

14

(Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on the Immoral | A 5.24

Theme: Moral virtue is the proximate condition for right concentration; Buddhist aesthetics
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018, 2021

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 The (Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta (A 5.24) shows how proximate conditions work in our practice to help us reach the path of awakening. These conditions are those of the 5 Dharma-aggregates.

Without a grounding in moral virtue, we will not be able to gain mental concentration, without which we will neither know nor understand true reality: we will not have wisdom. Hence, we are unable to let go of the world, much less will we see or win mental freedom. [§1]

We are like a **tree** that lacks branches and leaves: its shoots will neither sprout nor will it grow in bulk. [§2]

1.1.2 Grounded in moral virtue, we easily gain mental concentration, which is the basis for wisdom, that is, knowing and seeing true reality. Seeing the true nature of things, we are no more fooled by appearances, so that we let go of them; hence, we see and win mental freedom for ourself. [§3]

We are like a tree heavy with branches and leaves that easily sprouts shoots and grows in bulk. [§4]

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 The Dharma-aggregates and the proximate conditions

The 5 key points of **the (Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta** should be seen as referring to the 5 Dharma-aggregates respectively (in the positive cycle), thus:

<u>The 5 dharma-aggregates (<i>khandha</i>)¹</u>	<u>the 5 proximate conditions (<i>upanisā</i>)</u>	
(1) moral training [moral conduct]	moral virtue	<i>silā</i>
(2) concentration training	right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>
(3) wisdom training	knowledge-and-vision of true reality	<i>ñāṇa, dassana</i>
(4) freedom	revulsion and dispassion	<i>nibbidā, virāga</i>
(5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom	(same)	<i>vimutti, ñāṇa, dassana</i>

Let us now examine how the 2 sets of teachings work with each other when we practise the Dharma.

1.2.2 The progress of insight

1.2.2.1 Moral conduct

(1) The Buddhist life is rooted in our keeping at least the 5 precepts.² The true and full **human** state is *defined* and lived by the rule and spirit (or precepts and values) of *life, happiness, freedom* (and re-

¹ On the 5 dharma-aggregates (*pañca dhamma-k, khandha*), see **Sīla Sampanna S** (It 104,4), SD 59.13.

spect for others), *truth* and *wisdom*. The 5 precepts are respectively rooted in these values.³ Monastics have freely taken up the cloth to observe an extended code of precepts called the Pātimokkha, which is the essence of **the Vinaya**, the monastic discipline for true renunciants working for the path in this life itself.

(2) Without **moral training** or moral conduct, there is no moral virtue (both termed *sīla*). Such false monastics who pretend to renunciation and holiness, but neither respect nor follow the Vinaya are said to be “**thieves**” (*cora*).⁴ When they openly and shamelessly live as lay people, with families and businesses, they are called “**yellownecks**” (*kāsāva,kaṇṭha*).⁵ In either case, these “**false recluses**” (*samaṇaka*),⁶ including those who habitually break the Vinaya rules, or only pretend to live by them, face karmic retribution as “**hell-fillers**” (*apāya,pūra*),⁷ those bound for the subhuman states of *the exploitative asuras, the instinctively routine animals, the addictive preta demons, and the habitually violent hellbeings*.⁸

(3) On the positive side, Dharma-based training begins with **moral training** (*sīla,sikkhā*). This is, both for the laity and the monastic, basically, the restraining of the body and speech from the unwholesome (rooted in greed, hate and delusion), and the personal and social cultivation of non-greed (charity), non-hate (love) and non-delusion (wisdom) in a Dharma-spirited way. This is the transformation of the senses, from serving as mere vehicles for sense-experience to becoming the means for sensing truth and beauty, the essence of the good and the joyful. Simply, this is the essence of **Buddhist aesthetics** on a secular level. [1.2.3]

1.2.2.2 Right concentration

The 2nd aspect of Buddhist training is that of **mental concentration** (*samādhi sikkhā*), or, to be more exact, right concentration (*sammā,samādhi*), the term used in the Sutta. When we are able to habitually keep the precepts on account of our understanding of the precepts and respect for the 5 values, we are, in sutta terms, “cultivated in body” (*bhāvita,kāya*). We are then ready to be “cultivated in mind” (*bhāvita,citta*).⁹ A cultivated body (one that is well restrained in terms of the precepts) is the basis for mental cultivation, at least, by way of mindfulness (*sati*), if not, dhyana (*jhāna*) itself.

