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(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Suttā

The (Nine) Discourses on What is Seen for Oneself | A 9.46+47

Theme: The state directly experienced as nirvana

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

1 Sutta summaries, key words and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARIES AND THEMES

1.1.1 Sutta summaries

The title **(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta** refers to these two discourses, both found in the Pañcāla Vagga (dealing with nirvana) of the Aṅguttara [2.1]:

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|---|----------|----------------|
| (1) the (Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika 1 or Dhamma Sandiṭṭhika Sutta | (A 9.46) | SD 50.25a, and |
| (2) the (Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika 2 or Nibbāna Sandiṭṭhika Sutta | (A 9.47) | SD 50.25b. |

Sutta (1) deals with *dhamma*, which here means broadly “teaching, truth, reality,”¹ but can also include nirvana, and should be understood as a synonym for *nibbāna*² [3.1]. Sutta (2) clearly refers to nirvana or aspects of it. Both *dhamma* as teaching, experience and reality on the one hand, and as *nibbāna*, on the other, are said to be “seen for oneself” (*sandiṭṭhika*) [1.2].

1.1.2 Main sutta theme

The main theme of the two **(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Suttas** is the same—the 9 progressive stages of cessation (*anu, pubba nirodha*). These are the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*) and the attainment of cessation (*nirodha samāpatti*). They are also listed as such in **the Anupubba Nirodha Sutta** (A 9.31).³

1.2 SANDIṬṬHIKA

1.2.1 Both the titles share the keyword, *sandiṭṭhika* (BHS *sandṛṣṭhika*), which the Commentary explains as meaning “that which is to be seen for oneself” (*sayam passitabbako*, AA 4:207). The word *sandiṭṭhika* is derived from “seen (*diṭṭhika*) for oneself (*sam*).”

1.2.2 The grammar compendium, **Sadda, nīti**, gives more technical details, explaining that “*sandiṭṭhika* means that the noble path [1.3] is to be seen by oneself with the review knowledge” (*ariya, maggo, pac-cavekkhaṇa, ñāṇena sayam daṭṭhabbo’ti sandiṭṭhiko*) (Sadd 787,14-15).⁴ This refers to the attaining of nirvana by an arhat, who ascertains his awakening by reviewing his spiritual progress—just as we, having passed an examination, examines the details of the results.

1.2.3 In practical terms, *sandiṭṭhika* has two important senses. The first is that the Dharma as **the teaching** (*dhamma*) points out how we create our own understanding of things by projecting our perceptions

¹ On *dhamma* as “teaching, truth, reality,” see **Udumbarikā S** (D 25,6.3) SD 1.4; SD 3.13 (3.2.3-4). For further details, see under DEB: dhamma.

² On *dhamma* as referring to nirvana, see **Mahāli S** (D 6,13) SD 53.4.

³ On *anupubba, vihara*, see A 9.31/4:409 (SD 33.6 (3.2.2+3.2.3)). Further see SD 50.25 (1.3.2.2).

⁴ For further analysis of *sandiṭṭhika*, see SD 15.9 (2.2). See also Sn:N 280 n567.

onto our experiences. The world “out there” is neither good nor bad; it is our perception of it that gives it moral value in a positive way or a negative way.⁵

Secondly, we can only grow through seeing for oneself directly into the true nature of things (dhamma). Although we can learn a lot from the teachings from others and from outside information, true knowledge only arises in us through our own experience of things, and understanding the patterns that underlie all such experiences.⁶ That universal pattern of things is that of **impermanence**, which we need to observe and understand. This is the understanding that will free us from suffering.⁷

1.3 THE NOBLE PATH

1.3.1 “Seen for oneself”

The noble path (*ariya, magga*) is “seen for oneself” because it can be seen by a noble individual for himself when he has done away with lust (*rāga*), etc, in his (mind-body) continuity (*santāna*) (Sadd 787,-12-13).

As such, it is said [**the Sandiṭṭhika Dhamma Brāhmaṇa Sutta**, A 3.53]:

Brahmin, when a person is dyed with lust, overcome by it, his mind obsessed by it, then he thinks of his own affliction, he thinks of other’s affliction, he thinks of the affliction of both, and he feels mental pain and grief.

But when he has abandoned lust, then he thinks not of his own affliction, he thinks not of other’s affliction, he thinks not of the affliction of both, and he does not feel mental pain and grief. (A 3.53/1:156 f), SD 15.8a

1.3.2 Those who see the path

1.3.2.1 The “noble path” (*ariya, magga*) refers both to the supramundane eightfold path as well as the 8 kinds of saints and nirvana itself—as a set called **the “9 supramundane dharmas”** (*nava lok’uttara dhamma*), that is, the 4 paths and the 4 respective fruitions and nirvana. The 4 paths (magga) and the respective fruitions are the streamwinner, the streamwinner-to-be, the once-returner, the once-returner-to-be, the non-returner, the non-returner-to-be, and the arhat and the arhat-to-be—these are “the 8 individuals” (*aṭṭha purisa, puggala*)—and with nirvana, they form the 9 supermundane dharmas.

