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Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta

The Discourse on the Analysis of the Elements | M 140

Theme: How a pupil recognizes his teacher through the teaching

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Pukkusāti and his awakening**1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY**

The Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta is a deep and moving account of how a pupil recognizes his teacher through the teaching, how the wise recognizes the Buddha through the Dharma. Pukkusāti (a former king of Takka, silā, located in modern Punjab, West Pakistan),¹ who has gone forth out of faith in the Buddha but has never met him, journeys to meet him. They meet halfway in a humble potter's shed, where both of them start off with sitting in meditation.

The Buddha sees that Pukkusāti is ripe for awakening, and gives him a special teaching without revealing himself. The discourse is essentially on what constitutes a person and an awakened saint. A “normal” person is nothing but the 6 elements [§8], the 6 bases of contacts [§9] and the 18 investigations [§10]. A true individual, that is, one who is working for awakening or arhathood, also has the 4 foundations (*adhiṭṭhāna*) of wisdom, truth, letting go and peace [§11], which is actually a higher exposition on the previous three teachings [§12].

The Buddha then elaborates on the 4 foundations [§§13-32]. Halfway through the Buddha's exposition of the 1st foundation (that is, on the 6 elements and the equanimity of the formless dhyanas), Pukkusāti realizes the Buddha's true identity [§22.2], but remains attentive. The Buddha then elaborates on the nature of feelings, thus closing the instructions on the first foundation [§23-25].

The 2nd foundation (on truth, that is, nirvana) [§26], and the 3rd (on letting go, that is, awakening) [§27] are brief. The 4th and last foundation open with the Buddha briefly mentioning how he himself has struggled with the mental roots of suffering, and in due course, gaining true peace [§§28-29]. One who squarely stands on these 4 foundations is truly “a sage at peace,” an awakened saint [§30]. He is free of mental conceivings [§§31-32].²

Pukkusāti then makes his lion-roar, apologizing to the Buddha for not recognizing him at first, and then asking to be admitted into the order [§§33-34]. Pukkusāti then goes about looking for robe and bowl for his renunciation, but while doing so, is gored to death by a cow and is reborn in the Avihā heaven (in the pure abodes) as a non-returner [§§35-36]. [1.2]

1.2 PUKKUSĀTI

1.2.1 Pukkusāti, it is said, was one of the 7 monks who, in Kassapa Buddha's time, lived on a mountain top and who vowed to refrain from taking food until they have attained arhathood. The senior monk gained arhathood, the 2nd became a non-returner, but the remaining 5 died of starvation and were reborn in Tusita heaven. In our Buddha's time, they became Pukkusāti, Kumāra Kassapa, Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya, Dabba Malla, putta and Sabhiya respectively.³

¹ Takkasilā was a significant archaeological site in the modern city of Taxila in the Punjab, West Pakistan. It lies about 25 km (16 mi) NW of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and 25 km (16 mi) SW of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, just off the famous Grand Trunk Road.

² For more on “mental conceiving” (*maññita*), ie, as “mental exploration” (*manopavicāra*), see **Salāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,8/3:216 f), SD 29.5.

³ Ap 2:473; DhA 2:212; UA 81.

The Majjhima Commentary here gives a long account of Pukkusāti.⁴ He was the rajah of Takka,silā about the same age as king Bimbisāra of Magadha, whom he befriended through merchants who traveled between the two countries for purposes of trade. As such, it is likely that Pukkusāti was quite old by then, which would account for his close friendship with Bimbisāra, and also for his renunciation at this point. It might have been more difficult for him to renounce (not having met the Buddha and living so far away), if he were still a young rajah.⁵ In due course, although the two never met, a bond of affection grew between them.

One day, Pukkusāti sent Bimbisāra a gift of 8 priceless garments in lacquered caskets. This gift was accepted at a special meeting of the whole of Bimbisāra’s court. Bimbisāra, having nothing material he considered precious enough to send to Pukkusāti, came up with the idea of announcing to him the appearance of the 3 jewels in the world.

1.2.2 Bimbisāra had a long gold sheet (*suvanna,paṭṭa*, MA 5:38), 4 cubits long and a span wide⁶—about 2.4 m by 0.3 m—inscribed with descriptions of the 3 jewels quoting 3 verses from **the Ratana Sutta**⁷ and various other teachings such as the 4 focuses of mindfulness, the noble eightfold path and the 37 factors of awakening. This gold sheet was placed in the innermost of the several caskets of precious substances, and was taken in procession on the back of the state elephant to the Magadha frontier. Similar honours were paid to the local chieftains along the route to Takka,silā.⁸

When Pukkusāti, in his solitude, read the inscriptions on the gold sheet, he was filled with great joy and decided to renounce the world. Without being formally ordained, he shaved off his hair, put on saffron robes and left the palace amidst the lamentations of his subjects.

After travelling 192 leagues [yojanas],⁹ he reached Sāvattihī¹⁰ but passed the gates of Jetavana, having understood from Bimbisāra’s letter that the Buddha was at Rājagaha.¹¹ Although the Buddha was at Sāvattihī, he omitted to inquire about his presence and so travelled all the 45 leagues to Rājagaha, only to

⁴ MA 5:33-63. Pukkusāti was said to have waged war against Caṇḍa Pajjota of Avantī and defeated him (Law 1932: 50).

⁵ See E Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 1988: 100 f.

⁶ A **cubit** (*ratana*) is the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, ie, about 50 cm (1.6 ft). A **span** (*vidatṭhi*) is the distance between the tips of the outstretched thumb and little finger, ie, about 18 cm (6 ins). Traditionally, 1 *ratana* = 2 *vidatṭhi* (VbhA 343). See n on “leagues” below.

⁷ Khp 6.3, 6.5-7 = Sn 224, 226-227.

⁸ Takka,silā (lit “stones that think” or “logic stones”) but the Skt name is Takṣa,śilā. It was the ancient capital of the kingdom of Gandhāra. The ancient Takṣaśilā University boasted over 60 distinct arts and sciences taught by master teachers, assisted by able pupils, from at least the 7th century BCE until about mid-3rd century CE. Today, it is called Taxila, located about 14 km (22 mi) NW of Rawalpindi, Pakistan. According to **Tela,pattā J** (J 96) and **Susima J** (J 163), Takkasilā is 2000 leagues from Benares (near where the Buddha taught the first discourse). See Law 1932:4, 50, 49 f, 52; DPPN: Takkasilā.

⁹ “**Leagues**,” *yojanā*. VbhA and Abhidhana-p,paḍīpikā give the following dimensions: 1 *yojana* (league) = 4 *gāvuta*; 1 *gāvuta* = 80 *usabha*; 1 *usabha* = 20 *yaṭṭhi*; 1 *yaṭṭhi* (pole) = 7 *ratana*; 1 *ratana* = 2 *vidatṭhi* (span). 1 league is generally said to be about 11.2 km (7 mi). Takkasilā was, as such, about 2150 km (1336 mi) away from Sāvattihī, which in turn is 504 km (313 mi) from Rājagāha. See n on “cubit” above. On the “sacred” *yojana* and “secular” *yojana*, see Mori & Motozawa 2010. On *yojana*, see DEB: *yojana* 2.

¹⁰ Sāvattihī (Skt *Śrāvastī*), the capital of Kosala, today is locally known as Saheth Maheth, lying about 17 km from Balrampur. The Rapti river (in Uttar Pradesh) once ran beside the city rampart but is today about 1.5 km (0.93 mi) to the north (Dhammika 1999:164). See DPPN: Sāvattihī.