In this study, we will focus on the practical goal for those (lay or monastic) who, for any reason, are unable to attain dhyana, in other words, the attainment of **streamwinning** or of once-returning.¹⁰ This refers specifically to the breaking of **the 3 fetters** (*samyojana*)¹¹ of *self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows*.

Our key practice here should be that of **the perception of impermanence** (*anicca,saññā*).¹² With this as our foundational practice, we may do the breath meditation or the lovingkindness meditation, usually both (since they actually give us a good balanced practice). When we emerge from either meditation

² On the 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*)—abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication—see **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,13), SD 5.10; **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

³ On the 5 values (*pañca,dhamma*), see SD 40a.1 (13).

⁴ Renunciant as thieves: **Arahatta Susīma S** (S 12.70,58), SD 16.8; SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2).

⁵ See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,8), SD 1.9; **Dh 307a**, SD 19.1(6.3); SD 49.3a(2.1.3); SD 28.9b.

⁶ *Samaṇa-ka* (“little recluses), diminutive of *samaṇa*; hence, a false one (V 1:45; D 1:90; M 2:47, 210; Sn p21). See PED sv.

⁷ SD 3.12 (1.2); SD 50.41 (1.2.1.2).

⁸ As the 4 subhuman states (*cat’upāya*): SD 54.3f (2.2.4).

⁹ On both terms, see **Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja S** (S 35.127,7), SD 27.6a.

¹⁰ On streamwinning, see SD 3.3; SD 10.16 (11). On once-returning, see SD 10.16 (12).

¹¹ On the 3 fetters, see SD 40a.8; SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

¹² On the perception of impermanence, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (5).

with some level of mental calm, clarity and joy, we direct that beautiful mind to look into the **impermanence** of the body, our mind, and whatever we experience through the senses. In short, this is our **concentration training** (*samādhi sikkha*), leading into “insight” (*vipassanā*), as the basis for wisdom training (*paññā sikkhā*).

1.2.2.3 Knowledge-and-vision of true reality

The term for this stage, “knowledge-and-vision of true reality” (*yathā.bhūta,ñāṇa,dassana*)¹³ refers to the twin aspect of our self-knowing of the true nature of our experiences. In our “normal” perception, for example, we instinctively project our past biases (greed, hate, delusion, fear), into present sense-objects. Hence, we do not really “know” what we are experiencing: we have merely created a “comfort zone”—a conditioned reflex or latent defence mechanism—so that whatever we experience is a virtual reality of our conditioned past.

We are creating our own virtual world and living in it. Our **greed** (*lobha*) works to accept and attract what we see as feeding our craving and views; our **hate** (*dosa*) rejects and keeps out whatever we perceive as threatening this private reality; what seems unfamiliar (not measurable by our greed nor our hate), we regard as “non-existent,” and we ignore them: this is our **delusion**. Every time we feed *greed*, we feed our latent tendency of sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*); when we *hate*, we feed the latent tendency of aversion (*paṭigha*); when we *ignore* our experiences, we feed the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjā*).¹⁴

When we learn to see this urobolic feeding—the cosmic serpent painfully feeding on its own tail—the more we understand this, the more we stop biting and eating our own tail: hence, the less we suffer. On the other hand, we also learn to see the **impermanence** of all our experiences, all the people, beings and things that exist around us, as being *impermanent*; we appreciate that all our sense-experiences are all but *passing moments*. We begin to see ourselves as we really are: each devouring our own tail in our own self-created world. We fancy themselves as God or God-created, but we are helplessly dogging our own greed, hate, delusion and fear. In essence, this is our knowledge-and-vision of true reality.

