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Mahā Hatthi, padôpama Sutta

The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Hoofprint | M 28

Theme: The 4 elements & dependent arising of the 5 aggregates

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 Sāriputta addresses the monks at Jetavana and tells them that, just as the footprint of every creature will fit into the elephant's hoofprint, even so all wholesome states of mind are found within the 4 noble truths [§§1-2]. After listing the four noble truths, he analyzes the first noble truth (*dukkha ariya, -sacca*) in its various components [§3]. Of the components, he enumerates the last, namely, the 5 aggregates of clinging (*pañc'upādāna-k, khandha*) [§4].

1.1.2 Next, he selects the 1st of **the 5 aggregates**, that is, the aggregate of form (*rūpa-k, khandha*) [§5] and analyzes it into the 4 primary elements (*mahā, bhūta, rūpa*), elaborating on each of them in their 2 aspects, the internal (*ajjhatta*) and the external (*bahiddhā*) [§§6-7, 11-12, 16-17, 21-22]. Each of the elements is presented as a basis for insight practice as well as for developing patience, faith and equanimity [§§8-10, 13-15, 18-20, 23-25].

1.1.3 Sāriputta then goes on to examine those aspects of the noble truths that he had earlier set aside. **The derived form** is introduced by way of the sense-faculties and its objects, which he then relates to the other 4 aggregates of the 1st noble truth. Where the eye is intact, and external shapes are present within its field, and there is conscious engagement, there arises the appropriate consciousness. This is how the form aggregate of clinging arises.

It is similar with each of the other 4 aggregates [§§27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37]. Finally, he relates this same approach to each of the other 3 noble truths [§§28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38]. **The (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56/3:58-61) gives a more detailed exposition of the 5 aggregates [§4].

1.1.4 Sāriputta's main instruction on the 4 elements are each refrained by a reflection of *samvega* (sense of spiritual urgency) [§§10, 15, 20, 25]. This interesting state is discussed in detail in **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16).¹

1.2 SUTTA STRUCTURE

Each of the 4 element-cycles comprises reflections on

- (1) the internal element (as our body-parts);
- (2) the external element which are defined.

Both (1)+(2) are then reflected on in the light of the 3 characteristics as being impermanent, suffering and non-self.

- (3) The "psychological" application, that is, how the element arises in our body, and how we should not identify with it, so that we are equanimous.
- (4) This then arouses a sense of urgency (*samvega*) in us.

¹ See SD 9 (7f).

- (5) The closing practice is the reflection on the dependent arising of the 5 aggregates in the 12 elements (the 6 sense-bases and their respective sense-objects).

2 Key passage

2.1 The key passage, in terms of practice, in the Mahā Hatti, padôpama Sutta is clearly this: “And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element, brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute” (*tassa dhāt’ārammaṇam eva cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati*) [§§8, 13, 18, 23] repeated for each of the four elements. **Bh Bodhi** notes:

This sentence can be construed in two alternative ways, depending on how the compound *dhāt’ārammaṇam* is understood. Ven Nyanaponika takes it as the object of the verb *pakkhandati*, and he understands *dhātu* here as ‘an impersonal element in general’ capable of including sound, contact, feeling, etc. Thus he translates, ‘And his mind enters into that very object [taking it just as an impersonal] element.’ [Ñānamoli] reads the compound as an adjunct qualifying *citta*, and supplies the object of the verb in parenthesis. MA seems to support the former reading; MAṬ explicitly identifies *dhātu* as the earth element, thus supporting the latter reading. MA explains the phrase ‘acquires resolution’ [*adhimuccati*, ‘is resolute’] to mean that the meditator contemplates the situation by way of elements and thus has neither attachment nor aversion concerning it.” (M:ÑB 1221 n334; emphases added)

2.2 A simpler structure of this sentence is found in **the Cūḷa Suññata Sutta** (M 121): *tassa araṇṇa, saññāya cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati*, “His mind plunges into that perception of forest, brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute” (M 3:104; cf M 1:186; Miln 326). Here the underscored phrase is progressively replaced by the perceptions of earth, of each of the four formless attainments, and finally of the signless concentration of mind). This stock passage refers a leap of faith in a person as result of spiritual experience (Miln 36).

2.3 Based on this passage and Buddhist practice as I understand it, I have taken *dhāt’ārammaṇa* as a karmadharaya: “the element that is this very object.”² As such, the key sentence *Tassa dhāt’ārammaṇam eva cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati* [§§8, 13, 18, 23] can be rendered as:

“And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element [earth, water, fire, wind], brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute.”

This translation clearly makes good sense as it reflects what actually happens in a meditation on the elements, as is shown in such passages as found in **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61,8-12/1:421-423), and the meditation on the earth element in **the Cūḷa Suññata Sutta** (M 121,5/3:105).

3 The primary elements and their derivatives

3.1 The Mahā Hatthi, padôpama Sutta not only lists the 4 primary elements but also explain how they are manifested in the human body. These elements, although physical as opposed to mental, do not merely refer to the “elemental” forces we face, but are the very structure of the universe and life itself, that is,

² More specifically, a *avadhāraṇa, pubbapada kamma, dhāraya, samāsa*, whose etymology is *dhātuñ c’eva taṃ ārammaṇāñ cā ti dhāt’ārammaṇam*, “that very object that is the element.”

THE 28 MATERIAL PHENOMENA

(Dhs 127; Vism 443; Abhs:SR 159; Abhs:BRS 6.2-5/235-242; Abhs:WG 216-228)

Concretely produced matter

I. *The primary elements*

1. Earth element
2. Water element
3. Fire element
4. Wind element

II. *Sensitive phenomena*³

5. Eye-sensitivity
6. Ear-sensitivity
7. Nose-sensitivity
8. Tongue-sensitivity
9. Body-sensitivity

III. *Objective phenomena*

10. Visible form
11. Sound
12. Smell
13. Taste
- [] Touch = 3 elements: earth, fire, wind.

IV. *Sexual phenomena*

14. Femininity
15. Masculinity

V. *Heart phenomenon*

16. Heart-base

VI. *Life phenomenon*

17. Life faculty

VII. *Nutritional phenomenon*

18. Food

Non-concretely produced matter

VIII. *Limiting phenomena*

19. Space element

IX. *Communication phenomena*

20. Bodily intimation
21. Vocal intimation

X. *Mutable phenomena*

22. Lightness (agility)
23. Malleability (elasticity)
24. Wieldiness (adaptability) (plus 2 intimations, 20-21)

XI. *Characteristics of matter*

25. Growth (production)
26. Continuity
27. Decay
28. Impermanence

³ These are the internal senses (*ajjhattik'āyatana*) as faculties of perception (*cakkhu, sota, ghana, jivhā, kāya*). The suttas use a different set of Pali terms for the corresponding physical organs (eye = *akkhi*, ear = *kaṇṇa*, nose = *nāsā*). The fact that the former set is more common in the discourses shows that the emphasis is on the subjective, ie one's ability to see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Experience as represented by the 6 types of consciousness, however, is the outcome of two determinants: the "objective" in-coming sensory impressions and the "subjective" way in which these sensory impressions are received and cognized. **Ñānamoli** explains these two determinants as follows: *ajjhattik'āyatana* = the organization of experience; *bahiddh'āyatana* = the experience of the organized (*A Thinker's Notebook*, 1971: 159). **Van Zeyst** explains: "the inner sphere ... constitutes the subjective element which is the capacity of reaction, and the outer sphere constitutes the objective element which produces the impact" (*Ency Bsm* 470 "Āyatana").

the 4 states of matter (*rūpa*). In modern terms, the four elements may be freely and respectively rendered as *solidity, fluidity, heat (plasma) and gas*, or more dynamically as hardness (or extension), cohesiveness, softness (or maturation) and motion (or distension).