¹¹ Rājagaha (Skt *rājagṛha*), the capital of Magadha until the end of the Haryāṅka dynasty, today known as Rajgir is 100 km (62 mi) by road SE from Patna and 65 km (40 mi) by road from Gaya (Dhammika 1999:104; Oxford DictB: Rājagṛha). See DPPN: Rājagaha.

discover that the Buddha was at Sāvattthī. Since it was already evening, he lodged at the potter Bhaggava's dwelling.¹²

1.2.3 The Buddha, with his divine eye, saw Pukkusāti and noticing his predisposition for attaining the paths and fruits, journeyed alone on foot to Rājagaha to meet him.¹³ To avoid being recognized, says the Commentary, the Buddha concealed his superhuman marks and appeared as an ordinary wandering monk (MA 5:46). However, the account as it stands (without the Commentary) is interesting enough (perhaps even more so) even if the Buddha had refrained from using his superhuman powers and that both teacher and pupil only recognized each other in the midst of the discourse¹⁴ [§22.2]

After listening to this Sutta, Pukkusāti asked for full admission into the order from the Buddha himself. While looking for his robe and bowl, he was gored to death by an amok cow [§35]. Due to his spiritual attainment, he died a non-returner and was reborn in the Avihā world¹⁵ as an arhat,¹⁶ along with six others—Upaka, Palagaṇḍa, Bhaddiya, Bhadda,deva, Bāhu,danti and Piṅgiya¹⁷—as recorded in **the Ghaṭikāra Sutta** (S 1.50/v172/1:35+60).¹⁸

2 Studying the Sutta

The Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta not only analyzes human existence into its primary elements (*dhātu*), but also, like **the Tittth'āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61),¹⁹ gives an important and interesting variation of the practice of the focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), namely:

	<u>Focuses of mindfulness</u>
[§8] The 6 elements (<i>dhātu</i>)	= the body
[§9] The 6 bases of contact (<i>phass'āyatana</i>)	= feelings
[§10] The 18 mental investigations (<i>mano,pavicāra</i>)	= mind
[§11] The 4 foundations (<i>adhiṭṭhāna</i>) ²⁰	= mind-objects (<i>dhamma</i>)

¹² Bhaggava is either a surname, clan name, or a generic name for all potters, perhaps a special form of address used towards members of the *kumbhakāra* class. The word is found in the foll texts where potters are addressed as "Bhaggava": **Pāṭika S** (D 24/3:2-35) 85x, SD 63.3; **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140/3:237), SD 4.17; **Ghaṭikāra Ss** (S 1.50 + 2.24), SD 49.13; DhA 1:33; J 2:80, 3:382 (where also the potter's wife is addressed as Bhaggavī). See **Ghaṭikāra S** (S 1.50), where brahma Ghaṭikāra is addressed by the Buddha. Ghaṭikāra is the potter in that past life (in the Pukkusāti story) (S 1.50/1:36). See SD 49.13 (1.1).

¹³ According to Jātaka Comy, the Buddha converted Pukkusāti (called Pukkusa here) after the conversion of Mahā Kassapa but before Mahā Kappina (J 4:180). From the context of this account, however, it is likely that this event occurred sometime during the first 20 years of the ministry since it was before Aṅgulimāla's conversion which was in the 20th year.

¹⁴ In the Sutta, Pukkusāti is referred to as *kula,putta*, "noble son" or "son of family," but this does not mean that he is a young man, for it is merely a designation for one who comes from a respectable family. Vakkali, a young man then, is similarly referred to *kula,putta*: see **Vakkali S** (S 22.87,39/3:124), SD 8.8.

¹⁵ Avihā world, one of the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the five highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are Āviha ("Non-declining"), Ātappa ("Unworried"), Sudassā ("Clearly Visible"), Sudassī ("Clear-visioned") and Akaniṭṭhā ("Highest") (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

¹⁶ MA 5:61. He becomes an arhat "upon landing" (*upahacca parinibbayī*) in the pure abodes: see §36 n.

¹⁷ The Be Comy text gives the last three as Khaṇḍa,deva, Bāhuraggi and Siṅgiya (CSCD 4.226).

¹⁸ S 1.50/v172/1:35+60.

¹⁹ **Tittth'āyatana S** (A 3.61/1:173-177), SD 6.8.

²⁰ In **Tittth'āyatana S** (A 3.61/1:173-177), SD 6.8, this is replaced by the 4 noble truths.

While a large section of **the Tittth'āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61.7-9) is connected with the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*),²¹ a major part of the Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta deals with the 4 foundations (*adhiṭṭhāna*) as the contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*). The uniqueness of this Sutta is that the contemplation of mind-objects here describes the nature of arhathood [§§12-29]. These foundations are what make the arhat a “sage at peace” (*muni santo*) [§§7b, 30].

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Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta

The Discourse on the Analysis of the Elements

M 140

[237]

1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha meets Pukkusāti

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] in Magadha country in stages (on a teaching tour).²²

In due course, he arrived in Rājagaha, where he approached the potter Bhaggava. Having approached the potter Bhaggava, he said this to him:

2 “If it is no trouble to you, may I stay for one night on your premises?”²³

“Bhante, it is no trouble at all. But there is a renunciant²⁴ who has arrived there first. If he allows, you, bhante, please stay as you please.” [238]

3 Now there was a son of family²⁵ named Pukkusāti who had gone forth from the household into homelessness out of faith in the Blessed One.²⁶ At that time, he was the first one to take up residence there.

²¹ **Tittth'āyatana S** (A 3.61.7-9/1:173-177), SD 6.8.

²² “Wandering ... in stages,” *cārikam caramāno*, lit, “walking the walk,” ie, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people. See n ad loc in **Tevijja S** (D 13,1/1:235), SD 1.8.

²³ “On your premises,” PTS *āvasane*, Be *āvesane*, Ce Se *nivesane*. “Premises” refers to a house and its compound. The Buddha would most likely be staying in a shed (MA 2:121, 5:47) or outhouse or even in the open. It is against the Vinaya for monks to stay under the same roof with a woman (Pāc 6 @ V 4:17-19). Pācittiya 5 (V 4:14-17) prohibits monks to share the same room with one unordained (novices and laity) for more than 2-3 nights. The main reasons for these rules are decorum and preventing sexual misconduct.

²⁴ “Renunciant,” *pabbajita*, ie one who has gone forth into homelessness, ie who has renounced the world.

²⁵ On *kula,putta*, see Intro (1).

²⁶ “A son of family...who had gone forth...out of faith in the Blessed One,” *kula,putto bhagavantam uddissa saddhāya agārasmā anagāriyam pabbajito* (D 3:238; A 4:359, 5:129). K R Norman, in “Dhammapada 97: a misunderstood paradox,” muses that besides *assaddha* in Dh 97, “It is not impossible that another example in Pāli has been overlooked. The common usage in Sanskrit is the instrumental singular *śraddhayā* (‘gladly’). The equivalent of this may be in the common Pāli phrase *kulaputtā saddhāya agārasmā anagāriyam gacchanti* [sic], ‘They gladly leave home.’” (1979:329 n). See also *saddhāya agārasmā...* (A 5:89); *saddhāya nikkhamma* (J 444.5/4:33; Thī 341); *saddhāya abhinikkhamma* (Tha 249, 250, 251; Ap 426.1/2:388); *saddhāya pabbajitvāna* (Thī 8, 9, 92); *saddhāya gharā nikkhamma* (Sn 58; Tha 195); *yāya saddhāya pabbajito agārasmānagāriyam* (S 1:197). See **Dhammapada 97**, SD 10.6.

3.2 Then, the Blessed One went up to the venerable Pukkusāti. Having gone up to the venerable Pukkusāti, he said this:

“Bhikshu,²⁷ if it is no trouble to you, may I stay on these premises for one night?”

“The potter’s premises are spacious, avuso (*āvuso*).²⁸ The venerable one may stay as he pleases.”

4 Then, the Blessed One, having entered the potter’s premises, spread a mat of grass at one end and sat down on it. Having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, he established mindfulness before him.²⁹

4.2 Then, the Blessed One spent most of the night sitting (in meditation).

The venerable Pukkusāti, too, spent most of the night sitting (in meditation).

The Buddha teaches Pukkusāti

4.3 Then, it occurred to the Blessed One,

“Now, indeed, this son of family conducts himself in a faith-inspiring manner!³⁰ What if I were to question him?”³¹

Then, the Blessed One said this to Pukkusāti:

5 “Bhikshu, on whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? Whose teaching do you profess?”³²

“There is, avuso,³³ the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son, who has gone forth from the Sakya clan.