1.3.2.2 All the suttas of **the Pañcāla Vagga** (A 4:449-454) follow the framework of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anupubba, vihāra*) [§§3-11]. The first 8 stages—the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments—are X-axis of the bases for the attaining of the 9 supramundane dharmas [1.3.2.1]. The unique stage of the 9 progressive abodes is the 9th and last abode, which is that of the cessation of perception of feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*).

While the 9 supramundane dharmas or states [1.3.2.1] refers to the stages of noble sainthood, the 9 progressive abodes refer to the dhyana meditations that act as the springboard or springboards to nirvana, represented by the 9th and last stage, called “cessation” in brief. The last stage—**cessation**—is the actual experience of nirvana for the arhat or the non-returner in this life itself.

⁵ **Nibbedhikā Pariyāya S** (A 6.63,3.4) SD 6.11.

⁶ This patent is known as **the 3 characteristics** (*ti, lakkhaṇa*) of impermanence, suffering and non-self: see **Atam, mayatā**, SD 19.13 (1).

⁷ That stage of spiritual understanding that is truly liberating is called **streamwinning** (*sotāpatti*): see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7

It is important to understand that cessation does not exist in itself: it is a conditioned and impermanent experience that is experience when the arhat or the non-returner is able to free himself from all defilements and all views, especially that of the self (at least temporarily, for the duration of the cessation, in the case of the non-returner).

1.4 *PARIYĀYENA* AND *NIPPARIYĀYENA*

1.4.1 Usages of the terms

The pair of terms—*pariyāyena* and *nippariyāyena*—are key words in both the Suttas (A 4.96 + 4.97). In the (Navaka) *Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1* (A 4.96), *pariyāyena* qualifies the first 8 stages of meditation as occasions of *dhamma* (as teachings and practices) that are “directly visible” [§§3.2, 4.2 etc], and similarly in the (Navaka) *Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2* (A 4.97), in connection with the first 8 stages of meditation that are “directly visible” in terms of *nibbāna* [§§3.2, 4.2 etc]. The term *nippariyāyena* applies only to the last—the 9th—stage in either Sutta [§11.2 respectively].⁸

1.4.2 Meaning of *pariyāyena*

1.4.2.1 *Pariyāyena* qualifies the first 8 stages of meditation as occasions of *dhamma* (as teachings and practices) [3.1] that are “directly visible” in the (Navaka) *Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1* [§§3.2, 4.2, 5.2 etc], and similarly the first 8 stages of meditation that are “directly visible” in relation to *nibbāna* [4.1] in the (Navaka) *Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2* [§§3.2, 4.2, 5.2 etc]. The Commentary explains it as (literally) “by one way of reasoning, ground or motive” (*ekena kāraṇena*, AA 4:205), that is, “in a manner of speaking” or “in a provisional manner,” as it is translated here. [1.4.2.2]

1.4.2.2 In the two Suttas mentioned [1.4.2.1], *pariyāyena*, “in a provisional manner,” is applied to all the first 8 stages of spiritual progress [§§3-10 respectively], that is, except the 9th or last stage, namely, nirvana or its equivalent [§11 respectively]. Only *nirvana*, the goal of the series of stages, is described “in a non-provisional manner,” that is, in the ultimate sense [1.4.3].

1.4.3 Usage of *pariyāyena* in A 9.46

1.4.3.1 In the (Navaka) *Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1* (A 9.46), each of the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments (that is, the first 8 stages) are described by the Buddha as “the directly visible dharma” (*dhamma*, here meaning “state” or “condition”) in a provisional [relative] manner (*pariyāyena*).

1.4.3.2 The Commentary, as we have noted [1.4.2.1], explains *pariyāyena* as “in a manner of speaking,” “relatively speaking,” or “in provisionally manner.” This means that each of the 8 meditative stages—the 4 form dhyanas [§§3-6] and the 4 formless dhyanas [§§7-10]—does not in itself constitute nirvana. Each of these preliminary meditative stages work in a relatively conditional manner—the preceding conditioning the next—as the conditions for the arising of the 9th and last “stage,” that is, nirvana.

1.4.3.3 The theme of A 9.46 is the “direct visibility” (*sandiṭṭhika*) of all the 9 stages of spiritual progress, ending in nirvana. The first 8 stages (the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless dhyanas) are described as being “directly visible” in a *provisional sense*, that is, none of them by itself brings about the last or 9th stage, nirvana. In this context, nirvana arises in one of two ways:

⁸ On the two terms, see SD 3.9 (7.5.1) & *Pariyāya nippariyāya*, SD 68.2.

- (1) with the completion of the whole series of the 8 dhyanas, or
- (2) at any of these meditative stages (including the 8th), the practitioner, at the proper time, applies his mind to reflect on the 3 characteristics (the impermanence, suffering and non-self) of the meditations and their respective experiences and benefits.