These primary elements, “great elements” or “great essentials” (*mahā, bhūta*) are called “elements” (*dhātu*) in the sense that they have their own characteristics (*attano sabhavaṃ dhārenti*).⁴ None of these elements exist in themselves but are merely essential characteristics that manifest in various proportions, for example, a rock would have a predominance of earth (hardness, solidity); rain, of mostly water (fluidity); fire, of heat (maturation or decay); and the atmosphere, of wind (motion). Taken together, the 4 primary elements are founded on the earth, held together by the water element, maintained by the fire element, and spread about by the wind element.

It is with such understanding that in **the (Sāriputta) Dāru-k, khandha Sutta** (A 6.41), Sāriputta declares that for a wise disciple *even a tree trunk can be seen as a manifestation of each of the 4 primary elements*, since each of them is but a quality of the same tree.⁵

3.2 According to the Abhidhamma, there are 2 kinds of matter, comprising 11 categories and totalling 28 types of phenomena, that is, the 4 primary elements and the 24 derived forms. The 2 kinds of matter are concretely produced matter (*nippahanna, rūpa*) and non-concretely produced matter (*anippahanna, rūpa*), as shown here in the table on **the 28 material phenomena** [above].

4 Where do the 4 primary elements cease without remainder?

Regarding the question asked by a “certain monk” as to “Where do these 4 primary elements—earth, water, fire, wind—cease without remainder?” [§67.2], the *where* of the question should be well noted. It is interesting to note that while the ancient Indian sages and seekers generally discuss existence in outer *spatial* terms,⁶ the Buddha speaks in terms of *inner* space, of the 6 senses.⁷ This spatial notion is clearly evident in the monk’s question [§67b].

The primary elements clearly cannot cease in a physical or a non-physical universe existing in time and space, that is, a universe made up of the 4 primary elements themselves. This universe comprises the sense-world (*kāma, dhātu*), the form world (*rūpa, dhātu*) and the formless world (*arūpa, dhātu*).

Early Upaniṣadic asseverations place the realm of the immortal, the liberated, variously in the *brahmaloka, svargaloka*, or the trans-solar region. It is quite literally and spatially the highest cosmic plane. In cosmological *suttas* such the *Devaddha* [sic, Kevaḍḍha Sutta, D 13], the paradise of the god *Brahmā* is merely a *devaloka*, and *devaloka* is not the abode of immortality.

(R H Robinson 1972:321)

Obviously, the answer has to lie outside of such a universe, as something non-temporal and non-spatial, or what is sometimes called “the realm of cessation” (*nirodha, dhātu*),⁸ that is, a non-spatial (*apa-tiṭṭhita*) realm.⁹ In other words, the 4 primary elements cease to exist in nirvana.¹⁰

⁴ See Vism 11.93, 109; Abhs:BRS 1999:234-246.

⁵ A 6.41/3:340 f.

⁶ See eg S Schayer, “Das mahāyānistische Absolutum nach der Lehre der Mādhyamikas,” *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, 1935:401-415; and R H Robinson, “Some methodological approaches to the unexplained points,” 1972: 321 f.

⁷ See eg EJ Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1933:128.

⁸ D 33.1.10(14)/3:215.

⁹ See R H Robinson 1972:322 f.

5 “How who sees dependent arising, sees dharma ... ”

5.1 The Mahā Hatthi, padopama Sutta contains an interesting statement attributed to the Buddha himself, but which is found nowhere else, namely, “**He who sees dependent arising sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising**”¹¹ (*yo paṭicca, samuppādaṃ passati, so dhammaṃ passati; yo dhammaṃ passati, so paṭicca, samuppādaṃ passatīti*) [§28]. In fact, this quote is untraced in the Pali Canon as we have it and possibly belongs to some lost texts.

The Sutta goes on to explain that the 5 aggregates of clinging arise interdependently (*paṭicca, samuppannā*). The Commentary explains the statement thus: “One who sees conditionality (*paccaya*) sees dependently arisen states (*paṭicca, samuppanne dhamme*); one who sees dependently arisen states see conditionality” (MA 2:230).¹²

5.2 Dependent arising is the most important epistemological model for explaining how our experiences arise through conditions and how they are interrelated to events and states around us. Dependent arising is the interrelatedness of dharmas, as **Rupert Gethin** points out:

To see *dhammas* is to see their interrelatedness; to see their interrelatedness is to see *dhamma*. One might rephrase the Nikāya saying, then, as: “He who sees *dhammas* sees *dhamma*; he who sees *dhamma* sees *dhammas*.” (Gethin 2001:151)

In his article “He who sees *dhamma* sees *dhammas*,” Gethin adds:

My suggestion is that this [MA 2:230 above] should be read in part as quite deliberate play on the meaning of *dhamma*, a play, moreover, that is entirely consonant with the Nikāyas. As we have seen, *dhammas* are mental and physical qualities, and seeing these *dhammas* as *dhammas*—seeing how they arise and disappear, seeing how they are dependently arisen—one sees the ultimate truth: he who sees *dhammas* sees *dhamma*. (Gethin 2004:536)

5.3 Gethin, however, is careful to add a caveat that he is not trying to impute any specific technical Abhidharma understanding to the Nikāyas, that he is not suggesting that *dhamma* is used in early Buddhist thought in the sense of an irreducible element. It is just that *dhamma* here is used in the general sense of a mental or physical quality.

Nevertheless, alongside the use of *dhamma* in the Nikāyas in the senses of the practices, truths and teachings that are recommended on the authority of the Buddha, there is a further usage already embedded in the Nikāyas: *dhammas* are the fundamental qualities, both mental and physical, that in some sense constitute—or better, support and maintain—experience or reality in its entirety. (Gethin 2004:536 f)

5.4 That the exact understanding and translation of *dhamma* in early Buddhist thought should remain elusive is understandable. The Dharma is “deep, hard to see, peaceful, sublime, beyond the sphere of

¹⁰ For a related discussion in connection with the state of the Tathāgata after death, see **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 63), SD 5.8 (3.6).

¹¹ As will be explained below, it is important that “dharma” is here spelt in the lower case. Indeed, Pāli and other ancient Indian languages do not have capital letters, the use of which imposes a sense of permanence onto the idea that the word refers to—a notion foreign to early Buddhism.

