulture Peak, and

²⁶ Kassapa is the 27th of the 28 Buddhas, or the one just before our Buddha Gotama: see SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

²⁷ ThaA 1:544 f; ApA 478; cf Ap 421-28/93-95, where he is called **Koliya,vessa**. The ApA confuses his story with that of Soṇa Kuti,kaṇṇa; see also AA 1:237 f, where the details are different, esp regarding the honour paid by Soṇa to the pratyeka buddha. Once, on visiting the pratyeka buddha’s cell, he noticed that the ground outside it was muddy. So, he spread on the ground a rug worth one hundred thousand, so that the pratyeka buddha’s feet might not be soiled.

²⁸ See Intro (2.1) above: n on Sīta,vana.

²⁹ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “influxes”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows in or towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has also been variously tr as “cankers,” “taints” (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the canker of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*ditth’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*oghā*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the suttas (D 33,1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of the influxes is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

appeared right before the venerable Soṇa in the Cool Forest near Rājagaha.

The Blessed One sat down on the prepared seat.

The venerable Soṇa, having saluted the Blessed One, sat down at one side.

As the venerable Soṇa sat thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to him: [375]

“Now, Soṇa, when you were alone in retreat, did this thought arise in your mind:³⁰

‘I am one amongst the Blessed One’s disciples who dwell putting forth effort. Yet my mind is not freed by non-clinging from the mental influxes.

Now, my family is wealthy, and I will be able to enjoy wealth and make merit. What now if I give up the training and return to the low life, enjoy wealth and make merit?’?”

“Yes, bhante.”

The parable of the veena

1.4 “What do you think, Soṇa, were you skilled in **playing the veena** [lute]³¹ before, as a house dweller?”³²

“Yes, bhante.”

“What do you think, Soṇa, when the strings of your veena were too taut, was your veena well tuned or easy to play?”

“Indeed not, bhante.”

“What do you think, Soṇa, when the strings of your veena were too loose, was your veena well tuned or easy to play?”

“Indeed not, bhante.”

“What do you think, Soṇa, when the strings of your veena were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned to an even pitch, was your veena well tuned or good to play?”

“Yes, bhante.”

“Even so, Soṇa, if energy is put forth too forcefully, it will bring about *restlessness*;³³ if the energy is too slack, it will bring about *sloth* [*indolence*].³⁴ Therefore, Soṇa, **apply your energy evenly, and keep the spiritual faculties³⁵ balanced, and therein grasp the sign.**”³⁶

³⁰ Here we have a rare and interesting example where the Buddha actually expressly reads another’s mind to teach him the Dharma. Usually, the Buddha would question to reiterate the circumstances with the person concerned: see eg **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhāya S** (M 38,5/1:257 f), SD 7.10.

³¹ “Veena,” *vīṇā*, but this is not the modern veena. Indian Medieval paintings and temple sculpture often show a string instrument with two gourd resonators connected by a central shaft, possibly of bamboo, and held diagonally from lap to shoulder. The North Indian “rudra veena” and “vichitra veena,” technically zithers (whose strings do not extend over the soundbox), are probably closer to Soṇa’s *vīṇā*.

³² Comy notes: “Seven notes, three scales, twenty-one tones, | forty-nine stops—such is the sphere of sounds” (*satta sarā tayo gāmā, mucchanā eka,visati | thānā ekūna,paññāsam icc’ete sara,maṇḍalam*) (AA 3:390). Indian classical music has one of the most complex and complete musical systems ever developed. Like Western classical music, it divides the octave into 12 semitones of which the 7 basic notes (“seven sounds,” *sapta,śvara*) are Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa, in order, replacing Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Si Do. (In Anglo-Saxon countries, “sol” is often changed to “so,” and “si” was changed to “ti” by Sarah Glover in the 19th cent so that every syllable might begin with a different letter.) However, it uses the “just intonation” tuning. (“Just intonation” is any musical tuning in which the frequencies of notes are related by ratios of whole numbers. Any interval tuned in this way is called a “just interval”; in other words, the two notes are members of the same harmonic series.) Indian classical music is monophonic (melody without accompanying harmony) in nature and based around a single melody line which is played over a fixed drone. The performance is based melodically on a particular mood (*rāga*) and rhythm (*tāla*, lit “clap”).

³³ **Uddhacca** (neut) [abstract n of *ud-dharati*, *ud* + √DHR, “to hold”; cf *uddhaṭa* & *uddhata*; BHS *auddhatya*. BHS *uddhava* seems to be alternative for *uddhacca*] (mental) restlessness, agitation, excitement, distraction, flurry (on

“Yes, bhante,” the venerable Soṇa answered the Blessed One in assent.

