

3g

Dukkara Sutta

The Discourse on the Difficult to Practise | S 1.17

Theme: Meditation difficulties can and should be overcome

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 SUMMARY. The **Dukkara Sutta** (S 1.17) comprises 3 verses: the first two are uttered by a deity relating to the difficulties of a recluse's life, especially in terms of mental cultivation [S 32*+33*]. The third verse is the Buddha's response where he mentions the parable of the tortoise to illustrate sense-restraint and a mind focused on meditation, and praises the awakened (the arhat), independent of others, who is not a nuisance to anyone [S 34*].

1.2 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT. This Sutta is interesting, even unique, amongst the Saṃyutta verses we have studied so far in SD 54. Here, the Buddha neither counters nor corrects any of the deity's comments, but merely adds on to them by giving his teachings. However, while the deity considers the difficulties of a recluse's life, the Buddha declares how it can be successful and liberating.

1.3 THE BUDDHA'S VERSE. It is likely that the **Dukkara Sutta** (S 1.17) is the original provenance of the closing verse [S 34*], since it fits the context of the dialogue here. The whole verse recurs as the closing of the **Kummôpama Sutta** (S 35.240), SD 19.17, where it is not preceded by the usual sentence stating that the Buddha speaks it on this occasion, which suggests that the sutta redactors must have attached it on by reason of the tortoise simile.¹ [2.4]

2 COMMENTARY

2.1 "OBSTRUCTIONS" (*sambādhā*) [S 32c*]

2.1.1 Definition. Clearly, the deity uses the word *sambādhā* instead of the better known term, *nīvaraṇa* (hindrance). However, we see its verb, *nivāraye* (holds back), in S 32b*. The PED defines *sambādhā* as "crowding, pressure, inconvenience from crowding, obstruction." Hence, it has the sense of crowdedness both as a cause of stifling stress and an inconducive condition or hindrance to spiritual growth.

2.1.2 Usages

2.1.2.1 The best known usage of *sambādhā* is as an adjective meaning "crowded," both in its literal and figurative sense [2.1.1]. This usage is found in the phrase, ***sambādho ghara, vāso***, "family life is confined," that is, a cramped stressful life (domestic duties, activities, people etc), full of hindrances to personal and spiritual growth.² In contrast, the life of renunciation is spacious, peaceful and conducive to personal and spiritual cultivation.

2.1.2.2 The phrase, "family life is confined" (*sambādho ghara, vāso*) is found in a famous sutta stock passage, such as in the **Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2) and the **Cūḷa Hatthi, padôpama Sutta** (M 27), thus:

¹ See S 35.240,9 n (SD 19.7).

² D 1:63, 250; S 2:219, 5:350; DA 1:180.

“The household life is stifling, a dusty path (*sambādhō gharavāso raja, patho*). The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life fully, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?”

Then, after some time, he abandons all his pile of wealth, little or great,³ and circle of relatives, small or large, shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the saffron robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. (D 2,41), SD 8.10 = (M 27,12), SD 40a.5⁴

2.1.2.3 In fact, there is a wordplay on *sambādhā*, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” as a euphemism for **the sexual organs**: the male⁵ and the female.⁶ Hence, *sambādhā* suggests sexual activities and their distractions. The sexual organs are the gates to samsara.

The phrase, *rajā, patha*, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (*āgamana, patha*), that is, rebirth, in the sense of having to remain in samsara, subject to all its uncertainties.⁷ Family life and sexuality are said to be “dusty” because they blind and distract us from mental cultivation and the greater good of the world as a whole.

2.1.2.4 The sexual act, after all, is the most selfish of human acts,⁸ and the family as a biological unit limit our human engagements to a group that is very much smaller than even a tribe.⁹ The Buddha’s teachings, on the other hand, addresses a happy family life, such as in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31).¹⁰ The teaching on **renunciation**, on a social level, is about growing beyond the biological family and accepting humanity as our family with the Buddha as the spiritual parent.