¹² *Yo paṭicca, samuppādaṃ passatī ti yo paccaye passati; so dhammaṃ passatī ti so paṭicca, samuppanna, dhamme passati.* (MA 2:230)

reasoning [logic], subtle, to be known by the wise,”¹³ so that they are beyond bookish banter or academic pronouncements, but something to be personally and directly experienced leading to a wholesome life change. For this reason, even the Buddhas put the Dharma above themselves.¹⁴

6 Related suttas

The Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 62), too, like the Mahā Hatthi, padôpama Sutta, deals with the 4 primary elements but includes “space” (*ākāsa*) as the fifth element.¹⁵ **The Dhātu, vibhāṅga Sutta** (M 140) gives six elements, adding space and consciousness as the last two elements (M 140,8-19/3:239-243).¹⁶ It also has a section on the meditation on the elements unique to it (M 28,13-17/ 1:423 f). **The Visuddhi, -magga** gives a detailed analysis of the four elements (Vism 11.21-38/347-351) and says that the 4 elements are treated briefly in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) and at length in **the Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta** (M 28), **the (Mahā) Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) and **the Dhātu, vibhāṅga Sutta** (M 140).

The short **Rāhula Sutta** (A 4.177) gives an account of the Buddha’s teaching Rāhula how to reflect non-self in terms of the 4 elements (A 4.177/2:164 f).

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Mahā Hatthi, padôpama Sutta

The Greater Discourse

on the Simile of the Elephant’s Hoofprint

M 28

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha, piṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove near Sāvathī.

1.2 Then, the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks thus:

“Āvuso [Friends]!”

“Āvuso [Friend]!” the monks replied.

The venerable Sāriputtā said this:

The 1st noble truth

2 “Avuso [Friends], just as the footprint of any living being that walks can be placed within an elephant’s hoofprint,¹⁷ and so the elephant’s hoofprint is declared to be the foremost of them because of its great size;

¹³ *Dhammo gambhīro duddaso duranubodho santo paṇīto atakkâvacaro nipuṇo paṇḍita, vedanīyo* (M 1:167). On *atakkâvacara*, see **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14,3.1.2), SD 49.8.

¹⁴ *Dhammañ ñeva sakkatvā garuṃ katvā*, **Gārava S** (S 6.2/1:138-140 = A 4.21/2:20 f), SD 12.3.

¹⁵ M 28.8-12/1:421-423 = SD 3.11. On how the 4 primary elements cannot exist in themselves, see Boisvert 1995: 36 f.

¹⁶ By themselves, space and consciousness are not called “elements” (*dhātu*).

¹⁷ This parable as in **Appamāda S 1** (S 3.17/1:86) & **(Chakka) Appamāda S** (A 6.53/3:364 f). In both cases, the Buddha declares diligence (*appamāda*) is helpful both here and in the hereafter.

even so, avuso, all wholesome states can be included [found] in the 4 noble truths.

2.2 In what four?

In the noble truth that is	suffering, [185]
in the noble truth that is	the arising of suffering,
in the noble truth that is	the ending of suffering,
in the noble truth that is	the path leading to the ending of suffering.

3 And what, avuso, is **the noble truth that is suffering**?¹⁸

Birth is suffering,
 decay¹⁹ is suffering,
 [disease is suffering,]²⁰
 death is suffering;
 grief, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair are suffering;²¹
 []²²
 not to get what one desires is suffering,
 —in short, the 5 aggregates of clinging²³ are suffering.

¹⁸ See **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:420-424) in SD 1.1. In the Chinese Mahāyāna texts, this list (excluding “grief, lamentation, etc”) comprises the “eight sufferings” (Skt *aṣṭa,duḥkhatāḥ*). Buddhaghosa gives **the eight occasions invoking urgency** (*aṭṭha saṁvega,vatthu*), as follows: birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), suffering of loss (*apāya,dukkha*), suffering of the past rooted in the round of rebirth (*atīte vaṭṭa,mūlaka dukkha*), suffering of the future rooted in the round of rebirth (*anāgate vaṭṭa,mūlaka dukkha*), and suffering of the present rooted in the search for food (*paccuppanne āhāra,pariyetṭhi,mūlaka dukkha*) (Vism 4.63/135). **The Dukkha S** (S 38.14) categorizes suffering into 3 kinds: (1) suffering due to pain (*dukkha,dukkhatā*); (2) suffering due to formations (*saṅkhāra,dukkhatā*); and (3) suffering due to change (*vipariṇāma,dukkhatā*) (S 38.14/4:259; also S 45.165-166/5:56; D 33.1.10(27)/3:216). (1) is painful bodily pain and mental displeasure; (2) is all conditioned phenomena of the 3 worlds because they are oppressed by the rise and fall of events; and (3) is pleasant feeling, which brings suffering when it ends. In the above Sutta list [3], the categories of suffering are as follows: (1) birth, decay, disease, death, grief etc; (2) the 5 aggregates; (3) not to be with the pleasant, to be without the pleasant. The 3 kinds of suffering are elaborated at Vism 16.34 f/499.

¹⁹ *Jarā*, old age, aging.

²⁰ Only in the Vinaya & Saṃyutta versions of **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (V 1:10-12; S 56.11); it is not mentioned in Comys.

²¹ Found in most MSS but not in Be and Ce.

²² All MSS omit *appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho* (to be with the unpleasant is suffering, to be with the pleasant is suffering).

²³ “The 5 aggregates of clinging,” *pañc’upādāna-k,khandha*, namely, form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness (S 3:47 Vbh 1). The aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-k,khandha*) are more fully called “the 5 groups of existence which form the objects of clinging” (Vism 14.214 f/477 f). **Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:47 f) defines the aggregates of clinging as being “with cankers, subject to clinging” (*sāsava upādānīya*). According to the Abhidhamma, all forms (*rūpā*) are classified as “with cankers, subject to clinging,” and so too the resultant (*vipāka*) and functional (*kiriya*) mental aggregates of the arhat (Dhs 1103, 1219). The only aggregates that are “without cankers, not subject to clinging” (*anāsava anupādānīya*) are the four mental aggregates occurring in the cognitive moments of the 4 supramundane paths and fruits (Dhs 1104, 1220). The reason for this is that *sāsava* and *upādānīya* do not mean “accompanied by cankers and by clinging,” but “capable of being taken as objects of the cankers and of clinging.” Moreover, the arhat’s mundane aggregates can be taken as objects of the cankers and of clinging by *others* (DhsA 347).²³ The Saṃyutta Commentary says that while the form aggregate is of the sense-sphere, the other 4 aggregates are of the 4 spheres (sense sphere, form sphere, formless sphere, supramundane) (SA 2:270).

The 5 aggregates of clinging

4 And what, avuso, are **the 5 aggregates of clinging**?

They are:²⁴

- The form aggregate of clinging;
- The feeling aggregate of clinging;
- The perception aggregate of clinging;
- The formations aggregate of clinging;
- The consciousness aggregate of clinging.

5 And what, avuso, is **the form aggregate of clinging**?

It is the 4 great [primary] elements²⁵ and the form derived²⁶ from the 4 great elements.

5.2 And what, avuso, are **the 4 great elements**?

They are:²⁷

- The earth element;
- the water element;
- the fire element;
- the wind [air] element.

THE 4 PRIMARY ELEMENTS²⁸

(A) THE EARTH ELEMENT

Internal earth element

6 And what, avuso, is the earth element?²⁹

²⁴ For a more detailed exposition, see **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56/358-61).

²⁵ “The 4 great elements” (*cattāro mahā, bhūtā*), as in **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 11,8-11) but with §12 on “space.” (M 11.8-11/1:421 f).

