

Atthi,rāga Sutta

The Discourse on “There is Lust”

[The nature of the arhat’s consciousness]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 12.64/2:101-104)

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1 Suffering is sustained by four kinds of food

1.1 FOOD. The Atthi,rāga Sutta (S 12.64) is about how our cyclic lives are prolonged, and how the arhat fully breaks this cycle. Our samsaric lives are prolonged by the four foods, that is, edible food, contact (or sense-impression), mental volition, and consciousness [§3]. The Commentaries say that they are so called because “they nourish” (*aharanti*) their own effects. Although there are other conditions for beings, these four alone are called “food” because they serve as *special conditions* for the personal life-continuity (*ajjhattika,santatiyā vivesa,paccayattā*) (MA 1:209; SA 2:26; DhsA 153).

For edible food (*kabaliṅkāra āhāra*) is a special condition for the physical body of those beings who subsist on edible food. In the mental body, contact is the special condition for feeling, mental volition for consciousness, and consciousness for name-and-form. **The products of food** (what it nourishes) are as follows:

- (1) Edible food put into the mouth produces the groups of form with nutritive essence as the eighth (*oja’atthamaka,rūpāni*, an Abhidhamma term for the simplest cluster of material states);
- (2) contact as food (*phass’āhāra*) produces the three kinds of feeling [pleasurable, painful, neutral];
- (3) mental volition as food (*mano,sañcetanāhāra*) produces the three kinds of existence [sense-world, form-world, formless world]; and
- (4) consciousness as food (*viññān’āhāra*) produces name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*) at rebirth.

(MA 1:207 ff; SA 2:22-27; KhA 75 ff); see also Vism 11.1-3/341

In the **Āhāra Sutta** (S 46.61/5:102-107) and the **Abhisāṅga Sutta** (S 55.31-33/5:391-392), the term *āhāra* is used in a broader sense of “special condition” without reference to the four kinds of food.¹

1.2 THE PAINTER. The consciousness of an unawakened person, who is sustained by the four kinds of food, is compared to *an artist and his works* [§8]. The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that the painter or artist represents karma with its adjuncts [SAT: craving and ignorance, and time and destination, etc]; the panel, wall or canvas represents samsara with its three realms. As the painter creates a figure on the panel, even so karma creates a form in the three realms of existence. As the figure created by an unskilled painter is ugly, deformed and disagreeable, even so the karma created with a mind dissociated from wisdom gives rise to an ugly, deformed and disagreeable figure. But as the figure created by a skilled painter is beautiful and well-formed, even so the karma created with a mind associated with wisdom gives rise to a beautiful and well-formed figure.² (SA 2:114; cf MA 1:166)

2 The arhat’s consciousness

The arhat’s consciousness. in the **Atthi,rāga Sutta** (S 12.64), is compared to a sun-beam shining into a house and not settling anywhere in empty space [§§17-20]:

Even so, bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for nutriment that is edible food...for the food that is contact...for the food that is mental volition...for the food that is consciousness...consciousness is not established there and grow.

Where consciousness is not established and grow...I say that it is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair. (S 12.64/2:101-104) = SD 26.10

¹ See also S:B 731 n19 (*These four kinds of nutriments have craving as their source.*)

² This painter parable recurs in **Gaddula,baddha S 2** (S 22.100.11/3:152) = SD 28.7b.