1.2.2.4 Revulsion and dispassion

(1) **Revulsion** (*nibbidā*) is a strong word for a powerful experience: when we are burnt by fire, we dread it. It is our natural response to that self-created world conditioned by impermanence; hence, characterized by suffering. It is like a wise doctor who sees very nasty germs, or a naturalist confronted by a very venomous snake or spider: they would at once keep a safe distance away, to begin with.

Their natural reaction is based on their knowledge and experience. These creatures are neither good nor bad in the sense that it is their nature that any contact we have with them would harm us fatally. Moreover, these creatures do not know what good or bad is, but we do. We know what harms us and what does not. We are able to avoid harming others, and we do not wish to be harmed by others, too.

We are neither good nor bad, but our thinking, and acting out that thinking, make us so. At some point in our human growth, we will know that good is what affirms *life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom*. Bad negates them, prevents them from being as they are, in their *truth* and *beauty* [1.2.3]. Hence, it is **right view**, on our part, to understand and accept that there *is good*, there *is bad*; that we are accountable for our actions, since they have consequences.¹⁵

¹³ In simple terms, “knowledge” refers to what we can know or *learn* about it; “vision” is seeing this reality more directly, so that we understand it.

¹⁴ **Sammā Ditṭhi S** (M 9,65-67), SD 11.14; **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (8.2).

¹⁵ This acceptance of good and bad forms the 2nd view in the 6 kinds in the right-view pericope: **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,23/1:55), SD 8.10; **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,10/1:287), SD 5.7; **Sandaka S** (M 76,7.2/1:515), SD 35.7; **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117,5/3:71 f); summary, SD 6.10; SD 40a.1 (5.1.2.1)

(2) The next point is vitally important and universal, but not easy to understand. There is neither entity nor essence behind any existence, animate or inanimate. There is no “thingness” behind any thing. What we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think* is just that: there is only *the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking*, but no seer, hearer, smeller, taster, toucher, thinker: no one that *does* these actions. Even when we say something mundane like “The sun rises; the sun sets,” it is simply worldly or “conventional” language. In reality, there is neither rising nor setting. Perhaps we may say that there are moving bodies in the heavens. In other words, everything is moving, changing, becoming other (it is even meaningful here to say: things are “othering”!) This is the universal principle of **nonself**. Of all the wise in any generation, only the Buddha sees this and makes it known to the world.

On a deeper, more personal, level, there is nothing that we can really direct our greed to (to have or to own), or direct our hate to (to reject or dislike), or ignore (to neither like nor dislike). The nature of all things in this world is that they are impermanent; hence, they are unsatisfactory (suffering). Thus, we have no control over them: they are nonself. When we understand this, and live by this, our response will be that of **dispassion** (*virāga*).

1.2.2.5 Knowledge-and-vision of freedom

(1) Many, if not most, religions start by wanting us to believe in some unreal ideas like “sin” and “God,” and then say that it is a *sin* not to believe in God. After claiming that we are helpless and foolish in the worst possible way, they then insist that we must choose whether to believe them or not. We are then told that their almighty all-loving God created everything, even hell and heaven. Yet, if we do not believe, we would be cast into hell; but if we believe, we would be rewarded with life in heaven.¹⁶

The Buddha, rejecting belief through faith, teaches wisdom through inquiry and experience. He begins, for example, by asking something like “What can we know?” In **the Sabba Sutta**, “the discourse on the all” (S 35.23), he states that all we can know are **our sense-experiences**: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts. Hence, the sources of knowledge are our own **senses**: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The early Buddhists (and ancient Indians) accept the mind as the 6th sense, since it also, on its own, makes sense of things. This is the teaching of “**the all**” (*sabba*).¹⁷

(2) We have already noted that all these experiences are *impermanent, suffering and nonself* [1.2.2.4]. In other words, whatever that exists is conditioned, arising and ceasing, depending on a network of causes and effects, where causes themselves become effects, which in turn become causes, over and over, ad infinitum. Whatever idea we may have of such a reality can only be conceived in our mind, and cannot be conceived independently of our 6 senses.¹⁸

(3) Early Buddhist moral training and mental cultivation—the development of mind and body—are guided by the understanding of this **conditionality** (*paccaṃyatā*), the network of causes and effects. The basic rule that works for the universe also applies to how our mind works, governing our moral and psychological being, our body-mind existence. This is called the law of **karma** (*kamma*).