²⁶ Although the “derived (or derivative) forms” (*upādāya rūpa*) are mentioned here (and also in **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S**, S 22.56.7/3:58-61; SD 3.7), their analysis first appears in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Dhs 596, 980; Tikap 3, qu at Vism 535; Tikap 89, 109; Vism 444), according to which there are **24 “derived forms,”** namely: the 5 sense faculties (*pasāda, rūpa*): seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, body; the four sense objects: form, sound, smell, taste —touch being identical with three of the great elements, viz earth, fire and wind; femininity (*itth’indriya*); masculinity (*puris’indriya*); physical base of the mind (*hadaya, vatthu*); bodily intimation (*kāya, viññatti*), verbal intimation (*vacī, viññatti*); physical life (*rūpa, jīvitā*); the space element (*ākāsa, dhātu*), physical agility (*rupassa lahutā*), physical elasticity (*rupassa mudutā*), physical adaptability (*rupassa kammaññatā*), physical growth (*rupassa upacaya*); physical continuity (*rupassa santati*); and food (*āhāra*). See BDict: Khandha & also *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (Abhds:NB 6.2-5). For a useful discussion, see Gethin 1986; Harvey 1993:3-5 (digital ed); also Karunadasa 1967:38 f & Boisvert 1995:37-42.

²⁷ For a psychological treatment of the 4 elements, see **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 1,3-6/1:1), SD 11.8.

²⁸ Here, Mahā Hatthi, padopama S, deals with the 5 primary elements, incl “space” (*ākāsa*) as the 5th element (M 28,8-12/1:421-423). **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140) gives 6 elements, adding space and consciousness as the last two elements (M 140.8-19/3:239-243), and has a section on the meditation on the elements unique to it (M 28,13-17/1:423 f). **Visuddhi, magga** gives a detailed analysis of the 4 elements (Vism 11.21-38/347-351) and says that they are treated briefly in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) and here (Mahā Hatthipadōpama S), **(Mahā) Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62) and **Dhātu, vibhāṅga S** (M 140). On how the 4 primary elements cannot exist in themselves, see Boisvert 1995:36 f. Practical meditation instructions on the elements can be found in Vimmi:ESK 1961:197-205, Vism 351, Pa Auk 1996:17; Fryba 1987:123. For the first 5 elements in later Buddhism, see Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, London, 1959:183 ff.

The earth element may be either internal or external.³⁰

6.2 And what, avuso, is **the internal earth element**?

Avuso, whatever that is solid, solidified and clung to³¹ internally and individually [belonging to one-self], namely,

head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin,³²
flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidney;
heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs;
mesentery, bowels, stomach contents, dung,

or whatever else³³ that is solid, solidified and clung to, internally and individually [belonging to one-self]—this, avuso, is called **internal earth element**.

6.3 Now **both** the internal earth element and the external earth element are simply **earth element**.³⁴ And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’³⁵

Having seen it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by³⁶ *the earth element*,³⁷ by wisdom the mind becomes detached [lust-free].³⁸

External earth element

7 Now, avuso, there comes a time when the external water element is agitated and then **the external earth element** vanishes.³⁹

²⁹ Qu at MA 1:25.

³⁰ *Paṭhavi, dhātu siyā ajjhakkā siyā bāhirā.*

³¹ “Clung to,” *upādīṇṇa*. In the Abhidhamma, this is a technical term applicable to bodily phenomena that are produced by karma. Both the **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62) and Mahā Hatthipadōpama S (M 28) use *upādīṇṇa* in the general sense as applicable to the entire body insofar as it is grasped as “mine” and misapprehended as a self.

³² The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca, pancaka kamma-ṭ, ṭhāna*) (Vism 8.50/242) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to novices on their initiation.

³³ The phrase “whatever else” (*aññam pi kiñci*) is intended to include the earth element as comprised in those parts of the body not included in the above enumeration. According to the Abhidhamma the four elements are primary qualities of matter in which they are all inseparably present in varying degrees of strength. Thus “each element is also included though in a subordinate role, in the bodily phenomena listed under the other three elements” (M:ÑB 1221 n329). See also BDict: Dhātu.

³⁴ Comy says that this statement is made to emphasize the insentient nature (*acetanā, bhāva*) of the internal earth element by yoking it to the external earth element, thus making its insentient nature more apparent (MA 2:223 f). Among the external elements that **Vibhaṅga** lists are: iron, copper, tin, lead, etc (Vbh 82).

³⁵ *N’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*. This threefold formula is the contrary of “the 3 graspings” (*ti, vidha gāha*), that is, *of craving (taṇhā), of conceit (māna), of view (ditṭhi)* (MA 2:111, 225). A brief version of this is given below: “There can be no considering that (element) as ‘I’ [wrong view] or ‘mine’ [craving] or ‘I am’ [conceit]” [§§7.2, 12.2, 17.2, 22.2]. These 3 graspings are syn with the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) and of self-view (*sakkāya ditṭhi*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). In **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59, 12-16/3:68), the formula is applied to the 5 aggregates & in **Pārīleyya S** (S 22.81/3:94-99) to the 4 primary elements: see SD 6.16 (5).

³⁶ “Is revulsed by” (*nibbindati*), n *nibbidā*. The full *nibbidā* formula or the 7 criteria of the true Dharma-Vinaya reads, “it leads to utter revulsion, to dispassion, to ending (of suffering), to peace [stilling], to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana” (*etaṃ ekanta, nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhismāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattanti*, D 1:189; S 5:82, 179, 255, 361; A 3:83, 4:143, 5:216): see **Nibbidā**, SD 20.1.

³⁷ “Earth,” *paṭhavi*. On the 4 elements, see **Khandha 1 Rūpa**, SD 17a.2a (2).

³⁸ *Paṭhavi, dhātuyā nibbindati paññāya cittam virājeti*. “The mind becomes detached,” *cittam virājeti*.

7.2 Avuso, when even this external earth element, great as it is, is seen to be impermanent, subject to destruction, subject to disappearance, subject to change—

what more of this body that lasts but for a short while, but which is clung to by craving?

There can be no considering that (earth element) as “I” or “mine” or “I am.”⁴⁰

Psychological application

8 So, then, avuso, if others abuse, revile, scold, harass a monk (who has seen the earth element as it really is),⁴¹ he understands thus:

‘This painful feeling born of **ear-contact** has arisen in me. It is dependent, not independent.

Dependent on what? [186] Dependent on contact.⁴²

8.2 Then, he sees that contact is impermanent, that feeling is impermanent, that perception is impermanent, that formations are impermanent, that consciousness is impermanent.

And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element [earth],⁴³ brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute.⁴⁴

9 Now, avuso, if others were to assail⁴⁵ a monk in a manner that is unwished for, undesirable, disagreeable, through the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives, he understands thus:

‘**The body** is of the nature that it is assailed by the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks, or the touch of knives.⁴⁶ But this has been said by the Blessed One in his **Advice on the Simile of the Saw**:

“*Bhikshus, even if robbers or low-down people⁴⁷ were to sever you limb by limb with a two-handed saw, whoever [a monk or nun]⁴⁸ gives rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be a doer of my teaching.*”⁴⁹

9.2 So tireless energy shall be roused in me, undistracted mindfulness shall be established, my body shall be tranquil and unagitated, the mind concentrated and unified.⁵⁰

³⁹ Early Indian cosmology says that in the cosmic cycle, the world may be destroyed by either “water,” “fire” or “wind.” See **Aggañña S** (D 27,10-15/3:84-88) in SD 1.1 & Vism 13.30-65/414-422.