1.4.3.4 It should be noted here that those arhats “**freed by wisdom**” (*paññā, vimutta*) attain nirvana by gaining insight through the understanding of the 3 characteristics of their experiences and of true reality itself with the help of the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*) or some form of dhyana-related mental focus. However, they do not attain any of the formless dhyanas.⁹

Those arhats who are “**freed both ways**” (*ubhato.bhāga, vimutta*), simply put, are liberated from the limitations of the physical body—that is, the 5 physical senses (like the wisdom-freed arhat) [1.4.3.5], and also enjoy the freedom of the mind. Based on their mastery of the 4th dhyana, they are able to go into deeper meditative states of dhyana that transcend space and time in a progressively refined way.¹⁰

1.4.3.5 Both kinds of **arhats**—the wisdom-freed and the both-ways freed—are liberated from their bodies. This means that they are neither limited nor defined by the 5 senses, that is, by what they see, hear, smell, taste or touch. They have overcome all misperception of such sense-experiences so that they are not in the least troubled by attractiveness or ugliness of such experiences. Hence, they do not react to such experiences in terms of liking or disliking, but respond spontaneously with wise and joyful equanimity.¹¹

1.4.3.6 Not all arhats or non-returners attain **cessation** (*nirodha*)¹² or need to. **The Kīṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70), for example, lists 7 kinds of noble individuals. Of these, only the both-ways-freed (*ubhato.bhāga, vimutta*) arhat and the body-witness (*kāya, sakkhī*) non-returner are said to be able to experience the peaceful liberation (*santā, vimokkha*), the highest of which is cessation.¹³ We can take *santā, vimokkha* here to be synonymous with the 9 progressive abodes [1.3.2.2].

The Mahā Nidāna Sutta (D 15) mentions the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*) of which cessation is the highest. Only the both-ways-freed arhat [1.4.3.4] is able to attain these stages in the ascending or direct (*anuloma*) order, and in the descending or reverse (*paṭiloma*) order.¹⁴ The point here is that the both-ways-freed arhat, having mastered the form dhyanas and the formless attainment, is able to attain the cessation of perception and feeling.¹⁵ Conversely, some non-returners (those who have mastered the formless attainments) are also able to experience cessation, but not in such a versatile manner as the both-ways-free arhat does.

⁹ On the *paññā, vimutta*, see SD 4.25 (3.1); SD 10.16 (14.2).

¹⁰ On the *ubhato.bhāga, vimutta*, see SD 4.25 (3.2); SD 10.16 (14.3). On the necessity of both *samatha* and *vipassanā* for experiencing cessation, see also Analayo 2003:88-91.

¹¹ On how arhats respond to such experiences (the 5 perceptions), see **Ti,kaṇḍaki S** (S 5.144) + SD 2.12 (Table 4).

¹² “Cessation” (*nirodha*) or “attainment of cessation” (*nirodha, samāpatti*) or, more fully, “cessation of perception and feeling” (*saññā.vedayita, nirodha*), is essentially an experience of the bliss of the ending of all suffering in this world itself—ie, experiencing nirvana as a meditative state in this life itself. It is experienced only by some arhats and some non-returners.

¹³ M 70,15+17/1:477 f (SD 11.1).

¹⁴ D 15,36/2:71 (SD 5.17).

¹⁵ On the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*), see SD 23.7 (2); SD 48.7 (3.2). See also Somaratana 2006: *saññāvedayitanirodha* in Ency Bsm 7:748-750.

1.4.4 Usage of *pariyāyena* in A 9.47

1.4.4.1 In the **(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2** (A 9.47), each of the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments (that is, the first 8 stages) are described by the Buddha as “the directly visible **nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner (*pariyāyena*).” Note the sutta language: it does not say that we actually “attain nirvana,” but refers to the nirvana that is “**directly visible**,” which we can envision for ourself.

Even we, as unawakened beings, from our understanding of the suttas and our meditation, often think that we have some right idea of nirvana. However, the meditator with dhyana will have a much clearer vision and feel of nirvana. In fact, at any stage of the progressive cessation—any of the 4 form dhyanas or the 4 formless attainments—as meditator, we will be able to personally “see” or “feel” nirvana for ourself. However, since this vision is not the full attaining of nirvana (which entails the utter destruction of all defilements), it is said to be only in a “provisional manner” (*pariyāyena*).

1.4.4.2 The **(Musīla Nārada) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68), for example, says that **the non-returner** is like one lost in the desert who comes to a well and sees water in it. However, he does not have a rope and pail to draw water to quench his thirst, and clean and cool himself (SA 2:123).¹⁶ However, with some effort, it is just a matter of time before he is able to draw some water and use it.

