

Dutiya Acchariya Sutta

The Second Discourse on the Marvellous

[Four marvellous things]
(Aṅguttara Nikāya 4.128/2:131 f)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

Introduction

1 Spiritual evolution

The biological evolution of species is a horizontal (linear) process of physical (and to some extent, psychological) adaptation of the group. Spiritual evolution, on the other hand, is a vertical spiralling of personal development heading towards spiritual liberation. If the training in higher moral virtue (*adhi-sīla, sikkhā*) is taken as a social evolution, then the training of higher mind (*adhicitta, sikkhā*) is a mental evolution, both of which form the foundation for the training in higher wisdom (*adhipañña, sikkhā*), or spiritual evolution.¹

In the cosmic process of spiritual evolution, the mostly evolved is called a **Buddha**, one “awakened” from the sleep of ignorance and the dream of delusion, and who has thus freed himself from the samsara or cyclic existence of biological evolution. One could of course awaken and go about one’s life, but those who having fully awakened, in turn awaken others, too, are called fully self-awakened ones (*sammā, sambuddha*). This sutta is a reflection and celebration of that supreme awakening.

The primacy of this sutta is reflected in its simple use of words to describe the nature of liberation without any technical terms common in later texts. Only four simple terms—non-attachment (*anālaya*), removal of conceit (*māna, vinaya*), peace (*upasama*), and removal of ignorance (*avijjā, vinaya*)—are used. One could almost see a hint of the four-truth framework in these four terms, but this cannot be forced to hard, thus:

non-attachment (<i>anālaya</i>)	suffering <u>arises</u> from various forms of attachment;
removal of conceit (<i>māna, vinaya</i>)	<u>suffering</u> is a manifestation of the three complexes; ²
peace (<i>upasama</i>)	the <u>ending</u> of suffering is true peace; and
removal of ignorance (<i>avijjā, vinaya</i>)	the <u>way</u> to suffering’s ending to overcome ignorance.

In fact, we find **the Visuddhi, magga** explaining the four noble truths on the basis of *ālaya*, that is, “attachment, the delighting in attachment, the removing of attachment, and the means of removing of attachment” (*ālaya-ālay’āramatā-ālaya, samuggahāta-ālaya, samuggahātakūpāyānañ ca*, Vism 16.28/-497).

2 Attachment

The Critical Pali Dictionary defines *ālaya* (ts) in this way:³

1 (a) house, dwelling, habitat, household, a built structure; **(b)** nest, lair, perch, shelter; **(c)** abode, seat, place of rest, resort, haven, repository; **(d)** domain, field of activity, sphere, ken.

2 (a) liking, inclination, attachment, fondness for, partiality towards; **(b)** affection, love; **(c)** (as a metaphysical concept) desire, yearning, clinging, sensual attachment (syn with *taṇhā*); **(d)** thought preparatory to a decision (regarding the *vassa*), the decision itself.

3 feint, pretence, ruse, dissimulation, impersonation.

¹ On the threefold training (*sikkhā*), see *Cāgānussati* = SD 15.11(2).

² Here, of course, the first noble truth that is “suffering” and the second truth that is “the arising of suffering” are switched around. The three complexes or “conceits” (*māna*) [3] refers to the fact that one tends to define one’s lack and pains in terms of others, measuring oneself as inferior to, superior to, or equal to other pains.

³ For refs, see CPD.

Ālaya, then, is sensuality, worldly attachment, “worldliness.”⁴ As used in **the Acchariya Sutta**, *ālaya* has a metaphorical sense (2), that is, (c) “desire, yearning, clinging, sensual attachment (synonymous with *taṇhā*),” and also (a) “liking, inclination, attachment, fondness for, partiality towards.” As such, *ālaya* is not only a synonym for *taṇhā* (“craving”), but also for *nati* (“inclination”).⁵ Let us look at a few passages where *ālaya* is used:

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|--------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| (1) <i>chetvā āsavāni ~āni</i> | “having cut off the cankers ⁶ and attachments” | (Sn 535) |
| (2) <i>kām’~e asattamī</i> | “unattached to the lair of sense-pleasures” | (S 1:33,3* = Sn 177) |
| (3) <i>ālaya,rāmā...</i> | “that delights in attachment...” | (S 6.1/1:136) |

In [1], **the Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 535), *ālaya* seems to refer to the function of cankers, that is, as a result of the cankers (sense-desire, desire for eternal existence, wrong view and ignorance), one is attached to those ideas, running after them, seeking the rainbow’s end.

