

## SD 61.27 (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Suttā 1-3

The (Saḷāyatana) Discourses to Samiddhi 1 + 2 + 3 | S 35.65 + 66 + 67

Theme: Māra, being and suffering that are the 6 sense-bases

Translated by Piya Tan ©2024

### Contents

#### [SD 61.27a Introductory notes: \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 1.](#)

[1](#) [3 similar suttas on the 6 sense-bases: Summaries.](#)

[1.1](#) [The 3 Samiddhi Suttas: S 35.65-67.](#)

[1.2](#) [\(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 1 \(S 35.675\), SD 61.27a.](#)

[1.2.1](#) [Sutta summary and significance of S 35.65.](#)

[1.2.2](#) [How the sense-bases work with the aggregates. \*\*Table 1.2.2.\*\* The process of seeing.](#)

[1.2.3](#) [Māra as the 6 sense-bases.](#)

[2](#) [Samiddhi and his suttas.](#)

[2.1](#) [The monk Samiddhi.](#)

[2.2](#) [Suttas related to Samiddhi.](#)

#### [61.27a \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 1 \(S 35.65\)](#)

#### [SD 61.27b Introductory notes: \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 2.](#)

[3](#) [A “being” is the 6 senses.](#)

[3.1](#) [Definition of “being.”](#)

[3.1.1](#) [Beings as \*satta\*.](#)

[3.1.2](#) [Beings as \*pāna\*.](#)

[3.1.3](#) [Breathing, living and self-knowing.](#)

[3.2](#) [How the aggregates are “us.”](#)

[3.2.1](#) [How the aggregates create us.](#)

[3.2.2](#) [How we can tame the aggregates.](#)

[4](#) [Initiative and agency.](#)

[4.1](#) [Atta,kārī Sutta \(A 6.38\).](#)

[4.1.1](#) [\(Summary of A 6.38\).](#)

[4.1.2](#) [Self and initiative.](#)

[4.2](#) [Karma and agency.](#)

[4.2.1](#) [A common karma.](#)

[4.2.2](#) [Acting on others and acting together.](#)

[4.2.3](#) [Collective good and individual awakening.](#)

#### [61.27b \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 2 \(S 35.66\).](#)

#### [SD 61.27c Introductory notes: \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 3.](#)

[5](#) [“Suffering” and the 3 worlds.](#)

[5.1](#) [The sense-world \(\*kāma.loka\*\).](#)

[5.1.1](#) [Definition of suffering \(\*dukkha\*\).](#)

[5.1.2](#) [The 8 sufferings.](#)

[5.2](#) [The form-world \(\*rūpa.loka\*\).](#)

[5.2.1](#) [The 5-constituent existence and the sense-bases.](#)

[5.3](#) [The formless world \(\*arūpa.loka\*\).](#)

[5.4](#) [The arhat: aggregates without clinging. \*\*Table 5.4.2.2.\*\* The 5 perceptions simplified.](#)

[5.4.1](#) [Time-free teaching.](#)

[5.4.2](#) [Aggregates without clinging.](#)

[5.5](#) [Summary.](#)

#### [61.27c \(Saḷāyatana\) Samiddhi Sutta 3 \(S 35.67\).](#)

## 1 The 3 similar suttas on the 6 sense-bases: Summaries

### 1.1 THE 3 SAMIDDHI SUTTAS: S 35.65-67

We will here examine 3 closely related suttas on the 6 sense-bases from the Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta, that is to say:

(1) (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 1	S 35.65	Māra as the 6 sense-bases	SD 61.27a
(2) (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 2	S 35.66	A “being” as the 6 sense-bases	SD 61.27b
(3) (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 3	S 35.67	Suffering as the 6 sense-bases	SD 61.27c

### 1.2 (SAḶĀYATANA) SAMIDDHI SUTTA 1 (S 35.65), SD 61.27A

#### 1.2.1 Sutta summary and significance of S 35.65

**1.2.1.1 The (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 1 (S 35.65)** is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 suttas dealing with the 6 sense-bases, preserved in the Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta. This Sutta records Samiddhi asking the Buddha “What is Māra?” The reply is that he is the 6 sense-bases, along with their respective sense-objects, sense-consciousnesses, and objects of sense-cognition (eg, the eye, forms, eye-consciousness<sup>1</sup> and dharma-base of forms).

This is a sort of “vertical” or synchronic view of the cognitive process of seeing, that is, analysed as the whole process of “seeing”; this is what happens when we *see* something. This is the activity of each of the sense-bases and *the mind* behind it. Basically, this is the faculty (organ) + object + perception resulting in the respective consciousnesses; and this is **how we “sense” things** at the very basic level of our daily life.

**1.2.1.2** On a deeper level, we don’t just “sense” things—we don’t just see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think—but we “**make sense**” of such experiences. We recognize what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think*, to what we already “sensed” before. This is also how we *know* things (on a very simple level), rightly or wrongly (often wrongly), but we believe it since we have “experienced” it! For example, we see a mirage in a desert or during some freak weather situation, in which case, we often know that it is just a “mirage.”

Our experiences are, however, very often, much more complicated than this. These images or mirages happen so fast and so often that we get so used to them as to believe that they are actually real. We believe that “it” is there, that there is this “something” (*kiñci*) really *out there*. We do not realize that we have conjured or projected it all **in our own mind**.

When we *know* that this is actually happening, and we *see* how it is happening, we then understand things as they really are (*yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti*). This needs mindfulness (the ability to direct our mind or attention to the object) and awareness (the ability to keep the mind on that object), so that we see it as it is, that is, as being impermanent, etc (*yoniso manasikāra*). This is what early Buddhist meditation training is basically about.

We also use the models of the 6 sense-bases and the 5 aggregates to better understand how they work; that is, how we sense things, how we feel about them, how we recognize them, how we react to them, and how we become what we experience. This is what we will examine further.

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<sup>1</sup> In the *āyatana* model, consciousness (eye-consciousness etc) includes “perception” (*saññā*): while *viññāṇa* cognizes, *saññā* recognizes. See SD 20.2 (2) *Citta, mano* and *viññāṇa*.

### 1.2.2 How the sense-bases work with the aggregates

<u>visual cognition</u>	<u>aggregates</u>		<u>sense-bases</u>	
eye	(form)	} <i>rūpa</i>	eye-base <i>cakkhv-āyatana</i>	
form	form		form-base <i>rup'āyatana</i>	
eye-consciousness	consciousness	} <i>viññāṇa</i>	mind-base <sup>2</sup> <i>man'āyatana</i>	
eye-contact <sup>3</sup>	formations		} <i>dharmā-bases*</i> <i>dhamm'āyatana</i>	
feeling born of eye-contact	feeling			
recognizing the form	perception			
reacting to form	formations			

**Table 1.2.2** The process of seeing (in terms of sense-bases and aggregates) [SD 61.28 (Table 2.1)]

["Dharma" (*dhamma*) is sometimes translated as "phenomenon/-mena" or "state/s."]

**1.2.2.1** With the help of **the Table** below, we will examine more or less what happens when we "sense" things, such as, when we **see something**:

**1.2.2.2** When we direct our **eye** (line of vision) to the object (say, the **form** of a person), we are **conscious** of *seeing* something. There is **visual contact**: we see that it is a human person. We then **feel** that it is something *pleasant* or *unpleasant*. We recognize that it is a friend: **perception** by way of memories to which we react and **form** emotions, we like the *pleasant* feeling, we desire to connect with that person (or not), and so on.

Notice that perceptually we first *feel* an object as either pleasant or unpleasant. Then, when we perceive further, we notice the details of the memories which we evaluate, "I like this," or "I don't like this," or when we have no memory of it (or forgotten it), we ignore it. This is the volitional formations stage when karma is formed.

In mindful strategy, such as during meditation, we stop, as it were, at the feeling stage, simply noticing it as either pleasant or unpleasant, and leaving it at that. We can also turn to cultivating lovingkindness to keep the mind "open" and bright with calm and clear vision of things as they are. In this way, we disregard the "signs and details" (*nimitta, vyañjana*).<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2.3 Māra as the 6 sense-bases

**1.2.3.1** What does it mean to say that "**Māra is the 6 sense-bases**"? [61.27a]. To see "Māra" as a real being in the form of what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think* helps us understand in a very effective way how experiences have, as it were, lives of their own. Hence, we often enough claim, "I did not know what I was doing!" With this as skillful means, we are better in charge or mindful of our sense-experiences, by simply *letting them come, letting them go*. This way, we are actually enjoying this very moment as it arises and falls away.

<sup>2</sup> What we broadly refer to as "the mind" encompasses "mind-base" and "dharma-bases." The mind-base is the subjective aspect (the observer or "screen") while the "dharmā-bases" are the objective aspects of mental experience (what shows or plays on the screen), ie, the sense-objects.

