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(Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2

Dutiya (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2 | S 22.38/3:38-40
The Second Discourse to Ānanda (on the Altering State)

Theme: The aspects of impermanence

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010

1 The 2 (Aññathatta) Ānanda Suttas

There are 2 Saṃyutta discourses entitled (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta: **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1** (S 22.37) and **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2** (S 22.38).¹ Both treat the subject of impermanence, or more specifically, “rising, falling and alteration of its presence” (*uppāda vaya thitassa aññathatta*), also rendered as “rising, falling and alteration of presence.”

The difference between the two discourses is simply that while **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1** (S 22.37)² is about the rising and falling of the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—in *the present moment*,³ **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2** (S 22.38) affirms this reality of the aggregates throughout the three periods of time (the past, the present and the future).⁴

2 The totality formula

2.1 THE SUTTA DEFINITION

2.1.1 Both the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1 (S 22.37), and the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2 (S 22.38) refer to the 5 aggregates [1] as exhibiting the nature of rising and falling. The word *khandha* (Skt *skandha*) means, amongst other things, a heap or mass (*rāsi*). The 5 aggregates (*pañca-khandha*) are so called because “they each unite under one label a multiplicity of phenomena that share the same defining characteristic” (S:B 840).

This defining characteristic is called “**the totality formula**,” mentioned, for example, here in **the (Dve) Khandha Sutta** (S 22.48), and encompassing all the aggregates—“whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near.”⁵

2.1.2 The full formula is stated in this famous stock passage from **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59), thus:

Tasmā-tiha, bhikkhave, (yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ | yā kāci vedanā | yā kāci saññā | ye keci saṅkhārā | yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ) atītānāgata, paccuppannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumāṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, (sabbaṃ rūpaṃ | sabbaṃ vedanā | sabbaṃ saññā | sabbe saṅkhārā | sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ)—“n’etaṃ mama, n’eso’ham asmi, na meso attā ti evam etaṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ samma-p, paññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.

Therefore, bhikkhus, any kind of **⟨form | feeling | perception | formations | consciousness⟩** whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all **⟨forms | feelings | perceptions | formations | consciousness⟩** should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:

¹ Respectively S 22.37/3:37 f = SD 33.11 & S 22.38/3:38-40 = SD 33.12.

² S 22.37/3:37 f = SD 33.11.

³ On the 5 aggregates (*pañca-khandha*), see SD 17.

⁴ S 22.38/3:38-40 = SD 33.12.

⁵ S 22.48/3:47 f. Also **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68) = SD 1.2.

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’⁶

(S 22.59.19-21/3:68) = SD 1.2

2.2 ABHIDHAMMA EXPLANATION

2.2.1 The formula is explained in detail in **the Vibhaṅga**⁷ and briefly in **the Visuddhi, magga**. Briefly, besides “past, future or present” (which are self-explanatory), they are as follows:⁸

“internal”	(<i>ajjhatta</i>)	=	physical sense-organs, or our person;
“external”	(<i>bahiddhā</i>)	=	physical sense-objects, or another person; ⁹ [2.2.2]
“gross”	(<i>oḷ ārika</i>)	=	that which impinges (the physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire);
“subtle”	(<i>sukhuma</i>)	=	that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water);
“inferior”	(<i>hīna</i>)	=	undesirable physical sense-objects (form, sound, smell, taste, and touch), or the sense-world;
“superior”	(<i>paṇīta</i>)	=	desirable physical sense-objects (form etc), or the form and the formless worlds;
“far”	(<i>dūre</i>)	=	subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”), or distant objects, other universes;
“near”	(<i>santike</i>)	=	gross objects (“easy to penetrate,” or things close by, or anywhere in this universe). ¹⁰

2.2.2 “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41).