The law of karma means that how we **think** (our intentions) affects and defines our actions. How we act in this way becomes us: we are our karma (what we think, say and do). This is what shapes us, mind and body. Just as plants die and grow again through their genes preserved and propagated by seeds and other means, our mind, too, comprises what may be envisioned as “mind-genes” or karmic genes that continue to live and grow in new bodies.

¹⁶ On the serious problems with such teachings, see SD 26.9 (1.7.2.2).

¹⁷ S 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1).

¹⁸ Cf Einstein’s quote at the start of SD 7.1.

(4) Like the biological genes, **the karmic genes**, too, are “information” that determine our traits. We inherit the biological traits in this life from our parents (synchronically), but we pass on our own karmic traits to the next and subsequent lives (diachronically). When our human body dies, our **mind**—depending whether it is that of *an exploitative asura*, *an instinctively routine animal*, *an addictive preta demon*, or *a habitually violent hellbeing* or of a human, perhaps, even a divine being—will arise in the next life in that form and state. Hence, karma and rebirth work together, existentially, exponentially.

(5) **Karma** means that each and everyone of us are accountable for our own actions (thought, words and deeds). Since we are our karma, it does not make sense to say that our karma “punishes” us. When we put our hand into a fire and it gets burnt, we do not say: “The fire punished me.” Rather, we say: “We got burnt”: it is a reflexive action; we burned ourselves, so to speak. In this sense, karma is telling us, quite directly and plainly, what actions are “good” for us, what actions are “bad” for us. This knowledge, and acting on this knowledge, frees us from the karmic fruits we would otherwise must taste.

On a deeper and wider scale, when we understand the universal characteristics of *impermanence*, *suffering and nonself*, we understand that it is unproductive (and unpleasant) to run or grasp after anything of this world, or to try to own or cling any of it. The reason is very simple: by the time we grasp them, they are no more there. They are not those things that we previously found attractive and desirable. Everything is changing, everything is turning, round and round. We can at best just watch and enjoy the view.

1.2.3 Buddhist aesthetics

1.2.3.1 Value of life

Early Buddhist aesthetics is an appreciation (study and experience) of truth and beauty in our sense-experiences. “Truth” is here used in a broad sense to refer either to virtual reality or to true reality, each knowingly taken for what it is, not otherwise. When we are able to see things as they are—virtual reality as virtual reality, true reality as true reality—there is a sense of **peace** because of the harmony of the experience; there is **joy** knowing that we have not been hoodwinked by delusion or ignorance, misguided by what we think or know.

We feel **the beautiful truth that is reality** when we apply the universal characteristics of *impermanence*, *suffering and nonself* to each of the 5 precepts. Then, we better understand why we value life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom as expressed through the joyful and ruthless¹⁹ keeping of the 5 precepts. In short, we are living a Dharma-spirited “beautiful life of value.”

Abstaining from **killing** (*pāṇātipāta*) is our personal gesture and collective effort to show that we value **life** because all existence is conditioned: everything in this world is *subject to change*, *impermanent*, *becoming other*. Essentially, our mind is not the same for any 2 moments; our body, too, subtly changes moment to moment. All we seem to see and experience is a “**continuity**” (*santati*) that gives us a false sense of an abiding “self.” There is only this moment, and it’s already gone.

1.2.3.2 Value of happiness

In terms of Buddhist aesthetics, for life to be *true and beautiful*, it should also be a **happy** one. To but live, feed, play, hunt, mate, age, die, is to merely exist animal-like. As humans, with a heart of humanity, we are capable of learning and growing from our experiences, and of living happily alone, in pairs, as a group, as a society, as a world.

¹⁹ From ruth, “compassion.”