In the Buddha’s teachings, we find that the drift of the Buddha Dharma (*dhamm’ anvaya*) is the greater good and happiness of all beings. This temporal happiness is the basis for the liberation and lasting happiness of the path of awakening.¹¹

2.2 “ONE WOULD FALTER STEP AFTER STEP” (*pade pade visīdeyya*) [S 33c*]

The Commentary explains *pade pade* [S 33c*] as “in each sense-object” (*ārammaṇe ārammaṇe*), that is, being mindful of impermanence (for example) in what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. In doing so, we see “the world” of our senses for what they are, so that we are not hemmed in and drowned in them with ignorance and craving.

“For, whenever a defilement arises in relation to any object, it is just there that one founders (*visīdati*). However, the phrase can also be understood in terms of our bodily postures (*iriya, patha*) (standing, walking, sitting and reclining). When a defilement arises in our mind while we are walking (or standing, sitting, reclining), it is right there that we founder.” Hence, that is where we need to be on guard through mindfulness. (SA 1:36,23-27)

³ On the accumulation of wealth, cf **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.23-24/2:85 f).

⁴ D 2,41/1:63 (SD 8.10) = M 27,12/1:179 (SD 40a.5).

⁵ V 1:216, 2:134.

⁶ V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260.

⁷ DA 1:180,17 = MA 2:179,20; UA 237,27.

⁸ Sex as the “most selfish human act”: SD 31.7 (6.2); SD 32.2 (3.1.3).

⁹ On tribalism, see SD 19.11 (5).

¹⁰ D 31 (SD 4.1), see esp §§27-42.

¹¹ See esp the “great commission,” SD 11.2.

2.3 “Thoughts” (*saṅkappa*) [S 33d*]

2.3.1 Thoughts. In S 33*, we read “one would falter step after step | under the power of one’s thoughts” [S 33cd]. We have already noted the meaning of “step after step” [2.2]. The Commentary explains that *saṅkappa* “should be understood here by way of the 3 wrong intentions, that is, of sensuality, of ill will and of harming.”¹² (SA 1:36,27 f).

This interpretation is rather narrow since a meditator will also be troubled and hindered by any kind of thought. He has to transcend even wholesome thoughts to attain a mind that is totally thought-free so that he is not under their power—as noted in S 33cd*. However, even when a good meditator is not troubled by “intentions” (*saṅkappa* as *cetanā*), he may be distracted by adventitious thoughts that crowd up his mind. [2.3.2]

2.3.2 Mental proliferation

2.3.2.1 An important term for the crowding up of the mind by intentional deliberations, interpretive indulgences and adventitious verbalization is “**mental proliferation**” (*papañca*). From our cognizing of sense-objects through the 6 sense-bases, we *re-cognize* familiar memories and old habits projecting them onto present events before us. Our evaluating mind replay past pleasures and pain in a recursive loop, ignoring what we can make no sense of.

Thus, with every thought, we proliferate greed, hate and delusion, and strengthen the unconscious roots of lust, aversion and ignorance. As a result, we raise walls of sensual lust and ill will, which arouse sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-worry, perpetuating doubt in ourself—we are effectively hindered from spiritual progress by weakening our faith, sapping our energy, distracting our mindfulness and concentration, and so we are deprived of liberating wisdom.

2.3.2.2 Mental proliferation is the theme of **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18), where it is explained in terms of the 30 elements of the 6 sense-faculties, the 6 sense-objects, the 6 sense-consciousnesses and the feelings that arise accordingly—and how one then perceives.¹³

... what one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception (*papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*) assails a person regarding past, future and present <sense-object> cognizable through <the sense-faculty>. M 18,16 + SD 6.14 (2)¹⁴

The Cha Phass’āyatana Sutta (S 35.94) reminds us of the spiritual benefit of understanding and overcoming mental proliferation, thus:

*Papañcita,saññā itaritarā narā
papañca,yantā upayanti saññino
mano,mayaṃ geha,sitañ ca sabbam
panujja nekkhamma,sitam iriyati*

People here and there, because of **proliferated perception**,
when perceiving, go on to become the tools of proliferation.
But all the house-bound, mind-made, one,
having dispelled them, moves on in renunciation.

