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## Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta

The Discourse on the Nirvana-elements | It 2.2.7

Theme: The 2 ways of viewing nirvana

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

### 1 Sutta basics

#### 1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

**1.1.1 The Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta** (It 2.2.7) states there are two kinds of nirvana-elements, which is a technical term [2.3.1.1] synonymous with *nibbāna*, that is, the goal or culmination of buddhahood or arhat-hood. The Buddha or an arhat attains, not two “levels” or stages, but rather, two “times” of nirvana (*nibbāna*), in a manner of speaking: the *first* is when he awakens to true knowledge and spiritual freedom, and the *second*, when he passes finally away without any more rebirth. [1.3.2.6]

**1.1.2** According to the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta, **the first “type”** of nirvana—entailing the awakening (*bodhi*) of the Buddha or an arhat—simply means “the nirvana-element with residue,” or more technically, as “the nirvana-element with residue of clinging (or with remnants of a substrate)” (*sa,upādi,sesā nibbāna,-dhātu*) [§2]. The “residue” or “substrate” (*upādi*) refers to the 5 aggregates [1.3.2.6; 2.2.1.1]. Colloquially, this nirvana-element is often referred to simply as “the nirvana with residue.”

**1.1.3** The same Sutta (It 2.2.7) defines **the second “type”** of nirvana—entailing final passing away, that is, without any further rebirth—as “the nirvana-element without residue” or “the nirvana-element without any residue of clinging (or remnants of a substrate)” (*anupādi,sesā nibbāna,dhātu*) [§2]. Colloquially, this is often referred to as “the nirvana without residue,” or the final nirvana, since this also marks the death—or rather, non-arising, of the arhat because he goes through no more rebirth.

#### 1.2 BUDDHAS AND ARHATS AWAKEN IN THE SAME WAY

**1.2.1** All buddhas and arhats awaken in the same way [1.1.2] and attain the same nirvana. According to **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58), both the Buddha and the arhats awaken “on account of revulsion (towards the 5 aggregates), through dispassion [letting go], through cessation (of suffering).”<sup>1</sup> They are both said to be “liberated by wisdom” (*paññā,vimutta*), which refers to the wisdom (*paññā*) that liberates (*vimuccati*) the Buddha and the arhat—the fires of greed, hate and delusion are quenched forever.

**1.2.2** There is no significant difference between **the awakening** of the Buddha and that of the arhats (whether monastic or lay). The *only* difference between them is that the Buddha is the discoverer of the path to awakening—hence, he is the *first* fully awakened being to arise amongst us—while the arhats, since they awaken through the Buddha’s teaching, are followers after the Buddha. In either case, there is nothing more for them to cultivate in terms of awakening, since their journey has been completed and nirvana has been reached.<sup>2</sup> [§§11-12]

<sup>1</sup> S 22.58,3.2+4.2 etc + SD 49.10 (1.1.1.1).

<sup>2</sup> S 22.58,11-12 + SD 49.10 (1.1.1.2).

### 1.3 TERMINOLOGY AND RELATED SUTTAS

#### 1.3.0 The two key phrases of the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta are

“the nirvana-element with residue” and	<i>sa,upādi,sesā nibbāna,dhātu</i>
“the nirvana-element without any residue.”	<i>anupādi,sesā nibbāna,dhātu</i> [S2]

The translation of *upādi,sesa* keeps to its old sense as simply meaning, “with residue.” Although as later developed terms, *upādi* means “clinging” and *upādi,sesa* alludes to the 5 aggregates, these senses apply more to *upādhi* (with which *upādi* is often confounded) [2.2.1.8]. However, as technical terms, *upādi,sesa*—especially in the phrases *sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*—should also be understood as alluding to the 5 aggregates for them to make sense—as we shall see [2.2.4].

#### 1.3.1 Early terms and developments

**1.3.1.1** In the **Aññātara Bhikkhu Sutta 2** (S 45.7), we see the term “nirvana-element” (*nibbāna,-dhātu*) used to designate both arhathood and nirvana, thus:

This, bhikshu, is a designation for **the nirvana-element**, that is to say: the removal of lust, the removal of hate, the removal of delusion. The destruction of the influxes is spoken in that way.<sup>3</sup> (S 45.7/5:8,11)

The Sutta’s commentary explains that the removal of lust, etc. is a designation for the unconditioned, death-free nirvana-element. The destruction of the influxes<sup>4</sup> is **arhathood**. The removal of lust, etc. is a name for arhathood, too. (SA 3:123). This shows the likelihood that at an early period—at least, in the Saṃyutta Nikāya—we do not see any differentiation between arhathood (awakening, *bodhi*) and nirvana. Note below [2.5] that we do not have any Saṃyutta reference for either of the pair of nirvana-elements.

**1.3.1.2** In the early Buddhist texts, the terms *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna*, as a rule, refer to the same thing, that is, the full awakening of an arhat. However, there is an important grammatical difference. *Parinibbuta* (literally, “who has nirvana-ed”; “who has attained nirvana”) is the past participle of *parinibbāna*, which also means “full nirvana,” that is, the awakening of the Buddha or an arhat.<sup>5</sup>

The prefix *pari-* (meaning “all around, complete”) before the noun *nibbāna* (“nirvana”) and past participle *nibbuta* (“extinguished, cool or cooled”) give the compounds the sense of action nouns. Hence, *parinibbāna* means “full or final nirvana,” and *parinibbuta*, “having attained full or final nirvana.”

The verb, *nibbāyati*, means “to be in nirvana,” while *parinibbāyati* means “to attain full or final nirvana.”<sup>6</sup> In short, they are all words referring to awakening without distinguishing between activity and state, between *bodhi* and *nibbāna* [2.4]. These words are more fixed technically when they are used to refer specifically to an event, such as the Buddha’s passing away [2.2.1.5].

<sup>3</sup> *Nibbāna,dhātuyā kho etaṃ bhikkhu adhvacaṇaṃ raga,vinayo dosa,vinayo moha,vinayo āsavānaṃ khayō tena vuccatīti.*

<sup>4</sup> The influxes (*āsava*) are those of (1) sensual desire, (2) existence, (3) views and (4) ignorance: **Ogha Pañha S** (S 38.11), SD 30.3(1.4).

<sup>5</sup> On the early synonymy of *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna*, see SD 50.27 (1).

<sup>6</sup> For a historical n, see Thomas 1933:121 f n4. See also Tha:N 119 n5 & Collins 1998:191-198.

**1.3.1.3** We see an early usage of the word *parinibbuta* in the **(Nigrodha Kappa) Vaṅḡisa Sutta** (Sn 2.12), which records in its prose introduction that “not long after the parinirvana” (*acira, parinibbuto hoti*) of his preceptor, Nigrodha Kappa, the monk Vaṅḡisa wonders, “Has my preceptor attained nirvana or has he not?” (*parinibbuto nu kho me upajjhāyo udāhu no parinibbuto*, Sn p59). The import of the question is simple and clear: *Is he awakened or not?*

However, in the verse section, Vaṅḡisa is recorded as asking: “Has he attained nirvana or is he one with residue [is he still one with residue of clinging]?” (*nibbāyi so ādu sa, upādi, sesa*) (Sn 354c).<sup>7</sup> I’ve added an alternate translation because we can read the Pali in two ways. The question, “Has he attained nirvana or is he one with residue?” broadly means “Has he awakened or not?” = Is he an arhat or still a worldling?

**1.3.1.4** The question, “Has he attained nirvana or is he still one with residue of clinging?” specifically means, as interpreted by Buddhaghosa: “Is he an arhat (an adept, *asekha*) or a learner (*sekha*)?” (SnA 3:250,23).<sup>8</sup> Buddhaghosa’s explanation apparently adds a new dimension to the development of the *nibbāna, dhātu* doctrine. It applies the terms to exclusive categories: arhats and non-arhats (more specifically, the learners).

Note that here *sa, upādi, sesa* is applied only to Kappa (or Kappāyana, as he is called in the Sutta); it is not applied to *nibbāna, dhātu*. The term *sa, upādi, sesa* qualifies a person, not a state—this suggests that it is not a technical term, but merely a descriptive phrase, describing the state of a person [1.3.1.3 n].

In other words, while the Sutta uses *sa, upādi, sesa* in a non-technical sense (“Is he an arhat or a learner?”), Buddhaghosa glosses it technically, explaining that Vaṅḡisa is asking whether his preceptor, Kappāyana is *anupādi, sesa*, that is, an adept (*asekha*) or arhat, or still a learner, who has yet to rid himself of the remnants of the fetters (*samyojana*).<sup>9</sup> This is probably the only place where the terms, *sa, upādi, sesa* and *anupādi, sesa*—are applied to a person instead of to nirvana.

### **1.3.2 Early developments**

**1.3.2.1** In the suttas, the compound *upādi, sesa*, “residue of clinging,” is mostly and broadly used in such expressions as “one of the 2 fruits may be expected: either perfect wisdom (arhathood) or, if there is still any residue (*sati upādi, sese*), non-returning”—such as in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10).<sup>10</sup> Note here that “clinging” (*upādi*) simply refers to the fetters that still need to be eradicated—in the case of the non-returner, this is obviously the 5 higher fetters.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> = Tha 1274: see Tha:N 299 n1274. Verses are usually a very old part of the sutta. The *sa, upādi, sesa* is prob used in a non-technical sense, simply meaning “with remains of clinging.” It may also be the harbinger of the term *nibbāna, dhātu* which uses this ancient phrase. [1.3.1.4]

<sup>8</sup> See Sn:N 235 n354 & Masefield 1979:222, 230.

<sup>9</sup> (Comy on Sn 354c) *Yathā vimutto’ti kiṃ anupādi, sesāya nibbāna, dhātuyā yathā asekhā, udāhu sa, upādi, sesāya yathā sekhā’ti pucchati*, “In terms of ‘liberation,’ one asks, ‘Is it that the nirvana-element with residue applies to the adept (arhat, *asekha*), or the nirvana-element with remains to the learner (*sekha*)?’” (SnA 350,23). Note here that *sa, upādi, sesa* is applied to Kappāyana, not to *nibbāna, dhātu*. See Masefield 1979:222, 230; Norman 1992:214 n354, 2001:235 n354; Soon-il Hwang 2006:29. On the learners and the fetters they still have to eradicate, see SD 10.16 (1.2.1, esp Table 1.2.1.3).

<sup>10</sup> See **Mahā Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (D 22,22/2:314,12), SD 13.2; **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62), SD 13.3; **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70,27/1:481), SD 11.1; **Aṭṭhika Maha-p, phala S** (S 46.57/5:129,21); **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 1** (A 5.67/3:82), SD 106.15; **Sati Supaṭṭhita S** (A 5.122/-3:143); **(Dasaka) Pabbajjā S** (A 10.59/5:108); **(Duka) Paṭisallāna S** (It 2.2.8/39,15), SD 41.4; **Sikkhānisamsa S** (It 2.2.9/40,12); **Jāgariya S** (It 2.2.10/41,11); **Dvayatānupassanā S** (Sn pp140,13, 148,13), SD 104.2.

Originally, the term in the two compounds is probably *upadhi*, “life-support, substrate”—which is the Buddhist Sanskrit cognate of *upādi*—as general term meaning the “fuel” for life or existence: if this is not exhausted, rebirth will recur. Apparently, in time, the word *upadhi* was less used or forgotten in favour of *upādi*. For this reason, too, their senses overlap and the two words—*upadhi* and *upādi*—are often confounded.

**1.3.2.2** We see here an example of the usages of *anupādi,sesa* and *upādi,sesa* to simply refer respectively to the arhat (the fully awakened adept, *asekha*) and to the learners (*sekha*) (those on the path to awakening who still have defilements to eradicate)—not to the two kinds of nirvana (that of awakening itself and of the arhat’s death).

It is possible—in fact, very likely—that the two terms, *upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*, arose very late in the Buddha’s ministry, or perhaps, even after his time. The fact that it deals with the posthumous state of the Buddha and the arhat—and that they are both clearly *technical terms*—are further evidence of their lateness. It is also curious that the actual word *upādāna* (“clinging”) or some more familiar form of it is not used—instead, we see the rare and odd form, *upādi*, used in the two terms. [1.3.2.4]

**1.3.2.3** In the **Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12), the term *sa,upādi,sesa*, translates as “those with residues of clinging,” and broadly refers to various kinds of saints who are not yet arhats. It is often said that “those who die with residues of clinging,” even when they are reborn as devas, are likely to fall into any of the subhuman states, that is, those of hell-beings, the animals and the ghosts, and humans in painful and unfortunate circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

The Buddha explains to Sāriputta that, while this may be true of worldlings, it is not the case with the 9 kinds of individuals who have eradicated some of the 10 mental fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*),<sup>13</sup> that is, the 5 kinds of non-returners, the once-returned, and the 3 kinds of streamwinners [2.2.2.2]. These individuals are, in fact, the various kinds of **learners**<sup>14</sup> on the path to awakening, who are assured of awakening—the weakest of whom, the streamwinner, has, at the most, only 7 more lives before they attain full awakening.<sup>15</sup>

Note here that, despite the technicality of the classes of learners, they are all included in the same category as other worldlings “with residues” (*sa,upādi,sesa*). The learners, however, having eradicated various mental fetters, are certain to attain nirvana in due course, but meantime, will never be reborn in any of the subhuman or suffering states.