The Anaṅa Sutta (A 4.62) speaks of the 4 joys of wealth, that is, the joys of having and using, of debtlessness and blamelessness. According to the Sutta, as humans, our 1st joy, that of **having** (or ownership), is expressed thus:

“At the thought, ‘Wealth is mine, gained by work and zeal,
gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of brow,
justly obtained in a lawful way,’
he gains happiness, he gains mental ease [satisfaction].”²⁰

Furthermore, we are happy because we are able to **use** our wealth, thinking, “By means of wealth thus gained, I both enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds.” Thirdly, we are debtfree: we are not taking a bit of money from others and paying back much more;²¹ and fourthly, above all, we are blameless: our actions are rooted in charity, love and wisdom. These are the ideals by which we can wholesomely guide our lives.

We may use these teachings as a utilitarian argument to assert that we should not steal because if what we have were routinely stolen, we would neither be motivated to work nor be productive; we may end up stealing, too. As a result, no one would be safe having anything, nor have enough to be happy. Underpinning this utilitarian argument is also **the aesthetic argument**: the right and joy to be happy are the value (happiness) in which this precept is rooted.

1.2.3.3 Value of freedom

(1) The 3rd precept is the abstention from **sexual misconduct** (*kāmesu micchācāra*), which essentially refers to respecting **the body** (ours and others) **and the privacy** of another, whatever the sex. In the Buddha’s time (in India today, too, to a great extent) society is mostly patriarchal. Not only *men* had the upper hand in daily affairs and special situations, they also may, as a rule, exploit women, even with hubris. Women, on the other hand, who docilely or pragmatically see themselves merely as baby-machines and pleasure-givers to men, tend to overplay their femininity to sell themselves, as it were, to the best male partners and protectors.

In such a situation, it is understandable the Buddha has to take a firm stand against such womanly propensities, not because women are less virtuous, but because the men, especially the monks, may be more vulnerable to such temptations and fall from their training. Moreover, the monastic life is one of voluntary celibacy, but once taken up, is one of necessarily strict sexual abstinence with karmic accountability. The main reason for this is that monastics are supposed to learn and master meditation to overcome the 5 hindrances—those of *sensual desire, ill will, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, and doubt*—the first 4 of which are directly rooted in the body.

One vital meditation strategy, then, is to cultivate enough joy and happiness (*pīti, sukha*), and peace of mind (*samatha*) so that we would not be swayed by any pleasure of the senses, any bodily pleasures. Upon this *calm*, we then build insight (*vipassanā*), a direct seeing, into the true nature of the body: that of being *impermanent, suffering and nonself* [1.2.2.4]. These twin exercises strengthen our mind and wean it away from being drawn to and distracted by the body. Finally, with the attainment of dhyana (*jhāna*), having tasted supremely higher spiritual pleasure and freedom, we can be fully free from all sensual desires and distractions.

(2) For the laity who are still rooted in activities of the body and the world, so long as they are tempered and restrained by **the 5 precepts** [1.2.2.1], they are capable of practising the Dharma as **stream-winners** who “enjoy sense-pleasures” (*kāma, bhogī*), as clearly stated in **the Mahā Vaccha, gotta Sutta**

²⁰ A 4.62/2:69 f (SD 2.2).

²¹ In our times, it is more practical to say that we are well capable of discharging our debts.

(M 73).²² It should be understood that it is *not* that sensual pleasures (including sexuality) are “permitted” in such situations, but rather that, for these practitioners, they are freed from unwholesomeness by faith (*saddhā*) and love (*pema*), so that they are capable of fully enjoying the moment, feeling the *impermanence*, even of joy and pleasure, especially of love and goodness.

Such lay practitioners, who enjoy sensual pleasures, have a joyful love and wholesome respect for others, especially their loved ones, those they socialize with, and are generally kind and caring to all. Because of their freedom from *the self-identity view*, they are unlikely to measure themselves against others, but see it as an occasion for learning and friending. Nor would they be dependent on the attention of others, such as how a cult guru ravenously leeches off his followers. He has good faith in his people-skills, in befriending others, and keeping friendships and relationships open and amicable.

