

## (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta

The Discourse on (the Food for) Ignorance

A 10.61/5:113-116

Theme: Conditions giving rise to ignorance and to liberation

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### 1 The essence of the discourse

1.1 CRAVING AND IGNORANCE. The (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta (A 10.61) and the (Āhāra) Taṇhā Sutta (A 10.62) are identical except that the former centres around *ignorance* (*avijjā*) while the latter centres around *craving for existence* (*bhava, taṇhā*).<sup>1</sup> The (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta (A 10.61), in its first half, applies a causal scheme similar to the Upanisā Sutta to show how ignorance arises beginning with association with “false persons” (*asappurisā*). The rain parable of the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta is used in a negative way to show how this lack of wisdom builds up [§§1-3]. In its closing half, the Sutta deals, in a similar manner, with the dependent arising of liberation [§§4-6].

Both the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta and the (Āhāra) Taṇhā Sutta deal with dependent arising of *ignorance* and its ending leading to liberation, the former directly, the latter indirectly. The (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta takes *ignorance* in its general sense, that is, as the first link of dependent arising, while the (Āhāra) Taṇhā Sutta takes *the craving for existence* as its point of departure.

While the better known 12-link formula begins with *ignorance* (*avijjā*), the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta shows that this ignorance, although it is without beginning, it is itself *conditioned*. In other words, ignorance is here treated as the *last* link in the dependent arising formula [2]. But the Sutta classes by reversing the process, describing the dependent arising of liberation [3].

This teaching unequivocally shows that ignorance is not any kind of metaphysical first cause. The same is true of *craving* (*taṇhā*), that is, the second noble truth, namely, the arising of suffering. It too is not an uncaused cause. The (Āhāra) Taṇhā Sutta explains *craving* in practically the same way as the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta does for *ignorance*.

Both ignorance and craving may be very powerful root conditions for samsaric existence, but they are themselves “fed” by other conditions—they are conditioned phenomena—and as such can be “starved.” When the supporting conditions for ignorance and craving can be removed, liberation ensues. Otherwise, liberation is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

1.2 FOOD (*āhāra*). The term “food” is here used in the sense of a strong supporting or “special condition.” The same usage is found in the (Nīvaraṇa Bojjhaṅga) Āhāra Sutta (S 46.51)<sup>3</sup> and the Abhisāṇḍa Suttas (S 55.31-33),<sup>4</sup> *āhāra* is used in this broader sense of “special condition” without reference to the four kinds of food.<sup>5</sup>

The early Canon speaks of four kinds of food or nutriment (*āhāra*): (1) solid (or edible) food, (2) contact (sense-stimuli), (3) volition, (4) consciousness.<sup>6</sup> 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 (*ajjhatika, santatiyā visesa, paccayattā*).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A 10.61/3:113-116 = SD 31.10 & A 10.62/3:116-119 = SD 21.11

<sup>2</sup> See Vism 17.36-39/525.

<sup>3</sup> S 46.51/5:102-107 = SD 7.15.

<sup>4</sup> S 55.31-33/5:391-392

<sup>5</sup> See also S:B 731 n19 (*These four kinds of nutriments have craving as their source.*)

<sup>6</sup> D 3:228; M 1:48, 1:261; S 2:13, 48, 98-105; Vbh 401.

<sup>7</sup> MA 1:209; SA 2:26; DhsA 153.

For edible food (*kabalīkāra 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.

*Āhāra* should be understood, not only as a supporting condition, but also as the products of food (what it nourishes): (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 (*viññāṇ'āhāra*) produces name-and-form (*nāma, rūpa*) at rebirth.<sup>8</sup>

The (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta is interesting in that it uses the term *āhāra* in the sense of “specific condition” (*idap, paccaya*) [§1(1)]. And it gives an alternative dependent arising (perhaps one that is older than the well known 12-link formula) of ignorance, and hence, suffering [§§1-3] [2], and the dependent arising of liberation [§§4-6] [3].

## 2 Feeding ignorance

Many of these negative qualities listed in the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta are defined in the Abhabba Sutta (A 10.76).<sup>9</sup> In fact, the Abhabba Sutta can be read as an elaboration on the negative qualities that are only briefly stated in the (Āhāra) Avijjā Sutta, and further shows how these negative qualities are related to one another in hindering spiritual progress. Here we will briefly look at each of the specific conditions (*idap, paccaya*) or “food” (*āhāra*) of the nine links of dependent arising of ignorance. [§§1-3]

2.1 ASSOCIATING WITH FALSE PERSONS (*asappurisa, samseva*). A “false person” (*asappurisa*) is one “who is evil, empty, confused, a fool blinded by ignorance.”<sup>10</sup> The Sappurisa Sutta (M 113) defines a “false person” (*asappurisa*) as one who habitually shows conceit (*māna*), that is, he measures others on account of birth, family, status, wealth, learning, holiness, and meditation attainments. In such cases, the false person is one who considers that he is accomplished in that state and looks down on or belittles others who are unlike him or have not attained his state.<sup>11</sup> The point is that such a person is filled with conceit, which is a hindrance to arhatood.<sup>12</sup> As such, the false person is not a true practitioner, or at best, one who needs to overcome his conceit, in order to progress spiritually. [§2(1)]

The (Sappurisa) Sikkhā, pada Sutta (A 4.210) defines the false person as *one who breaks the precepts*, and one who is “worse than the false person” or “even more false person” (*asappurisa, tara*) as *one who breaks the precepts and encourages others to do so*.<sup>13</sup> Associating with such a person only prevents us from any opportunity of listening to the true Dharma.

2.2 LISTENING TO WHAT IS NOT THE TRUE DHARMA (*asaddhamma-s, savana*). According to the Abhabba Sutta (A 10.76), without giving up the lack of desire to see the noble ones,<sup>14</sup> the lack of desire to listen to the noble Dharma,<sup>15</sup> and a fault-finding mind,<sup>16</sup> one would be unable to give up unmindful-

<sup>8</sup> MA 1:207 ff; SA 2:22-27; KhA 75 ff; see also Vism 11.1-3/341.

<sup>9</sup> A 10.76/5:144-149 = SD 2.4.

<sup>10</sup> *Asappurisan ti lāmaka, purisaṃ tucca, purisaṃ mūḷha, purisaṃ avijjāya andhī, kataṃ bālaṃ* (AA 3:209).

<sup>11</sup> M 113/3:37-45 = SD 23.7.

<sup>12</sup> Conceit (*māna*) is one of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojanā*), which are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, dīṭṭhī*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*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 (or remorse) (*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 arhat has broken all the 10 fetters.

<sup>13</sup> (Sappurisa) Sikkhā, pada S (A 4.26/5:20) = SD 47.3a. See also **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), where it is stated that we should keep the precepts and encourage others to do so, too, and to speak in praise of such acts (S 55.7.5-12/5:353-355) = SD 1.5.