5.2 Concerning this Blessed One, this fair report has been spread about:³⁴

‘Such, too, is the Blessed One: an arhat [worthy], fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, supreme guide of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’

5.3 It is to that Blessed One that I have gone forth. It is that Blessed One who is my teacher. It is the teaching of that Blessed One that I profess.”

5.4 “And where, bhikshu, does that Blessed One, fully self-awakened one, reside?”

²⁷ The Buddha addresses Pukkusāti as *bhikkhu* even though he is not yet ordained. This is understandable as the term *bhikkhu* (Skt *bhikṣu*) also applies to others (not merely the Buddhists) who have gone forth to live on alms alone. The Skt term *bhikṣu* actually originated in the time of the Upanishads (700-550 BCE) where “renunciation” (*tyāga*) was regarded as more efficacious than the predominant Vedic sacrifices and rituals. See S Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London, 1962:37.

²⁸ “Avuso,” *āvuso*, sometimes tr as “friend” or “brother,” a form of address to juniors or between equals. Pukkusāti is unaware it is the Buddha before him. See below §33, where, on realizing his error, he apologizes.

²⁹ *Parimukha*, lit “around the mouth,” here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning “in front”: so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed) and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). **Vibhaṅga** explains it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” (Vbh 252 = §537).

³⁰ *Pasādikaṃ nu kho ayaṃ kula.putto iriyati*. “In a faith-inspiring manner,” *pāsādika*. We see here an excellent example of how Dharma begins to be effectively transmitted, ie, through exemplary personal example, without a word being spoken.

³¹ From this passage, it is possible to construe that the Buddha does *not* know who Pukkusāti is, of course, it is possible that the Buddha could have used his psychic powers to identify him, if he wishes to. Either way, we see here the Buddha, instead of using a “person” approach, speaks as the Dharma to Pukkusāti. Nevertheless, he begins the teaching process in a most human way, so that, as it were, we might be able to emulate him. See §6a n.

³² Comy says that the Buddha knew who Pukkusāti was, but said these words merely to start a conversation. (MA 5:49)

³³ Pukkusāti addresses the Buddha so right up to §22.2, when he realizes it is actually the Buddha himself teaching him! He apologizes at the first opportunity [§33.2].

³⁴ For details on this **Buddhānussati**, see SD 15.7b.

“Avuso, there is a town named Sāvattihī in a district to the north. That Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, is residing there.”

5.5 “And, bhikshu, have you seen that Blessed One before? And if you were to meet him, would you recognize him?” [239]

“No, indeed, avuso, I have not seen the Blessed One before. And if I were to meet him, I would not recognize him.”

6 Then, the Blessed One thought:

“This son of family has gone forth from the household into homelessness on my account. What if I were to teach him the Dharma?”³⁵

THE NATURE OF A PERSON

Summary of the analysis of the elements

6.2 Then, the Blessed One addressed the venerable Pukkusāti:

“Bhikshu, I will teach you the Dharma. Listen to it and pay close attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, avuso,”³⁶ the venerable Pukkusāti replied in assent to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

7 ³⁷“This person is made up of:

(1) the 6 elements,	<i>cha dhātu</i>	[§§7.2-8, 13-32]
(2) the 6 bases of contact,	<i>cha phass'āyatana</i>	[§9]
(3) the 18 mental investigations, ³⁸ and	<i>aṭṭhārasa mano, pavicāra</i>	[§10]
(4) the 4 foundations (of arhathood). ³⁹	<i>catu adhiṭṭhāna</i>	[§§11, 28]

7.2 Those who stand on them (the 4 foundations) do not go with the flow of mental conceiving (*mañña*),⁴⁰ not flowing with mental conceiving,⁴¹ one is called “a sage at peace” (*muni santo*).

³⁵ Noticing that Pukkusāti, still-minded and ready for the Dharma, the Buddha decides he should teach him. This is, as we shall soon see, a good example of the miracle of teaching, mentioned in **Kevalaḍḍha S** (D 11,4-8/1:212), SD 1.7.

³⁶ On Pukkusāti’s addressing the Buddha as *āvuso*, see §3 n.

³⁷ The first 3 items here are as in **Saḷ'āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137.3/3:216), SD 29.5. These 3 items are also analyzed in **Tiṭṭh'āyatana S** (A 3.61/1:175 f), SD 6.8, where a novel list of the “4 stations of mindfulness” is given. However, in place of the 4th item, “the 4 foundations,” the 4 noble truths are given in **Saḷ'āyatana Vibhaṅga S**.

³⁸ The 18 mental investigations (*manōpavicāra*), as at **Saḷ'āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:216-222), SD 29.5; from *mano* (mind) + *upavicāra* (range, scope). Comy glosses *upavicāra* as being syn with “thinking and pondering” (*vitakka, vicāra*) (MA 5:21, 22). *Manōpavicāra* can also be resolved as *mano* + *pavicāra* (thorough investigation) (PTC: *pavicarati*, “range over”): cf *pavicarati*, M 3:85 ff, S 5:68, 111, 331. See §10.

³⁹ Comy: Since Pukkusāti had already purified the preliminary practice of the path and was able to attain the 4th dhyana through the mindfulness of breathing, the Buddha began directly with a talk on insight meditation, teaching on the ultimate voidness that is the foundation of arhathood (MA 5:50). On *adhiṭṭhāna*, see **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11-27)/3:229): D:W calls them “4 kinds of resolve.”

⁴⁰ *Maññassavā na-p, pavattanti, maññassave kho pana na-p, pavattamane*. Here *maññassavā* is resolved as *mañña* (“conceiving”) + *assava* (Skt *āsrava*), (a) “purulent matter, discharge” (A 1:124); (b) tt for obstacle to arhathood, “canker, influx, inflow, taint” (V 3:21 = 5:143 = A 5:70, V 5:225, D 3:216, M 1:55, S 5:410, Sn 535, Thī 76); also related to *āsava* (spirituous liquor) because both are kept for a long time, MA 1:61 = AA 2:183 = ItA 1:114). The word *assava* is also related to *assavati*, “it flows (on)”. In this context, *pavattanti* should be rendered as “they flow”

7.3 Wisdom should not be neglected;
the truth should be guarded;
letting go should be cultivated;⁴²
 one should indeed train for peace (of mind).⁴³

*paññaṃ na-p,pamajjeyya
 saccaṃ anurakkheyya
 cāgaṃ anubrūheyya,
 santim eva so sikkheyyāti*

This is **the summary of the analysis of the 6 elements**.

What a person really is

(1) THE 6 ELEMENTS

8 ‘Bhikshu, **this person is made up of 6 elements**’,⁴⁴ so it is said. And in what connection is this said?

The earth element.
 The water element.
 The fire element.
 The wind [air] element.
 The space element.
 The consciousness element.

‘Bhikshu, this person is made up of 6 elements’: so it is said in this connection.

(2) THE 6 BASES OF CONTACT

9 ‘Bhikshu, **this person is made up of 6 bases**⁴⁵ **of contact**’; so it is said. And in what connection is this said?

The base of eye-contact.
 The base of ear-contact.
 The base of nose-contact.
 The base of tongue-contact.
 The base of body-contact.
 The base of mind-contact.

‘Bhikshu, this person is made up of 6 bases of contact’; so it is said in this connection.

(S 2:31, J 2:104; PvA 143, 154, 198): M:ÑB reading *maññ’ussavā* (wr for *maññ’ussāvā*): “the tides of conceiving ... sweep.” See foll n.

⁴¹ Mental conceiving (*mañña*), closely related to “mental proliferation” (*papañca*), here refers to thoughts and ideas arising from the three roots of conceiving or mental proliferation: craving (*taṇhā*), view (*diṭṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). For an interesting n on *maññati*, see M:ÑB 1162:n6. The “sage at peace” is the arhat. On *papañca*, see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14 (3). See prev n.

⁴² “Letting go,” *cāga*, in other contexts, often tr as “charity.”

⁴³ I B Horner wonders, “It is, I think a question whether the order of these last two headings should not be reversed to tally with the order of the analysis below [30-32, 11-29 respectively], which appears to be the more logical sequence. But the commentarial exegesis, MA 5:51 f, is against this, for it takes the headings as they stand above.” (M:H 3:286 n5). §7.2 (the 4 foundations) is elaborated in §§11-29 below; §7.3 (the sage at peace) at §§30, 31.2.