⁴⁰ “‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’,” *ahan ti vā maman ti vā asmī ti vā*. See the more detailed formula in §6.2. See also **(Dhātu) Rāhula S** (A 4.177/2:164 f), SD 67.6.

⁴¹ Cf **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22), where the Buddha instructs the monks not to feel negative when others abuse them, and not to be elated when others praise them (M 22.39/1:140), SD 3.13.

⁴² Comy: This passage shows the strength of the mind of the monk meditating on the elements in applying his understanding to undesirable objects that arise at the ear-door [the organ of hearing]. By regarding such experiences by way of conditionality and impermanence, he transforms the potentially negative situation of being subjected to abuse, etc, into an occasion for insight. (MA 2:226)

⁴³ *Tassa dhāt’ārammaṇam eva cittaṃ pakkhandati*. See Intro (2) above.

⁴⁴ See **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 28), where Rāhula is taught the meditation of the 4 “element-like” meditations (M 28,13-17/1:424 f @ SD 3.11.13-17).

⁴⁵ “Assail,” *samudācaranti*, ie “to occur to, beset, befall.”

⁴⁶ Comy: This passage shows the strength of the meditating monk when he is assailed by way of the body (MA 2:226).

⁴⁷ “Low-down people,” *ocarakā*, also “informers, spies, secret service agents; robbers” (DP) (V 3:52; M 1:129; S 1:79; U 66).

⁴⁸ Comy to **Kakacūpama S** (MA 2:102).

⁴⁹ **Kakacūpama S** (M 21,20/1:129).

⁵⁰ *Āraddhaṃ kho pana me viriyaṃ bhavissati asallīnaṃ, upaṭṭhitā sati asammuṭṭhā, passaddho kāyo asāraddho, samāhitam cittaṃ ekaggam*.

And so let there be⁵¹ the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks, or the touch of knives upon this body; for this is just how the Teaching of the Buddhas is practised!

Samvega

10 Avuso, when that monk thus recollects the Buddha, thus recollects the Dharma, thus recollects the Sangha, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency [samvega]⁵² thus:

‘It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is not good for me, that when I thus recollect the Buddha, thus recollect the Dharma, thus recollect the Sangha,⁵³ equanimity supported by the wholesome⁵⁴ is not established in me.’⁵⁵

10.2 Avuso, just as when a daughter-in-law sees a father-in-law, she rouses a sense of urgency (to please him),⁵⁶ even so, when that monk thus recollects the Buddha, thus recollects the Dharma, thus recollects the Sangha, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency.

But, avuso, if when he thus recollects the Buddha, thus recollects the Dharma, thus recollects the Sangha, equanimity supported by the wholesome *is* established in him, **[187]** then he joyfully approves of it. At that point, avuso, much has been done⁵⁷ by the monk.

⁵¹ “Let there be,” *kāmaṃ*, adv (with imp), “let them...as they please”; “even if...” (M 1:481; S 1:224; Tha 312 Vv 18.6; J 1:233, 6:491, 493)

⁵² “A feeling of urgency,” *saṃvega*, ie an overpowering experience of awe or a religious experience that induces one to ask the deep questions of life and seek their answers. **The Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 37) records how Moggallāna roused a sense of urgency (for spiritual development) in Sakka, Vessavaṇa and the gods of the 33 by making the celestial Vejayanta Palace quake and tremble through his psychic powers (M 37,11/1:254 f). **The Vana Saṃyutta** (ch 9) of the Saṃyutta Nikaya consists of 14 suttas all dealing with the rousing of the sense of urgency for spiritual development (S 9/1:197-205). **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16 @ SD 9) and **Saṃvega S** (A 4.118) list the 4 places that arouse feelings of urgency (*saṃvejanīya-ṭ,ṭhānā*) as (1) the place of the Nativity (Lumbini Park, modern Rummindai); (2) the place of the Great Awakening (Uruvela on the Nerañjarā river, modern Uveli on the Lilañja river); (3) the place of the First Discourse (the Deer Park at Isipatana, modern Sahet-Mahet); and (4) the place of the Mahā Parinirvana (Kusināra, modern Kashgar) (D 16,5.8/2:140; A 4.118/2:120 f). Buddhaghosa gives **the eight occasions invoking urgency** (*aṭṭha saṃvega,vatthu*), as follows: birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), illness (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), suffering of loss (*apāya,dukkha*), suffering of the past rooted in the round of rebirth (*atīte vaṭṭa,-mūlaka dukkha*), suffering of the future rooted in the round of rebirth (*anāgate vaṭṭa,mūlaka dukkha*), and suffering of the present rooted in the search for food (*paccuppanne āhāra,pariyēṭṭhi,mūlaka dukkha*) (Vism 4.63/135).

⁵³ For the stock passages on these 3 recollections, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.9/2:93) & **Dhaj’agga S** (S 11.3/-1:219 f).

⁵⁴ “Equanimity supported by the wholesome” (*upekkhā kusala,nissitā*) is the equanimity of insight, the sixfold equanimity of neither attraction nor aversion towards agreeable and disagreeable objects that appear at the six sense-doors (MA 2:227). “Strictly speaking, the sixfold equanimity pertains only to the arahant, but is here ascribed to the monk in training because his insight approximates to the perfect equanimity of the arahant” (M:ÑB 1222 n337).

⁵⁵ Comy: The recollection of the Buddha is undertaken here by recalling that the Blessed One spoke this simile of the saw, and the recollection of the Dharma by recalling the advice given in the simile of the saw, and the recollection of the Sangha by the virtues of the monks who can endure such abuse without giving rise to a mind of hate. (MA 2:227)

⁵⁶ Here we find an example of a cultural imagery which should be understood against the ancient Indian milieu. In our own times, such an imagery has to be contextualized, for example, as that of a loving husband or wife feeling a sense of urgency in pleasing a spouse.

⁵⁷ That is, he is ready to go on to breath meditation and so on.

(B) THE WATER ELEMENT

The internal water element

11 And what, avuso, is **the water element**?

The water element may either be internal or external.⁵⁸

11.2 And what, avuso, is **the internal water element**?

Avuso, whatever that is liquid, liquefied and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat;

fat, tears, tallow, saliva, snot, synovial fluid, urine,

or whatever else⁵⁹ that is liquid, liquefied and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, avuso, is called internal water element.

11.3 Now **both** the internal water element and the external water element are simply **water element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Having seen it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the water element, by wisdom the mind becomes detached [lust-free].

The external water element

12 Now, avuso, there comes a time when **the external water element** is agitated. It carries away villages, towns, cities, districts and countries.

There comes a time, avuso, when the waters in the great ocean sink down 100 leagues, 200 leagues, 300 leagues, 400 leagues, 500 leagues, 600 leagues, 700 leagues.

There comes a time, avuso, when the waters in the great ocean stand 7 palm trees deep, 6 palm trees deep, 5 palm trees deep, 4 palm trees deep, three palm trees deep, 2 palm trees deep, only one palm tree deep.

There comes a time, avuso, when the waters in the great ocean stand 7 fathoms deep, 6 fathoms, 5 fathoms, 4 fathoms, 3 fathoms, 2 fathoms, only one fathom deep.