The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that the arhat’s karma is similar to sun-beam. However, the sun-beam exists, but because there is nowhere for it to settle, it is said to be *unestablished* (*appatiṭṭhitā*). But the arhat’s karma is said to be unestablished because it is non-existent. Although he has a body, etc, no wholesome or unwholesome karma is thereby created. His deeds are merely functional, without fruition (*kiriya,matte thatvā avipākam hoti*). (SA 2:115)³

Bhikkhu Bodhi makes an important note here:

It should be noted that [SA] explains the statement that the arahant’s *consciousness* is unestablished to mean that his kamma is unestablished. This seems too free an interpretation. Nevertheless, I think it would be wrong to interpret the sutta as saying that after his parinibbāna the arahant’s consciousness persists in some mode that can only be described as unestablished. The present passage is clearly speaking of the arahant’s consciousness *while he is alive*. Its purport is not that an “unestablished consciousness” remains after the arahants’ parinibbāna, but that his consciousness, being devoid of lust, does not “become established in” the four nutriments in any way that might generate a future existence. (S:B 775 n174)

3 The two consciousnesses

The statement regarding the fourth and last kind of food begins thus:

Bhikkhus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for the food that is consciousness, consciousness is established there and grows. [§7]

Such statements are characteristic of the early texts where technical terms are very rare, and important words are understood in terms of their context. Here, the first consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is “cognitive consciousness” arising at the sense-doors, while the second is the “existential consciousness” that links one life to the next.

There is no unified definition of consciousness in the Suttas. However, from the contexts of the term *viññāṇa* as used in early Buddhism, we can tease out at least two important senses, that is, **the two basic conscious processes**—namely, the functions of dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppādā*), that is, cognitive consciousness and existential consciousness.⁴ The first—cognitive consciousness—centering around *viññāṇa* (consciousness) and *nāma,rūpa* (name-and-form), shows how our senses work and how our lives are sustained by the moment. The second function of dependent arising—that of existential consciousness—centering around *taṇhā* (craving) and *upādāna* (clinging or fuel), is to show the true nature of what we call an “individual,” going through various lives, and it shows this by stating that *consciousness* arises conditioned by ignorance and formations.⁵

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³ Here, see **Bhūmija S** (S 12.25/2:37-41 = SD 31.2) & S:B 749 n81.

⁴ Amongst the scholars who have used this distinction are OH de A Wijesekera 1964, Rune EA Johansson 1965: 198 f, & WW Waldron 2003: 41-45. See also Harvey 1995:158 f & **The unconscious** = SD 17.8b(3).

⁵ See **Viññāṇa** = SD 17.8a (6.1).

The Discourse on “There is Lust”

(S 12.64/2:101-104)

1 (The Buddha was) residing at Sāvattihī.

Four kind of food

2 “Bhikshus, there are these four kinds of food for the maintenance of beings that are already born or for the support of beings to be born.⁶

3 What are the four?

- (1) Edible food, gross and subtle.
- (2) Contact [sense-impression].
- (3) Mental volition.
- (4) Consciousness.

These, bhikshus, are the four kinds of food for the maintenance of beings that are already born or for the support of beings to be born.

Feeding one’s consciousness

4 (1) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for edible food, consciousness⁷ is established therein and grows.⁸

Where⁹ consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.¹⁰

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.¹¹

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.¹²

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.¹³

⁶ *Cattāro ’me, bhikkhave, āhārā bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya.* The term *sambhavesī* (“being to be born”) here refers an “intermediate being,” one who has not attained a proper rebirth. See **Is rebirth immediate?** = SD 2.17 (3-4, 7).

⁷ Here, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) refers to “cognitive consciousness,” arising at the sense-doors: see below in this para for the other kind of consciousness. See §7 n.

⁸ *Kabalīkāre [Kabalīnkāre] ce, bhikkhave, āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandī atthi taṇhā, patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇam virūḷham.* Comy explains that lust (*rāga*), delight (*nandī*) and craving (*taṇhā*) are synonyms for greed (*lobha*) (SA 2:114). On the phrase, “**consciousness is established there and grows**” (*patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇam virūḷham*), Comy explains “Having caused karma, it is established and grows through its ability of prolonging (*ākāḍḍhana*) a rebirth. (SA 2:114). Here, I take *kabalīkāre...āhāre* as sg loc (as also in the other 3 foods), but render them into idiomatic English depending on the context.