<sup>14</sup> “Lack of desire to see the noble ones,” *ariyānaṃ adassana, kamyatāṃ*.

<sup>15</sup> “Lack of desire to listen to the noble Dharma,” *ariya, dhammaṃ asotu, kamyatāṃ*.

<sup>16</sup> “A fault-finding mind,” *upārambha, cittatāṃ*, an angry mind, a mind aroused by hate (ThaA 2:153).

ness, lack of clear awareness, and a distracted mind.<sup>17</sup> Right view, according to Suttas, arises in two ways: through the voice of another (*parato ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) [2.4].<sup>18</sup> Conversely, wrong view arises from listening to another and unwise attention.

The Aṅguttara Commentary explains *parato ghosa* in the context of giving rise to wrong view as “hearing the false Dharma before [in the presence of] another” (*parassa santikā asaddhamma, savanamī*), and in the context of giving rise to right view as that of “hearing the true Dharma” (*saddhamma, savana*) (AA 2:157). Not listening to the true Dharma not only prevents the arising of right view, but it prevents faith from arising in us, as we do not have any understanding of true reality. [S2(2)]

2.3 LACK OF FAITH (*assaddhiya*). There are two kinds of faith (*saddhā*):

(1) “rootless faith” (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 2:170);

(2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23).

“Unrooted” (*amūlaka*) faith is the means me = “not seen, not heard, nor otherwise sensed” (*diṭṭha, suta, -mūta*)<sup>19</sup> or “known” (*viññāta*).<sup>20</sup> [3.3]

The **Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70) records how the monks Assaji and Punabbasu and their followers refuse to follow the Buddha’s instruction that monastics abstain from taking food at night, saying that they are more comfortable with eating when they wish. Towards end of the **Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70), the Buddha rebukes those monks who are living lax lives, refusing to observe moderation in food, thus:

24 But, bhikshus, that faith is not here.

Bhikshus, that approaching (a teacher) is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that respectfully drawing near is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that lending the ear is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that listening to the Dharma is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that remembering of the Dharma is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that investigating of their meaning is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that reflectively accepting of the teachings is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that desire [will-power] is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that exertion is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that weighing [balancing the practice] is not here, too.

Bhikshus, that striving is not here, too.

Bhikshus, you have lost your way! Bhikshus, you have been going the wrong path! How far you have strayed, bhikshus, from the Dharma and the Vinaya!

[Buddha:]

25 “Bhikshus, there is a four-line exposition,<sup>21</sup> and when it is recited a wise man would quickly understand it through wisdom.

I shall recite [show] it to you, monks. You will understand it from me.”

[Assaji-Punabbasu:]

“But, bhante, who are we to be knowers of the Dharma?”<sup>22</sup>

[Buddha:]

26 “Bhikshus, even with a teacher who dwells concerned with material things, an heir to material things, attached to material things, such haggling (by his followers) would not be proper: ‘If we get this, we will do this. If we don’t get this, we won’t do it. What more, bhikshus, with the Tathagata, who is totally detached from material things?’<sup>23</sup> (M 70.24-26/1:480) = SD 11.1

<sup>17</sup> A 10.76.12/5:145 = SD 2.4.

<sup>18</sup> **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.13/1:294) = SD 35.1 & **Āsā Vagga** (A 2.11.10.8/1:87).

<sup>19</sup> V 2:243 3:163 & Comy. *Mūta* refers to all other senses, except seeing and listening. On the tr, see Sn:N 1992: 285 n714. See also The Body in Buddhism = SD 29.6a (3.4(1)).

<sup>20</sup> See **Diṭṭh Suta Mūta Viññāta** = SD 53.5.

<sup>21</sup> “A four-lined exposition,” *catu-p, padam veyyakaraṇam*. Cf Dh 273. See Intro (6.1) above.

<sup>22</sup> *Ke ca mayam bhante ke ca dhammassa aññātāro ti*, lit “Who are we, bhante, and who are the knowers of the Dharma?” M:ÑB: “Venerable sir, who are we that we should understand the Dhamma.”

The Buddha then goes on to declare that if the practitioner humbly wishes to learn, has faith in the Teaching, and puts in every effort he can muster, he is sure of either non-return or arhathood.

Faith is an important first step towards taking the inward journey towards spiritual liberation. The lack of faith is the fuel or food for unwise attention. [S2(3)]

2.4 UNWISE ATTENTION (*ayoniso manasikāra*). “Unwise attention” [2.2], according to **the Vibhaṅga**, is the regarding of what is impermanent as being permanent, what is painful as being pleasurable, what is not self as self, what is foul as beautiful.<sup>24</sup> These are called the four “perversions” (*vipallāsa*) (MA 1:64).<sup>25</sup> **The (Akusala,mūla) Añña,titthiya Sutta** (A 3.68) says that the three unwholesome roots of lust, hate and delusion arise through unwise attention. *Lust* arises and grows through unwisely attending to a “beautiful sign,” that is, being captivated by what we perceive as attractive in a thing. *Hate* arises and grows through unwisely attending to a “repulsive sign,” that is, what we take to be unattractive.

And *delusion* arises and grows through unwise attention itself. In other words, delusion is usually present when there is lust or hate. This delusion arises and grows because of the four perversions mentioned above. Unwise attention, in other words, is based on ignorance, which starts off the dependent arising of formations, and so on leading to the whole mass of suffering, and the prolonging of the samsaric cycle (*vaṭṭa*) (MA 1:64 f). In short, unwise attention is the root of samsaric existence; for, it is food for a lack of mindfulness and full awareness, which in turn increase ignorance and craving. [S1(4)]

2.5 LACK OF MINDFULNESS AND FULL AWARENESS (*asata,sampajañña*). These two qualities are together called “unmindfulness” (*muṭṭha,sacca*), that is, the opposite of *sati* or *paṭissati* (mindfulness). In a number of discourses, the monk (or practitioner) is reminded, when seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, he should “grasp neither the sign nor the detail” (*na nimitta-g,gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g,gāhī hoti*) of the sense-object.<sup>26</sup> **The sign** (*nimitta*) here is *the most distinctive qualities of the object* which, when unmindfully grasped, can give rise to defiled thoughts: simply put, this is a perception of the object *as a whole*. **The feature** (*anuyyañjana*) is a *detail* that subsequently gains attention when the initial perception is not followed by restraint.<sup>27</sup>

A lack of mindfulness and full awareness further fuels a lack of sense-restraint. This lack of restraint, when it is habitual, can have devastating effects. In the Appamāda Sutta 2 (A 1.10.17-32), the Buddha exhorts his disciples on what threatens and what protects the Teaching, and one of his teachings is this:

Bhikshus, I do not see a single other thing that conduces to the confusion and destruction of the True Dharma except for lack of full awareness. Lack of full awareness, bhikshus, conduces to the confusion and destruction of the True Dharma. (A 1.10.27) = SD 73.1

The lack of mindfulness and full awareness are destructive because they are fuel for a lack of sense-restraint. [S2(5)]

2.6 LACK OF SENSE-RESTRAINT (*indriya,asamvara*). Here “lack of sense-restraint” refers to perceiving a sense-experience as more than what it really is. **The Vibhaṅga** defines “lack of restraint” (*asamvara*) as follows: on experiencing a sense-object one takes in its signs (general appearance) and its details,<sup>28</sup> arousing covetousness and mental pain (Vbh 933/372). Whenever there is a lack of sense-restraint in a sense-experience, it becomes an avenue for “conceiving.”

