

SD 63.9

Pātubhāva Sutta

The Discourse on Events

A 6.96

Theme: The 6 rare events

Translated by Piya Tan 2010, ©2025

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY (AND RELATED STUDY)

1.1.1 The Pātubhāva¹ Sutta (A 6.96), “the discourse on events,” gives a brief list of the Buddha’s teachings on the manifestation of 6 wholesome events or manifestations (*pātubhāva*) in the world that are rare, that is, difficult to be seen (*dullabha pātubhāva*), namely,

- | | |
|--|-------|
| (1) the arising of the Buddha, | [2.1] |
| (2) one who teaches Dharma, | [2.2] |
| (3) rebirth as a noble disciple, | [2.3] |
| (4) having fully functional sense-faculties, | [2.4] |
| (5) having practical wisdom, and | [2.5] |
| (6) showing the will to do good. | [2.6] |

These are the 6 events we rarely see in the world.

1.1.2 For a similar study on the “right times” (*khaṇa*) or opportunities for wholesome events, see **the Khaṇa Sutta** (S 35.135), which lists the 6 “opportunities” for doing good. The lack of opportunity is the “hells” that are undesirable, unpleasant and disagreeable *forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches* and *thoughts*. They bury one in suffering. On the other hand, there are the 6 “heavens” that are desirable, pleasant and agreeable *form forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches* and *thoughts*. These are true benefits and liberation that one gets from properly living the holy life.²

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 Person types and personal development

1.2.1.1 Typically, the Aṅguttara Nikāya mostly classifies **persons**—lay and monastic, ordinary followers and noble disciples—according to qualities and practices related to the Dharma-spirited values and goals. We can thus see how the 6 qualities of the Pātubhāva Sutta fall into 2 sets:

Statements (1-3) refer to ideal persons in terms of **the values** related to the 3 jewels, and statements (4-6) are **the goals** for developing one’s faculties (mindfulness and clear awareness), cultivating one’s mind (for wisdom) and the will for good (mental freedom) in relation to these values. These are practical teachings directed at the cultivation of the 3 trainings, those of the body and speech (moral conduct), the mind (mental concentration) and liberation (wisdom).³

¹ *Pātubhāva* (m), “appearance” (Skt *prādurbhāva*) = *pātur* and *pātu* (indecl) (Geiger & Norman, *Pāli Grammar*, §67): M 1:50; S 2:3, 4:78; A 1:266, 2:130; Sn 560, 998; J 1:63; Vism 437. [SED: *prā* + *dur* (“out of doors”), “before the door; openly”; cf *dvāra*, “door”] “visible, open, manifest” + √BHŪ, to be. Pres *pātubhavati* (D 1:220, 2:12, 15, 20, 226; M 1:445; S 4:78). Verb: *pātubhavati* = *nibbattati* (PvA 129).

² S 35.135/4:126 (SD 53.24).

³ On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; **Sīla samādhi paññā** SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5).

1.2.1.2 The suttas of the **Āṅguttara Nikāya** tend to be pithy statements, concise and meaningful teachings, based on longer teachings recorded especially in the Majjhima Nikāya and the Saṃyutta Nikāya. One should therefore be familiar with such longer teachings before one can understand the full import of such brief statements. Hence, beginners should study such brief statements as research theses by relating them to longer teachings elsewhere in the Pali canon.

In fact, we may look at such Āṅguttara teachings as key study topics to be elaborated by competent teachers or researchers who can helpfully elaborate them based on the longer sutta teachings. This is the basic way to approach such short teachings. Further, the teachers or researchers should explain or elaborate these teachings in *contemporary terms* so that they are relevant for Dharma practice today.

