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Kāma-c,chanda

Desire for sense-pleasures

Theme: The first of the 5 mental hindrances

An essay by Piya Tan ©2006, 2010, 2014

1 Definition of kāma-c,chanda**1.0 THE PRISON OF THE SENSES**

1.0.1 Sense-based desires. *Kāma-c,chanda* is the first of the 5 mental hindrances for a very good and natural reason: our minds work, like a computer, with an on-off pattern. *On* here means paying attention to a thing, something which interests us; while *off* means a lack of attention and interest towards something that we see no pleasure in. Behind this reactivity and predictability of samsaric behaviour lies the mother of all emotions: *desire*.

More specifically, our desires are sense-based; for, that is *all* that we really are. We are our senses, and our senses create the world we live in¹ [2.2]. What sort of world have we created for ourselves? If we are to carefully review how we have lived up till now, we would notice that we have been making choices between liking and not liking, doing and not doing. Even at the moment of waking up, we need to choose between rising up and remaining in bed, for at least a little while longer.

1.0.2 Power of the senses. Although there are some choices we would rather not select (like going to work in an office with an asura-like boss), we simply try not to think about it, not to give it any attention, so that the pain is much less, that is, less noticed and noted. Our desires, as such, bend the truth to fit our liking.

Brahmavamso, in his book, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, for example, recalls of his own youth, of own awareness of how the senses seem to work on us:

... when I drank my first glass of beer in my early teens, I could not believe how disgusting it tasted. However, the male society in which I lived almost worshipped beer and held it up as an essential part of all celebrations. So, after a short time, I began to enjoy the taste of beer. It wasn't that the taste of beer had changed but that my perception of the taste had changed to fit what I wanted [it to be]. The truth has been bent by desire. Sex is similar. The socially conditioned hormonal hunger for copulation twists raw experience to make sex appear as pleasure. Is sexual pleasure the way things truly are, or just the way desire makes it seem [to be]. (2006: 176)

1.0.3 The contexts of sense-desire

1.0.3.1 Since we are sense-based beings, sense-desires pervades all our being, that is, on physical, mental and spiritual levels. On a physical level, we work to restrain them with moral training and a wholesome social environment, and to direct our sensuality healthy ways, such as (for the laity) through marriage.² The monastics have various kinds of meditation to ward of sensuality, such as the perception of foulness³ and the stages of bodily decomposition.⁴

1.0.3.2 On a mental level, sensual desire is the key defilement we must deal with (again due to our sense-based being). Hence, we see “the desire for sensual pleasures” (*kāma-c,chanda*) as the first and foremost of the 5 mental hindrances (theme of this paper). Psychologically, that is, whether we are meditating or moving through our daily lives, we tend to be caught up with the 4 kinds of clinging (*upādāna*)—to sensual pleasures, to views, to ritual and vows, and to a self-view—as listed in **the Cūḷa Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 11).⁵

¹ See **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1.

² On sex, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7. On marriage, see **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31,30), SD 4.1 (where see nn for cross-refs).

³ Ie, on the 31 or 32 parts of the body, see **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,7), SD 12.21.

⁴ Ie, the 9 charnel-ground meditations, see **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,9), SD 12.21.

⁵ M 11,9-12 + SD 49.2 (4.3), esp Fig 4.3.1 for a collation table of the fetters and the clings.

1.0.3.3 These 4 kinds of clinging are a compact listing of the 5 lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), so called because they fetter and hold us back in the sense-world, which we now inhabit.⁶ If we are able to restrain and tame our sensual drives, we would also similarly reduce our hate and ill will, which are on the flip side of this sensuality coin. Hence, we see **the (Dasaka) Cetanā'karaṇīya Sutta** (A 10.2), reminding us that if we keep the moral precepts well, we would progress through our meditation, “without need of intention” (*cetanā'karaṇīya*), that is, almost effortlessly, in our meditation.⁷

1.0.3.4 Even if we are not yet able to even weaken sensual desires like the saints, we need only to overcome the first 3 fetters—those of self-identify view, spiritual doubt and of attachment to rituals and vows—we would be no more be “outsiders” to the path, and become streamwinners, sure of awakening. When we go on to weaken sensual desire, hate and delusion (the 3 unwholesome roots of action), we would attain once-return. When we exterminate all the 5 lower fetters, we attain non-return.

1.0.3.5 Then we go on to work to abandon the 5 higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*)—which fetter us to the higher non-physical world, that is, the form world and the formless world; hence, they are called respectively, lust for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*) and for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*). At this level, even a slight spiritual attachment, such as concern for the progress of others, would generate a spiritual “restlessness” (*uddhacca*), or measuring our attainment against those of others, would generate “conceit” (*māna*)—either of which prevents us from attaining full awakening as arhats. For then, we still have a tinge of spiritual “ignorance” (*avijjā*) lingering. But it just a matter of time before the non-returner is fully awakened.⁸

1.1 ASPECTS OF CHANDA. Now we will go on to analyse in greater detail the meanings and usages of the term *kāma-c, chanda*, and how we can benefit from self-understanding in the process.

1.1.1 Chanda as a morally neutral term

1.1.1.1 The term *kāma-c, chanda* is resolved as *kāma* (sense-pleasure) and *chanda* (desire). We will first examine **chanda**, as it is the easier of the two. *Chanda* is in itself a morally neutral term, regarded in the Abhidhamma simply as a mental factor (*cetasika*), whose moral quality depends on the intention (*cetanā*) that arouses and directs the desire (which, as such, is a good translation of it). Negative *chanda* arises in our minds with regard to what we see as desirable and to what we cherish; for example,

- the body (*kāyasmim chando*) S 47.37/5:181;
- sense-objects (*rūpesu chando*) S 35.246/4:195;
- sexuality (*methunasmim chando*) Sn 835;
- the world we live in (*lokasmim chando*) Sn 866; and
- our continued existence (*bhave chandam*) Thī 14.

1.1.1.2 Indeed, our whole being, that is, the 5 aggregates,⁹ are rooted in *chanda*, here meaning negative desire of craving (*taṇhā*). For that reason, the aggregates of an unawakened being is called “the 5 aggregates of clinging” (*pañc 'upādāna-k, khandha*). Here, *upādāna* is the active side of *chanda*, namely, clinging. It is on account of *chanda* (as negative desire) that we cling to the aggregates, to our body and our mind. *Chanda* also has a passive side, that is, as fuel (*upādāna*), it feeds itself, so that we continue to cling, even more tenaciously, to the aggregates.

1.1.1.3 This process fetters us to our cyclic lives (*saṃsāra*), which are all impermanent, and as such bring us suffering (the first noble truth). The food or fuel of this process, *chanda*, is, therefore, the “cause” of suffering, the second noble truth.¹⁰ It is the key condition that brings about suffering. Only

⁶ **Oram, bhāgiya S** (S 45.179/5:61), SD 98.11. On the 10 fetters, see **Kīṭa, giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3 (2).

⁷ A 10.2/5:2-4 (SD 41.6).

⁸ **Uddham, bhāgiya S** (S 45.180/5:61), SD 98.12. On the 10 fetters, see **Kīṭa, giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3 (2).

⁹ On the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*), see SD 17.

¹⁰ “Desire is the root of suffering” (*chando hi mūlam dukkhassa*, S 42.11/4:327-330); “all states are rooted in desire” (*chanda, mūlakā ... sabbe dhammā*, A 8.83/4:339, 10.58/5:107).

after *chanda* is given up, can we be liberated from suffering.¹¹ The purpose of the holy life, therefore, is to abandon *chanda*.¹²

1.1.2 Chanda as positive desire. When desire is rooted in any of the three wholesome roots (non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion), it is said to be motivated by a wholesome mind (*kusala,citta*). Once moved by such a wholesome state, we have the desire (*chanda*) to arouse and direct our effort to letting go of the evil we have been doing, to keep on avoiding it, to cultivate good, and maintain it.¹³ Here, *chanda* is clearly a word for right effort (*sammā vāyāma*). The Commentaries regard this as a wholesome desire (*kusala-c,chanda*),¹⁴ a spiritual desire (or Dharma-moved desire, *dhamma-c,chanda*),¹⁵ the desire (or will) to create wholesome states.¹⁶

On a more intense level, *chanda* (as enthusiasm or the desire to act), together with energy (*virīya*), mind (*citta*, that is, mental concentration), and investigation (*vīmaṃsā*), are the predominant support (*ādhipateyya paccaya*)¹⁷ in the cultivation of good (*kusala*) in the mundane sphere, culminating in the bases of spiritual power (*iddhi,pāda*)¹⁸ in the supramundane sphere.

1.1.3 Chanda as negative desire. When desire is rooted in any of the three unwholesome roots (greed, hate, delusion),¹⁹ it is said to be motivated by an unwholesome mind (*akusala,citta*) and, as such, is unwholesome. Here, *kāma-c,chanda* is synonymous with the unwholesome root of *rāga* (lust) or *lobha* (greed) (Dhs 1153/204; Vbh 541/252).

As a negative quality, *chanda* is synonymous with lust and affection,²⁰ and is an early stage in the rise of attachment. According to the 5th-century Sanskrit commentary, **Abhidharma.kośa,vyākhyā**,²¹ *chanda* (in its negative sense), is the desire for things *to be* acquired (in the future), while *rāga* is attachment to things *already* acquired.²²

When used in the sense of an immoral quality, *chanda* is referred to as *kāma-c,chanda* (desire for sense-pleasure) or *chanda,rāga* (lustful desire²³ or desire and lust²⁴). **The Vatthūpama Sutta** (M 7), says that “covetousness and rampant greed (*abhijjhā,visama.lobha*) are an imperfection of the mind (*cittassa upakkilesa*),” meaning that the dvandva (“desire and lust”) is really a single imperfection, differentiated only by the sequence of its appearance. First, we desire something, and when we already have it, we tend to cling to it (lust).

¹¹ “Having abandoned desire, one is thus free from suffering” (*chandaṃ virājetvā evaṃ dukkhā pamuccati*) (S 1.30/1:16).

¹² “The holy life is lived for the sake of abandoning desire” (*chanda,pahān’atthaṃ brahmacariyaṃ vussati*, S 45.-41/5:27).

¹³ These are the 4 right efforts: see **Mahā Sakul’udāyī S** (M 77,16/2:11; A 9.82/4:462).

¹⁴ We find *kusale dhamme chando* (Be We) or *kusala,dhamma-c,chando* (Ce Ee Se) in **Pātubhāva S** (A 6.96/-3:441), SD 63.9. See PmA 1:168; VvA 116; DhsA 289, 370.

¹⁵ *Dhamma-c,chanda* is a canonical term: see **Saññā Nānatta S** (S 14.7) where it means “desire for mental state(s)” (S 14.7/2:143), SD 17.5. See also PmA 1:168; VvA 116; DhsA 289, 370.

¹⁶ *Kusala dhammesu kattu,kamyatā dhamma-c,chando* (NmA 1:17). Such a process is the 12-step learning process described in **Caṅkī S** (M 95), where the 9th step is “desire for mindfulness arises” (*sati chando jāyati*) (M 95,20/-2:173 f) + SD 21.15 (5). See also MA 3:14.

¹⁷ Vbh 288; DhsA 359.

¹⁸ **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,28/3:77), SD 36.10; **Mahā Sakul’udāyī S** (M 77,17/2:11), SD 49.5; **Iddhi,-pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:276-281), SD 28.14.

¹⁹ See **(Akusala,mūla) Añña,titthiya S** (A 3.68/1:199-201), SD 16.4.

²⁰ *Chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ*, Nm 181; *kāma,saṅkhāto chando*, NmA 1:17, DhsA 370.

²¹ More fully, Sputārthā Abhidharma.kośa,vyākhyā (ed Unrai Wogihara, 1934), comy on Vasubandhu’s Abhidharma,kośa by Yaśomitra (5th cent, Kucha, Central Asia, on the Silk Road, on the northern rim of the Takla Makan desert).

²² *Aprāpteṣu viṣayeṣu prārthanā chandāḥ, prāpteṣu rāgaḥ* (qu in Ency Bsm 4:114). See **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,3-(1)/1:36) n, SD 28.12.

²³ As tatpurusha, eg, a lustful desire for a meditative state (DA 3:988; MA 3:146).

²⁴ As dvandva in **Koṭṭhita S** (S 35.232/4:163), SD 28.4.