<sup>3</sup> Contact (*phassa*) is not listed amongst the 5 aggregates in the suttas where it is implicit with feelings (*vedanā*). The Abhidhamma and Comys include it in the aggregate of formations.

<sup>4</sup> See **Nimitta & Vyañjana**, SD 19.14.

**1.2.3.2** Māra is that “**ancient voice**” within us we call memory. We habitually, even instinctively, link our present experiences with what we experienced in the past, or imagine what we want it to be in the future. “This is what I want!” or “This is what I hate!” and so on. And so we are caught with this pendulum swing of lust-hate in our experiences.

There is either of 2 ways we can correct this negative emotional reactivity, so that we stop reacting to such mental states, and simply observe them like watching the sunset or a movie. The first way is by the application of **insight** (*vipassanā*). We see or “note” such occasions as being “conditioned” by our thoughts. They are thus impermanent, unsatisfactory and “not-I, not-me, not-mine.” This is the strategy of “**disowning the pain.**”

**1.2.3.3** The second strategy to prevent or correct emotional negativity or reactivity is by **the cultivation of lovingkindness** (or compassion, or even joy).<sup>5</sup> Generally, the idea is to cultivate positive feelings based on the opposite of the negative state we are facing.

Suppose we are annoyed at seeing or imagining something ugly or painful. We can cultivate the idea that *ugliness is not something pleasant, that we are not that person; may that person be well and happy.*

Or, we notice that actually the person is really *suffering* (like feeling some sense of lack or jealousy). Then, we cultivate compassion: *May that person recover from that state, feel happy. May that person be well disposed towards others.* And so on.

**1.2.3.4** Often both strategies—insight and lovingkindness—done alternately works well over time. It works by drawing us away from our own negative thoughts or inclinations, and turning our mind to more wholesome states. Such wholesome habits are necessary and valuable to prevent our mind from being caught in a negative rut. One good mental habit leads to another.

## 2 Samiddhi and his Suttas

### 2.1 THE MONK SAMIDDHI

#### 2.1.1 Samiddhi’s personality

**2.1.1.1 Samiddhi** came from a householder’s family of Rājagaha. From the time of his birth his family prospered, and he himself was happy and good; hence his name which means “well-endowed.” On witnessing the meeting between the Buddha and king Bimbisāra, he was so inspired by it that he joined the sangha. He was apparently a young and very good-looking person who attracted even the gods.

**The (Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.20) records a celestial nymph appearing to Samiddhi who is drying himself on a rock after a wash in the hot spring lake. Alluding to Samiddhi’s youth and innocence, she tries to seduce him. Samiddhi replies that sensual pleasures are “time-consuming,” and he has faith in the Dharma. In the end, she agrees to Samiddhi bringing her to see the Buddha.

The Buddha relates **the Samiddhi Jātaka** (J 167) in this connection. The Bodhisattva was once a brahmin’s son in the village of Kāsi. Having come of age, he lived a religious life by a lake in the Himalayas cultivating the knowledges and attainments. Having practised right effort for the whole night, he went to wash in the lake at dawn. As he stood in a single bark-dress, the other in his hand, a celestial nymph (*deva, dhītā*) appeared to him, having fallen in love with his perfect beauty.

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<sup>5</sup> Cultivating lovingkindness (*mettā*) is the easiest and most effective. To cultivate compassion (*karuṇā*) needs the foundation of lovingkindness, and the cultivation of joy (*muditā*) needs both. However, if we have a good practice and joy arises from it, this is naturally helpful in strengthening and guarding our mind.

She uttered the first verse:<sup>6</sup>

<i>abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu</i>	Not having feasted, <sup>7</sup> look for food, O bhikshu.
<i>na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi</i>	Having feasted, you look not for food!
<i>bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu</i>	Having feasted, O bhikshu, then look for food—
<i>mā taṃ kālo upaccagā ti</i>	let not time slip by you! <b>(S 42* = J 185)</b>

Having heard the nymph, the Bodhisattva uttered the second verse:

<i>kālaṃ vo'haṃ na jānāmi</i>	I know not indeed what time is:
<i>channo kālo na dissati</i>	time is hidden, it cannot be seen.
<i>tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi</i>	Therefore, not having eaten, I seek alms—
<i>mā maṃ kālo upaccagā ti</i>	let not time slip by me! <sup>8</sup> <b>(S 43* = J 186)</b>

(S 1:8 f; J 167/2:56-58).

**2.1.1.2** Once when Samiddhi was drying himself after bathing in the Tapodā (hot spring lake), a deva appears to him and questions him about **the Bhadd'eka,ratta Sutta**. Samiddhi confesses ignorance, and the deva asks him to learn it from the Buddha. The Buddha teaches him a brief version which is then elaborated by Mahā Kaccāna: **the Māha Kaccāna Bhadekka,ratta Sutta** (M 133/3:192 f).

Once, while Samiddhi was at the Tapod'ārāma (Hot Spring Monastery, near Rājagaha) musing on his good fortune as a monk with the Buddha as teacher, Māra tries to frighten him with a booming sound. Samiddhi consults the Buddha who teaches him how to stand up to Māra. Soon after that he gains arhat-hood. Samiddhi then declares his knowledge (*aññā*) in a verse (Tha 46), and Māra vanishes discomfited. This account is also given at **the (Māra) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 4.22/1:119 f), but there the venue is given as Silāvātī.<sup>9</sup> [2.2]

### Samiddhi Thera,gāthā

<i>saddhāyāhaṃ pabbajito</i>	In faith I went forth
<i>agārasmā anagāriyaṃ<sup>10</sup></i>	from the house into homelessness.
<i>sati paññā ca me vuḍḍhā</i>	My mindfulness and wisdom have grown,
<i>cittañ ca susamahitaṃ</i>	and my mind well concentrated.
<i>kāmaṃ karassa rūpaṇī</i>	Make shapes as you please,
<i>n'eva maṃ byādhayissasī ti</i>	you will not terrify me. <b>(Tha 46)</b>

**2.1.1.3** According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, Samiddhi was a resident pupil (*saddhi,vihārika*) of Sāriputta, and **the (Navaka) Samiddhi Sutta** (A 9.14) preserves a lesson given by Sāriputta to Samiddhi on intentional thought (*saṅkappa vitakka*) (AA 4:175,21) [2.2]. The Sutta records Sāriputta as questioning Samiddhi on the dependent arising of intentional thoughts, and Samiddhi is able to answer correctly, earning Sāriputta's praise and also advice not to be conceited about it.

<sup>6</sup> These same 2 verses recur in **S 1.20** (SD 21.4).

<sup>7</sup> There is a wordplay on "having feasted" (*bhutvā*) or "eaten, consumed, enjoyed" which can refer to food or, as intended here, to sense-pleasures.

<sup>8</sup> See SD 21.4 (2) for explanation of key terms.

<sup>9</sup> Silāvātī is prob the name of a village or locality on the Tapodā.

<sup>10</sup> Be Ee (S 1:185, 198): *agārasmānagāriyaṃ* that keeps to 8 syllables. This line (*pāda*) is well known: Tha 48, 107, 136, 380, 605, 645, 657, 688, 793, 1186, 1209; Thī 92, 226.

**2.1.1.4** Samiddhi was a monk of great faith and learning, but depicted as having the occasional over-enthusiasm of an impetuous student. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his monkhood, for example, Samiddhi is recorded as conversing with the wanderer **Potali,putta** in the bamboo grove. The wanderer says that he has heard the Buddha teach that all action and speech are vain, and that only what passes in the mind is significant. A stage can be reached in which there is no feeling whatever.

Samiddhi protests that Potaliputta has misinterpreted the Buddha’s teaching, and Potaliputta then asks him questions regarding experience, which Samiddhi answers. Potaliputta, showing neither approval nor disapproval, walks away. When the Buddha hears from Ānanda of Potaliputta’s questions and Samiddhi’s answers, he chides Samiddhi for his hasty reply.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 SUTTAS RELATED TO SAMIDDHI

<b>(Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta</b>	S 1.20/1:8-12	SD 21.4.
A celestial nymph tries to seduce Samiddhi but he speaks of his dedication to the training. In the end he brings the nymph to meet the Buddha.		
<b>(Māra) Samiddhi Sutta</b>	S 4.22/1:119 f	SD 36.11.
Māra, attempting to frighten Samiddhi, makes a fearsomely loud sound. After consulting the Buddha, Samiddhi courageously stands up to Māra who at once vanishes.		
<b>(Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 1</b> or (Paṭhama) Māra,pañha Sutta or (Māra) Samiddhi Sutta 2: <sup>12</sup>	S 35.65/4:38 f	SD 61.27a.
The Buddha tells him that Māra is the 6 sense-bases.		
<b>(Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 2</b> or Samiddhi Satta,pañha Sutta	S 35.66/4:39	SD 61.27b.
The Buddha tells him that a “being” is the 6 sense-bases.		
<b>(Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 3</b> or Samiddhi Dukkha,pañha Sutta	S 35.67/4:39	SD 61.27c.
The Buddha tells him that suffering is the 6 sense-bases.		
<b>Samiddhi Sutta 4</b> or Catuttha Samiddhi S 4 or Samiddhi Loka Pañha	S 35.68/4:39 f	SD 20.11.
The Buddha tells Samiddhi that the “world” is the 6 sense-bases.		
<b>(Tika) Samiddha Sutta</b> (Be Se; Ee <i>Paviṭṭha Sutta</i> )	A 3.21/1:118 f	SD 80.21
Sariputta, Mahā Koṭṭhita and Samiddha (or Paviṭṭha) on which is the best: the faith-liberated, the body-witness or the view-attainer.		
<b>(Navaka) Samiddhi Sutta</b>	A 9.14/4:385 f	SD 57.20a.
Sāriputta teaches him on intentional thought ( <i>saṅkappa, vitakka</i> ).		