1.2.2 Rare “world” events

The **Pātubhāva Sutta** (A 6.96) speaks of 6 rare “world” events [1.2.1]. The word **world** (*loka*) has 3 important and related senses, that is, those of:

(1) space (location),	<i>okāsa,loka</i>	[2.1.1]
(2) beings, and	<i>satta,loka</i>	[2.1.2]
(3) formations. ⁴	<i>saṅkhāra,loka</i>	[2.1.3]

These 3 terms are respectively :

(1) the physical world	of <u>space and time</u> ;
(2) the world of <u>beings</u> ,	that is, living beings (conscious existence); and
(3) the world of <u>formations</u> ,	the thoughts and mentally created world that define us.

(Vism 7.37/204 f; DA 1:173 f; MA 1:397, 2:200)

We will first discuss the **tathagata** in terms of these 3 definitions of “world” (as cross-referenced above). Then, we will reflect on the 6 teachings in the light of this understanding of the 3 “worlds.”

1.2.3 Why are the 6 events rare?

1.2.3.1 The 2 Pali words—*dullabha* and *kiccha*—can both be translated as “difficult.” We see the first word, **dullabha** (literally, “difficult to obtain”), as used in this discourse, the **Pātubhāva Sutta** (A 6.96), means “not easy,” in the sense of “not happening easily; rare.” These 6 events—(1) *the arising of the Buddha*, (2) *one who teaches Dharma*, (3) *rebirth as a noble disciple*, (4) *having fully functional sense-faculties*, (5) *having practical wisdom*, and (6) *showing the will to do good*—are rare [1.1.1]. We do not see this happening daily or frequently; they rarely happen, they are thus *difficult* to see, even when they do happen. However, they do happen, as we should be mindful to recognize them and appreciate them, or, where possible, initiate any of them.⁵

The 2nd Pali word in this connection is **kiccha**, which means “difficult,” in the sense of “being hard to do, to be or to understand.” We need a lot of effort—and the right effort—to do what is hard, and we have to understand what we are doing and what its results will be. Often, when we say something is “easy,” it refers to what we think we know enough about, or something we do without much thought.

⁴ SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2)); SD 17.6 (3.1.3.2).

⁵ The 1st case, becoming a buddha, would of course be the most difficult, and should neither be ritualized nor trivialized.

1.2.3.2 We can also see that *dullabha* has a broader compass of senses in its application to the 6 rare events mentioned in the Sutta (A 6.96). Not only do these 6 events rarely happen, but when they do happen, it takes a lot of *effort, compassion and wisdom* on the part of those making any of these events happen. What then is the difference between the 2 words, *dullabha* and *kiccha*?

The key difference lies in the *agency* behind these difficult actions, events or states, that is, those who are initiating them and those who are benefitting from them, or simply observing them or knowing about them. Both Dharma-giving and Dharma-receiving are rare and difficult in the world. But it is only *in the world* that the Dharma is given and the Dharma is received. Thus the Buddha arises *in the world*.

In at least the first 3 cases—those of (1) *the arising of the Buddha*, (2) *his teachings*, and (3) *the noble disciples*—we tend to see them as “**other**” since we are not “them” or have not attained any of those states. Even in the last 3 cases—(4) *full sense-faculties*, (5) *practical wisdom*, and (6) *the will to do good*—we tend to think of them as found only or mostly in the Buddha or his disciples or “**others**.” We tend not to think that we are endowed with these qualities.

The vital significance of the teaching on these 6 difficult events is that **good exists**; it is accessible to us, with some effort. That is to say, these 6 things are available today, and we need only to want to work to appreciate them or to attain them. They are difficult to come by when we do not work for them. The keys to the mastery of these teachings then are **initiative** and **self-effort**.