In the negative sense, *chanda, rāga* is practically synonymous with *kāma, rāga* and *kāma-c, chanda*.²⁵ Here, *chanda* is one of the 5 hindrances and one of the 10 fetters.²⁶ An effective way to weaken this negative *chanda* is to practise sense-restraint. In simple terms, sense-restraint is not to read more than what our senses allow us to know.²⁷

1.2 KĀMA

1.2.1 The sensuality element. According to the Saṃyutta Commentary, speaking in Abhidhamma terms, **the sensuality element** (*kāma, dhātu*) is sensual thought, all sense-sphere phenomena in general and, in particular everything unwholesome, except the ill will element and the violence element, which are listed separately. **The perception of sensuality** (*kāma, saññā*) arises in dependence on the sensuality element by taking it as an object or by way of association (*sampayutta paccaya*, that is, when the perception of sensuality is associated with sensual thought in the same citta)²⁸ (SA 2:135). It then quotes the following **Vibhaṅga** definition of the “sensuality element” (*kāma, dhātu*):

The mentation, thinking, intention, fixing, focusing, mental application, wrong thought, *associated with desire*. This is called the sensuality element.

Taking Avīci [crowded hell] as the lower limit, the Para, nimmita, vasavatti gods [those who lord over others’ creations], including whatever is in between, occurring therein, included therein by way of aggregates, elements, bases, forms, feelings, perceptions, formations, consciousness. This is called the sensuality element.²⁹ (Vbh §182/86)

The sensuality element, as such, is a comprehensive term embracing both subjective (internal) and objective (external) aspects of *kāma* or sensuality. In simple terms, we tend to like or dislike certain sense-experiences, and to hold ideas, even fixations, about them in our minds. In either case, we are often compelled to run after and collect what we see as desirable, and conversely reject what we see as other than such desirables, thus rejecting them or ignoring them.

1.2.2 Two kinds of sensuality.

(1) SUTTA DEFINITIONS

1.2.2.1 In the suttas, we see two usages of the term *kāma*, that is, (1) as subjective desire for the 5 sense-objects, and (2) as the objective sensual objects themselves. Technically, the first—*kāma* as **subjective desire**—has the following contextual senses:

- “sensual craving” (*kāma, taṇhā*) as one of the 3 cravings (*taṇhā*) [1.4.1],
- “sensual thought” (*kāma, vitakka*) as one of the 3 thoughts (*vitakka*) [3.2],
- “sensual desire” (*kāma-c, chanda*) as one of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*),³⁰
- “sensual lust” (*kāma, rāga*) as one of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*) [4.4].

Kāma is also one of the mental influxes (*āsava*) [4.5] and a clinging (*upādāna*) [1.4.4].

²⁵ See eg desire for physical form (MA 3:138, 4:162; SA 1:17 f); desire for form and formless existences (SA 1:17); desire for the earth element (SA 2:152).

²⁶ Fetters (*saṃyojana*): see (4.4) & n.

²⁷ On how to overcome sensual desire through wise attention, see *Nimitta & anuvyañjana*, SD 19.14.

²⁸ Here, **citta** is anglicized and used as a modern Abhidhamma term, usually tr as “consciousness,” but is more specific. Citta is one of the 4 “realities” or “ultimates” (*param’attha*)—the 4 ultimates are matter (*rūpa*), citta (consciousness), mental factors (*cetasika*), and nirvana. Citta is actually a term for possible mental states or mind-moments, of which there are 89 or 121. In simple terms, a citta is a moment of consciousness. See Abhs:BRS 27-31 (or the whole ch).

²⁹ *Kāma, paṭisaṃyutto takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā micchā, saṅkappo, ayaṃ vuccati kāma, dhātu. Heṭṭhato avīci, nirayaṃ pariyantaṃ karitvā uparito para, nimmita, vasavattī deve anto, karitvā yaṃ etasmim antare etthāvacarā ettha pariyāpannā khandha, dhātu, āyatanā rūpā vedanā saññā saṅkhārā viññāṇaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati kāmadhātu. Sabbe pi akusalā dhammā kāmadhātū’ti.* (VbhA 74)

³⁰ See *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

1.2.2.2 Secondly, *kāma* as **objective sensual objects**, in the suttas, is generally called “cords of sensual pleasure” or “cords of sensuality” (*kāma, gūṇa*). They are famously defined in this pericope, as follows:

Bhikshus, they are these **5 cords of sensual pleasure**. What are the five?

Visual forms cognizable by the eye

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,
connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

Sounds cognizable by the ear

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,
connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

Smells cognizable by the nose

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,
connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

Tastes cognizable by the tongue

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,
connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

Touches cognizable by the body

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,
connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

(M 13,7/1:47), SD 6.9³¹ [2.3]

1.2.2.3 The “5 cords of sensual pleasure” (*pañca kāma, gūṇa*) so called because they are the objects of the 5 physical senses. They are also the qualities of desire, that is, that which brings pleasure to the senses, or desirable sense-experience, as listed in the stock passage above. They are “**cords**” (*gūṇa*) because they bind one to them, and they “multiply” (*gūṇa*) themselves as a result, binding us ever closer and tighter to them.

1.2.2.4 The pains and dangers of sensual pleasures are often illustrated graphically in the suttas, such as **the Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22) and **the Potaliya Sutta** (M 54). One of the first aspects of Buddhist training is that of at least keeping ourselves from being overwhelmed by them. As such, their disadvantages (*ādīnava*) feature prominently in the Buddha’s progressive talk (*ānupubbī, kathā*), which is the initial instruction for the laity.³²

1.2.2.5 *Kāma* is also desire personified, that is, the god of love, sometimes identified with Māra (Tha 3.88; BA 289). It is interesting to note here that there is no “mental pleasure” (*somanassa*) in the list. Such mental pleasures generally arise through mental focus or meditation, and, as such, are not regarded as *gūṇa*, insofar as they provide a lasting sense of satisfaction and inner peace that lead to letting-go.

(2) COMMENTARIAL VIEW

1.2.2.6 **The Sammoha, vinodanī** (Vibhaṅga Commentary) says:

There are 2 kinds of sensuality [sense-desire], namely,

(1) sensuality as the basis (*vatthu, kāma*) and (2) sensuality as defilement (*kilesa, kāma*).

Here, sensuality as defilement is *the element (dhātu)* which is associated with sensuality that is the sensuality element—this is the name for thought of sensuality (*kāma, vitakka*).

³¹ V 1:3, 17, 225, 293, 3:111; M 13,7/1:47, 13,7/1:85; S 1:9, 132, 36,19/4:225, 6,31/4:235+237, 45,30/5:22, 45,-176/5:60, 47,6/5:148, 47,7/5:149; A 6.63/3:411,4, 9.35/4:415,4, 9.42/4:449,13, 9.65/4:458,15, 10.99/5:203,22; Dh 48, 415; Sn 436; Tha 254; J 423/3:466, 467/4:172+173, 507/4:469. 542/6:127; Ap 547; Nm 1; Vbh 256; Mvst 3.-417.2; MA 1:199, 131, 2:261; listed at D 33,2.1(3)/3:234; ref to at D 21,11/2:271,26; 29,23/3:131,5/1:172, 2:243; S 12.63/2:99; Kāma, gūṇa S, S 35.117/4:97 (SD 88.6); A 6.26/3:315,3, 4.122/2:125,17, 5.34/3:40,23, 6.25/3:312,25+313,16, 7.65/4:118,9, 8.35/4:239,10, 5.55/3:69,8*, 5.148/3:172,26, 6.26/3:315,12, 7.48/4:55,18, 10.177/5:272,15+273,1, 35.241/4:180.

³² On *ānupubbī, kathā*, see, eg, V 1:15; D 1:148; A 3:184; **Levels of learning**, SD 40a.4 (1.2).

As for sensuality as basis, *sensuality* itself [ie the object desired], as an element, is the sensuality element—this is the name for dharmas [mental states] of the sense sphere. (VbhA 74)

1.2.2.7 The terms *vatthu, kāma* and *kilesa, kāma* probably first appeared in the ancient Sutta Nipāta commentary Mahā Niddesa (Nm 1). They correspond respectively to the 5 cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca kāma, guṇa*) [2.3] and sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), such as in **the Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta** (A 6.63)³³ [2.3.2].

1.2.2.8 The Vibhaṅga Commentary correlates sensual thought with sensuality as a defilement (*kilesa, kāma*) and sense-sphere phenomena with sensuality as sense-objects (*vatthu, kāma*). In other words, “sensual pleasure” (*kāma*) refers to the sensual objects (*vatthu, kāma*) or sense-experiences, and “sensual desires” refers to “sensuality as mental defilement” (*kilesa, kāma*), the subjective aspect of the sense-process.

1.2.2.9 Sensual intention arises dependent on sensual perception by way of either association (*sampayutta paccaya*) or decisive support (*upanissaya paccaya*). In Abhidhamma terminology, “association condition” (*sampayutta paccaya*) is a relationship between simultaneous mental phenomena, while “decisive-support condition” (*upanissaya paccaya*) is a relationship between a cause and an effect separated in time.³⁴

1.3 KĀMA-C, CHANDA. The term *kāma-c, chanda* has been variously translated as “excitement of sensual pleasure” (PED), “sensuous desire” (BDict), and “will to sensual desire” (Nett:Ñ 294). *Kāma-c, chanda* arises from unwise attention towards a sense-object by regarding it as being pleasurable and desirable. In meditation texts, it is often referred to as “a lustful mind” (*sa, rāgam cittaṃ*).³⁵ As such, it is properly translated as “desire for sense-objects.”

In this famous and ancient stock passage, *kāma-c, chanda* is synonymous with “covetousness” (*abhijjhā*):

Here, bhikkhus, a monk³⁶ dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, **observing [watching] the body in the body**, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world ...

(M 10,3A/1:56), SD 13.3

In this pericope, the dvandva, “covetousness and displeasure” (*abhijjhā, domanassa*) is a synecdoche (or short form) for the set of 5 mental hindrances. Both *kāma-c, chanda* and *abhijjhā* refer to sensual desire in general which arises from unwisely attending to a sensually attractive sense-object.³⁷ More specifically, here, *kāma-c, chanda* functions as the first and foremost mental hindrance.

1.4 RELATED TERMS

1.4.1 *Tanhā*. According to the early Buddhist analysis of existence, craving (*tanhā*) is the very root condition that propels and perpetuates *cyclic life*, and is the key factor for the arising of suffering, as defined in the second noble truth. In other words, there is no first cause to suffering or anything else—whatever that can arise, arises through conditions.³⁸ This central role that craving plays is often referred to in the suttas,³⁹ and is the theme of a whole chapter in **the Dhammapada** (Dh canto 24 = Dh 334-359).

1.4.2 *Rāga* is a near-synonym of *kāma-c, chanda*, but has a more intensely negative level of desire. *Rāga* literally means “dyed,” coloured thoroughly by an external hue, and is often translated as “lust” or

³³ A 6.63,3/3:311 (SD 6.11).

³⁴ See **Sa, nidāna S** (S 14.12/2:151-153), SD 29.8.

³⁵ Eg **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,34(1)/1:59 = D 2:299), SD 13.3.

³⁶ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either a monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipaṭṭhana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3/1:55) @ SD 13.3 (3.1.1).

³⁷ On wise attention, see **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

³⁸ On conditionality, see eg (**Avijjā**) **Paccaya S** (S 12.27), SD 39.12.

³⁹ See eg **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 13), SD 6.9; **Māgandiya S** (M 75), SD 31.5; **Pubbe Sambodha Ss 1+2** (S 4.13+14), SD 14.9+10; (**Vaṅṅisa**) **Ānanda S** (S 8.4), SD 16.12; **Atthi, rāga S** (S 22.64), SD 26.10; **Methuna S** (A 7.47), SD 21.9; **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127), SD 27.6a; **Māta Putta S** (A 3.55), SD 66.2; (**Taṇhā**) **Bhikkhu S** (A 4.159), SD 10.14; (**Rāga**) **Anuttariya S** (A 6.121), SD 14.14; **Saññoga S** (A 7.48), SD 8.7; (**Āhāra**) **Taṇhā S** (A 10.62), SD 31.11.

“passion.” We are dyed in lust when our desire for sense-pleasure (*kāma-c, chanda*) reaches a level that is out of our control, and see everything as being hued and tinted by it.

1.4.3 Akusala, mūla. *Rāga, dosa* and *moha* (lust, hate and delusion) are the three unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) that motivate us to break the precepts and commit unwholesome deeds through the mind, speech and body. *Rāga*, as such, is a fundamental defilement, referring to “a state of lack, need and want. It is always seeking fulfilment and lasting satisfaction, but its drive is inherently insatiable, and thus as long as it endures it maintains the sense of lack” (Nyanaponika 1978: xiv; he translates *rāga* as “greed.”)