In [2], **the Anomiya Sutta** (S 1:33,3*)⁷ and **the Hemavata Sutta** (Sn 177), *ālaya* is used figuratively, as “lair,” that is, sense-pleasures. The Sutta Nipāta Commentary speaks of *ālaya* as being twofold on account of craving and of view regarding sense-pleasures (*kāmesu taṇhā,ditthi,vasena duvidho ālayo*) (SnA 216,3). The Saṃyutta Commentary on the same sutta, however, is more general: “unattached to the lair of sense-pleasures” means not adhering to the five objects of sense-pleasure” (*kām’ālaye asattan ti pañca,kāma,guṇ’~e alaggamī*).⁸

The Commentaries, two speak of the twofold *ālaya*—the attachment due to sense-desire (*kām’ālaya*) and the attachment due to craving (*taṇhālaya*).⁹ The Buddhist Sanskrit tradition, however, speaks of three kinds of *ālaya*, equating them with the threefold craving (*tr̥ṣṇā*), namely, the attachment to sense-pleasures (*kām’ālaya*), the attachment to existence (*bhav’ālaya*), and the attachment to non-existence (*vibhav’-ālaya*) (BHSD qv).¹⁰ *Ālaya*, as a synonym for craving (*taṇhā/tr̥ṣṇā*) is also found in the Pāli suttas: “in whom no attachments are found” (*yass’~ā na vijjanti*, Sn 635 = Dh 411), where their respective Commentaries gloss *ālaya* as *taṇhā* (SnA 469,3; DhA 4:186,6).

In [3], **the Āyācana Sutta** (S 6.1), we find the sentence “But this generation revels in attachment, delights in attachment, rejoices in attachment” (*ālaya,rāmā kho panāyam pajā ālaya,ratā ālaya,sammudittā*).¹¹ **The Saṃyutta Commentary** here explains *ālaya* objectively as the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca kāma,guṇa*).¹² They are called “attachment” because they attach themselves to these 5 cords of sensual pleasure. Subjectively, *ālaya* refers to the 108 mental investigations driven by craving (*taṇha,-vicarītāni*) (A 2:212 f),¹³ and it is these that attach themselves to their objects. (SA 1:195)

⁴ M:ÑB 1218 n306.

⁵ M 1:115; S 2:67, 4:59.

⁶ “Cankers,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the canker of (1) sense-desire (*kām’-āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These four are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three cankers (omitting the canker of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

⁷ S 1.45/1:33 = v148.

⁸ SA 1:85,9; cf AA 3:128,4 f.

⁹ DA 464,21 = MA 175,2 = SA 1:196,5.

¹⁰ See **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11.6/5:421) = SD 1.1.

¹¹ S 6.1/1:136 = SD 12.2. MA 1:167,32 = SA 1:195,52.

¹² SD 8.7 Intro (2).

¹³ See **Taṇha Jālinī S** (A 4.199/2:211-213) = SD 26.13.

3 Conceit

The Pali word *māna* is the same as the Sanskrit word, and is derived from √MAN, “to think,” and originally probably means “high opinion,” hence “pride” (PED: *māna*). From its usage, *māna*, although etymologically derived from √MAN, “to think,” also includes the sense of √MĀ and √MĪ, both, meaning “to measure,” as in *mānēti*, “he honours, thinks highly (of),”¹⁴ and *mināti*, “he measures,” this latter however is not found in the Canon, but only in the Commentaries and later works. As such, the Pali English Dictionary (PED) gives two definitions of *ālaya*:

1. Pride, conceit, arrogance (*cittassa uṇṇati*, Nc 80; Vbh 350).
2. Honour, respect (J 5:331 + *pūja*).

As used in the Acchāriya Sutta 2, and more commonly, *māna* means conceit, pride, or arrogance, is one of the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) binding to existence,¹⁵ and is only exterminated by the arhat. It is also one of the latent tendencies (*anusaya*)¹⁶ and is a defilement (*kilesa*).¹⁷ Conceit, in short, makes one define one’s lack and pains in terms of what one perceives as desirable qualities in others, measuring oneself as inferior to, superior to, or equal to other pains.

