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(Tika) Nibbāna Sutta

The (Threes) Discourse on Nirvana | A 3.55
 or, **Nibbuta Sutta** The Discourse on the Cooled
 or, **(Jāṇussoṇi) Nibbāna Sutta**, The Discourse on Nirvana (to Jāṇussoṇi)
 Theme: Nirvana as a personal experience
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2016

1 Significance of the Sutta

1.1 The (Jāṇussoṇi) Nibbāna Sutta (A 3.55)—also called **Nibbuta Sutta**—is about nirvana as a personal experience. The brahmin Jāṇussoṇi starts by mentioning all the virtues of the Dharma except the first [§2.2]—he omits “well taught is the Blessed One’s Dharma” (*svākkhāto bhagavato dhammo*). He probably omits this first virtue because he is not referring to the teaching as theory, or even training. He lists the other 5 virtues because they apply to nirvana, which is the *goal* of the Dharma.

1.2 The Buddha’s answer is basically that nirvana arises when the 3 unwholesome roots of actions—lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)—are all fully abandoned. In other words, there are three parts to his answer, and each part is again divided into two more parts: the first part states the negative effects of the root [§§3, 5, 7], and the second part, the abandoning of the roots by which “nirvana is seen here and now.” [§§4, 6, 8].

2 The brahmin Jāṇussoṇi

2.1 Jāṇussoṇi was a brahmin of great wealth (*mahā,sāla*), ranked with eminent brahmins such as Caṅkī, Tārukkha, Pokkhara,sāti and Todeyya (Sn 115). The name **Jāṇussoṇi** was not given by his parents (we do not know his personal name). It is a title he received on account of his appointment to the office of royal chaplain or purohita (*purohita*), given to him by Pasenadi, king of Kosala. Hence, he is called *Jāṇussoṇi* (AA 2:115).

The Sutta Nipāta commentary says that he received the title on account of his appointment as purohita (royal chaplain), and adds that, like Pokkhāra,sāti, he, too, was a fortune-teller (*nemittika*) (SnA 463). The Aṅguttara commentary says that, alternatively, Jāṇussoṇi might be his family name (SnA 463). The Saṃyutta commentary says that he was a great purohita whose wealth amounted to 80 crores (*asīti,koṭi*) and the name was a title following this appointment (SA 2:75).¹

2.2 Jāṇussoṇi is well known for his sustained interest in the Dharma, and the frequent questions he asks the Buddha are recorded in at least a dozen major suttas. At the end of each of these suttas, he is recorded as going for refuge in the 3 jewels.² Of all those who have taken refuge in the 3 jewels, Jāṇussoṇi seems to be the one who has done it the most. Although he seems to be deeply sympathetic to the Dharma, there is no record of his spiritual attainment³.

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¹ For further details, see SD 44.3 (2).

² See SD 44.3 (2.4).

³ For more details on Jāṇussoṇi, see SD 2.6a (1).

(Tika) Jāṇussoṇi Sutta

The (Threes) Discourse on Nirvana

A 3.55

Jāṇussoṇi's question

1 Then, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi approached the Blessed one, saluted him, and sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi said to the Blessed One:

2 “Master Gotama, it is said,
‘Nirvana visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika nibbāna*).’

2.2 In what way is nirvana

**visible here and now,
nothing to do with time,
for one to “come and see,”
accessible,
to be realized by the wise for himself?”⁴ [159]**

*sandiṭṭhika
akālika
ehi,passika
opaneyyika
paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ viññūhi*

The Buddha's answer

(1) ABANDONING LUST

3 “Brahmin, one who is excited by **lust**, overcome by *lust*, his mind overwhelmed by it, intends for his own affliction, intends for the affliction of others, intends for the affliction of both, and he feels mental suffering and sorrow.⁵

4 When **lust** is abandoned,
he neither intends for his own affliction,
nor intends for the affliction of others,
nor intends for the affliction of both,
nor does he feel mental suffering or sorrow.

In this way, brahmin, nirvana is seen here and now.

(2) ABANDONING HATE

5 Brahmin, one who is excited by **hate**, overcome by hate, *his mind overwhelmed by it*, intends for his own affliction, intends for the affliction of others, intends for the affliction of both, and he feels mental suffering and sorrow.

6 When **hate** is abandoned,
*he neither intends for his own affliction,
nor intends for the affliction of others,
nor intends for the affliction of both,*
nor does he feel mental suffering or sorrow.

In this way, brahmin, nirvana is seen here and now.

⁴ Whole para: *Kittāvatā nu kho bho gotama sandiṭṭhikaṃ nibbānaṃ hoti akālikaṃ ehi,passikaṃ opaneyyikaṃ paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ viññūhīti.*

⁵ *Ratto* (Duṭṭho | Mūlho) *kho brāhmaṇa rāgena* (dosena | mohena) *abhibhūto pariyādinna, citto | atta, vyābhādhāya'pi ceteti, para, vyābhādhāya'pi ceteti, ubhaya, vyābhādhāya'pi ceteti, | cetasikam pi dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti.* The bracketed readings are those for §7 and §9 respectively.

(3) ABANDONING DELUSION

7 Brahmin, one who is excited by **delusion**, overcome by delusion, *his mind overwhelmed by it, intends for his own affliction, intends for the affliction of others, intends for the affliction of both, and he feels mental suffering and sorrow.*

8 When **delusion** is abandoned,
*he neither intends for his own affliction,
 nor intends for the affliction of others,
 nor intends for the affliction of both,
 nor does he feel mental suffering or sorrow.
 In this way, brahmin, nirvana is seen here and now.*

The utter destruction of the 3 roots

9 Now, brahmin, when one experiences
 the remainderless destruction of **lust**,
 the remainderless destruction of **hate**, and
 the remainderless destruction of **delusion**—

*anavasesaṃ raga-k,khayaṃ
 anavasesaṃ lobha-k,khayaṃ
 anavasesaṃ moha-k,khayaṃ*

then, brahmin, there is nirvana
*visible here and now,
 nothing to do with time,
 for one to “come and see,”
 accessible [leading on (to the goal)],
 to be realized by the wise for himself.*

Janussoṇi goes for refuge

10 Wonderful, master Gotama! Wonderful, master Gotama! Just as if one
 were to place upright what had been overturned, or
 were to reveal what was hidden, or
 were to show the way to one who was lost, or
 were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
 in the same way master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dharma, and to the community of monks, too.

May master Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth for life.”⁶

— evaṃ —

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⁶ This is an example of an individual refuge-going: see SD 44.2 (2.3). This is also one of at least 12 occasions when Jānussoṇi goes to the 3 jewels for refuge: see SD 44.3 (2.4).