1.2.3.3 We will now briefly examine the 2nd Pali word, *kiccha*, in connection with the 6 difficult events of **the Pātubhāva Sutta** in contrast with the Pali word, *dullabha*. Let us first look at this quatrain that connects the 6 rare events with the 4 difficult states, as listed in the Dhammapada verse 182, thus:

<i>Kiccho manussa,paṭilābho</i>	Difficult it is to gain a human state;
<i>kicchaṃ maccāna jīvitam</i>	difficult is the life of mortals;
<i>kicchaṃ saddhamma,savanam</i>	difficult it is to hear the Dharma;
<i>kiccho buddhānam uppādo</i> (Dh 182)	difficult is the arising of buddhas. ⁶

Here again, we can take *kiccha* as a synonym of *dullabha*, in the sense of “difficult to happen or to see” any of these 4 events—*human life, the human state, hearing the Dharma and the arising of the Buddha*. This set of 4 difficulties is actually an abbreviated form the 6 rare events: we can collate the 2 sets of teachings, thus:

The 6 rare events (A 6.96)

- (1) the appearance of a tathagata
- (2) one who teaches the Dharma-Vinaya
- (3) rebirth in the sphere of the noble ones⁷
- (4) having unimpaired sense-faculties
- (5) being intelligent and wise
- (6) the will for wholesome states

The 4 difficult events (Dh 182)

- (d) the arising of buddhas
- (c) to hear the Dharma
- (a) to gain the human state⁸
- (b) the life of mortals

The 1st rare event (A 6.96), “(1) the appearance of a tathagata,” is basically the same as “**the arising of buddhas**” (Dh 182d). While the Sutta refers specifically to the Buddha of an epoch (such as Gotama Buddha in our own history), the Dhammapada refers to the arising of buddhas in general.

While A 6.96 speaks of “(2) one who teaches the Dharma-Vinaya,” Dh 182c has “**to hear the Dharma**.” The Sutta speaks of both the teaching and the discipline, both lay and monastic practitioners; that is, as

⁶ See SD 49.10 (1.4.2).

⁷ SD 60.1d (3.3.4.1).

⁸ SD 29.6a (4.1.4).

the agency of the trained and wise. Dh 182, on the other hand, addresses the unawakened in general, that is, those who need guidance and inspiration in the Dharma.

The next 2 rare events of A 6.96—“(3) rebirth in the sphere of the noble ones” and (6) “the will for wholesome states”—are subsumed under “to gain the human state” (Dh 182a). “To gain the human state” (*manussa,paṭilābha*) has 2 significant senses:

- (1) the first is that we are born with a human body (which is relatively easy), but
- (2) we do not easily or always live in a human state.

We may have a human body but it is difficult to obtain and keep our human state or humanity.

1.2.3.4 The life of mortals (Dh 182b) is difficult, especially when our sense-faculties are *neither* fully functional *nor* properly cultivated—(4) “having impaired sense-faculties” not only makes life difficult, but it prevents us from fully developing our mental faculties, too—which means that it is difficult for us to “(5) be intelligent and wise” so that we can live well and benefit others, too.

The human state here refers to our capacity for love (properly, lovingkindness, *mettā*) so that we are inclined to and enjoy being morally virtuous (to at least keep the 5 precepts). We must first cultivate our **moral being**, that is, being “bodily cultivated” (*kāya,bhāvita*), by way of sense-restraint (neither harming self nor others). This is the basis for our **intellectual, mental and spiritual** development—we are then said to be “mentally cultivated.” In other words, we have been joyfully driven by (6) “the will for wholesome states” (*kusale dhamme chanda*).

With the arising of wholesome states, we cultivate wisdom—insight into true reality. In due course, we will be able to free ourselves from ignorance and suffering. Such a sustained development of body and mind brings us to the path of awakening, that is, (3) “the sphere of the noble ones” (*ariy’āyatana*).⁹

2 The 6 rare events in the world

2.1 “THE ARISING OF A TATHAGATA, THE FULLY AWAKENED ARHAT IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.1.1 The tathagata and the world as location

2.1.1.1 The term **tathāgata** is polysemic; it can be explained in various ways depending on our understanding of the Dharma. It suffices here to take *tathāgata* in its basic sense of “**one who has thus come**,” *tathā-āgata*,¹⁰ meaning one who has evolved into an awakened being, the wisest and most liberated of beings during a relatively developed world in a stable universe. This means that the tathāgata is one who has awakened to or fully understands the true reality of self, society and the world; this is our world of space and time.