Such a person has love and respect for his spouse or partner that he would accept a “no” with the same kind understanding as when he himself has to say “no.” His charity is freely extended to all, especially those who deserve it. **The Rasiya Gāmaṇi Sutta** (S 42.12) and **the Kāma,bhogī Sutta** (A 10.91) describe him, thus:

Here, having sought wealth rightfully, without violence, he enjoys sensual pleasures. Thus, he makes himself happy and pleased; he offers his share in giving and does deeds of merit. And he uses his wealth, unattached to it, not infatuated with it, not blindly absorbed in it, seeing its danger, understanding the escape.²³ (S 42.12, SD 91.3) = (A 10.91, SD 100.8)²⁴

This only shows that, as Buddhists, even as **lay Buddhists**, we can live beautiful lives in the world when we understand the nature of *truth and beauty* in terms of the moral life, as embodied in the 5 precepts. When we do aspire for **streamwinning**, we give greater meaning and purpose to our Buddhist life. And as streamwinners, our lives will be, as a rule, joyful all the way. When we do have to face some difficult karmic fruits, we are better equipped to respond wholesomely without aggravating the situation. After all, we have only 7 lives²⁵ to go at the most before we awaken on the path of freedom.

1.2.3.4 Value of truth

Our Dharma-spirited life is beautiful in the aesthetic sense because we are guided and enriched by the **values** (*dhamma*) of *life, happiness and freedom*, underpinning the first 3 precepts against killing [1.2.3.1], stealing [1.2.3.2] and sexual misconduct [1.2.3.3], respectively. These values work simply because our life is rooted in **truth**, that special value which empowers us in keeping the precepts, living a life of value for truth and beauty.

The 4th precept is that of abstaining from **lying** (*musāvāda*) because we value truth. Without truth, it is meaningless to abstain from killing, or to keep any of the other precepts. The truth here reflects the universal reality of the values of *life, happiness, freedom and wisdom*. Truth is the light that gives us *sight* of these values, and wisdom (the value underlying the 5th precept) [1.2.3.5] enables us to see and enjoy true beauty. All this empowers us to be truly creative: we are each able to create beauty, and to enjoy it, that is, to live a life of truth and beauty.

²² M 73,10/1:491 (SD 27.4); SD 54.9 (4.2).

²³ S 42.12/4:332,31-333,3 (SD 91.3) = A 5:178,8-12 (SD 100.8). See SD 54.9 (4.2.2).

²⁴ S 42.12/4:332,31-333,3 (SD 91.3) & A 10.91/5:178+181 (SD 100.8).

²⁵ On the streamwinner who is “seven-lives-at-most” (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), see **Sa,upādi,sesa S** (A 9.12,10), SD 3.3(3).

A 5.1.3.4 Aṅguttara Nikāya 5, Pañcaka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 3, Sumana Vagga 4
A 5.2.4.8 Aṅguttara Nikāya 5, Pañcaka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 4, Upāsaka Vagga 8

1.2.3.5 Value of wisdom

(1) The 5th and last precept for lay followers is the abstention from **intoxication**, especially due to strong drinks and other sources of inebriation (*surā, meraya, majja, pamāda-ṭ, thāna*). Technically, this precept does not seem to be related to our body and speech, the bases for moral action. However, it is clear that when we are intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, we let down all our moral restraints, and are emboldened to act unwholesomely which we, as a rule or normally, would never do. This is that one precept, which, when broken, is likely to make us break any or all of the other precepts. Hence, its special place amongst the 5 precepts.

The 5th precept is rooted in the value of **wisdom** in the sense that knowledge and understanding best arise in a lucid mind. Some people may take licence in claiming that they are better inspired to be creative when they are inebriated, since they are “free” to think and feel “out of the box.” This may seem true, but it is like saying that it’s fun to swim in water with piranhas or deadly jelly-fish just for the excitement. We are unlikely to outlive the experience to relate it.