⁴⁴ *Cha, dhāturo ayaṃ bhikkhu puriso’ti*. Comy: Here the Buddha teaches the existent (*vijjamānā*) with the non-existent (*avijjamānā*). For the elements exist but the person does not. This means that what one perceives as a “being,” “person” or “individual” consists merely of the 6 elements. Ultimately there is no person here. “Person” is a mere concept (*paññatti*.) (MA 5:50)

⁴⁵ “Bases,” *āyatana*. Here although the same word, *āyatana*, is used, it denotes the senses, not a support or level of meditation [§§21-22]. See SID: āyatana.

(3) THE 18 INVESTIGATIONS

10 ‘Bhikshu, **this person is made up of 18 mental investigations**’;⁴⁶ so it is said. And in what connection is this said?

- | | |
|--|--|
| i. On seeing a <u>form</u> with the eye ,
one investigates the form that is
one investigates the form that is
one investigates the form that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief [pain],
the basis for equanimity. |
| ii. On hearing a <u>sound</u> with the ear ,
one investigates the sound [240] that is
one investigates the sound that is
one investigates the sound that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief,
the basis for equanimity. |
| iii. On smelling a <u>smell</u> with the nose ,
one investigates the smell that is
one investigates the smell that is
one investigates the smell that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief,
the basis for equanimity. |
| iv. On tasting a <u>taste</u> with the tongue ,
one investigates the taste that is
one investigates the taste that is
one investigates the taste that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief,
the basis for equanimity. |
| v. On feeling a <u>touch</u> with the body ,
one investigates the touch that is
one investigates the touch that is
one investigates the touch that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief,
the basis for equanimity. |
| vi. On cognizing a <u>mind-object</u> with the mind ,
one investigates the mind-object that is
one investigates the mind-object that is
one investigates the mind-object that is | the basis for joy,
the basis for grief,
the basis for equanimity. |

Thus, there are the 6 investigations of joy, the 6 investigation of grief, the 6 investigations of equanimity.

‘Bhikshu, *this person is made up of 18 mental investigations*’: so it is said in this connection.

THE 4 FOUNDATIONS (FOR ARHATHOOD)

(4) THE 4 FOUNDATIONS (*catuṛādhiṭṭhāna*)

11 ‘Bhikshu, **this person is made up of 4 foundations (for gaining arhathood)**’;⁴⁷ so it is said. And in what connection is this said?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. The foundation of wisdom. | <i>paññā’dhiṭṭhāna</i> | [§§13-25] |
| 2. The foundation of truth. | <i>saccādhiṭṭhāna</i> | [§26] |
| 3. The foundation of letting go. | <i>cāgādhiṭṭhāna</i> | [§27] |
| 4. The foundation of peace. | <i>upāsamādhiṭṭhāna</i> | [§28] |

⁴⁶ As at **Sa’āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,8/3:216 f), SD 29.5.

⁴⁷ “The 4 foundations,” *catu + adhiṭṭhāna*, which Comy glosses as *patiṭṭhā*, “that which stands (against).” This person, made up of the 6 elements, the 6 bases of contact and the 18 mental investigations, when he turns away from them and attains arhathood, is *established* in the 4 foundations (*ṭhānā*) (MA 5:51). In other words, while we *are* the 1st 3 dharmas, we still need to *cultivate* the 4th, ie, the 4 foundations [§§12-29].

‘Bhikshu, this person is made up of 4 foundations’: thus it is said in this connection.

THE 1ST FOUNDATION

12 ‘*Wisdom should not be neglected; the truth should be guarded; letting go should be cultivated; one should indeed train for peace (of mind)*’ [§7.3]:⁴⁸ so it is said. And in what connection is this said?

The foundation of wisdom: the 6 elements

13 And, bhikshu, **how is wisdom not neglected?**⁴⁹

There are, bhikshus, these 6 elements:⁵⁰

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) The earth element. | <i>paṭhavī, dhātu</i> |
| (2) The water element. | <i>āpo, dhātu</i> |
| (3) The fire element. | <i>tejo, dhātu</i> |
| (4) The wind [air] element. | <i>vayo, dhātu</i> |
| (5) The space element. | <i>ākāsa, dhātu</i> |
| (6) The consciousness element. | <i>viññāṇa, dhātu</i> |

(1) The earth element

14 What, bhikshu, is **the earth element** [hardness]?

The earth element may be internal or may be external.

And, bhikshu, whatever that is hard, solid, solidified [rigid]⁵¹ and clung to⁵² internally, separately [belonging to oneself], namely,

*head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin;*⁵³
*flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;*⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Comy: From the start one should not neglect the wisdom born of calm and insight in order to reach into the wisdom of the fruit of arhathood. One should guard truth in order to realize nirvana, the ultimate truth. One should cultivate letting go in order to abandon all defilements, stilling them through the path of arhathood. (MA 5:51, 52)

⁴⁹ Comy: Wisdom is not neglected by way of the meditation on the 4 elements. Here the meditation on the 4 elements is that found in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28,6, 11), SD 6.16 and **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,8-12), SD 3.11.

⁵⁰ Vism 348 says that the 4 primary elements (*dhātu*) are only briefly explained in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,6/-2:293), SD 13.2, and at length in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28,6-27/1:185-191), SD 6.16, **Mahā Rāhu’ovada S** (M 62,8-17/1:421-426), SD 3.11 and **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140,13-18/3:240-242). The 4 elements are explained in some detail in **Mūla, pariyaaya S** (M 1), SD 11.8. The 6 elements (4 primary elements + space + consciousness) are mentioned in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1 (16)/3: 248), **Bahu, dhātuka S** (M 115,5/3:62), SD 29.1a, and **Titth’āyatana S** (A 3.61,6/1:175 f), SD 6.8; see also Dhs 638. For the first 5 elements in later sectarian Buddhism, see Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, London, 1959:183 ff.

⁵¹ “Solid, solidified [rigid],” *kakkhaḷam kharigatam*. The former is the element’s characteristic (*lakkaṇa*) and the latter its mode (*ākāra*) (Vism 286). In the Abhidhamma, the hardness (*kakkhaḷatta*) itself is the earth element (VismṬ 362 f). See Karunadasa 1967:17 f.

⁵² “Clung to,” *upādinna*. In the Abhidhamma, this is a technical term applicable to bodily phenomena that are produced by karma. Here, in **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62), SD 3.11, as well as **Mahā Hatthipadōpama S** (M 28), SD 6.16, it is used in the general sense as applicable to the entire body insofar as it is grasped as “mine” and misapprehended as a self.

⁵³ The meditation on these 5 parts “with skin as the 5th” or “skin pentad” (*taca, pancake kamma-t, ṭhāna*) (Vism 8.50/242) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to novices on their initiation.

*heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),⁵⁵ spleen, lungs;⁵⁶
large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,⁵⁷ dung,⁵⁸*

or whatever else⁵⁹ that is hard, solid, solidified, and clung to internally, separately—
this, bhikshu, is called the internal earth element.

14.2 And whatever is **the internal earth element**, whatever is **the external⁶⁰ earth element**,
is simply **the earth element** [hardness].⁶¹

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.’⁶²

Having seen it, as it really is, with right wisdom, thus,
one is revulsed towards the earth element,
detached [dispassionate] towards the earth element.

(2) The water element

15 What, bhikshu, is **the water element** [cohesion]?⁶³

The water element may be [241] internal or may be external.

And what, bhikshu, is **the internal water element**?

Bhikshu, whatever that is water, watery and clung to internally, separately [belonging to oneself],
namely,

*bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;⁶⁴
tears, skin-grease [tallow], saliva, snot, oil of the joints,⁶⁵ urine.⁶⁶*

⁵⁴ *Maṁsaṁ nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi, miñjā vakkam̐.*

⁵⁵ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

⁵⁶ *Hadayaṁ yakanam̐ kilomakam̐ pihakam̐ papphāsam̐.*

⁵⁷ *Udariyaṁ*, lit “that which is in the *udara* (stomach),” sometimes tr as “gorge” (Vism:Ñ 8.120/-122/258 f); technically, this includes chyme (food half-digested by gastric juices, expelled into the duodenum).