Significantly, the Buddha, on account of his awakening to true reality, does not define his teachings in terms of any Almighty God idea, or a favoured race, or a privileged social class, or even a supreme individual. For whatever exists, exists in space and time; it is *impermanent*. Even the Buddha is impermanent; he passes away. Thus, the Buddha does not “die” for anyone, not even for the world.

The Buddha’s death is the final and conclusive truth that impermanence is universal and what the Buddha teaches is true and real.

2.1.1.2 The Buddha rarely arises in **the world** (*loka*). The Pali word *loka* also encompasses the sense of what we understand today as “the universe” (or specifically, *loka,dhātu*), refers to our own universe.

⁹ See SD 36.1 (4.3.3.3); SD 57.13 (1.2.3.2).

¹⁰ On the traditional definitions of *tathagata*, see SD 15.7 (2).

Besides our own universe, there are other separate universes—or metaverses—each with its suns, moons, planets, star and galaxies—as stated, for example, in **the Kosala Sutta 1** (A 10.29).¹¹

The Buddha is not only aware of such universes, but his teachings are said to extend over many such “world systems” (*loka, dhatu*); this is called the “**buddha-field**” (*buddha, khetta*). For the Buddha, living and teaching at a time before modern astronomy, when ancient religions were dominated by the notion of an earth-centred universe and other mythical notions, his awareness and teaching on other universes was truly ahead of his time and really remarkable.¹²

2.1.1.3 Not only does the Buddha speak of the vastness of the universe and of other universes, he also declares himself to be “**the teacher of gods and humans**” (*satthā deva, manussānaṃ*). He broadly hints that we are in some way—by our actions, good and bad—connected with such beings, even those beyond our world. Traditionally, we would imagine these gods to be “divine beings” who inhabit the “heavens,” that is, our own sense-based universe, as well the form-world and the formless world.¹³

The Buddha is often recorded as interacting with these gods (*deva*), especially giving them teachings. Through the Buddha’s teachings, for example, **Brahma** is said to have become a nonreturner,¹⁴ and **Sakra** (the Vedic Indra) a streamwinner.¹⁵ Among the various teachings connected with devas¹⁶ we have, for example, **the Devatā Saṃyutta** (the connected teachings with deities) (S 1) and **the Deva,putta Saṃyutta** (the connected teachings on young devas) (S 2), both of which open the Saṃyutta.¹⁷

On a futuristic note, we may interpret the Pali term **deva** (which broadly includes brahmas)¹⁸ as referring to “**aliens**,” those intelligent beings who inhabit other quadrants of our universe.¹⁹ Since time and space pervades the whole universe (or universes) and the Buddha’s teachings are profoundly related to “time and space,” intelligent aliens²⁰ would have no problem understanding and accepting the Buddha’s early teachings based on *impermanence* and *suffering* (which are the nature of all things), and on *nonself*, which is the principle of the relativity of all things, of true reality. [2.1.3.2]

2.1.2 Tathagata and society: The 5 investigations

2.1.2.0 For our purposes here, we will limit the sense of the term **loka** to refer to the “world of beings,” that is, “society.” In this connection, it is said that the bodhisattva, before being born into the world, makes **the 5 “great investigations”** (*pañca mahā, vilokana*),²¹ that is, regarding: (1) the prevailing human lifespan, (2) the continent, (3) the country, (4) the family, and (5) the mother.²² The 5 conditions reflect the favourable conditions as well as the constraints for a buddha to appear in the world.

¹¹ A 10.29/5”59-65 (SD 16.15).

¹² On buddha-fields, see SD 57.10 (2.2.3). Only 1 buddha appears in a buddha-field: SD 49.10 (1.5.1).

¹³ These are known as the 3 worlds: SD 29.6a (5.2); SD 29.6b (7.2). On the realms of these worlds as the stations of consciousness (where rebirth occurs), see **Viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti**, SD 23.14.

¹⁴ On Brahmā Sahampati as a nonreturner, see **Ghaṭikāra S** (M 81) + SD 49.3 (4.2.1); SD 63.8 (3.2.2.1).