As regards the terms “**internal**” (*ajjhatta*) and “**external**” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have 2 applications:¹¹

- (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them, and anything else is “external”;
- (2) the sense-organs (*āyatana*) are “internal,” but their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.”¹²

⁶ *N’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*. A brief version, “There can be no considering that (element) as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’” (*ahan ti vā maman ti vā asmī ti vā*) is found in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28/1:184-191 §§6b-7, 11b-12, 16b-17, 21b-22). This is opp of “the 3 graspings” (*ti, vidha gāha*) formula: *etaṃ mama, eso ’ham asmi, eso me attā ti* [§§12-16]. In **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-16/3:68), these formulas is applied to the 5 aggregates & in **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81/ 3:94-99 = SD 6.1) to the 4 primary elements. See also (**Dhātu**) **Rāhula S** (A 4.177/-2:164 f). See **Pārileyya S**, SD 6.16 Intro (5). See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

⁷ “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (R Gethin, “The five khandhas: their treatment in the Nikāyas and early Abhidhamma,” 1986:41).

⁸ Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7. See Gethin 1986:40 f.

⁹ As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhatta*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have 2 applications [2.2.2]. Boisvert (1995:43, 47), however, overlooks these applications: see Harvey 1996:93.

¹⁰ This last pair is by way of distance: see Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7.

¹¹ On “internal” and “external” as referring to “oneself” and “others” respectively, see SD 13.1 Intro (3.7a-g). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38f; Boisvert 1995:43-48.

¹² Boisvert, however overlooks these applications (1995:43, 47).

2.2.3 Just as the body or the sense-organs cannot exist or function in themselves, so too the aggregates do not exist in themselves. They are aspects of our being, all functioning together. These aspects are identified merely as a conventional means for us to understand the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self of the whole process of what we regard as our “self.” It is like a stick: it has size, weight, hardness, length and colour. One cannot take only one of these aspects to be the stick. They all function together giving one the conception of a “stick.” In other words, when there is one aspect, the others are also present.

2.2.4 The next pair, gross and subtle, refers to our sense-experiences: “**gross**” = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); “**subtle**” = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water). The pair, “**inferior**” and “**superior**” can also refer to the sense-world (*kāma, loka*), and the form and formless worlds, respectively. In fact, I think this interpretation makes more practical sense in terms of understanding the aggregates. The pair, “**far**” and “**near**” can be taken in a literal sense of space, that is, nearby (within clear sight) or distant (difficult to see or beyond normal vision), which could also be said as referring to this universe and any other universe.¹³

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(Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2

The Second Discourse to Ānanda (on the Altering State)

S 22.38/3:38-40

1 Originating in Sāvattihī.

The Buddha’s question

2 Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the venerable Ānanda sat down at one side.

3 Sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to the venerable Ānanda:

“If, Ānanda, you were asked thus:

‘What, avuso Ānanda, were those things of which an arising *was* discerned, a passing away was discerned, an altering in its presence was discerned?’¹⁴

What, avuso Ānanda, will be those things of which an arising *will be* discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an altering in its presence will be discerned?’¹⁵

¹³ See **Abhibhū S** (A 3.80.3/1:227 f) = SD 53.1 & **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29.2/5:59) = SD 16.15, where the Buddha refers to parallel universes. For a Sutta interpretation of the other characteristics, see SD 17.13(4.2).

¹⁴ Past tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyittha, vayo paññāyittha, ÷hitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyitthā ti?*

¹⁵ Future tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyissati, vayo paññāyati, ÷hitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyissatī ’ti?*

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising *is* discerned, a passing away is discerned, an altering in its presence is discerned?’¹⁶

When asked thus, Ānanda, how would you answer?’

Ānanda’s answer

4 “If, bhante, I were asked thus:

‘What, avuso Ānanda, were those things of which an arising *was* discerned, a passing away was discerned, an altering in its presence was discerned?’¹⁷

What, avuso Ānanda, will be those things of which an arising *will be* discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an altering in its presence will be discerned?’¹⁸

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising *is* discerned, a passing away is discerned, an altering in its presence is discerned?’

When asked thus, bhante, I would answer thus:

5 PAST AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it was of whatever form that *has* passed, ceased, changed,¹⁹ that
an arising *was* discerned,
a passing away was discerned,
an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever feeling that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
an arising *was* discerned,
a passing away was discerned,
an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever perception that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
an arising *was* discerned,
a passing away was discerned,
an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever formations that *have* passed, ceased, changed, that
an arising *was* discerned,
a passing away was discerned,
an altering in their presence was discerned.