The concept of “conceit” (*māna*) is very important in early Buddhist psychology, and overlaps with the modern psychological concept of “complex,”¹⁸ which is basically a cluster of emotionally toned ideas or dispositions (the best known of which are the Oedipus complex, the Electra complex, and inferiority complex).¹⁹ Buddhist psychology, however, speaks of three basic complexes, also called the three discriminations (*tisso vidhā*), namely: the (equality-) conceit (*māna, sadisa, māna*), the inferiority-conceit (*omāna, hīna, māna*) and the superiority-conceit (*atimāna, seyya, māna*).²⁰ The following representative passages will give us a good idea regarding these complexes:

In **the Khema Sumana Sutta**, the monks Khema and Sumana separately approach the Buddha and make this declaration, which the Buddha approves of:

¹⁴ D 2:138; M 1:235, 3:205 (x4); A 3:76, 77 (x4), 4:91, 265, 268; Nm 2:320, 321.

¹⁵ The 10 fetters (*dasā saṃyojanā*) are: (1) Self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rituals (*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 places, no 5 (*kāma, rāga*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmī*) (see **Ānāpānasati S**, M 118.10 = 7.13).

¹⁶ **The Pahāna S** (S 36.3) mentions 3 latent tendencies, those (1) of lust (*rāgānusaya*), (2) of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), and (3) of ignorance (*avijjā’nusaya*) (S 36.3/4:205). **The Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18 = SD 6.14 Intro (5)), expanding in the last item, lists 7 latent tendencies, namely: (1) sensual desire (*kāma, rāga*); (2) aversion (*paṭigha*); (3) wrong view (*diṭṭhi*); (4) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*); (5) conceit (*māna*); (6) desire for existence (*bhava, rāga*); and (7) ignorance (*avijjā*). See also **Sall’atthēna S** (S 36.3) = SD 5.5 Introd.

¹⁷ A *kilesa* is anything that defiles the mind. According to **Visuddhi, magga**, they are so called because they are themselves defiled, and because they defile the mental factor associated with them; and there are 10 of them: (1) greed (*lobha*), (2) hate (*dosa*), (3) delusion (*moha*), (4) conceit (*māna*), (5) views (*diṭṭhi*), (6) doubt (*vicikicchā*), (7) torpor (*thīna*), (8) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (9) shameless (*ahirika*), and (10) lack of moral fear or conscience (*anotappa*) (Vism 22.49/683, 65/684 f). Nos 1-3 are the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) (SD 18.2); nos 6-8 are mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) (SD 15.1(8.2)); and nos 9-10 are two of the 4 unwholesome factors associated with all karmically unwholesome states of consciousness, the other two being restlessness (*uddhacca*) and delusion (*moha*) (BDict: *ahirika-anotappa*). Although these 10 terms often occur in the Suttas, none of them has any classification of *kilesa*. See Dhs 1229 f & Vibh ch 12 for details. A related term is *upakkilesa* (“mental impurities”): 11 are mentioned at M 128 = SD 5.18; 16 at M 7 & 8 (Wheel 61/62). See BDict: *upakkilesa*.

¹⁸ Pronounced with the accent on the second syllable.

¹⁹ See eg Arthur S Reber, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, 1985 svv.

²⁰ See S 45.162; Vbh 920/367.

Venerable sir, a monk who is an arhat, with cankers destroyed, having lived the holy life, with the burden set down, the goal attained, utterly discarded the fetters of existence, liberated by direct knowledge, has no such thought:

“There is one better than I” (*atthi me seyyo*), or
 “There is one equal to me” (*atthi me sadiso*), or
 “There is one worse than I” (*atthi me hīno*).

Soon after the venerable Khema and the venerable Sumana had left, the Blessed One addressed the monk, saying:

“In this way, bhikkhus, the sons of family declare their final knowledge (*aññā*). The fact is mentioned without reference to a self.²¹

But there are some empty persons here who laughingly [lightly] think that they have attained final knowledge, only to find later than disaster have befallen them. (A 6.49/3:358 f) = SD 19.2b

In the **Soṇa Sutta 1** (S 22.49), the Buddha declares to Soṇa the son of family, thus:

Soṇa, those ascetics and brahmins who, by way of form,...feeling,...perception,...formations, ...consciousness, that is impermanent, suffering, subject to change, consider thus:

“I am better” (*seyyo’ham asmi*), or
 “I am equal [as good as...]” (*sadiso’ham asmi*), or
 “I am worse” (*hīno’ham asmi*)—

why do they all consider thus, but through not seeing things as they really are? (S 22.49/3:48-50)

The Pesalā Atimaññanā Sutta (S 8.3) shows how the monk Vaṅgīsa,²² realizing that through evil speech (*paṭibhāna*), “infatuated with the pathway of conceit” (*māna, pathasmiṃ*), he has been looking down on other well-behaved monks, resolves thus:

720 *Tasmā akhilo ‘dha padhānavā* Therefore be free of mental hardness here, be assertive;
nīvaraṇāni pahāya visuddho having abandoned the hindrances, be pure.
mānañ ca pahāya asesam Having utterly abandoned conceit,
vijjāy’antakaro samitāvī be an end-maker of knowledge, at peace. (S 8.3/1:188)²³

As noted in the **Khemaka Sutta** (S 22.89), even the saints, except for the arhats, have not totally given up conceit, as it is a latent tendency.