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<sup>11</sup> M 136/3:207 (SD 4.16). On Samiddhi’s meeting with a past buddha, and suttas related to him, see SD 21.4 (1.2).

<sup>12</sup> Related suttas are **(Rādha) Māra S** (S 23.11), and **Māra, dhamma S** (S 23.12) [SD 61a (2.3.0.4)].

## SD 61.27a (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 1

The First (Saḷāyatana) Discourse to Samiddhi

S 35.65/4:38 f

Be (**Paṭhama**) Ce **Māra,paṇha Sutta**, the (First) Discourse on the Māra Question  
or, (**Māra**) **Samiddhi Sutta 2** The Second (Māra) Discourse to Samiddhi<sup>13</sup>

Theme: Māra is the 6 sense-bases

**1** At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in the squirrels' feeding-ground in the bamboo grove outside Rājagaha.

**2** Then the venerable Samiddhi approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him and sat down at one side.

Sitting at one side, the venerable Samiddhi said to him:<sup>14</sup>

**3** "Bhante, it is said, '**Māra, Māra!**' (*māro māro ti*)

In what way, bhante, might there be Māra or a definition of Mara?"<sup>15</sup>

### WHERE MĀRA EXISTS

- 4** "(1) Where there is **the eye**, Samiddhi,  
Where there are forms, **[39] eye-consciousness**, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness,  
there Māra exists or the definition of Māra.
- 5** (2) Where there is **the ear**,  
where there are sounds, ear-consciousness, things to be cognized by ear-consciousness,  
*there Māra exists or the definition of Māra.*
- 6** (3) Where there is **the nose**,  
where there are smells, nose-consciousness, things to be cognized by nose-consciousness,  
*there Māra exists or the definition of Māra.*
- 7** (4) Where there is **the tongue**,  
where there are tastes, tongue-consciousness, things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness,  
*there Māra exists or the definition of Māra.*
- 8** (5) Where there is **the body**,  
where there are touches, body-consciousness, things to be cognized by body-consciousness,  
*there Māra exists or the definition of Māra.*
- 9** (6) Where there is **the mind**,  
where there are mental states, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind consciousness,  
*there Mara exists or the definition of Māra.*

### WHERE MĀRA IS NOT

- 10** (1) Where there is **no eye**, Samiddhi, *no forms, no eye-consciousness,*  
*no things to be cognized by eye-consciousness,*  
there Māra does *not* exist nor any definition of Māra.
- 11** (2) Where there is **no ear**, *no sounds, no ear-consciousness,*  
*no things to be cognized by ear-consciousness,*  
*there Māra does not exist nor any definition of Māra.*

<sup>13</sup> (**Māra**) **Samiddhi S 1** is S 4.22 (SD 36.11).

<sup>14</sup> See S 1.20/1:8-12 (SD 21.4).

<sup>15</sup> *Māro vā assa māra,paññatti vā.* Comy: By "Māra" he asks about death (*maraṇa*); "the definition of Māra," ie, "Māra" is the defining by assigning a name, *māro ti paññatta, nāma, dheyyarā* (SA 2:367,19-22).

- 12** (3) Where there is **no nose**, *no* smells, *no* nose-consciousness,  
*no* things to be cognized by nose-consciousness,  
*there Māra does not exist nor any definition of Māra.*
- 13** (4) Where there is **no tongue**, *no* tastes, *no* tongue-consciousness,  
*no* things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness,  
*there Māra does not exist nor any definition of Māra.*
- 14** (5) Where there is **no body**, *no* touches, *no* body-consciousness,  
*no* things to be cognized by body-consciousness,  
*there Māra does not exist nor any definition of Māra.*
- 15** (6) Where there is **no mind**, *no* mental states, *no* mind-consciousness,  
*no* things to be cognized by mind-consciousness,  
*there Mara does not exist nor any definition of Māra.”*

— evaṃ —



## SD 61.27b (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 2

The Second (Saḷāyatana) Discourse to Samiddhi

S 35.66/4:39

or, **Samiddhi Satta,pañha Sutta**, the Samiddhi Discourse on Being

Theme: A being is the 6 sense-bases

### 3 A “being” is the 6 sense-bases

**3.0** In this section, I have put together very concisely some notes from the suttas, Commentaries and my own observations to initiate some thoughts and discussion on the definition and nature of “being” (*satta*), both as conscious existence and as a sentient individual.

#### **3.1 DEFINITION OF “BEING”**

##### **3.1.1 Beings as *satta***

**3.1.1.1** The Buddha is recorded in **the (Rādha) Satta Sutta** (S 23.2) as defining “being” as follows:

“Whenever there is any desire, any lust, any delight, any craving,  
for **form ... , feeling ... , perception ... , formations ... , consciousness,**  
then, therein one is stuck, entangled—therefore, one is called a ‘being’.”

S 23.2/3:189 f (SD 52/2e)

Echoing this teaching, **the Visuddhi,magga** says:

Beings (*satta*) are so called because they are stuck to (*satta*), entangled in (*visatta*) lustful greed for the aggregates, beginning with form; thus they are beings.

***Sattā ti rūp’ādisu khandhesu chanda,rāgena sattā visattā ti sattā.*** (Vism 9.53/310)

How the aggregates cause craving in us will be discussed below [1.2.1].

**3.1.1.2** Not all beings have the 5 aggregates. According to the Abhidhamma and Commentaries, the existence in sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*) (in which we live) and the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*)—where all the 5 aggregates of existence (*pañca-k,khandha*) are found are called “**5-constituent existence**” (*pañca,-vokāra*).<sup>16</sup> Form (*rūpa*) is not found in the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*), which only has 4-constituent existence (*catu,vokāra bhava*), that is, only the 4 mental aggregates—feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.

Then there is **the single-constituent existence** (*eka,vokāra bhava*), found only among the non-percipient beings (*asañña,sattā*). Only the form aggregate is found here. By our standards, these beings are not alive, but the moment a thought arises in any of them that being falls from that state and is reborn. The non-percipient beings exist in the mundane 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana state with their lives in hibernation for 500 aeons. In other words, the life-force exists but is not active like ours.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Kvu 261; Vbh 137; Tikap 32, 36 f; Vism 572; KhpA 245; SnA 19, 158. The term **vokāra** is used in this sense only in the Abhidhamma, and is almost syn with *vikāra* (4) (PED), and in the **Yamaka** with *khandha* (eg *pañca,vokāra, catu,vokāra*, etc). See BDict: *vokāra* (App).

<sup>17</sup> For a diagram of the 31 planes (incl that of the non-percipient beings) and other details, see SD 1.7 (App) or DEB appendix.

### 3.1.2 Beings as *pāna*

**3.1.2.1** In the very first of the 5 precepts (the one against killing), killing (*paṇātipāta*) is described as follows:

As to **killing living things**,<sup>18</sup> there is here a “breathing thing” (*pāṇa*; Skt *prāṇa*).<sup>19</sup> It is an aggregate-continuity involving a life-faculty, or it is a being defined in that same connection. When there is the mind (intention) to kill such a breathing thing someone, recognizing it as a breathing thing, kills it by way of either the body-door or the speech-door, causing the active process of severing the life-faculty.

*Pāṇātipāto ti ettha tava pāṇo it jīvit’indriya,paṭibaddhā khandha,santati taṃ vā upādāya paññatto satto, tasmim’ pana pāṇe pāṇa,saññīno tassa jīvit’indriyūpaccheda,upakkama,samuṭ-  
ṭhāpikā kāya,vācī,dvārānaṃ aññatara,dvāra-p,pavattā vadhaka,cetanā pānātipāto.*

(KhpA 26,1-6)

**3.1.2.2** Technically, **the 5 conditions (*sambhāra*) for killing** are:<sup>20</sup>

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| (1) there is a living being;  | object     |
| (2) we know that it is a living being (it breathes);  | perception |
| (3) we have the intention to kill it;   | intention  |
| (4) we make the effort to stop its breathing process either by our own act; or<br>by getting it done vicariously; and | effort     |
| (5) the being dies as a result.   | result     |

Constituent (1) refers to a living being as defined in 3.1.2.3.