⁵⁸ *Antam̐ anta, guṇam̐ udariyaṁ karīsam̐.* See M 3:90; KhpA 38. Later traditions add the 32nd part—*matthake mattha, luṅgam̐* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): “brain” is not listed at S 4:111. Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “faeces” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. For a fascinating discussion on how ancient ascetics obtain such knowledge of the human anatomy, see Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*, 1998:34-37.

⁵⁹ 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). Later tradition adds “brain” here, making it a set of 32 body parts. See also BDict: Dhātu.

⁶⁰ **Bāhirā**. Note that the “external” earth element (and the other “external” elements, respectively) are not mentioned separately: they are implied. In fact, their externality is highlighted after this, in **the “5 element-like meditations”** [§§13-17].

⁶¹ Comy to Mahā Hatthi’padōpama S ad loc 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). **Vibhaṅga** lists more examples: iron, copper, tin, lead, etc. (Vbh 82). According to Abhidhamma, it is characterized by hardness (*thaddha, lakkhaṇa*).

⁶² See §3n.

⁶³ “Water,” *āpo*. Abhidhamma characterizes it by cohesion (*ābandhana*).

⁶⁴ *Pittam̐ semham̐ pubbo lohitaṁ sedo medo*.

⁶⁵ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

or whatever else that is water, watery and clung to internally, separately—
this, bhikshu, is called internal water element.

15.2 And whatever is the internal water element, whatever is the external water element,
is simply **the 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, as it really is, with right wisdom, thus,
one is revulsed towards the water element,
detached [dispassionate] towards the water element.

(3) The fire element

16 What, bhikshu, is **the fire element** [heat]?

The fire element may be internal or may be external.

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

Bhikshu, whatever that is fire, fiery, and clung to internally, separately [belonging to oneself], namely,
*that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns,⁶⁷ and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed
and tasted⁶⁸ gets completely digested,*

or whatever else that is fire, fiery and clung to internally, separately [belonging to oneself]—
this, bhikshu, is called the internal fire element.

16.2 And whatever is the internal fire element, whatever is the external fire element,
is simply **the 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, as it really is, with right wisdom, thus,
one is revulsed towards the fire element,
detached towards the fire element.

(4) The wind element

17 What, bhikshu, is **the wind element** [motion]?⁶⁹

The wind element may be internal or may be external.

And what, bhikshu, is **the internal wind [air] element**?

Bhikshu, whatever that is wind [airy], wind-like and clung to internally, separately, namely,
*⁷⁰up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the belly, winds in the chest, winds that course
through the limbs,⁷¹ in-breaths and out-breaths,*

⁶⁶ *Assu vasā kheḷo siṅghāṇikā lasikā muttam*. Here there are a total of 31 parts of the body. See **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,7), SD 12.21.

⁶⁷ Apparently, these preceding three terms—*santappati, jiriyati, pariḍayhati*—refer to body metabolism. In fact, the whole section refers to body metabolism.

⁶⁸ *asita,pīta,khāyita,sāyitā*. These are the four modes of consuming food, namely: *eat* food; *drink* liquids; *chew* solid food, a toothstick, betel-nut, chewing gum; *taste* (or lick) sweets, ice-cream.

⁶⁹ “Wind,” *vāyo*, or “air” element, that is, motion, in Abhidhamma, said to be “strengthening” or “supporting” (*vitthambhana,lakkhaṇa*). On how winds cause pains, see **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97,28-29/2:193), SD 4.9.

or whatever else that is wind, wind-like and clung to internally, separately [belonging to oneself]—this, bhikshu, is called the internal wind element.

17.2 And whatever is the internal wind element, whatever is the external wind element, is simply **the 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, as it really is, with right wisdom, thus,
one is revulsed towards the wind element,
detached towards the wind element.

(5) The space element

18 What, bhikshu, is **the space element**?⁷²

The space element may be internal or may be external.

And what, bhikshu, is **the internal [242] space element**?

Bhikshu, whatever that is space, spatial and clung to internally, separately [belonging to oneself], namely,

the ear-canals, the nostrils, the mouth cavity, and that (opening) whereby what is eaten, drunk, taken, and tasted, is swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from below,

or whatever else that is space, spatial and clung to internally, separately—
this, bhikshu, is called the internal space element.

18.2 And whatever is the internal space element, whatever is the external space element, is simply **the space 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, as it really is with right wisdom, thus,
one is revulsed towards the space element,
detached towards the space element.

⁷⁰ According to **Visuddhi,magga**, “winds” are responsible for the various internal motions of the body, namely, “up-going winds” (*uddhañ,gamā vātā*) for vomiting and belching, “down-going winds” (*adho,gamā vātā*) for the expelling of faeces and urine (Vism 350). “Wind” clearly refers to elemental “motion,” not to the object moved.

⁷¹ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅga-m-aṅgānusārino vātā*. In reference to this, Peter Harvey says, “Note that the ‘motion/air’ 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). In contemporary terms, these “winds” clearly refer to the oxyhaemoglobin, ie, the oxygen in the blood, coursing through the body.

⁷² “Space,” *ākāsa*, according to Abhidhamma, is not a primary element but is classified under “derivative material form” (*upādā rūpa*).

(6) The consciousness element

19 Then, there remains only **consciousness**,⁷³ purified and cleansed.⁷⁴

What does one know [cognize] with that consciousness?

*One understands,*⁷⁵ *‘(It is) pleasant.’*

One understands, ‘(It is) painful.’

One understands, ‘(It is) neutral.’

19.2 ⁷⁶On account of a contact that is felt as **pleasant**, there arises *a pleasant feeling*.

When one feels a pleasant feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a *pleasant feeling*.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as *pleasant*, whatever feeling arising from that, that is to be experienced as *pleasant*, the contact arising conditioned by *pleasant feeling*, that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’⁷⁷

19.3 On account of a contact that is felt as **painful**, there arises *a painful feeling*.

When one feels a painful feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a *painful feeling*.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as *painful*, whatever feeling arising from that, that is to be experienced as *painful*, the contact arising conditioned by *painful feeling*, that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’

19.4 On account of a contact that is felt as **neither pain nor pleasure**, there arises *a neutral feeling*.⁷⁸

When one feels a neutral feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a *neutral feeling*.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as *neither painful nor pleasant*,

⁷³ Comy: This 6th element “remains” in that it has yet to be taught by the Buddha and which Pukkusāti has yet to realize. Here it is explained as the consciousness that accomplishes the work of the insight meditation on the elements. Feeling is also introduced under this same heading. (MA 5:53)

⁷⁴ “Purified and cleansed,” *parisuddham pariyodātam*. This refers to a mind in dhyana and on emerging from it. Or, on a simpler level, a mind that is very mindful and supported by moral virtue throughout. Cf “Bhikshus, this mind is bright, but it is soiled by external impurities.” (A 1.6.1-2/1:10), SD 8.3 (6).

⁷⁵ The defs of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and perception are very close. Note that here the verb is “(he) understands” (*pajānāti*), while in the def on perception (*saññā*), the verb is *sañjānāti*, “(he) perceives.” See SD 17.4 (7.1.4.1).

⁷⁶ *Sukha, vedaniyam bhikkhu, phassaṃ paṭicca upapajjati sukhā vedanā, so sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamī ti pajānāti. Tass’eva sukha, vedanissa phassassa nirodhā yaṃ tajaṃ vedayitam sukha, vedaniyam phassaṃ paṭicca uppannā sukhā vedanā sā nirujjhanti, sā vūpasammati ti pajānāti.*

⁷⁷ “Ceases ... is stilled,” *nirujjhanti ... vūpasammati*.