**1.3.2.4** The **(Brahmā) Tissa Sutta** (A 7.53) is one of the most interesting sources in the study of the evolution of the “two nirvana-elements” doctrine. In it, we see an early mention (perhaps the very first hint) of the two kinds of nirvana (without the use of the term “**nirvana-element**,” *nibbāna,dhātu*).

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<sup>11</sup> The 5 higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya saṃyojana*) are (1) lust for form existence, (2) lust for formless existence, (3) conceit, (4) restlessness, and (5) ignorance. They prevent us from attaining arhathood. See **Uddham,-bhāgiya S** (S 45.180), SD 50.12 esp Table 2.2.2.

<sup>12</sup> A 9.12,3.4/4:379 (SD 3.3(3)).

<sup>13</sup> The 10 fetters are: (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt, (3) attachment to rituals and vows, (4) sensual lust, (5) repulsion, (6) lust for form existence, (7) lust for formless existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance: see SD 50.11 (2.2.2).

<sup>14</sup> On these types of “learners” (*sekha*) of the path, see **Sekha S** (M 53) + SD 21.14 (2.1).

<sup>15</sup> A 9.12,4-10/4:379-381 (SD 3.3(3)).

The Sutta opens with two deities (*devatā*)<sup>16</sup>—probably brahmas (*brahmā*)—appearing to the Buddha, telling him that the devas are divided on whether “these nuns are liberated (*vimutta*)” or they are “well liberated without any residue (*anupādi, sesā suvimuttā*).” The Sutta’s commentary explains that the nuns in question are the 500 of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī’s retinue, who have been “freed without any residue of clinging” (*upādāna, sesam atthapetvā*).<sup>17</sup> (AA 4:39 f).

Note here that the Commentary uses **upādāna** (“clinging”) instead of *upādi*, despite referring to the same state. This is a further clue that *upādi* has the same meaning as *upādāna*. Yet, instead of *upādāna*, the rare and odd form *upādi* is used in the two nirvana-element compounds. *Upādi* here works as an adjectival form of *upādāna*, or it is probably an older form from which *upādāna* derived. This shows that although the two *nibbāna, dhatu* expressions may be late, they are not commentarial. [1.3.2.2]

**1.3.2.5** From the ensuing discussion in the Sutta, it is clear that *anupādi, sesa* here means that the nuns have eradicated *all defilements without any residue*, not that they have passed away into “the nirvana-element without residue” (*anupādi, sesā nibbāna, dhātu*). In other words, these nuns are *living arhats*.<sup>18</sup>

We need not detain ourselves with the technical details of the Sutta discussion. The point here is clear that the term *anupādi, sesa* does not refer to the “nirvana-element without residue” in the sense of final passing away, but simply to the attainment of arhatness of a saint who continues to live.

As a rule, we would expect the term “nirvana-element with residue” (*upādi, sesa*) to be used for the living arhat nuns. However, the same Sutta uses this latter term to refer to the trainees (*sekha*), those who are on the path of awakening (that is, streamwinners, etc) but not yet arhats [2.3.2.2]. This shows that the two terms did not have fixed senses, but depend on their context—and that the senses we are now familiar with was fixed quite late in the Pali canon’s history.

**1.3.2.6** We will now look at a Dhammapada verse which may give us a clue to a very early stage in the evolution of the usage of the two nirvana-element terms. **Dhammapada 89** refers to those who, in this world itself, attain nirvana with the destruction of the influxes. They are those who become *arhats* and continue to live out their natural life-span. The verse goes like this:

<i>Yesam sambodhi, aṅgesu</i>	Whose mind is <sup>19</sup> fully well cultivated	<i>b</i>
<i>sammā cittaṃ subhāvitam</i>	in the awakening-factors,	<i>a</i>
<i>ādāna, paṭinissagge</i>	who, without clinging,	<i>d</i>
<i>anupādānāya ye ratā</i>	delight in the giving up of grasping, <sup>20</sup>	<i>c</i>
<i>khīṇ’āsavaṃ jutimanto</i>	lustrous, with influxes destroyed,	
<i>te loke parinibbutā</i>	they have, in this world, attained nirvana.	
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<sup>16</sup> Usually refers to younger devas or gods, prob syn with *deva, putta*, “young deva” or more generally, “male deva.” Clearly, sex only apply to the sense-world devas since above that the form and the formless brahmas are beyond any kind of sexuality. The ages of devas are, of course, hardly “young” by earthly standards. We should imagine here that their “youth” refers to their relatively recent arrival in the heavens. We should also note that these are *male* gods, since we also have *deva, dhītā*, but only in post-canonical works (DA 695,6; MA 2:24,9; SA 1:30,7; J 2:57,12, 6:117,1).

<sup>17</sup> Note that Comy glosses *upādi* with *upādāna*, “clinging” [2.2.1.1]—this becomes problematic when used with *upādi* in connection with “nirvana-elements,” as we shall see [2.2.2].

<sup>18</sup> A 7.53/4:79 (SD 54.5).

<sup>19</sup> Note that the poem uses singular *cittaṃ*, but the subject and the rest of the poem is plural. The mind is here treated as “one,” despite the many saints who attain that “mind,” alluding to the mind of awakening.

<sup>20</sup> “Grasping” (*upādāna*) is the “fuel” feeding the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*): form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

The Dhammapada Commentary explains that these arhats have “attained nirvana” (*parinibbutā*) by the two attainings of nirvana (*dvīhi parinibānehi*), that is:

- (1) the nirvana with residue (*sa, upādi, sesa*) of the round of rebirth after reaching arhathood and eradicating the influxes, and
- (2) the nirvana without residue (*anupādi, sesa*) with the cessation of the last thought and ending the round of the aggregates. (DhA 2:162)

From all this, we can surmise that “the residue” refers to the 5 aggregates<sup>21</sup> [2.2.1.1].

**1.3.2.7** This is also where both the nirvana-elements refer to the arhat. This is probably one of the earliest references to nirvana in terms of **time** [1.1.1]. Notice here that the Commentary does not attach the suffix, *nibbāna, dhātu*, to either of the two commentarial terms, which are simply stated as *sa, upādi, sesa* and *anupādi, sesa*.

Surely Buddhaghosa was aware of the two nirvana-element terms by his time—and, as we have noted, he could not have introduced the two terms [2.2.6.3]. In fact, we have Buddhaghosa’s remarks on the two nirvana-elements in various Commentaries.<sup>22</sup> Surely, if he had introduced this doctrine, he would have mentioned it somewhere in his commentarial remarks.

## 2 Key words and terms

### **2.1 NIBBĀNA**

#### **2.1.1 Self-training**

Nirvana is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path, according to **the historical Buddha’s** teachings, as recorded in the early Buddhist texts. All the teachings are given for the one and same reason: to facilitate the attaining nirvana. Buddhist training ideally begins with a deepening and widening of a theoretical understanding of the early teachings. Such learning is best cultivated with the appropriate mindfulness and meditation practice. This theory and practice work together to give us growing insight into the true nature of things, especially how our mind works, how to tame it, and ultimately to liberate it.

#### **2.1.2 Refuge-going**

In the act of going for **the 3 refuges** (*ti, saraṇa*), the Dharma-jewel is *nirvana* for which we should strive. To take the 3 refuges, then, means to take the Buddha as our ideal of awakening, the Dharma as the goal (nirvana) for which we should quest, and the Sangha as the great saints, especially the arhats, whom we should emulate.<sup>23</sup> Even though we may not be able to attain nirvana here and now, we should at least aspire to attain streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>24</sup>

#### **2.1.3 A foretaste of nirvana**

**2.1.3.1** At this stage, even with the best sutta materials and Dharma teachers, we can only have conceptual and theoretical views of nirvana. It is like learning about some remarkable destination that we are looking forward to reach in due time.

<sup>21</sup> See Thomas 1933:131 f.

<sup>22</sup> Eg DA 1:2, 16, 2:439, 554; MA 1:50, 2:412, 299, 4:186, 5:92; SA 2:81, 331; AA 1:109, 2:247; SnA 1:350.

<sup>23</sup> See **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1.

<sup>24</sup> See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

Our current study is helpful in at least removing the wrong ideas or unhelpful habits we may have about the Dharma. It should help to tame our mind and free us from the way we think, so that we are better at freely feeling the true nature of people and things—especially how we think and feel.

**2.1.3.2** A simple exercise helps in envisioning the basic nature of nirvana. Whenever we are overwhelmed by some negative emotion (such as anger) or some wholesome feeling (especially joy), just be aware of its presence, and then notice how it goes away. This is the perception of impermanence, which, if regularly and properly done brings us streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>25</sup>

Or, we can review such an experience, reflecting on how it has arisen, remains, and then passes away. That emotion or feeling has arisen from various conditions but, ceasing, it has gone nowhere. Like a fire that has gone out, that mental state has vanished, too, but goes nowhere.<sup>26</sup> These are all temporary events or states—but imagine when all such lows and highs are absent in our life, and there’s this pervasive, even joyful, peace. This is a good worldly idea of what nirvana is like.

## 2.2 UPĀDI

### 2.2.1 Meanings of *upādi*, *upādi,sesa* and *anupādi,sesa*

**2.2.1.1** UPĀDI. In the suttas, *upādi*, as a rule, appears only as an element of a compound, especially as *upādi,sesa*. As a free-standing term, it is found only in the Commentaries. **Upādi** literally means “what is grasped, to which one clings,” namely, the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) of form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.<sup>27</sup> This is the first sense of *upādi*.<sup>28</sup>

The Commentaries give a second sense of *upādi*, that is, “material support (the fruit of past karma),”<sup>29</sup> which, interestingly, also refers to the 5 aggregates, as in the first sense. This sense of *upādi*—an allusion to the 5 aggregates—overlaps with that of *upadhi* [2.2.1.8], with which it is often confused.<sup>30</sup>

**2.2.1.2** PALI POLYSEMY. As a rule, I have translated both *upādi* and *upādi,sesa* as simply “residue”—in the latter case, not as “substrate-remnant” (Masefield, eg It:M 35 and ItA:M 1:408)—simply because I think both *upādi* and *sesa* are synonyms, and hence tautologous: “this same substrate is itself a remnant” (*upādi-yeva seso’ti upādi,seso*).

Moreover, the original term is non-technical, and the burden of allusions to the 5 sense-faculties, clinging, the aggregates and so on are later supplied by the Commentaries. The point is that we should let the sutta context speak for itself as we read the texts and form our understanding of the intended teaching without the bias of scholastic technicality.<sup>31</sup>

**2.2.1.3** EARLY USAGE. We have a vital clue to perhaps the oldest sense of *upādi,sesa* in the Sunakkhatta Sutta (M 105). Both the compounds *sa,upādi,sesa* and *anupādi,sesa*, appear in connection with the Sutta’s parable of the man shot with a poisoned dart (*sallāṃ ... sa,visena*). A surgeon or dart-remover

<sup>25</sup> See any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25), eg, (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>26</sup> On the parable of the extinguished fire, see **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72,18) + SD 6.15 (4) on the fire imagery.

<sup>27</sup> ThaA 2:271,16; PmA 323,20.

<sup>28</sup> Cf BHS *upādi*, *upadhi*. See CPD: *upādi*.

<sup>29</sup> UA 151,12 = ItA 1:135,9. Comy on **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105/2:257,1), SD 94.3, on *sa,upādi,sesaṃ*, glosses it with *sa,gahana,sesaṃ* (MA 4:55)—that is, *upādi = gahana*, “clinging”.

<sup>30</sup> Walshe, in his tr of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) renders *upādi* as “substrate,” prob confounding it for *upadhi* (life-basis) (D:W 350,5+16). Further on the meanings of *upādi* and *nibbāna,dhātu*, see SD 45.18 (2.5.2).

<sup>31</sup> On the vitality of Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2). See also SD 45.18 (2.5.2.6).

(*salla,kattā*), it is said, cuts around the opening of wound, and probes for the dart or barb. Then, he extracts it and goes on to remove the poison “that still remains” (*sa,upādi,sesa*).

After knowing that “nothing remains” (*anupādi,sesa*) of the poison, he instructs the man to avoid unsuitable food (that may cause the wound to suppurate), to occasionally clean the wound and apply a new dressing, and generally keep the wound clean and prevent infection.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the simplicity of the meaning of the word **anupādisesa** here, we may surmise that it is resolved as *anu* (“after, regularly”) + *pa* (“further, later”) + *ādi* (“from the start”) + *sesa* (“residue”). The full sense of the word, then, is “to carry out an operation or attend to a wound, removing all the sources or causes of pain or danger (down to its beginning or root) and caring for it thereafter.” However, this basic sense was forgotten or disused as the more developed and technical senses rose to prominence.

**2.2.1.4 UPĀDI,SESA.** The compound *upādi,sesa* (mfn)<sup>33</sup> simply means “residuum, trace” [2.2.1.2]; technically (in more developed later sense), it means “a remnant of material support or fuel; a residue of grasping or attachment.”<sup>34</sup>

In the suttas, the term *upādi,sesa* is famously found in this passage, usually serving as the sutta conclusion:

“One of two fruits can be expected: either direct knowledge in this very life, or, if there were <u>any residue of clinging</u> , non-returning,” <sup>35</sup>	<i>dvinnam phalanam aññataram phalam pāṭikaṅkham diṭṭh’eva dhamme aññā sati vā upādi,sesa anāgamitā</i>
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Here, *upādi* clearly refers to the remnants of the fetters—more specifically, the 5 higher fetters [1.3.2.1]—as the reference here is to “non-returning.”