Constituent (2) is a reasonable awareness (understanding) of the intended victim. However, even when we kill the wrong person, the karma of killing is still complete—the fact remains that we have killed a living being.

Constituent (3) is the unwholesome intention, that is, it is rooted in greed, hate or delusion.

Constituent (4) refers to the effort to kill, which may be made by oneself, or by instructing another, or through some devious means that brings about the death of the being. It also includes non-action, such as when we are aware that by not warning someone of a danger would bring his death.

**3.1.2.3** The term “**living beings**” does not include plants, bacteria and microorganisms in general. They are generally regarded as being “**single-facultied life-form**” (*ek’indriya jīva*),<sup>21</sup> Plants, for example, are understood to have only a sense of “touch.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is not included in the karmic constituents of killing. However, there are Vinaya rules which forbid monastics from polluting (with waste) or harming plant-life or the environment, and from digging the earth for any reason.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See also DA 1:69,22, 71,18, 72 (DhsA 98).

<sup>19</sup> See Vism 9.54/310.

<sup>20</sup> These nn on killing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (1). For technical details, see comy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pār 3 = V 3:68-86).

<sup>21</sup> V 1:137 f 3:156 4:34 = SnA 1:3 f = DhA 3:302 4:296.

<sup>22</sup> In modern botany, this includes characteristics such as taxis, a locomotor response towards or away from an external stimulus by a motile (and usually simple) organism. In other words, plants can only respond to external stimuli (presence and changes), constantly adapting themselves to their environment by way of 5 plant tropisms: phototropism (light), thigmotropism (touch), gravitropism (gravity), hydrotropism (water) and thermotropism (heat), in predictable ways.

<sup>23</sup> For further details, see SD 10.16 (4.4.1).

**3.1.2.4** The term *pañca,vokāra bhava* (five-constituent existence) is a commentarial term for the kind of existence or being where all the 5 aggregates—*form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—are present in some form working together to constitute a “conscious body” [1.3]. This includes sense-world existence (*kāma,bhava*) and form existence (*rūpa,bhava*) except for the non-percipient beings, who only exist as form aggregate (in a kind of hibernated state) [3.1.1.2].

### **3.1.3 Breathing, living and self-knowing**

**3.1.3.1** Basically, the Commentaries agree that “the breath (*pāṇa*) is life (*pāṇa*),” to live is to breathe (*pāṇati*) [5.2.1]. The Commentary on the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta (Khp 9) is helpful here, explaining the term “beings” (*sattā*) as follows:

Breathing things (*pāṇa*) are themselves beings (*bhūta*), thus they are breathing beings (*pāṇa,bhūta*); or alternatively, **they breathe** (*pāṇanti*), thus they are breathing things (*pāṇa*), a term that includes those beings of **the 5-constituent existence** (*pañca,vokāra bhava*) [5.2.1], which are bound up with **in-breath and out-breath**; and then they are [exist] (*bhavanti*), thus they are **beings** (*bhūta*).<sup>24</sup> This includes one-constituent and 4-constituent beings.

(KhpA 245,11-14)

“**They breathe**” (*pāṇanti*) seems to be the only verb for “to breathe” in the early Buddhist texts and Commentaries. We can of course deduce the singular form *pāṇati*, “one breathes.” More often, the texts speak of “breathing in, breathing out” (*assasati passasati*), from which we form the nouns *āṇa + apāṇa* for the in-breath and the out-breath respectively;<sup>25</sup> hence, the compound *āṇāpāṇā,sati*, “the mindfulness of the in- and out-breaths,” in the name of M 118.<sup>26</sup>

**3.1.3.2 The Cūḷa,vedalla Sutta** (M 44) records a very interesting teaching on the nature of the breath given by the nun Dhamma,dinnā, thus:

The in-and-out breaths,	are bodily formation. <sup>27</sup>
Thinking and pondering	are verbal formation. <sup>28</sup>
Perception and feeling	are thought formation. <sup>29</sup>

The in-breathing and out-breathing ... are bodily; these are states bound up with *the body*.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, they are bodily formation.<sup>31</sup>

... having first thought and pondered [applied thought and sustained thought], one then breaks out into *speech*. Therefore, thinking and pondering are verbal formation.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Pres part of vb *bhavati*, “to be,”

<sup>25</sup> For details, see SD 7.13 (2.1).

<sup>26</sup> **Āṇāpāṇa,sati S** (M 117/3:77-88), SD 7.13.

<sup>27</sup> *Assāsa,passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāya,saṅkhāro*: note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See (2.4.1).

<sup>28</sup> *Vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhāro*: note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See SD 40a.9 (2.4.2).

<sup>29</sup> *Saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro*: note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See SD 40a.9 (2.4.3).

<sup>30</sup> “Bound up with ...” (*paṭibaddha*), ie, dependent upon or coexistent with. The implication is that breath, like, food, is inseparable from what we call “life.”

<sup>31</sup> *Assāsa,passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya,paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa,passāsā kāya,saṅkhāro*. See SD 7.13 (2): The breath.

<sup>32</sup> *Pubbe kho āvuso visākha vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācamṛm bhindatī. Tasmā vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhāro* (M 44,15/1:301), SD 40a.9.

Perception and feeling—these are mentally-connected states, bound up with the mind.  
Therefore, perception and feeling are thought formation.<sup>33</sup> (M 44,14/1:301), SD 40a.9

**3.1.3.3** The suttas regard **breathing** as a bodily or physical process in the sense of the body taking in air (oxygen) and giving out air (carbon dioxide). This process of oxidation—respiration as well as combustion—is how our body interacts with the environment, taking in wind (air), processing and producing water (sweat, etc), generating heat (combustion, digestion and decay). All this supports the functioning of the vital organs and bodily movements. Our breathing, then, keeps us connected with our environment (the 4 elements), feeding on and processing it.<sup>34</sup>

What keeps this vital process going is our **mind** or consciousness. This is no ordinary consciousness but a very fundamental one termed “**life-faculty**” (*jīvit’indriya*). We are “**alive**” because we have a functional body (the 5 physical senses) and the mind. We are mindful of sense-data (**the mind-base**, *man’-āyatana*) through the sense-faculties and the mind itself.<sup>35</sup> These are “raw data” that are immediately processed as “**dharmas**”—as feelings, perceptions and formations—as graphically shown in **Table 1.2.2** (SD 61.27a).

## 3.2 HOW THE AGGREGATES ARE “US”

### 3.2.1 How the aggregates create us

As sense-world beings, with the faculties of *sight, sound, smell, taste and touch* (assuming all of them are functional), we don’t merely *see, hear, smell, taste or touch*, but with each of these sensings, for example, when we see something, as a rule, we **feel** it, **perceive** it, and **react** to it; we are thus **conscious** of it as an experience. This is how the 5 aggregates work. We can outline these functions as follows:

- (1) **Form** (*rūpa*). The function of *the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind*, and their respective objects.
- (2) **Feeling** (*vedanā*). When we hear a voice or sound (for example), we at once judge it as being pleasant or unpleasant. Notice that this is, as a rule, an almost instinctive reaction. We do not have any control over it.
- (3) **Perception** (*saññā*). We then recognize the voice or sound often at once connecting it with a memory of it or something connected with it. Again, this usually happens instinctively or habitually often without any thinking.
- (4) **Formations** (*saṅkhārā*). When we associate (recognize) that pleasantness with a pleasant memory, we then desire to speak or associate with the person, or look at the object, buy it or take it, and so on. If, when we associate the unpleasantness with an unpleasant memory, we then *desire* to turn away or reject that person or object, even react with some negative emotion. When we have no memory to “colour” that vocal experience, we simply ignore it.
- (5) **Consciousness** (*viññāṇa*). All this is mentally engaging and feeding our consciousness:
  - when we *desire* the pleasant object, our formations are negatively fed with lust (*rāga*);
  - when we *reject* the unpleasant object with dislike, we feed the formations with repulsion (*paṭigha*);
  - when we *ignore* the “neutral,” we feed the formations with ignorance (*avijjā*).These negative roots come from our latent tendencies (*anusaya*).

<sup>33</sup> *Saññā ca vedanā ca cetasikā ete dhammā citta,paṭibaddhā. Tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro’ti.*

<sup>34</sup> What follows is a provisional and simplified explanation of an early Buddhist theory of knowledge for a better understanding of how feeling, emotions, etc, arise in us, and how we can manage them positively.