1.4.4 Upādāna. When *kāma-c, chanda* becomes more persistent, it is called *upādāna*. The term *upādāna* has two important senses: an active sense of “grasping” or “clinging,” and a passive sense referring to that which is grasped or clung to, in the sense of its “basis” or “substrate,” often signifying “supply” or “fuel.” In this latter passive sense, *upādāna* forms the ninth of the twelve-link dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*), where it arises in dependence on craving and leads on to existence (*bhava*).

As the conditioning force for continued existence, *upādāna* stands for the 4 kinds of clinging,⁴⁰ that is, clinging to sense-pleasures⁴¹ [2], to views,⁴² to rituals and vows,⁴³ and to a self-view.⁴⁴ Even here, we see *upādāna* or clinging as that which *feeds* our attraction to sense-pleasures, to views, to rituals and vows, and to a self-doctrine.

1.4.5 Anusaya. When *kāma-c, chanda* becomes habitual, it is known as *kāma, rāgānusaya*, the latent tendency of sensual lust⁴⁵ [4.5]. Of these 4 kinds of clinging, the most evident would clearly be the clinging to sense-pleasures, which explains why it is often addressed in the suttas.

2 Sense-pleasures

2.1 THE PAINS OF PLEASURES

2.1.1 On a deeper mental level, says **the Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (M 64), this sensual desire is reinforced as the latent tendency of sensual lust (*kāma, rāgānusaya*), which is present even in a newborn baby.⁴⁶ Sensual lust, together with ignorance, lying deep in our unconscious, as latent tendencies, give rise to the 3 unwholesome roots of greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). Greed looks for and collects what it perceives as sense-pleasure, hate rejects what it perceives as being unpleasurable, and delusion ignores what it perceives to be neither.

2.1.2 The Māgandiya Sutta (M 75), using a graphic imagery, adds that the painful results of craving for sensuality (*kāma, taṇhā*) are like those of a leper who burns his wounds over a fire and scratches them: he feels a fleeting relief but his action only worsens his condition.⁴⁷ Clinging to sense-pleasures (*kām'-upādāna*), as such, has a broad range of negative effects, and has to be removed before we can progress on the path to awakening.

2.1.3 The Alagaddūpama Sutta (M 22) gives a list of 10 graphic images to illustrate the painfulness and pointlessness of sense-pleasures, as follows:

- (1) *a skeleton*, a fleshless, blood-smearred bone cannot satisfy the hunger of a starving dog;
- (2) *a piece of meat*, for which birds of prey fight, unyielding, often meeting death or deadly pain due to their beaks and claws;
- (3) *a grass torch*, carried against the wind severely burns the carrier;

⁴⁰ See **Sammā Ditṭhi S** (M 9,34/1:50 f), SD 11.14.

⁴¹ On clinging to sense-pleasures, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (2).

⁴² On clinging to views, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (5).

⁴³ On clinging to vows and rituals, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3 (5.3).

⁴⁴ On clinging to self-doctrine, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (5.2): self-view. *Attānūvāda*. Cf D 2:58, 3:230; M 1:66; S 2:3; Dhs 212. Regarding *atta, vād'upādāna* (clinging to a self-view), Comy says that they talk about, cling to the “self” (MA 1:219). On *atta, vāda*, see **Sallekha S** (M 8/1:40).

⁴⁵ See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (2).

⁴⁶ M 64,3/1:433 (SD 21.10).

⁴⁷ M 75,13-17/1:506-508 (SD 31.5).

- (4) *a pit of burning coals*, over which a man is dragged by others, then thrown into the flame and consumed by it;
- (5) *a dream* of a beautiful landscape disappears when we awake;
- (6) *borrowed goods*, in which we foolishly pride ourselves but are taken away by the owners;
- (7) *a fruit-laden tree* [or *fruits on a tree*]: desiring fruits, but unable to climb, someone axes it down, hurting us who are already in it.
- (8) *a butcher's knife and block* [or *executioner's block*]: sense-desires cut off our spiritual development;
- (9) *a sword stake*, sense-desires are piercing, causing wounds where there are none before; and
- (10) *a snake's head*, sense-desires are a grave risk for our welfare, present and future.

(M 22,3.5/1:130), SD 3.13

Such images are also found elsewhere in the early suttas.⁴⁸ **The Potaliya Sutta** (M 54), for example, gives a detailed explanation of the first seven images.⁴⁹ **The Vammika Sutta** (M 23), too, has two of these images.⁵⁰

2.1.4 The Mahā Dukkhā-k, khandha Sutta (M 13) is a study on sense-desire (*kāma*),⁵¹ where the Buddha first defines it as our seeking to gratify the 5 physical senses, and he then goes on to show their disadvantages, as follows:

- in seeking to earn a living, we have to tolerate bad weather, negative environments, etc;
 - when we are out of work, we are usually distressed;
 - when we have accumulated wealth from our work, we may lose that wealth in various ways;
 - quarrels and violence occur on all social levels and relationships often on account of sense-desire;
 - wars, as a rule, occur on account of sense-desire;
 - theft, robberies, kidnapping, etc, often occur on account of sense-desire;
 - such criminals often suffer the pains of punishment and tortures on account of their sense-desire;
 - those who misconduct themselves through body, speech and mind on account of sense-desire, are, as a result, likely to be reborn in suffering states.
- (M 13,7-15/1:85-87), SD 6.9

While the first seven cases are sufferings as a result of sense-desire, arising in the present, the last refers to suffering arising in a future state (as karmic results).

2.2 THE BODY IS THE SENSES

2.2.1 The Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta (A 6.63) gives an instructive teaching on the nature of *kāma* (sensual objects), highlighted in this key passage:

Bhikkhus, these [the 5 cords of sense-pleasures] are not sensual objects (*kāma*), but in the noble discipline, they are called “cords of sensual desire” (*kāma, guṇa*).⁵²

*Saṅkappa, rāgo purisassa kāmo
n'ete kāmā yāni citrāni loke
saṅkappa, rāgo purisassa kāo*

The thought of passion is a person's sensuality:
There is no sensuality in what is beautiful in the world.
The thought of passion is a person's sensuality:

⁴⁸ V 2:25 = A 3:97 = J 5:210 = Thī 487-91; MA 2:103. For details, see Nyanaponika, *The Discourse on the Snake Simile*, 1974 n2. See also foll n.

⁴⁹ M 54,15-21/1:364-368 (SD 43.8).

⁵⁰ M 23/1:142-145 (SD 28.13).

⁵¹ It should be noted here that *kāma* is used in this sutta (M 13) in a broad sense, that is, both as the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or “sense-desire,” and as the object of desire (*vatthu*) or “(objects of) sensual pleasure” (Nm 1,1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f): see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:192 f. In other words, *kāma* tr into English as “sense-desire” as well as “sensual pleasure,” depending on the context, but the one sense should be taken as implicit in the other in the English translation.

⁵² *Api ca kho bhikkhave n'ete kāmā, kāma, guṇā nam'ete ariyassa vinaye vuccanti*. This is an enigmatic statement whose meaning is clarified in the verse that follows. See foll n.

tiṭṭhanti citrāni that'eva loke What is beautiful in the world remain just as they are.
Ath'ettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan ti So here the wise remove the desire for them.⁵³

(A 6.63,3.4/3:411), SD 6.11

2.2.2 From this teaching, we understand that our physical senses are not the problem: they simply function as sensors by which we experience the world around us. Even the world around us is “neutral,” as it were, and *it all depends on how we perceive it*. They become “cords of sensual desire” (*kāma,guṇa*) [2.3] when we are attached to what we experience. More importantly, we can experience beauty in the world without being attached to it. Or, if there is any attachment to such sensual pleasures, we ought to remove them. Only in this way we would really enjoy the world and be at peace with ourselves.

2.2.3 Attachment to sense-desires is difficult to overcome when we cling to our senses and sense-experiences. We see them as desirable so that we are unable to let go of them. We are often told that the senses protect our body, but some insight into the nature of our senses will show that this is not the case. In fact, on the contrary, it is the body that *serves as the vehicle for the 5 senses to play in the world*.⁵⁴ For this reason, sensual desire is regarded as the first of the 5 lower fetters⁵⁵ that bind beings to samsara.⁵⁶

2.2.4 In meditation, or when we are profoundly focused on what we enjoy doing, the world fades away from us, as it were. On a deeper level, even the 5 senses fade away. Indeed, full focus only arises when the whole physical body “shuts down.” In dhyana or meditation absorption, we are no more aware of the physical body. We only *feel* the profound bliss of dhyana, as there is no *knowledge* (discursive thought) about it until we emerge from it and review it in retrospect.

The operational verb here is *feel* because there is no knowing, which only comes after the fact. When we emerge from dhyana, and review our practice, we then know what we have experienced. We need not go into dhyana to know this. An athlete might recall a time when he is totally immersed in the “flow” of the second wind⁵⁷ of his running or the “runner’s high” following his victory. There are effectively no thoughts at that moment: it is only an exhilarating wordless and thought-free feeling. Or, on a simpler level, we are so overjoyed on receiving a gift that we have greatly wished for, and when asked about it, we are likely to say that we are at loss for words. [5.1]

2.3 THE 5 CORDS OF SENSE-PLEASURES

2.3.1 Our living body comprises the 5 physical senses (*pañc'indriya*), that is, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the body. They are like five security monitors that are incessantly trained on their sense-fields. However, it is the mind, or more exactly, our attention that decides which one to direct itself to. The untrained or undisciplined mind would simply run after the sense-objects that it perceives as pleasant, and is often “bound” to it by desire. Hence, these 5 sense-objects are famously known as “cords of sensual pleasure” (*kāma,guṇa*). They are also so called because they hold us in their power by multiplying or replicating (*guṇa*) themselves. [1.2.2.1]

2.3.2 The Nibbedhika Pariyāya Sutta (A 6.63), for example, declares:

There are these 5 cords of sensual pleasures (*kāma,guṇa*):

Forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;

Sounds cognizable by the ear that are, ... delightful;

Smells cognizable by the nose that are ... delightful;

Tastes cognizable by the tongue that are ... delightful;

Touches cognizable by the body that are desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful. [1.2.2.1]

⁵³ This verse, which explains the previous prose sentence, “plays upon the double meaning of *kāma*, emphasizes that purification is to be achieved by mastering the defilement of sensuality, not by fleeing [from] sensually enticing objects.” (A:ÑB 1999:302 n34)

⁵⁴ See Brahmavamsa 2006:30-33.

⁵⁵ On the lower fetters, see (4.4) & n.

⁵⁶ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(7)/3:234).

⁵⁷ See eg http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_wind.

—**Bhikshus, these are not sensual objects (*kāma*), but in the noble discipline, they are called “cords of sensual desire” (*kāma,guṇa*).**

⁵⁸The thought of passion is a person’s sensuality:

There is no sensuality in what is beautiful (*citra*) in the world.

The thought of passion is a person’s sensuality:

What is beautiful in the world remains as they are.

So here the wise remove the desire for them.⁵⁹ (A 6.63,3/3:411), SD 6.11.

The second half of this statement is especially useful in our understanding on how to overcome sensual desire. The sense-objects are “external” to us in the sense that they exist in themselves: they are there even when we do not sense them or when we leave the place. They only have a hold on us through our minds, that is, when we “internalize” them. In simple terms, we keep *thinking* of them even after the fact.

2.3.3 Furthermore, we do not merely think about them, but we tend to project our own notions upon them. In this sense, we never really *experience* them as they are, but we are merely creating our own images of these objects and reacting with them. The mind is like a movie director that decides how we would live these experiences in the stage of consciousness. In fact, the mind is capable of creating and projecting its own images, even more real to us than what we experience of the outside world. What our minds create is more real to us than what we experience of the real world.⁶⁰

3 Sexual pleasure

3.1 KĀMA AS SEXUAL PLEASURE

3.1.1 The most common manifestation of sense-desire for most people would be some level of sexual fantasy. Sexuality is so universal that it is often addressed in the Suttas.⁶¹ The Buddha explains sexuality on two important levels: the mythical and the psychological. The Buddha’s explanation of the rise of sexuality is famously given in mythical language in **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), humorously related as a sort of divine devolution and social evolution: how the gods become worldlings, and how these worldlings evolve socially.⁶²

3.1.2 A psychological explanation of sexuality is found in **the Saññoga Sutta** (A 7.48). The Buddha shows how a woman or a man, on account of preoccupation with her or his physical being, sees their differences, and on account of this perceived duality, desires what she or he sees as lacking in either of them. As such, we, attached to our own sexuality, enter into sexual union with another. The message of the teaching is that *we are not merely sexual beings*, but we need to rise above our bodily limitations or perceptions to realize our mental and spiritual potentials.⁶³

3.1.3 Sensual desires arise from self-centred experiences of the world, which, in turn, reinforce the desires, like a tail-biting snake. We each create our own worlds with our habitual collecting of pleasant sense-experiences, and avoiding of unpleasant sense-stimuli. Of such experiences, the most powerful—and most selfish—is that of **sexuality**. It is the doorway to samsara or repeated cyclic lives.⁶⁴

3.1.4 The basic characteristics of sexual lust are clinging (*upādāna*) and multiplying (*guṇa*) [2.3]. It is the most prolific and most difficult of the three unwholesome roots (of lust, hate and delusion) to overcome.⁶⁵ Lust simply seeks to replicate itself: it is insatiable. In evolutionary terms, it is said that sexuality

⁵⁸ An almost identical verse (without line c) is found in **Na Santi Sutta** (S 1.34/1:22), SD 42.6.