⁷⁸ Although in English it appears contradictory to speak of “neutral feeling,” this apparent oxymoron obtains in Buddhist psychology. For example, when one is asked, “How do you feel?” one may answer “I feel nothing.” Otherwise, one could resort to rendering it in a cumbersome manner as “a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant.” Comy to Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says that it is not easy to be mindful of neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma, saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other 4 sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2). The suttas however speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Sati-paṭṭhāna*, 2003:171).

the contact arising conditioned by *neutral* feeling,
that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’

Parable of the fire-sticks

19.5 Bhikshu, just as **the touch and rubbing together of two fire-sticks**⁷⁹ were to generate heat and produce fire, and with the separation of these 2 fire-sticks the resulting heat ceases, it cools,⁸⁰ even so, [243]

on account of a contact that is felt as **pleasant**, there arises a pleasant feeling.

When one feels a pleasant feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as pleasant, whatever feeling arising from that, that is to be experienced as pleasant, the contact arising, conditioned by pleasant feeling, that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’

On account of a contact that is felt as **painful**, there arises a painful feeling.

When one feels a painful feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a painful feeling.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as painful, whatever feeling arising from that, that is to be experienced as painful, the contact arising, conditioned by painful feeling, that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’

On account of a contact that is felt as **neither pain nor pleasure**, there arises a neutral feeling.

When one feels a neutral feeling, one understands, ‘I feel a neutral feeling.’

One understands, ‘With the cessation of that same contact that is felt as neither painful nor pleasant, the contact arising, conditioned by neutral feeling, that, too, ceases, that is stilled.’

Equanimity

20 Then, there remains only **equanimity**, pure and bright, malleable, pliable and radiant.⁸¹

⁸²Bhikshu, just as a skilled goldsmith or his apprentice were to prepare a furnace.

Having prepared it, he were to start a blaze at the furnace mouth.

Having started the blaze, using tongs,⁸³ he were to place the gold (in a crucible)⁸⁴ in the furnace mouth.

From time to time, he would blow on it; from time to time he would sprinkle water on it;
from time to time he would just look on at it.

The gold would become refined, well refined, completely refined,
faultless, free of dross, malleable, pliable, radiant.

Then, he makes whatever kind of ornament he wishes, as would serve his purpose—

⁷⁹ On a more elaborate application of the 3 fire-sticks parable to sensual-pleasures, see **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,17-19/1:242), SD 49.4, = **(Majjhima) Saṅgārava S** (M 100,14-16), SD 10.9.

⁸⁰ “Ceases ... cools,” *nirujjhati ... vūpasammatti*.

⁸¹ Comy: This is the equanimity (*upekhā*) of the 5th dhyana. Pukkusāti has already attained the 4th dhyana and is very attached to it. The Buddha first praises this equanimity to inspire Pukkusāti’s confidence, then he gradually leads him to the formless dhyanas (*arūpa jhāna*) and the attainment of the paths and fruits (MA 5:53).

⁸² This goldsmith parable (M 140,19/3:243) is also found in **Nimitta S** (A 3.100b/1:257), SD 19.12, varying mostly in syntax.

⁸³ *Sanḍāsena*. “Tongs” = *sanḍāsa*, ie long pincers, tweezers.

⁸⁴ *Mūsāya*: see **Paṃsu,dhovaka S** (A 3.100a,2/1:253), SD 19.11.

a gold chain or ear-rings or a necklace or a gold garland.
Even so, bhikshu, then there remains only equanimity, pure and bright, malleable, pliable and radiant.

Equanimity supported by the formless spheres

21 He understands thus,

‘If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright,

to **the sphere of infinite space** (*ākāsānaññ, c’āyatana*),

and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana],
then this equanimity of mine, supported by that sphere, holding on to it,
would remain for a very long time.⁸⁵

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright,

to **the sphere of infinite consciousness** (*viññānaññ, c’āyatana*), **[244]**

and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana],
then this equanimity of mine, supported by that sphere, holding on to it,
would remain for a very long time.

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright,

to **the sphere of nothingness** (*ākin, c’āyatana*),

and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana],
then this equanimity of mine, supported by that sphere, holding on to it,
would remain for a very long time.

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright,

to **the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception** (*n’eva, saññā, nāsaññ’āyatana*),

and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana],
then this equanimity of mine, supported by that sphere,
holding on to it, would remain for a very long time.’

Conditioned equanimity

22 He understands thus,

‘If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright, to **the sphere of infinite space**,
and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana], *it*⁸⁶ *would be conditioned*.

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright, to **the sphere of infinite consciousness**,
and were to cultivate my mind in that way, *it would be conditioned*.

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright, to **the sphere of nothingness**,
and were to cultivate my mind in that way, *it would be conditioned*.

If I were to direct this equanimity, thus pure, thus bright, to **the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception**,

and were to cultivate my mind towards that state [the formless dhyana], *it would be conditioned*.’

⁸⁵ If a meditator who has attained to this plane were to pass away here, he would be reborn here—the realm of infinite space—and live there for the full span of 20,000 aeons or cycles (MA 5:54). In the other higher three formless planes, the lifespans are 40,000 aeons, 60,000 aeons and 84,000 aeons respectively.

⁸⁶ “It would be conditioned,” *saṅkhatam etan ti*. Comy: “It” (*etaṃ*) refers to one’s “lifespan” (*āyu*). This is said to show the danger in this formless realm (of infinite space). Even though the lifespan there is 20,000 aeons, still the realm is conditioned. Thus, it is impermanent, unstable, not eternal, temporary. It is subject to falling away, breaking up, dissolving. It is founded on birth, dogged by decay, struck down by death. Founded on suffering, it is not a shelter, not a safe place, not a refuge. Having passed away from there as an ordinary person, one can still be reborn in the 4 suffering states. All this is said of the one word, “conditioned,” *saṅkhata*. (MA 5:54 f)

Pukkusāti attains non-returning

22.2 He neither constructs mental formations⁸⁷ nor thinks in terms of being and non-being.⁸⁸

Since he neither mentally constructs nor thinks in terms of being and non-being, he does not cling to anything in this world.⁸⁹

Not clinging, he is not agitated.

Not agitated, he himself attains nirvana for himself.

THE NON-RETURNER'S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

22.3 He understands thus:

'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived,
done what is to be done,
there is no more for this (state of being).'

[*pajānāti*]⁹⁰

*khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahma, cariyaṃ
kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ
nāparaṃ itthatāyā ti (pajānāti)*

[*He recognizes the Buddha.*]⁹¹

True nature of feeling

23 If he feels a pleasant feeling,⁹²

he understands that it is

he understands that it is

he understands that

impermanent;

not to be clung to;

there is no delight in it.

If he feels a painful feeling,

he understands that it is

he understands that it is

he understands that

impermanent;

not to be clung to;

there is no delight in it.

⁸⁷ "He neither constructs mental formations," *So n'eva abhisankharoti*, lit "he does not construct" but the English here is transitive (needs an object). See foll n.

⁸⁸ "Nor thinks in terms of being and non-being," *nābhisañcetaṃ bhavāya va vibhavāya*. The verbs *abhisankharoti* (constructs) and *abhisāñcetaṃ* (thinks out, plans)—both being connoted by the term *papañceti* (he mentally proliferates)—denotes the willful process of constructing and generating thoughts and opinions that fuels the continuation of conditioned existence. Ceasing the thought for either being or non-being—also tr as "growth" and "decline" respectively (MA 5:57)—shows the ending of craving for eternal existence (due to eternity view, *sassata, vāda*) and annihilation (due to annihilationism, *uccheda, vāda*), leading to the attainment of arhathood. For further discussion, see **Kaccā(ya)na, gotta S** (S 12.15/2:16 f), SD 6.13.

⁸⁹ *Na kiñci loke upādiyati*: this is also the promised benefit of satipatthana, found in the "insight refrains," repeated after each of the satipatthana practices (totalling 16 times): **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63 passim), SD 13.1 esp (3.7-10). The *Satipaṭṭhāna S* gives the full statement as "Dwelling independent and not clinging to anything in this world" (D 22,2.5 = M 10,5), SD 13.1 (3.10).

⁹⁰ Note that the verb here is *pajānāti*, whereas in the arhat's review knowledge (with identical passage), but with the verb *abhaññāsi*, "he directly knew," as in **Poṭṭha, pāda S** (D 9,56.4/1:203), SD 7.14. In the Pali, this verb is at the end, show below within a parenthesis.

