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Dvaya Sutta 2

Dutiya Dvaya Sutta The 2nd Dyad Discourse | S 35.93

Theme: The 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2021

1 Sutta summary

The **Dvaya Sutta** (S 35.93) gives an alternative model for **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-khandha*) in terms of the 6 internal and 6 external sense-bases by way of existential analysis or phenomenological taxonomy (simply, the types and nature of experience).

2 Sutta significance

2.1 THE NATURE OF OUR SENSES

2.1.1 The 12 sense-bases

At first blush, it would seem that **the “12 sense-bases”** (*dvādas’āyatana*)—the 6 internal sense-bases (*ajjhattik’āyatana*) (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and 6 external sense-bases (form, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought) (*bāhir’āyatana*) should be understood simply as **the 5 sense-faculties** (*āyatana*) and their **sense-objects** (*ārammaṇa*), with the “base” (*āyatana*)—the “mind” behind the sense—as the source or origin of each of these sense-experiences.

2.1.2 Origin of the 6-base model

2.1.2.1 From **the Abhidhamma period** (beginning c 300 BCE and a few centuries that follow), the 6 pairs of bases [2.1.1] were understood as a complete model or taxonomy that encompasses all the elements of existence mentioned in the suttas (the Nikāyas). The origin of **the 6 sense-bases** is probably found in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), where the Buddha declares that the 6 pairs of internal sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects are **“the all”** (*sabba*), apart from which nothing exists at all.¹

2.1.2.2 The Abhidhamma developed this idea to encompass practically everything (not just *experiences* but also “things”). **The Vibhaṅga** (the 2nd book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka) thus, in its 2nd chapter, on the analysis of bases (*āyatana, vibhaṅga*), defines **the mind-base** (*man’āyatana*) as encompassing *all* classes of consciousness, and **the mental state base** (*dhamm’āyatana*), as including the other 3 mental aggregates (feeling, perception, formations), non-sensuous or non-material forms, and even nirvana as an “element” (*nibbana, dhatu*). (Vbh 70-73)

2.2 THE 2 MODELS FOR SENSE-BASES

2.2.1 Sutta analysis, Abhidhamma taxonomy

2.2.1.1 From this development [2.1.2], it seems that we have an alternative to the early model for **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-khandha*) in terms of the 6 internal and 6 external sense-bases by way of the analysis of experience and existence. We can see **the Abhidhamma taxonomy** (classification) as a kind of **horizontal** cross-section (a diachronic view)² of our experiences, in all their states and possibilities, and **the sutta analysis** by way of the 6 sense-bases as a **vertical** process [Table 2.2].

¹ S 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1).

² On “diachronic” and “synchronic,” see SD 5.16 (8.2, 13.4).

<u>Aggregates</u>	<u>Seeing</u>	<u>Sense-base</u>
form	the eye	eye-base
	form	form-base
consciousness	eye-consciousness	mind-base
(formations)	eye-contact (on account of attention)	} mental state base
feeling	feeling arising from eye-contact	
perception	perception of form	
formations	volition regarding form	

Table 2.2. An event of seeing in terms of the aggregates and the sense-bases

2.2.1.2 Note that, while in the suttas, **contact** (*phassa*) does not explicitly feature in any of the 5 aggregates, in the Abhidhamma and Commentaries, it is assigned to the formations aggregate. This key event in the cognitive process is implied in the sentence, “**the meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called ... contact**” (that is, eye-contact, §3.3; etc). Here, in the **Dvaya Sutta 2** (S 35.93), only its impermanence (as a reflection) is highlighted.