Since *upādi* is not a technical term (without a fixed sense), it can have other meanings. In **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), for example, has this stock passage for the Buddha’s passing away, where *anupādi,sesa* is used, where “clinging,” *upādi*, has the sense of “the 5 aggregates”:

“Here, the Tathagata passed away into the nirvana-element without any residue (of clinging).”	<i>idha tathāgato anupādi,sesāya nibbāna,dhātuyā parinibbuto</i> [1.3.2.2]
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The context here clearly demands that the word “residue” allude to “clinging,” which, of course, refers to the 5 aggregates, completely extinguished when the Buddha or an arhat passes away.

**2.2.1.5 PARINIBBĀNA AS “FINAL PASSING AWAY.”** However, when **parinibbāna** [1.3.1.2] is used in the title, **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) [SD 9], where it clearly and specifically refers to the Buddha’s passing away into “final nirvana” (that is, without any more rebirth). In the same Sutta—in a passage recurring in **the Saṃvejaniya Sutta** (A 4.118)—there is a reference to the 4 holy places, worthy of pilgrimage,

<sup>32</sup> M 105,19 (SD 94.3); cf **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 63,5.2), SD 5.8, where the parable differs. On the tr, see Myanmar Piṭaka Assoc, *Twenty-five Suttas from Uparipañṇāsa*, 1990:9.

<sup>33</sup> An adjective (masculine, feminine or neuter).

<sup>34</sup> D 2:314,14 = M 1:62,36 (MA 1:301,33 f) = S 5:129,19 (SA 3:175,31) = A 3:82,10 ≈ Sn p140,15 (SnA 2:504,3) = It 39,17 = 41,13; Vism 509,8 (nirvana referred to as *sa,upādi,sesa*).

<sup>35</sup> **Mahā Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (D 22,22/2:314,12), SD 13.2; **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62), SD 13.3; **Kiṭa,giri S** (M 70,-27(4)/1:481), SD 11.1; **Aṭṭhika Maha-p,phala S** (S 46.57/5:129,21); **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 1** (A 5.67/3:82), SD 106.15; **Sati Supaṭṭhita S** (A 5.122/-3:143); **(Dasaka) Pabbajjā S** (A 10.59/5:108); **(Duka) Paṭisallāna S** (It 2.2.8/39,15), SD 41.4; **Sikkhānisamsa S** (It 2.2.9/40,12); **Jāgariya S** (It 2.2.10/41,11); **Dvayatānupassanā S** (Sn pp140,13, 148,13), SD 104.2.

the last of which is Kusinārā, of which is declared: “Here the Tathāgata has passed into the nirvana-element without residue (*anupādi,sesa*).”<sup>36</sup>

Here, the term *anupādi,sesa* is synonymous with *parinibbāna*, both referring to the Buddha’s “final passing away”—thus popularizing this sense.<sup>37</sup> Here, the emphasis is not on the Buddha’s *act* of awakening, but as a “state” of nirvana that he is in. (“State” is within quote marks because it is used only *provisionally* to refer to nirvana, which is not really a “state” in the normal sense.)<sup>38</sup>

**2.2.1.6 ANUPADI,SESA** (mfn), the opposite of *upādi,sesa*, is used in these senses:<sup>39</sup>

- (1) (of nirvana, at death) without any remnant of karmic sustenance (D 2:108,33) [for references, see 1.3.2.1];
- (2) (of arhats) without any residue of karmic sustenance (A 4:75,6);
- (3) a name for nirvana (Sn 876, regarding those who pretend to be expert in the absolute *nibbāna*);
- (4) completely free from the elements of clinging (the 5 aggregates) (A 4:75,17 plural, +24; Vism 509,13; Nett 109,13). This sense is generally used as an epithet of “nirvana-element,” *nibbāna,-dhātu* (f).<sup>40</sup>
- (5) (physical sense) without any trace or infection remaining; without leaving any trace or infection (M 2:257,1+11).

**Anupādi** (m or f)<sup>41</sup> [*na + upādi*] [2.2.1.8] is a rare late term, meaning “absence of karmic sustenance, absence of clinging” (ThaA 2:271,16).<sup>42</sup> Apparently, the term *anupādi*, as it is, is not found in the Canon, but only in the Commentaries and later works. Clearly, it is one of those technical terms introduced by Buddhist scholastics in the course of their scriptural work.

**2.2.1.7 SA,UPĀDI,SESA.** The compound *sa,upādi,sesa* (mfn) has the following meanings and usages:<sup>43</sup>

- (1) (of nirvana, during life) accompanied by a residue of karmic sustenance (It 38,24 + 38,26\*);
- (2) with a residue of karmic sustenance, with some clinging (A 4:75,23; Sn 354);
- (3) with a trace or infection remaining, leaving some infection (M 2:257,1+3).

A later form, *sôpādi,sesa* (mfn) means “accompanied by a residue of karmic sustenance” (found only in later works and the Commentaries).<sup>44</sup> [2.2.2.2]

**2.2.1.8 UPADHI AND UPĀDI** are terms often confused because of their overlapping sense alluding to the “substrate” (*upadhi*) of the 5 aggregates. **Upadhi** literally means “that on which something is laid or rests,

<sup>36</sup> D 16,5.8(4) (SD 9); **Samvejaniya S** (A 4.118/2:120). Cf usages of merely “final nirvana” (*parinibbuta*) for the Buddha’s passing away at (**Chakka**) **Kimbila S** (A 6.40/3:340), SD 106.13, & (**Sattaka**) **Kimbila Sutta or Kimbila Sutta 3** (A 7.56/4:84), SD 106.14

<sup>37</sup> See SD 50.1 (2.1.1.7).

<sup>38</sup> On the differences between *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna*, see Norman 1994:17 f.

<sup>39</sup> For detailed refs, see CPD sv.

<sup>40</sup> Nom *anupādi,sesā nibbāna,dhātu*, It 38,7 f, 39,1\*; Nett 38,6, 108,33, 127,18; acc ~am nibbāna,dhātuṃ, Nett 14,22, 92,23; instr ~āya nibbāna-dhātuyā (*parinibbāyati*): V 2:239,27 = U 55,32; U 85,9; It 121,21; D 2:108,33, 136,5 (quoted Miln 175,16), 3:135,13; A 2:120,32 (*parinibbuto*), 4:202,26, 313,20; Pam 1:101,2; J 1:28,12, 55,28; VvA 165,9 (*parinibbuta*); Miln 95,22 (*parinibbutassa*); Nett 12,21 (*muccati*); 40,15 (*anissita,cittā ~ niddisittabbā*); cf Nc 245,11 (NcA 2:215,20-21); UA 131,5, 216,31, 406,11; Sāsv 3,6;

<sup>41</sup> This is a reading for *anupād’ādīm*, which is prob a wr,

<sup>42</sup> For further details, see DP svv.

<sup>43</sup> See also SA 1:21,20; DhA 2:163,7; Vism 509,9; Nett 38,6. For other refs, see CPD: upādi-sesa.

<sup>44</sup> Eg Petk 235,23; Vism 508,8; and in Skt works.

basis, foundation, substratum” (CPD); “worldly possessions or belongings, acquisitions (according to the Commentaries, including the body); attachment to such possessions (forming a basis for rebirth)” (DP).

*Upadhi* also physically refers to “possessions, belongings,” and, subjectively, to “the seizing, holding, grasping of these possessions” and to “the attachment to, affection for, clinging to them.” It is thus psychologically equated with *taṇhā* (“craving”), *ādāna* (“appropriating”), *upādāna* (“clinging”), *āsava* (“influx”), *kamma* (“karma”), in later systematization, particularly with *kāma* (“sensual pleasures” and “object of sense-pleasure”), *khandha* (“aggregates (of clinging)”), *kilesa* (“defilement”), *abhisankhārā* (“karmic formations”), all of which are causes or bases of rebirth.<sup>45</sup>

**2.2.1.9 UPĀDI**, like *anupādi* [2.2.16], is not found as it is in the Pali canon. In the suttas, *upādi* occurs as an infix or an element of a compound, especially *sa,upādi,sesa* and *anupadi,sesa*, where it simply means “residue, remnant” [2.2.1.1]. It serves as an allusion to the remaining defilements, such as the mental fetters (*samyojana*) [1.3.2.3] that still need to be overcome (in the case of the learners, *sekha*); or, to the 5 physical faculties or senses (in the case of arhats, *asekha*) [2.2.3.5].

However, it is found by itself—as *upādi*—in the Commentaries and later works, where it is a technical term. From its contexts, we can deduce that *upādi*, is used in the later works in two ways, that is, as meaning (1) clinging [2.2.1.2], or (2) the 5 aggregates [2.2.1.1]. These are old senses of the word, but they have become technical terms.

## **2.2.2 Technical difficulties**

**2.2.2.1** The terms, *sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* [§§3-6] and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* [§§7-9], have **technical difficulties**. We shall discuss these difficulties under these two headings:

- (1) the conditional categorization of the experience of nirvana, which is unconditioned; [2.2.3]
- (2) the use of worldly terms to describe a personal spiritual experience that is nirvana. [2.2.4]

**The fire imagery** is helpful in giving us the essence of this problem. Nirvana, or rather, the attaining of nirvana, can be compared to a fire that is extinguished. Once the fire has been extinguished, there is nothing more we can say about its existence. We may say that the fire that has been put out is like the “nirvana-element with residue.” But it makes no sense to add that the doused fire will *further* be “finally put out without residue” (like the “nirvana-element without residue”)!

**2.2.2.2** Early Buddhist teachings, as a rule, speak of **spiritual training and transformation** in progressive terms rather than in a categorical manner. Take the case of two well known texts: the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) on the stages of mental focus, and the Kīṭā,giri Sutta (M 70) on the kinds of saints.

**The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) presents the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*catu sati’paṭṭhāna*) and their fruits, the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjaṅga*), as a graduated growth: from body-based meditation, to dealing with feelings, with the mind, with mind-objects, and then on to the various stages of the concentrated mind until the level of spiritual equanimity (that is, dhyana and spiritual awakening).<sup>46</sup>

**2.2.2.3** Even the 7 kinds of saints listed in **the Kīṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70), beginning with the category common to all arhats—the one freed both ways (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*)—and then progressively descending to those of the truth-follower (*dhammānussārī*) and the faith-follower (*saddhā’nusārī*). Even these stages are progressive “transitional” stages, of which the very first category is the goal, that is, arhathood.

<sup>45</sup> On *upadhi* or *upādhi*, see SD 12.4 (6.1).

<sup>46</sup> M 10 (SD 13.3).

**2.2.2.4 The Aṭṭha Puggala Sutta 2** (A 8.60) presents a list of the 8 kinds of noble individuals (*aṭṭha ariya,puggala*) according to their progressive attainments (by way of path and fruition). These saints mark the various significant stages when various sets of mental fetters (*samyojana*) are broken and other defilements weakened or eradicated.<sup>47</sup>

**2.2.2.5** The two kinds of “**nirvana-elements**” (*nibbāna,dhātu*), on the other hand, seem to be absolute categories of saints: the first, those who awaken while still bearing their physical bodies and the second, those who awaken to nirvana at the moment of death. Even when we apply these two categories to the same individual, he seems to “progress” directly or abruptly from one state to the other without any gradual intervening stages.

Are these two types of nirvana-elements, then, two stages of awakening, or two categories of arhats? Or, are they two stages of attaining nirvana? They are actually *none* of these, as we shall presently see.

### **2.2.3 Sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu** [§§3-6]

**2.2.3.1** By way of summary, we will here briefly discuss “the conditional categorization of the experience of nirvana, which is unconditioned” [2.2.2.1] and related issues. When the term *upādi,sesa* or *sa,-upadi,sesa* was first used, it simply means “with residue” of karma, in either case, without any technicality [1.3.0]. The term *sa,upādi,sesa*, understandably, makes sense on its own. However, as the term is used *conditionally* and *specifically* to refer to “final death” of the Buddha or an arhat, it becomes more technical, as seen in **the (Nigrodha Kappa) Vaṅgīsa Sutta** (Sn 354c) and its commentary [1.3.1.3].

**2.2.3.2** *Upādi,sesa*, then, refers to the state of the learners (*sekha*), saints of the path who still have to eradicate some mental fetters [1.3.2.3]. Here, *upādi* simply means “residue, remains,” that is, of the defilements, such as mental fetters, to be overcome. Probably from this usage, the next logical development is to use its opposite to refer to the arhat.

The next stage in the development of **the nibbāna,dhātu doctrine** is the application of *upādi,sesa* to the arhat himself—when he “utterly passes away,” without any more rebirth. Here, the suffix, *anupādi,-sesa*, “without remains,” is added to this compound. Since the arhat attains a special state or distinct sphere (*dhātu*) [2.3], that is, nirvana, it is called “nirvana-element” (*nibbāna,dhātu*)—so, we have ***anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu***—and *upādi,sesa* becomes more technical as *sa,upādi,sesa* [2.2.1.6]. And so we have the “two-*nibbāna,dhātu*” doctrine.

**2.2.3.3** This is where we must understand how *dhatu* is used: it has been added to the two terms here to remind us that it is *not* nirvana itself that are of two kinds, but the “nirvana-element”—that is, nirvana as a **concept** (*paññatti*) that we are referring to. Since nirvana itself is unconditioned, it is meaningless to speak of “types” of nirvana! [2.3.2.3]

**2.2.3.4** The most developed formulation of the term *upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* is clearly the one found in **the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta** (It 2.2.7) [§§4-6]—this passage should be carefully examined. First, the arhat is defined by way of the full khīṇ’āsava pericope [§4]. This prepares the context for the next statement: that “for whom the 5 faculties still persist, on account of their non-disappearance; who experiences both the pleasant and the unpleasant, who feels pleasure and pain” [§5].