Even so, avuso, although a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, yet in regards to the five aggregates of clinging, there still lingers in him a residual conceit “I am” (*asmi, - māna*),²⁴ a desire “I am,” a latent tendency “I am” that has not yet been uprooted.

Some time later, he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging:

such is form, such its arising, such its passing away;
 such are feelings, such their arising, such their passing away;
 such is perception, such its arising, such its passing away;
 such are formations, such their arising, such their passing away;
 such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.

As he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging, this residual conceit “I am,” this desire “I am,” this latent tendency “I am,” that has not yet been uprooted would be uprooted. (S 22.89.27/3:131) = SD 14.13)

²¹ *Evam kho bhikkhave kulaputtā aññam vyākaronti. Attho ca vutto attā ca anupanīto.*

²² Vaṅgīsa is foremost of those monks with ready wit (*paṭibhānavantānam*) (A 1:24).

²³ See Bodhi’s nn at S:B 459f nn498 f.

²⁴ Cf D 3:273.

In the Abhidhamma, **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, summarizing the Sutta teachings, gives the following definition of “the fetter of conceit” (*māna,saṃyojana*):

<i>Tattha katamaṃ māna,saṃyojanaṃ seyyo 'ham asmī ti māno sadiso 'ham asmī ti māno hīno 'ham asmī ti māno yo eva,rūpo māno maññanā unnati unnamo dhajo sampaggāho ketu,kamyatā cittassa— idaṃ vuccati māna,saṃyojanaṃ</i>	Therein, what is the fetter of conceit? It is the conceit, “I am better”; It is the conceit, “I am equal”; It is the conceit, “I am inferior.” Any such conceit, imagining, haughtiness, elevation, flaunting the flag, ²⁵ the mind’s wish for pre-eminence ²⁶ — this is called the fetter of conceit. (Kvu §1116/198)²⁷
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The Arahanta Sutta (S 1.25) has the last word on one who has experience the removal of conceit (*mana,vinaya*), thus:

<i>Pahīna,mānassa na santi ganthā vidhūpitā māna,ganthassa sabbe sa vīti,vatto yamataṃ sumedho aham vadāmī ti pi so vadeyya [mamaṃ vadantī ti pi so vadeyya] loke samaññaṃ kusalo veditvā vohāra,mattena so vohareyya</i>	For one who has abandoned conceit, there is no knot; for him, all knots of conceit have been destroyed. Though the wise has gone beyond the conceived, he might still say, “I speak,” [or, he might still say, “They speak to me.”] ²⁸ He is skillful, knowing worldly convention, he would use it only by way of mere expression. (S 1.25/1:14 f = v64)²⁹
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4 Restlessness

Restlessness (*anupasama*) here refers to a purely mental state.³⁰ This mental restlessness may be summed up as the 15 wrong views and the 16 doubts. The 15 wrong views are mentioned in **the Bhadd’eka,ratta Sutta** (M 131), thus:

Running back to the past:

- (1) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’³¹
- (2) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such feeling in the past.’
- (3) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such perception in the past.’
- (4) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such formations in the past.’
- (5) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such consciousness in the past.’

²⁵ This last phrase I follow Dhs:RD 275.

²⁶ *Ketu* (ts) has a broad range of meanings based on the idea of eye-catching prominence: brightness, flag, eminent person, comet. “By *ketu* is meant the conceit which, arising again and again, is like a signal in the sense of something set up on high” (Dhs:RD 275 n2).

²⁷ More detailed defs of the various forms of *māna* are given at VbhA §§866-890/353-357.

²⁸ This line is omitted in Ce MSS, but found in Be.

²⁹ See Bodhi’s nn at S:B 360 nn49-51

³⁰ A grosser form of “restlessness” (*uddhacca*)—as one of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)—is both mental and bodily—and prevents one from gaining mental concentration. As one of the 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*), it is more subtle, and overcoming it, contributes toward the realization of a higher “peace” (*upasama*), an epithet of nirvana, as in the recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*), ie the peace of nirvana.