<sup>35</sup> Technically, the mind, besides processing sense-objects (experiences), also generates its own mind-objects (*ārammaṇa*, an Abhidhamma term).

### 3.2.2 How we can tame the aggregates

**3.2.2.1** The Buddha, with his awakening, realized that we may be the 5 aggregates but we need not be their slaves; we can master the aggregates. By not clinging to the aggregates, we free ourselves from the feeding the latent tendencies that chain us to the cycle of reactive being. Hence, the aggregates of the arhats are said to be “without clinging” (*anupādāna*);<sup>36</sup> hence, they are simply, “the 5 aggregates.”

The arhats (including the Buddha), too, have the 5 aggregates so long as they have a body (*rūpa*) and the mind (feeling, perception, formation and consciousness). Since the arhats have uprooted the 3 unwholesome roots of *greed, hate and delusion* and destroyed their latent tendencies, they do not create any new karma through the formations. Their actions are purely “functional,” not karma but *kiriya*, like the breath.

Since an arhat acts out of *charity, compassion and wisdom*, we can say these are good karma; but they have no need of any karma since they will not be propelled into any new rebirth. When their bodies finally cease to function, there is no more basis or footing for consciousness to manifest. Without consciousness, all the other aggregates cease to function. The arhat attains nirvana, time-free and death-free.

**3.2.2.2** Even though we may not be arhats (yet), we can learn to live with the aggregates without feeding the latent tendencies and preventing them from driving the formations to create bad karma. We keep up training ourselves by generating the opposite of the unwholesome roots, *greed, hate and delusion*, that is, **wholesome karma** (*kusala, kamma*): charity, lovingkindness and wisdom. For this reason, “**giving**” (*dāna*) is the first and foremost of Buddhist virtue and practice in the triad of “**giving, moral virtue and mental cultivation**” (*dāna sīla bhāvanā*).<sup>37</sup>

“By giving one is beloved” (*dadamāno piyo hoti*).<sup>38</sup> By “discriminate giving” (*viceyya, dāna*), that is, giving to the giftworthy (the needy and the virtuous) first, one gains great merit.<sup>39</sup> The greatest gift is the “**gift of the Dharma**” (*dhamma, dāna*) (Dh 354), the foremost of gifts.<sup>40</sup> This is the highest gift because we are giving more than what we *have*: we give what we are.

The Dharma gift is a teaching that inspires and empowers us to cultivate and liberate ourselves, a teaching that is given with joy so that we—both the giver and the receiver—are happy here and now, whether we are faith-inclined or wisdom-inclined. We give wisdom and happiness to others, too.<sup>41</sup> In that way, we also help to propagate and preserve the Buddha Dharma.

**3.2.2.3** By showing **love** (appreciating others as they are), one cultivates moral virtue, which is a strong basis for wholesome mental cultivation. Even if we are unable to cultivate dhyana or deep meditation, we will benefit from mindfulness training for a calm and clear mind. Hence, the most basic qualities we should cultivate to understand and wholesomely manage the 5 aggregates is to practise **giving, moral virtue and mental cultivation** (*dāna sīla bhāvanā*). The **Mā Puñña Bhāyī S** (It 22) calls this triad thus: (1) giving (*dāna*), (2) taming (*tama*) and (3) restraint (*saññama*).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> V 3:19,36.

<sup>37</sup> See (Iti) **Puñña, kiriya, vatthu S** (It 60/3.2.1/51 f), SD 22.17(2.1); (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Puñña, kiriya, vatthu S** (A 8.36), SD 22.17.

<sup>38</sup> **Dān’ānisaṃsa S** (A 5.35), SD 45.3.

<sup>39</sup> See **Sādhu S** (S 1.33), SD 22.10c; (**Dāna**) **Vaccha, gotta S** (A 3.57), SD 22.12 (2); **Āditta J** (J 424) SD 22.10a (1.3).

<sup>40</sup> See **SD 38.6** (1.2.4.3): The true individual, & **SD 38.4** (2.3): Three kinds of joy.

<sup>41</sup> See **Kim, dada S** (S 1.42), SD 2.9; **Paññā Bala S** (A 9.5,6(1)), SD 2.21.

<sup>42</sup> It 22/1.3.2/14-16 (SD 2.11b). While “restraint” (*saññāma*) refers to moral training, “taming” (*tama*) refers to mental cultivation.

In this way, we are *making self-effort in self-development*: this is **self-reliance**. By self-reliance is meant that we can and should cultivate our body, speech and mind for personal development. Let us look at a short remarkable sutta that speaks of the efficacy of self-effort.

## 4 Initiative and agency

### 4.1 ATTA, KĀRĪ SUTTA (A 6.38)

**4.1.1 The Atta, kārī Sutta** (A 6.38) is a classic “Dharma teaching for self-application” (*attûpāniyaka dhamma, pariyāya*), that is, we are capable of freely acting and causing to act, which also means that we are accountable for our own actions, since what we do affects others and can change our environment (that is, society and the world). In 4 simple human actions, the Buddha shows how we are capable of self-motivated actions or initiative, thus:

“How could one stepping forward, or one stepping back, say thus, ‘There is no action of one’s own; there is no action done by others?’”<sup>43</sup>

<b>The element of initiative</b> exists	<i>ārambha, dhātu:</i>	
(1) there is “ <b>the element of stepping away</b> ”	<i>nikkama, dhātu</i>	(an effort of endeavour).
(2) there is “ <b>the element of stepping forward</b> ”	<i>parakkama, dhātu</i>	(an effort of exertion).
(3) there is “ <b>the element of standing</b> ”	<i>ṭhāma, dhātu</i>	(an effort of continuity).
(4) there is “ <b>the element of stopping</b> ”	<i>ṭhiti, dhātu</i>	(an effort of duration).
(5) there is “ <b>the element of approaching</b> ”	<i>upakkama, dhātu</i>	(an effort of initiative).

All these action can be and are done by others, too.

(A 6.38/3:337 f). SD 7.6

The Aṅguttara Ancient Subcommentary (*porāṇa, ṭīkā*) adds that this is a teaching that one, *having applied to oneself, should apply to others*.<sup>44</sup> This teaching comprises the first 7 of the 10 courses of wholesome action (wholesome actions of body and speech), each practised in 3 ways: *by observing them oneself, by exhorting others to observe them, and by praising such actions*.

The purpose of the Sutta teaching is to show how such a “**personal teaching**” clearly refers to a spiritual lifestyle of keeping to a morally virtuous life that conduces to mindfulness and awareness so that we can cultivate wisdom. In this way, we are habitually acting wholesomely so that we will reach the path, that is, at least attain streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>45</sup>

### 4.1.2 Self and initiative

**4.1.2.1** If science speaks of “natural selection”<sup>46</sup> as a defining principle of species evolution, we can speak of **human evolution** as that of keeping ourselves *bodily and mentally fit*, or in Buddhist terms,

<sup>43</sup> *Mā’ham brāhmaṇa evaṃ, vādī evaṃ, diṭṭhi adassaṃ vā assosiṃ vā kathaṃ hi nāma sayāṃ abhikkamanto sayāṃ paṭikkamanto evaṃ vakkhati n’atthi atta, kāro n’atthi para, kāro ti.* This is Makkhali Gosāla’s wrong view, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,20/1:53 f) & **Karota S** (S 24.6/3:208 f).

<sup>44</sup> AAT:Be 3:108, AAT:Se 1.4.8-11.

<sup>45</sup> **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,5/5:353), SD 1.5.

<sup>46</sup> Natural selection (a term popularized by Charles Darwin & Alfred Russel Wallace in their theory of evolution, 1858) is a key mechanism of evolution. Organisms that are more adapted to their environment are more likely to survive and pass on the genes that aided their success. This process causes species to change and diverge over



cultivating moral virtue (*sīla*) and mental development (*samādhi*) for the attaining of wisdom (*paññā*). In simple terms, there should be a predominance of social harmony to promote individual growth and mental development. **Life** then provides us with a body that we should respect (take it for what it is, frail and impermanent) and nurture with proper food and conditions, so that we can grow in mental calm and clarity to examine and understand the true nature of *humanity, life and the world*.

**4.1.2.2** We thus respect **life** by keeping to the precepts and living it morally, not only because life is frail and impermanent, but because it is unique and our only means to understanding ourself and the world. In short, this is **the meaning of life**: it is filled with challenges, natural, personal and social, that we need to also understand the conditions for these challenges—which can be termed “suffering”—which we will examine in SD 61.27c.

It suffices here to say that having understood the meaning of life, we are better equipped to work with **the purpose of life**. That purpose surely must begin with our learning how to overcome those challenges so that we may overcome suffering and enjoy happiness, or at least the fruits of satiety and peace from such labours. Having cultivated our body and speech, we should then be better prepared for cultivating the mind so that we are fully free from any such suffering wherever possible. The Buddha has proven to us that this is possible by way of *self-awakening*.