<sup>23</sup> *Kim pana bhikkhave yaṃ Tathāgato sabbaso āmisehī visaṃsaṅṅho viharatī*. IB Horner: “So what has this to do with the Tathāgata who lives dissociated from material things?”

<sup>24</sup> Vbh 936/373; MA 1:64.

<sup>25</sup> See **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/2:52; Vism 22.68/685) = SD 16.11; **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1 (4.1a).

<sup>26</sup> See eg **Kummōpama S** (S 35.240/4:177-179) = SD 19.17 & **(Cattāro) Padhāna S** (A 4.14/2:16 f) = SD 10.2. For more refs, see *Nimitta* and *Anuyyañjana* = SD 19.14 Intro (1.1).

<sup>27</sup> See *Nimitta & Anuyyañjana* = SD 19.14.

<sup>28</sup> See *Nimitta & Anuyyañjana* = SD 19.14.

Conceiving (*maññanā*) refers both to the thought-process that is perverted by craving, conceit and views, and the views that are “conceived” (*maññīta*) or rooted in such modes of thought. Craving, conceit and views form the “threefold grasping” (*ti, vidha gāha*) manifested as the notions:

- |                       |                          |                                                             |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) “This is mine”    | ( <i>etam mama</i> )     | (arises through craving, <i>taṇhā, gāha</i> ),              |
| (2) “This I am”       | ( <i>eso ’ham asmī</i> ) | (arises through conceit, <i>māna, gāha</i> ), and           |
| (3) “This is my self” | ( <i>eso me attā</i> )   | (arises through views, <i>dīṭṭhi, gāha</i> ). <sup>29</sup> |

These three are also known as “latent tendencies to ‘I’-making, ‘mine’-making and conceit” (*ahañ, kāra, -mamañ, kāra, mānānusaya*).<sup>30</sup> These threefold graspings are the main factors behind conceptual thinking (M 1) and mental proliferation (M 18).<sup>31</sup> In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct reactions to reality.<sup>32</sup>

“Mental proliferation” is when we are so overwhelmed by our thoughts that we effectively lose all sense of present-moment reality. We are mostly ruled by our past memories, or intoxicated by some future dream, or the present becomes a private surreal world. This loss of a true sense of reality weakens us, making us false persons, never really happy. We tend to think happiness lies in external things, and run after without ever really enjoying them. And our communication with people is not only superficial, but can even be unhealthy.<sup>33</sup>

A lack of sense-restraint means that we would go on to fall into the three wrong conducts, that is, of the body, of speech, and of the mind. [S2(6)]

2.7 THE 3 WRONG CONDUCTS (*ti duccharita*). **The Upāli Sutta** (M 56) centres around a teaching on the three wrong conducts.<sup>34</sup> These three types of misconducts are those of the three doors of action (the body, speech and mind). As a set, they are sometimes known as “heedlessness” (*pamāda*), since they are habitually under the sway of the physical pleasures of the five senses (Vbh 846/350). As a result, we are unable to focus on our spiritual development.

**The (Karaja, kāya) Brahma, vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208) mentions the three wrong actions as a full list of the ten courses of wrong conduct (*akusala kamma, patha*), that is,

- bodily conduct: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct;
- verbal conduct: false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle chatter;
- mental conduct: covetousness, ill will, wrong views.

The Buddha then declares that a wise noble disciple, having refrained from such wrong courses of conduct, would then undertake the cultivation of pervading the four quarters with lovingkindness.<sup>35</sup>

Those who habitually show these three wrong conducts are clearly motivated by wrong view. If they are monks who would hold wrong views or break monastic rules with impunity. The Buddha would reprimand such monastics as *mogha, purisa*, literally meaning “empty person,” but is usually translated as “misguided one” or “hollow person.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See **Anattā, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-21/3:68 f) = SD 1.2.

<sup>30</sup> M 22.15, 72.15, 112.11 20; S 2:75, 3:236, 4:41; A 1:132, 133.

<sup>31</sup> See **Yavakalāpi S** (S 35.248/4:202) = SD 40a.3.

<sup>32</sup> See Bodhi (tr), *The Discourse on the Root of Existence*, 1980: 8-11; Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32

f. See Intro (4) esp 4.2.

<sup>33</sup> On **mental proliferation** (*papañca*), see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18) = SD 6.14 (2).

<sup>34</sup> M 56/1:371-387 = SD 27.1.

<sup>35</sup> A 10.208/5:299-301 = SD 2.10.

<sup>36</sup> See esp **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.6/1:132) = SD 3.13. See **Pāthika S** (D 24): 3:3 (×3), 4 (×3), 6, 7 (×2), 9 (×2), 10 (×2), 11, 12 (×2), 28 (×2); **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12): 1:68, 69; **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22): 132 (×5), 258 (×5); **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhāya S** (M 38): 258 (×2); **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā, putta S** (M 63): 1:428; **Mahā Kamma, vibhaṅga S** (M 136): 3:208 (×3), 209; **Mīlhaka S** (S 17.5): 2:229; **Sīha, nāda S** (A 9.11): 4:378; **Vinaya: V 1:32, 58 (×2), 59 (×4), 154 (×3), 193 (×4), 216, 218 (×3), 250 (×3), 301 (×3), 305 (×3), 306 (×6); 2:7, 18 (×3), 26 (×5), 118, 119 (×2), 165 (×2), 168 (×4), 193.** On *mogha, purisa* as a syn of *asappurisa*, see **Sappurisa S** (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (3.2).

If our actions—bodily, verbal and mental—are unwholesome, especially habitually so, then they hinder us from any mental development. [S2(7)].

2.8 THE 5 HINDRANCES (*pañca nīvaraṇa*). The five mental hindrances are sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. How the five hindrances condition ignorance [2.9] is explained in **the (Manta) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 5.193), where they are said to prevent us from knowing our own goodness and that of others.<sup>37</sup> The five mental hindrances prevent us from tapping our inner stillness and clarity, and so hinder the awakening of wisdom within us.