³¹ Comy says that one thus “**seeks delight**” by associating the past in terms of craving or a view associated with craving (MA 5:3). “It should noted that it is not the mere recollection of the past through memory that causes bondage, but the reliving of past experiences with thoughts of craving. In this respect the Buddha’s teaching differs significantly from that of Krishnamurti, who seems to regard memory itself as the villain behind the scene” (M:ÑB 1143 n1215).

Chasing after the future:

- (6) One seeks delight there thinking, ‘May I have such form in the future.’³²
- (7) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such feelings in the future.’
- (8) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such perception in the future.’
- (9) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such formations in the future’
- (10) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such consciousness in the future.’

Distracted by the present:

- (11) An untaught ordinary person, ... unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma of the noble ones, regards form as self, or self as possessed of form, or form as in self, or self as in form.
- (12) He regards feeling as self....
- (13) He regards perception as self....
- (14) He regards formations as self....
- (15) He regards consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or consciousness as in form.

The above 15 wrong views shows how an uninstructed ordinary person tends to regard any of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness) in these ways:³³

- (a) the aggregate as the self, or
- (b) the self as possessing the aggregate, or
- (c) the aggregate as in the self, or
- (d) the self as in the aggregate.

The **Paṭisambhidā, magga** illustrates the four basic modes of self-identity view in connection with form in these ways:

- (a) One wrongly regards form as self, just as that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame.
- (b) One wrongly regards self as possessing form, just as a tree possesses a shadow.
- (c) One wrongly regards form as in self, just as the scent is in the flower.
- (d) One wrongly regards self as in form, just as a jewel is in a casket.³⁴

The Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta (M 109.10/ 3:17 f) and **the Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7 f/1:300) list the 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the five aggregates.

The 16 doubts are mentioned in such discourses as **the Mahā Taṇhā,saikhaya Sutta** (M 38.23), **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2.7) and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.20), thus:

- (1) ‘Was I in the past?’
- (2) ‘Was I not in the past?’
- (3) ‘What was I in the past?’
- (4) ‘How was I in the past?’
- (5) ‘Having been what, did I become in the past? [What was I before I became that in the past?]’
- (6) ‘Will I be in the future?’
- (7) ‘Am I not in the future?’
- (8) ‘What will I be in the future?’
- (9) ‘How will I be in the future?’
- (10) ‘Having been what, what will I become in the future? [What now would lead me to that future state?]’³⁵

³² *Eva, rūpo siyam anāgatam addhānan ti tattha nandim samanvāneti.*

³³ On these four self-identity views, see **Bhadd’eka, ratta Sutta** (M 131) = SD 8.9 Intro (4).

³⁴ Pm 2.50, 74, 77, 90 = 1:144 f.

³⁵ See **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2.7/1:8).

- (11) ‘Am I?’
 (12) ‘Am I not?’
 (13) ‘What am I?’
 (14) ‘How am I?’
 (15) ‘Where has this being come from?’
 (16) ‘Where will it [this being] go?’” (M 2.7/1:8, 38.23/1:265; S 12.20/2:26 f)

When one has crossed over the 15 wrong views and the 16 doubts, one has truly attained mental peace.

The Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta (M 140) defines the highest experience of peace, the diametrical opposite of restlessness, thus: “For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble peace, that is to say, the stilling of lust, hate and delusion” (*eso hi bhikkhu, paramo ariyo upasamo yadidaṃ rāga,dosa,mohānaṃ upasamo*), or more fully, thus:

Formerly [as an ordinary person], when one was ignorant, one experienced covetousness, desire and lust. Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Formerly, when one was ignorant, one experienced anger, ill will and hate. Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Formerly [as an ordinary person], when one was ignorant, one experienced ignorance and delusion. Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Therefore, such an accomplished monk is one accomplished in **the supreme foundation of peace**. For this, bhikkhu, is the supreme noble peace, that is to say, the stilling of lust, hate and delusion. (M 140.28/3:245 f) = SD 4.17.

The recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*) is one of the ten recollections (*anussati*) (A 1:30, 42).³⁶ This meditation is helpful in bringing one access concentration,³⁷ and taking this as a foundation, one could go on to another meditation leading to dhyana, or to reflect on impermanence. In **the Sallekha Sutta** (M 8), the four formless attainments are called “peaceful abidings” (*santā vihārā*).³⁸ Here we have *santa* as a synonym of *upasama*.