In other words, **the streamwinner** (and implicitly, the once-returner and the non-returner) have a vision (*dassana*) of nirvana, a clear idea of the peace and benefits of awakening. However, they have yet to attain nirvana itself, that is, to rid themselves of all their defilements.¹⁷ Only **the arhat**—the one with all his mental influxes destroyed (*khīṇ’āsava*)¹⁸—has attained the full distinction of both “the knowledge and vision” (*ñāṇa, dassana*) of true reality and awakening.¹⁹

1.4.5 Meaning of *nippariyāyena*

1.4.5.1 The term, “in a non-provisional manner” (*nippariyāyena*), is used in both **A 4.96** and **A 4.97** [§3 respectively] to describe the 9th and last stage of the progressive stages of cessation [1.1.2]. This term is the opposite of *pariyāyena*, “in a provisional manner,” which describes the preceding 8 stages. While the preceding 8 stages are only provisional—they reflect the progress or positive changes in the meditator—the last or 9th stage is the actual goal in the ultimate sense, that is, there is nothing more beyond this. This summon bonum (the highest good or goal) is, of course, nirvana itself.²⁰

1.4.5.2 The teaching on “the provisional” (*pariyāyena*) and “the non-provisional” (*nippariyāyena*) has interesting parallels with that on teachings that are “implicit” (*neyy’attha*) and that are “explicit” (*nīṭ’attha*), as given in **the Neyy’attha Nīṭ’attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5+6).²¹ The “provisional” and the “implicit”—in terms of teachings—have the same function in that the teaching’s meaning is not at once clear or complete, but needs to be teased out.

¹⁶ S 12.68/2:118 (SD 70.11).

¹⁷ On the saints and the fetters they overcome, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8).

¹⁸ There are the 4 “mental influxes” (*āsava*): sensual desire (*kām’āsava*), existence (*bhav’āsava*), views (*diṭṭh’āsava*) and ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 16,10.4 n @ SD 9). The older list omits views, see SD 30.3 (1.3.2).

¹⁹ See, eg, **(Anuruddha) Upakkilesa S** (M 128,15), SD 5.18. The knowledge here is the arhat’s review knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa, ñāṇa*), which is part of the full arhathood pericope: see, eg, **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86,16), SD 5.11.

²⁰ “In a non-provisional manner,” *nippariyāyena*, see also **(Pañcāla, caṇḍa) Sambādha S** (A 9.42/4:449-451), SD 33.2 (2.1).

²¹ A 2.3.5+6/1:60 (SD 2.6 b).

1.4.5.3 The “**provisional**,” however, also has its special sense of “means” or “purpose”: it is both a *necessary condition* as well as a *sufficient condition* for the arising of nirvana which is “directly visible,” meaning “to be seen by oneself.” Even when we are inspired by, say, the Buddha himself, we (on account of our spiritual maturity and readiness) can see nirvana for ourself.

It is a necessary condition for the arising of nirvana in the sense that the 1st dhyana is the basis for all the higher dhyanas, up to the 4th formless attainment, the basis for cessation of perception (consciousness) and feeling. It is, however, a sufficient condition, in the sense that it can by itself be a springboard to nirvana. For example, when we attain the 1st dhyana (which overcomes all attachment to sensual pleasures), and we gain the necessary insight, we can attain nirvana (that is, without experiencing any of the formless attainments), as in the case of the wisdom-liberated (*paññā, vimutta*) non-returner or arhat.

1.4.5.4 With the ceasing of consciousness and feeling—the *cognitive* and the *affective* aspects of our being—nirvana arises. However, when we still have some defilements, no matter how subtle,²² left (as in the case of the non-returner, nirvana is only a temporary experience by way of transcending the dhyanas. In the case of the arhat, who has overcome all the mental fetters, and is free from rebirth. He is able to experience the bliss of nirvana here and now through attaining cessation. This is a subtle but vital point which attests to the natural fact that samsara is not nirvana, as notoriously claimed in later Buddhist theology.

1.4.5.5 The “**non-provisional**” (*nippariyāyena*), or ultimate level, of teaching is, in some sense, the same as the teaching that is “explicit” (*neyy’attha*) in the sense that it points to no other or further goal. The subtle difference between the two is that the former—the non-provisional—has the specific sense of experiencing nirvana here and now (*diṭṭha, dhammika*), while the explicit teaching is simply just that, a clear and exact teaching.

Hence, the terms *pariyāya-nippariyāyaya* refer both to both teaching and experience, while *neyy’attha-nīta’ttha* refer only to the teaching or theoretical aspects. In the Abhidhamma, however, *pariyāyaya-nippariyāyaya* refers to the 2 kinds of teachings (*desanā*).²³

2 The 5th chapter of the Book of Nines

2.1 The 5th chapter of the Book of Nines (*navaka nipāta*), in the Pali Text Society (PTS = Ee)²⁴ and the Siamese (Se) editions, is called “**the Pañcāla chapter**” (*pañcāla vagga*), after the first sutta of the chapter. The Burmese (Be) and the Sinhalese (Ce) editions call it “**the chapter of similarities**” (*sāmañña vagga*), based on its theme.