## 4.2 KARMA AND AGENCY

### 4.2.1 A common karma

The early Buddhist teaching on **karma** (*P kamma*) is basically that since we have a shapable body (along with its communicability) and a tamable mind (that is capable of evolving in knowing and being), our actions (through body, speech and mind) can subtly yet profoundly affect others, society and nature. Hence, we must be in wholesome control of all our actions since their goodness or badness also affects others in similar ways. In other words, we are all extensions of one another, interlinked by our karma.

### 4.2.2 Acting on others and acting together

**4.2.2.1** Although we seem to be easily influenced by the actions of others, the reality is that we choose who would influence us in what way. We can be drawn to others *by love* or *by lust*, or be repelled by others *by hate* or *by fear*; but it is **delusion** that holds us in a ding-dong swing in how we relate to others by like or dislike.

When we see and understand the causes and effects in our actions and those of others, we see the wisdom of dependent arising. Our actions affect others, as theirs affect us. As our delusion sublimates into understanding and matures into wisdom, we are able to relate to others in a more unconditional and all-embracing way, allowing the best in us to be wedded into greater social maturity and openness rooted in individual genius of truth and beauty.

**4.2.2.2** One of the great delusions that shaped the West was **Christianity and Greek individualism**. There was a time when Christianity seemed to triumph when it parasited on that individualism and pretended to be the social wisdom of civilization. We are familiar with the centuries of internecine religious wars that destroyed much of Europe’s human history until she was liberated and enlightened by innovative and intuitive thinkers with courage and ken enough to debunk the God-idea and emasculate the Church.

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time. This “selection” is a non-conscious process that occurs randomly, unlike mental evolution which needs cultivation (*bhāvanā*).

In **Asia**, wherever religion predominates, it was often a tool for projecting the delusion of the few at the cost of both the individual and the masses. Hence, we mostly saw insect-like swarms at religious events. Where we saw those in religious postures, it was almost never for any kind of awakening or advance of society, but rather to feed off the wizened hands of ingenuous believers. On an organized level, even **Buddhism** had succeeded in becoming some kind of multinational corporation with local branches with only one goal: immediate palpable benefits in the name of some higher good of the world. The charismatic guru of means had effectively displaced the Buddha.<sup>47</sup>

**4.2.2.3** Asian cultures tended to base itself on **hierarchy**, especially emulating the potential of family relations. Thus, the Chinese emperor was regarded as the “Son of Heaven” and Father of all mankind. Mainly due to the rather rigid nature of its logographic language,<sup>48</sup> the premodern Chinese had great difficulty in producing music, art, science or learning as sophisticated as those in the West.<sup>49</sup> Up to colonial times, imperial China viewed herself as the centre of the world and all else was “barbarian.” In the end, the barbarians won and the Chinese empire collapsed.<sup>50</sup>

The social strength of the East seemed to be in its **collectivism**—basically rooted in the respect for status and seniority. Hence, most Orientals were quick to imitate others, especially the West, when the goodness and holiness were seen as palpable and measurable. A collectivist society was often one that was a pyramid of power and privileges. Most of society’s hard workers happily accepted their position as the foundation of this hierarchy so long as they could have food in their hands and a family under a roof.

#### **4.2.3 Collective good and individual awakening**

In both the West and the East, we can see **culture and music** often playing the role of social interaction and integrity. Early Buddhism however replaced the clarion call of music for social harmony with the peaceful practice of moral virtue, rooted in the 5 precepts. The task of wise and diligent Buddhist teachers is to encourage others to *live* the moral life, not merely to *ritualize* it, which only pretends to make one look good; the purpose of the moral life is to be good.

Hence, the early Buddhist notion of moral virtue is to be the agent of **the collective harmony** in society. This common peace is, in turn, for nurturing and enriching **individual growth and genius** for social betterment, and at the same time to allow the individual to rise above the sense-based crowd and unthinking society for a radiant mind of pure calm and clarity leading to spiritual freedom and awakening of the true individual.

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<sup>47</sup> For the examples and comments of such a priest on wealth and worldliness in our times, see SD 31.12 (3.4.4).

<sup>48</sup> In a written language, a **logogram** (from Ancient Greek *logos*, “word,” and *gramma* “that which is drawn or written”), also logograph or lexigraph, is a written character that represents a semantic or meaningful component of a language, such as a word or morpheme (smallest meaningful component of a language). Chinese developed independently over 3000 years, and is still evolving today with language reforms (such as syllabification and simplification of its characters).

<sup>49</sup> Chinese music, on its own, remained with mostly percussion and loudness for drawing and exciting the crowd rather than soothing it. Indian music however managed to invent wind instruments that rival, even outshine, the violin and piano.

<sup>50</sup> Chinese history of course had its great moments. The Eastern Han dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE; 9–23 Xīn; 25–220 CE) was one of the most prolific eras of science and technology in ancient China, notably the historic invention of paper-making by Cai Lun (c50/62–121), and the numerous scientific and mathematical contributions by the famous polymath Zhang Heng (78–139).



## 61.27b

**(Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 2**

The Second (Saḷāyatana) Discourse to Samiddhi

S 35.66/4:39

or, **Samiddhi Satta,pañha Sutta** The 7 Questions to Samiddhi Discourse

Theme: A being as one with the 6 sense-bases

1 At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in the squirrels' feeding-ground in the bamboo grove outside Rājagaha.

2 Then the venerable Samiddhi approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him and sat down at one side.

Sitting at one side, the venerable Samiddhi said to him:

3 "Bhante, it is said, '**A being, a being!**' (*satto satto ti*)

In what way, bhante, might there be 'being' or a definition of 'being'?"<sup>51</sup>

WHERE 'A BEING' EXISTS

- 4 "(1) Where there is **the eye**, Samiddhi,  
where there are forms, eye-consciousness, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness,  
there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'
- 5 (2) Where there is **the ear**,  
where there are sounds, ear-consciousness, things to be cognized by ear-consciousness,  
*there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'*
- 6 (3) Where there is **the nose**,  
where there are smells, nose-consciousness, things to be cognized by nose-consciousness,  
*there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'*
- 7 (4) Where there is **the tongue**,  
where there are tastes, tongue-consciousness, things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness,  
*there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'*
- 8 (5) Where there is **the body**,  
where there are touches, body-consciousness, things to be cognized by body-consciousness,  
*there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'*
- 9 (6) Where there is **the mind**,  
where there are mental states, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind consciousness,  
*there 'a being' exists or the definition of 'a being.'*

WHERE 'A BEING' IS NOT

- 10 (1) Where there is **no eye**, Samiddhi,  
*no forms, no eye-consciousness, no things to be cognized by eye-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any definition of 'a being.'*
- 11 (2) Where there is **no ear**,  
*no sounds, no ear-consciousness, no things to be cognized by ear-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any definition of 'a being.'*
- 12 (3) Where there is **no nose**,  
*no smells, no nose-consciousness, no things to be cognized by nose-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any definition of 'a being.'*

<sup>51</sup> *Satto vā assa satto,paññatti vā*. See S 35.65,3 (SD 61.27a) n.

- 13** (4) Where there is **no tongue**,  
*no tastes, no tongue-consciousness, no things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any definition of 'a being.'*
- 14** (5) Where there is **no body**,  
*no touches, no body-consciousness, no things to be cognized by body-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any definition of 'a being.'*
- 15** (6) Where there is **no mind**,  
*no mental states, no mind-consciousness, no things to be cognized by mind-consciousness,  
there 'a being' does not exist nor any description of 'a being'."*

— evaṃ —

## SD 61.27c

**(Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 3**

The Third (Saḷāyatana) Discourse to Samiddhi

S 35.67/4:39

or, **Samiddhi Dukkha,pañha Sutta**, the Samiddhi Discourse on Suffering

Theme: Suffering is the 6 sense-bases

**5 “Suffering” and the 3 worlds****5.1 THE SENSE-WORLD (KĀMA,LOKA)****5.1.1 Definition of suffering (dukkha)**

The **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11) gives this well-known definition of suffering (dukkha) along with the 3 groups of suffering given in **the (Sāriputta) Dukkha Sutta** (S 38.14) in the far right-hand column:

<u>the 8 sufferings</u>	<u>the 3 groups of suffering</u>
(1) birth is suffering,	} physical suffering ( <i>dukkha,dukkha</i> )
(2) decay [old age] is suffering, [ ] [disease is suffering,] <sup>52</sup>	
(3) death is suffering,	
(4) grief, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair are suffering, <sup>53</sup>	
(5) to be with the unpleasant is suffering, <sup>54</sup>	} suffering due to change ( <i>vipariṇāma,dukkha</i> )
(6) to be without the pleasant is suffering, <sup>55</sup>	
(7) not to get what one desires is suffering,	} suffering that is the formations ( <i>saṅkhāra,dukkha</i> )
(8) —in short, <u>the 5 aggregates of clinging</u> <sup>56</sup> are suffering	
	(S 56.11,5) SD 1.1; (S 38.14,3.2 (SD 1.1(4.1)))

The traditional definition of **dukkha** lists the “8 sufferings” as numbered above; the Vinaya and Saṃyutta definitions add a 9<sup>th</sup> item—that “disease is suffering”—which is otherwise subsumed under “decay is suffering.” **The (Sāriputta) Dukkha Sutta** (S 38.14) conveniently groups these sufferings into 3 categories, as shown above.