⁵⁹ This verse, which explains the previous prose sentence, “plays upon the double meaning of *kāma*, emphasizes that purification is to be achieved by mastering the defilement of sensuality, not by fleeing [from] sensually enticing objects.” (A:ÑB 1999:302 n34)

⁶⁰ See further **Saññā**, SD 17.4 & **Saṅkhāra**, SD 17.6.

⁶¹ See **Sexuality**, SD 31.7.

⁶² D 27/3:80-97 (SD 2.19).

⁶³ A 7.48,2-3/4:57 (SD 8.7).

⁶⁴ On sex and marriage, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (4.2).

⁶⁵ See (**Vitthāra**) **Paṭipadā S** (A 4.162/2:149 f), SD 18.3.

is nature's way of perpetuating life. But nature makes beasts of us and keeps us so, making us tear at each other, bloody tooth and claw to procreate for the sake of our species' survival and proliferation.

3.1.5 Sexuality is essentially a *bodily* instinct, a *physical* preoccupation.⁶⁶ If we are preoccupied with our bodies, we would also be attracted to those of others—then we fall fully under the power of sexual preoccupation and proliferation. We become addicted to sexual pleasure *because we know of no higher pleasure*.⁶⁷ The solution therefore is have a taste of a greater pleasure, an inner bliss that is independent of the body; in short, meditative bliss. [5]

3.2 THE 3 TRAININGS

3.2.1 Evolution is essentially biological evolution based on natural selection. In other words, the whole process is sex-based in which we remain as animals, albeit, intelligent human animals. It is after all the evolution of *a species*, as a group. In animal evolution, the animal (including the human animal), remains within the evolutionary group.

3.2.2 Spiritual evolution begins where biological evolution ends: to spiritually evolve, we need to rise above the crowd and its conditioning. It is the evolution of *the individual*, that is, the process of individuation, in which we need to grow out of the group, and only in that way, is our consciousness raised to a higher level of being, even to liberation itself.⁶⁸

Spiritual evolution is envisioned in Buddhism as **the 3 trainings** (*ti, sikkhā*): the training in moral virtue, in mental cultivation, and in insight wisdom.⁶⁹ Moral virtue arises from the disciplining of the body and speech, that is, sublimating bodily action and speech into processes that nurture our minds. When these two karmic doors (action and speech) are wholesomely restrained, we will be able to direct our energies towards mental cultivation, which entails focusing our attention inwards towards the mental processes themselves, elevating them to a level of a clear inner stillness, that is, insight wisdom. It is in such an inner clarity that we see our true self, realize our spiritual potential, and attain true self-liberation.

3.2.3 The purpose of Buddhism, then, is to bring us beyond biological evolution, through spiritual evolution, to self-liberation; or, more simply, from being mere sexual beings, through mental being (tapping the mind's potential to rise above the physical state), to freedom from suffering.⁷⁰ Sexuality is what binds us to the biological state, relegating us to exist merely as sexual beings, but according to Buddhism, there are *other realms of existence*, namely, the form realm and the formless realm. In other words, besides our sense-world, there are the worlds of beings composed purely of *light* (the devas) and the worlds of those composed of *pure energy* (formless devas).⁷¹

What separates us from the form beings and the formless beings is our *sexuality*; what prevents us from becoming divine beings is our fixation with *a physical body* that depends on material food and sexual reproduction. It is not that sexuality is impure or bad, but that it keeps us within the rut of cyclic lives, within the realm of the physical senses, thus preventing us from enjoying bliss beyond the physical body and winning total liberation.

3.3 APPROPRIATE SEXUAL CONDUCT

3.3.1 The practitioner's moral training centres around the 5 precepts, which are as follows:

The precepts

- (1) not destroying life
- (2) not taking the not-given
- (3) not committing sexual misconduct

rooted in

the value of life or the value of *being*;
happiness expressed through our ideas and owning things—this is the value of *having*;
the value of freedom and respect for a *person*—this is the value of *doing*;

⁶⁶ See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a.

⁶⁷ For a detailed study, see **Māgandiya S** (M 75/1:501-513), SD 31.5.

⁶⁸ See SD 8.7 (4).

⁶⁹ See **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235), SD 24.10c & **Sīla Samādhi Paññā**, SD 21.6.

⁷⁰ For a succinct statement on this, see **Saññoga S** (A 7.48/4:57-59), SD 8.7.

⁷¹ For a list of the 31 planes constituting these 3 worlds, see **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11), SD 1.7 Table 1.7

- | | |
|---|---|
| (4) not speaking falsehood | the value of <u>truth</u> and beneficial communication—this is the value of <i>seeing</i> ; and |
| (5) not taking strong drinks or intoxicants | the value of <u>wisdom</u> or the basis for a clear mind in preparation for mental cultivation—this is the value of <i>mind</i> . ⁷² |

3.3.2 Of special interest here is the third precept: abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*). This training rule reminds us, as lay people enjoying sense-pleasure, that we should not fall into the rut of lust, that is, a sense of gratification that is dependent on appropriating external objects (whether a person or thing). This consuming drive is rooted in an unconscious notion of *duality*, that we must *have* what is different from us.⁷³

Buddhism does not view sex as being intrinsically evil. Even when the precept against sexual misconduct is broken, the person is not “punished” by any Buddhist law or authority. This precept, like the other four of the 5 precepts, constitutes *natural morality*. It is “natural” in that it is self-evident that we, and all beings, treasure our lives. No one wants to be exploited or violated by another. This precept is rooted in the respect for another’s *person*.⁷⁴ A person has the right to say *no* to any kind of sexual contact. Even one spouse can rightly say *no* to sex to the other, as neither is owned by other, and both are free individuals.

3.3.3 Sex, however, becomes problematic when it is misused in the following ways, for example,

- when it is forced upon an unwilling partner (even a spouse who rejects the advance);
- when it is done with an improper partner, such as another’s spouse, or a minor;
- as a self-empowerment through exploiting others, such as children, the disabled and the gullible;
- as an escape from real issues, such as difficulties or frustration arising from personal problems.

Sex is wrong or unwholesome in such cases because it is an act of exploiting another, of causing pain or unhappiness to the victim or those related to the victim.

3.3.4 On a deeper psychological level, when we often or habitually feel a need for sexual gratification, it is likely that we are *addicted* to sex. **Addiction** means that we are never fully satisfied with it, and keep on wanting it. This is mainly because we do not understand the true nature of sexuality, that it is merely a physical act that cannot fully gratify itself. As such, we keep on wanting it.

We cling to sexual pleasure (or any sensual pleasure, for that matter) because we are looking at only one aspect of it, *that which we find attractive* or because we have not tasted a greater bliss. This fatal attraction is the proverbial snake that keeps painfully biting its own tail.⁷⁵ Each time we allow ourselves to be unwholesomely attracted to a sensual object, we are very likely to be caught in its rut.⁷⁶

3.4 WHOLESOME SEXUAL CONDUCT

3.4.1 Lay Buddhists who are non-celibate, enjoying sense-pleasures (*kāma, bhogī*)⁷⁷—that is, those enjoying sense-pleasures *and* also desirous of living a moral and happy life—should only indulge themselves in such pleasures within the limits of the 5 precepts, that is, they should know *when to stop* and avoid sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācārā*). In fact, such people, who enjoy sense-pleasures in a wholesome manner and yet do not neglect their spiritual development, are still capable of attaining streamwinning,⁷⁸ fully awakening to spiritual liberation within seven lives at the most.⁷⁹

⁷² On the 5 precepts, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41), SD 5.2 (2); **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7/5:352-356), SD 1.5; **Bhaya Vera S** (A 5.174/3:204-206), SD 6.4.

⁷³ For a psychological explanation, see **Saññoga S** (A 7.48.2-3/4:57), SD 8.7.

⁷⁴ See **The person in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a.

⁷⁵ Another mythical imagery is that of **Sisyphus** who, in Greek mythology, is a devious king, punished by the gods to push a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll down again, and to repeat the task for eternity. The French author, **Albert Camus**, in his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), sees Sisyphus as personifying the absurdity of human life, but concludes, “one must imagine Sisyphus happy” as “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart.” See **Yodh’ājīva S** (S 42.3), SD 23.3 (1) & n.

⁷⁶ On how to break this vicious cycle, see **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

⁷⁷ On *kāma, bhogī*, see **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73, 10/1:491), SD 27.4.

⁷⁸ See **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73, 10/1:491), SD 27.4.

⁷⁹ See **Sa, upadisesa S** (A 9.12, 10/4:381), SD 3.3 (3).

3.4.2 A good Buddhist lay practitioner is one who keeps to *right conduct* regarding sexual behaviour. While such a person understands that sexuality may be the greatest *bodily* pleasure, he accepts that it is only *impermanent*, and consistently reflects on this truth as the occasion arises. For him, sexuality is only meaningful and wholesome with his spouse or partner, to whom he is *committed* socially, emotionally and spiritually.

3.4.3 One important advantage for the “sense-enjoying” lay practitioner committed to his spouse or partner is that wholesome sexuality between them provides a mutual satisfaction, albeit a temporary one, which allows them to *set effectively aside sexual feelings for more selfless actions*. Indeed, due to the temporary nature of sex, a sex-centred relationship can never last or be a healthy one. What really keeps a couple together is unconditional love and committed partnership.

3.4.4 Often enough, a common higher purpose, such as raising a child or children, or doing social work (or both), serves as a lasting bond for a wholesome family. Wholesome sex, in other words, can be an expression of the fruit of mutual love, that is, the procreation of other beings, and providing them with an environment and opportunities for personal development and a happy life. A good lay Buddhist, in other words, can be one who really knows how to enjoy life in a wholesome way.

3.5 SEX IS THE MOST SELFISH OF HUMAN ACTIONS

3.5.1 Despite all the benefits of the wholesome sexual behavior we have mentioned, it is still a very selfish behaviour. Indeed, *sex is the most selfish of human behavior*, in that we expect not only self-gratification from it, but that it can only satisfy a single person or at best a couple. Even when we think that we are satisfying a partner, our perception is often that of a subtle self-centredness, even superiority (that is, conceit), that *I* have gratified the *other*.

3.5.2 An important purpose of the third precept, as such, is to introduce a level of *selflessness* into the sexual experience. The sexual act between a loving couple is wholesome when done with mutual respect and clear comprehension of one another. No one is used merely as a tool for the pleasure of the other. Wholesome sex is an expression of the unconditional acceptance of one another.

This means that even when our spouse or partner turns down a sexual advance, we should respect it. At the same time, for a healthy couple to really bond together, sex should never be used to hold the other party to ransom. Sex is most gratifying when both parties fully and mutually surrender to one another in a blissful self-forgetting. This is the closest that the body can ever get to feel what dhyana is like.⁸⁰

4 The nature of lust

4.1 LUST DEMANDS OUR FULL ATTENTION

4.1.1 Let us once again discuss the nature of *kāma-c, chanda* in a broader perspective. Craving (*taṇhā*) constitutes the second noble truth, that is to say, the human predicament as a whole is rooted in craving, which is “accompanied by lust and delight” (*taṇhā nandi, rāga, sahaḡatā*).⁸¹ Mythically, as related in **the Māra, dhītā Sutta** (S 4.25), Rāga is one of Māra’s daughters, along with Taṇhā (Craving) and Araṡī (Discontent).⁸² This highlights the negative nature of *kāma-c, chanda* and its close link with the problem of craving.