<u>Traditional</u>	<u>PTS</u>	<u>Pañcāla Vagga or Sāmañña Vagga (A 4:449-454)</u>	
A 9.1.5.1	(A 9.42)	(Pañcāla, caṇḍa) Sambādha Sutta	“the confined” SD 33.2
A 9.1.5.2	(A 9.43)	Kāya, sakkhī Sutta	“the body-witness” SD 50.30
A 9.1.5.3	(A 9.44)	Paññā, vimutta Sutta	“the wisdom-liberated” SD 50.31
A 9.1.5.4	(A 9.45)	Ubhato, bhāga, vimutta Sutta	“the both-way liberated” SD 50.32
A 9.1.5.5	(A 9.46)	Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1 <i>or</i> Sandiṭṭhika Dhamma Sutta	“the directly visible state” SD 50.25a

²² These are the higher mental fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), see SD 10.16 (1.2.1.3-1.2.1.4).

²³ SD 33.2 (2.1); SD 47.20 (1.3).

²⁴ The basic abbreviations used here are Be = Burmese edition; Be:Ka = certain Burmese editions; Ce = Ceylonese (Sinhala) edition; Ee = European (PTS) editions; Ke = Khmer (Cambodian) edition; Se = Siamese edition.

A 9.1.5.6	(A 9.47)	Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2 or Sandiṭṭhika Nibbāna Sutta	“the directly visible nirvana”	SD 50.25b
A 9.1.5.7	(A 9.48)	Nibbāna Sutta	“nirvana”	SD 50.26
A 9.1.5.8	(A 9.49)	Parinibbāna Sutta	“parinirvana”	SD 50.27
A 9.1.5.9	(A 9.50)	Tad-aṅga,nibbāna Sutta	“nirvana by that means” ²⁵	SD 50.28
A 9.1.5.10	(A 9.51)	Diṭṭha,dhamma Nibbāna Sutta	“the nirvana seen for oneself”	SD 50.29

Since both Ānanda and Udayī address one another as *āvuso*, it is likely that the Buddha is still alive at that time. The fact that these suttas are located in Kosambī also suggests that they record teachings given by Ānanda when the Buddha is in solitary retreat in the Pārileyya forest during the 10th rains of the ministry (BA 3). In that case, these suttas clearly belong to the “Kosambi incident” cycle.²⁶

3 The First (Nines) Discourse on the Directly Visible

3.1 MEANING OF DHAMMA

3.1.1 The Commentary does not gloss on ***dhamma***. From the Sutta context, *dhamma* clearly means “state” and its related teachings, and “state” here refers to each of the dhyanas described in the Sutta. This dhyana is that “the directly visible dharma” (*sandiṭṭhika dhamma*), meaning that it is experienced as part of our mental process of building up the conditions for the arising of nirvana in due course.

3.1.2 This “**directly visible state**,” that is, the dhyana, is also spoken of “in a provisional manner” (*pariyāyena*) that is, in a relative way, in relation to nirvana. None of these dhyanas, either alone or in combination, can bring nirvana. However, at any of these stages, we can, having emerged from it, reflect on it as being mind-made, and hence, impermanent. In fact, this is what needs to be done for each of these dhyanas, if we are to progress through them. In this sense, they are “provisional.”

3.1.3 The 9th and last stage—**cessation**—is the only one said to be presented in a “non-provisional manner” (*nippariyāyena*), that is, as an experience of nirvana as “cessation,” that is, the blissful end of all suffering, at least for its duration. It is important to note that we cannot define nirvana as being either in a *provisional* or a *non-provisional* way. We may only describe or refer to a concept of nirvana in either of these ways—that is, from the unawakened person’s viewpoint.

What is described here for the sake of our understanding, is give us an inspiring vision of the possibility of awakening to nirvana, liberation from suffering. Neither the provisional nor the non-provisional descriptions of nirvana is nirvana itself. We can only *describe* nirvana, but never really define it as we do with other words. After all, nirvana is unconditioned or non-conditioned.²⁷

²⁵ Or, “that-factored nirvana.” “By that means” or “that factor” (*tad-aṅga*) refers to the nirvana that has one or other dhyana as its factor, that is, the 1st dhyana and so on (***Tad-aṅga,nibbānan’ti paṭhama-j,jhān’adinā tena tena aṅgena nibbānam***, AA 4:207). Here, the meditator attains by means of dhyana meditation. *Tad-aṅga* recurs at M 3:148,27 (MA 4:202,16); A 4:411,1 (AA 4:193,24).

²⁶ The “incident” is the quarrel between the two parties of monks at Kosambī. When they refused to listen to the Buddha, he quietly leaves to spend the 10th rains in solitary retreat in the Pārileyya forest (BA 3): see SD 6.1 (6).

²⁷ On the ineffability regarding nirvana and silence related to true reality, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1, esp (1.1.2 + 5.4).

SD 50.25a

(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 1

Or **Paṭhama (Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta** The First (Nines) Discourse on the Directly Visible

Or **Dhamma Sandiṭṭhika Sutta** The Discourse on the Directly Visible State | **A 9.46/4:453**

Traditional: A 9.1.5.5 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 9, Navaka Nipāta 1, 5, Pañcāla Vg²⁸ 5

Theme: The nature of the directly visible nirvana

1 (Originating in Kosambī.)²⁹

2 “Directly visible state. Directly visible state,’ avuso,³⁰ it is said.