<sup>47</sup> A 8.60 (SD 15.10a(2)); **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179), SD 50.11; **Uddham,bhāgiya S** (S 45.180), SD 50.12. See also SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8).

Since the arhat, like us, has the 5 senses, he feels the way we do: he experiences the pleasant and the unpleasant, and pleasure and pain. However—this is the clincher—“(but) for him there is the destruction of lust ... hate ... delusion” [§6]. Unlike us, the arhat feels but he does not react like a worldly, not even like a learner (a streamwinner, a once-returner or a non-returner).<sup>48</sup> In other words, an arhat has no negative emotions at all.

The arhat has broken all the 10 fetters, especially the 5 higher fetters: he has no desire for any kind of existence (form or formless), has no conceit, no restlessness, and has overcome spiritual ignorance. He has only “residues,” that is, his 5 *physical* senses—his mind is fully liberated.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, his state is called “the nirvana-element with residue.” [§6]

**2.2.3.5 Upādi**, according to the Sutta, comprises the 5 faculties (*pañc’indriya*), that is, the 5 physical senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body)—the context here is clearly human beings or those beings of the sense-world who have these 5 faculties. Furthermore, if they are learners (*sekha*), they still need to overcome the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*), that is, lust, hate and delusion.

**The Aññātara Bhikkhu Sutta 2** (S 45.7), for example, speaks of the removal of lust, etc. as a designation for the unconditioned, death-free nirvana-element, and the destruction of the influxes,<sup>50</sup> that is, arhathood. The removal of lust, etc (the 3 unwholesome roots), is a name for arhathood, too (SA 3:123). This reflects a teaching from an early period when we do not see any differentiation between arhathood (awakening, *bodhi*) and nirvana (*nibbāna*). [1.3.1.1]

## 2.2.4 Anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu [§§7-9]

**2.2.4.1** Here, we will briefly discuss “the use of worldly terms to describe a personal spiritual experience that is nirvana” [2.2.2.1] as represented by the term, *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*. First, there is the problem of terminology. In Pali, the two kinds of nirvana are called *sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*, “the nirvana with residue” and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*, “the nirvana without residue.” Their Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit cognates are *sôpadhi,śeṣa nirvāṇa,dhātu* and *nir-* or *an-upadhi,śeṣa nirvāṇa,dhātu*.<sup>51</sup> Note that the Pali terms use *upādi* while the BHS has *upadhi*.

We may safely surmise that both the Pali *upādi* and the BHS *upadhi* in these respective terms (since they are cognates) must have the same meaning or their senses overlap in these terms. The Pali Commentaries take *upādi* to mean the 5 aggregates of clinging (*pañc’upādānā*). However, only the first pair of terms—*upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* (P) and *sôpadhi,sesa nirvāṇa,dhātu* (Skt)—refer to their presence. The other terms—*anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* (P) and *anupādhi,śeṣa nirvāṇa,dhātu* or *nirupadhi,śeṣa nirvāṇa,dhātu* (Skt)—refer to the nirvana-element free of all aggregates whatsoever.

**2.2.4.2** The first term—*sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*—technically, refers to the nirvana with residue (the aggregates of clinging), and is explained as the total cessation of defilements (*kilesa,parinibbāna*<sup>52</sup> or, less commonly, *kilesa,nirodha*<sup>53</sup>).<sup>54</sup> This means that although the defilements—all comprised in

<sup>48</sup> On how an arhat may choose to respond to an experience by way of “the 5 modes of perception,” see **Metta,-sahagata S** (S 46.54,12-15) SD 10.11

<sup>49</sup> On the 5 higher fetters, see **Uddham,bhāgiya S** (S 45.180), SD 50.12.

<sup>50</sup> For the destruction of influxes pericope, see **Gopāka Moggallāna S** (M 108,23) SD 33.5. For def of *āsava-k,-khaya ñāṇa*, see **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,42-44) SD 1.12 (excerpt), SD 49.4.

<sup>51</sup> See Norman 1990:31, 1991:2.

<sup>52</sup> DA 3:899; MA 4:116; AA 1:91; ThaA 1:46.

<sup>53</sup> PmA 2:505, 3:546.

<sup>54</sup> This cessation is also called *kilesa,nibbāna*; the other, the cessation of the aggregates (or final nirvana), is *khandha,nibbāna* (DA 899 f): see SD 45.18 (2.5.2.3).

the 3 unwholesome roots of lust, hate and delusion—have completely ceased, the aggregates remain (*sa, upādi, sesa*) since the arhat is still alive.<sup>55</sup>

If the term is applied to the learners (*sekha*)—the streamwinner, the once-returner and the non-returner—they still have “residues” (*sesa*) of clinging, but none of them would derail the certain trajectory of the learners towards nirvana. These residues are those mental fetters (*samyojana*) that have yet to be eradicated. However, in the case of an arhat, the “residues” are the “aggregates” (*khandha*) that are free from clinging: they constitute the awakened mind and physical body of the living arhat.

**2.2.4.3** The second term, **the nirvana without residue**, refers to the extermination of the aggregates (*khandha, parinibbāna*)<sup>56</sup> or the cessation of existence (*bhava, nirodha*).<sup>57</sup> This means that the remaining aggregates cease completely. The arhat dies, or rather, ceases to exist as we understand existence.<sup>58</sup> Doctrinally, these two kinds of nirvana correspond to the two most important events in the Buddha’s life: his great awakening and his final passing away free of all rebirth.<sup>59</sup>

Figuratively speaking, the *anupādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu* is like when a **spinning potter’s wheel** is suddenly stopped—to use Soon-il Hwang’s simile. The potter’s wheel spins around by, say, the power of an electric motor. *Sa, upādi, sesa* is like a wheel spinning on even after the power has been turned off, due to momentum; *anupādi, sesa* is like the final stopping of the wheel because there is no more force left.

Then, there is **the parable of the fuelless fire** (*nissatṭha ... upādāna aggi*)—found in **the (Brahma-vihara) Subha Sutta** (M 99)—which helps us understand the nature of the two nirvana-elements. In the Sutta, this parable actually refers to zest (*pīti*) as a dhyana-factor of mental pleasure which “has no fuel,” meaning that it is *free from clinging*. We can imagine the nirvana-element *with* residue as a “fuelless fire” that continues to “burn” as long as life lasts. With the end of life, there is the nirvana-element *without* residue—then, the fuelless fire goes out, too.<sup>60</sup>

**2.2.4.4** **The Nibbāna, dhātu Sutta** (It 2.2.7) explanation of the *anupādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu* is much more concise than its explanation of the *upādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu*. After repeating the description of the arhat [2.2.3.4], the Sutta simply says that for the one who has attained the nirvana-element without residue, “**all that are felt right here are not delighted in: they become cool**” [§9]. This means that the Buddha and the arhat *do* feel like everyone else<sup>61</sup>—after all, awakening radically frees the mind, but this does not affect the body in any significant way. However, the body would, of course, in some way, still benefit from the wisdom of the awakened mind.

The key phrase in the passage is found in the statement that the arhats, upon passing away, “**become cool or cold** (*sīti, bhavissanti*)”<sup>62</sup> like an extinguished fire [§9]. Note here that the future-tense plural *bhavissanti* and its singular form *bhavissati* do not work as the usual future tense. Rather, they refer to the spiritual potential or inherent state that is not apparent or not yet apparent to the observer.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>55</sup> ThaA 1:46; DhA 2:163. On the 2 kinds of *parinibbāna*, see Tha:N 119 n5.

<sup>56</sup> ThaA 1:46; DhA 2:163.

<sup>57</sup> **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15/2:57), SD 5.17; **Sammā, diṭṭhi S** (M 9/1:50), SD 11.14; **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38/1:263 f, 270), SD 7.10; **(Paribbājaka) Māgandiya S** (M 75/1:512), SD 31.5; **Ñāṇa, vatthu S 1** (S 12.33/2:57), SD 85.11; **Sāriputta Koṭṭhika S 4** (S 44.6/4:389, 390), SD 97.17; **(Dasaka) Sāriputta S** (A 10.7/5:9), SD 107.11; **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29/5:64), SD 16.15; **Diṭṭhi, gata S** (It 2.2.12/43 f), SD 57.16; Pm 1:159; PmA 2:461.

<sup>58</sup> PED sv *parinibbāna*; Masefield 1979:217.

<sup>59</sup> Vism 438; Norman 1991:2; Gombrich 1996:65; Soon-il Hwang 2006:45-49.

<sup>60</sup> M 99, 17 (SD 38.6).

<sup>61</sup> On arhats and feeling, see **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144) SD 2.12 + Table 4; also **Vedanā**, SD 17.3 (7.3-7.8)

<sup>62</sup> On *bhavissati* describing spiritual states, see SD 36.13 (6.1).

<sup>63</sup> This special usage of *bhavissati* famously occurs in **(Pada) Doṇa S** (A 4.36, 2.3) + SD 36.13 (6).

The Sutta commentary explains *sīti, bhavissanti* as “(will) become cool (*sītālī*) through the stilling of care (*daratha*) associated with formations, as a result of their perpetual subsiding, meaning that they will cease by way of the ending of rebirth-relinking”<sup>64</sup> (ItA 1:167). Simply put: The arhat is “cool” in that he is free from all karmic care, all of which are forever stilled with the ending of rebirth.

In the verse, we are informed: “**Those whose minds are free by direct knowledge | of this unconditioned state have destroyed existence’s leader**” [§12cd]. The key phrase here is “existence’s leader” (*bhava, netti*), which the Iti, vuttaka Commentary glosses with “craving” (*taṇhā*, ItA 1:167). The arhat is “cool,” too, because he has totally overcome craving, that is, both bad and good desires. He acts spontaneously in response to the moment and to true reality.

### **2.2.5 Nibbāna as “blowing out” and as “cool”**

**2.2.5.1** We will now examine the term *nibbāna* as used in these two ways: (1) as “blowing out” and (2) as “cool,” to show how this helps us better understand the two related terms, “nirvana-element with residue” [§§5-6] and “nirvana-element without residue” [§9]. In simple terms, we can easily see this relationship from the Sutta (It 2.2.7) itself.

**The nirvana-element with residue** implies *the destruction of the 3 unwholesome roots* of lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) [§6]. In the suttas, this triad is often referred to as “the 3 fires (*aggi*)” of greed (*lobha*),<sup>65</sup> hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) that need to be extinguished.<sup>66</sup> We see here the relevance of the imagery of “blowing out” (*nir*, “out” + *√vā*, to blow)—the 3 fires are utterly extinguished in the arhat. [§§5-6]

**The nirvana-element without residue** is described in the Nibbāna, dhātu Sutta as “all that are felt right here are not delighted in: they become cool” [§9]. As we have already noted [2.2.4.4], the phrase, “they become cool” (*sīti, bhavissanti*) is a special form of 3<sup>rd</sup> person future [2.2.4.4]: it points to a natural spiritual state—in this case, the final passing away of the arhat into nirvana. Note here that even the phrase “into nirvana” must be taken provisionally, simply as *conventional* language expressing an ultimate state (*param’attha*). For, nirvana is neither a place nor is it located anywhere [2.4.3.2].

**2.2.5.2** We have also assumed that we know how this important word, *nibbāna*, is formed. Of course, we are not completely wrong for the most part, but we are likely to miss some interesting, even vital, details, if we do not at least once carefully examine how the term is formed. We have become so familiar with the word “nirvana” (*nibbāna*) that we have taken it for granted.

Technically, *nibbāna* is the past participle of the verb *nibbāyati*, “to be blown out, extinguished.” So, we assume that *nibbāna* must mean “blowing out,” and so on.<sup>67</sup> But it is difficult to imagine how this meaning can apply to humans! But, we conclude, this is the blowing out of the 3 fires [2.2.5.1]—hence, we may possibly speak of \**nibbān’aggi* or \**nibbāt’aggi*—but there are no such usages in Pali!<sup>68</sup>

The Pali-English Dictionary (PED) of the Pali Text Society opens its entry on *nibbāna* with saying:

Although *nir + √vā* (to blow) (cf BHS *nirvāṇa*) is already in use in the Vedic period (see PED: *nibbāpeti*), we do not find its distinctive application until later and more commonly in popular

<sup>64</sup> *Sīti, bhavissantīti accanta, vūpasamena saṅkhāra, daratha, paṭippassaddhiyā sītālī bhavissanti, appaṭisandhika, -nirodhena nirujjhissantīti attho* (ItA 1:167).

<sup>65</sup> *Rāga* (more common) and *lobha* (only as part of the triad of unwholesome roots) are synonyms.

<sup>66</sup> (**Uggata, sarīra**) **Aggi S** (A 7.44, 3.2+ 3-11) SD 3.16; **Āditta Pariyāya S** (S 35.28, 4-8) + SD 1.3; (**Khandha**) **Āditta S** (S 22.61) SD 17.10.

<sup>67</sup> See Nyanatiloka’s *Buddhist Dictionary*: *nibbāna*, but where “*nir + √vā*” is explained as “to cease blowing” (sic).