5 Ignorance

Avijjā, usually translated into English as “ignorance,” does not mean the lack of knowledge in the worldly sense, but a lack of spiritual knowledge, that is, the wisdom based on a direct experience of seeing reality. As such, it is synonymous with *moha*, “delusion,” the third of the three unwholesome roots of action,³⁹ and is at the root of all evil and suffering, preventing one from seeing reality. Ignorance, as delusion, tricks one into a false life-affirming view that our existence is permanent, happy, substantial and pleasant. The reality is that all the world is impermanent, liable to suffering, void of self, and basically impure.⁴⁰

The (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta (S 12.2) defines ignorance as not knowing the four truths, namely, suffering, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending.⁴¹ In simple terms, this refers to

³⁶ Explained in detail in Vism 8.245-251/293 f.

³⁷ “Access concentration” (*upacāra,samādhi*) is mostly momentary and not very strong, but properly cultivated, goes on to full concentration (*appanā*), and dhyana: see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1(9.2).

³⁸ M 8.8-11/1:41 f.

³⁹ The 2 unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*) are greed (*dosa*), hate (*lobha*) and delusion (*moha*) (D 3:275; It 45): see **(Kusalākusala,mūla) Nidāna S** (A 3.33/1:134-136) = SD 18.2.

⁴⁰ The 4 perversions (*vipallāsa*) regard what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant or bringing happiness, what is without an abiding self (*anattā*) as a self, what is foul or ugly (*asubha*) as pure or beautiful (**Vipallāsa Sutta**, A 4.49/2:52,4-7; Vism 22.68). See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1(4).

⁴¹ S 12.2.15/2:4 = SD 5.15.

one's lack of a clear understanding of reality, of how craving works, of the ending of suffering, and the way to the effective ending of suffering. The main reason we lack this understanding is that we do not see the pervading nature of impermanence in our existence.⁴²

It is sometimes argued that the world is created by a creator God, and that this God exist. However, it is impossible to conceive of an existent without a cause, unless it is merely a concept like time (which is merely as mental construct, and is, in a manner of speaking, causeless). The true creator of the world is ignorance. All we can know of the world is through our six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), and as such we all experience the world in our unique ways, each conceiving our own sense-constructed world (including the God-idea).

Buddhism however does not subscribe to an idealist view of the world, that it only exists in the mind: for, there is a real physical world out there. We cannot however fully comprehend it through our six senses when they really acts as coloured glasses, telescopes, microscopes and effect lenses, filtering and distorting our experiences. Only on the mental level can we deconstruct the false images we have created for ourselves, and living in this self-constructed world.⁴³

Although the world is rooted in ignorance and sustained by delusion, they are not the first cause. Indeed, there are *no* first causes at all, since all existents are mental constructs and are merely temporary manifestations of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind, or in current terms, extension (hardness and dimension), cohesiveness (“stickiness” of matter), heat (decay), and motion. Such a system of constant flux has no place for any “final state” of matter.⁴⁴

The Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9) states that “With the arising of the cankers (*āsava*), there is the arising of ignorance.”⁴⁵ In fact, the cankers and ignorance feed and fuel one another. The point to remember here is that these are all mental models for understanding the mind's working, and using this knowing to work towards personal liberation. It is the Buddha who has discovered the removal of ignorance (*avijjā,vinaya*) [§4].

6 The Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta

The main teachings of the Acchariya Sutta are these four: non-attachment (*anālaya*), removal of conceit (*māna,vinaya*), peace (*upasama*) and removal of ignorance (*avijjā,vinaya*). This is one of the simplest description of the attainment of arhathood. There is a remarkable parallel, even concordance, of these four teachings with the four “foundations” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) for attaining arhathood taught by the Buddha to the young renunciant Pukkusāti, thus:

Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta (M 140)

The four foundations (*adhiṭṭhāna*)

1. **Wisdom** (*paññā*) through the analysis of the six elements (earth, water, fire, air, space, consciousness); [M 140.13-19c] followed by equanimity [20-22b] and the true nature of feelings [23-25].
2. **Truth** (*sacca*), ie nirvana [26].

Acchariya Sutta (A 4.128)

2. **Removal of conceit** (*māna,vinaya*), which is effected by the understanding of the interdependence of physical and mental elements, and the nature of feelings.
4. **Removal of ignorance** (*avijjā,vinaya*), undefined here, but usually referring to understanding the four noble truths.

⁴² This is what such suttas as (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) = SD 16.7 exhort us to do.