The **Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18) describes, in interesting detail, how an experience of seeing can lead us to conceive ideas and views, and to perceive a sense-experience, colouring it with emotions based on past memories, thus:

Avuso, ³dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the 3 is contact.⁴

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.⁵

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.⁶

From that as source, **proliferation of conception and perception**⁷

assails a person regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through *the eye*.⁸

(M 18,16), SD 6.14

³ *Cakkhuñ ca āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu,viññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa,paccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tato,nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañca,saññā,saṅkhā samudācaranti atītānagata,paccuppannesu cakkhu,viññeyyesu rūpesu.* A passage similar is found in **Pariññā S** (S 35.60) where, however, the learned noble disciple becomes disillusioned (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness (also using the sentence, *tinnaṃ saṅgati phasso*), and as such “becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is freed (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, ‘Clinging has been fully understood by me.’” (S 35.60/4:32 f). **Mahā Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 28) closes in a similar manner, beginning with the statement: “If, avuso, internally the eye is unimpaired [intact] but no external forms come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention] (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*), then, there is no appearance of that class of consciousness” (M 28,27-38/1:190 f; MA 2:229,28-32). On Nāṇananda’s notion of the 3 phases of mental proliferation, see SD 6.14 (2). See foll n.

⁴ *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso.* In **Cha Chakka S** (M 148), this phrase is part of the sequence on any sense-based reflection (**M 148**,7-9/3:281 f + 28-39/3:284 f), SD 26.6. For a discussion on this phrase and passage, see Bucknell 1999: 318 ff. See prec n.

⁵ “One thinks about,” *vitakketi*. When thinking stops, desires do not arise: **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.2/2:277).

⁶ This verse up to here is also found in (**Samuday’atthaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 @ SD 7.5) and (**Sabb’upā-dāna**) **Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f @ SD 6.17) in different contexts.

⁷ *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, see SD 6.14 (3).

⁸ This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See SD 6.14 (4).

“**Contact**” (*phassa*) is defined here as “the meeting of the 3” (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*), where the key term, *samannāhāra* means “an appropriate act of attention” (MA 2:229,28-32). Attention here clearly suggests a karmic deliberation rooted in either lust, hate or delusion. What is implied in the suttas is thus explicitly stated, helpfully so, in the Abhidhamma.

2.2.1.3 Now, we are told [§3.3 etc] that during an event of **seeing**, eye-consciousness arises in dependence on the eye and forms; the meeting of the 3 is contact. With contact as condition, there arise *feeling, perception and formations* [*volition*] [§3.4 etc]. This is a “**vertical**” or synchronic view of our experience of *seeing*, by way of the sense-bases (*āyatana*): the eye and visible forms are each a separate base, respectively, the eye-base, and the form-base; eye-consciousness is a mind-base; and eye-contact, feeling, perception and formations are all grouped as “the mental state base” (*dhamm’āyatana*).

2.2.1.4 Now, looking “horizontally” or diachronically [2.2.1.1], across an event of seeing, we experience **the form aggregate** (*rūpa-k,khandha*). This comprises the eye and visible form, with the body as the physical basis of consciousness (this is the “body with its consciousness,” *sa,viññāṇaka,kaya*).⁹ In terms of **feeling aggregate** (*vedanā-k,khandha*), there is a feeling *born of eye-contact*. By way of **perception** (*saññā-k,khandha*), it is that of a visible form. **The perception of formations** is that regarding form. And **the consciousness aggregate** is, of course, an event of eye-consciousness itself.

2.3 RELATING THE 2 MODELS OF SENSE-BASES

2.3.1 The 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases

2.3.1.1 Interestingly, although the 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases are two well known teaching models in the suttas (as we have seen above), we rarely see them being presented in the suttas as working with one another, except perhaps in **the Dvaya Sutta 2** (S 35.93) and **the (Saḷ-āyatana) Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (S 35.121).¹⁰

There are at least **3 possible reasons** for this: the 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases as rarely related models in the suttas. The 1st reason: as teaching models, either of them is quite self-sufficient in terms of practical understanding in mindfulness and meditation practices. The 5 aggregate model was probably better known to the renunciants, while the 6 sense-base model, to the lay practitioners: the latter is clearly an easier model to teach and understand.¹¹

A 2nd reason is a technical one. It is probable that, in the suttas, the eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base and body-base each have their own respective location (the eye, ear, etc). **The mind-base**, however, is not located anywhere. Unlike the 6 sense-bases, the 5 aggregates are “mind-heavy,” with 4 of its 5 aggregates that are “mental”: feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.¹² In other words, the 2 models have distinctly different purposes: while the 6 sense-base model explains how our physical senses work with the mind, the 5-aggregate model is used for showing how the mind works in a conscious body.