How, avuso, has the Blessed One spoken of **the directly visible state** (*sandiṭṭhika dhamma*)?”

THE OPENING: THE 9 PROGRESSIVE ABODES [1.3.2.2]

The 4 dhyanas

(1) THE 1ST DHYANA

3 Here, avuso, a monk,³¹

quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome mental states,

attains and dwells in the **1st dhyana**,

accompanied by initial application and sustained application,

and with zest and happiness born of solitude.³²

3.2 He dwells, having touched that base³³ with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.³⁴

3.3 To that extent, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible dharma** *in a provisional [relative] manner*.³⁵

(2) THE 2ND DHYANA

4 And, furthermore, avuso, a monk,

with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,

by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,

attains and dwells in **the 2nd dhyana**,

²⁸ Ee Se so (after its 1st sutta); Be Ce *sāmañña, vagga*, the chapter on similarities.

²⁹ Ce. On Kosambī, see SD 6.1 (1-2).

³⁰ Presumably, Ānanda is addressing the monk Udāyī—Kāl’udāyī, says Comy (AA 4:205)—in Ghosit’ārāma, outside Kosambī, far west of the “middle country” (*majjhima, desa*), ie, the central Gangetic plain. Since they address one another as *āvuso* (“Friend, brother”), this sutta—and the others of this **Pañcāla Vagga** [2.1]—record events while the Buddha is still living. The Buddha’s absence may be explained by the fact that he is away on solitary retreat for the rains of the 10th year of the ministry (BA 3): see SD 6.1 (2+6). **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16) records the Buddha, in his last days, as instructing that senior monks should address juniors by name or as *āvuso*, while junior monks should address seniors as *bhante* (“sir”) or *āyasmā* (“venerable”) (D 16, 6.2), SD 9.

³¹ “A monk” (*bhikkhu*) in such contexts always refers to a meditator (**Satipaṭṭhāna S**, M 10,3A n, SD 13.3), or to the practitioner (SD 4.9 (5.3); SD 13.1 (3.1.1)).

³² “Born of solitude,” *viveka, ja*; ie it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) and “concentration” (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5.

³³ “That base” (*tad-āyatanam*), ie, the meditation state.

³⁴ *Yathā yathā ca tad-āyatanam tathā tathā nam kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya ca nam pajānāti*.

³⁵ *Ettāvata’pi kho āvuso sandiṭṭhiko dhammo vutto bhagavatā pariyāyena*. “In a provisional manner,” *pariyāyena*, ie, in a restricted sense, “in a sense” [1.4.2-1.4.4]; cf *nippariyāyena* [1.4.5].

free from initial application and sustained application,³⁶
with zest and happiness born of concentration.³⁷

4.2 *He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.*

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

(3) THE 3RD DHYANA

5 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
with the fading away of zest, he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly knowing,
and experiences happiness with the body.

He attains and dwells in **the 3rd dhyana**,
of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’
He permeates and pervades, floods and fills this very body with the happiness
free from zest.

5.2 *He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.*

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

(4) THE 4TH DHYANA

6 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
with the abandoning of joy and pain—
and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure—
attains and dwells in **the 4th dhyana**,

that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.

6.2 *He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.*

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

The 4 attainments

(5) THE SPHERE OF INFINITE SPACE

7 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
having completely transcended perceptions of form,
with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance,
through non-attention to perceptions of diversity,
contemplating, “Infinite space,” attains and dwells in **the sphere of infinite space**.³⁸

³⁶ On “initial application and sustained application” (*vitakka, vicāra*), see **Vitakka, vicāra**, SD 33.4; SD 8.4 (5.1.2).

³⁷ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṇhī, bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie either talk Dharma or meditate). See **Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.

7.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.

(6) THE SPHERE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

8 And furthermore, avuso, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of infinite space, contemplating, “Infinite consciousness,” attains and dwells in **the sphere of infinite consciousness**.³⁹

8.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.

(7) THE SPHERE OF NOTHINGNESS

9 And furthermore, avuso, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of infinite consciousness, contemplating, “There is nothing,” attains and **[451] dwells in the sphere of nothingness**.⁴⁰

9.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible Dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.

(8) THE SPHERE OF NEITHER-PERCEPTION-NOR-NON-PERCEPTION

10 And furthermore, avuso, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of nothingness, contemplating, “This is peaceful; this is sublime,” attains to **the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.⁴¹

10.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible dharma** in a provisional [relative] manner.

The cessation of perception and feeling

11 (9) Furthermore, avuso, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attains and dwells in **the cessation of perception and feeling**.

³⁸ Sabbaso rūpa,saññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭigha,saññānaṃ atthaṅgamā nānatta,saññānaṃ amanasikārā ananto ākāso ti ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati.