**5.1.2 The 8 sufferings**

**5.1.2.1** These 8 kinds of suffering characterize sense-world existence; all the beings there somehow experience any of these sufferings at one time or other. Since sense-world beings have a physical body, their births take some time to gestate, and mother and child go through a lot of physical pain during

<sup>52</sup> Only in the Vinaya & Saṃyutta versions; not mentioned in Comys.

<sup>53</sup> Found in most MSS but not in Be and Ce.

<sup>54</sup> “The unpleasant,” *appiya*, also tr “what one loves not.”

<sup>55</sup> “The loved,” *piya*, also tr “what one loves.”

<sup>56</sup> *Pañc’upadāna-k,khandha*, viz, form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness (S 3:47; Vbh 1) & SD 17. What is briefly mentioned here is elaborated in the 2nd discourse, **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59), SD 1.2.

child-birth. From the moment of birth, decay starts. For about the first half of human life, for example, we perceive our decaying process as “growth” or “maturing.” After the second half of human life, we speak of the decaying process as “aging.” But there is only one real process: all life in the sense-world **decay** from the moment of birth.

We need proper care from other humans; the child depends on them to provide food, clothing, shelter, health and safety. Even then, we (even as children) still fall sick, and there are those who die before old age sets in. Even when humans live up to 100 years or a little more, they will still die on account of the failure of their physical body to function properly.

**5.1.2.2** The beings of the **subhuman planes**—animals, pretas and hell-beings—not only greatly differ from us in form, habits and characteristics, but they also experience endless forms of sufferings and lacks in their daily lives. Animals often kill and devour one other; pretas feel incessant hunger never able to satiate themselves; hell-beings are ceaselessly engaged in violence and suffering amongst themselves.

Humans, endowed with the 5 physical senses, experience various forms of suffering and dissatisfaction in terms of *seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching*. However, when we understand the nature of our minds and learn from our experiences, we will suffer less and gain intelligence and technology which alleviate us from our physical sufferings by providing us with safety, convenience and comfort.

Even then, we still suffer mental pains because of our *greed, hatred, delusion and fear*, as a result of which we conflict with others and our ambience. We suffer when we are *with the unpleasant, or without the pleasant*, or when we *do not get what we desire*, or when we *lose what we love or desire*. For any of these reasons, we suffer *grief, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair*.

**5.1.2.3** The Buddha explains **why** we suffer; that is because we have craving (*taṇhā*). We are drawn to what we desire, such as imagining we can have eternal life or some Eternal Being comforting us; by such beliefs, we suffer hatred against those who do not share our beliefs or who differ from us. We delude ourselves by imagining ourselves to be a favoured person, group or race, and view others as lesser than us in birth, status, dignity and other ways. We thus exist rooted in *greed, hatred, delusion and fear*.<sup>57</sup>

The Buddha explains **how** we suffer; because we cling to what we sense (see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think). We are often deluded by what we experience seeing them through false memories of our past and uncertainties of our present. They arouse feelings shaped by greed, hatred and delusion, by which we then speak and act with ill will and violence towards others. We then work to label them as our “enemies” so that we can destroy and purge them from our consciousness, our mental history.

In short, these 5 aggregates: forms, feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness—that we cling to are suffering.

## 5.2 THE FORM-WORLD (RŪPA,LOKA)

### 5.2.1 The 5-constituent existence and the sense-bases

**5.2.1.1** Beings of the form-world (*rūpa,loka*), that is, the form-dhyana realms of the brahmas, like the beings of the sense-world and its devas, have a “**5-constituent existence**” (*pañca,vokāra*), that is, they are endowed with *form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness* [1.2.2]. The key difference is

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<sup>57</sup> While greed, hatred and delusion form the 3 unwholesome roots, these 4, desire (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*) and fear (*bhaya*) form the **biases** (*agati*): **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n; called the “4 motives” (*thāna*) in **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

that their **form** (*rūpa*) is of pure light (*ābhā*), not grossly mattered (heavy with the earth-element) like those of humans and the physical sense-world.<sup>58</sup>

**The devas of the sense-world**—the heavens of the 4 great kings, of the 33, of Yāma, of Tusita, of those who delight in creation, and of those who lord over the creation of others—have a form that is much more refined than that of humans (basically invisible to humans) but less refined than the bodies of the form-world brahmas. These devas' lifespans range from 500 celestial years to 16,000 celestial years.<sup>59</sup>

**5.2.1.2 The form brahmas** can, if they wish to, manifest themselves as beings visible to the lower worlds. So long as these brahmas remain in their respective dhyanas (the 4 form-dhyanas), they are safe and happy. When they do emerge from the dhyanic state (if they choose to), then Māra has access even to them.<sup>60</sup> The lifespans of the form brahmas are astronomically longer than even those of the sense-world devas, ranging from ¼ of an aeon to 16,000 aeons. (An aeon (*kappa*) is a world-cycle.)

The mental aggregates—feelings, perception, formations and consciousness—of the form brahmas are very much more subtle and wholesome than even those of the sense-world devas. However, without awakening, even these form brahmas tend to have self-views and cling to things, that is, until their lifespans end and they fall (*cavati*) from their heavens for some lower realms.

### 5.3 THE FORMLESS WORLD (*ARŪPA,LOKA*)

**5.3.1** The brahmas of **the formless world** populate the 4 highest realms of the universe, that is, the 4 formless dhyana realms in some kind of deep meditative state—unless they wish to intermingle with worthy human affairs such as during the advent of the Buddha. They will then assume some kind of physical form so that the earth will be able to support their form. Their lifespans are incredibly long, ranging from 20,000 aeons to 84,000 aeons.

Now, as we have noted, the form brahmas are characterized by pure light [5.2.1.1]. In other words, the physical elements of these brahmas are in their subtlest forms, and **fire** or heat (*tejo*) predominates in their being. While in the form brahmas, they often manifest as *radiant light*, in the formless brahmas they exist in the form of **pure energy**, that is, in the subtlest *active* form of the fire element.

This is a very simplified way of explaining the nature of the very advanced life-forms in our sentient universe.

**5.3.2** How do the aggregates—that is, the mental aggregates—exist in the brahmas of the formless world? In very subtle form, but they exist nevertheless. We can imagine these formless brahma states to be like some extended existential vacations from the sufferings of samsara. The lifespans of such high-end brahmas may be astronomical, but their aeons are still numbered. The time will come with the ending of the world-period when these brahmas, too, will fall from their divine state for some less happy state.

Hence, devas are never said to “die” (*marati*); devas and brahmas must face their **fall** (*cavati*) even from the highest heavens when their time is nigh. That which exists does so in space-time; hence, *what-ever exists must die*; this is the cost of existence.

<sup>58</sup> On the nature of the 4 primary elements, see SD 17.2a (5).

<sup>59</sup> The lifespans of these devas follow the Vibhaṅga scheme: see SD 54.3a (2.2.1.1). See also SD 1.7 (App). On the deaths of devas, see **Pañca Pubba,nimitta S** (It 83), SD 23.8a(1.2).

<sup>60</sup> See SD 61.21 (3.3.3.2).

## 5.4 THE ARHAT: AGGREGATES WITHOUT CLINGING

### 5.4.1 The time-free teaching

One of the 6 virtues of the Buddha Dharma is that it is **timeless** (*akālika*). It is explained as “having nothing to do with time.” In **the (Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.120), the monk Samiddhi describes the Dharma as being “visible right here, immediate [time-free], inviting us to come and see, accessible, to be personally known by the wise.”<sup>61</sup> [2.1.1.1]. The phrase “immediate [time-free]” in Pali is *ākālika*, literally “not time,” that is, “having nothing to do with time.”

*Akālika* is thus descriptive of nirvana, or more correctly, what nirvana is not: nirvana has nothing to do with time. It is time-free. What is time-free is beyond birth and death; nirvana is death-free. The arhat who has attained nirvana is not reborn, and is thus death-free.