⁹ *Tattha*, “wherever, wherein.” Comy explains that *yattha* is a locative referring to the 3 realms of samsara.[the sense word, the form world and the formless world],or else, in all instances, this locative is used with reference to the correlative term in the preceding phrase. (SA 2:114)

¹⁰ On the establishing of consciousness (*patiṭṭhitam viññāṇam*), see **Cetanā Sutta 1** (S 12.38/2:65 f = SD 7.6a) & S:B 757 n112, & on the descent of name-and-form (*nāma,rūpassa avakkanti*), see **Cetanā Sutta 2** (S 12.39/2:66 = SD 7.6b) & SB 760 n115.

¹¹ *Yattha atthi nāma,rūpassa avakkanti, atthi tattha saṅkhārānaṃ vuddhi.* Comy: This refers to the formations that are the cause of further existence for one living in the present cycle of results (SA 2:114). Bodhi notes: “The variation here on the usual sequence is very interesting. When ‘the growth of volitional formations [*saṅkhārānaṃ vuddhi*]’ is placed between name-and-form and future existence, this implies that the expression corresponds to the three critical terms of the standard formula—craving, clinging, and (kamma-)existence—with *āyatim punabbhavā-bhinibbatti* signifying the process of entering the new existence.” (S:B 775 n172)

¹² *Yattha atthi saṅkhārānaṃ vuddhi, atthi tattha āyatim punabbhavābhinibbatti.*

¹³ *Yattha atthi āyatim jāti,jarā,marāṇam, s’asokaṃ taṃ, bhikkhave, s’adaram sa,upāyāsanti vadāmi.*

5 (2) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for the food that is contact [sense-impression], consciousness is established therein and grows.¹⁴

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

6 (3) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving in the food that is mental volition, consciousness is established there and grows.¹⁵

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

7 (4) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving in the food that is (existential) consciousness, consciousness is established there and grows.¹⁶

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

The parable of the painter

8 Suppose, bhikshus, a painter or an artist,¹⁷ using dye or lac or turmeric or indigo or crimson,¹⁸ [102] would create the figure of a man or a woman replete with all its limbs and features on a well-polished panel, wall or canvas.¹⁹

¹⁴ *Phasse ce, bhikkhave, āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandī atthi taṇhā, patiṭṭhitam tattha viññānam virūḥam.* Here, I take *phasse...āhāre* as sg loc (as also in the other 3 foods), but render them into idiomatic English depending on the context.

¹⁵ *Mano,sañcetanāya ce, bhikkhave, āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandī atthi taṇhā, patiṭṭhitam tattha viññānam virūḥam.* Here, *phasse...āhāre* is sg loc (as also in the other 3 foods), but render them into idiomatic English depending on the context.

¹⁶ *Viññāne ce bhikkhave āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandī atthi taṇhā, patiṭṭhitam tattha viññānam virūḥam.* Here, the first consciousness (*viññāna*) is “existential consciousness” that links one life to the next, while the second is “cognitive consciousness,” arising at the sense-doors. See Intro (3) & *Viññāna* = SD 17.8a (6.1).

¹⁷ On the meaning of the painter simile, see Intro (1).

¹⁸ These five refer to the artist’s painting media, ie, plant products. **Dye** (*rajana*) comes from various sources: the 6 dyes allowed for monastics are from plant-parts, viz, root-dye (*mūla*~), trunk dye (*khandha*~), bark dye (*taca*~), leaf-dye (*patta*~), flower-dye (*puppha*~), and fruit-dye (*phala*~) (V 1:286; cf Tha 965). **Lac** (*lākha*), ie the *lākṣā* plant, whence a reddish dye (SnA 577; Vism 261). **Turmeric** (*haliddī*), ie the turmeric plant, whence a yellow dye (M 1:127; S 2:101; A 3:230, 233; KhpA 64). **Indigo** (*nīli*, Skt *nīlinī*), ie the indigo plant (A:230, 233). **Crimson** (*mañjīṭṭha*) is the tree, *Vitex negundo*, *sindhavāra*, source of a colour like that of the *kaṇavīra*-bud (Vv 39.1; VvA 177; DhsA 317). The usu primary-colour pericope is: indigo (or sky grey) (*nīla*), golden yellow (or orange) (*pīṭa*), crimson (*mañjīṭṭhaka*), blood red (*lohitaka*), and white (*odāta*) (M 1:509; J 6:185; Dhs 617). See **Atthi,rāga S** (S 12.64.8/2:102); **Gaddula,baddha S 2** (S 22.100.11/3:152); (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55.4b/5:121); (**Manta**) **Saṅgārava S** (A 5.193.3/3:230)..