⁹¹ Comy: At this point, Pukkusāti attains the 3 paths and their respective fruits, becoming a non-returner. He realizes that he is before his teacher, the Buddha, himself. He cannot express this realization since the Buddha is in the midst of his discourse. (MA 5:58). See also SD 44.1 (2.3.5).

⁹² This passage shows how the arhat dwells in the nirvana-element with residual being (*sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu*). Although the arhat continues to experience feelings, he is free from lust for pleasant ones, free from aversion towards painful ones, and free from ignorance about neutral feelings.

If he feels a neutral feeling,⁹³
 he understands that it is *impermanent*;
 he understands that it is not to be clung to;
 he understands that there is no delight in it.
24 If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it in a detached manner.⁹⁴
 If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it in a detached manner.
 If he feels a neutral feeling, he feels it in a detached manner.

24.2 When he feels a feeling ending with the body,⁹⁵ he understands,
 ‘I feel a feeling ending with the body.’

When he feels a feeling ending with life,⁹⁶ **[245]** he understands,
 ‘I feel a feeling ending with life.’

He understands,

‘When the body has broken up after life has ended, all that is felt, in which he delights not,⁹⁷ will cool down right here.’⁹⁸

Parable of the oil-lamp

24.3 Bhikshu, just as an oil-lamp burns on account of oil and wick, and when oil and wick are used up, if it does not get any more fuel, it is quenched from lack of fuel;⁹⁹

even so, bhikshu, when he feels *a feeling ending with the body*, he understands, ‘I feel a feeling ending with the body.’

24.4 When he feels *a feeling ending with life*, he understands, ‘I feel a feeling ending with life.’

He understands, ‘*When the body has broken up after life has ended, all that is felt, in which he delights not, will cool down right here.*’

25 Therefore, such an accomplished bhikshu is one accomplished in **the supreme foundation of wisdom**. For this, bhikshu, is the supreme noble wisdom, that is to say, the knowledge of the ending of all suffering.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ “Neutral,” *adukkha-m-asukha*, lit “neither painful nor pleasant.” The suttas often speak of pleasant and painful sights, sounds, smells and tastes, which in turn provide the conditions for the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or pain (eg S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). According to the Abhidhamma tradition, however, only the sense of touch is accompanied by pleasure or by pain, but feelings arising at the other four physical sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhs 2); cf Dhs:R 171 n2. See also Analayo 2003:171.

⁹⁴ “In a detached manner,” *visaṃyutta*.

⁹⁵ “Ending with the body,” *kāya,pariyantika*, ie arising in the body, at any of the 5 physical sense-doors (*yāva pañca,dvāra,kayo pavattati, tāva pavattaṃ pañca,dvārika vedanan ti attho*, SA 2:78,32 f; AA 3:176). On this n and foll n, cf **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5, on the 2 kinds of feeling (bodily and mental): the arhat suffers only the bodily pains, but the unawakened suffers both bodily and mental pains: see SD 5.5 Also cf **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5), SD 5.4.

⁹⁶ “Ending with life,” *jīvita,pariyantika*, ie arising in the mind or mind-door (*yāva īvitaṃ pavattati, tāva pavattaṃ mano,dvārika vedanan ti attho*, SA 2:79,1 f; AA 3:176).

⁹⁷ “All that is felt, in which he delights not,” *sabba,vedayitāni anabhinanditāni* (Ce:Copenhagen, Be:VRI text & Comy; BUDSIR but Thai tr “that is delightful”). Alt reading *sabba,vediyitāni abhinanditāni* (PTS, Ce & Comy): “All that is felt that is delightful.”

⁹⁸ *Kāyassa bhedā uddham jīvita,pariyādānā idh’eva sabba,vedayitāni abhinanditāni sīti,bhavissantīti pajānāti*.

⁹⁹ “If it does not get ... lack of fuel,” *pariyādānā aññassa ca anupāhārā anāhāro nibbāyati*. Similar lamp parable in **Assaji S** (S 11.88/3:126), SD 42.8; **Saṃyojana S 1** (S 12.53/2:86×2); **Saṃyojana S 2** (S 12.54/2:87×2); **Gelaññā S 1** (S 36.7/4:213); **Gelaññā S 2** (S 36.8/4:214); **Padipōpama S** (S 54.8/5:319), SD 62.2.

¹⁰⁰ Comy: The knowledge of the ending of all suffering is the wisdom of the fruit of arhathood (MA 5:59).

THE 2ND FOUNDATIONThe foundation of truth

26 This liberation of his, founded on truth, is unshakable.

For, bhikshu, that which has a deceptive nature is false; that which has an undeceptive nature—nirvana—is true.

Therefore, such an accomplished monk is one accomplished in **the supreme foundation of truth**. For this, bhikshu, is the supreme noble truth, that is to say, nirvana that has an undeceptive nature.

THE 3RD FOUNDATIONThe foundation of letting go

27 Formerly (as an ordinary worldling), when one was ignorant, one was preoccupied with and indulging in birth-bases [in acquisitiveness].¹⁰¹

Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Therefore, such an accomplished monk is one accomplished in **the supreme foundation of letting go**.¹⁰² For this, bhikshu, is the supreme noble letting go, that is to say, the letting go of all birth-bases.

THE 4TH FOUNDATIONThe foundation of peace

28 Formerly (as an ordinary worldling), when one was ignorant, one felt covetousness, desire, lust.

Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

28.2 Formerly, when one was ignorant, one experienced anger, ill will and hate.

Now one has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

28.3 Formerly, when one was ignorant, one experienced ignorance and delusion.

Now one has abandoned them, cut them off **[246]** at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

28.4 Therefore, such an accomplished monk is one accomplished in **the supreme foundation of peace**.¹⁰³ For this, bhikshu, is the supreme noble peace, that is to say, the stilling of lust, hate and delusion.¹⁰⁴

29 *‘Wisdom should not be neglected; the truth should be guarded; letting go should be cultivated; one should indeed train for peace (of mind)’* [§7.3]: so it is said.

And it is in connection that this is said.

¹⁰¹ “Birth-basis,” *upadhi*, substrates of existence, essentials of being, worldly possessions as a source of rebirth. Comy mentions 4 kinds of birth-basis: the aggregates (*khandh’upadhi*), defilements (*kiles’upadhi*), volitional formations (*abhisankhār’upadhi*), and the cords of sense-pleasure (*kāma,gun’upadhi*) (MA 2:112, 3:169, 5:60). See SD 28.11 (3.2).

¹⁰² “Letting go,” *cāga*, often tr as “charity, generosity,” but here has a broader spiritual sense of “letting go” of not only material things, but also mental states, all of which are summarily called “birth-basis” (*upadhi*).

¹⁰³ *Tasmā evaṃ samannāgato bhikkhu iminā paramena upasamādhīṭṭhānena samannāgato hoti.*

¹⁰⁴ *Eso hi bhikkhu paramo ariyo upasamo yad idaṃ rāga,dosa,mohānaṃ upasamo.*

THE SAGE AT PEACE¹⁰⁵

30 ‘Those who stand on them (that is, the four foundations of wisdom, truth, letting go and peace) do not go with the flow of mental conceiving (*maññita*):¹⁰⁶ not flowing with mental conceiving, one is called “**a sage at peace**” (*muni santa*) [§7.2]. So it is said.

And in what connection is this said?

31 Bhikshu,	
‘I am,’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I am this,’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will be’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will not be,’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will consist of form,’ ¹⁰⁷	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will be formless,’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will be percipient [conscious],’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will be non-percipient,’	this is a mental conceiving.
‘I will be neither percipient nor non-percipient,’	this is a mental conceiving. ¹⁰⁸

31.2 Mental conceiving, bhikshu, is a sickness; mental conceiving is a tumour; mental conceiving is a dart.

By overcoming all mental conceiving, bhikshu, he is called ‘**a sage at peace.**’

And a sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die. He is unshaken, unagitated.

31.3 For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born.¹⁰⁹

Not being born, how could he age [decay]?

Not ageing, how could he die?