There comes a time, avuso, when the waters in the great ocean stand half a fathom deep, only waist deep, only knee deep, only ankle deep.⁶⁰

There comes a time, avuso, when the waters in the great ocean are not enough to wet even the joint of a finger.

12.2 When even this external water element, great as it is, **[188]** is seen to be impermanent, subject to destruction, subject to disappearance, subject to change—

what more of this body that lasts but for a short while, but which is clung to by craving?

There can be no considering that (water element) as “I” or “mine” or “I am.”

⁵⁸ See **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,9/1:422). See Vism 11.31/350.

⁵⁹ “Or whatever else,” *aññam pi kiñci*. See §6n.

⁶⁰ **Suriya S** (A 7.62) says that waters of the great ocean falls to only ankle deep when the “fifth sun” appears (A 7.62/4:101 f).

Psychological application

13 So, then, avuso, if others abuse, revile, scold, harass a monk (who has seen the water element as it really is), he understands thus:

'This painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. It is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.

13.2 Then, he sees that *each of the 5 aggregates* is impermanent.

And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element [water], brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute.

14 Now, avuso, if others were to assail a monk in a manner that is unwished for, undesirable, disagreeable, *through the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives*, he understands thus:

'The body is of the nature that it is assailed by the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives. But this has been said by the Blessed One in his **Advice on the Simile of the Saw**:

*"Bhikshus, even if robbers or low-down people were to sever you limb by limb with a two-handed saw, whoever [monk or nun] gives rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be a doer of my teaching."*⁶¹

14.2 So tireless energy shall be roused in me, undistracted mindfulness shall be established, my body shall be tranquil and unagitated, the mind concentrated and unified.

And so let there be the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives upon this body; for this is just how the Teaching of the Buddhas is practised!

Samvega

15 Avuso, when that monk thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency thus:

'It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is not good for me, that when I thus recollect the Buddha, thus recollect the Dharma, thus recollect the Sangha, equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in me.'

15.2 Avuso, just as when a daughter-in-law sees a father-in-law, she rouses a sense of urgency [to please him], even so, when that monk thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency.

But, avuso, if when he thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, equanimity supported by the wholesome is established in him, then he joyfully approves of it. At that point, avuso, much has been done by the monk.

(C) THE FIRE ELEMENT

The internal fire element

16 And what, avuso, is **the fire element**?

The fire element may either be internal or external.⁶²

And what, avuso, is **the internal fire element**?

⁶¹ **Kakacūpama S** (M 21,20/1:129).

⁶² See **Mahā Rāhu'ovāda S** (M 62,10/1:422). See Vism 11.31/350.

Avuso, whatever that is fire, fiery, and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns⁶³, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted⁶⁴ gets completely digested, or whatever else⁶⁵ that is fire, fiery, and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, avuso, is called internal fire element.

16.2 Now **both** the internal fire element and the external fire element are simply **fire element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Having seen it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the fire element, by wisdom the mind becomes detached [lust-free].

The external fire element

17 Now, avuso, there comes a time when **the external fire element** is agitated. It burns up villages, towns, cities, districts and countries.

It goes out due to lack of fuel⁶⁶ only when it comes to green grass, or to a road, or to a rock, or to water, or to a pleasant stretch of level ground.

17.2 There comes a time, avuso, when they seek to start a fire even with a cock’s feather or a hide-paring.⁶⁷

17.2 When even this external fire element, great as it is, is seen to be impermanent, subject to destruction, subject to disappearance, subject to change—

what more of this body that lasts but for a short while, but which is clung to by craving?

There can be no considering that (fire element) as “I” or “mine” or “I am.”

Psychological application

18 So, then, avuso, if others abuse, revile, scold, harass a monk (who has seen the fire element as it really is), he understands thus:

‘This painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. It is dependent, not independent.

Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.

18.2 Then, he sees that *each of the 5 aggregates* is impermanent.

And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element [fire], brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute.

19 Now, avuso, if others were to assail a monk in a manner that is unwished for, undesirable, disagreeable, *through the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives*, he understands thus:

⁶³ Apparently, these preceding three terms—*santappati, jiriyati, pariḍayhati*—refer to the body metabolism. In fact, the whole section refers to the body metabolism.

⁶⁴ *asita, pīta, khāyita, sāyitā*. These are the four modes of consuming food, namely: to *eat* food; *drink* liquids; *chew* solid food, a toothstick, betel-nut, chewing gum; *taste* (or lick) sweets, ice-cream.

⁶⁵ “Or whatever else,” *aññam pi kiñci*. See §6n.

⁶⁶ “It goes out due to lack of fuel,” *anāhārā nibbāyati*. For other related expressions, see SD 50.1 (2.3.2.3).

⁶⁷ “Even with a cock’s feather or a hide-paring,” *kukkuṭa, pattena pi nahāru, daddulena pi*. I follow M:ÑB. Horner has “with snippets of gristle” (M:H 1:235). As in **Saññā S 2** (A 7.46,6/4:48).

‘The body is of the nature that it is assailed by the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives. But this has been said by the Blessed One in his **Advice on the Simile of the Saw**:

“*Bhikshus, even if robbers or low-down people were to sever you limb by limb with a two-handed saw, whoever [monk or nun] gives rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be a doer of my teaching.*”⁶⁸

19.2 So tireless energy shall be roused in me, undistracted mindfulness shall be established, my body shall be tranquil and unagitated, the mind concentrated and unified.

And so let there be the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives upon this body; for this is just how the Teaching of the Buddhas is practised!

Samvega

20 Avuso, when that monk thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency thus:

‘*It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is not good for me, that when I thus recollect the Buddha, thus recollect the Dharma, thus recollect the Sangha, equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in me.*’

20.2 Avuso, just as when a daughter-in-law sees a father-in-law, she rouses a sense of urgency [to please him], even so, when that monk thus recollects *any of the three jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency.

But, avuso, if when he thus recollects *any of the three jewels*, equanimity supported by the wholesome *is* established in him, then he joyfully approves of it. At that point, avuso, much has been done by the monk.

(D) THE WIND ELEMENT

The internal wind element

21 And what, avuso, is **the wind**⁶⁹ **element**?

The wind element may either be internal or external.⁷⁰

And what, avuso, is **the internal wind element**?

Avuso, whatever that is wind, wind-like [airy] and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,

up-going winds [burping], down-going winds, winds in the belly [flatulence],

winds that course through the limbs,⁷¹ in-breath and out-breath, or

whatever else⁷² that is wind, wind-like [airy] and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, avuso, is called internal wind element.

⁶⁸ **Kakacūpama S** (M 21,20/1:129).

⁶⁹ “Wind,” *vāyo*, or “air” element, that is, motion.

⁷⁰ See **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,11/1:422 f). See *Vism* 11.31/350.

⁷¹ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅga-m-aṅgānusārino vātā*. In reference to this, Peter Harvey says, “Note that the ‘motion/wind’ element might be related to the modern concept of electrical discharges of the nerves ... In that case, the mind would move the body by effecting the electrical modulation of nerve discharges.” (1993:7 digital ed).

⁷² “Or whatever else,” *aññam pi kiñci*. See §6n.