¹⁵ On Sakra as a streamwinner, see **Sakka, pañha S** (D 21/2.10.4) + SD 54.8 (1.2.4); SD 63.8 (3.2.2.1).

¹⁶ As a generic term, *deva* incl both the sense-world devas, and the form brahmas and the formless brahmas.

¹⁷ Respectively, S 1.1-81/1-45 and S 2.1-30/1-46-67.

¹⁸ Technically, **devas** (*deva*) are divine beings of the sense-world [1.4.2]; and the **brahmas** (*brahmā*) are those of the 4 form-realms [SD 53.23 (2.1.2)] and those of the 4 formless realms [SD 53.23 (2.1.3)].

¹⁹ SD 54.2 (4.1.4.3); SD 57.10 (1.3.3.2 passim).

²⁰ See eg the Dalai Lama’s views: <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhistdoor-view-extending-buddhist-practice-to-beings-beyond-earth/> 14 Oct 2025.

²¹ J 2:48 f :: J:J 64-66; DA 2:428-430; MA 4:171-173; AA 1:114, 122; BA 273 f; ApA 53 f. On the 5 great investigations, see SD 52.1 (2.2).

²² For details, see SD 52.1 (2.2); also SD 39.1 (4.2.3).

2.1.2.1 According to the Commentaries,²³ **human lifespan** gradually fluctuates between 10 years to the maximum of 100,000 years.²⁴ A buddha does not arise when human lifespan is too long, since the long-lived would not take seriously any teachings on impermanence. Neither does a buddha arise when the lifespan is too short, since people would not live long enough to reflect on or understand the teaching. The ideal lifespan of humans for buddhas to arise is between 80,000 years²⁵ and 100 years. The latter duration is that of our own time.

2.1.2.2 Ancient Buddhist cosmography imagined the world as comprising 4 continents (*mahā,dīpa*) around Mount Sumeru (also called Neru, Sineru, or Meru), the cosmic mountain (sometimes identified with one of the Himalayan mountains). On the south was **Jambu,dīpa** (where the Buddha arises); on the west, *Apara,go.yāna*; on the north, *Uttara,kuru*; and on the east, *Pubba,videha*.²⁶ Jambu,dīpa was centrally located just below Mount Meru.²⁷ In social terms, the northern central Gangetic plain was characterized by the rise of religious teachers and spread of ideas that pervaded almost all of northern Indian society whose people seemed to be naturally inclined to religious beliefs and rituals.²⁸

2.1.2.3 By “country” here is meant **the middle country**, that is, where people were going through **the Iron Age**,²⁹ which corresponded to the transition of the principalities³⁰ (*janapada*) of the Vedic period into the 16 great states (*mahā,janapada*). This led to the rise of cities and urbanization around 600 BCE that supported growing political stability, a money economy and trade on account of powerful kings establishing and expanding their realms, culminating in the emergence of the Maurya Empire (320-185 BCE), about 200 years after the Buddha.

2.1.2.4 The family that the bodhisattva chose to be born into was **Suddhodana’s** kshatriya Gotama clan (*gotta*) in *Kapila,vatthu*,³¹ the capital of the Sakya republic (*gaṇa,saṅgha*). Even in the Buddha’s time, the Sakyas were already vassals to the king of Kosala.³² It could thus be argued that since Siddhattha could

²³ DA 2:428-430; MA 4:171-173; AA 1:114, 122; BA 273 f; ApA 53 f.

²⁴ See esp **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,9-25/3:64-76), SD 36.10.

²⁵ This figure is from D 26 (see prec n).

²⁶ See SD 16.15 (3). For modern studies of ancient Buddhist cosmology, see Randy Kloetzli 1983:23-72 & Akira Sadakata 1997:25-40, esp 30-38.

²⁷ For details on the 4 continents, see SD 52.1 (2).