(S 35.94/4:71), SD 94.7

¹² *Saṅkappānan’ti kāma,saṅkapp’ādīnaṃ*

¹³ For the details of how this process operates, see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,16/1:112 f), SD 6.14).

¹⁴ M 18/1:108-114 + SD 6.14 (2).

2.3.3 Our mind is lost in the depths and currents of proliferation because we keep **identifying** with our body, feelings, perceptions, formations and conscious states. We imagine a permanence in these mental proliferations we have hooked and hung ourself to like barnacles to a hard rock washed by the tides and currents of the restless ocean of views.

To break free from these mental proliferations, we must stop identifying with our body or mind, to see “it” and all its activities are merely conditions that rise and fall away, to see the **impermanence**, change, becoming other, of our body, feelings, perceptions, formations and conscious states. In other words, we see no abiding state, entity or “self” in any of these passing phenomena.

This non-identifying with sense-objects is known by an ancient term: *a,tam,mayatā*, meaning that I *am* not that, that I *was* not that, that I *will* not be that. Only when we see in terms of things and thoughts, name and form, we feel a sense of “being.” We may use “being” and “beings” as convenient conventions for daily communication. When we do not identify with such *being* or *beings*, then, we will have a better idea and truer understanding of what they really are. Since we understand there is no abiding self, there is no ground for suffering to arise.¹⁵

2.4 “The tortoise” (*kumma*) [S 34a*]

2.4.1 The tortoise parable

2.4.1.1 In the Sutta, the Buddha gives this advice for meditators: “**Just as a tortoise draws in its head into its shell, | so does a monk hold back his mind’s thoughts**” [S 34ab*]. The word, “monk” (*bhikkhu*) of course, refers to any meditator following the Buddha Dharma.¹⁶ The tortoise head is our attention; the shell is mindfulness. This [S 34a] is a brief version of a longer well-known tortoise parable. [2.4.1.2]

2.4.1.2 The simile of the tortoise is fully elaborated in **the Kummôpama Sutta** (S 35.240), where the tortoise symbolizes all the 6 senses—presumably, its “5 limbs” (4 legs and the head) are *the 5 physical senses*, and the shell as *the mind or mindfulness*. At the sign of any danger, the tortoise would pull in all these 5 limbs safely into its shell. The Sutta closes with the same verse as the Buddha’s verse (S 34) [1.3].¹⁷

2.4.2 “Hold back his mind’s thoughts” [S 34b*]

2.4.2.1 In S 34b, the Buddha instructs us, especially when meditating, not to be distracted by our thoughts. We are often told by modern meditation teachers to “let go” of any thoughts, but here the Buddha instructs us to “hold back” our mind’s thoughts. Just as a tortoise draws its head into its shell, says the Buddha, “**so does a monk hold back his mind’s thoughts**” (*samodaham bhikkhu mano,vitakke*). What does it mean, then, to “hold back his mind’s thoughts”? [2.4.2.2]

2.4.2.2 The meaning of this statement is clear enough: we are not to simply let our thought run wild. This is, in fact, an instruction in “directed meditation.” We need to **direct** our thought rightly to the meditation object. This is the kind of practise that is described by Ānanda in **the Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka Sutta** (S 47.10), where the Buddha recommends that, when we face difficulties in satipatthana practice, we should temporarily meditate on a calm (*samatha*) object of meditation to cultivate mindfulness and joy.¹⁸

¹⁵ See *Atammayatā*, SD 19.13.

¹⁶ See *Satipaṭṭhāna Ss*, SD 13.1 (3.1.1).

¹⁷ See SD 19.15 (2.1).

¹⁸ S 47.10 + SD 24.2 (1).

2.4.2.3 The Saṃyutta Commentary explains “directed cultivation” (*paṇidhāya bhāvanā*) as meaning “having put aside cultivation” (*ṭhapetvā bhāvanā*), that is, temporarily interrupting the meditation, and directing the attention to an “inspiring” (*pasādaniya*) meditation object. As such, these are known as “inspiring meditations.”