(2) Wisdom is knowledge directed towards seeing deeper into life and reality so that we better understand *impermanence, suffering and nonself*. These are what we inexorably see when we examine our life. When we scientifically examine the cosmos, too, we see a world of amazing beauty (like when we look at the open ocean). Wisdom, then, is knowledge renewing itself, updating itself, freeing itself, as we let go of old ways and views, and evolve mentally closer to seeing the path of awakening. Wisdom is liberating and joyful: **truth frees, joy beautifies**. This is the essence of Buddhist aesthetics. This is what early Buddhism is really about.²⁶

2 Related suttas

The relevance of **the (Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta** is attested by the fact that its teaching is reprised in another sutta [A 5.168], and expanded in a number of others [A 6.50, 7.61, 8.81, 10.3, 104, and 11.3], as shown in this comparative list of related suttas:

(1) (Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta	A 5.24/3:19 f	Briefer version of 3, 4, 5, 6	SD 59.14a
(2) (Pañcaka) Sīla Sutta	A 5.168/2:201	= 1, but spoken by Sāriputta	SD 59.14b
(3) (Chakka) Indriya Saṁvara Sutta	A 6.50/3:360	Expanded parallel of 1	SD 115.1
(4) (Sattaka) Hiri Ottappa Sutta	A 7.61/4:99	[Be 7.65] Expanded parallel of 1, 3	SD 115.2
(5) Sati Sampajañña Sutta	A 8.81/4:336 f	Expanded parallel of 1, 3, 4	SD 115.3
(6) (Dasaka) Upanisā Sutta 1	A 10.3/5:4 f	Expanded parallel of 1, 3, 5, 6	SD 89.5a
(7) (Dasaka) Upanisā Sutta 2	A 10.4/5:5	= 6, but spoken by Sāriputta	SD 89.5b
(8) (Ekādasaka) Upanisā Sutta 1	A 11.3/5:313	Expanded parallel of 6	SD 89.5b

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²⁶ For details on the 5th precept, see SD 59.5 (2.5.1).

SD 59.14a

(Pañcaka) Dussīla Sutta The (Fives) Discourse on the Immoral

A 5.24

THE IMMORAL PERSON

1 "Bhikshus,

(1) for **an immoral person**, for one lacking in moral conduct,

(2) right concentration lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no right concentration, for one lacking in right concentration,

(3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

for one lacking in the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

(4) revulsion and dispassion lack their proximate cause.

When there is no revulsion and dispassion,

for one lacking in revulsion and dispassion,

(5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom lacks its proximate cause.²⁷

THE TREE LACKING BRANCHES AND FOLIAGE

2 Suppose, bhikshus, there is **a tree lacking in branches and foliage**. Then, its shoots do not grow to fullness; also its bark, [20] softwood and heartwood do not grow to fullness.

So, too, bhikshus, for an immoral person, one lacking in virtuous conduct, right concentration lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no right concentration for one lacking in right concentration, (3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no knowledge-and-vision of true reality, for one lacking in the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, (4) revulsion and dispassion lack their proximate cause.

When there is no revulsion and dispassion, for one lacking in revulsion and dispassion, (5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom lacks its proximate cause.

THE MORALLY VIRTUOUS PERSON

3 Bhikshus,

(1) for **a morally virtuous person**, for one who has moral conduct,

(2) right concentration has its proximate cause.

When there is right concentration, for one having right concentration,

(3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality has its proximate cause.

When there is the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

²⁷ Comy: "Knowledge-and-vision of true reality" (*yatha, bhūta, nana, dassana*) is tender insight (*taruṇa, vipassanā*), such as the knowledge of the delimitation of name and form (*nāma, rūpa, pariccheda, ñāṇa*) [Pm 1; Vism 672-678]. For "revulsion and dispassion" (*nibbidā, virāga*), "revulsion" is strong insight (*bala, vipassanā*); "dispassion" (*virāga*) is the noble path. *Vimutti, ñāṇa, dassana* resolves as *vimutti* (freedom) + *ñāṇa, dassana* (knowledge-and-vision): the former is the fruition (*phala, vimutti*) while the latter, review knowledge (*paccavekkhana, ñāṇa*). (AA 3:229,7-13)

A 5.1.3.4

Aṅguttara Nikāya 5, Pañcaka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 3, Sumana Vagga 4

A 5.2.4.8

Aṅguttara Nikāya 5, Pañcaka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 4, Upāsaka Vagga 8

for one having the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

(4) revulsion and dispassion have their proximate cause.

When there are revulsion and dispassion, for one with revulsion and dispassion,

(5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom has its proximate cause.