²⁸ The Achaemenid empire (Persia, Middle East, Egypt, Eastern Europe, parts of Central Asia, and Indus Valley) started in 550 BCE with Cyrus. Mazdaism prevailed then; later (just before the Buddha), Zoroastrianism. Philosophy and speculation were well developed in ancient Greece, but such discussions and interests were mostly limited to leisurely upper-class citizens served by slavery, justified by the philosophers. In China, the other relatively advanced and centralized civilization of the time, literacy and education were mostly restricted to the ruling elite and perhaps the merchant class.

²⁹ **The Iron Age** is the final epoch of the 3 historical Metal Ages, after the Copper Age and Bronze Age. It has also been regarded as the final age of the 3-age division starting with prehistory (before recorded history) and progressing to protohistory (before written history). In this usage, it is preceded by the Stone Age (subdivided into the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic) and Bronze Age.

³⁰ A principality is a state or territory ruled by a prince or chief ruler.

³¹ Kapila,vatthu is prob modern **Tilaurakot** located in Kapilavastu municipality (Taulihawa), some 25 km (16 mi) SW of Lumbini, in Nepalese Terai. For details: Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha* vol 1, 2000:48-54. Nearby **Piprahwa**, Uttar Pradesh, in India, has also been claimed as the location for Kapilavastu. See Swoyambhu D Tuladhar, "The Ancient City of Kapilavastu – Revisited," *Ancient Nepal* (151) 2002:1-7; Chris Hellier, "Competing Claims on Buddha's Hometown," *Archaeology* 54,2, Mar/Apr 2001. (Both articles 25 Oct 2025.)

³² See SD 16.15 (2.1).

not become a powerful world-ruler, he decided to take the alternative of becoming a world renouncer.³³ It could also be said that Suddhodana, Siddhattha's father, by providing him with all the sensual pleasures that a youth would want and shielding Siddhattha from the true realities of life, was ironically preparing Siddhattha for a dramatic epiphany that led to his renunciation.³⁴ The point remains that Siddhattha was a spiritually precocious youth, which led him to see true reality all on his own.³⁵

2.1.2.5 The Commentaries tell us that the bodhisattva chooses as **his mother** one who would pass away 7 days after giving him birth.³⁶ Some may argue that the child Siddhattha who lacked mother-love from birth might have suffered some negative emotional effects which led him to renounce the world. Such an argument is simply unfounded since, when **Mahā Māyā** died, her younger sister Pajāpatī raised Siddhattha as her own son.³⁷ Moreover, the child Siddhattha was surrounded by the members of an elite noble household and enjoyed all the pleasures and learning of youth.

One good reason for the bodhisattva to choose Mahā Māyā as his mother is that she was a very virtuous woman.³⁸ Māyā died 7 days later, having performed her task of giving human form to the future Buddha.³⁹ Due to this wonderful karma and her own goodness, she was reborn in Tusita heaven as Māyā,deva.putta.⁴⁰ It is said that the Buddha spent the 7th rains retreat in Tāvātimsa, when Māyā,-deva.putta came down from Tusita to listen to the Buddha, teaching "Abhidhamma";⁴¹ Māyā gained streamwinning as a result.⁴²

2.1.3 The tathagata and the world as "formations"

2.1.3.1 So far, we have spoken of the Buddha arising as **a human person** in the world of humans so that we can benefit from his teachings and be free from suffering (*dukkha*). Clearly, it is not easy at all to free ourselves from suffering.

We cannot deal with **suffering** when we do not even know what it is.

In order to know what suffering really is, we must know how it **arises**.

When we understand how suffering arises, we will then be able to do something to **end** it, or at least lessen it.

Finally, we **live** our lives so that we bring an end to suffering, or to at least lessen it.

This is indeed what the Buddha teaches us: suffering, its arising, its ending and the path to its ending.

This is an explanation of **the 4 noble truths** in practical reality.⁴³

This is the central teaching of early Buddhism; hence, the Buddha declares:

³³ On the prophecy regard the "great man," see SD 4.1 Asita; SD 4.3 Koṇḍañña.

³⁴ On Suddhodana's ironic role in the great renunciation, see SD 52.1 (6-7).