When the Blessed One had thus advised the venerable Soṇa,
just as a strong man would stretch his flexed arm, or flex his stretched arm,
he vanished from the Cool Forest and reappeared on Mount Vulture Peak. [376]

Soṇa awakens

2 Then, the venerable Soṇa, in due course, applied his energy evenly, and kept the spiritual faculties balanced [harmonious], and therein grasped the sign.³⁷

2.2 THE FULL ARHATHOOD PERICOPE³⁸

Then, the venerable Soṇa, dwelling alone, aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute,
in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,
attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,
for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

2.3 THE ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE. He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,	<i>khīṇa, jāti</i>
the holy life has been lived,	<i>vusitam brahma, cariyam</i>
done what is to be done,	<i>kataṃ karaṇīyam</i>
there is no more of this state of being.” ³⁹	<i>nāparam itthattāyāti</i>

2.4 And the venerable Soṇa became one of the arhats.

its meaning, see D:RD 1:82; Dhs:R 119; Abhs:SR 18, 45, 83). As one of 5 *uddham, bhāgiyāni saṃyojanāni: rūpa, rāgo arūpa, rāgo māno ~am avijjā: D 3:234,20 ≠ S 5:61,16 = 136,26 = A 4:460,4 = Thī 167 ≠ Vbh 377,10 = Vism 682,34 = DhsA 239,35. Other refs: S 5:277 f; A 1:256, 282, 3:375, 421, 449, 4:87, 5:142, 145, 148; DhsA 260; SnA 492 (ad Sn 702 *unṇata*); Nm 220,3 = Dhs 86,37 = 205,10 = Vbh 255,26 ≠ 168,25; Nm 501; Pm 1.81, 83, 2.9, 97 f, 119, 142, 145, 169, 176; Vbh 168, 369, 372, 377; Dhs 427, 429 (*cittassa*), 1159, 1229, 1426, 1482; Pug 18, 59; Vism 137, 469 (= *uddhata, bhāva*); Sdhp 459. As dvandva with *~, kukkucca* (“worry, remorse”), listed as the 4th of the 5 *nīvaraṇā* & as the 9th of the 10 *saṃyojanā* (D 1:71, 246, 3:49, 234, 269, 278; S 1:99; A 1:3, 3:16, 5:30; Nc 379; Dhs 1486). For a discussion, see SD 44.8 Modern Comy on 364.*

³⁴ *Kosajja* (neut) [from *kusīta*] “sloth, idleness, indolence”; expl at Vbh 369. See V 2:2; S 5:277-280; A 1:11, 16, 2:218, 3:375, 421, 5:146 f, 159 f, A 4:195 = Dh 241; Miln 351; Vism 132; Nett 127; DhA 3:347, 4:85; DhsA 146; SnA 21.

³⁵ The 5 faculties (*pañc’indriya*) are: faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom: *Pañc’indriya*, SD 10.4.

³⁶ *Evam eva kho Soṇa accāraddham viriyam uddhaccāya samvattati. Atīlīnam viriyam kosajjāya samvattati. Tasmā-tiha tvarṃ Soṇa, viriya, samataṃ adhiṭṭhaha, indriyānaṃ ca samataṃ paṭivijjha, tattha ca nimittam gaṇhāhī ti.* Comy: “(Apply) energy evenly” (*Vīriya, samatham [sic] adhiṭṭhahā* ti) means apply calm jointly with effort, and yoke effort to calm. “Keep the spiritual faculties balanced” means establish the faculties beginning with faith, etc, in a balance: therein, when faith is yoked with wisdom, and wisdom with faith, when energy is yoked with concentration, and concentration with energy, then the balance of the faculties is maintained”: see Vism 4.45-49/129 f. “And therein grasp the sign” means when there is such a balance, the sign arises like a reflection of a face in a mirror, then you should grasp the sign, be it a sign of calm, or insight, or the path, or the fruit. Thus, did the Teacher, having attained arhathood, teach meditation. (AA 3:390 f). The “sign” (*nimitta*) is the meditation sign, usu in the form of a beautiful stable bright light: see *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

³⁷ See *Nimitta & anuvyañjana*, SD 19.14.

³⁸ For details, see *Poṭṭhapāda S* (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.

³⁹ On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see *Poṭṭhapāda S* (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.

The 6 things an arhat is dedicated to

2.5 Then it occurred to the venerable Soṇa who had attained arhathood,
“Let me now approach the Blessed One and declare final knowledge before him.”