When the mind is focused again, we redirect our mind to the original meditation object. The Commentary compares this cultivation to a man carrying a load of sugar to his village, who rests midway, puts down his load, chews a sugar cane, and then continues his way (SA 3:207). In other words, directed meditation refers to cultivating sufficient calmness (*samatha*)—this usually means a joyful state that settles the mind—as a support for satipatthana practice.

On a practical level (especially for the lay practitioner), the mental hindrances may be at least temporarily suspended by simple spiritual preparations, such as keeping the precepts, listening to an inspiring Dharma talk, receiving instructions from a meditation teacher or spiritual friend, or attending a meditation retreat.

2.5 S 34cd*

2.5.1 “Independent” (*anissita*) [S 34c*]

2.5.1.1 The renunciant who has succeeded in his meditation—a good and true practitioner—is said to be “independent” (*anissita*). The Sutta Commentary explains that he is “one independent (*anissito*) of the dependencies of craving and views, and **fully quenched** (*parinibbuta*) by the nirvana of defilements (*kilesa, parinibbāna*)¹⁹ (SA 1:37). In other words, he is one who has attained the 1st of the 2 kinds of nirvana, that is, the nirvana of defilements: his defilements have been overcome. He has destroyed all his mental influxes of sensual desire, of existence, of views and of ignorance; hence, he is “one with influxes destroyed” (*khīṇ’āsava*), an arhat.²⁰

The Commentary takes S 34cd as a whole as referring to a single event, that of full awakening. However, we can take the 3 qualities mentioned in these lines—“independent,” “not troubling others,” and even the last, “he would blame no one,” as referring to the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhat (the 4 kinds of saints), but line S 34d itself specifically refers to the arhat, one “fully quenched” (*parinibbuta*).

2.5.1.2 The word “**independent**” (*anissita*) often famously describes the streamwinner, one of those who have found “a footing, a foothold, and solace in this teaching and discipline, crossed over doubt, gone beyond uncertainty, won moral courage, who, independent of others, dwell in the teacher’s teaching.”²¹ This passage, for example, describes Nakula.mātā (Nakula’s mother), a streamwinner.²² It is, however, descriptive of any streamwinner. [2.5.1.3]

2.5.1.3 A **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*) is said to be one “independent” (*anissita*) in the sense that he is both emotionally and spiritually independent. Being **emotionally independent** means that we are capable of thinking for ourselves, and yet sensitive to individual differences in others to promote solidarity. **Spiritual independence** is our capacity for happiness through inner stillness without the

¹⁹ *Anissito’ti taṇhā, diṭṭhi, nissayehi anissito hutvā* (SA 1:37, 5 f).

²⁰ See D 16, 10.4 n (SD 9); *asava* also called “floods” (*ogha*) and “bonds” (*yoga*): SD 30.3 (1.4.2).

²¹ *Imasmim dhamma, vinaye ogādha-p, pattā paṭigādha-p, pattā assāsa-p, pattā tiṇṇa, vicikicchā vigata, katham, kathā vesāraja-p, pattā apara-p, paccayā satthu sāsane viharantiyo* (A 6.16, 2.6/3:297), SD 5.2.

²² A 6.16, 2.6/3:297, (SD 5.2).

need for external approval or support: we are our own refuge, the liberating truth [the Dharma] is our refuge.²³

2.5.2 “Not troubling others” (*aññam aheṭṭhayāno*) [S 34c*]

2.5.2.1 The Commentaries to the two occurrences of the verse (S 34 + S 35.240) both give the same gloss to *aheṭṭhayāno*: “Not troubling (others)” means “not resorting to violence, not injuring others, being non-violent” (*aheṭṭhayāno’ti avihimsamāno*).²⁴ A true monastic, as such, is a renunciant who is both the epitome of patience and a pacifist. The Commentary to **Dh 49** gives the synonym for *aheṭṭhento* as *anivāsento*, “without destroying (anyone or anything).”²⁵