4.1.2 According to **the Channa Paribbājaka Sutta** (A 3.71), lust not only weakens our goodness, but it also blurs, even blocks out, our vision of the goodness of others, which then easily drives us into unwholesome conduct of body, speech and mind.⁸³ **The Sama, citta Sutta** (A 2.4.6) states that sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*) causes people to quarrel with each other, while lust (*taṇhā*) manifesting as passionate attachment to views (*diṡṡhi, rāga*) will cause even recluses to quarrel with each other.⁸⁴

4.1.3 **The Sāriputta Koṡṡhita Sutta 3** (S 44.5) shows how passionate attachment often fuels philosophical speculations and argumentations, which boils down to the presence of lust in regards to the

⁸⁰ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

⁸¹ **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:421), SD 1.1.

⁸² S 4.25/1:124, SD 36.6.

⁸³ A 3.71/1:215-217 (SD 18.10).

⁸⁴ In **Sama, citta Vg** (A 2.4.6/1:66), SD 64.12.

5 aggregates.⁸⁵ In short, we tend to look at the body and mind as *objects* to be grasped at and owned, not realizing that they are both actually impermanent.

4.2 LUST MAKES US FORGETFUL

4.2.1 When sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*) is present in the mind, one of its consequences is *forgetfulness*. In the (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava Sutta** (S 44.55), the Buddha famously tells the brahmin Saṅgārava that lust, as one of the 5 mental hindrances,⁸⁶ demands so much of our attention that it becomes difficult for us to remember even those things we have repeatedly memorized.⁸⁷ As a mental hindrance, sensual lust weakens our wisdom, preventing us from mental development.

When our minds are weakened by lust, not only are our memories impaired, but our perceptions are squinted, too. Drenched in lust, or even in a lustful moment, we can experience a perversion of perception (*viparīta, saññā*), which induces us to falsely see happiness in what actually brings pain.⁸⁸

4.2.2 The Gaddula, baddha Sutta 2 (S 22.100) explains how lust deludes the mind so that our notions of pleasure are as illusory as an artist's painted images of a woman or a man, which however real they may appear, are actually artistic constructions (S 3:152). Such ideas may be illusory, but their effects are real, as lust can set the whole mind on fire (S 1:188). Indeed, there is no fire that is like the fire of lust:

<i>N'atthi rāga, samo aggi</i>	There is no fire like lust,
<i>n'atthi dosa, sama kali</i>	there is no fault like hate,
<i>n'atthi khandha, samā dukkhā</i>	there is no ill like the aggregates,
<i>n'atthi santi, param sukham</i>	there is no bliss greater than nirvana. (Dh 202)

4.2.3 Numerous discourses warn monastics of the dangers of sensual lust because it can make them fall from the holy life or give it up to return to the lay life. **The Yodh'ājiva Sutta** (A 5.76), for example, says that a monk who goes on alms-round without sense-restraint, or who socializes excessively, can easily be so overwhelmed by lust that he might commit an offence or return to lay life.⁸⁹

4.2.4 The Citta Hatthi, sārīputta Sutta (A 6.60) warns that even after having attained the profoundly blissful states of the form dhyanas or the signless samadhi, but the meditator then excessively socializes with others, he would be overcome by lust and leave the order.⁹⁰ For this reason, the Buddha, as recorded in **the Laṭukikôpama Sutta** (M 66), declares that all the 4 form dhyanas, and even the 4 formless dhyanas, “need to be transcended,” that they are in themselves “not enough” for spiritual liberation. Only the attainment of *the cessation of perception and feeling*, attainable only by the Buddha and the arhats, is truly free of the subtlest mental fetter.⁹¹

4.2.5 So great is the power of lust that it can bring great mental distress to serious practitioners. In the case of the conscientious nun **Sihā**, for example, it drives her to the verge of suicide, because for years sensual lust prevents her from attaining any mental peace. And just as she casts the noose around her neck, her mind is completely released (Thī 77-81).

4.3 LUST CAUSES FEAR

4.3.1 Sensual lust causes fear; for, we invariably fear losing what we cling to. And we tend to cling to what we perceive as being pleasurable or empowering. Psychologically, lust is our identification with a sense-object (form, sound, smell, taste or touch) that we regard as pleasurable. What we regard as pleasurable is invariably based on past experiences or memories of what we regarded as desirable or gratifying.

⁸⁵ S 44.5/4:386.

⁸⁶ The 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) are (1) sensual desire, (2) ill will, (3) sloth and torpor, (4) restlessness and remorse, and (5) spiritual doubt (D 2,67-68/1:71), SD 8.10; see also **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

⁸⁷ S 46.55/5.121 (SD 3.12).

⁸⁸ See eg **Māgandiya S** (M 75,13-17/1:506 f), SD 31.5.

⁸⁹ See A 5.76/3:93-100 (SD 69.3).

⁹⁰ See A 6.60/3:392-399 (SD 51.3).

⁹¹ M 66,26-34/1:455 f (SD 28.11).

And when a similar sense-object arises, we superimpose that perception on the present object. As such, we are caught up with the past, and we remain as the Peter Pans of pleasure. Such pleasures are neither real nor lasting because they are based on past objects or events, which have all ceased to exist.

4.3.2 Our past perceptions and memories often condition our present perceptions. Conditioned by the past, lust arises in us towards present objects. When we are caught up in present sense-pleasures, sensual lust arouses a fear of losing them. Furthermore, when we are used to such pleasures, fear arises when we notice their absence.

For this reason, says **the Bhaya Bherava Sutta** (M 4), those with lustful minds often feel fear in the present when they are in a secluded spot, such as a forest, as their minds are under the power of lust.⁹² This shows that lust is a raw stimulation of the physical senses. When we are attracted to people, or a certain kind of person, or a part of a person, and when this desirable object is unavailable, we become bored, lonely, grieved or depressed, or worse, we feel fearful.

4.3.3 According to **the Abhaya Sutta** (A 8.184), fear for the future arises when we are afflicted by some disaster or disease, and *our present lust* for sense-pleasures or *attachment* to the body arouses a fear of death.⁹³ **The (Kāma) Bhaya Sutta** (A 8.56) says that sensual lust causes fear not only in the present, but also towards the future.⁹⁴ In this connection, the Dhammapada says:

<i>Kāmato jāyati soko</i>	From lust arises grief,	
<i>kāmato jāyati bhayaṃ</i>	from lust arises fear;	
<i>kāmato vippamuttassa</i>	for one who is free from lust,	
<i>n’atthi soko kuto bhayaṃ</i>	there is no grief, much less fear.	(Dh 215)

4.4 LUST IS A MENTAL FETTER

4.4.1 The Brahm’āyu Sutta (M 91) records how Uttara Māṇava, a learned brahmin youth, shadowing the Buddha for seven months, makes a careful observation of his character and conduct. One of his careful and close observations is that the Buddha takes food, feeling its taste, and yet without lusting after the taste (*rasa,paṭisaṃvedī...no ca rasa,rāga,paṭisaṃvedī*).⁹⁵

This important observation shows that a lustful experience is not overcome simply by *avoiding* the experience. In fact, a sense-experience (the faculty enjoying an object)—such as listening to music or going to the movies—is *not*, in itself, a problem. For, if this were so, then the deaf and the blind would be a well-developed person! The problem arises from our minds’ *lusting* for it. In other words, we need to examine our own minds, and remove the lust from the way we look at things.⁹⁶ The last discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, **the Indriya Bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), deals with this in some detail.⁹⁷

4.4.2 The (Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta (S 35.232) states that neither is the sense-faculty a fetter (*saṃyojana*) of its sense-objects, nor is a sense-object a fetter of its sense-faculty. Just as when two oxen are yoked together, neither is responsible for the other being bound, so too neither the sense-faculties nor the sense-objects are responsible for us falling into bondage with our sense-experiences.

4.4.3 It is our desire-and-lust (*chanda,rāga*) that are the fetters. Hence, awakening is possible because we can train ourselves not to be overcome by desire and lust.⁹⁸ The early Buddhist texts highlight the tenacious power of lust by calling it a “**fetter**” (*saṃyojana*). As a mental fetter, it is called “sensual lust” (*kāma,rāga*), that is, a lusting after sense-objects, regarding them as desirable and gratifying in themselves.

⁹² M 4,4/1:17 (SD 44.3).

⁹³ A 8.184/2:173-176 (SD 14.8).

⁹⁴ A 8.56/4:289.

⁹⁵ M 91,14/2:138 f (SD 63.8).

⁹⁶ To a certain extent, this perspective incl sexuality, but only in the case of lay people under the proper circumstances, as all monastics and lay celibates have voluntarily taken up the rule of celibacy. Even then, a sexual act, as a rule, is defined by the sexual desire that drives it, as the Buddha declares in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22): *there can be no sexual act without sexual desire* (M 22,9/1:133), SD 3.13.

⁹⁷ M 152/3:298-301 (SD 17.13).

⁹⁸ S 35.232/4:162-165 (SD 28.4).

es. They are called “**fetters**” because they *bind* us to samsara, the cycle of rebirths and redeaths. Sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*) is the first of the 5 lower fetters,⁹⁹ so called because they bind us to the realms of senses.¹⁰⁰

4.4.4 As such, says **the Putta,maṃsa Sutta** (S 12.63), when sensual lust is uprooted, our rebirth will go beyond the sense sphere.¹⁰¹ Lust, however, can still occur in subtler ways, as “*higher*” *mental fetters* by way of lust for the form-spheres (*rūpa, rāga*), that is, lustful desire to attain the form dhyanas or be reborn in such a realm, and lust for the formless-spheres (*arūpa, rāga*), that is, lustful desire for attaining the formless dhyanas or be reborn in such a realm.¹⁰² These two lustful desires are two of the 5 higher fetters.¹⁰³ As such, these fetters are also referred to as a “fetter of lust for existence” (*bhava, rāga, saṃyojana*).¹⁰⁴

4.5 LUST AS AN *ĀSAVA*

4.5.1 As lust is a root condition for our sufferings, it is often found together with other defilements. It is an *āsava* or “mental influx.” The term *āsava* literally means “in-flow” and comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards or inwards,” that is, either “into” or “out” towards the observer. It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, cankers, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated, as it is a rich term that cannot be fully translated into English.

4.5.2 The Abhidhamma lists 4 mental influxes, namely,

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| (1) the mental influx of sense-desire | (<i>kām'āsava</i>), |
| (2) the mental influx of (desire for eternal) existence | (<i>bhav'āsava</i>), |
| (3) the mental influx of views | (<i>diṭṭh'āsava</i>), |
| (4) the mental influx of ignorance | (<i>avijjāsava</i>). ¹⁰⁵ |

Note that *sense-desire* is the first, and this is significant because *sense-desire underlies all the other three influxes*. **The (Catu) Yoga Sutta** (A 4.10) speaks of these influxes as “the four types of yokes” (*cattāro yoga*), where lust underlies the first three yokes, namely, the yoke to sensuality due to sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*); the yoke to existence due to lust for existence (*bhava, rāga*), and the yoke to views due to lusting after our own views (*diṭṭhi, rāga*). The last yoke, that of ignorance (*avijjā, yoga*), is the ignorance of the true nature of the six spheres of contacts (*phass'āyatana*), that is, the nature of sense-experience.¹⁰⁶

4.5.3 While lust as craving (*taṇhā*) constitutes the second noble truth, which is to be abandoned, ignorance (*avijjā*) is the lack of a true understanding of the noble truths, so that we do not really understand the nature of suffering, and so we crave for sense-pleasures. Craving and ignorance are the twin root-conditions for suffering and samsara.

4.5.4 The influxes are also known as the 4 “floods” (*ogha*) because we can drown in them. *The influx of existence* is the attachment and desire for the realm of form and of formlessness, and as such, is the

⁹⁹ The 5 lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*) are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*śīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) aversion (*paṭigha*): see **Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 64/1:432-437), SD 21.10. Another five, called the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*) are (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), and (10) ignorance (*avijjā*). Together they form **the 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*): they are the opp sides of the same coin.

¹⁰⁰ The sense-world (*kāma, loka*) is one of the 3 worlds: the other two being the form world (*rūpa, loka*) and the formless world (*arūpa, loka*). See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (5.2) & **The person in Buddhism**, SD 29.6b (7.2). See also **Śīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6 (6). The sense-world comprises the 6 lower deva worlds, the human realm, and the sub-human realms (asuras, ghosts [the departed], animals and the hells. For details, see **Viññāṇa-ṭ-ṭhiti**, SD 23.14.

¹⁰¹ S 12.63,9/2:99 (SD 20.6).

¹⁰² See above n on “The 5 lower fetters.”

¹⁰³ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.1(7)/3:234).

¹⁰⁴ A 7.8/4:7.