³⁵ On Siddhattha's personality as a youth, see SD 52.1 (5.2; 7.2; 8.3.1.3).

³⁶ AA 1:340.

³⁷ S 2:281; U 2; AA 1:315. Nanda's verses are Tha 157 f.

³⁸ See also SD 52.1 (3.2.4). On a related reading, see Kim Gutschow, "The death of the Buddha's mother," *Buddhism Engaged* winter/spring 2016. <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/the-death-of-the-buddhas-mother/>.

³⁹ A doctor friend told me that possibly the account that Māyā delivered the bodhisattva while standing and holding on to the branch of a sal-tree in Lumbinī might suggest that she had some birth difficulty and that the child was given a caesarean delivery; which might also explain why Māyā died 7 days later.

⁴⁰ Tha 534 f; ThaA 2:225,27-31.

⁴¹ AA 1:101,4-7; BA 146,15-18, 174,1-8, 298,33; ApA 118,7-10; PvA 140,14-18; DhsA 31,13-16, 35,33-36.

⁴² DhA 3:218 f. Further see SD 53.24 (1.2.2.5).

⁴³ The truth-sequence, 1-2-4-3, is the practice sequence, found, eg, in **Mahā Sal-āyatanika S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

Both before and now what I teach is suffering and the ending of suffering.
dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhan 'ti. (S 22.86)⁴⁴

2.1.3.2 “Suffering” (*dukkha*) is the simple and practical early Buddhist term for the true reality that pervades the whole universe (the macrocosmos) and that characterizes our whole being (the microcosmos). Suffering is thus a shorthand for **the 3 universal characteristics**; that is:

All things [formations] are impermanent ;	<i>sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā</i>
all things are suffering [unsatisfactory];	<i>sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā</i>
<i>everything</i> is nonself . ⁴⁵	<i>sabbe dhammā anatta</i>

(Dh 279; D 33,1.8(2))⁴⁶

The English word “**thing**” can here be used for rendering both ***dhamma*** (truth, reality, principle, etc) and ***saṅkhāra*** (formation(s); any constructed state, sense-based or mental). There are the 2 referents in the 3 lines from **Dh 279**: *saṅkhārā* and *dhammā* (both in the plural since they refer to all possible experiences in this world). To distinguish the meaning and function of each of these 2 key terms, I have rendered *sabbe saṅkhārā* as “all things” and *sabbe dhammā* as “everything.”

I shall briefly explain “all things” (*sabbe saṅkhārā*) here first [2.1.3.3], and then in the following section explain “everything” (*sabbe dhammā*) [2.1.3.4].

2.1.3.3 In the translation of **Dh 279**, I highlight the various states and realities that are experienced through our senses or the mind, that is, both sense-experiences and thoughts. These are, in fact, the “**all**” (*sabba*) that we can experience, think about, speak about or refer to when communicating with others.⁴⁷

Simply put, when we experience “**things**,” we often make up or imagine them; we even have the informal English saying, “seeing (or hearing) things,” that is, to think that we can see or hear something that is in fact not really there. We tend to see or hear things more often than we care to admit or even know. In fact, one of the hindrances to understanding what we read (such as this paper) is that we “read” more into it than we “tease out” its import. Hence, clear and direct understanding and self-realization are often encouraged.

One of the pernicious roots of “suffering” (*dukkha*) is that we tend to seek “**something**,” or we are conditioned, especially by religion, to seek *something* “out there” (like the Soul, God and so on). Or we are driven to make assumptive notions such as, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

This is similar to assuming, “Everything happens for a reason!” The real question is: “Who decides what that ‘reason’ is or how do we really know that our reasoning is correct or the only correct one?” In fact, this way of thinking is characteristic of **fatalism**, meaning that things just happen, or that we have no control over things, or that we cannot or should not make any effort for the better, that self-effort is useless and we must turn to some higher power.