⁹ On *sa,viññāṇaka,kaya*, see SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

¹⁰ S 35.93/4:67-69 (SD 57.39); S 35.121/4:105-107 (SD 93.6).

¹¹ Eg, it is impossible to distinguish any of the 4 mental aggregates (like trying to taste sea-water and telling which river it has come from, Miln 133); but the 6 senses are noticeably and palpably distinct.

¹² It should be noted, however, that consciousness is “the mind” (*citta*) itself, while the other 3 are “mental factors” (*cetasika*) [SD 17.1a (4.3.1)]. The suttas, eg **Sammā Ditṭhi S** (M 9), defines “mentality” (*nāma*) as “feeling, perception, formations, contact and attention” (M 9,54/1:53) + SD 11.14 (8.1).

A 3rd reason for the rarity of an integral model incorporating *both* the 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases in the suttas, is perhaps because there *were* such teachings, but they were lost to us. After all, we do see them working together in S 35.93 and S 35.121. If we carefully sift through the suttas, we may discover more suttas that, directly or indirectly, relate the 2 models in the same teaching.

2.3.1.2 We do see an integrated presentation of the 2 models—the **5 aggregates** and the **6 sense-bases**—at the start of **the Dhātu,kathā**, “the discourse on elements” (the 5th book of the Abhidhamma). This reflects the attempt of the early Buddhists to merge the various practical aspects of the teaching into a single comprehensive system where every element is clearly defined. Unlike the early suttas, which tend to be contextual, non-technical, the Abhidhamma tends to be technically precise. However, when a living experience is described in technical terms, we are likely to see it as a textbook experience, and miss out on what we can actually discover from our own direct experience of life that is reflected in the suttas—which is the way of learning in the Dharma spirit.

2.3.2 The role of the sense-bases

2.3.2.1 The teaching on **the sense-bases** go back to the earliest period, recorded in the Nikāyas themselves, where they are usually presented not as a complete existential model, but as starting points for the arising of cognition. This model explains how we are conscious of things through our senses in a conscious body.

The sense-bases basically mediate between **consciousness** and its objects. The internal bases (our sense-faculties) are referred to as the “bases for contact” (*phass’āyatana*). In this context, **the mind** (*mano*), the base for the arising of mind-consciousness (*mano,viññāṇa*), probably is a passive flow of consciousness where active cognition occurs, and mental states (*dhammā*), the non-sensuous objects of consciousness arise as introspection, reflection and imagination.

2.3.2.2 The suttas are not driven so much by the idea of classification or interaction of the aggregates and the sense-bases, even for the sake of being a comprehensive theory of experience. They are more concerned with the practical understanding and progress of the Buddha’s path leading to the end of suffering.

The sense-bases are the very body of experience where we can understand how suffering arises (S 35.106). Hence, it is said that the holy life is lived under the Buddha for **the full understanding of suffering**, and when we are asked what is the suffering that *should be fully understood*, the proper answer is that the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and so on, and all states arising from them, are the suffering that should be *fully understood*—as stated in **the Sambhula Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 35.81) and **the (Saḷ-āyatana) Kim Atthiya Sutta** (S 35.152).¹³

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¹³ S 35.81/4:50-52 (SD 108.16); S 35.152/4:138 (SD 85.8).

Dvaya Sutta 2

The 2nd Dyad Discourse

S 35.93

2 “Bhikshus, **consciousness** comes to be, dependent on a dyad.¹⁴
And how, bhikshus, does consciousness come to be, dependent on a *dyad*?