¹⁰⁵ D 16,1.12/2:82, 16,2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937.

¹⁰⁶ See A 4.10/2:10.

craving for dhyanic bliss (profound meditation joy), on account of *the false views* of eternalism and annihilationism. As such, *the influx of view* is subsumed under the influx of existence (MA 1:67). The list of three influxes (omitting that of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the suttas.¹⁰⁷ The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood.¹⁰⁸

4.5.5 The Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) applies the same image to the 5 types of mental shackles (*cetaso vinibandhā*)—doubt about the Teacher, doubt about the Dharma, doubt about the Sangha, doubt about the training, and unresponsiveness and ill will towards fellow practitioners—which undermine the inspiration to practice and thereby prevent growth in the Dharma. These shackles are all manifestations of lust (*rāga*) for sense-pleasures, for the body (one’s own physical being), for forms (the bodies of others), for food (leading to indolence), and for divine birth.¹⁰⁹

4.5.6 Lust, as such is not only *wide-ranging* in its grasp, but also lies *deep* in our minds. It is like a spider that spins its own web and is itself caught therein (Dh 347). It is the nature of lust lying deep in our being that we will now examine.

4.6 LUST AS A LATENT TENDENCY

4.6.1 The roots of lust lie very deep in our unconscious,¹¹⁰ the sum of our conditionings and memories over countless past lives, re-enacting and reinforcing itself repeatedly in this life. Lust haunts the minds of the unawakened, even those of non-arhat saints, in a milder form, as latent tendencies (*anusaya*).¹¹¹ Latent tendencies are like lightning conductors that attract the electrical charges of the storm that is raging around us. But more accurately, it is the latent tendencies that actually brew up the storm in our minds, spewing forth the raging defilements that drive us into lustful, hateful and deluded actions, and clouding and colouring our judgements.

4.6.2 The oldest list of latent tendencies is perhaps that of the *three* of them, found, for example, in **the Pahāna Sutta** (S 36.3), that is:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| (1) the latent tendency to lust | (<i>rāgānusaya</i>); |
| (2) the latent tendency to aversion | (<i>paṭighānusaya</i>); and |
| (3) the latent tendency to ignorance | (<i>avijjā’nusaya</i>). (S 36.3/4:204-206), SD 31.1 |

4.6.3 This set of three, in due course, expands into the *seven* latent tendencies, and are listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta**,¹¹² **the Cha,chakka Sutta**,¹¹³ **the Anusaya Sutta**,¹¹⁴ **the Paṭisambhidā,magga**,¹¹⁵ **the Vibhaṅga**,¹¹⁶ and **the Yamaka** as follows:¹¹⁷

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) the latent tendency of sensual lust | (<i>kāma,rāgānusaya</i>); |
| (2) the latent tendency of aversion | (<i>paṭighānusaya</i>); |
| (3) the latent tendency of conceit | (<i>mānānusaya</i>); |
| (4) the latent tendency of views | (<i>diṭṭhānusaya</i>); |
| (5) the latent tendency of doubt | (<i>vicikicchā’nusaya</i>); |
| (6) the latent tendency of lust for existence | (<i>bhava,rāgānusaya</i>); |
| (7) the latent tendency of ignorance | (<i>avijjā’nusaya</i>). ¹¹⁸ |

¹⁰⁷ D 33,1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63.

¹⁰⁸ See BDict: āsava & Ency Bsm: āsava.

¹⁰⁹ M 16/1:101-104 (SD 51.4).

¹¹⁰ On the unconscious, see **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b.

¹¹¹ On latent tendencies, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

¹¹² D 33,2.3(12)/3:254, 282.

¹¹³ M 148,28/3:285 (SD 26.6).

¹¹⁴ A 7.11-12/4:8 f.

¹¹⁵ Pm §587/123.

¹¹⁶ Vbh §816/341, §949/383.

¹¹⁷ Yam 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104.

¹¹⁸ See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (1). Such a list is expanded, I think, to facilitate the explanation of the various stages of sainthood, wherein the list becomes fully developed technical terms as **the 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*): (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parā-*

In this list, lust manifests itself in at least two of the seven latent tendencies, that is, as the latent tendency of sensual lust and as the latent tendency of lust for existence (D 3:254; Yam 268). As **the Mahā Mālunḅyā,putta Sutta** (M 64) states, the latent tendency of sensual lust is present even in a newborn baby, even though an infant would not yet be able to conceive any idea of sensuality.¹¹⁹

4.6.4 The latent tendency of lust is aroused in connection with the arising of pleasant feeling. This relation, however, as noted in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), is *not* a necessary one, since some pleasant feelings, such as those experienced in a dhyana, do not arouse this latent tendency.¹²⁰ As regards the more mundane pleasant feelings, however, only a proper and sustained effort can bring us beyond the grasp of the latent tendency of lust.

4.7 FIGHTING POISON WITH POISON

4.7.1 Craving to end craving

4.7.1.1 To uproot suffering, we must overcome craving. However, there is a kind of craving that can be useful, as it were—that is, it is the “craving” to end craving—which entails our directing our desire (*chanda*) to reaching the goal of the path. Hence, in **the (Taṇhā) Bhikkhuṇī Sutta** (A 4.159), Ānanda says to a nun: ‘Sister, this body has come into being through craving. Yet, *based on craving, craving can be abandoned*.’¹²¹ He explains how a certain monk, hearing of the arhathood of another, aspires to attain it, too. “Then some time later, *based on craving, he abandons craving*.”¹²² The Commentary explains that, based on the present “craving” to become an arhat, he abandons the previous craving (AA 3:136).

4.7.1.2 Hence, we can distinguish 2 kinds of craving: the bad and the good. In fact, a post-canonical text, the **Netti, pakaraṇa**, says, “There are 2 types of craving, the wholesome and the unwholesome. Unwholesome craving leads to samsara, but the wholesome is the way of non-accumulating, that is, the abandoning of craving” (Nett 87).¹²³

4.7.1.3 Spiritual craving, however, like any other craving, brings some level of unsatisfactoriness. In fact, **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44) speaks of “grief that arises conditioned by longing”¹²⁴ for the supreme liberation, and **the Saḷ’āyatana Sutta** (M 137) speaks of “the pains of renunciation,”¹²⁵ wherein, if we have “longing” for the goal of the path, there arises unsatisfactoriness in us. We may “desire” to go beyond all that is unsatisfactory, but this “is not to be obtained by wishing.”¹²⁶ The reason for this should be carefully understood: any kind of desiring or wishing involves *thinking*, which involves words. The word is *not* the thing; the thought is *not* the vision.¹²⁷

māsa), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) aversion (*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 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). On the 3 trainings (*sikkhā*) & the fetters, see **Sīla samādhī paññā**, SD 21.6 (4). The abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes us a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*): see **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118,10), SD 7.13. This verse technically refers to the non-returner, but here is spoken of an arhat, one who has broken all 10 fetters: see **Laṭṭukikōpama S** (M 66,17/1:454), SD 28.11. On the stages of sainthood & the fetters, see **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1).

¹¹⁹ M 64,3/1:33 (SD 21.10).

¹²⁰ M 44,24/1:303 (SD 40a.9).

¹²¹ *Taṇhā, sambhūto ayam bhagini kāyo, taṇham nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā ti* (A 4.159.6/2:146), SD 10.15, where cf §3.

¹²² *Taṇham nissāya taṇham pajahati*.

¹²³ *Tattha taṇhā duvidhā kusalāpi akusalā’pi. Akusalā saṃsāra, gāminī, kusalā apacaya, gāminī pahāna, taṇhā* (Nett 87); cf Peṭṭ 97. Cf the 3 kinds of cravings, viz for form (*rūpa, taṇhā*), for formlessness (*arūpa, taṇhā*) and for cessation (*nirodha, taṇhā*) (D 33,1.18(16)/3:216).

¹²⁴ *Pihā, paccayā domanassa* (M 44,28/1:303 f), SD 40a.9.

¹²⁵ *Nekkhammasita domanassa* (M 137,13/3:218), SD 29.5. Cf **Deva, dāha S** (M 101,10-11/3:218), SD 18.4.

¹²⁶ **Te, vijja S** (D 13) has a parable of a man on a river bank beseeching the farther bank to come over, which is a parody of selfish and impossible prayer (D 13,24/1:244 f), SD 1.8. On the Buddha’s criticism of selfish prayer, see **Iṭṭha S** (A 5.43/3:47-49), SD 47.2; cf **Alabbhanīya Ṭhāna S** (A 5.48/3:54), SD 42.1. Cf also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,18/2:307), SD 13.2.

¹²⁷ See **Memes**, SD 26.3 (5.1.2); **Self & selves**, SD 26.8 (2.2.2).

4.7.1.4 It is natural that we, having seen and understood the true nature of existence, are motivated to seek a way out of it. The direct and quick way to uprooting suffering is through dhyanic meditation, which means that we have to fully overcome thinking, and directly feel the mind.¹²⁸ If we are able to fully let go of all thoughts, then we will attain arhathood. If there is still some with lingering thoughts for the Dharma, we will attain non-return.¹²⁹

4.7.2 “Lust” for the Dharma. Interestingly, as pointed in the **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta** (M 52), lust (*rāga*) need not always be negative, that is, when it is directed to the Dharma. This wholesome form of lust is known as “lust for the Dharma” (*dhamma,rāga*). This term applies where we fail to reach a full eradication of the influxes and, due to such lust for the Dharma, attain non-return.¹³⁰

As **Analayo** notes, the way these instances are formulated seems to allow for two explanations. One could either take *dhamma,rāga* to be the factor that has prevented the full eradication of the influxes, or else, to be the factor that has ensured at least the gain of non-return. The commentarial explanation supports the first case, taking *dhamma,rāga* to mean *chanda,rāga*, “lustful desire” towards our meditative experiences (Pm 3:146). This interpretation, apparently, has not gone unchallenged, and the same commentarial records the argument being raised that on this interpretation an unwholesome mental factor is made responsible for leading to such sublime attainment as non-return and its consequent rebirth in the Pure Abodes.

Such a problem could be avoided, argues Analayo, with the other interpretation. On this understanding, just as there could be wholesome forms of craving (*taṇhā*), so too there could be wholesome forms of lust (*rāga*), once such craving or lust is directed towards wholesome objects or goals.¹³¹

4.7.3 Adhamma,rāga. On the other hand, there is lust as a mental factor that is entirely unwholesome, namely, “lust for what is not-Dharma” (*adhamma,rāga*), sometimes translated as “unnatural lust.” In the suttas that are arguably later works, the *adhamma,rāga* is a quasi-technical term referring to negative social tendencies or situations. **The Cakka,vatti Siha,nāda Sutta** (D 26), for example, in a prophetic tone, uses *adhamma,rāga* to describe the depravity of a society in moral decline.¹³² The Dīgha Commentary on the Sutta says that *adhamma,rāga* here refers to incest, that is, “lust between mother and mother’s sister and father’s sister and maternal uncle’s wife and other such improper situations.”¹³³ **The Attha,sālinī**, the Commentary on the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī, too, agrees (DhsA 366).

Another discourse, **the Paloka Sutta** (A 3.56), describes the dire social consequences of the predominance of *adhamma,rāga*, which apparently not only brings about quarrels and violence, but can also cause adverse climatic conditions and a rise in demonic forces (A 1:160).¹³⁴ Due to the profound depths that lust

¹²⁸ See esp *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1; **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.2).

¹²⁹ “One of two fruits is to be expected: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is any residue [trace] of clinging left, non-return,” *dvinnam phalānam aññataram phalam paṭikaṅkham diṭṭhe ca dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā ti*. as at **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,22/2:314,12); **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62); **Kiṭagiri S** (M 70,27/1:481); **Aññātara S** (S 46.57/5:129); **Nirodha S** (S 46.76/5:133); **Dve Phalā S** (S 48.65/5:236); **Phalā S 1+2** (S 54.4+5/5:313 f); **Iddhi,pāda S** (A 5.67/3:82); **Sati Supaṭṭhita S** (A 5.122/3:143); **Pabbajjā S** (A 10.59/-5:108); **Paṭisallāna S** (It 2.2.8/39,15); **Sikkhānisamsa S** (It 2.2.9/40,12); **Jāgariyo S** (It 2.2.10/41,11); **Dvayatānupassanā S** (Sn pp140,13, 148,13).

¹³⁰ M 52,4/1:350 (SD 41.2).

¹³¹ Analayo 2009: 33 f.

¹³² D 26,17/3:70 (SD 36.10).