Not dying, how could he be shaken?

Not shaken, why should he be agitated?

32 ‘Those who stand on them (the four foundations) do not go with the flow of mental conceiving, not flowing with mental conceiving, one is called a “sage at peace.”’ So it is said. And it is in this connection that this is said.

Bhikshu, remember this **brief analysis of the 6 elements.**¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ See §7.2 & n there.

¹⁰⁶ See §7 & nn there.

¹⁰⁷ “I will attain form dhyana or rebirth in the form world.”

¹⁰⁸ See also **Yava, kalāpī S** (S 35.248/4:202 f), SD 40a.3 & **Samanupassanā Sutta** (S 22.47/3:47), SD 26.12. For an analysis, see SD 19.1 (4.3).

¹⁰⁹ What is not present in him is the craving for being. Those who still have this craving are reborn ever again.

¹¹⁰ Comy: The whole teaching of the Buddha is “in brief”: there is no extended teaching, even the Paṭṭhāna Kathā. Amongst the 4 types of persons, beginning with the one who can understand Dharma in a condensed form (*ugghāṭit’aññū*), Pukkusāti was a “diffuse learner” (*vipacit’aññū*, ie one to whom the Dharma has to be explained in detail). For this reason, the Buddha taught **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (MA 5:60). The 4 types of persons (in terms of how fast they learn the Dharma) are: (1) the intuitive or quick learner (*ugghāṭitaññū*); (2) the diffuse learner, one who learns after a detailed treatment, the intellectual (*vipacit’aññū*); (3) the guidable, one who needs tutoring (*neyya*); and (4) the slow learner, “one who merely knows the word of the text (but not the meaning or usage)” (*pada, parama*) (A 2:135; Pug 41).

Pukkusāti's lion-roar

33 Then, the venerable Pukkusāti thought:

“Indeed the Teacher has come to me! Indeed, the well-farer (*sugata*) has come to me! Indeed, the fully self-awakened one has come to me!”

33.2 Then, he rose from this seat, arranged his upper robe¹¹¹ over one shoulder and bowed with his head at the Blessed One's feet. Then, he said this to the Blessed One:

“A transgression¹¹² has overcome me, bhante—just as one foolish, as one confused, [247] as one unskillful—as to have presumed to address the Blessed One as ‘avuso’!¹¹³

Bhante, may the Blessed One accept my transgression as a transgression, so that I may show restraint henceforth.”¹¹⁴

33.3 “Yes, bhikshu, you have transgressed—just as one foolish, as one confused, as one unskillful—in having addressed me as ‘avuso.’

But, bhikshu, since you see your transgression as a transgression, and make amends in accordance with the Dharma, we accept it.”¹¹⁵

For, bhikshu, it is progress in the discipline of the noble ones, when, seeing a transgression as a transgression, one makes amends in accordance with the Dharma and shows restraint henceforth.”

34 Bhante, may I receive the full admission¹¹⁶ before the Blessed One.”

“But, bhikshu, are your robe and bowl complete?”

“No, bhante, my robe and bowl are not complete.”

“Bhikshu, the Tathāgata [the Buddha thus come] does not admit anyone who is not complete as regards robe and bowl.”

¹¹¹ “Upper robe,” *cīvara*, here refers to that of a wanderer (*paribājjaka*) or renunciant (*pabbajita*), not that of a Buddhist monk (usu called *uttara,saṅga*). Below, Pukkusāti, when asked by the Buddha, replies that he (Pukkusāti) does not have “robe and bowl” for his ordination (*upasampadā*) as a Buddhist monk. This development shows that this episode prob occurs *after* the first 20 years (surely not within the first 10 years) of the Buddha's ministry, when the sangha may ordain suitable candidates by a sangha act.

¹¹² *Accaya*.

¹¹³ *Accayo maṃ accayaṃ bhante accagamā yathā, balaṃ yathā, mūlhaṃ yathā, akusalaṃ, yo'haṃ bhagavantaṃ āvuso, vādena samudācaritabbam amaññissam*. Throughout the initial phase of his meeting the Buddha, Pukkusāti addresses him as *āvuso*, translatable as “friend” or “brother,” a form of address to juniors or between equals [§§3-6]. On realizing he is speaking to the Buddha, he seeks forgiveness here. See foll 2 nn.

¹¹⁴ *Tassa me bhante bhagavā accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatim samvarāyā ti*. On confession, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2) @ SD 8.10 (6).

¹¹⁵ The Buddha uses the “royal we,” speaking for the sangha. A scholar wonders if the Buddha is “cold” here: **Nakamura**, eg, says, “We would expect Sakyamuni to grant forgiveness in the face of a bhikkhu's remorseful apology, for that is the behaviour common to all peoples. Could the historical Sakyamuni really have uttered the cold words we find in the sutra? A religious leader who had become lost in his own importance may well have done so, but the figure in this sutta is completely different from the Sakyamuni portrayed in ancient verse. In the [§33.3], the Buddha merely repeats Pukkusāti's words; that is, words are merely being put into his mouth, in another instance of the phenomenon of deification.” (2005: 219 f; see also the whole ch). It should also be noted that in the oldest texts, we find even lay people addressing the Buddha simply as “you” (*tvaṃ*) (Sn 377). It would be interesting to hear what these scholars would have the Buddha say.

¹¹⁶ “Full admission,” *upasampadā*, also tr as “ordination” or “full ordination” which however connotes a ritualization of what is originally simply a public gesture of spiritual realization (called the *ehi, bhikkhu upasampadā*, V 1:12; Kkhv 17; VA 240). As such, “ordination” is best reserved for the later ritualized formal *upasampadā*.

Pukkusāti dies a non-returner

35 Then, the venerable Pukkusāti rejoicing and approving of the Blessed One’s word, rose from his seat, saluted the Blessed One. Keeping his right side to the Blessed One, he left to look for the robe and bowl.

35.2 Then, while the venerable Pukkusāti was looking for the robe and bowl, an amok cow killed him.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

35 Then, some bhikshus approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, they saluted him and sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the monks said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, the son of family Pukkusāti, who was given a brief instruction by the Blessed One, has died. What is his destiny? What is his future course?”

“Bhikshus, wise is the son of family Pukkusāti, one who practised in accordance with the Dharma, and who did not trouble me in regards to the points of the Dharma.¹¹⁸

Bhikshus, the son of family Pukkusāti, with the destruction of the 5 lower fetters, is **one spontaneously born** [in the pure abodes] and will attain nirvana there without ever returning from that world.”¹¹⁹

The Blessed One said this. Satisfied, the monks rejoiced¹²⁰ in the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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¹¹⁷ “Amok cow,” *bhanta, gavī*, ie a stray cow running berserk, that Comy says was rushing after her wandering young calf (MA 5:62). The cow is said to have been a yakshini (ogress) who was a cow in 100 births. In her last birth as a cow, besides goring Pukkusāti to death (DhA 2:35), she also killed the monk Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya, the public executioner Tamba, dāthika and the leper Suppabuddha (UA 289). In a past life, the cow was a courtesan and these four men, the sons of wealthy merchants, took her to a park for the pleasure of her company. In the evening, they killed her and took back the jewels and money they had given her. While dying, she vowed vengeance to kill them in a hundred existences. (UA 289; DhA 2:35)

¹¹⁸ “In regards to the points of the Dharma,” *dharmādhikaraṇa*. M:ÑB has “in the interpretation of the Dhamma.”

¹¹⁹ Comy: Pukkusāti is reborn in the pure abode called Avihā and attains arhathood there “upon landing” (*upahacca parinibbayī*, D 3:237). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17. Comy quotes **Ghaṭikāra (Gāthā) S** (S 1.50/1:35), mentioning Pukkusāti as one of the 7 monks reborn in Avihā and attained liberation by transcending the heavenly bonds, that is, they immediately attained arhathood on being reborn there. On the pure abodes, see SD 47.15 (2.3). On the Brahmā Ghaṭikāra, see **Ghaṭikāra S** (M 81), partially tr in **Money & monastics**, SD 4.19. Cf M 91,39/2:146 on this para.

¹²⁰ “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā ... abhinandurū*.