THE TREE ENDOWED WITH BRANCHES AND FOLIAGE

4 Suppose, bhikshus, there is **a tree endowed with branches and foliage**. Then, its shoots grow to fullness; also its bark, softwood and heartwood grow to fullness.

So too, bhikshus, for one who is morally virtuous, (2) right concentration has its proximate cause.

When there is right concentration, for one with right concentration, (3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality has its proximate cause.

When there is the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, for one with the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, (4) revulsion and dispassion have their proximate cause.

When there are revulsion and dispassion, for one with revulsion and dispassion, (5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom has its proximate cause.”

— *catuttham* —

SD 59.14b

(Pañcaka) Sīla Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on the Moral

A 5.168

1 Originating in Sāvattḥī.

Then, the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks:

“Avuso bhikshus.”

“Avuso,” the monks replied to the venerable Sāriputta.

1.2 The venerable Sāriputta said this:

THE IMMORAL PERSON

(1) for **an immoral person**, for one lacking in moral conduct,

(2) right concentration lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no right concentration, for one lacking in right concentration,

(3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

for one lacking in the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

(4) revulsion and dispassion lack their proximate cause.

When there are no revulsion and dispassion,

for one lacking in revulsion and dispassion,

(5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom lacks its proximate cause.²⁸

²⁸ Comy: “**Knowledge-and-vision of true reality**” (*yatha, bhūta, nana, dassana*) is tender insight (*taruṇa, vipassanā*), such as the knowledge of the delimitation of name and form (*nāma, rūpa, pariccheda, ñāṇa*) [Pm 1; Vism 672-678].

THE TREE LACKING BRANCHES AND FOLIAGE

2 Suppose, avusos,²⁹ there is a **tree lacking in branches and foliage**. Then, its shoots do not grow to fullness; also its bark, softwood and heartwood do not grow to fullness.

So, too, bhikshus, for an immoral person, one lacking in virtuous conduct, right concentration lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no right concentration for one lacking in right concentration, (3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality lacks its proximate cause.

When there is no knowledge-and-vision of true reality, for one lacking in the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, (4) revulsion and dispassion lack their proximate cause.

When there is no revulsion and dispassion, for one lacking in revulsion and dispassion, (5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom lacks its proximate cause.

THE MORALLY VIRTUOUS PERSON

3 Avusos,

(1) for a **morally virtuous person**, for one who has moral conduct,

(2) **right concentration** has its proximate cause.

When there is right concentration, for one having right concentration,

(3) **the knowledge-and-vision of true reality** has its proximate cause.

When there is the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,
for one having the knowledge-and-vision of true reality,

(4) **revulsion and dispassion** have their proximate cause.

When there are revulsion and dispassion, for one with revulsion and dispassion,

(5) **the knowledge-and-vision of freedom** has its proximate cause.

THE TREE ENDOWED WITH BRANCHES AND FOLIAGE

4 Suppose, avusos, there is a **tree endowed with branches and foliage**. Then, its shoots grow to fullness; also its bark, softwood and heartwood grow to fullness.

So too, avusos, for one who is morally virtuous, (2) right concentration has its proximate cause.

When there is right concentration, for one with right concentration, (3) the knowledge-and-vision of true reality has its proximate cause.

When there is the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, for one with the knowledge-and-vision of true reality, (4) revulsion and dispassion have their proximate cause.

When there are revulsion and dispassion, for one with revulsion and dispassion, (5) the knowledge-and-vision of freedom has its proximate cause.”

— aṭṭhamam —

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For “**revulsion and dispassion**” (*nibbiddā, virāga*), “revulsion” is strong insight (*bala, vipassanā*); “dispassion” (*virāga*) is the noble path. *Vimutti, ñāṇa, dassana* resolves as *vimutti* (**freedom**) + *ñāṇa, dassana* (**knowledge-and-vision**): the former is the fruition (*phala, vimutti*) while the latter, review knowledge (*paccavekkhana, ñāṇa*). (AA 3:229,7-13)

²⁹ I have here anglicized *āvuso* as “avuso,” making its pl as “avusos.” I have done the same for *bhante*, whose pl is “bhantes.” However, in some earlier translations, I have not differentiated the sg and pl forms.