2.6 Then the venerable Soṇa approached the Blessed One and saluted him. Having saluted him, the venerable Soṇa said this to the Blessed One:

3 “Bhante, a monk—an arhat, with mental influxes destroyed, having lived the holy life, done his task, laid down the burden, attained the goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and is rightly freed through direct knowledge—is intent on [dedicated to] **6 things**.

3.2 He is intent on *renunciation, solitude, non-violence, the destruction of craving, the destruction of clinging, and non-confusion*.

(1) DEDICATION TO RENUNCIATION

4 It might be, bhante, that a certain venerable here might think,
‘Could it be that this venerable is intent on renunciation on account of **mere faith** alone?’⁴⁰

But, bhante, it should not be seen thus.

4.2 A monk whose mental influxes are destroyed, lived the holy life, and done his task,
does not see in himself anything more to be done, and anything else to be added to what has been done.⁴¹

4.3 Since lust has been destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, he is intent on **renunciation**.

Since hatred has been destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, he is intent on renunciation.

Since delusion has been destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, he is intent on renunciation. **[377]**

(2) DEDICATION TO SOLITUDE

5 It might be, bhante, that a certain venerable here might think,
‘Could it be that this venerable is intent on solitude, hankering after **gain, honour and reputation**?’⁴²

But, bhante, it should not be seen thus.

*A monk whose mental influxes are destroyed, lived the holy life, and done his task,
does not see in himself anything more to be done, and anything else to be added to what has been done.*

*Since lust has been destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, he is intent on **solitude**.*

Since hatred has been destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, he is intent on solitude.

Since delusion has been destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, he is intent on solitude.

(3) DEDICATION TO NON-VIOLENCE

6 It might be, bhante, that a certain venerable here might think,
‘Could it be that this venerable is intent on non-violence, is backsliding from the spiritual core, **clinging to rituals and vows**?’⁴³

⁴⁰ *Kevalaṃ saddhā, mattakaṃ nūna ayam āyasmā nissāya nekkhammādhimuttō ti.*

⁴¹ *Attano asamanupassanto katassa vā paticayaṃ.* Such a one—adds (**Ekādasaka**) **Nandiya S** (A 11.14)—is an arhat who is “permanently liberated” (*asamaya, vimutta*) (A 11.14/5:336,26), SD 99.2. In other words, he does not need to even become a Buddha, as falsely claimed by some later Mahāyāna teachers and writers. See **Mahā Assa-pura S** (M 39,21.3), SD 10.13 highest goal; also **Mahā, nidāna S** (M 15,36.3/2:71,26), SD 5.17; SD 30.8 (6.4.4). On dealing with Buddha’s death, see SD 27.6b (4.1.1) dealing with Buddha’s death.

⁴² *Lābha, sakkāra, silokaṃ nūna ayam āyasmā nikkāmayamāno pavivekādhimuttō ti.* That is, he takes being non-violent in a ritualistic or superstitious sense.

⁴³ *Sīla-b, bata, parāmāsaṃ nūna ayam āyasmā sārato paccāgacchanto abyāpajjhādhimutto hotī ti.*

But, bhante, it should not be seen thus.

A monk whose mental influxes are destroyed, lived the holy life, and done his task, does not see in himself anything more to be done, and anything else to be added to what has been done.

*Since lust has been destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, he is intent on **non-violence**.*

Since hatred has been destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, he is intent on non-violence.

Since delusion has been destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, he is intent on solitude.

(4) DEDICATION TO THE DESTRUCTION OF CRAVING

7 Because lust is destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, that he is intent on **the destruction of craving**.

Because hatred is destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, that he is intent on the destruction of *craving*.

Because delusion is destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, that he is intent on the destruction of *craving*.

(5) DEDICATION TO THE DESTRUCTION OF CLINGING

8 Because lust is destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, that he is intent on **the destruction of clinging**.

Because hatred is destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, that he is intent on the destruction of *clinging*.

Because delusion is destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, that he is intent on the destruction of *clinging*.

(6) DEDICATION TO NON-CONFUSION

9 Because lust is destroyed, his mind is rid of lust, that he is intent on **non-confusion**.⁴⁴

Because hatred is destroyed, his mind is rid of hatred, that he is intent on the destruction of *non-confusion*.

Because delusion is destroyed, his mind is rid of delusion, that he is intent on the destruction of *non-confusion*.

Wise attention

10 ⁴⁵Bhante, even if strong⁴⁶ **forms** cognizable by the eye

were to come within the range of the eye of one whose mind is thus rightly freed, they would not overpower his mind.

