

SD 62.20

Saññā Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on Perceptions | A 5.62

Dutiya Saññā Sutta The Second Discourse on Perceptions

Theme: Another 5 perceptions for awakening to the path

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017, 2025

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 Recommended practice for the laity

1.1.1.1 The Dutiya Saññā Sutta or the Second Discourse on Perceptions lists 5 perceptions—those *on impermanence, on nonself, on death, on the repulsiveness of food, and on non-delight in all the world*—that is, meditative perceptions on letting-go (renunciation) recommended for the laity.

1.1.1.2 Saññā (fem), “perception(s),” here means memory-based meditation. *Saññā* is both singular and plural; when used as singular, it usually refers to the perception or experience itself [SD 62.19 (2.1)]; as plural, it refers to various forms of memory-based meditations [SD 62.19 (2.2)].

1.1.2 Practising for streamwinning

Especially recommended for the laity is the regular practice of the first perception, that on **impermanence**, as instructed in 10 suttas of **the Okkanti Saṃyutta** (S 25/3:225-228). The first, **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), the reflection on impermanence of the 6 sense-bases, for example—along with the other 9 suttas of the same Saṃyutta—is the basis for gaining streamwinning in this life itself (SD 16.7).

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

The Dutiya Saññā Sutta or the Second Discourse on Perceptions (A 5.62) is the second of 2 suttas on 5 perceptions listed consecutively as the first 2 suttas of **the Saññā Vagga**, “the chapter on meditative perception.” The Burmese Tipiṭaka calls this pair of suttas **the Saññā, sutta, dvaya** (the 2 suttas on perceptions), since structurally they are very similar, that is:

SD 62.19	Saññā Sutta 1	A 5.61/3:79
SD 62.20	Saññā Sutta 2	A 5.62/3:79

2 Saññā as meditative perception

2.1 SAÑÑĀ MEANING “MEDITATIVE PERCEPTION”

2.1.1 When the term **saññā** is used to mean “meditative perception” or simply “perception,” it refers to using an idea or memory as meditation object. In other words, the meaning remains as “perception,” as *saññā* of the 5 aggregates, but it is used in the sense of meditation-object, that is, a “theme,”¹ “idea,”² or “perceptual object.”

¹ Nyanaponika & Bodhi 1999:303 VII n1.

² BDict: *saññā* (3).

2.1.2 A perception practice is useful in normalizing or settling an idea so that it calms us, or directs us into some deeper aspect of Dharma experience. Hence, the suttas also use other active verbs to describe how the meditation-object is otherwise perceived, thus:

	<u>Perception on</u>	impermanence	nonself
<i>paṭisañcikkhati</i>	"reflects"	√	√
<i>anupassati</i>	"contemplates"	√	√
<i>paccavekkhati</i>	"reviews"		

[For a Table on the perceptions of the Saññā Sutta 1 (A 5.61), see SD 62.19 (2.1.2). For a longer list, see SD 19.16 (Table 3.3).]

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Saññā Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on Perceptions

A 5.62

1 Bhikshus, these **5 perceptions**, when cultivated and developed, are of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the death-free, having the death-free as their consummation.
What are the five?

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (1) The perception of impermanence, | <i>anicca,saññā</i> |
| (2) the perception of non-self, | <i>anatta,saññā</i> |
| (3) the perception of death, | <i>maraṇa,saññā</i> |
| (4) the perception of the repulsiveness of food, and | <i>āhāre paṭikkūla,saññā</i> |
| (5) the perception of non-delight in all the world. ³ [80] | <i>sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā</i> |

These 5 perceptions, bhikshus, when cultivated and developed, are of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the death-free, having the death-free as their goal.

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³ The perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) is at A 10.60,1, the perception of non-self (*anatta,saññā*) at A 10.60,2.