21.2 Now **both** the internal wind element and the external wind element are simply **wind element**. And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Having seen it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the wind element, by wisdom the mind becomes detached [lust-free]. [189]

The external wind element

22 Now, avuso, there comes a time when **the external wind element** is agitated. It sweeps away villages, towns, cities, districts and countries.

There comes a time, avuso, in the last month of hot season when they seek wind by means of a fan or by means of bellows, and even the thatch on the roof-top does not stir.⁷³

22.2 When even this external wind element, great as it is, is seen to be impermanent, subject to destruction, subject to disappearance, subject to change—

what more of this body that lasts but for a short while, but which is clung to by craving?

There can be no considering that (wind element) as “I” or “mine” or “I am.”

Psychological application

23 So, then, avuso, if others abuse, revile, scold, harass a monk (who has seen the wind element as it really is), he understands thus:

‘This painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. It is dependent, not independent.

Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.

23.2 Then, he sees that *each of the 5 aggregates* is impermanent.

And his mind plunges into that very object that is that element [wind], brightens with faith, becomes steady, and is resolute.

24 Now, avuso, if others were to assail a monk in a manner that is unwished for, undesirable, disagreeable, *through the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives*, he understands thus:

‘The body is of the nature that it is assailed by the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives. But this has been said by the Blessed One in his **Advice on the Simile of the Saw**:

“Bhikkhus, even if robbers or low-down people were to sever you limb by limb with a two-handed saw, whoever [monk or nun] gives rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be a doer of my teaching.”⁷⁴

24.2 So tireless energy shall be roused in me, undistracted mindfulness shall be established, my body shall be tranquil and unagitated, the mind concentrated and unified.

And so let there be the touch of fists, the touch of clods of earth, the touch of sticks or the touch of knives upon this body; for this is just how the Teaching of the Buddhas is practised!

⁷³ *Hoti kho so āvuso samayo yaṃ gimhānaṃ pacchime māse tālavaṇṇena pi vidhūpanena pi vātaṃ pariyesanti, ossavane pi tiṇāni na icchanti.* Here *icchanti* is pres 3rd pl of *icchati*, “it goes, moves, reaches” (DP).

⁷⁴ **Kakacūpama S** (M 21,20/1:129).

Samvega

25 Avuso, when that monk thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency thus:

'It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is not good for me, that when I thus recollect the Buddha, thus recollect the Dharma, thus recollect the Sangha,⁷⁵ equanimity supported by the wholesome⁷⁶ is not established in me.'

25.2 Avuso, just as when a daughter-in-law sees a father-in-law, she rouses a sense of urgency [to please him], even so, when that monk thus recollects **[190]** *any of the three jewels*, if equanimity supported by the wholesome is not established in him, then he rouses a feeling of urgency.

But, avuso, if when he thus recollects *any of the 3 jewels*, equanimity supported by the wholesome is established in him, then he joyfully approves of it. At that point, avuso, much has been done by the monk.

DEPENDENT ARISING OF THE 5 AGGREGATES IN THE 12 ELEMENTS

26 Avuso, just as when a space is enclosed by timber, creepers [for binding], grass and clay, it is reckoned as a 'house,' even so, when a space is enclosed by bones, sinews, flesh and skin, it is reckoned⁷⁷ as 'form.'

The eye and forms

27 ⁷⁸If, avuso, internally **the eye** is intact [unimpaired] but no external forms come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention],⁷⁹ then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ For the stock passages on these three recollections, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.9/2:93) & **Dhaj'agga S** (S 11.3/1:219 f).

⁷⁶ "Equanimity supported by the wholesome" (*upekkhā kusala, nissitā*) is the equanimity of insight, the sixfold equanimity of neither attraction nor aversion towards agreeable and disagreeable objects that appear at the six sense-doors (MA 2:227). "Strictly speaking, the sixfold equanimity pertains only to the arahant, but is here ascribed to the monk in training because his insight approximates to the perfect equanimity of the arahant" (M:ÑB 1222 n337).

⁷⁷ "Reckoned as" (*saṅkham gacchati*): see **Language and Discourse**, SD 26.11 (2).

⁷⁸ **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18) has a similar analysis of the 18 elements (6 sense-organs + 6 sense-objects), beginning with: "Friends, dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. **The meeting of the 3 is contact.** With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye." (M 18,16/1:111 f)

⁷⁹ "Appropriate mental engagement," *tajjo samannāhāro hoti*, or "an appropriate act of attention on the part of the mind" (Jayatilleke, 1963:433). *Tajjo* (*tad + ya*), "this like," appropriate; "engagement [of attention]" (*samannāhāra*) here is syn with *manasikāra*, "attention" (M 1:445; Vbh 321). Comy explains it here as attention arising in dependence on the eye and forms. It is identified with the "5-door adverting consciousness" (*pañca, dvāra, vajjana, citta*), which breaks off the flow of the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*) to initiate the process of cognition (MA 2:229). Even when a sense-object (external stimulus) comes within the range of the sense-organ, if attention is not directed towards the object (because one is occupied with something else), there is still no appearance of "the corresponding class of consciousness." Here [§27.1], meaning that no eye-consciousness would arise. See Harvey 1996: 95.

27.2 If, avuso, internally the eye is intact [unimpaired] and external forms come into its range, but there is no appropriate conscious engagement [attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

27.3 If, avuso, internally the eye is intact [unimpaired] and external forms come into its range, and there is an appropriate conscious engagement, then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

28 The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.⁸¹

The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the feeling aggregate of clinging.

The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.

The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

28.2 He understands thus:

‘This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.’

28.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: ‘He who sees dependent arising [191] sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.’⁸²

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

28.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging⁸³ based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is **the arising of suffering**.

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire,⁸⁴ for these 5 aggregates is **the ending of suffering**.’

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.⁸⁵

The ear and sounds

29 If, avuso, internally **the ear** is intact [unimpaired] but no external sounds come into its range, *and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness*.

⁸⁰ “Class of consciousness,” *viññāṇa, bhāga*. Comy: This section introduces form derived from the 4 great elements. Derived form, according to the Abhidhamma analysis of matter, includes the 5 sense-faculties (*pasāda, rūpa*) and the first 4 kinds of sense-object, the tangible object being identified with the primary elements themselves (MA 2:229). This passage is qu at Kvu 620; cf Miln 56 ff. **Peter Harvey** renders *viññāṇa, bhāga* literally as “share of discernment [consciousness]” (1995:129-133), where he also argues against **N Ross Reat**’s rendition of it as “type of consciousness” (1987:19) and **R E A Johansson**’s interpretation of the dependence of *rūpa* on consciousness (1979:32).

⁸¹ This section shows the 4 noble truths by way of the sense-doors. “What has thus come to be” (*tathā, bhūta*) refers to all the states and conditions that arise by way of eye-consciousness. Sāriputta analyzes these states and conditions to show that any sense-experience or factors related to it would fall under the truth of suffering.

⁸² See Intro (5).

⁸³ *Chanda, ālaya, anunaya, ajjhosanā*. These are syns for *taṇhā* (“craving”).

⁸⁴ The prec two phrases are syns for nirvana (MA 2:230).

⁸⁵ Although only 3 of the 4 noble truths are explicitly elaborated in the Sutta, the 4th truth—the path—is implicit. Comy says that this refers to the penetration of these truths by the development of the eight factors of the path (MA 2:230).