(1) The eye

3 Dependent on the eye and forms, there arises **eye-consciousness**.

The eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; **[68] forms** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is *shaking and trembling*,¹⁵ *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.¹⁶

3.2 **Eye-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of eye-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, eye-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

3.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **eye-contact**.¹⁷

Eye-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of eye-contact is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, *eye-contact* has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

3.4 **Contacted** [Touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.¹⁸

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

¹⁴ *Dvayaṃ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti.*

¹⁵ “Shaking and trembling,” foll *Ce calañ c’eva vyathañ ca; Be calañ c’eva byathañ ca; Ee calañ c’eva vyayañ ca; Se calañ ca byādhañ ca. Vyatha or byatha* (Be with labialized v-) is supported by Comy: *Calan c’eva byathañ cāti attano sabhāvena asaṅṭhahanato* [Ce Se asamvahanato] *calati c’eva byathati ca*, “Shaking and trembling: it shakes and trembles because, by its nature, it remains not stable.” (SA:Be 3:26,9 f). SubComy: *Byathatīti jarāya maraṇena ca pavedhati*, “Trembling: it trembles (*pavedhati*)* with decay and death.” (SAPT:Be 2:299,18 f). **Pavedhati*: as *pave-dheyya* (Sn 928a), from VYATH, to waver. On *vyath*, see Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1916, 2000: §§25.1, 38.4; MW, sv *vyath*, to tremble, waver, come to naught, fail.

¹⁶ *Itth’etaṃ dvayaṃ calañ c’eva vyayañ ca, aniccaṃ vipatiṇāmi aññathā, bhāvi.* See prec n.

¹⁷ *Yā kho bhikkhave imesaṃ tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo.* See (2.2.1.2).

¹⁸ *Phuṭṭho bhikkhave vedeti phuṭṭho ceteti phuṭṭho sañjānāti.* Comy explains this line as referring to the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*): the eye and its object at the eye-door “touched” (*phuṭṭho*) the aggregate of **form** (*rūpa-k, khandha*); it feels (*vedeti*) the aggregate of **feeling** (*vedanā, khandha*); it thinks (*vedeti*) the aggregate of **formations** (*saṅkhāra-k, khandha*); it perceives (*sañjānāti*) the aggregate of **perception** (*saññā, khandha*); consciousness is the aggregate of **consciousness** (*viññāṇa-k, khandha*). The same applies mutatis mutandis to each of the other 5 senses. (SA 2:381,4-13)

(2) The ear

4 Dependent on the ear and sounds, there arises **ear-consciousness**.

The ear is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; **[68] sounds** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

4.2 **Ear-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of ear-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, ear-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

4.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **ear-contact**. Ear-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of ear-contact is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, ear-contact has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

4.4 **Contacted** [Touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

(3) The nose

5 Dependent on the nose and smells, there arises **nose-consciousness**.

The nose is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; **[68] smells** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

5.2 **Nose-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of nose-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, nose-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

5.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **nose-contact**. Nose-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of nose-contact is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, nose-contact has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

5.4 **Contacted** [Touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

(4) The tongue

6 Dependent on the tongue and tastes, there arises **tongue-consciousness**.

The tongue is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; [68] **tastes** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

6.2 **Tongue-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of tongue-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, tongue-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

6.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **tongue-contact**. Tongue-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of tongue-contact is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*. [69]

When, bhikshus, *tongue-contact* has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

6.4 **Contacted** [Touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

(5) The body

7 Dependent on the body and touch, there arises **body-consciousness**.

The body is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*; [68] **touches** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

7.2 **Body-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of body-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, body-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

7.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **body-contact**. Body-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of body-contact is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, *body-contact* has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

7.4 **Contacted** [Touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

(6) The mind

8 Dependent on the mind and thoughts, there arises **mind-consciousness**.

The mind is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*; **thoughts** are *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

Thus, this dyad is shaking and trembling, *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

8.2 **Mind-consciousness** is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of mind-consciousness is also *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

When, bhikshus, mind-consciousness has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

8.3 The meeting, the falling together, the coming together of these 3 things is called **mind-contact**. Mind-contact, too, is *impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

The cause, the condition, for the arising of mind-contact is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

When, bhikshus, *mind-contact* has arisen, dependent on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

8.4 **Contacted**, bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives.

Thus, these things, too, are *shaking and trembling, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise*.

It is in such a way, bhikshus, that consciousness comes to be, dependent on a dyad.”

— tatiyaṃ —

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