His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on [observes] their passing away. **[378]**

Bhante, even if strong **sounds** cognizable by the ear

were to come within the range of the ear of one whose mind is thus rightly freed, they would not overpower his mind.

His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.

Bhante, even if strong **smells** cognizable by the nose

were to come within the range of the nose of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,

⁴⁴ "Intent on non-confusion," *asammohādhimutto*.

⁴⁵ *Evam sammā, vimutta, cittassa, bhante, bhikkhuno bhūsā ce pi cakkhu, viññeyyā rūpā cakkhussa āpātham āgacchanti, n'ev'assa cittaṃ pariyādiyanti, amissī, katam evassa cittaṃ hoti, ṭhitaṃ āneñja-p, pattarṃ. Vayaṃ c'ass-ānupassati.*

⁴⁶ "Strong," *bhusa*. Comys gloss *bhusā ti balavatiyo* (SA 1:78), *bhusā ti balavatī* (SA 3:300), *bhusā ti balavanto* (AA 3:392).

they would not overpower his mind.

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Bhante, even if strong **tastes** cognizable by the tongue

*were to come within the range of the tongue of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.*

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Bhante, even if strong **touches** cognizable by the body

*were to come within the range of the body of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.*

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Bhante, even if strong **mind-objects** cognizable by the mind

*were to come within the range of the mind of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.*

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Simile of the rocky mountain

11 Suppose, bhante, there were a **rocky mountain** of singularly solid mass, with neither crack nor cleft.

Now even if strong [heavy] wind-blown rain were to come from the east, it would not be able to quake, shake or move it.

*Even if strong [heavy] wind-blown rain were to come from the west, it would not be able to quake,
shake or move it.*

*Even if strong [heavy] wind-blown rain were to come from the north, it would not be able to quake,
shake or move it.*

*Even if strong [heavy] wind-blown rain were to come from the south, it would not be able to quake,
shake or move it.*

*Even so, bhante, even if strong **forms** cognizable by the eye*

*were to come within the range of the eye of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.*

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable⁴⁷—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Bhante, even if strong **sounds** cognizable by the ear

*were to come within the range of the ear of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.*

*His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

⁴⁷ "Remains attained in the imperturbable." *ṭhitam āneñja, pattam*. Here, evidently, *āneñja* is non-technical, simply referring to an undisturbed mind in meditation, and if free from the mental hindrances, means dhyana. In other contexts, it would specifically refer to the 4th dhyana or one of the 4 formless attainments (MA 4:161): see M 122,9.4+10.4/3:112 @ SD 11.4 (3a). See also **Āneñja, sappāya S** (M 106/2:261-266), SD 35.13 & **Laṭukikôpama S** (M 66,22-34/1:454-456), SD 28.11; also MA 3:171.

*Bhante, even if strong **smells** cognizable by the nose
were to come within the range of the nose of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.
His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

*Bhante, even if strong **tastes** cognizable by the tongue
were to come within the range of the tongue of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.
His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

*Bhante, even if strong **touches** cognizable by the body
were to come within the range of the body of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.
His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

*Bhante, even if strong **mind-objects** cognizable by the mind
were to come within the range of the mind of one whose mind is thus rightly freed,
they would not overpower his mind.
His mind, unmixed with them, remains attained to the imperturbable—
and he contemplates on their passing away.*

Sona's verses⁴⁸

- 12** Intent on renunciation,⁴⁹ and on mental solitude, too,
intent on non-violence, and on clinging's destruction, **Tha 640**
- intent on craving's destruction, and on non-confusion of mind:
having seen the arising of the sense-bases, the mind is rightly released. **Tha 641**
- For a monk who is rightly released, his mind is at peace;
there is no more to add to the done; nothing more to be done.⁵⁰ **[379]** **Tha 642**
- Just as a solid mountain of rock is unmoved by the wind,
even so, forms, tastes, sounds, smells, touches and all **Tha 643**
- states, desirable and undesirable, shake not such a one;
and, his mind remaining unyoked, he observes its falling away.⁵¹ **Tha 644**

— evaṃ —

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⁴⁸ These verses form the last 5 of the Soṇa Koliṅga's 13 Thera,gāthā (Tha 632-644), SD 44.8, where see the Modern Comy.

⁴⁹ **A 6.55:** Be Ce Ee Se *nekkhammaṃ*; **Tha 640a:** Be Ce Ee Se *nekkhamme*, Ke *nikkhame*.

⁵⁰ *Katassa paṭicayo n'atthi. karaṇīyaṃ na vijjati.*

⁵¹ *Ṭhitaṃ cittaṃ visaññutaṃ vayañ c'assānupassatī ti.*