The first hindrance is *sense-desire*, which is living a reactive life ruled by our sense-experiences, that is, thinking that pleasure and happiness lies on the surfaces of things. It is a refusal or failure to see within ourselves (and similarly in others) the potential for good and liberation. The antidotes are sense-restraint and contentment.

The hindrance of *ill will* squints our minds into acutely seeing a self against an other, building a distance, even a wall, between us and them. Differences are played up and similarities played down, resulting in due course in some form of violence against the other, even to the extent of desiring to exterminate the other. The antidote is to *unconditionally* accept others, especially those who are in some way different.

The hindrance of *mental sloth and torpor* overpowers us when we fail to recall happy moments in our lives. This often becomes more difficult when we remain stuck with a single meditation practice and do not know how to vary it, so as to keep our attention on the meditation. We can either turn to loving-kindness meditation, or resort to one of the “inspiring meditations,” that is, the recollection on Three Jewels, on moral virtue, on charity, or on the devas.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, if we delve in the past in an unwholesome manner, we might fall into remorse over come error of commission or omission; or if we look to longingly into the future, we might end up feeling restless. The idea is to let go of both the past and the future, and focus on the present moment of the mind.

The most harmful of the mental hindrances to opening our minds to spiritual liberation is that of *doubt*, that is, the inability to see the all these hindrances are self-constructed on account of lust, hate, and delusion. For the hindrances weaken our wisdom, and feeds our ignorance. [S2(8)]

2.9 IGNORANCE (*avijjā*). Ignorance is not just *not* knowing, but also refers to when we mistake *avijjā* for *vijjā*, that is, true knowledge. It is a blindness that keeps us groping our way, often hurting ourselves, and keeping us going in circles as we cannot see where we are going. Although the six senses (our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) are tools of knowing, we do not really know what to do with the sense-experiences that arises there.

Since we are ignorant of the true nature of our sense-experiences, we tend to see something permanent or desirable in them. This is craving. It causes us to incessantly run after such experiences for ever more and greater gratification. So we are caught in a rut, a cyclic life.<sup>39</sup>

The Suttas often define ignorance as not truly knowing or nor realizing the four noble truths. The *Andha,kāra Sutta* (S 56.46), for example, opens with these words:

Bhikshus, there are world-interspaces (*lok'antarika*), unsupported (*agha*), fathomless (*asani vuta*), regions of blinding darkness and gloom, where the light of the sun and the moon, so powerful and mighty, reach not... *But darker than this is the ignorance of the four noble truths!*  
(S 56.46/5:454; also D 14.1.17/2:12; M 123.7/3:120; A 4.127/2:130)

The (Āhāra) *Avijjā Sutta*, however, presents a dependent arising model of ignorance—as the *last* link of dependent arising—that is, “ignorance has a specific condition” (*idap,paccaya*): this specific condition or “food” for ignorance is the five hindrances [S1]. And the five hindrances are fed by the three wrong conducts [2.7], and so on [2.6, 2.5 etc]. This is the dependent arising of ignorance. [S2(9)]

<sup>37</sup> A 5.193.13/3:230-236 = SD 6.11. See Memes = SD 26.3 (3.3.2) & The Five Hindrances = SD 32.1.

<sup>38</sup> See SD 15.

<sup>39</sup> See *Anusaya* = SD 31.3 (7).

### 3 Feeding liberation

Here we will briefly look at each of the specific conditions (*idap,paccaya*) or “food” (*āhāra*) of the nine links of dependent arising of liberation. [§§4-6]

3.1 ASSOCIATING WITH TRUE INDIVIDUALS (*sappurisa,samseva*). A true individual (*sappurisa*), say the Sappurisa Sutta (M 113), is one who *does not regard his family, property, status, or ascetic practice as a measure of his spiritual attainment*. For, none of these things have to do with the destruction of the three unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion). However, for such a person, even if one lacks these things, he is one “practising the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, . . . practising what is right, . . . keeps to the Dharma [one is a follower of the Dharma],” one is worthy of honour and praiseworthy.”<sup>40</sup>

So, keeping at heart [keeping in mind] only the practice of the way,<sup>41</sup> he neither praises himself nor belittles others on account of (family, property, status, or ascetic practice). (M 113.3b etc)

In the Suttas, the term *sappurisa* has various levels of meanings, depending on the context. It refers to a true lay practitioner (A 8.37-38), to a true practitioner (M 110, 113), or to the saints of the path, except the arhats (S 45.26; A 4.201), or generally to all saints, including the arhats (A 4.240). In other words, *sappurisa* can refer to an unawakened practitioner, or to any saint, whether they are monastics or lay, depending in the context.<sup>42</sup>

An outstanding quality of the true individual is that he greatly benefits both himself and others. The **Sappuris’ānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 4.240/2:239), a very short discourse, defines a true individual as one who grows in the moral virtue, the concentration, the wisdom and the liberation of the noble ones.<sup>43</sup> And the **(Mahā,megha) Sappurisa Sutta** (A 8.38), says that a true lay individual arises for the good of all beings: the family, society, religion, and even the gods, like a rain cloud that rains on and benefit all kind of plants (and living beings).<sup>44</sup>

A true individual is a spiritual friend who inspires us in our own spiritual development. Indeed, the term “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa mitta*) refers to a caring teacher and friend who is capable of helping us in our meditation practice. A spiritual friend is said to have these eight characteristics of a spiritual friend: faith, moral virtue, learning, charity, effort [energy], mindfulness, concentration [samadhi] and wisdom.<sup>45</sup> [§5(1)]

3.2 LISTENING TO THE TRUE DHARMA (*saddhamma-s,savana*). Right view, according to Suttas, arises in two ways: through the voice of another (*parato ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). According to the Majjhima Commentary, another’s voice is “the listening to conducive Dharma” (*sap-pāya,dhamma-s,savana*), and adds that wise attention is the method of the Pratyeka Buddhas and the All-knowing Buddhas, since there is no *parato ghosa* for them. *Parato ghosa* is the means of the listeners or holy disciples (*sāvaka*) (MA 2:346). This interpretation is supported by the **Sutta Nipāta Commentary** which says that the “noble listener” (*ariya,sāvaka*) is one who is characterized by “hearing (the Dharma) before the aryas [noble saints]” (*ariyānam santike sutattā*) (SnA 166).

<sup>40</sup> M 113/3:37-45 = SD 23.7.

<sup>41</sup> *So paṭipadam yeva antaram karitvā*. The phrase *antaram karitvā* comes from *antaram karoti*, lit “he makes (it) the centre,” means “he keeps in mind; he is mainly concerned with”: cf *kāma,rāgam antaram karitvā*, etc (used in connection with the mental hindrances) at **Gopaka Moggallāna S** (M 108.26/3:14) = SD 33.5, & **Saddha S** (A 11.10/5:323). Comy glosses it as *abbhantaram katvā*, “making it the interior (the heart)” (MA 4:73; see also AA 5:79).