29.2 If, avuso, internally the ear is intact [unimpaired] and external sounds come into its range, *but there is no appropriate conscious engagement [attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.*

29.3 If, avuso, internally the ear is intact [unimpaired] and external sounds come into its range, and there is a appropriate conscious engagement, then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

30 *The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.*⁸⁶

The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the feeling aggregate of clinging.

The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.

The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

30.2 He understands thus:

'This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.'

30.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: 'He who sees dependent arising [191] sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.'⁸⁷

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

30.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging⁸⁸ based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is **the arising of suffering.**

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire,⁸⁹ for these 5 aggregates is **the ending of suffering.'**

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.

The nose and smells

31 If, avuso, internally **the nose** is intact [unimpaired] but no external smells come into its range, *and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.*

31.2 If, avuso, internally the nose is intact [unimpaired] and external smells come into its range, *but there is no appropriate conscious engagement [attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.*

31.3 If, avuso, internally the nose is intact [unimpaired] and external smells come into its range, and there is a appropriate conscious engagement, then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

32 *The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.*⁹⁰

The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the feeling aggregate of clinging.

The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.

⁸⁶ This section shows the 4 noble truths by way of the sense-doors. "What has thus come to be" (*tathā, bhūta*) refers to all the states and conditions that arise by way of eye-consciousness. Sāriputta analyzes these states and conditions to show that any sense-experience or factors related to it would fall under the truth of suffering.

⁸⁷ See Intro (5).

⁸⁸ *Chanda, ālaya, anunaya, ajjhosanā*. These are syns for *taṇhā* ("craving").

⁸⁹ The prec two phrases are syns for nirvana (MA 2:230).

⁹⁰ This section shows the four noble truths by way of the sense-doors. "What has thus come to be" (*tathā, bhūta*) refers to all the states and conditions that arise by way of eye-consciousness. Sāriputta analyzes these states and conditions to show that any sense-experience or factors related to it would fall under the truth of suffering.

The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

32.2 He understands thus:

'This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.'

32.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: 'He who sees dependent arising [191] sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.'⁹¹

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

32.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging⁹² based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is **the arising of suffering**.

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire,⁹³ for these 5 aggregates is **the ending of suffering**.'

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.

The tongue and tastes

33 If, avuso, internally **the tongue** is intact [unimpaired] but no external tastes come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

33.2 If, avuso, internally the tongue is intact [unimpaired] and external tastes come into its range, but there is no appropriate conscious engagement [attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

33.3 If, avuso, internally the tongue is intact [unimpaired] and external tastes come into its range, and there is an appropriate conscious engagement, then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

34 *The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.*⁹⁴

The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the feeling aggregate of clinging.

The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.

The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

34.2 He understands thus:

'This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.'

34.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: 'He who sees dependent arising [191] sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.'⁹⁵

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

⁹¹ See Intro (5).

⁹² *Chanda, ālaya, anunaya, ajjhosanā*. These are syns for *taṇhā* ("craving").

⁹³ The prec two phrases are syns for nirvana (MA 2:230).

⁹⁴ This section shows the four noble truths by way of the sense-doors. "What has thus come to be" (*tathā, bhūta*) refers to all the states and conditions that arise by way of eye-consciousness. Sāriputta analyzes these states and conditions to show that any sense-experience or factors related to it would fall under the truth of suffering.

⁹⁵ See Intro (5).

34.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging⁹⁶ based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is **the arising of suffering**.

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire,⁹⁷ for these 5 aggregates is **the ending of suffering.**'

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.

The body and touches

35 If, avuso, internally **the body** is intact [unimpaired] but no external touches come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

35.2 If, avuso, internally the body is intact [unimpaired] and external touches come into its range, but there is no appropriate conscious engagement [attention], then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

35.3 If, avuso, internally the body is intact [unimpaired] and external touches come into its range, and there is a appropriate conscious engagement, then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

36 The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.⁹⁸

The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the feeling aggregate of clinging.

The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.

The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

36.2 He understands thus:

'This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.'

36.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: 'He who sees dependent arising [191] sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.'⁹⁹

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

36.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging¹⁰⁰ based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is **the arising of suffering**.

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire,¹⁰¹ for these 5 aggregates is **the ending of suffering.**'

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.

⁹⁶ *Chanda, ālaya, anunaya, ajjhosanā*. These are syns for *taṇhā* ("craving").

⁹⁷ The prec two phrases are syns for nirvana (MA 2:230).

⁹⁸ This section shows the 4 noble truths by way of the sense-doors. "What has thus come to be" (*tathā, bhūta*) refers to all the states and conditions that arise by way of eye-consciousness. Sāriputta analyzes these states and conditions to show that any sense-experience or factors related to it would fall under the truth of suffering.

⁹⁹ See Intro (5).

¹⁰⁰ *Chanda, ālaya, anunaya, ajjhosanā*. These are syns for *taṇhā* ("craving").

¹⁰¹ The prec two phrases are syns for nirvana (MA 2:230).

The mind and mind-objects

37 If, avuso, internally **the mind**¹⁰² is intact [unimpaired] but no external mind-objects come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement,¹⁰³ then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

37.2 If, avuso, internally the mind is intact [unimpaired] and external mind-objects come into its range, but there is no appropriate conscious engagement, then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.¹⁰⁴

37.3 If, avuso, internally the mind is intact [unimpaired] and external mind-objects come into its range, and there is a appropriate conscious engagement,¹⁰⁵ then there is the appearance of that class of consciousness.

38 The form in what has thus come into being is grouped into the form aggregate of clinging.
The feeling in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.
The perception in what has thus come into being is grouped into the perception aggregate of clinging.
The formations in what has thus come into being are grouped into the formations aggregate of clinging.

The consciousness in what has thus come into being is grouped into the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

38.2 He understands thus:

‘This, indeed, is how there comes into being the grouping, gathering and accumulation of things into these 5 aggregates of clinging.

38.3 Now this has been said by the Blessed One: “One who sees dependent arising sees dharma; one who sees dharma sees dependent arising.”

And these 5 aggregates are dependently arisen.

38.4 The desire, indulgence, inclination and clinging based on these 5 aggregates of clinging is the arising of suffering.

The removal of lustful desire, the abandonment of lustful desire for these 5 aggregates is the ending of suffering.’

To that extent, too, avuso, much has been done by that monk.”

38.5 The venerable Sāriputta said this. The monks joyfully approved¹⁰⁶ of the venerable Sāriputta’s word.

— evaṃ —

¹⁰² Comy explains “internally the mind” (*ajjhatiko mano*) here to be the life-continuum consciousness (*bhav’-aṅga,citta*) (MA 2:230).

¹⁰³ “Corresponding mental engagement,” *tajjo samannāhāro hoti*. See n at §27.1.

¹⁰⁴ Comy illustrates this by the mind’s preoccupation with a familiar object without noticing the familiar details of the object (MA 2:230).

¹⁰⁵ *Tajjo samannāhāro* or “corresponding mental engagement,” that is, the mind-consciousness (*mano,viññāṇa*), which takes non-sensuous objects as its sphere of cognition (M:ÑB 1223 n345). See §27.1 n; also SD 56.17 (5.2.2.2).

¹⁰⁶ “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā ... abhinandun*.

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