### 5.4.2 Aggregates without clinging

**5.4.2.1** Even while still living, **the arhat** has the 5 aggregates but since he has no defilements, he does not cling to any of them; hence, his aggregates (body and mind) are simply called “the 5 aggregates” that is, they are clinging-free. So long as his form (*rūpa*) is intact, his body remains functional supported by almsfood and self-care. Feelings about the pleasant and the unpleasant arise in him, but he does not perceive them beyond what they really are (impermanent states), neither liking nor disliking them [1.4.2.2]. His formations are wholesome functional states, basically, rooted in *charity, compassion and wisdom*; hence, he also notices *neutral* states, and are morally virtuous by nature.<sup>62</sup> In terms of spiritual training, the arhat has nothing more to do.<sup>63</sup> He is fully awakened just like the Buddha, and has no need of further becoming a buddha.<sup>64</sup>

**5.4.2.2** Since an arhat has a physical body, he senses things and feels temperature, experiences beauty in nature, and so on, but has no unwholesome emotions or karma at all.<sup>65</sup> An arhat does not perceive as the unawakened do; his **perceptions** are in the form of meditations. **The Paṭisambhidā, magga** explains the arhat’s 5 modes of perception thus.<sup>66</sup>

In the case of an agreeable object (eg as sensually attractive person), one either pervades it with the thought of foulness or regards it as impermanent.

In the case of a disagreeable object (eg a hostile person), one either pervades it with lovingkindness or regards it as physical elements.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Sandiṭṭhiko ... akālika ehi, passiko opanayiko paccattam veditabbo viññūhī ti* (S 1.20,5+13), SD 21.4. In **(Sandiṭṭhika) Sambahula S** (S 4.21), Māra (in the form of a venerable brahmin) offers a similar advice to a group of young monks (to enjoy their youth before the spiritual life), they reply in identical words as Samiddhi’s (S 4.21/1:117 f), SD 103.7. See Intro (2.1).

<sup>62</sup> See **Samaṇa,maṇḍika S** (M 78) SD 18.9; **Beyond good and evil**, SD 18.7.

<sup>63</sup> **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14; SD 15.10a (1.1.1).

<sup>64</sup> **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,21.6), SD 10.13; highest goal, **Mahānidāna S** (M 15,36.3), SD 5.17; SD 30.8 (6.4.4).

<sup>65</sup> On how arhats feel, see SD 91.19 (forthcoming).

<sup>66</sup> Here arranged according to the Aṅguttara listing. See **Metta, sahaḡata S** (S 46.54,12-15/5:119) + SD 10.11(5). See also **Ti, kaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144,2 + n), SD 2.12.

<sup>67</sup> “Elements,” *dhātu*. The analysis of the elements (*dhātu, vavatthāna*), the last of the 40 traditional meditation methods, is described in great detail at *Vism* 11.27-119/347-371. The method of given in brief in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,6/2:294 f) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,12/1:57 f), and in detail in **Mahā Hatthi, padūpamā S** (M 28,6-28/1:185-191), **Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,8-17/1:421-425) and **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,13-18/3:240-243).

One pervades both agreeable and disagreeable objects with the thought of foulness or regards them as impermanent; thus one perceives both as repulsive.

One pervades both disagreeable and agreeable objects with lovingkindness or regards them as physical elements; thus one perceives both as unrepulsive.

Avoiding both disagreeable and agreeable, objects, having seen a form with the eyes, heard a sound with the ears, smelt smells with the nose, tasted tastes with the tongue, sensed a touch with the body, cognized a mind-object with the mind, one is neither glad nor sad, but abides in equanimity towards that, mindful and clearly aware.

(Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f; SA 3:171 f)

Perception	Method	Reflection
(1) Lust-arousing object: see it as <i>repulsive</i>	Perception of foulness, or of impermanence	“May I <u>not lust</u> for a <i>pleasant</i> object”
(2) Hate-arousing object: see it as <i>unrepulsive</i>	Lovingkindness, or see the body as being comprised of the 4 elements	“May I <u>not hate</u> an <i>unpleasant</i> object”
(3) An object arousing both lust and hate: see it as <i>repulsive</i>	Perception of foulness, or of impermanence	“May I <u>not lust</u> for something <i>pleasant</i> nor <u>hate</u> something <i>unpleasant</i> ”
(4) An object arousing both hate and lust: see it as <i>unrepulsive</i>	Lovingkindness, or the 4 elements	“May I <u>not hate</u> something <i>unpleasant</i> nor <u>lust</u> for something <i>pleasant</i> ”
(5) Seeing an object as arousing <i>neither lust nor hate</i>	Equanimity (avoiding lust, hate and delusion)	“May I <u>not lust</u> for the <i>pleasant</i> , <u>nor hate</u> something <i>unpleasant</i> , <u>nor ignore</u> something <i>neutral</i> ” <sup>68</sup>

**Table 5.4.2.2.** The 5 perceptions simplified

## 5.5 SUMMARY

Essentially, the arhat would first simply note whether the sense-object is:

- (1) lust-arousing, eg a sensual object (which would arouse lust in an unawakened mind), or
- (2) hate-arousing, eg a hostile person (who would arouse hate in an unawakened mind), or
- (3) arousing both lust and hate (which would arouse mixed feelings in an unawakened mind), or
- (4) arousing neither lust nor hate (which would bore or tire an unawakened person).

In the case of (1) the arhat would see it as being “repulsive” (*paṭikūla*), and either go into the perception of foulness or of impermanence.

In the case of (2), he would see it as “unrepulsive” (*appaṭikūla*), and cultivate lovingkindness or reflect on the body as being composed of the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, wind).

<sup>68</sup> See *Cūla Vedalla S* (M 44,24-25/1:303), SD 40a.9; *Pahāna S* (S 36.34/4:205 f), SD 31.3; *Anusaya*, SD 31.3 (3).

In the case of (3), he *could* (or choose to) see the object as being “repulsive,” and either go into the perception of foulness or of impermanence, as in (1).

Or, again, in the case of (4), he *could* (if he chooses to) see the object as being “unrepulsive,” and either cultivate lovingkindness or reflect on the body as being composed of the 4 elements, as in (1).

In the case of (5), the arhat cultivates equanimity, that is, neither showing lust towards something pleasant, nor showing hate toward something unpleasant, not ignoring something neutral (that is, both pleasant and unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant).<sup>69</sup>

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## 61.27c (Saḷāyatana) Samiddhi Sutta 3

The Third (Saḷāyatana) Discourse to Samiddhi

S 35.67/4:39

1 At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in the squirrels’ feeding-ground in the bamboo grove outside Rājagaha.

2 Then the venerable Samiddhi approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him and sat down at one side.

Sitting at one side, the venerable Samiddhi said to him:

3 "Bhante, it is said, ‘**Suffering, suffering!**’ (*dukkho dukkho ti*)

In what way, bhante, might there be suffering or a definition of suffering?”<sup>70</sup>

### WHERE SUFFERING EXISTS

4 “(1) Where there is **the eye**, Samiddhi,

where there are forms, eye-consciousness, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness, there suffering exists or the definition of suffering.

5 (2) Where there is **the ear**,

where there are sounds, ear-consciousness, things to be cognized by ear-consciousness, there suffering exists or the definition of suffering.

6 (3) Where there is **the nose**,

where there are smells, nose-consciousness, things to be cognized by nose-consciousness, there suffering exists or the definition of suffering.

7 (4) Where there is **the tongue**,

where there are tastes, tongue-consciousness, things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness, there suffering exists or the definition of suffering.

8 (5) Where there is **the body**,

where there are touches, body-consciousness, things to be cognized by body-consciousness, there suffering exists or the definition of suffering.

9 (6) Where there is **the mind**,

where there are mental states, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind consciousness, there suffering exists or the description of suffering.

### WHERE SUFFERING IS NOT

<sup>69</sup> See also **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144), SD 2.12 + Table 4; **Vedanā**, SD 17.3 (7.3-7.8); SD 50.13 (3.2.3.3); R112.

<sup>70</sup> *Dukkho vā assa dukkho, paññatti vā*. See S 35.65,3 (SD 61.27a) n.



- 10** (1) Where there is **no eye**, Samiddhi,  
*no forms, no eye-consciousness, no things to be cognized by eye-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any definition of suffering.*
- 11** (2) Where there is **no ear**,  
*no sounds, no ear-consciousness, no things to be cognized by ear-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any definition of suffering.*
- 12** (3) Where there is **no nose**,  
*no smells, no nose-consciousness, no things to be cognized by nose-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any definition of suffering.*
- 13** (4) Where there is **no tongue**,  
*no tastes, no tongue-consciousness, no things to be cognized by tongue-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any definition of suffering.*
- 14** (5) Where there is **no body**,  
*no touches, no body-consciousness, no things to be cognized by body-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any definition of suffering.*
- 15** (6) Where there is **no mind**,  
*no mental states, no mind-consciousness, no things to be cognized by mind-consciousness,  
 there suffering does not exist nor any description of suffering.”*

— evaṃ —

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