<sup>42</sup> See The Person in Buddhism = SD 29.6b (7.3).

<sup>43</sup> A 4.240/2:239) @ 38.10 (3.2).

<sup>44</sup> A 8.38/4:244 f = SD 30.10 (3.2).

<sup>45</sup> S 5:2-30; A 1:14-18; It 10. See Meghiya S (A 9.3/4:354-358 ≈ U 4.1/34-37) = SD 34.2 (2.1) & Upakkilesa S (M 128.8-13/3:155-157) = SD 5.18; also see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 5 (on Sāriputta & Moggallāna).

The Commentary on the **Vitakka Saṅghāna Sutta** (M 20), quotes an ancient verse which says that for the removal of thoughts connected with delusion (*moha, dhātu pahīyati*), we should build up the five “Dharma supports” (*dhammūpanissaya*):

- (1) guidance of a teacher (*garu, saṁvāsa*);
- (2) intent on learning the Dharma (*uddesa*);
- (3) intent on inquiring into the meaning of doctrines learnt (*uddiṭṭha, paripucchana*);
- (4) listening to the Dharma at proper times (*kālena dhamma-s, savana*);
- (5) inquiry into what are and are not the causes (*thānāṭṭhāna, vinicchaya*). (MA 2:89)

When we listen to wise practitioner or an awakened teacher, our faith in the true Dharma grows. [§5(2)]

3.3 FAITH (*saddhiya*). There are two kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlaka, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 2:170) [2.3]; (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23); also called *avecca-p, pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is synonymous with *ākāravati, saddhā*. Rupert Gethin speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective:

Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary.

(Gethin 2001:207; my emphases)<sup>46</sup>

In the **Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95), faith is the first of the twelve stages of truth discovery. This faith is said to arise by the pupils observing (*samannesamāno*) a teacher, finding him purified of delusive states.” Faith motivates the pupil to approach and learn from the teacher, and so benefits his practice, resulting in liberation.<sup>47</sup> Faith does this, at first, by feeding wise attention in the student. [§5(3)]

3.4 WISE ATTENTION (*yoniso manasikāra*). “Wise attention” is seeing the impermanent as impermanent, what is suffering as suffering, what is not self as not self, and what is foul [unattractive] as foul.<sup>48</sup> “Attention” (*manasikāra*) is the very first stage of the mind’s encounter with an object,<sup>49</sup> and it holds the associated mental factors to the object. As such, it is the prominent factor in two specific classes of consciousness, that is, advertence (*āvajjana*) at the five-sense doors and at the mind-door. These two states of consciousness, breaking through into the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*), form the first stage of the perceptual process (*citta, vīthi*).<sup>50</sup>

“Wise” (*yoniso*) here comes from *yonī*, meaning “the womb, origin (place of birth).” As such, *yoniso* means “down to its origin or foundation” (PED), and *yoniso manasikāra* means “directing the attention to the roots of things,” that is, observing phenomena as they truly are, as being characterized by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self.

<sup>46</sup> Gethin, *The Path to Awakening*, 2001. See also ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387.

<sup>47</sup> M 95.20/2:173 = SD 21.15. See also (Sappurisa) **Sikkhā, pada S** (A 4.201/2:217) = SD 47.3b.

<sup>48</sup> See **Nivarana Pahāna Vagga** (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 Intro (6).

<sup>49</sup> “*Manasikāra* should be distinguished from *vitakka*: while the former turns its concomitants towards the object, the latter applies them onto the object. *Manasikāra* is an indispensable cognitive factor present in all states of consciousness; *vitakka* is a specialized factor which is not indispensable to cognition.” (Abhs:BRS 2.2(7) (Guide).

<sup>50</sup> See *Vism* 14.152/466 & *The Unconscious* = SD 17.8b(5).



The term *yoniso manasikāra* is found throughout the **Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2), and is, in fact, its key action word, as it is said to counteract the mental influxes.<sup>51</sup> The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) says that wise attention is fuels mindfulness and full awareness, which in turn, are the conditions for the arising of right view (M 43),<sup>52</sup> of streamwinning,<sup>53</sup> and of the awakening-factors.<sup>54</sup> [§5(4)]

3.5 MINDFULNESS AND FULL AWARENESS (*sati, sampajañña*). In such discourses as the **Sāmañña,-phala Sutta** (D 2), mindfulness and full awareness are defined as follows:

Here, when going forward and returning, he acts with full awareness:

- (1) while going forward or back, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (2) while looking forward or back, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (3) while bending or stretching, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (4) while carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (5) while eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, he is clearly knowing of what he is doing;
- (6) while voiding or peeing, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (7) while walking, while standing, while sitting, while asleep, while awake,<sup>55</sup> while talking, or while remaining silent, he is clearly aware of what he is doing. (D 2.65/1:70) = SD 8.10<sup>56</sup>

In simpler terms, this refers to “present-moment awareness,” that is, being mindful of what we are doing right now, not being aware of what is going on at this very moment.

The Visuddhi, magga explains that full awareness (*sampajañña*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is investigation, manifested as scrutiny. Mindfulness (*sati*) has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not forgetting, manifested as guarding.<sup>57</sup> Mindfulness and full awareness are food for sense-restraint. [§5(5)]

3.6 SENSE-RESTRAINT (*indriya, samvara*). The **Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2) describes how defilements can be abandoned through sense-restraints as follows:

- (1) through keeping to the training rules (monastic precepts or lay precepts);

<sup>51</sup> M 2/1:6-12 & SD 30.3 (2.1.3). “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “cankers”) comes from *ā-savati*, meaning “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as cankers, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 kinds of *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kāma-āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhava-āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭhā-āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā-āsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx 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 influxes is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

<sup>52</sup> M 43.13/1:294 = SD 35.1.

<sup>53</sup> It is one of the limbs for streamwinning (*sotāpatti-y-angāni*, alt tr “limbs of streamwinning”): (1) association with true persons (ie true practitioners, esp saints); (2) hearing the True Teaching; (3) wise attention; (4) practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma (D 33.1.11(13)/3:227; Pm 2:189 f). These are preliminary practices that lead to the attainment of streamwinning. In Paññā, *vuḍḍhi* S (A 5.246) these same 4 qualities are called *vuḍḍhi-dhamma*, “virtues conducive to growth” (A 5.246/2:245); cf the 5 factors of noble growth (*ariya, vuḍḍhi*): (Tadah’) Uposatha S (A 3.70.8b/1:210) = SD 4.18; **Sambadh’okāsa S** (A 6.26.8/3:316) = SD 15.7a; Pañca *Vaḍḍhi* S 1 (A 5.63/3:80); Pañca *Vaḍḍhi* S 2 (A 5.64/3:80). See S:B 762 n120. Cf (2) *sotāpannassa angāni*. In Pañca Vera Bhaya S (S 12.41/2:68-70) = SD 3.3(4.2).