<sup>68</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Norman 1994:24-27.

use, where  $\sqrt{v\bar{a}}$  [to blow] is fused with  $\sqrt{v\bar{r}}$  [to cover] in this sense, viz, in application to the extinguishing of fire, which is the prevailing Buddhist conception of the term.<sup>69</sup> (PED)

Although we often hear of scholars and teachers telling us that *nibbāna* is derived from the root meaning “to blow out,” we never see such a usage in the suttas. In fact, in the suttas and commentaries, whenever we see the imagery of the extinguishing of a lamp, it is not due to being blown out either by someone or by the wind, but due to exhaustion of fuel,<sup>70</sup> or to the removal or dunking of a wick.<sup>71</sup>

**2.2.5.3** The point of all this is that from the earliest times down through the ages, those who recite, study and teach the suttas have become so familiar with the term *nibbāna* that they did not trouble themselves with its semantic origins or technical forms. The term *nibbāna*, then, serves its purpose very well in presenting the foremost idea of salvation in early Buddhism.

The lesson is that we must understand and accept that much of the language of the early Buddhist texts is non-technical. The words do not define the state or reality, but, rather, it is just the other way around.<sup>72</sup> Having understood it, we express it in suitable words and imagery for the benefit of those who have yet to understand it.

## **2.2.6 Usefulness of the *nibbāna, dhatu* doctrine**

**2.2.6.0** Here, we will explore the possible conditions or reasons that brought about the rise of the doctrine of the two nirvana-elements (*nibbāna, dhātu*). These explanations are, at best, provisional and are meant to encourage us to think more broadly and deeply into the difficulties of the matter, and above all, for the sake of Dharma training.

**2.2.6.1 The first reason** probably has to do with **the Buddha’s silence** on the nature of the arhat after death—that we cannot say or view that *he exists, or that he does not, or both, or neither*.<sup>73</sup> To try to define such an ineffable state is to attempt to bring down to a worldly level what is utterly free from all worldliness. This point highlights the verifiable, pragmatic and experiential spirit of early Buddhism.<sup>74</sup>

It’s like trying to describe the most beautiful painting we have seen or our joyful experience of a sunset. We need to see what is beautiful for ourselves. We need to taste a meal for ourselves. Even then, we must learn how to take wholesome food, eat wholesomely, keep to food hygiene, observe table manners, and so on.

Such a profound teaching may be well understood and accepted by the arhat and the learners, all of whom have various levels of liberated minds and boundless hearts, or by learned scholars and diligent students. However, it is not easy for the ordinary Buddhist worldling to understand these tetralemma of reality; hence, it is difficult for them to *not* think about the posthumous nature of the Buddha or the arhat.

The teaching of the two nirvana-elements, as it were, simplifies the logic and meaning of the tetralemma. It helps the ordinary unawakened Buddhist to understand that an arhat awakens in this life, lives

<sup>69</sup> For Buddhaghosa’s def of *nibbāna*, see Vism 8.245-251/293 (recollection of peace).

<sup>70</sup> **Aggi Vaccha, gotta S** (M 72): “being without fuel, it [the fire] would surely be reckoned as quenched” (*anāhara nibbuto t’eva saṅkham gacchati*, M 72,19.3/1:487,28-30), SD 6.15.

<sup>71</sup> **Paṭṭācāra Thī**: “Then, taking a needle, | I dunked the wick: | just like the lamp’s quenching is nirvana | the liberation of (my) mind” (*tato sūcim gahetvāna | vaṭṭim okassayām’aham || padīpassēva nibbānam | vimokkhu ahu cetaso*, Thī 116), SD 43.3(5).

<sup>72</sup> On the non-technical nature of Pali in the early Buddhist texts, see SD 10.16 (1.3.2).

<sup>73</sup> On the posthumous state of the arhat, see SD 5.8 (2-3).

<sup>74</sup> See esp **Kesa, puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4a.

out his natural life-span, and with his death, attains “final nirvana.” The nirvana-element teaching gives a more palpable and positive vision of the Buddha or an arhat who has passed on than the teachings on silence and apophasis.<sup>75</sup>

**2.2.6.2 The second reason** probably has to do with the Buddhist view of **karma**. Unlike the Jains who view that all karmic acts must bear fruit before liberation can be won, the Buddha teaches that only when we have won full control of the mind that we will awaken to nirvana.

With full control of our mind, we are able to stop defilements from imprisoning us to the world. Hence, once we have eradicated our defilements, our lives will naturally progress happily to its natural end, and when death finally comes, there is no more rebirth. While the nirvana with residue refers to the initial awakening, the nirvana without residue refers to the true and utter end of our round of rebirths and redeaths.

This explanation inspires us to explore further into the personal nature of the Buddha or the arhat—whether they feel, how they feel. Above all, all arhats began, as it were, just like any of us. Through self-effort, they are able to attain awakening and nirvana here and now, and with death, they end up just like the Buddha. Like the Buddha, all arhats are liberated from birth and death. We can be arhats, too.

**2.2.6.3** At least one scholar has suggested the possibility that the doctrine of the 2 kinds of *nibbāna*, *dhātu* is a **late innovation**—that it could have been introduced by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century north Indian commentator, Buddhaghosa, working in Sri Lanka.<sup>76</sup> This is highly unlikely because by his time, the Tipiṭaka as we have it today was basically closed.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the Pali canon was **written down**, probably in India by Asoka’s time, but certainly in Sri Lanka during the reign of king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi (c29-17 BCE). All these events meant that it is almost impossible that any new suttas could have been added to the canon.

Another reason is the **simplicity** of the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta itself. Although this Sutta is the locus classicus for the doctrine of the two nirvana-elements, the Sutta contains only basic early Buddhist teachings without any technical terms except for those of the nirvana-elements. If Buddhaghosa had interpolated this teaching, he would have surely presented a more technically crafted text that reflected the commentarial style. Moreover, if he had introduced any new doctrine, he would surely have presented his reasons and arguments in his Commentaries or his Visuddhi,magga, explaining the two terms to us.<sup>78</sup>

## 2.3 DHĀTU

### 2.3.1 The term *dhātu*

**2.3.1.1** A fuller definition of *dhātu* is given in Nyanatiloka’s *Buddhist Dictionary*. We will confine our discussion to our purpose of understanding the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta and its teachings. In this connect-

<sup>75</sup> On the Buddha’s silence on speculative and unhelpful matters, see SD 44.1 (5.2). On apophasis or negative language, see SD 40a.1 (6.3).

<sup>76</sup> See, eg, Soonil Hwang 2006:46 f.

<sup>77</sup> Traditionally, the early Pali canon or *dhamma,vinaya* was determined by the first “recital”—the council of Rājagaha—said to be held during the rains retreat 3 months after the Buddha’s passing (AB) (traditional date 543 BCE; scholars’ date 405 BCE). The 2<sup>nd</sup> council was held 100 years after the Buddha’s death at Vesālī, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> council, 218 years AB in emperor Asoka’s capital, Pāṭali,putta. Asoka reigned from c272-231. Buddhaghosa lived around the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. For Vinaya records of the first two councils, see V 2:284-307 (chs 11-12).

<sup>78</sup> Buddhaghosa, in his Visuddhi,magga, only mentioned *nibbāna,dhātu* to explain certain points. In his works, however, he mentions a 3<sup>rd</sup> kind of “nirvana”—that of the Buddha’s relics (*sārīranibbānadhātu*). On “Nirvana: 2 kinds or 3 kinds,” see SD 9 (15.2). See Norman 1991:2 = 1993:253; Thomas 1933:131 f.

ion, *dhātu*, “element,” seems almost always to refer to “a distinct sphere of experience.” These are the “elements” of experience: a visible object, for example, is experientially distinct from an auditory object, from the visual organ, from visual consciousness, and so on.

Physically, the earth element is distinct from water, etc; pleasant bodily feeling from unpleasant bodily feeling, etc; sense-desire from aversion, etc; sense-objects from form or the formless. Likewise, the unconditioned and the conditioned are quite distinct as objects of experience.<sup>79</sup> We have already noted that the suffix *-dhātu* in *nibbāna,dhātu* makes it a technical term. [2.3.2.2]

**2.3.1.2** Sutta teachings on the analysis of these elements are intended to facilitate insight into **non-self** (*anattā*). In the **Mahā Rāhul’ovada Sutta** (M 62), for example, the Buddha teaches Rāhula how to meditate on the 5 elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space. First, each of them is defined in terms of our own elements: these are our “internal” (*ajjhatta*) elements. The “internal” element and its “external” counterpart are “simply” (*eva*) the same element itself.

“And that should be seen, according to reality, with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’” When we see it thus with right wisdom, revulsion arises towards the element, and our mind is dispassionate towards it.<sup>80</sup> “Revulsion” (*nibbidā*) here refers to a kind of “once bitten, twice shy” realization and response of being a burnt child who dreads the fire.

**2.3.1.3** Clearly, the purpose here is to discern conceptually the unconditioned element (*asaṅkhata dhatu*) of awakened experience “in order to clarify retrospective understanding of the fruition attainment (*phala,samāpatti*).”<sup>81</sup> The term, *asaṅkhata*, “unconditioned” appears by itself in, for example, the *Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta* (S 43/4:359-373), where it is defined as the destruction of lust, hate and delusion. In this context, it is applied to the 3<sup>rd</sup> noble truth—in either case, it refers to “the ending of suffering,” nirvana.<sup>82</sup>

### 2.3.2 Dhātu in nibbāna,dhātu

**2.3.2.1** The Commentary to the *Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta* explains that the word *dhātu* in the term, *nibbāna,dhātu*, is “an ‘element’ in the sense that it is not a being (*nissatta*), and of lacking any soul (*nijjīva*), and in the sense of sustaining (*dhāraṇa*) its own nature”<sup>83</sup> (ItA 1:164) [2.3.1.1]. Nirvana, as it were, exists in itself—as an unconditioned reality, the only one of its kind, without any counterpart, but of cosmic significance—it is *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>84</sup>

**2.3.2.2** Even without the suffix, *-dhātu*, the two terms—as *upādi,sesa nibbāna* and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna*—would make good sense and serve exactly the same function. The suffix *-dhātu*, then, is a pleonasm, a technical redundancy. However, the suffix *-dhātu* serves not only to give emphasis to the term, but also makes it a technical term, in the sense that it refers to the arhat or attempts to define the nature of the arhat in clear, even fixed, terms. In other words, the two terms are late but canonical technical terms.

However, as we well know or should know, technical terms are not common in the early Buddhist texts. The **suttas** do not use words to fix a truth or reality. Rather, they work with words to describe

<sup>79</sup> See Cousins 1984:73 f.

<sup>80</sup> M 62,8-12 (SD 3.11).

<sup>81</sup> Cousins 1984:73 f.

<sup>82</sup> Cousins 1984:74.

<sup>83</sup> *Tad eva nissatta,nijjīv’atthena sabhāva,dhāraṇ’atthena ca dhātūti nibbāna,dhātu* (ItA 1:164).

<sup>84</sup> See SD 26.8 (1.1.3).

truth or reality for our provisional understanding so that we can, as a result, free our mind from thinking about it. Our mind then becomes calm and clear, ready for mental focus, ready for liberating wisdom.<sup>85</sup>

### 2.3.2.3 OVERVIEW

(1) Getting back to basics, we must remind ourselves that **nirvana** is simply the utter uprooting of the 3 unwholesome roots—lust, hate and delusion—which effectively constitute all the defilements, gross and subtle, that hinder us from awakening. It—properly, “it” is *not* nirvana but the attaining of nirvana—has been compared to a fire that is fully extinguished [2.1.3.2]. It may be said that in the Buddha’s time, unlike the Vedic followers (who believe that the fire has merely “disappeared” back into the wood or fuel), the Buddhists reject such a notion (teaching that fire arises simply from the right conditions).

(2) Hence, we should not take the two terms—*upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,-dhātu*—as referring to two “kinds” of nirvana (that is, as separate states or categories). The word **dhātu** in these two terms emphasizes the fact that they refer to the concept of nirvana, not to nirvana itself [2.2.3.2]. This is merely a way of speaking about how we should view the 4 kinds of saints, especially the arhat, or the nature of the arhat himself. We are using language to point out what is beyond language; so, we need to keep a very open mind.<sup>86</sup> The two terms, then, are simply conceptual tools for talking about the awakened saint and the awakened state.

(3) When applied **synchronously** (within a life-time), we can (it is a flexible set of terms), for example, say that while the first three kinds of saints (streamwinner, once-returner and non-returner) are those with *upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* (they still have residues of the fetters to eradicate), while the arhat is with *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu* (he has eradicated all the fetters).

When the two terms are applied **diachronously** (“across time” or over two lives)—that is, in this life and the next—they apply *only* to the arhat. In this life itself, the arhat *remains* on account of his past “residual” karma, that is, his 5 aggregates without clinging (form, feeling, perception, formation (sg)<sup>87</sup> and consciousness). On passing away—when these aggregates cease to support him—he passes away just like a fire or a lamp that has naturally run out of fuel.

## 2.4 BODHI AND NIBBĀNA

### 2.4.1 Related but not synonymous

Full awakening naturally and necessarily entails the attaining of nirvana (*nibbāna*), or at least, the first type of nirvana [1.1.1.2]. However, the early Buddhist texts sometimes seem to blur the distinction between *bodhi* and *nibbāna*—both referring to the final stage or culmination of the spiritual path—but they are not exactly synonymous. While *bodhi* is an event while *nibbāna* is a state, but both refer to the same goal of spiritual freedom (*vimutti*). Although they overlap in this sense, they do not fully mean the same thing.