2.5.2.2 The Dhammapada describes him thus:

<p><i>Yathā’pi bhamaro puppham vaṇṇa,gandham aheṭṭhayam paleti rasam’ādāya evam game munī care</i></p>	(Dh 49)	<p>Just as a bee, harming neither the flower, nor its colour nor scent, collecting only the nectar, then, moves on— thus would the sage wander in the village.</p>
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Such qualities of a renunciant is not merely the dictates of monastic rules, but the natural expression of lovingkindness in him, as stated in **the (Karaṇīya) Metta Sutta** (Khṇ 9 = Sn 1.8), thus:

<p><i>santussako ca subhara ca appa,kicco ca sallahuka,vutti</i>²⁸</p>	<p>contented²⁶ and easily supportable,²⁷ with little busyness²⁹ and living a simple life,³⁰</p>
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²³ See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8 esp (1.1.3).

²⁴ SA 1:37,4 f = 3:29,26 f.

²⁵ DhA 1:374,16 f.

²⁶ **contented**, *santussako* means being content in terms of the twelvefold contentment (*dvādasā,vidha santosa*) regarding the 4 supports: see SD 38.3 (4.4).

²⁷ **easily supportable**, *subhara*, lit “a light burden.” With a cheerful and radiant face, a monastic enjoys what he gets, be it coarse or fine, little or much. A monastic does not ask uninvited for things from the laity, but may accept allowable offerings from the laity: see **Anaṅgaṇa S** (M 5), SD 37.7 (3.2); **Anubuddha S** (S 47.3), SD 24.6a (2.3.1(2)). If a monastic is contented with his 4 supports, as described above, he would also be easily supportable. A layman, on his part, should not give unallowable things or services to a monastic. “Unallowable” (*akappiya*) here means that it is against the Vinaya. Unallowed as gifts incl money²⁷ and living beings. As a rule, monastics are not allowed to ask for things from the laity, unless the latter has given the “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*), except for close relatives. In other words, monastics are not beggars, nor allowed to be so. See eg Nis Pāc 7 (V 3:214,19-22); Ariyesako 1998: 67-72.

²⁸ **§2b (Sn 144b)**. *Sa-l,lahuka,vutti* = *sa-lahuka* (adj) + *vutti*, lit, “light in living” (nom feminine sg): a karmadharaya (P *kamma,dhāraya*, descriptive cpd). Whether as a renunciant or a layman, we are here exhorted not to be drowned by work so that we are alienated from other people. A good Buddhist is one who is available to those in need, especially when we are skilled and capable enough to help others. Cariyā,piṭaka Comy, however, advises that we should be neither altogether inaccessible to others, nor too accessible, and we should not associate with others at the wrong time (*na ca paresu sabbena sabbam asevinā bhavitabbam, na anāsevinā bhavitabbam, na akāla,sevinā*, CA 313). In other words, our compassion must be tempered with wisdom, and our wisdom moved by compassion.

²⁹ **with little busyness**, *appa,kicco*. A renunciant should not have a busy life: see nn at **(Brahma,vihāra) Subha S** (M 99.5/2:197), SD 38.6; also SD 38.3 (3.1.2).

³⁰ **living a simple life**, *sa-l,lahuka,vutti*. A renunciant’s life should be uncluttered with things: see SD 38.3 (3.1.3).

sant'indriyo ca nipako ca with the senses calmed,³¹ and wisely careful,³²
appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho unobtrusive,³³ not running after families.³⁴ Sn 144

The qualities listed in this verse (**Sn 144 = Khp 9.2**) are those of a **silent sage** (*muni*) who, as a rule, is uninfluenced by the outside world as he has attained true inner peace.³⁵ His silence is that of seeing the world just as it is with joyful understanding; hence, there is no need for any words or reaction, except a knowing smile and helping hand. When he does break the silence, it is because of our ignorance of it: his words are bridges for us to touch that liberating joyful silence. He is then called the buddha.