³⁹ Sabbaso ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkama anantaṃ viññāṇaṃ ti viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati.

⁴⁰ Sabbaso viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma n’atthi kiñcī ti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati.

⁴¹ Sabbaso ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ samatikkama santam etaṃ paṇītam etaṃ ti n’eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati.

11.2 And having seen it with wisdom, his mental influxes are fully destroyed.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible dharma** in a non-provisional manner.⁴²

— evaṃ —

4 The Second (Nines) Discourse on the Directly Visible

4.1 MEANING OF *NIBBĀNA*

4.1.1 The 2 kinds of nirvana

4.1.1.1 The Dīgha Commentary mentions 2 kinds of nirvana:

(1) the nirvana of the defilements (*kilesa, nibbāna*), and

(2) the nirvana of the aggregates (*khandha, nibbāna*). (DA 899 f)

According to the Commentary, *nibbāna* here refers to the “nirvana of the defilements” (*kilesa, nibbāna*), that is, the cessation of the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) of greed, hate and delusion (AA 4:205). In the suttas, these 2 kinds of nirvana are respectively called “the nirvana with remains” (*sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna*) and “the nirvana without remains” (*anupādi, sesa nibbāna*).⁴³

4.1.1.2 In brief, “**the nirvana of the defilements**” entails the cessation of arising of new karma and refers to the arhat’s state while he still lives. This refers to the utter destruction of the roots (*mūla*) of greed, hate and delusion, the bases for our ignorance, craving, rebirth and suffering. This is the nirvana of the arhat who continues to live as long as his karmic aggregates last.

At the moment of death and thereafter, the arhat is said to have attained “**the nirvana of the aggregates**,” which means that all his *form, feeling, perception, formation and consciousness*⁴⁴ cease to arise any more. Like a fire that has gone, there is nothing more speak about it, except that it is “extinguished, quenched or cooled” (*nibbuta*).⁴⁵

4.2 THE “DIRECTLY VISIBLE” NIRVANA

4.2.1 Experiential

4.2.1.1 The key idea here is that nirvana is “**directly visible**” (*sandiṭṭhika*), which, as we have seen, means “that which is seen for oneself” [1.3.1], especially by review knowledge [1.2.2]. This understanding entails two important characteristics of the practice and result of the Buddha teachings. The first is that it is experiential, and second that it is verifiable.

4.2.1.2 True reality is **experiential** in the sense that we can only *know* is through our 6 sense-bases; *what* we can know—the objects of knowledge—are the sense-objects, or basically, our experiences. We can know nothing beyond this, and we don’t need to. This understanding is sufficient as the basis for

⁴² “In a non-provisional manner,” *nippariyāyena*, ie, in the ultimate sense [1.4.5].

⁴³ SD 50.13 (1.3.2).

⁴⁴ On the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*), see SD 17, eg (**Dve**) **Khandhā S** (S 22.48), SD 17.1a.

⁴⁵ On the nature of nirvana as a concept, see **Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta S 1** (U 8.1) + SD 50.1 (2).

working for mental liberation. This is the teaching of **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23).⁴⁶ What is experiential—based on personal experience—is also verifiable [4.2.2].

4.2.2 Verifiable

4.2.2.1 A teaching or truth that is experiential also means that it can and should be investigated and verified for ourself. In fact, **investigation** (*vīmaṃsā*) is the theme of such discourses as **the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), where the Buddha invites us to investigate even his own moral virtue and mental state—that is, to say, buddhahood itself.⁴⁷

4.2.2.2 The Buddha’s teaching is **personally verifiable and realizable in this life itself** (*sacchikato sayam*, Tha 331; *diṭṭhe dhamme veditvā*, Sn 1053). We can test it, understand it, and free our minds even here and now.⁴⁸ In an important way, we can see how nirvana works even here and now, such as when we understand the nature of anger, and so wisely overcome it. The anger, as it were, has been “cooled” (*nibbuta*). Our problem is that this is only a temporary measure. We need to learn how to make such a habit of it so that we will naturally have no anger at all.

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SD 50.25b

(Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta 2

Or **Dutiya (Navaka) Sandiṭṭhika Sutta** The Second (Nines) Discourse on the Directly Visible
Or **Nibbāna Sandiṭṭhika Sutta** The Discourse on the Directly Visible Nirvana | **A 9.47/4:453**
Traditional: A 9.1.5.6 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 9, Navaka Nipāta 1, 5, Pañcāla Vg⁴⁹ 6
Theme: The nature of the directly visible nirvana

- 1 (Originating in Kosambī.)⁵⁰
- 2 “Directly visible nirvana. Directly visible nirvana,” avuso,⁵¹ it is said.
How, avuso, has the Blessed One spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** (*sandiṭṭhika nibbāna*)?”

THE OPENING: THE 9 PROGRESSIVE ABODES⁵²

The 4 dhyanas

(1) THE 1ST DHYANA

3 Here, avuso, a monk,⁵³
quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome mental states,

⁴⁶ SD 35.23 (SD 7.1).