<sup>85</sup> We may, however, say that, unlike the suttas, the Abhidhamma, at least in parts, attempts to use words and concepts to define “ultimate reality,” which can only be directly experienced. The word is not the thing: see SD 26.3 (5.1.2.5); SD 44.1 (5.4).

<sup>86</sup> “Keeping an open mind” here refers to not being caught up by the idea that the truth or reality is defined by the words, but rather we are only using words and ideas to explore such a truth or reality for a better understanding of it. This does not mean that we can “say anything” we want about “something,” without having tasted the truth, or at least, having some wholesome understanding of the matter. We must be careful not to fall into the sophistry or licence that end up rejecting or belittling the historical Buddha and his teachings—which only betrays the fact that we really neither understand nor respect the Dharma..

<sup>87</sup> On the singular form, *saṅkhāra*, see SD 20.6 (2.2.2.1). See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.13-15), SD 40a.9.

## 2.4.2 Distinctions between awakening and nirvana

2.4.2.1 Distinctions should be made between these two terms as used in the early Buddhist texts:

**Awakening** (*bodhi*) is cognitive, psychological and teleological event. [2.4.2.2-2.4.2.4]

**Nirvana** (*nibbāna*) is affective, soteriological and eschatological state. [2.4.2.5-2.4.2.7]

Technically, then, we can say that while *bodhi* (from √BUDH, “to wake”) is best understood as a spiritual or mental event, *nibbāna* should be understood as an existential state in relation to space and time. The “buddha” (the nomen agentis or personal noun of *bodhi*) or the arhat awakens to true knowledge and freedom, and on account of that, attains or realizes nirvana, which is rebirth-free and time-less.

In terms of **time**—but only so, without any distinction in grade or status—awakening occurs first, while nirvana is a sustained state that follows, so to speak, and also the final ending of the awakened event. This last statement refers to the passing away of the Buddha and the arhats, and which entails no more rebirth: they are liberated in terms of **space**. [2.4.3]

**2.4.2.2 AWAKENING** (*bodhi*) is cognitive in the sense that the Buddha and arhats cognize or know true reality in a more direct, fuller and clearer manner than the unawakened. Indeed, whatever the awakened cognize *is* true reality. They see and experience things as they really are, seeing into the truth and beauty of everything. The Pali word for “to know” in this sense is *paṭisaṃvedeti*, which significantly encompasses “to feel,” in the sense of “to experience directly.”<sup>88</sup>

Awakening is the cognitive and experiential dimension of buddhahood and arhathood. It is the direct knowledge and clear insight of true reality, and total freedom from the unwholesome roots of lust, aversion and ignorance. It is sometimes said to be “omniscience” (*sabbaññutā ñāṇa*) in the sense that the Buddha knows “all” (*sabba*), or rather, *the* all.

According to **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), the “**all**” are the 6 sense-faculties (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and their respective objects (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts).<sup>89</sup> In short, our senses are the tools of knowing, and the sense-objects, our sources of knowledge. This is *all* that we can possibly know.

**2.4.2.3** Awakening totally transforms us into true individuals in **psychological** and **spiritual** ways. For the awakened—and also for the saints of the path—their minds are *clarified* and their hearts *purified*. They have full clarity of mind—mindfulness (*sati*) and full comprehension (*sampajañña*)<sup>90</sup>—and a mind that fully and directly sees the truth of a person or a state—this is highlighted by the arhat’s accomplishment in the various superknowledges (*abhiññā*), including psychic powers (*iddhi*).<sup>91</sup>

Mindfulness and full comprehension purify the heart (the affective or feeling aspect) of the awakened and, to some extent, that of the path saint, too. This pure heart is able to fully and directly sense beauty in a being, a state or a thing. The suttas, for example, often speak of the Buddha and the arhats appreciating the beauty of nature,<sup>92</sup> or simply enjoying the bliss of their own experiences.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> On the significance of the verb, “to feel,” meaning to experience directly, see SD 36.1 (1.6.0.2). On feeling during meditation, see SD 38.3 (4.5).

<sup>89</sup> S 35.23 (SD 7.1).

<sup>90</sup> On mindfulness and full comprehension (*sati, sampajañña*), see SD 13.1 (3.6).

<sup>91</sup> On the 6 superknowledges (*abhiññā*), see SD 27.5a (5).

<sup>92</sup> See, eg, **Mahā Kassapa** (Tha 1062-1065); **Tālapuṭa** (Tha 1102-1103).

<sup>93</sup> In (**Sāriputta**) **Nibbāna S** (A 9.34), eg, Sāriputta describes nirvana as being “blissful”: “Where nothing is felt, that is truly happiness!” (A 9.34/4:414 f), SD 55.1; also SD 17.3 (7.8.4).

**2.4.2.4 Teleologically** (in terms of spiritual goal), awakening is the culmination or end of our spiritual training, the end of the noble quest.<sup>94</sup> **The Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), for example, declares that these things are difficult to see, that is, “the stilling of all formations, the giving up of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering), nirvana.”<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, in **the Uddham, bhāgiya Sutta** (S 45.180), in the “path schedule 3,” the practitioner is said to cultivate each factor of the eightfold path—eg, right view—“that plunges into the death-free, that crosses over to the death-free, that ends in the death-free.” In other words, as we practise the path, any of the factors of the supramundane path can lead us to nirvana.<sup>96</sup>

**2.4.2.5 NIRVANA** is seen to be **affective** in the sense that it is freedom from desire, passion, agitation, hate, birth and death, and rebirth. The Buddha and arhats are, as such, free from all negative emotions. Even before attaining nirvana, the meditator experiences profound *joy* and *peace* through the dhyanas (*jhāna*), which are the bases for his mental efforts to reach awakening. After attaining nirvana, the Buddha and the arhats continue to regularly meditate into the dhyanas as a natural part of their daily routine.

Dhyana meditation is no more a tool for awakening for the arhats because they are already awakened. Dhyana now becomes their *natural tendency*, just as a healthy Olympic champion sportsman continues to do his routine of exercises even after retirement. Even outside of meditation, the awakened mind is happy, peaceful and clear. However, such a meditation helps to keep the decaying physical body comfortably functional.<sup>97</sup>

**2.4.2.6** The **soteriological** aspect of our concept of nirvana is famously defined in **the Bāhiya teaching** (U 1.10), which is also given to Māluṅkya,putta—which is the occasion for their respective awakenings. The passage goes thus:

**13** “When, Māluṅkya,putta, in things to be seen, heard, sensed and known by you,  
     in the seen                   there will only be the seen;  
     in the heard                 there will only be the heard;  
     in the sensed                there will only be the sensed;  
     in the known                there will only be the known,  
 13.2 then, Māluṅkya,putta,    you are ‘not by that.’<sup>98</sup>  
 When Māluṅkya,putta,        you are ‘not by that,’ then, you will ‘not be therein.’<sup>99</sup>  
 When Māluṅkya,putta,        you are ‘not therein,’  
   then, you will ‘be neither here nor beyond nor between the two.’<sup>100</sup>  
 This is itself the ending of suffering.”<sup>101</sup>   S 35.95,13 (SD 5.9) = U 1.10,13 (SD 33.7)

<sup>94</sup> On the 4 kinds of noble quests, see **(Catukka) Pariyesanā S** (A 4.252), SD 50.9.

<sup>95</sup> *Sabba,saṅkhāra,samatho sabbūpadhi,paṭinissaggo taṇha-k,khayo virago nirodho nibbānaṃ* (M 26,19.3), SD 1.11.

<sup>96</sup> For an eschatological understanding of nirvana, see SD 50.1 (3.4).

<sup>97</sup> On how the Buddha keeps himself physically fit, such as with walking exercises, see **Caṅkama S** (A 5.29), SD 76.3. See also **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,3), SD 6.14; **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125,2.2) n, SD 46.3.

<sup>98</sup> *Na tena*, that is, one would not be aroused “by that” lust, etc. See SD 35.9 (2).

<sup>99</sup> *Na tattha*, that is, one would not be “therein,” i.e. in the seen, etc. See SD 35.9 (2).

<sup>100</sup> “Be neither here ... nor in between the two,” *n’ev’idha na huraii na ubhayam antarena*, meaning that one would not be reborn anywhere. See Sd 35.9 (3.2.4).

<sup>101</sup> See **The taming of the bull**, SD 8.2(10).

§13.1 of the verse above describes how, through mindfulness, the meditator is fully aware and comprehends what he sees, hears, senses and knows objectively. He simply knows things *as they really are*, as being mind-made, rising and falling phenomena that are impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self.

In §13.2, the phrase, “You are ‘not by that’” means that the arhat is controlled neither by any thought or emotion nor by any of his sense-experiences. He is no more what he thinks or feels. Since he is neither controlled nor concocted by his sense-experiences, he is not *in* such experiences, not overwhelmed by them.

There is no “I,” “me” or “mine” in any of his senses or experiences. There is no sense of self or self-ishness whatsoever underlying his experiences. Since he is now certain that there is no abiding self or soul, his mind is free from any wrong view. As such, he will not be reborn anywhere, neither in the sense world nor in the suprasensual worlds (the form and the formless worlds), nor in an in-between state. He is totally free from rebirth because he has attained nirvana.<sup>102</sup>

**2.4.2.7** In an **eschatological** sense, nirvana is our truly ultimate destiny from which we do not return to the suffering world, or to any kind of existence or non-existence. When the bark-dress ascetic **Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya** has attained final nirvana, the Buddha utters this *udāna* (inspired utterance):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>27</b> Where neither water nor earth,<br/>there, no stars shine,<br/>there, the moon glows not,</p> | <p>nor fire nor wind finds a footing,<br/>nor the sun blazes,<br/>nor is there darkness.<sup>103</sup></p>   |
| <p><b>28</b> And who knows this for himself,<br/>then, from form and formless<sup>104</sup></p>           | <p>through sagehood, he is a sage, a brahmin,<br/>freed is he, from joy and pain, too.<br/><span style="display: block; text-align: right;">(U 1.10,27-28/9), SD 33.7<sup>105</sup></span></p> |

— — —

## SD 50.13(2)

## Sarā Sutta

The Discourse on the Flows • S 68\*-69\* = S 1.27/1:15

Traditional: S 1.1.3.7 = Saṃyutta Nikāya 1, Sagāthā Vagga 1, Devatā Saṃyutta 1, Satthi Vagga 3

Theme: The nature of nirvana

### Introduction

The question is here asked about the “flows” (*sarā*) that is samsara or *samsāra, sarā*—the ceaseless flows of the streams of life and death, rebirths and redeaths—how do they end? The answer is by attaining nirvana. (SA 1:52)

<sup>102</sup> See SD 5.9 (3).

<sup>103</sup> This verse alluding to nirvana, qu at Nett 150; cf “Where do these 4 primary elements—earth, water, fire, wind—cease without remainder?” **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11,67-85/1:215-223) + SD 1.7 esp (2). Cf Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.10-12: “There the sun does not shine, | nor the moon and the stars. | There lightning does not shine, | of the common fire need we speak! | Him [the Ātman] alone, as he shines, do all things reflect; | this whole world radiates with his light.” || (Patrick Olivelle’s tr, *The Early Upaniṣads*, 1998:447-449; see also Paul Deussen (tr), *Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda*, 1897:581). Cf Śvetāśvatāra U 6.14; Kaṭhā U 5.15

<sup>104</sup> These 2 last lines apparently allude to the 9 progressive abodes (the 4 dhyanas, 4 formless attainments, and the cessation of perception and feeling): see **Raho, gata S** (S 36.11/4:216-218), SD 33.6.

<sup>105</sup> A similar verse is found at **Sarā S** (S 69\*/1.27/1:15), SD 50.13(2), and a similar teaching at **Channa S** (S 35.87/-4:59), SD 11.12. On this verse in **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11,85.3), SD 1.7, see D:W 557 n242 & **Mahā Parinibbāna S**, SD 9 (9h).

Statements on nirvana similar to that in **S 69** (the reply) are found in **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11)<sup>106</sup> and **the (Arahatta) Bāhiya Sutta** (U 1.10).<sup>107</sup>

### The Sarā Sutta

- |  |      |   |
|--|------|---|
| <p>1 <i>Kuto sarā nivattanti<br/>kattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati<br/>kattha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca<br/>asesaṃ uparujjhatī</i></p>                      | S 68 | <p>From where do the flows turn back?<br/>Where do the rounds no longer turn?<sup>108</sup><br/>When is<sup>109</sup> name-and-form<br/>destroyed without residue?</p>                    |
| <p>2 <i>Yattha āpo ca paṭhavi<br/>Tejo vāyu na gādhati<br/>ato sarā nivatthanti<br/>ettha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca<br/>asesaṃ uparujjhatī</i></p> | S 69 | <p>Where water, earth,<br/>fire and wind find no footing:<br/>it is from here that the flows turn back.<br/>Here, name-and-form, too,<br/>is<sup>110</sup> destroyed without residue.</p> |

— evaṃ —

**2.4.2.8** On the stopping of the flow, see these verses from **the Ajita Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.1):

- |  |         |  |
|--|---------|--|
| <p>1 <i>Savanti sabbadhī sotā<br/>(icc-ayasmā ājito)<sup>111</sup><br/>sotānaṃ kiṃ nīvaraṇaṃ<br/>sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūhi<br/>kena sotā pithiyyare<sup>112</sup></i></p> | Sn 1034 | <p>Streams flow everywhere,<br/>(said the venerable Ajita)<br/>What is the hindrance to streams?<br/>Tell me the restraint for streams.<br/>By what are streams dammed?</p>                |
| <p>2 <i>Yāni sotāni lokasmim<br/>(ajitāti bhagavā)<br/>satī tesāṃ nīvaraṇaṃ<br/>sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūmi<br/>pannā'ete pithiyyare</i></p>                                | Sn 1035 | <p>Whatever streams there are in the world,<br/>(Ajita, said the Blessed One)<br/>mindfulness is their hindrance,<br/>the restraint for streams, I say!<br/>They are dammed by wisdom.</p> |
| <p>3 <i>Paññā c'eva satī ca<br/>(icc-āyasmā ajito)<br/>nāma,rūpañ ca mārisa<br/>etaṃ me puṭṭho pabrūhi<br/>katth'etaṃ uparujjhati</i></p>                              | Sn 1036 | <p>Wisdom and mindfulness, too,<br/>(said the venerable Ajita)<br/>and name-and-form, sir,<br/>tell me, who has asked:<br/>where is<sup>113</sup> this stopped?</p>                        |

<sup>106</sup> D 11,85.3/1:223,13-15 (SD 1.7).