2.5.2.3 The locus classicus for **non-violence** (*ahimsa*) is defined in the parable of the saw,³⁶ given in **the Kakacūpama Sutta** (M 21), thus:

“Bhikshus, even if low-down thieves were to cut you up from limb to limb with a double-handled saw,³⁷ if you were ever to defile your mind with anger, you are thereby not a doer of my teaching.³⁸

Therein, bhikshus, you should train yourselves in this way:

³¹ **with the senses calm**, *sant'indriyo* = *santa* (adj) + *indriya* (nom masc sg): a karmadharaya. Our sense-faculties should remain unagitated and unmoved by lust for desirable objects or by ill will towards undesirable objects (KhpA 242). A helpful practice here is the perception of impermanence, that all such distractions are impermanent and not worth pursuing. It is also useful to understand the nature of sense-restraint and wise attention, and practise them. See eg **Nimitta and anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

³² **prudent**, *nipako*, ie, being wise, knowledgeable, intelligent in terms of keeping the mind undistracted. This entails understanding how to keep up moral conduct, and, for a renunciant, includes understanding about managing robes and the other supports, and understanding the 7 kinds of suitability (*sappāya*), ie, regarding abode, alms-resort, speech, person, food, climate, and posture [Vism 4.35-41] (KhpA 242).

³³ **unobtrusive**, *appagabbho* (Skt *a-pragalbha*; opp: *pagabbha*, impudent): *a* (*na*) + *p* (infix + *pagabbha*), neg adj + nom masc sg (avyayībhava), “not forward; importunate, modest” (CPD). Sometimes, in late works, spelt as *apagabbha* (cf Skt *apa-gabbha*, “abortive”), “timid, lacking boldness” (DP: *apagabbha*; also CPD sv). For further details, see SD 38.2 (3.2). A renunciant should not show any kind of bodily impudence, or the 4 kinds of verbal impudence, or the numerous kinds of mental impudence (KhpA 242; cf Nc 228); Sn 144 = Khp 9.2). Comy explains this as the refraining from being importunate or exploitative through the body (physical actions), speech and thought (KhpA 1:242,7). In **Candūpama S** (S 16.3), the Buddha exhorts monastics to be “ever a newcomer amongst families, unobtrusive” (*nicca,navakā kulesu appagabbho*) (S 16.3,6/2:198,2 f, qu at Miln 389,11; Sn 852, 941; A 3:433,12; Dh 245 ≈ Jtkm 98,23*). See SD 38.3 (3.1.4).

³⁴ **not running after families**, *kulesu ananugiddho* (*an* (*na*), “not” + *anugiddho*, “greedy”), where *anugiddha* means “show parallel emotion with” families, ie, fawn upon families (KhpA:N 281), either out of greed (*gedha*) for items of support or through unwholesome mingling with the laity, esp by being forward in engaging oneself in business or work (of the laity) that has arisen (KhpA 244; cf Sn 65c). The Buddha often warns monastics against socializing with the laity, through which they are likely to be enticed by sensual pleasures, so that they are unable to keep up their practice, or even leave the order. In short, a renunciant should not be emotionally attached to any family. See eg **Cātumā S** (M 67,14-20/1:459-461) + SD 34.7 (6.3). See SD 38.3 (3.1.4).

³⁵ Sn 144 = Khp 9.2 (SD 38.3). Cf **Khagga,visāṇa S** (Sn 3/35-75); **Muni S** (esp Sn 213b, 214b); **Nalaka S** (Sn 712c); **Magandiya Pañha** (Sn 844).

³⁶ Qu in some detail in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28,9/1:186,11 + 24/1:189,24), SD 6.16.

³⁷ “Double-handled saw,” *ubhato,daṇḍaka kakaca*. Such a saw, worked by two persons, was used to make clean cross-cuts of a standing tree or free lumber. Two-man saws were also known to the ancient Romans, but became common in Europe only in the mid-15th cent. In North America, crosscut saws were used as early as the mid-17th cent, but felling saws only began to replace axes for felling trees in the late 19th cent.

