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Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta 2

Dutiya Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta The Discourse on the Unshakable Recluse | **A 4.88**
 also called **Saṃyojana Sutta** = The Discourse on Fetters
 or **Samaṇa-m-acala Saṃyojana Sutta** The Unshakable Recluse Discourse on Fetters
 Four types of noble saints according to fetters broken
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2005, 2007

Introduction

1 While the Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta 1 (A 4.87) defines the saints of the path by way of their meditation attainments,¹ **the Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta 2** (A 4.88) defines the 4 kinds of saints—the streamwinner (*sot'āpanna*), the once-returner (*sākadāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and the arhat (*arahata*)—who progressively constitute those on the path of awakening.²

2 This Sutta further defines the saints in terms of their abandoning the mental fetters. There are these **10 mental fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*), namely:

The lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (1) self-identity view | <i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i> |
| (2) persistent doubt | <i>vicikicchā</i> |
| (3) attachment to rules and rites | <i>sīla-b.bata, parāmāsa</i> |
| (4) sensual lust | <i>kāma, rāga</i> |
| (5) repulsion | <i>paṭigha</i> ⁴ |

The higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| (6) greed for form existence | <i>rūpa, rāga</i> |
| (7) greed for formless existence | <i>arūpa, rāga</i> |
| (8) conceit | <i>māna</i> |
| (9) restlessness | <i>uddhacca</i> |
| (10) ignorance | <i>avijjā</i> |

} streamwinner
 } once-returner³
 } non-returner
 } arhat
 (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377)

3 The first saint, the streamwinner, is called “**the unshakable recluse**” (*samaṇa-m-acala*), after whom the Sutta is titled [§2]. He is “unshakable” (*acala*) for obvious reasons: he has abandoned the notion of self-identity (he does not see any kind of permanent entity in connection with his body or mind), he is not superstitious or obsessively compulsive (a “control freak”), and he has no doubt about the nature of impermanence as discovered and taught by the Buddha. In other words, he has broken *the first three mental fetters* (see table above).⁵ He is “not bound for the lower world,⁶ sure of liberation, destined for

¹ A 4.87/2:86-88 @ SD 20.13.

² In terms of path (*magga*) and fruition (*phala*) for each of the 4 stages, there are the 8 types of noble individuals (*aṭṭha ariya puggala*): V 5:117; MA 1;167; ThaA 206; Or, more commonly, *aṭṭha purisa, puggala* (D 2:94, 3:5, 227; M 1:37; S 1:220, 2:69, 4:272, 279, 304, 5:429; A 1:208, 222, 2:34, 56, 3:36, 212, 286, 4:407, 5:183, 330; It 88). Another well known list is that of the 7 holy persons: **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(11)/3:254), **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70 @ SD 11.1), **Bhaddāli Sutta** (M 65.11-12/1:439 f), **Saviṭṭha S** (A 3.21/1:118-120), and (**Āhuneyyā**) **Puggalā S** (A 7.14/4:10 f). See also Pm 2:52; Pug 10, 30-36, 73; Vism 659. Six types of saints, assured of liberation, are listed in **Sarakāṇi S 1** (S 55.24/5:375-377), SD 3.6.

³ The once-returner has broken these 3 fetters and *also* diminished any action rooted in the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion). See below.

⁴ In some sets, (5) (*paṭigha*) is replaced by “illwill” (*vyāpāda*).

⁵ **Mental fetters** (*saṃyojanā*). There are 10 of them: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b.bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some sets, no 5 (*paṭigha*)

awakening, sure of liberation, bound for awakening.”⁷ We may become streamwinners either through wise faith or through spiritual wisdom.⁸

4 The once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*) has broken *the three fetters* and also significantly weakened *the three unwholesome roots*, namely, greed, hate and delusion. He is so called because he is still propelled on by the momentum of his karmic remnants for one more life, during which time he would never consciously break the five precepts, but would work on overcoming the other fetters.

5 Both the streamwinner and the once-returner are likely be lay people who still engage in their routines in the world. They might have families, work for a living, even enjoy sensual pleasures (in other words, they need not be celibate), but they are *not* worldly in any negative sense, since they would never consciously breach the precepts, and would in due course become fully liberated.