<sup>107</sup> U 1.10/9,4 (SD 33.7).

<sup>108</sup> On how the rounds cease turning, see the phrase, “there is no more round to describe” (*vattam ... n'atthi paññāpanāya*) at **Upādana Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56,21/3:61,28), SD 3.7; **Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S** (S 22.57,13.2+18.2+21.4+25.2+29.2), SD 29.2; **Sāriputta Koṭṭhita S 4** (S 44.6/4:391,9), SD 97.17.

<sup>109</sup> The Pali takes *nāmañ ca rūpañ ca* as a cpd singular: note *nirujjhati*. The same in S 69.

<sup>110</sup> On *nāmañ ca rūpañ ca*, see prec n.

<sup>111</sup> Comy says that this is the reciter's remarks (ThaA 242 ad Tha 824). See Sn:N n18-29.

<sup>112</sup> *Pithiyyare* (3 pl, passive of *pidahati*, “to cover, conceal, close, shut”). On *th/dh* change, see Sn:N 381 n935 & Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994 §39.5. On the verb *pathiyati* = *pithiyyati*, cf “new joys and sorrow have hidden away old ones” (*navena sukha,dukkhena porānaṃ apithiyati*. J 2:157,23\*). On its technicality, see Tha:N 247 n872.

<sup>113</sup> On *nirujjhati* as sg at Sn 1036e + 1037df, see n at S 68 above.

- 4 *Yam etaṃ pañhaṃ apucchi*  
*(aiiṭṭa taṃ vadāmi te)*  
*yattha namañ ca rūpañ ca*  
*asesaṃ uparujjhati*  
*viññāṇassa nirodhena*  
*etth'etaṃ uparujjhati* Sn 1037
- This question which you have asked,  
 (Ajita, I will answer it)  
 about where name-and-form  
 is stopped without residue—  
 with the ceasing of consciousness,<sup>114</sup>  
 there, this is stopped.

**2.4.2.9** At the closing of **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), there is a riddle which even the highest gods are unable to answer, and its answer given by the Buddha, thus:

Where do earth, water, fire, wind find no footing?  
 Here long and short, small and great, fair and foul,  
 name and form totally cease without remainder?

And the answer to that is:<sup>115</sup>

The consciousness without attribute [non-manifesting],<sup>116</sup> without end, radiant all around<sup>117</sup>—

*ettha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo vāyo na gādhati*  
*ettha dīghaṃ ca rassañ ca anuraṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ*  
*ettha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesam uparujjhati*  
*viññāṇam nirodhena etth'etaṃ uparujjhātīti*

Here, earth, water, fire, and wind find no footing;  
 here, long and short, small and great, fair and foul;  
 here, name and form stop without residue:  
 here, with the ceasing of consciousness (all) this  
 stop.”<sup>118</sup>

(D 11,85,3-4), SD 1.7

### 2.4.3 Space and time

**2.4.3.1** In discussing such subtle and abstruse ideas relating to the concepts of nirvana, figurative language often helps. Poetically, we can speak of awakening in terms of our mind freeing itself from the

<sup>114</sup> On the ceasing of consciousness, cf Sn 734; see also [2.4.2.9], which follows.

<sup>115</sup> The first stanza line, *viññāṇam anidassanam anantam sabbato, pabham*, as in **Brahma, nimantanika S** (M 49, 25/1:329), SD 11.7. On the unestablished consciousness, see **Viññāṇa**, SD 17.8a(11.3).

<sup>116</sup> “Without attribute [signless],” *anidassana*, “invisible.” Ñāṇananda renders it as “non-manifesting” (*Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971:59). See Bodhi’s important n at M:ÑB 1249 n513. See also Thanissaro’s nn: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.11.0.than.html> & <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.049.than.html>.

<sup>117</sup> “Radiant all around,” *sabbato, pabham*, where *pabham*, vl *paham*. Ñāṇamoli, in his *Majjhima tr*, takes *pabham* to be the negative present participle of *pabhavati* (“to be able”)—*apabham*—the negative-prefix *a* elided in conjunction with *sabbato*: “The sense can be paraphrased freely by ‘not predicating being in relation to “all,”’ or ‘not assuming of “all” that it is or is not in an absolute sense’” (M: ÑB 1249 n513). But, argues Bodhi. “if we take *pabham* as ‘luminous,’ which seems better justified, the [Majjhima] verse links up with the idea of the mind as being intrinsically luminous [A 1:10]” (id). See D:W 557 n241. Cf A 1.10 (SD 8.3) where the mind is said to be naturally radiant (*pabhassara*) & A 2:139 where the light of wisdom (*paññā, pabha*) is called the best of lights. See Bodhi’s important n at M:ÑB 1249 n513. For a philological survey on *sabbato, pabha*, see Norman 1987. See also Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, 1996:100 f.

<sup>118</sup> The Buddha makes a similar statement by way of an Udāna (inspired utterance) on the parinirvana of **Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya**: “Where water, earth, fire and wind find no footing, | There neither brightness burns nor sun shines | There neither moon gleams nor darkness reigns. | When a sage, a brahmin, through wisdom has known this by himself. | Then he is freed from form and formless, from joy and pain.” (U 1.10). A similar verse is found at S 69\*/1:15, and a similar teaching is given by Mahā Cunda to Channa (S 35.87/4:59). On this verse in **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,85), SD 1.7, see D:W 557 n242 & **Mahā Parinibbāna S**, SD 9 (9h).

limitations of **space**, while nirvana refers to our overcoming the limitations of **time**. Awakening frees up our mind in terms of “inner space”—the freedom from the “confined” or crowdedness of worldly life.<sup>119</sup> Notice that in Buddhist cosmology, **the hells** are the most crowded environment there is for sentient beings, and **the heavens**, on the other hand, are the most spacious realms. Nirvana is beyond even this cosmic space.

**2.4.3.2** One good way to see **Buddhist renunciation**—becoming a monastic to work for awakening in this life itself—is the giving up of the crowdedness of family and worldly life for the **spaciousness** of spirituality. This is an *inner* spaciousness that is accessed through proper meditation, based on peace and love. With proper training and diligence, we will be able to free our body from the physical senses so that the mind is liberated to be what it really is.

This profoundly blissful mental state is known as “**dhyana**” (*jhāna*), of which there are 4 ascending stages, each becoming more refined in mental joy and clarity. When the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana is properly cultivated, we go on to experience the boundlessness of space; then, rising from that state, our consciousness is free from all bounds. We go on to see the joy of “nothingness,” or better, “no thingness.” In the 4<sup>th</sup> “formless” dhyana (as these 4 higher states are called), we enjoy a mental state where our consciousness is so *refined* that it is said to neither exist nor not exist.<sup>120</sup>

However, even with the mastery of these **8 attainments** (*aṭṭha samāpatti*)—the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless dhyanas—we are still caught in the round of existence. Even after being reborn in the highest heavens, we can and will fall into any of the subhuman states, even the lowest, the hells, when the force of our good karma is exhausted.<sup>121</sup> The only way we can avoid this cosmic snakes-and-ladders (an ancient Indian board-game about karma and liberation)<sup>122</sup> is to attain at least *streamwinning* in this life itself.<sup>123</sup>

**2.4.3.3** A related but more developed set of meditation states is called **the 8 liberations** (*aṭṭha vimokkha*).<sup>124</sup> The term *vimokkha* refers both to the method and the attainment. The first 3 are dhyana meditations using the *kasīṇa* (meditation-disc) method; then, there are the 4 formless attainments, and the 8<sup>th</sup> is the cessation of perception and feeling [2.4.3.4]. The full-fledged arhats have developed and mastered all these 8 liberations.

All such methods can be seen as ways of transcending crowded worldliness for spiritual space. This “space” is not *ākāsa* (“empty space”), but *okāsa*,<sup>125</sup> meaning space as the opportunity for personal development, freedom and awakening, that is, nirvana itself. However, nirvana is neither space nor place: it is located neither anywhere nor anywhen.<sup>126</sup>

**2.4.3.4** If we envision the 8 liberations as opening up for us the inner space that culminates in total mental and spiritual freedom, then, the 8<sup>th</sup> liberation—that of the cessation of perception and feeling

<sup>119</sup> See (**Pañcāla,caṇḍa**) **Sambādha Sutta** (A 9.42) + SD 33.2 (1.2); **Sambādho’kāsa S** (A 6.26), SD 15.6.

<sup>120</sup> On the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

<sup>121</sup> On that even the gods eventually fall into the hells, see (**Nānā,karaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

<sup>122</sup> Snakes and Ladders is a board game that originated in India. The Jain version is called Gyan Chauper (the game of wisdom) has more snakes than ladders, signifying the difficulty of doing good. It serves as a pleasant tool for teaching karma and liberation (*mokṣa*), or the cycle of samsara. A Buddhist version prob existed during the Pāla-Sena period in Bengal (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> cent). See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snakes\\_and\\_Ladders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snakes_and_Ladders).

<sup>123</sup> See (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (1.7.3.2).

<sup>124</sup> On the 8 liberations, see SD 5.17 (10); SD 49.5b (3).

<sup>125</sup> On *okāsa*, see **Sambadh’okāsa S** (A 6.26) @ SD 15.6 (2.3.3).

<sup>126</sup> On nirvana not being a place, see SD 45.18 (2.5.6). On spirituality as “space,” see SD 10.16 (1.4.1.5); SD 11.4 (1.3); SD 49.19 (1.2.3).

(*saññā, vedayita nirodha*) or cessation attainment (*nirodha samāpatti*) or, simply, cessation (***nirodha***)—is the highest liberation from **time** itself [2.4.2.1]. In practical terms, time, as we know it, is already transcended in the preceding dhyanas, even in the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana. The ultimate transcendence of time, however, is only experienced by the Buddha, the arhat or the non-returner, that is, those who have mastered all the dhyanas and overcome their emotions, both unwholesome and wholesome.

**Cessation** is an arhat’s dwelling in nirvana here and now, while still living. It is not that the arhat has “come out” of nirvana after his awakening or that it has left him. It is that nirvana is “time-free” (*akālika*): it has nothing to do with time.<sup>127</sup> For the arhat to get out of the world of space-time, he goes into “cessation” (*nirodha*).

**2.4.3.5 Awakening** means that the arhat is fully liberated in his mind, but his body remains just as it is—as the 5 aggregates. But the clinging (*upādāna*, or *upādi*, to use the ancient term), the mind’s attraction to the body and distraction by it, is totally gone. In other words, the arhat still feels the body the way we feel it, but he knows what he is experiencing and is not overwhelmed by it. [2.2.3.4]

**The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) records the Buddha both as appreciating natural beauty,<sup>128</sup> and suffering excruciating bodily pains on account of his age. To deal with the pain, he goes into deep meditation, known as “the signless concentration of mind.”<sup>129</sup>

The cessation of feeling (or simply, “cessation”), however, is a profound mental state where all the life-signs as we know them medically, and scientifically measurable, simply cease in the meditator. In other words, he is clinically dead, but actually he is in stasis, and will emerge alive and well at the end of the cessation state.<sup>130</sup>

## **2.4.4 Enlightenment and awakening**

**2.4.4.1 “Enlightenment”** has been widely used by scholars and in secondary literature on Buddhism in reference to the process that makes a buddha—what in early Buddhism is known as *bodhi* [2.4.4.1]. Concerned scholars have often cautioned that the translation “enlightenment” can be misleading in view of the western cultural and historical association.

“The Enlightenment” is, in fact, a special term for a European intellectual movement of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries emphasizing reason, free inquiry and individualism rather than tradition. Early European scholars of Buddhism probably saw it fitting to associate this term with their notion of Buddhism, especially as a counterweight against Christianity.

**2.4.4.2** Traditionally, the term “**enlightenment**” [2.4.4.3] is commonly used in Mahāyāna (especially Zen) writings and circles, especially in reference to “satori” or “kensho.” It is difficult to determine what sort of religious state this really is, or whether it is what psychologists call a “dissociative” mental state. This is a state where some integral part of our life becomes separated from the rest of our personality and functions independently. For example, someone with emotional issues suddenly, in an apparent flash of insight, claims to experience a total release from it all, lost in some transcendently blissful state.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> The Dharma as the path (*magga*) is also said to be *akālika*: this is also an allusion to nirvana. See SD 15.9 (2.3). See also Norman 1994:23.

