

## Hatthi,pad'upama Sutta 1 & 2

### The Discourse on the Hand-and-Foot Parable

[The relativity of mind and body]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 35.236/4:171 f; PTS: S 35.195)

& (Saṃyutta Nikāya 35.237/4:172)

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#### Introduction

1. There are two almost identical Hatthi,pad'upama Suttas (S 35.236 and S 35.237). Their only difference is that where S 35.236 has *paññāyati*, S 35.237 has *hoti* throughout, for example,

S 35.236: *Hatthesu, bhikkhave, sati ādāna, nikkhepanam paññāyati*  
= Bhikkhus, when there are hands, taking up and putting down are *discerned*.

S 35.237: *Hatthesu, bhikkhave, sati ādāna, nikkhepanam hoti*  
= Bhikkhus, when there are hands, *there are* the taking up and putting down.

*Hoti* (“there is, it is”) is a singular verb, but is here rendered as plural (“there are”) in keeping with the English idiom.

2. The Saṃyutta Commentary says that both the Hatthi,pad'upama Suttas explain the cycle of existence and its ending by way of karmically resultant pleasure and pain<sup>1</sup> (SA 3:5). **Ñāṇananda**, in his “Nibbāna Sermon 9,” gives an interesting and useful commentary on these two discourses. The following comments is inspired by his commentary.<sup>2</sup>

3. As unawakened beings, we tend *reify* our experiences. What are really impermanent manifestations of form, that is, the four elements (earth, water, fire and wind),<sup>3</sup> we perceive as permanent objects. We store such ideas as our memories and then superimpose them reactively the next time a similar sense-stimulus occurs. When we view ourselves in this manner, we are likely to misconstrue that *this* is what we are: we have conjured up a self-identity (*sakkāya*). This becomes our self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*).

We continue to appropriate or fuel (*upādiyati*) this self-identity view by clinging (*upādāna*) to this self-identity. The mental aspects of our being—feeling, perception, formations and attention—are all directed to reifying—turning into *form*—what are merely mental experiences. In other words, the mind projects things into our lives.

The things we experience—what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch (feel)—are as such relative to how we think. In this sense, all such experiences are *mind-made*.<sup>4</sup> What is creating “things” (reifying) is the mind. We are the world’s creator. We create our world based on our likes and dislikes. What we like, we try to remember, and to collect; what we dislike, we try to deny (push out of our consciousness), and keep on denying or rejecting such ideas. But in doing so, we are inevitably and constantly reminded by it. And so we are caught in the mood swing between liking and disliking.

Discourses such as **the Cha Chakka Sutta** (M 148) contains teachings on how such latent tendencies (of lust, aversion and ignorance) arise, and how they can be corrected.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dvīsu pi c'etesu vipāka, sukha, dukkham eva dassetvā vaṭṭa, vivaṭṭam kathitan ti.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ñāṇananda 2004: 186 f.*

<sup>3</sup> See (**Saṅkhitta**) **Dhātu S** (S 14.30/4:169 = SD 29.15).

<sup>4</sup> Cf Dh 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> M 148/3:280-287 = SD 26.6; see esp §§34-39.

## The First Discourse on the Hand-and-Foot Parable (S 35.236/4:171 f)

**1** THE PARABLE. Bhikshus,

when there are hands,	taking up and putting down are discerned.
When there are feet,	coming and going [going and returning] are discerned.
When there are limbs,	bending and stretching are discerned.
When there a belly,	hunger and thirst are discerned.

**2** THE TEACHING. Even so, bhikshus,

when there is <i>the eye</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on eye contact;
when there is <i>the ear</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on ear contact;
when there is <i>the nose</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on nose contact;
when there is <i>the tongue</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on tongue contact;
when there is <i>the body</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on body contact;
when there is <i>the mind</i> ,	pleasure and pain arise internally	dependent on mind contact;

**3** THE PARABLE. Bhikshus,

when there are no hands,	no taking up and putting down are discerned.
When there are no feet,	no coming and going [going and returning] are discerned.
When there are no limbs,	no bending and stretching are discerned.
When there no belly,	no hunger and thirst are discerned.

**4** THE TEACHING. Even so, bhikshus,

when there is <i>no eye</i> , [172]	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on eye contact;
when there is <i>no ear</i> ,	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on ear contact;
when there is <i>no nose</i> ,	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on nose contact;
when there is <i>no tongue</i> ,	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on tongue contact,
when there is <i>no body</i> ,	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on body contact;
when there is <i>no mind</i> ,	neither pleasure nor pain arise internally	dependent on mind contact.

— evaṃ —

## The Second Discourse on the Hand-and-Feet Parable (S 35.237/4:172)

**1** THE PARABLE. Bhikshus,  
when there are hands, there are taking up and putting down.  
When there are feet, there are coming and going [going and returning].  
When there are limbs, there are bending and stretching.  
When there a belly, there are hunger and thirst.

**2** THE TEACHING. Even so, bhikshus,  
when there is *the eye*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on eye contact;  
when there is *the ear*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on ear contact;  
when there is *the nose*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on nose contact;  
when there is *the tongue*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on tongue contact;  
when there is *the body*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on body contact;  
when there is *the mind*, pleasure and pain arise internally dependent on mind contact;

**3** THE PARABLE. Bhikshus,  
when there are no hands, there is no taking up or putting down.  
When there are no feet, there is no coming or going [going and returning].  
When there are no limbs, there is no bending or stretching.  
When there no belly, there is no hunger or thirst.

**4** THE TEACHING. Even so, bhikshus,  
when there is *no eye*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on eye contact;  
when there is *no ear*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on ear contact;  
when there is *no nose*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on nose contact;  
when there is *no tongue*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on tongue contact,  
when there is *no body*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on body contact;  
when there is *no mind*, neither pleasure nor pain arise internally dependent on mind contact.

— evaṃ —

### Bibliography

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