⁴⁷ M 47/1:317-320 (SD 35.6).

⁴⁸ SD 35.4a (4); SD 35.6 (3.4).

⁴⁹ Ee Se so (after its 1st sutta); Be Ce *sāmañña, vagga*, the chapter on similarities.

⁵⁰ Ce. See A 94.6 (SD 50.25a) n ad loc.

⁵¹ On this mode of address, see A 94.6 (SD 50.25a) n ad loc above.

⁵² *Anupubba, vihāra*, see (1.3.2.2).

⁵³ “A monk” (*bhikkhu*) in such contexts always refers to a meditator (**Satipaṭṭhāna S**, M 10,3A n, SD 13.3), or to the practitioner (SD 4.9 (5.3); SD 13.1 (3.1.1)).

attains and dwells in the **1st dhyana**,
 accompanied by initial application and sustained application,
 and with zest and happiness born of solitude.⁵⁴

3.2 He dwells, having touched that base⁵⁵ with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.⁵⁶

3.3 To that extent, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana in a provisional [relative] manner**.⁵⁷

(2) THE 2ND DHYANA

4 And, furthermore, avuso, a monk,
with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,

by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,
 attains and dwells in **the 2nd dhyana**,
 free from initial application and sustained application,⁵⁸
 with zest and happiness born of concentration.⁵⁹

4.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana in a provisional [relative] manner**.

(3) THE 3RD DHYANA

5 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
with the fading away of zest,

dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly knowing, and experiences happiness with the body.
 He attains and dwells in **the 3rd dhyana**,
 of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’
 He permeates and pervades, floods and fills this very body with the happiness
 free from zest.

5.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana in a provisional [relative] manner**.

(4) THE 4TH DHYANA

6 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
with the abandoning of joy and pain—

and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure—
 attains and dwells in **the 4th dhyana**,
 that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.

6.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

⁵⁴ See A 94.6 (SD 50.25a) n ad loc above.

⁵⁵ “That base” (*tad-āyatanam*), ie, the meditation state.

⁵⁶ *Yathā yathā ca tad-āyatanam tathā tathā nam kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya ca nam pajānāti.*

⁵⁷ *Ettāvatā’pi kho āvuso sandiṭṭhiko dhammo vutto bhagavatā pariyāyena.* “In a provisional manner,” *pariyāyena*, ie, in a restricted sense, “in a sense” [1.4.1-1.4.4]; cf *nippariyāyena* [1.4.5].

⁵⁸ On “initial application and sustained application,” see A 94.6 (SD 50.25a) n ad loc.

⁵⁹ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṇhī, bhāva*): see A 94.6 (SD 50.25a) n ad loc.

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

The 4 attainments

(5) THE SPHERE OF INFINITE SPACE

7 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
having completely transcended perceptions of form,
with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance,
through non-attention to perceptions of diversity,
contemplating, “Infinite space,” attains and dwells in **the sphere of infinite space**.⁶⁰

7.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

(6) THE SPHERE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

8 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
having completely transcended the sphere of infinite space,
contemplating, “Infinite consciousness,”
attains and dwells in the sphere of infinite consciousness.⁶¹

8.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

(7) THE SPHERE OF NOTHINGNESS

9 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
having completely transcended the sphere of infinite consciousness,
contemplating, “There is nothing,”
attains and **[451] dwells in the sphere of nothingness**.⁶²

9.2 He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

(8) THE SPHERE OF NEITHER-PERCEPTION-NOR-NON-PERCEPTION

10 And furthermore, avuso, a monk,
having completely transcended the sphere of nothingness,
contemplating, “This is peaceful; this is sublime,”
attains to **the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Sabbaso rūpa,saññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭigha,saññānaṃ atthaṅgamā nānatta,saññānaṃ amanasikārā ananto ākāso ti ākāsaṇaṅcāyatanam upasampajja viharati.*

⁶¹ *Sabbaso ākāsaṇaṅcāyatanam samatikkama anantam viññāṇan ti viññāṇaṅcāyatanam upasampajja viharati.*

⁶² *Sabbaso viññāṇaṅcāyatanam samatikkamma n’atthi kiñcī ti ākiñcaññ’āyatanam upasampajja viharati.*

⁶³ *Sabbaso ākiñcaññāyatanam samatikkama santam etam paṇitam etan ti n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatanam upasampajja viharati.*

10.2 *He dwells, having touched that base with the body as it is attained, and he understands it with wisdom.*

*To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a provisional [relative] manner.*

The cessation of perception and feeling

11 (9) Furthermore, avuso, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attains and dwells in **the cessation of perception and feeling**.

11.2 And having seen it with wisdom, his mental influxes are fully destroyed.

To that extent, too, avuso, the Blessed One has spoken of **the directly visible nirvana** in a non-provisional manner.⁶⁴

— evaṃ —

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⁶⁴ "In a non-provisional manner," *nippariyāyena*, ie, in the ultimate sense [1.4.5].