³⁸ *Tatrāpi yo mano padūseyya, na me so tena sāsana,karo*. Comy specifies that *yo* here refers to either a monk or a nun (ie not a lay person) (MA 2:102).

‘Our hearts will be unperverted in any way, nor shall we utter any bad speech, but we shall dwell with a heart of lovingkindness, moved by goodness, without a hating heart.

And we will dwell pervading that person with a heart attended by lovingkindness. And based on that, we will dwell pervading the whole world with a heart attended by lovingkindness, vast, grown great,³⁹ boundless, free from hate, free from ill will.⁴⁰

This is how you, bhikshus, should train yourselves.”

(M 21,20/1:129), SD 38.1

This is clearly an idealist vision of non-violence, the highest way of showing non-attachment to one’s own body, in keeping with the teaching of non-self. Such a surrender is only possible by a saint, an arhat, who understands the true nature of the physical body and so he is unattached to it, fears no pain and shows no negative emotions to those who cause such pain.

2.5.3 “Fully quenched” (*parinibbuta*) [S 34d*]

2.5.3.1 From the last line of **S 34d**, it is clear that the Buddha is speaking of an arhat, one who has awakened. The person is described as “fully quenched” (*parinibbuta*), that is, all the 3 fires of greed, hate and delusion, have been extinguished and he is thus “cooled” (*nibbuta*).⁴¹ In the 1st period of the Buddha’s ministry (the 1st 20-25 years),⁴² this is probably the only meaning of words *nibbuta* or *parinibbuta*.

2.5.3.2 Both the Commentaries (on S 34d and on S 35.240) gloss *parinibbuta* as referring to the attaining of nirvana that is the full quenching of the defilements (*parinibbuto’ti kilesa,nibbānena parinibbuto*).⁴³ By the 2nd period of the Buddha’s ministry, with the passing away of some arhats, their death is referred to as “the nirvana of the aggregates” (*khandha,nibbāna*).

The 2 kinds of nirvana—the nirvana of defilements (*kilesa,nibbana*) and the nirvana of the aggregates (*khandha,nibbana*)—are fully defined in **the Nibbāna,dhātu Sutta** (It 2.2.7).⁴⁴ The former refers to the attaining of arhatness, that is, the attaining of nirvana while the arhat continues to live on; the latter refers to the “final passing away,” that is, arhat’s passing away without any more rebirth in samsara. They are both also briefly mentioned in a number of texts, such as **the Māha Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16)⁴⁵ and **the Pāsādika Sutta** (D 29).⁴⁶

2.5.4 “*nūpavadeyya kañci*” (he would blame no one) [S 34d*]

³⁹ The mind “grown great” (*maha-g,gattā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 Intro (4).

⁴⁰ *Taṅ ca puggalam mettā,sahagatena cetasā pharitvā viharissāma, tad-ārammaṇaṅ ca sabbāvantaṅ lokam mettā,sahagatena cittena vipulena maha-g,gatena appamāṇena averena avyābajjhena pharitvā viharissāmāti*. The form *avyābajjha* (*abyabajjha*) = *avyāpajjha* (*abyāpajjha*). This stock describes a meditator who is fully focussed. “Vast” or “bountiful” (*vipula*) means he has attained samadhi or full concentration, and as such is “grown great” (*maha-g,gata*), that is, free (least temporarily) of all the mental hindrances (SD 32), and thereby attained to dhyana. Only such a heart can truly be “boundless” or “measureless” (*appamana*) because, at least momentarily, going beyond conceit, the meditator *does not measure anyone but sees all beings as they really are*, without regarding anyone as a stranger or an enemy, or harbouring any negative thought: he is “free from hate, free from ill will” (*averena avyābajjhena*). For details & refs, see **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5 (2.1.3).

⁴¹ On *nibbana* as “blowing out” and as “cool,” see SD 50.13 (1.3.1.2).

⁴² On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 1.1 (2.2); SD 40a.1 (1.3).

⁴³ SA 1:37,5 = 3:29,27 f.