6 The non-returner (*anāgāmi*) has totally broken *the first five fetters*, that is, the lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya*) that bind one to the “lower” realm, that is, the sense world. This means that the non-returner is *naturally* a celibate a person. When he dies here, he would be reborn in the Pure Abodes, propelled by the remnants of his good karma, to finish them off, so that he becomes fully awakened.

7 The remaining five mental fetters are known as the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya*) because they bind one to the “higher” realms, that is, the form and formless worlds. The arhat (*arahata*) has abandoned all these ten fetters, so that he would never be reborn. He has attained nirvana.

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The Second Discourse on the Unshakable Recluse

A 4.88

1 Bhikshus, there are these four persons existing in the world. What are the four?

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|---|------------------------------------|
| (1) The unshakable recluse | <i>samaṇa-m-acala,</i> |
| (2) the white lotus recluse | <i>samaṇa, puṇḍarīka,</i> |
| (3) the red lotus recluse | <i>samaṇa, paduma,</i> |
| (4) the recluse delicate amongst recluses | <i>samaṇesu samaṇa, sukhumāla.</i> |

(1) The unshakable recluse

2 And, bhikshus, how is a person an unshakable recluse (*samaṇa-m-acala*)?

THE STREAMWINNER. Here, bhikshus, a monk, having utterly destroyed the 3 mental fetters,⁹ [89] is a **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*), not bound for the lower world, sure of liberation, destined for awakening.

is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The streamwinner has broken the first 3 fetters. The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya*) that bind one to the “lower” realm, ie the sense world, and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya*) that bind one to the “higher” realms, ie the form and formless worlds.

⁶ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca, gati*) (D 33.2.1/3:234, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tirachāna, yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

⁷ (Sekha) Uddesa S (A 3.85/1:231 f), SD 3.3 (2). See also **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3 & **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6.

⁸ The 10 suttas of **Okkanti Vagga** (S 25) of the Saṃyutta attest to this: see eg (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

In this way, bhikshus, is the person an unshakable recluse.

(2) The white lotus recluse

3 And, bhikshus, how is a person a white lotus recluse (*samaṇa, puṇḍarīka*)?

THE ONCE-RETURNER. Here, bhikshus, a monk, having utterly destroyed the 3 mental fetters, and with the diminishing of greed, hate and delusion, is a **once-returner** (*sakadāgāmī*), who, after returning to this world only one more time, will make an end to suffering.

In this way, bhikshus, is the person a white lotus recluse.

(3) The red lotus recluse

4 And, bhikshus, how is a person a red lotus recluse (*samaṇa, paduma*)?

THE NON-RETURNER. Here, bhikshus, a monk, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters,¹⁰ is **one spontaneously born** [in the Pure Abodes]¹¹ (*opapātika*), due to attain nirvana without returning from that world.

In this way, bhikshus, is the person a red lotus recluse.

(4) The recluse amongst delicate recluses

5 And, bhikshus, how is a person a delicate recluse amongst recluses (*samaṇesu samaṇa, sukhumāla*)?

THE ARHAT. Here, bhikshus, with with the destruction of the mental influxes,¹² attains and dwells, here and now, in the influx-free freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom, realizing for them for himself by direct knowledge.¹³

In this way, bhikshus, is the person a delicate recluse amongst recluses.

These, bhikshus, are the four persons existing in the world.

— evaṃ —

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⁹ The first 3 mental fetters (*saṃyojanā*) are: (1) personality belief (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*); (2) doubt (*vicikicchā*); and (3) clinging to rules and observances (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*). The “fetters” are so called because they bind one to rebirth and suffering. See Intro n.

¹⁰ The 10 fetters (*saṃyojanā*): see Intro n.

¹¹ “Spontaneously born,” *opapātika*, ie, reborn as a deva in the Pure Abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*), the five highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa, loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are Āviha (“Non-declining”), Ātappa (“Unworried”), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”) and Akaniṭṭhā (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

¹² “Mental influxes destroyed,” *khīṇ’āsava*. On *āsava*, see **Samāṇa-m-acala Sutta 1** (A 4.87.3/2:87), SD 20.13.

¹³ *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu āsavānam khayā anāsavaṃ ceto, vimuttim paññā, vimuttim diṭṭh’eva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*. This is stock: see **(Catukka) Samāṇa S** (A 4.239,5.2) n, SD 49.14. Cf *abbhaññāsi* (or essential arhathood) pericope, with names of arhats: SD 47.1 (3.2.2.3).