¹³³ *Mātā mātuucchā pituucchā mātulanī ti ādike ayutta-ṭ,ṭhāne rāgo* (DA 3:853). The Sutta uses two other terms: “rampant greed” (*visama,lobha*) and “deviant conduct” (*micchā,dhamma*). The “**rampant greed**” here refers to excessive greed (or neurotic desire) by way of consuming things (*paribhoga,yuttesu pi ṭhānesu atibalava,lobho*, in other words, excessive materialism and consumerism); and “**deviant conduct**” refers to sexuality “between men and men, women with women” (DA 3:853). In short, crowded living conditions (such as heavily urbanized cities) are likely to conduce to cases of incest, consumerism, and homosexuality. It should, however, be noted that these commentarial notions are not found in the Canon, or at least not so distinctly expressed. See D 26,17/3:70 (SD 36.10).

¹³⁴ A 2.56/1:159 f (SD 72.3).

is rooted in our being, it is understandable that the Buddha often resorts to mythical language to describe the negative consequence of lust-driven lives.

4.7.4 Benefits of overcoming lust

4.7.4.1 From these various sufferings and disadvantages that attachment to lust entails, it is not surprising that the Buddha consistently admonishes us to remove lust. As it is not easy for us to remove all the lust at once, the Buddha teaches us a gradual way of personal training, whereby we overcome the simpler forms of lust. Once we set our minds to training our body and speech, and direct our minds to inner stillness, we begin to overcome lust.

4.7.4.2 First, we let go of *self-identity*, and its attendant mental fetters, to attain streamwinning. Then, *weakening lust* a bit more, we attain once-return. We go on to sublimate lust into spiritual energy, turning it into *Dharma-lust*, and overcoming all negative lust, we attain non-return. When even the subtlest desire, even to have an opinion or to enjoy a blissful state is abandoned, we become arhats.

4.7.4.3 **The (Hatthaka) Āḷavaka Sutta** (A 3.34) points out that, from a worldly perspective, we might perceive happiness as being in the company of people we enjoy, and living in a luxurious ambience. Yet, due to this very lust, we would feel bodily and mental torments and suffering, especially when we do not have access to these external sources of pleasure.

On the other hand, once we have overcome lust, we will be free from such pains and live truly happily, even if we were to stay out in the open, subject to the mercy of the weather, and the inclemency of climate, with only the hard ground to rest on, as the Buddha himself has done.¹³⁵

4.7.4.4 **The Suddhika Nirāmisā Sutta** (S 36.31) describes various levels of bliss and liberation, that is, the carnal, the spiritual, the one that is more spiritual than even the spiritual (*nirāmisā nirāmisā, taraṃ*), as follows:

The carnal (<i>āmisā</i>)	the joy, happiness, equanimity of <i>the 5 sense-faculties</i> .
The spiritual (<i>nirāmisā</i>)	the joy, happiness, equanimity of <i>the form dhyanas</i> .
The transpiritual	the joy, happiness, equanimity of <i>the arhat</i> . (S 36.31/4:237)

5 Abandoning lust

5.1 FIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH LUST

5.1.1 The Commentaries prescribe a list of 6 ways of overcoming and preventing lust,¹³⁶ thus:

- (1) mindfulness of the body's unattractive aspects,
- (2) meditating on them,
- (3) sense-restraint,
- (4) moderation in food, and
- (5) spiritual friends
- (6) conducive conversation.

5.1.2 The first two methods are those of *learning* and *practising the mindfulness of the body*, which is known in the suttas as *asubha, saññā* (perception of foulness). This perception practice is defined as the contemplation of the 31 (commentarial list, 32) parts of the body in **the Kāya, gatā, sati Sutta** (M 119)¹³⁷ and **the Gīrīmānanda Sutta** (A 10.60).¹³⁸ This practice can be done in connection with the recollection on the 4 elements.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ A 3.34/1:136-138 (SD 4.8). On the Buddha's warning against monastics indulging in lust, see **Jīvika S** (It 91/-3.5.2/89 f), SD 28.9b.

¹³⁶ MA 1:281-286 = SA 3:165-167 = AA 1:44-51 = ItA 2:176-182; VbhA 270-274. See also DA 3:777-782; cf DA 216.

¹³⁷ M 119,7-17/3:90-93 + SD 12.21 (5). Its basic practice is to reflect on the impermanence and foulness of "head-hair, body, nails, teeth, skin," which forms the skin pentad, the set of the 32 body parts.

¹³⁸ A 10.60/5:108-112 (SD 19.16).

¹³⁹ See **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 1,3-6/1:1), SD 11.8; **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28,6-27/1:185-191), SD 6.16; **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,8-17/1:421-426), SD 3.11; **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140,13-18/3:240-242), SD 4.17.

5.1.3 The (Iddhi,pāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta (S 51.20) gives an analysis of desire or enthusiasm (*chanda*) directed towards the overcoming of lust.¹⁴⁰ The suttas also prescribe the nine “charnel-ground meditations,” that is, reflecting on the 9 stages of bodily decomposition.¹⁴¹ All such practices should close with some cultivation of lovingkindness.

5.1.4 The third method of overcoming and preventing sensual lust is that of sense-restraint, which is not to be attached to any of the sense-experiences, or, when we are sitting in meditation, to cut down on paying attention to the physical sense-experiences so that we can be fully focused on the meditation object.¹⁴² A well known sutta teaching is that of “grasping neither the sign (*nimitta*) nor the details (*anuvyañjana*)” of our sense-experiences.¹⁴³

5.1.5 The fourth method is that of moderation in food, defined in the Commentaries as grasping the sign in over-eating,¹⁴⁴ that is, being mindful so that we do not over-eat. More specifically, this is defined as stopping to eat while there is still room for 4 to 5 morsels, and drinking water (to fill the belly).¹⁴⁵ A more detailed discussion is found in our study of *thīna,middha*.¹⁴⁶

5.1.6 The fifth method of overcoming and preventing sensual lust is that of spiritual friendship. Ideally, this is a teacher-pupil relationship centering around moral virtue, meditation, and personal development. The teacher acts as a role model and mentor to the pupil. The teacher’s task is not only to inculcate Dharma knowledge and meditation skills, but also to mould the pupil’s character so that he is able to realize his full spiritual potential.¹⁴⁷

5.1.7 The sixth method is closely related to spiritual friendship, since it should be based on conducive conversation. This is essentially the practice of right speech, that is, abstaining from false speech, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from harsh speech, abstaining from useless talk,¹⁴⁸ and speaking the truth at the right time, speech that promotes concord, pleasant and civil speech, and beneficial talk.

5.2 A PROCESS, NOT AN EVENT

5.2.1 Lust begins to weaken, even momentarily abandoned in our meditation, when we let go of the physical senses [2.2]. But we cannot let go of the 5 senses (that is, our body) by a mere effort of will. For a beginner, *kāma-c,chanda* can only be overcome gradually, as a process, not an event. First, we train ourselves to sit down comfortably but with an alert mind.

5.2.2 Just as our eyes need a bit of time to adjust themselves when we go from a dark room into bright light, or vice versa, even so, we will take a bit of time before we can really feel our bodily feelings. We can feel our body better after we have closed our eyes and let go of the outside world. If we notice any bodily discomfort, we should mindfully adjust our posture so that the body does not distract us.

5.2.3 A common way to turn away from the external world and the physical body is to keep directing our minds to the present moment. Distraction can be defined as allowing our minds to play with the senses so that we stray into the past or the future. Conversely, we can say that our past and future are all sense-experiences, but these are *virtual or constructed realities*, as we only have memories of them. And memories are what we want them to be.

5.2.4 Our memories of the past are but reconstructions of the 5 sense-experiences; our hopes and plans for the future, too, are but mental constructions of the sense-experiences. They are driven and

¹⁴⁰ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,5/2:293), SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,10/1:57), SD 13 (SD 13.3); **Giri-mānanda S** (A 10.60/5:109), SD 19.16.

¹⁴¹ See M 119,9-17/3:91 f (SD 12.21).

¹⁴² See **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,12/1:9 f), SD 30.3.

¹⁴³ See **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

¹⁴⁴ *Ati,bhojane nimitta-g,gāha*. DA 3:780; MA 1:284 = SA 3:166 = AA 1:50 = ItA 2:180; VbhA 273.

¹⁴⁵ **Tha 983** qu at DA 3:778; MA 1:282; SA 2:107, 3:165; AA 1:47; ItA 1:43, 2:179; SnA 2:494; ThaA 3:99; Miln 407 (with Tha 982), J 255/2:294 (with Tha 982); Nm 2:345; Dhs 404; VbhA 270. Cf A 6.19.6/3:304 f, 8.73.8/4:318 f.

¹⁴⁶ **Thīna,middha**, SD 32.6 (3.2.4).

¹⁴⁷ See **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1.

¹⁴⁸ **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117,18-20/3:74 f), SD 6.10; **(Subhāsita) Vaṅgīsa S** (S 8.5/1:188 f).

coloured by our sense-desires. For this reason, such thoughts are called “thoughts of sense-desire” (*kāma, vitakka*).¹⁴⁹ Such thoughts hold us down to the world of the 5 senses so that our mental development is negatively affected.

5.2.5 What we like, we try to remember and collect; what we dislike, we try to deny or discount (push out of our consciousness), and keep on denying or rejecting such ideas. But in doing so, we are only reinforcing and reminding ourselves of them.¹⁵⁰ And so we are caught in the mood swing between liking and disliking.¹⁵¹ This is the virtual world that we create and live in.¹⁵²

5.2.6 When we are drowned in a past memory or lost in a future fantasy, we actually disempower ourselves. The reason is simple: we cannot change the past, because it is dead and gone; we cannot change the future, because it has not yet come. It is sense-desire that drives us into looking at the past, often with regret not having done this or that, or remorse in having done this or that. And when we try to anticipate the future, we become restless. If we persist in looking into the past and delving into the future, we fall into a familiar state of disempowerment called *worry*.

5.3 PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS

5.3.1 One of the safest and most effective ways of *not* living in the past or future, or leading false lives, is to train our minds *to live in the moment*, and *letting is pass just as it has come*. This is not always easy for a beginner, but it becomes easier when we have something to focus on. The best present-moment object for the mind to focus on is the breath. The reasons for this are simple: the breath is always there and is a good indicator of our emotional state (when we are relaxed we breathe easier, lighter and shorter).

5.3.2 The basic technique of breath meditation is very simple: keep our full attention on the breath, and whenever the mind wanders away, patiently and lovingly bring it back to the breath. Simply let go of other physical sensations, and bring the mind back to the breath. This is like training a pet dog. In due course, the mind gets used to being focused on the breath. Our attention span has effectively lengthened and remains so.¹⁵³

5.3.3 The breath, in other words, is a stepping-stone, a spring-board, from the world of the senses into the realm of the mind; it is the vehicle that brings us from outer space into inner space. The first thing we would notice in our inner space is there is no sound at all: it is very peaceful. The body has effectively disappeared. We are now fully *mental beings*, as it were. Our physical senses no more distract us, and our body no more brings us discomfort—there is *no* body around!

5.3.4 All that remains is *the breath*. But there comes a point when the breath is no more a bodily sensation, but a mental feeling. In fact, after a while, the breath becomes so peaceful that we no more notice it. This is where a great bliss arises and keeps us focused in samadhi. And when the breath totally disappears, we will see the bright mental image (*nimitta*)¹⁵⁴ of our own still mind.

5.3.5 It is only at this stage that we truly, even if temporarily, overcome sense-desire. However, the more this inner stillness becomes a habit, the easier and longer that we keep out sense-desires. And this is where we begin to see beauty even in the simplest and smallest of things: everything is really beautiful. If we are able to see such natural beauty, then it is only a matter of time that we would be able to see the truth of reality through direct experience.¹⁵⁵

5.3.6 In the *Kāma Jātaka* (J 467), the Bodhisattva utters these verses, which succinctly restates what has been explained here:

¹⁴⁹ Such thoughts express themselves as the “16 doubts”: see *Sabb’āsava S* (M 2,7 f/1:8), *Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkha-ya S* (M 38,23/1:265) & *Paccaya S* (S 12.20/2:26 f). In *Paccaya S* (S 12.20), it is said that one who sees dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) with right wisdom would not speculate in these ways (S 12.20,18-20/2:26 f). See *Bhadd’eka,ratta S* (M 131), SD 8.9 (3).

¹⁵⁰ See *Self & selves*, SD 26.9 (1.6.2).

¹⁵¹ See *Hatthi,pad’pama S 1 & 2* (S 35.236-237/4:171 f), SD 29.7.

¹⁵² See *Sabba S* (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1.