⁴⁴ It 44/2.2.7/38 f, SD 50.13. On the kinds of nirvana, see SD 9 (15.2): Nirvana: 2 kinds and 3 kinds.

⁴⁵ D 16,3.20/2:108 f (SD 9).

⁴⁶ D 29,29/3:135 (SD 40a.6). On the 2 kinds of nirvana, see SD 45.18 (2.5.2.4).

The true renunciant is truly compassionate and conciliatory, even to those who are offensive or have committed an offense. The Commentaries explain that he would not reprove another person for defects in conduct, etc, out of a desire to humiliate him but would speak out of compassion, in the hope of rehabilitating him, having established himself in the 5 qualities, that is, speaking at the right time, not at the wrong time; about a true matter, not a false one; in pleasant words, not harshly; in a beneficial way, not otherwise; with a heart of compassion.⁴⁷

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Dukkara Sutta

The Discourse on the Difficult to Practise

S 1.17

1 At Sāvathī.

(Deity:)

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| <p>2 <i>Dukkaraṃ duttitikkhañ ca
avyattena ca sāmāññaṃ
Bahū hi tattha sambādā
yattha bālo visīdatī</i></p> | (S 32) | <p>Hard to practise and hard to endure
is recluseship for the unskilled.
For, therein, many are the obstructions⁴⁸
wherein the fool falters.</p> |
| <p>3 <i>Katīhaṃ careyya sāmāññaṃ
cittaṃ ce na nivāraye
pade pade visīdeyya
saṅkappānaṃ vasānugo'ti</i></p> | (S 33) | <p>For how many days can one keep to recluseship
if one holds not back the mind?
One would falter step after step⁴⁹
under the power of one's thoughts.</p> |
| <p>4 (The Blessed One):⁵⁰
<i>Kummo'va aṅgāni sake kapāle
samodahaṃ bhikkhu mano,vitakke
anissito aññaṃ aheṭṭhayāno
parinibbuto nūpavadeyya⁵⁴ kañcīti</i></p> | (S 34) | <p>Just as a tortoise draws in its head into its shell,
so does a monk hold back his mind's thoughts.⁵¹
Independent,⁵² not troubling others,⁵³
fully quenched,⁵⁵ he would blame no one.⁵⁶</p> |

⁴⁷ **Nūpavadeyya kañcīti** yaṃ kiñci puggalaṃ ācāra,vipatti'ādīsu yāya kāyaci mañkuṃ kātu,kāmo hutvā na vadeyya, "kālena vakkhāmi no akālenā'ti,ādayo pana pañca dhamme ajjhataṃ upaṭṭhapetvā ullumpana,sabhāva,saṅghitena cittena kāruññataṃ paṭicca vadeyyāti (SA 1:37,5-10). **Nūpavadeyya kañcīti** aññaṃ kañci puggalaṃ sīla,vipattiyā vā ācāra,vipattiyā vā attānaṃ ukkaṃsetu,kāmatāya vā paraṃ vambhetu,kāmatāya vā na upavadeyya, añña-d-atthu pañca dhamme ajjhataṃ upaṭṭhapetvā, "kālena vakkhāmi, no akālena, bhūtena vakkhāmi, no abhūtena, saṅghena vakkhāmi, no pharusena, attha,samhitena vakkhāmi, no anatta,samhitena, metta,citto vakkhāmi, no dos'antaro'ti evaṃ ullumpana,sabhāva,saṅghiten'eva cittena viharati (SA 3:29,28).

⁴⁸ "Obstructions" (*sambādā*): see (2.1).

⁴⁹ See (2.2).

⁵⁰ This whole verse recurs as the closing of **Kummôpama S** (S 35.240,9/4:179), SD 19.17, where see n.

⁵¹ See (2.4.2).

⁵² See (2.5.1).

⁵³ See (2.5.2).

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁴ Comys: *na upavadeyya* (SA 1:37,6 = 3:29,28).

⁵⁵ See (2.5.3).

⁵⁶ See (2.5.4).