⁴³ These false world is a result of our latent tendencies (*anusaya*) [3]: see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18) = SD 6.14 Intro (5).

⁴⁴ On the beginninglessness and endlessness of samsara, see **Sammā,diṭṭhi S** (M 9) = SD 11.14(9).

⁴⁵ M 9.66/1:54 = SD 11.14.

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| <p>3. Letting go (<i>cāga</i>), ie the letting go of all acquisitions (<i>upadhi</i>)⁴⁶ [27].</p> <p>4. Peace (<i>upasama</i>), ie the abandoning of the 2 unwholesome roots: greed, hate, and delusion [28-29]. [See 4 above]</p> | <p>1. Non-attachment (<i>anālaya</i>). (Defined here In the Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta.)</p> <p>3. Peace (<i>upasama</i>), the opposite of restlessness. (Defined here in the Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta.)</p> |
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The instruction section of the Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta concludes with these words of the Buddha:

Those who stand on them [that is, the four foundations of wisdom, truth, generosity and peace] do not go with the flow of mental conceiving (*mañña*),⁴⁷ not flowing with mental conceiving, one is called a “sage at peace”.’ So it was said. And in what connection is this said?

Bhikshu, “I am” is a mental conception; “I am this” is a mental conception.

“I will be” is a mental conception; “I will not be” is a mental conception.

“I will have form [birth in the form world]” is a mental conception; “I will be formless” is a mental conception.

“I will be percipient” is a mental conception; “I will be non-percipient” is a mental conception; “I will be neither percipient nor non-percipient” is a mental conception.

Mental conceiving, bhikshu, is a sickness; mental conceiving is a tumour; mental conceiving is a dart.

By overcoming all mental conceiving, bhikshu, one is called a “sage at peace.” And a sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die. He is not shaken, not agitated. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born.⁴⁸ Not dying, how could he be shaken? Not shaken, why should he be agitated?

Those who stand on them [the four foundations] do not go with the flow of mental conceiving, not flowing with mental conceiving, one is called a “sage at peace.” (M 140.30-32/3:246)

One should not neglect wisdom; one should guard the truth; one should cultivate letting go; one should train for peace [of mind].⁴⁹ (M 140, passim)

7 Final knowledge

Each of the four teachings of this sutta ends with the refrain: “...and they establish their minds in final knowledge (*aññā*).” “Final knowledge” (*aññā*) is the arhat’s direct knowledge of personal liberation, which means that any of these four teachings can be a foundation (*adhīttāna*) for the attainment for arhathood. In the **Kaḷāra Sutta** (S 12.32), the Buddha asks Sāriputta a series of question on how to define the final knowledge he has attained, beginning with:

[The Buddha:]

“Sāriputta, if they were to ask you,

‘Avuso Sāriputta, how have you known, how have you seen, that you have declared final knowledge thus:

“I understand: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being’”—being asked thus, how would you answer?’”

⁴⁶ “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, substrates of existence, essentials of being, worldly possessions as a source of rebirth. Comy mentions 4 kinds of acquisitions: the aggregates (*khandh’upadhi*), defilements (*kiles’upadhi*), volitional formations (*abhisaṅkhār’upadhi*), and the cords of sense-pleasure (*kāma,guṇ’upadhi*) (MA 2:112, 3:169, 5:60)

⁴⁷ See §7 & nn there.

⁴⁸ What is not present in him is the craving for being. Those who still have this craving are reborn ever again.

⁴⁹ Comy: From the start one should not neglect the wisdom born of calm and insight in order to reach into the wisdom of the fruit of arhathood. One should guard truth in order to realize nirvana, the ultimate truth. One should cultivate letting go in order to abandon all defilements, stilling them through the path of arhathood. (MA 5:51, 52)

[Sāriputta:]

“If, venerable sir, they were to ask me,...I would answer thus:

‘With the destruction of the source [cycle] from which birth arises, avuso, I know that the destroyed is in the destroyed [when the cause is destroyed, the effect is destroyed].’⁵⁰

Having known this, I understand: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’⁵¹

Being asked thus, venerable sir, I would answer in this way.” (S 12.32.14-16/2:51 f)

Some suttas where there is a reference to “final knowledge” include the following:

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	(M 10.46/1:62 f)	= SD 13.3
Nalaka,pāna Sutta	(M 68.10/1:465, 14/466)	
Kīṭāgiri Sutta	(M 70.22/1:479, 27/1:481)	= SD 11.1
Sunakkhatta Sutta	(M 105.2-6/2:252 f)	
Cha-b,bisodhana Sutta	(M 112/3:27-37)	
Kaḷāra Sutta	(S 12.32/2:51-54)	
Susīma Sutta	(S 12.70/2:120 f)	
Atthi ni kho Pariyāya Sutta	(S 35.153/4:138-140)	
Sīla Sutta	(S 46.3/5:69)	
Atthi Sutta	(S 46.57/5:129)	
Ñāya Sutta	(S 48.22/5:204)	
Pubb’ārāma Sutta 1	(S 48.45/5:222)	
Pubb’ārāma Sutta 2	(S 48.46/5:222 f)	
Pubb’ārāma Sutta 3	(S 48.47/5:223)	
Pubb’ārāma Sutta 3	(S 48.48/5:223 f)	
Piṇḍola Sutta	(S 48.49/5:224 f)	
Dve Phalā Sutta	(S 48.65/5:236)	
(Iddhi,pada) Phalā Suttas 1 & 2	(S 51.25-26/5:285)	
(Ānāpāna,sati) Phalā Suttas 1 & 2	(S 54.4-5/5:314)	

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⁵⁰ Comy: “Avuso, with the destruction of the condition for birth, I have understood thus, ‘As the condition for this birth is destroyed, the birth that is the effect [fruit], is destroyed, too.’” (*Āvuso, ayaṃ jāti nāma yaṃ paccayā, tassa paccayassa khayā khīṇasmim jātiyā paccaye jāti,saṅkhātāṃ phalaṃ khīṇaṃ ti viditaṃ*) (SA 2:62)

⁵¹ Highlighted passage: *Yaṃ nidānā āvuso jāti tassa nidānassa khayā, khīṇasmim khīṇaṃ iti viditaṃ,khīṇasmim khīṇaṃ iti viditvā khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahma,cariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti pajānāmi ti.*

The Second Discourse on the Marvellous

(A 4.128/2:131 f)

The Tathagata

1 Monks, with the arising of the Tathagata,⁵² the arhat [the worthy one], the fully self-awakened one, four wonderful and marvelous things appear. What are the four?

(1) Non-attachment

Monks, people delight in attachment [habitual tendencies],⁵³ revel in attachment, rejoice in attachment. When the truth of non-attachment (*anālaya*) is being taught by the Tathagata, people wish to listen to it, they give ear to it, and they establish their minds in final knowledge (*aññā*).⁵⁴

This is the first wonderful and marvelous thing that appears with the arising of the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.

(2) Removal of conceit

2 Monks, people delight in conceit,⁵⁵ revel in conceit, rejoice in conceit. [132] When the truth of the removal of conceit (*māna, vinaya*) is being taught by the Tathagata, people wish to listen to it, they give ear to it, and they establish their minds in final knowledge.

This is the second wonderful and marvelous thing that appears with the arising of the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.

(3) Peace

3 Monks, people delight in restlessness,⁵⁶ revel in restlessness, rejoice in restlessness. When the truth of the peaceful (*upasamika*) is being taught by the Tathagata, people wish to listen to it, they give ear to it, and they establish their minds in final knowledge.

This is the third wonderful and marvelous thing that appears with the arising of the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.

(4) Removal of ignorance

4 Monks, people delight in ignorance,⁵⁷ revel in ignorance, rejoice in ignorance. When the truth of the removal of ignorance (*avijjā, vinaya*) is being taught by the Tathagata, people wish to listen to it, they give ear to it, and they establish their minds in final knowledge (*aññā*).

This is the fourth wonderful and marvelous thing that appears with the arising of the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.

Monks, with the arising of the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, these four wonderful and marvelous things appear.

— evaṃ —

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⁵² *Tathāgata*, see *Buddhānussati* = SD 15.7b(2C).

⁵³ “Attachment” (*ālaya*): see Intro (2).

⁵⁴ “Establish their minds (*cittam*) in final knowledge,” *aññā(ya) cittam* [v| *aññā, cittam*] *upaṭṭhāpeti*. See CPD: *aññā*. I have rendered *cittam* (3 sg) as plural (“their minds”) so as to be in concord with “people” (*pajā*, “generation (of humans, beings), 3rd sg”). On *aññā*, see Intro (7).

⁵⁵ “Conceit,” *māna*, see Intro (3).

⁵⁶ “Restlessness,” *anupāsama*, see Intro (4).

⁵⁷ “Ignorance,” *avijjā*, see Intro (5).