<sup>128</sup> D 16,3.1-2/2:102 (SD 9), also at SD 17,3 (7.5).

<sup>129</sup> D 16,2.25.3/2:100 (SD 9).

<sup>130</sup> On the cessation of perception and feeling, see SD 48.7 (3.2).

<sup>131</sup> The problem with such claims is that, very likely, the conditions or causes of subject’s emotional issues are now repressed, ie, unwittingly pushed down deeper into his unconscious, where they stay and fester as latent tendencies: see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3. Such latent tendencies, when they manifest themselves, can be deeply destruc-

Unlike in early Buddhism, where awakening (*bodhi*) is the result of a progressive personal training in moral virtue, mental cultivation and insight wisdom, “**enlightenment**” tends to refer to some sudden “attainment,” even an epiphany, taken to be an intellectual revelation, or religious state, or spiritual realization, that has no basis in the early Buddhism.

Moreover, such attainments are conferred like a heraldic title by the sect or lineage leader, or they need to be “licensed” or “franchised,” that is, authorized or handed down from an authorized figure.<sup>132</sup> In other words, it is a form of “rituals and vows,” one of the first 3 fetters which prevent us from attaining even the very first step on the path of awakening.<sup>133</sup>

**2.4.4.3 Bodhi** is usually translated as “awakening” [2.4.4.4], which is commonly used in the context of early Buddhist teachings.<sup>134</sup> The term *bodhi* comes from the root √BUDH (to understand, wake), especially a progressive self-awakening in the 4 noble truths<sup>135</sup> and the gradual attaining of arhathood.<sup>136</sup> The archetypal awakening is that of **the Buddha**, “the awakened one,” under the Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*), when he himself awakens (*bujjhati*) to nirvana (*nibbāna*), that is, full liberation from samsara and suffering.<sup>137</sup> Through his teachings, numerous other followers, too, awaken to the same state of nirvana as arhats, just like him.<sup>138</sup>

Technically, we should take “awakening” as the best translation of *bodhi* (ts), and “enlightenment” as the Mahāyāna doctrine, such as the Zen *satori* and *kensho*. Considering the great diversity of Buddhisms and Buddhist ideas that have arisen in post-Buddha times, even in our own time, it is helpful, even vital, to distinguish between awakening as taught in the early Indian texts, and enlightenment, especially as a ritualized state (even one with an impressive Sanskrit title)<sup>139</sup> or as a licenced attainment. [2.4.4.1]

## 2.5 OCCURRENCES OF THE 2 KEY PHRASES

### 2.5.1 “Well liberated *without residue*” (*anupādi,sesā suvimuttā*)

This phrase and similar phrases—denoting both arhathood and awakening of a living arhat—are found in the following suttas. Note that in the first two suttas, there is the form *anupādā*, “through non-clinging.” Clearly, we have here an old usage of *upādi*, its semantic ancestor. The phrase *anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā* translates as “they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.”

<b>Upādāna Parivaṭṭa Sutta</b>	<i>anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā</i>	S 22.56,9+12+15+18+21	SD 3.7
<b>Satta-ṭṭhāna Sutta</b>	<i>anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā</i>	S 22.57,13+18+21+25+30	SD 29.2
<b>(Brahmā) Tissa Sutta</b>	<i>anupādi,sesā suvimuttā</i>	A 7.53/4:75	SD 54.5

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tive, as evident from the scandals involving leading Zen masters and Tibetan gurus in the US and UK in the 1990s: see **Bad friendship**, SD 64.17. These are serious matters that need to be studied and prevented from recurrence. On repression, see (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Khaluṅka S** (A 8.14), SD 7.9.

<sup>132</sup> See **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.5 esp (5.1.2.9).

<sup>133</sup> On rituals and vows as a mental fetter (*sarṃyojana*), see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8 (5).

<sup>134</sup> On “enlightenment” and “awakening,” see Norman 1990:129.

<sup>135</sup> See, eg, **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1. On awakening in terms of the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*), see Gethin 2001:183-189.

<sup>136</sup> On arhathood (*arahatta*), see D 9,56.4 nn, SD 7.14 & SD 10.16 (14).

<sup>137</sup> On the 2 aspects of nirvana, see **Nibbāna,dhātu S** (It 2.2.7) below.

<sup>138</sup> See esp **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10.

<sup>139</sup> See, eg, SD 49.10 (2.4.1) and A Skilton, “State or statement? Samādhi in some early Mahāyāna Sūtras,” 2002.

We may surmise, then, this possible but approximate evolution of these related terms:

*upādā* (“clinging”) → *upādi* (“clinging, etc”) → *upādāna* (“clinging”)<sup>140</sup>

## 2.5.2 “The nirvana-element without residue” (*anupādi,sesāya nibbāna,dhātuya*)

**2.5.2.1** The phrase *sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,dhatu*, “the nirvana-element with residue,” is found only in the Nibbāna,dhatu Sutta. The term *sa,upādi,sesa*, however, is found in two suttas, thus:

<b>Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta</b>	A 9.12,3.4	<i>sa,upādi,seso kālaṃ kurumāno</i> <sup>141</sup>	[1.3.2.3]	SD 3.3(3)
<b>Nigrodha,kappa Sutta</b>	Sn 354c = Tha 1274c	<i>nibbāyi so ādhu sa,upādi,seso</i>	[1.3.1.3]	SD 80.6
<b>Nibbāna,dhatu Sutta</b>	It 2.2.7	<i>sa,upādi.sesa nibbāna,dhātu</i>		SD 50.13

The term *sa,upādi,sesa* is not so common in the suttas simply because there is little use for it. Surely, in the first period,<sup>142</sup> when most of the arhats and saintly followers were relatively young, there is little thought about what happens when the Buddha or an arhat dies. We will try to see if we can work out the sequence of the appearances of these terms. The suttas above have been listed in the probable order of lateness.

The oldest usage of *sa,upādi,sesa* is probably in the **Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12), to point out that even those with good karma who are reborn in the heavens, will fall into the subhuman states when their good karma is exhausted. Only the noble saints never fall into the subhuman realms. This reflects the times when the Buddhist community has to communicate with other sectarians. [1.3.2.3]

The term *sa,upādi,sesa* is also found in the late **Nigrodha,kappa Sutta** (Sn 2.12, v354c) and the **Vaṅḡisa Thera,gāthā** (Tha 1274c), forming the gist of Vaṅḡisa’s question about his teacher’s spiritual attainment.

Then, we have the usage of *sa,upādi,sesa* in the **Nibbāna,dhatu Sutta**. This is probably the latest of the three, where we see the death of a preceptor, Vaṅḡisa’s teacher. Ordination by a preceptor was a relatively late practice.<sup>143</sup>

We should, of course, remind ourselves all this is only a conjectural surmise—which would be useful if it helps us have some idea of the sequence of the usages of the phrase.

**2.5.2.2** The phrase *anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*—denoting the arhat’s passing away—is found in the following suttas:

<b>Māha,parinibbāna Sutta</b>	D 16/2:108, 134, 136. 140, 141 <sup>144</sup>	SD 9 (15)
<b>Pāsādika Sutta</b>	D 29,29.2/3:135	SD 40a.6
<b>Saṁvejaṇiya Sutta</b>	A 4.118/2:120	Excerpt from D 16
<b>Pahārāda Sutta</b>	A 8.19/4:197, 202	SD 45.18
<b>Bhūmi,cāla Sutta</b>	A 8.70/4:313 <sup>145</sup>	Excerpt from D 16
<b>(Samudda) Uposatha Sutta</b>	U 5.5/54×2	
<b>Cunda Kammāra,putta Sutta</b>	U 8.5/85	
<b>Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta</b>	It 2.2.7,7/38 f, both elements	SD 50.13

<sup>140</sup> See SD 3.7 (4); on *upādāna*, see (5).

<sup>141</sup> “Those who die with residues of clinging,” in references to the aggregates.

<sup>142</sup> On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 1.1 (2.2); SD 40a.1 (1.3).

<sup>143</sup> For an idea of the evolution of the monastic ordination, see **Pabbajjā**, SD 45.16.

<sup>144</sup> Respectively in §§3.20, 4.37, 4.42, 5.8.1, 5.8.2.

<sup>145</sup> Summary of **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.13-20/2:107-109), SD 9.

(Tathāgata) Loka Sutta  
Paṭisambhidā,magga

It 4.13,2.2/121 = A 4.23/2:24  
Pm 1.462/1:101, 20.26/2:184

SD 15.7(2.1.2)

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## The Discourse on the Nirvana-elements

It 2.2.7

1 This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat, thus have I heard:<sup>146</sup>

### Two kinds of nirvana-elements

2 Bhikshus, there are these two **nirvana-elements**. What are the two?

The nirvana-element with residue and  
the nirvana-element without (any) residue.

*sa, upādi, sesā nibbāna, dhātu*  
*anupādi, sesā nibbāna, dhātu*

### The nirvana-element with residue

3 And what, bhikshus, is **the nirvana-element with residue** (*sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu*)?

4 Here, bhikshus, a monk<sup>147</sup> is

**an arhat** [worthy],  
one whose mental influxes have been destroyed,  
who has fully lived,  
whose task is done,  
who has laid down the burden,  
who has reached the goal by himself,  
whose fetter of existence has been fully destroyed,  
who is freed by right knowledge.

*araham hoti*  
*khīṇ'āsavo*  
*vusitavā*  
*kata, karaṇīyo*  
*ohita, bhāro*  
*anuppatta, sad'attho*  
*parikkhīṇa, bhava, saṃyojano*  
*samma-d-aññā vimutto.*

5 For whom the 5 faculties still persist,  
on account of their non-disappearance;

*Tassa tiṭṭhant'eva pañc'indriyāni yesaṃ*  
*avigātattā<sup>148</sup>*

who experiences both the pleasant and the unpleasant,  
who feels pleasure and pain—

*manāpāmanāpaṃ paccanubhoti<sup>149</sup>*  
*sukha, dukkhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti*

6 (but) for him there is

*tassa yo*

<sup>146</sup> This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj'uttarā**: see SD 16.14 (1).

<sup>147</sup> Here, “monk” (*bhikkhu*) refers to any practitioner: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) n, SD 13.3; or all present: see SD 4.9 (5.3) & SD 13.1 (3.1.1).

<sup>148</sup> All MSS have *avighātattā*, “on account of being without obstruction,” which is prob a wr; some with vl *avigatattā*, which is also in ItA, and is preferable.

<sup>149</sup> *Paccanubhoti* = *paṭi* (a directional prefix) + *anu* (“along, after”) + *vbhū*, “to be” (BHS *pratyanubhavati*, Divy 54, 262) “to experience, undergo, realize” (M 1:295; S 5:218, 264 f, 286 f. 353; A 3:425 f; It 38; PvA 26, 44, 107 (*dukkham*)). According to Abhidhamma, all sense-experiences are the fruit of past karma. Hence, the arhat responds from experience, but does not create new karma. Neither PED (sv *paccanubhoti*) nor BHSD (sv *pratyanubhavati*) with a much longer entry, bring this out.

the destruction of lust,	<i>raga-k,khayo</i>
the destruction of hate,	<i>dosa-k,khayo</i>
the destruction of delusion.	<i>moha-k,khayo</i>

This, bhikshus, is called the nirvana-element with residue.<sup>150</sup>

### The nirvana-element without residue

7 And what, bhikshus, is **the nirvana-element without residue?** (*anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhātu*)

8 Here, bhikshus, a monk is  
*an arhat [worthy],  
 one whose mental influxes have been destroyed,  
 who has fully lived,  
 whose task is done,  
 who has laid down the burden,  
 who has reached the goal by himself,  
 whose fetter of existence has been fully destroyed,  
 who is freed by right knowledge—*

9 for him, bhikshus, all that are felt right here are not delighted in: they become cool.

*Tassa idh'eva bhikkhave sabba,vedayi-tāni anabhinanditāni sīti,bhavissanti*<sup>151</sup>

This, bhikshus, is called the nirvana-element without residue.

These, bhikshus, are the two nirvana-elements.

### The 2-nirvana verses

10 The Blessed One spoke on this matter. In this connection, he said this:

11 *Duve imā cakkhumatā pakāsītā  
 nibbāna,dhātū anissitena tādīnā  
 ekā hi dhātu idha diṭṭha,dhammikā  
 sa,upādi,sesā bhava,netti,saṅkhayā*

These two nirvana-elements have been declared *ba*  
 by the one with vision, the independent, who is such. *ab*  
 Here, in this very life is the element  
 with residue, in which existence's leader is destroyed.<sup>152</sup>

[39]

12 *Anupādi,sesā pana samparāyikā  
 yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso  
 ye etad aññāya padaṃ asaṅkhatam  
 vimutta,cittā bhava,netti,saṅkhayā*

But in the hereafter, he is without any residue,  
 where all existences cease.  
 Those whose minds are freed by direct knowledge *dc*  
 of this unconditioned state have destroyed existence's  
 leader.

<sup>150</sup> *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave sa-upādi,sesā nibbāna,dhātu.* Note that here, there is no distinguishing between the doer and the deed.

<sup>151</sup> This special usage of the 3 sg fut *bhavissanti* describes a spiritual state that, as it were, “will” always be so; hence, it is rendered as simple present, implying a universal truth [2.2.4.4].

<sup>152</sup> *Netti*, “one that leads, leader, conductor.”