<sup>54</sup> See SD 10.1(8); **Kāya S** (S 46.2/5:64-67); (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:67-70) = SD 10.15; (**Ajjhatta**) **Āṅga S** (S 46.49/5:101), (**Bahiddhā**) **Āṅga S** (S 46.50/5:102), **Āhāra S** (S 46.51/5:102-107) = SD 7.15.

<sup>55</sup> “When asleep, when awake” *sutte jāgarite*. Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, “lying down, sleeping.” See Intro (3.6c).

<sup>56</sup> In **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.3/3:293 = SD 13.2; M 10.3/1:57 = SD 13.3), however, this section is “full awareness” (*sampajañña*); “mindfulness” (*sati*). See SD 13 Intro (3.6abc).

<sup>57</sup> Vism 4.172/163.

- (2) through practising the Dharma, that is, when sensing anything, “not grasping at its signs nor its details”;
- (3) keeping the mind to right intention, that is, overcoming sensual thoughts with thoughts of charity; overcoming thoughts of ill will with lovingkindness; and overcoming thoughts of violence with compassion. (M 2.12/9 f) & SD 30.3 (2.2)

In the Tevijja Sutta (D 13), the Buddha teaches sense-restraint more succinctly by saying that whatever is sense at any of the six sense-doors—that is, whatever we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think—we should “grasp neither its sign nor its detail.”<sup>58</sup> [2.6].

A classic example of the instruction in sense-restraint (*indriya,saṁvara*) for a practitioner is the one the Buddha gives to the monk Māluṅkyā,putta as recorded in the **Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (S 35.95):<sup>59</sup>

“...Māluṅkyāputta, regarding what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized by you,

in the seen	there will be only the seen; <sup>60</sup>
in the heard	there will only be the heard;
in the sensed	there will only be the sensed;
in the cognized	there will only be the cognized.” (S 35.95.13/4:73) = SD 5.9 <sup>61</sup>

So great is the benefit of sense-restraint, that the Buddha declares

Bhikshus, I do not see a single other thing that conduces to the establishment, non-confusion and non-destruction of the True Dharma except for full awareness. Full awareness, bhikshus, conduces to the establishment, non-confusion and non-destruction of the True Dharma.

(A 1.10.28) = SD 73.1

<sup>58</sup> D 19.64/1:70 = SD 1.8. See *Nimitta & anuvyañjana* = SD 19.14.

<sup>59</sup> This teaching is also given to the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya (**Bāhiya S**, U 1.10/8) = SD 33.7. According to SA, in the form base, i.e. in what is seen by eye-consciousness, “there is only consciousness”, that is, as eye-consciousness is not affected by lust, hatred or delusion in relation to form that has come into range, so the *javana* will be just a mere eye-consciousness by being empty of lust, etc. So, too, for the heard and the sensed. The “cognized” is the object cognized by the mind-door adverting (*mano,dvārāvajjana*). In the cognized, “only the cognized” is the adverting (consciousness) as the limit. As one does not become lustful, etc, by adverting, so I will set my mind with adverting as the limit, not allowing it to arise by way of lust, etc. *You will not be by “that” (na tena)*: you will not be aroused by *by that* lust, or irritated *by that* hatred, or deluded *by that* delusion. *Then you will not be “therein” (na tattha)*: the seen”. For eye-consciousness sees only form in form, not some essence that is permanent, etc. So too for the remaining types of consciousness (ie the *javana* series, SĀPT), there will be merely the seen. Or, alternatively, the meaning is “My mind will be mere eye-consciousness, which means the cognizing of form in form. When you are not aroused by that lust, etc, then “you will not be therein”—not bound, not attached, not established in what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized. (See Bodhi S:B 1410 n75)

<sup>60</sup> This verse is the crux of the **Maluṅkyāputta S** and *satipaṭṭhāna*. In sutta terms, such experiences are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso’ham asmī*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhī*) (**Anattā,lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. In simple Abhidhamma terms, such process should be left at the sense-doors, and not allowed to reach the mind-door. As long as the experience of sensing is mindfully left at its sense-door and taken for what it really is, that is an experience of reality (*param’attha*); after it has reached the mind-door and evaluated it becomes conventional (*paññatti*) reality, that brings one suffering due to greed, hate or delusion. When such sense-experiences are mindfully left on the reality level, one would in due course see the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. See Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Maluṅkyaputta Sutta*, tr U Htin Fatt, Rangoon, 1981.

<sup>61</sup> See also **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18) = SD 6.14 (7).

On a simpler level, in terms of daily practice, sense-restraint is the immediate support for the three good conducts. [S5(6)]

3.7 THE 3 GOOD CONDUCTS (*ti sucarita*). The three good conducts are the opposites of the three evil conducts (*ti ducarita*) [2.7], and has to do with right action through the three doors of body, speech and mind. The Dhammika Sutta (Sn 2.14) makes a succinct statement on the kinds of conduct in terms of the five precepts, thus:

Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill,	nor approve of killing by others,
Laying aside the rod [violence] toward all beings,	both the still and the moving in the world.
	(Sn 394)

The key term here is “the three-pointed utter purity” or simply “the threefold purity” (*ti,koṭī,parisuddha*) which comprises of the following three principles in relation to the three doors of action:

(1) not breaking a precept oneself	bodily action;
(2) not causing another to do so	verbal action, and
(3) not approving of any breach of the precepts	mental action. <sup>62</sup>

These moral disciplining at first helps us in avoiding (*parivajjuana*) unwholesome actions of body and speech, and in due course, in removing (*vinaya*) the grosser aspects of greed, hate and delusion, so that we are mentally prepared for deeper meditation, such as the four focusses of mindfulness.<sup>63</sup> [S5(7)]

3.8 THE 4 FOCUSES OF MINDFULNESS (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*). The Buddha key teaching is that we can liberate ourselves from suffering through self-effort. The best self-help tool is the four focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), that is, body-based, feeling-based, mind-based and reality-based meditations.<sup>64</sup> The purpose of body-based meditation (such as breath meditation) is basically to calm the body to the extent of overcoming all the mental hindrances [2.8]. Then we are able to direct our attention fully on feelings and the mind.

The feeling-based meditation helps us transcend all bodily sensations so that we fully focus on the mind. On emerging from dhyana, such bodily sensations are clearly seen as they truly are. The mind-based meditation allows us to become aware of the mind simply as being defiled (lustful, hating, deluded) or not, whether it is troubled any of the five hindrances [2.8], or whether it is concentrated or not, or whether it is liberated or not.