¹⁵³ See *Anāpāna,sati S* (M 118/3:77-88), SD 7.13.

¹⁵⁴ See *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

¹⁵⁵ On Buddhism as truth and beauty, see SD 40.1 (8.1.2); SD 46.5 (2.4.2) as aesthetics; SD 37.8 (2.3) in right livelihood. See also Piya Tan, Reflection, “No views frees,” R255, 2012.

*Yam yaṃ cajati kāmānaṃ
taṃ taṃ sampajjate sukhaṃ |
sabbañ ca sukhaṃ iccheyya
sabbe kāme pariccajati ||*

For every sense-desire you sacrifice,
happiness arises therein.
For he who wishes all the bliss,
let him abandon all sense-desires. (J 467/1:174)

5.4 FREEDOM FROM LUST

5.4.1 The Sati’paṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), in its contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), instructs us to be fully aware of the presence or the absence of any form of lust.¹⁵⁶ **The Upavāṇa Sutta** (S 35.70) explains the same meditation exercise as an example for the Buddha Dharma as a directly and immediately visible teaching, inviting one to come and see, leading onwards, and to be experienced personally by the wise.¹⁵⁷

5.4.2 The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), in its concluding section, on the contemplation on dharmas (*dhammānupassanā*), describes how such an awareness should be cultivated as a preliminary practice, which then leads to insight into how the hindrance of sensual desire has arisen, how to remove it, and how to prevent its future arising:

When there is sensual desire in him, he understands,

‘There is sensual desire in me’.

Or, when there is no sensual desire in him, he understands,

‘There is no sensual desire in me’.

And he understands the arising of unarisen sensual desire;

and he understands the letting go of arisen sensual desire;

and he understands the further non-arising of the sensual desire that he has given up.

(M 10,36/1:60), SD 13.3

The passage then proceeds to deal with each of the other four hindrances in the same manner. The main idea here is to see sensual desire (or any other mental hindrance) as *it is* and note its impermanence (its arising and passing away).

5.4.3 In the next step, we displace sensual desire with its opposite, renunciation (*nekkhamma*).¹⁵⁸ Three suttas in the Tika Nipāta (A 3) deal with overcoming of sensual desire, namely,¹⁵⁹

- | | <u>overcome</u> | <u>with</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| • (Saṅkappa) Vitakka Sutta (A 6.109) | thoughts of sensual desire | thoughts of renunciation, ¹⁶⁰ |
| • (Saṅkappa) Saññā Sutta (A 6.110) | perceptions of sensual desire | perceptions of renunciation, ¹⁶¹ |
| • (Saṅkappa) Dhātu Sutta (A 6.111) | element of sensual desire | element of renunciation. ¹⁶² |

5.5 OVERCOMING LUST

5.5.1 Compared to “hate” (*dosa*), notes **the (Akusala,mūla) Añña,titthiyā Sutta** (A 3.68.1), lust is less blameable (*appa,sāvajja*), but it is more difficult to remove (*dandha,virāgī*).¹⁶³ This is understandable because while *lust* is a persistent seeking and savouring of pleasant sense-stimuli, *hate* and its related emotions (anger, etc) are mostly reactions to the failure of attaining a particular sense-stimulus or the inability to sustain it.

¹⁵⁶ M 10,34(1)/1:59 = D 22,12/2:299 (SD 13.3).

¹⁵⁷ S 35.70/4:41 (SD 62.7).

¹⁵⁸ Pm 1:163. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*) here refers to letting go of unwholesome states and conduct.

¹⁵⁹ These suttas each deal with the removal of one of the 3 constituents of wrong thought (*micchā saṅkappa*), ie sensual desire (*kāma*), ill will (*vyāpāda*) and cruelty [violence] (*vihimsā*).

¹⁶⁰ A 6.109/3:446 (SD 62.10).

¹⁶¹ A 6.110/3:446 f (SD 62.11).

¹⁶² A 6.111/3:447 (SD 62.12). See further, on ill will: *Vyāpāda*, SD 32.5 (6.2).

¹⁶³ A 3.68,1/1:200 (SD 16.4).

5.5.2 For this reason, one of the most common teachings of the Buddha is on how to overcome lust. **The Rāga Paccaya Sutta** (A 2.10.6), for example, lists the two conditions (*paccaya*), either of which causes *the arising of lust*, that is, (1) the “sign of beauty” (*subha, nimitta*), usually a mental fixation on a physical body, and (2) “unwise attention” (*ayoniso manasikāra*), that is, not seeing the true nature of the sense-object.¹⁶⁴

5.5.3 In terms of practice, the best antidote for lust, therefore, says **the (Anussati-ṭ, ṭhāna) Udāyī Sutta** (A 6.29), is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) on the impermanent nature of the sense-object, or to the less appealing aspects of the body, examining its anatomical make-up and the unattractive nature of its parts.¹⁶⁵ Further anti-lust strategies, described in **the Nanda Sutta** (A 8.9), are sense-restraint, moderation in food, wakefulness and mindfulness with clear comprehension.¹⁶⁶

5.5.4 When we are distracted by lust, especially during meditation, one of the inspiring meditations usually helps, that is, the recollections (*anussati*) on the Buddha, on the Dharma, on the Sangha, on moral virtue, on devatas, and on charity.¹⁶⁷ Such practices build up a happy mind,¹⁶⁸ which helps to clear the mind of distractions, and to focus it, as stated in this famous pericope from **the Vatthūpama Sutta** (M 7):

(Having done a recollection on the 3 jewels, ie, one of the first three inspiring meditations,)

he gains inspired knowledge in the goal (*attha, veda*),¹⁶⁹

he gains inspired knowledge in the truth [reality] (*dhamma, veda*):¹⁷⁰

he gains gladness¹⁷¹ connected with the truth [reality].

When he is gladdened, zest is born.

When the mind is zestful, the body is tranquil.

The tranquil body feels happy;

When one is happy, the mind becomes concentrated.¹⁷²

5.5.5 As an alternative, the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), too, brings about a joyful state of mind that can lead up to the cultivation of equanimity as a liberation of the mind (*upekkhā ceto, vimutti*), that is a great “escape” (*nissaraṇa*) from lust.¹⁷³ The practice of four divine abodes—the cultivation of lovingkindness, of compassion, of appreciative joy, and of equanimity, are especially effective skilful means for erstwhile God-believers who can sublimate the remnants of their theistic conditionings into truly unconditional love.¹⁷⁴

5.5.6 Such passages describe methods and strategies for the cultivation of mental stillness (*samatha*) that can also function as antidotes to lust. This point is explicitly stated in **the Dhamma Vijja, bhāgiya**

¹⁶⁴ A 2.10.6/1:87.

¹⁶⁵ A 6.29/3:323 (SD 24.8).

¹⁶⁶ A 8.9/4:166-168 (SD 8.9).

¹⁶⁷ See SD 15.1 (1.5.6); **Sambādh’okāsa S** (A 6,26/3:314 f), SD 15.6.

¹⁶⁸ See *Nimitta*, SD 19.7(4.6.3(2)).

¹⁶⁹ *Attha, veda* see SD 28.12 (4).

¹⁷⁰ *Dhamma, veda* see SD 28.12 (4).

¹⁷¹ Gladness (*pāmuḍḍa*) here is the first factor leading to mental concentration. The rest, which follow, are zest (*pīṭi*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), happiness (*sukha*) and concentration (*samādhi*). This set is an abridged set of the 7 awakening-facts (*satta bojjhaṅga*): mindfulness (*sati*), dharma-investigation (*dhamma, vicaya*), effort (*virīya*), zest (*pīṭi*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), each suffixed with “awakening-factor” (*sambojjhaṅga*). Functioning as in the 5 dhyana-factors (*jhān’āṅga*) [see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4], *tranquillity* removes the subtle bodily and mental activities connected with gladness and zest, and brings on a stillness conducive to deep concentration and dhyana. See **Mahā Sakul’udāyī S** (M 77,20/2:12), SD 6.18.

¹⁷² On this *attha, veda* passage, cf the *nīvaraṇa, pahīna* passage at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,76/1:73), SD 8.10n for other refs. See also (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10.5/2:286 f), SD 15.3. On this passage, cf V 1:294; D 1:73; Miln 84.

¹⁷³ D 33,2.2(17)/ 3:249.

¹⁷⁴ Another effective practice for such people is the recollection on deity (or the gods): see *Devatā’nussati*, SD 15.13.

Sutta (A 2.3.10), which indicates that the cultivation of stillness builds the mind which in turn eradicates lust.¹⁷⁵

5.6 OVERCOMING LUST FOR GOOD

5.6.1 One of the key texts dealing with the uprooting of lust is **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha Sutta** (M 14). Mahānāma, who is said to be a once-returner,¹⁷⁶ complains to the Buddha that despite understanding the Dharma, such as that the three unwholesome roots are mental impurities, he *still* at times experiences some thoughts of lust, hate or delusion. The Buddha replies that this is to be expected when we live the household life, enjoying our sense-desires, and then gives this important teaching:

Mahānāma, even if a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-desires bring little solace [gratification], but much suffering, much despair, more danger here,¹⁷⁷ so long, as he does not gain zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that, he would not be able to be unaffected by sense-pleasures.¹⁷⁸

But, Mahānāma, when a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is with right wisdom that sense-pleasures bring little solace, but much suffering, much despair, more danger here, and *he gains zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that,*¹⁷⁹ then he would be able to be unaffected by sense-desires.

(M 14,4/1:91), SD 4.7

5.6.2 The Buddha then goes on to explain why we tend to seek gratification in sense-desire, and then graphically illustrates its danger with various imageries (such as those of battles and tortures inflicted on criminals). The Sutta closes with the Buddha explaining that our sufferings (such as those related to sense-desires) are not always due to past karma. If we here and now properly cultivate our minds, we will live enjoying only happiness.¹⁸⁰

5.6.3 The lesson here is very clear. Our sensual lust is due to our not having tasted a greater bliss, one that is not dependent on the physical senses. When we have tasted higher blissful states of mental concen-

¹⁷⁵ *Samatho bhāvito ... cittaṃ bhāvīyati, cittaṃ bhāvitam ... yo rāgo so pahīyati* (A 2.3.10/1:61).

¹⁷⁶ MA 2:61. A once-returner (*sakad'āgāmī*) has overcome the 3 fetters (self-identity view, doubt and attachment to rituals and vows), and also somewhat *weakened* the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion). On the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8. On the 3 unwholesome roots, see (**Akusala Mūla**) **Añña Tittihiyā S** (A 3.68/1:199-201), SD 16.4.

¹⁷⁷ It is clear from this passage that Mahānāma has attained some level of sainthood. In fact, Comy says that he is a once-returner (MA 2:61). Cf Arittha's wrong view that sensual lust is not an obstruction to spiritual growth (esp monasticism): **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,4-9/1:130-133), SD 3.13.

¹⁷⁸ The whole para: *App'assādā kāmā bahu, dukkhā bah'upāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo'ti— iti ce'pi, mahā, nāma, ariya, sāvakassa yathā, bhūtaṃ samma-p, paññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatr'eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pīti, suchaṃ nādhigacchati, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ, atha kho so n'eva tāva anāvaṭṭī kāmesu hoti.* The “zest and joy that are apart from sense-desires” here refers to the pīti and sukha of the first and second dhyanas. “Something more peaceful than that” refers to the higher dhyanas. “From this passage it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna” (M:ÑB 1201 n208). **Bodhi**: “The first part of this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya, -sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression ‘[has clearly seen with right] wisdom’ seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first Jhāna, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks [‘zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that’] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first Jhāna. The state ‘more peaceful than that’ [*santataraṃ*] would, of course, be the higher Jhānas” (2001:52). This is one of the passages that Bodhi quotes as “instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of Jhānas” (2001:51 f).

¹⁷⁹ “Something more peaceful than that,” *tato santataraṃ*. Comy explains that while zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*) pertain to the first 2 dhyanas, “something higher” is connected with the 3rd and 4th dhyanas (MA 2:63). On dhyana, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,75-82/1:73-76), SD 8.10.

¹⁸⁰ M 14/1:91-95 (SD 4.7).

tration, accompanied by profound joy and happiness, brought about by purely mental means, these higher states will displace any happiness that is dependent on physical sense-pleasures.

5.6.4 More significantly, such profound bliss generates for us such a clarity of mind that we will be able to see directly into our true nature, and so attain self-liberation. Even on a worldly level, the cultivation of mental stillness can work as a powerful antidote against sensual lust by freeing its objects of their false attractions, even if only temporarily. This should inspire us to further cultivate our minds.

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