It was of whatever consciousness that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
an arising *was* discerned,
a passing away was discerned,
an altering in its presence was discerned.

Of these things, avuso, an arising was discerned, a passing away was discerned, an altering in its presence was discerned.

6 FUTURE AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it will be of whatever form that has *not* arisen, *not* become,²⁰ that
an arising *will be* discerned,

¹⁶ Present tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, t̥hitassa aññathattarṃ paññāyatī ’ti?*

¹⁷ Past tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyittha, vayo paññāyittha, t̥hitassa aññathattarṃ paññāyitthā ti?*

¹⁸ Future tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyissati, vayo paññāyati, t̥hitassa aññathattarṃ paññāyissatī ’ti?*

¹⁹ *Yaṃ kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ atītaṃ niruddhaṃ vipariṇataṃ ...*

²⁰ *Yaṃ kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ ajātaṃ apātubhūtaṃ ...*

a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.
 It will be of whatever feeling that has *not* arisen, *not* become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.
 It will be of whatever perception that has *not* arisen, *not* become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.
 It will be of whatever formations that have *not* arisen, *not* become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in their presence will be discerned.
 It will be of whatever consciousness that has not arisen, not become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.

Of these things, avuso, an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an altering in their presence will be discerned.

7 PRESENT AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it is of whatever form that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
 It is of whatever feeling that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
 It is of whatever perception that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
 It is of whatever formations that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
 It is of whatever consciousness that
 an arising is discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.

Of these things, avuso, an arising *is* discerned, a passing away is discerned, an altering in its presence is discerned.’

When asked thus, bhante, I would answer thus.”

The Buddha’s endorsement

8 “Excellent! Excellent, Ānanda!

8.2 PAST AGGREGATES. Ānanda,

it was of whatever form that *has* passed, ceased, changed,²¹ that
 an arising *was* discerned,
 a passing away was discerned,
 an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever [40] feeling that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
 an arising *was* discerned,
 a passing away was discerned,
 an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever perception that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
 an arising *was* discerned,
 a passing away was discerned,
 an altering in its presence was discerned.

It was of whatever formations that *have* passed, ceased, changed, that
 an arising *was* discerned,
 a passing away was discerned,
 an altering in their presence was discerned.

It was of whatever consciousness that *has* passed, ceased, changed, that
 an arising *was* discerned,
 a passing away was discerned,
 an altering in its presence was discerned.

Of these things, Ānanda, an arising was discerned, a passing away was discerned, an altering in its presence was discerned.

9 FUTURE AGGREGATES. ‘Ānanda, it will be of whatever form that has *not* arisen, *not* become,²² that
 an arising *will be* discerned,

a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.

It will be of whatever feeling that has *not* arisen, *not* become,
 that an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.

It will be of whatever perception that has *not* arisen, *not* become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in its presence will be discerned.

It will be of whatever formations that have *not* arisen, *not* become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,
 an altering in their presence will be discerned.

It will be of whatever consciousness that has not arisen, not become, that
 an arising *will be* discerned,
 a passing away will be discerned,

²¹ *Yaṃ kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ atītaṃ niruddhaṃ vipariṇataṃ...*

²² *Yaṃ kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ ajātaṃ apātubhūtaṃ...*

an altering in its presence will be discerned.

Of these things, Ānanda, an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an altering in their presence will be discerned.

- 10** PRESENT AGGREGATES. ‘Ānanda, it is of whatever form that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
- It is of whatever feeling that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
- It is of whatever perception that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.
- It is of whatever formations that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in their presence is discerned.
- It is of whatever consciousness that
 an arising *is* discerned,
 a passing away is discerned,
 an altering in its presence is discerned.

Of these things, Ānanda, an arising *is* discerned, a passing away is discerned, an altering in its presence is discerned.’

- 11** When asked thus, Ānanda, you should answer thus.”

— evaṃ —

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