When we are able to let go of any arisen feeling or mental state naturally, we are able to go on to the dharma-based meditation, that is, we are clearly aware whether any of the five hindrances remains or have been totally abandoned (at least temporarily), and whether the awakening-factors are present. In short, the four focusses of mindfulness are food for the seven awakening-factors.<sup>65</sup> [S5(8)]

3.9 THE 7 AWAKENING-FACTORS (*satta bojjaṅga*). When the five mental hindrances [2.8] are overcome, mental concentration truly begins by way of the seven awakening-factors. The **Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2) list them as the seventh and last means of overcoming “all the influxes,” that is, they are to be abandoned by cultivation (*bhāvanā*).

What is to be cultivated are, of course, the seven awakening-factors, which bring us right into to the heart of our mind. The seven awakening-factors (*satta bojjaṅga*)<sup>66</sup> are as follows, that is, the awakening-factors of

<sup>62</sup> **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7.3-12/5:353-355) = SD 1.5; **Kūḍa,danta S** (D 5/1:127-149) = SD 22.8 Intro (3); SnA 376 f.

<sup>63</sup> See **Sabbāsava S** (M 2.19/1:10 f) = SD 30.3 Intro (2.5).

<sup>64</sup> For a brief def, see S 47.11.4/5:158 = SD 19.6. On *sati’paṭṭhāna*, see **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63) = SD 13.3.

<sup>65</sup> See **Sabbāsava S** (M 2.21/1:11) = SD 30.3 Intro (2.6).

<sup>66</sup> M 2.21/1:11 & SD 30.3 Intro (2.6).

- |                             |                                                                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) mindfulness             | the meditator builds up his present-moment awareness;                   |
| (2) investigation of states | he mentally focusses to remove all the mental hindrances;               |
| (3) effort                  | he focuses mindfulness until all the hindrances are abandoned;          |
| (4) zest (joyful interest)  | his mind is finally focussed and zestful (filled with joyful interest); |
| (5) tranquillity            | his whole body and mind are still;                                      |
| (6) concentration           | his mind is fully focussed in dhyana; and                               |
| (7) equanimity              | he attains the fourth dhyana. <sup>67</sup>                             |

These seven awakening-factors are part of the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi, pakkhiya dhamma*), and are discussed in some detail in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10.42) and **the Ānāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 118.29-40).<sup>68</sup> They constitute the path of the pilgrim's progress to liberation. [S5(9)]

3.10 THE LIBERATION BY TRUE KNOWLEDGE (*vijjā, vimutti*). Traditionally, *vijjā* here refers to the 3 knowledges (*te, vijjā*), that is,

- (1) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*) or the recollection of past lives;
- (2) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
- (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth.<sup>69</sup>

Only the last is really “true knowledge,” that is, it liberates us from suffering and rebirth. By itself it is usually called “final knowledge” (*aññā*), the arhat's liberating knowledge,<sup>70</sup> or more fully, it is called “right final knowledge” (*samma-d-aññā*).<sup>71</sup>

In the 12-link dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) model, final knowledge is stated as “the ending of this whole mass of suffering,” that is, nirvana. Like the list given in the (Āhāra) Avijjā, the dependent arising formula also begins with ignorance, and ends with liberation.<sup>72</sup> [S5(10)]

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<sup>67</sup> For details, see The Body in Buddhism = SD 29.6a (5.10).

<sup>68</sup> M 10.42/1:62; M 118.29-40/3:85-87. These 7 awakening-factors form the 6<sup>th</sup> of the famous “seven sets” of teachings that is the essence of early Buddhism: see *Bodhi, pakkhiya Dhamma* = SD 10.1 (8).

<sup>69</sup> D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421. See Tevijja S (D 13) = SD 1.8 Intro 2.2.

<sup>70</sup> See Dhamma, cakka-p, pavattana S (S 56.11.20/5:424) = SD 1.1 in ref to Koṇḍañña's final liberation. Cf M 2:43, 3:29; S 1:24.

<sup>71</sup> See *Mūla, pariyāya S* (M 1.51-146/1:4-6) = SD 11.8.

<sup>72</sup> See Dependent Arising = SD 5.16 (4).

## The Discourse on (the Food for) Ignorance

A 10.61/5:113-116

### Ignorance is without beginning, but conditioned

1 “Bhikshus, the first point of ignorance is not to be discerned,<sup>73</sup> of which it can be said, ‘Before that, there was no ignorance; after that, it arose.’

(1) But, bhikshus, even though it is said so, it is discerned that ignorance has a specific condition.<sup>74</sup> Ignorance, too, bhikshus, has its food, I say, it is not without its food.

(2) And what is the food for ignorance?

The five hindrances,<sup>75</sup> should be the answer.

The five hindrances, bhikshus, have their food, I say, they are not without their food.

(3) And what is the food for the five hindrances?

The three wrong conducts,<sup>76</sup> should be the answer.

The three wrong conducts, bhikshus, have their food, I say, they are not without their food.

(4) And what is the food for the three wrong conducts?

Lack of sense-restraint, should be the answer.

The lack of sense-restraint, bhikshus, is their food, I say, they are not without their food.

(5) And what is the food for the lack of sense-restraint?

The lack of mindfulness and full awareness, should be the answer.

The lack of mindfulness and full awareness, bhikshus, are its food, I say, it is not without its food.

(6) And what is the food for the lack of mindfulness and full awareness?

Unwise attention, should be the answer.

Unwise attention, bhikshus, is their food, I say, they are not without their food.

(7) And what is the food for unwise attention?

Lack of faith,<sup>77</sup> should be the answer.

Lack of faith, bhikshus, is its food, I say, it is not without its food.

(8) And what is the food for the lack of faith?

Listening to what is not the true Dharma, should be the answer.

Listening to what is not the true Dharma, bhikshus, is its food, I say, it is not without its food.

(9) And what is the food for listening to what is not the true Dharma?

Associating with false persons, should be the answer.

### Dependent arising of ignorance

2 (1) In the same way, bhikshus, when associating with false persons predominates, then listening to what is not the true Dharma predominates.

(2) When listening to what is not the true Dharma predominates, then a lack of faith predominates.

(3) When a lack of faith predominates, then unwise attention predominates.

(4) When unwise attention predominates, then a lack of mindfulness and full awareness predominates.

<sup>73</sup> *Purimā bhikkhave koṭi na paññāyati avijjāya*. Cf Gaddula Baddha S 1 (S 22.9) & Gaddula Baddha S 2 (S 22.100), which open with these words: “Without a beginning or an ending, bhikshus, is this samsara [cycle of lives and deaths]. A first point can’t be discerned of beings roaming and wandering on, hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving” (*Anamataggo ‘yam bhikkhave saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjā, nīvaraṇānaṃ satānaṃ taṇhā, saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvatam saṃsarataṃ*) (S 22.9.3/3:149) = SD 28.7a = (S 22.100.3/3:151) = SD 28.7b.

<sup>74</sup> *Idap, paccaṃyā avijjā ti*. See **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38.9/1:259) = SD 7.10 & Dependent Arising = SD 5.16 (2)+(6).