¹⁹ *Seyyathā’pi, bhikkhave, rajako vā citta,kārako vā sati rajanāya vā lākḥāya vā haliddiyā vā nīliyā vā mañjīṭṭhāya vā suparimattṭhe vā phalake bhittiyā vā dussa,paṭṭe vā itthi,rūpaṃ vā purisa,rūpaṃ vā abhinimmineyya sabb’-aṅga,paccaṅgaṃ.* On the painter simile, see Intro (1.2).

9 Even so,

(1) bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for edible food, consciousness is established there and grows.

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

10 (2) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for the food that is sense-contact, consciousness is established there and grows.

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

11 (3) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for the food that is mental volition, consciousness is established there and grows.

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

12 (4) Bhikshus, if there is lust, or delight, or craving for the food that is consciousness, consciousness is established there and grows.²⁰

Where consciousness is established and grows, there is the descent of name-and-form.

Where there is the descent of name-and-form, there is the growth of formations.

Where there is the growth of formations, there is further rebirth.

Where there is further rebirth, there are further birth, decay and death.

Where there are further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say that it is accompanied by sorrow, by anguish, by despair.

Not feeding one's consciousness [For short reflection]

13 (1) Bhikshus, if there is *no* lust, *nor* delight, *nor* craving for edible food, consciousness²¹ is *not* established there and grows *not*.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.²²

14 (2) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is sense-contact, consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

²⁰ On the two consciousnesses mentioned here, see §7 & n.

²¹ Here, consciousness (*viññāna*) refers to "cognitive consciousness" arising at the sense-doors: see below in this para for the other kind of consciousness. See §7 n.

²² *Asokantam, ...adaram anupāyāsanti*

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

15 (3) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is mental volition, consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

16 (4) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is consciousness, consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

The simile of house and sunbeam [For full reflection]

17 Suppose, bhikshus, there were a pinnacled house or a pinnacled hall, with windows on the northern, the southern, and the eastern sides. When the sun rises and a beam of light enters through a window, where would it settle?”

“On the western wall, bhante.”

18 “Bhikshus, if there were no western wall, where would it settle?”

“On earth [the ground], bhante.”

19 “Bhikshus, what if there is no earth [no ground], where would it settle?”

“On the water, bhante.”

20 “Bhikshus, what if there is no water, where would it settle?”

“It would not settle [It would not be established], bhante.”

21 Even so,

(1) Bhikshus, if there is *no* lust, *nor* delight, *nor* craving for edible food, consciousness is not established there and grows not.²³

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

22 (2) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is contact [sense-impression], consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

²³ On the significance of “not established” or unestablished (*appatit̥ṭhita*), see Intro (2).

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

23 (3) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is mental volition, consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.

24 (4) Bhikshus, if there is no lust, nor delight, nor craving for the food that is consciousness, consciousness is not established there and grows not.

Where consciousness is not established and grows not, there is no descent of name-and-form.

Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there is no growth of formations.

Where there is no growth of formations, there is no further rebirth.

Where there is no further rebirth, there are no further birth, decay and death.

Where there are no further birth, decay and death, bhikshus, I say one is without sorrow, without anguish, without despair.”

— evaṃ —

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