

(Dhātu) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on Recluses and Brahmins (On the Elements)

[The arising, passing away, gratification, danger and escape regarding the elements]
(Saṃyutta Nikāya 14.38/2:176)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2009

Introduction

The (Dhātu) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 2 (S 14.38) is the second of three identically named discourses which close the Dhātu Saṃyutta (S 14).¹ While **the Dhātu Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 1** (S 14.37) deals with the gratification, danger and escape regarding the elements—that is, the “gratification” formula—this second discourse deals the arising, passing away, gratification, danger and escape regarding the elements.

The three familiar terms of the discourse—*assāda*, *ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa*—often appear as a set in the Nikāyas. The Commentaries relate them to the four noble truths, thus:

danger	(<i>ādīnava</i>)	the first truth, that is suffering;
gratification	(<i>assāda</i>)	the second truth, that is, the arising of suffering, craving; and
escape	(<i>nissaraṇa</i>)	the third truth, that is, the ending of suffering, nirvana.

(DA 2:512; MA 2:11)

The (Dhātu) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 2 adds two other terms—arising (*samudaya*) and passing away (*attha'gama*)—to the threefold “gratification” (*assāda*) formula. Here, obviously, the first two terms do not refer to the second or third noble truths, which are already found in “gratification” (*assāda*) and “escape” (*nissaraṇa*). The arising and passing away here, I think, refers to the process of impermanence that the wise practitioner should observe.

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¹ For further details, see **(Dhātu) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa S** (S 14.37) = SD 29.12 Intro(1).

The Second Discourse to Recluses and Brahmins (On the Elements)

(S 14.38/2:176)

1 (The Blessed One was) residing at Sāvathī.

The four elements

2 “Bhikshus, there are these four elements. What are the four?

The earth element, the water element, the fire element, the wind element.

Not understanding the four elements

3 Bhikshus, those recluses and brahmins who do not understand, according to reality, the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in regard to these four elements—

I do not regard them as recluses amongst recluses or brahmins amongst brahmins, and these venerable ones do not, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, attain and dwell, here and now, in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.

Understanding the four elements

4 But, bhikshus, those recluses and brahmins who understand, according to reality, the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in regard to these four elements—

I regard them as recluses amongst recluses or brahmins amongst brahmins, and these venerable ones, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, attain and dwell, here and now, in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.

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