<sup>75</sup> See Intro (2.8).

<sup>76</sup> See Intro (2.7).

<sup>77</sup> See Intro (2.3).

- (5) When a lack of mindfulness and full awareness predominates, [114] then a lack of sense-restraint predominates.
- (6) When a lack of sense-restraint predominates, then the three wrong conducts predominate.
- (7) When the three wrong conducts predominate, then the five hindrances predominate.
- (8) When the five hindrances predominate, then ignorance predominates.
- (9) In this way there is food for that ignorance, and in this way it is predominant.

### The water-flow parable (negative)

3a Bhikshus, just as when the rains fall heavily on the mountain-tops, the waters flowing down along the slopes, fill the mountain clefts, gullies and streams.

When the mountain clefts, gullies and streams are full, they fill the ponds. When the ponds are full, they fill the lakes.

When the lakes are full, they fill the rivulets. When the rivulets are full, they fill the rivers. When the rivers are full, they fill the great ocean.<sup>78</sup>

In this way there is food for that great ocean, and in this way it is filled to the brim [predominant].

Even so, there is food for that ignorance, and in this way it is predominant.

3b (1) Even so, bhikshus, when associating with false persons predominates, then listening to what is not the true Dharma predominates.

(2) When listening to what is not the true Dharma predominates, then a lack of faith predominates.

(3) When a lack of faith predominates, then unwise attention predominates.

(4) When unwise attention predominates, then a lack of mindfulness and full awareness predominates.

(5) When a lack of mindfulness and full awareness predominates, then a lack of sense-restraint predominates.

(6) When a lack of sense-restraint predominates, then the three wrong conducts predominate.

(7) When the three wrong conducts predominate, then the five hindrances predominate.

(8) When the five hindrances predominate, then ignorance predominates.

(9) In this way there is food for that ignorance, and in this way it is predominant.

### Liberation is conditioned

4 (1) Liberation by true knowledge, too, bhikshus, is with food, I say, not without its food.

(2) And what is the food for the liberation by true knowledge?

The seven awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*),<sup>79</sup> should be the answer.

The seven awakening-factors, too, bhikshus, are with food, I say, not without food.

(3) And what is the food for the seven awakening-factors?

The four focusses of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>80</sup> should be the answer.

The four focusses of mindfulness, too, bhikshus, are with food, I say, not without food.

(4) And what is the food for the four focusses of mindfulness?

The three good actions (*ti sucarita*),<sup>81</sup> should be the answer.

The three good actions, too, bhikshus, are with food, I say, not without food.

(5) And what is the food for the three good actions?

Sense-restraint (*indriya saṁvara*),<sup>82</sup> should be the answer.

Sense-restraint, too, bhikshus, is with food, I say, not without food.

<sup>78</sup> The water-flow imagery in this section is stock: **Upanisā S** (S 12.23.27/2:31), **Vassa S** (S 55.38.2/5:396); **Parisā S** (A 3.93.5/1:243), **Dutiya Kāla S** (A 4.147.2/2:140), (**Āhāra**) **Avijjā S** (A 10.61.3/5:114, 10.61.6/3:115 f), (**Āhāra**) **Taṇhā** (A 10.62.3/3:117, 10.62.6/3:119).

<sup>79</sup> See Intro (2.9).

<sup>80</sup> See Intro (2.8).

<sup>81</sup> See Intro (2.7).

<sup>82</sup> See Intro (2.6).

(6) And what is the food for the three good actions?

Mindfulness and full awareness (*sati sampajañña*),<sup>83</sup> should be the answer.

Mindfulness and full awareness, too, bhikshus, are with food, I say, not without food.

(7) And what is the food for mindfulness and full awareness?

Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*),<sup>84</sup> should be the answer.

Wise attention, too, bhikshus, is with food, I say, not without food.

(8) And what is the food for wise attention?

Faith (*saddhā*)<sup>85</sup> should be the answer.

Faith, too, bhikshus, is with food, I say, not without food.

(9) And what is the food for faith?

Listening to the true Dharma (*saddhamma-s, savana*)<sup>86</sup> should be the answer.

Listening to the true Dharma, too, bhikshus, is with food, I say, not without food.

(10) And what is the food for listening to the true Dharma?

Associating with true individuals (*sappurisa, saṁseva*)<sup>87</sup> should be the answer.

### Dependent arising of liberation

5 (1) In the same way, bhikshus, when associating with true individuals predominates, then listening to the true Dharma predominates.

(2) When listening to the Dharma predominates, then faith predominates.

(3) When faith predominates, then wise attention predominates.

(4) When wise attention predominates, then mindfulness and full awareness predominate.

(5) When mindfulness and full awareness predominate, [114] then sense-restraint predominates.

(6) When sense-restraint predominates, then the three good conducts predominate.

(7) When the three good conducts predominate, then the four focusses of mindfulness predominate.

(8) When the four focusses of mindfulness predominate, then the seven awakening-factors predominate.

(9) When the seven awakening-factors predominate, then liberation by true knowledge is fulfilled [predominates].

(10) In this way there is food for that liberation by true knowledge, and in this way it is fulfilled [predominant].

### The water-flow parable (positive)

6a Bhikshus, just as when the rains fall heavily on the mountain-tops, the waters flowing down along the slopes, fill the mountain clefts, gullies and streams.

When the mountain clefts, gullies and streams are full, they fill the ponds. When the ponds are full, they fill the lakes.

When the lakes are full, they fill the rivulets. When the rivulets are full, they fill the rivers. When the rivers are full, [116] they fill the great ocean.

In this way there is food for that great ocean, and in this way it is filled to the brim [predominant].

Even so, there is food for that liberation by true knowledge, and in this way it is predominant.

### Dependent arising of liberation

6b (1) In the same way, bhikshus, when associating with true individuals predominates, then listening to the true Dharma predominates.

(2) When listening to the Dharma predominates, then faith predominates.

<sup>83</sup> See Intro (2.5).

<sup>84</sup> See Intro (2.4).

<sup>85</sup> See Intro (2.3).

<sup>86</sup> See Intro (2.2).

<sup>87</sup> See Intro (2.1).

- (3) When faith predominates, then wise attention predominates.
  - (4) When wise attention predominates, then mindfulness and full awareness predominate.
  - (5) When mindfulness and full awareness predominate, [114] then sense-restraint predominates.
  - (6) When sense-restraint predominates, then the three good conducts predominate.
  - (7) When the three good conducts predominate, then the four focusses of mindfulness predominate.
  - (8) When the four focusses of mindfulness predominate, then the seven awakening-factors predominate.
  - (9) When the seven awakening-factors predominate, then liberation by true knowledge is fulfilled [predominates].
- In this way there is food for that liberation by true knowledge, and in this way it is fulfilled [predominant].

— evaṃ —

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