Often such a “reasoned” or “fatalistic” way of thinking is rooted in some past conditioning, such as religion, personal trauma or social coercion. It greatly benefits us to examine and resolve these subtle habits of the heart and heal past wounds. To help us dismantle these mental “formations” of fears, guilt

⁴⁴ **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,21.2), SD 21.13, explained in **Yamaka S** (S 22.85,37), SD 21.12.

⁴⁵ Here, “nonself” means having nothing to do with a self, whereas “not self” is a negation of a self (ie, a self exists but this is not it). On no-self, not-self or nonself, see SD 2.16 (1.2).

⁴⁶ “All principles [conditions] are non-self” (Dh 279), see **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8. See also SD 20.6 (2.2); SD 83.12.

⁴⁷ This is based on the teachings of **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1.

and phantoms of the past, the Buddha teaches us to assert self-reliance by cultivating mindfulness and clear awareness to free our minds from greed, hatred and delusion.

2.1.3.4 In the translation of **Dh 279**, I have rendered *dhamma* as “**everything**,”⁴⁸ that is, “everything is nonself.” **Everything** (*sabbe dhammā*) here encompasses *all that exists or is imagined*; in other words, these are states, sense-based or mental, that are attributed with some quality, that is, made into a “thing” or “something” (*kiñcana*). It is thus said of nirvana, “[F]or one who sees, there is no thing [it is without anything]” (U 8.2,4).⁴⁹ Nirvana has no attributes.

The term “**everything**” includes, technically:
matter (earth, water, fire, or wind); or
space (including any of the formless realms), this world or other worlds, with their moon and sun; or
time (coming, going and standing; birth and death; established or occurring); or
this very sense-object (that we are experiencing). [2.1.3.5]

All these are *nonself*.

We are not just talking about “things”; more importantly, we are referring to the way we look at things, that is, the way we create views or project ideas. We are thus speaking of **principles**; how things are and the way we see them as they are.

All principles are non-self.⁵⁰

2.1.3.5 Nirvana is neither a formation nor a dharma;⁵¹ nirvana is never referred to as “non-self” in the suttas.⁵² Nirvana can be described as the “end of craving” (as the 3rd noble truth); but this is only a conventional and convenient “description” of nirvana. It is like a signboard on a difficult path warning of dangers and showing the right direction. It is like a finger pointing the way but it is not the way. The word is not the “thing.” Nirvana is just a word; we need to experience it for ourselves. *For one who sees, there is no thing.*

The Mahā Māluṅkyāputta Sutta (M 64) thus admonishes us to reflect on the 5 aggregates in this manner.⁵³

Whatever that is therein that consists *of form, of feeling, of perception, of formations, of consciousness*, he regards those states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien [as being other], as breaking up, as empty, as non-self. He turns his mind away from these states.

Having turned his mind away from these states,⁵⁴ he directs his mind to the death-free element, thus:

“This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all birth-basis,⁵⁵ the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana.” (M 64,9), SD 21.10

2.1.3.6 Talking about **nirvana** is very tricky, it is neither an idea or a thing which we can prescribe (like someone we know) or prescribe (like a God-idea). Even then we know how opinions can differ on account of such statements. The moment we try to talk about nirvana, we are likely to find words to

⁴⁸ On the broad polysemy of the Pali term, *dhamma*, see SD 51.25 (2.2.2.5).

⁴⁹ U 8.2,4/80 (SD 50.2).

⁵⁰ SD 26.8 (1.3).

⁵¹ Nirvana is neither a formation nor a dharma: SD 26.8 (1.2).

⁵² On the significance of this and the error made by a few leading scholars, see SD 26.8 (1.2).

⁵³ See also **Sīlavanta S** (S 22.122/3:168), **Sutavanta S** (S 22.123/3:169); **Nānā,kaṛaṇa S 2** (A 4.124/2:128), **Mettā S 2** (A 4.126/2:129), **Jhāna S** (A 9.36/4:423).

⁵⁴ Comy: That is, from the 5 aggregates, all of which are marked by the 3 characteristics. (MA 3:146)

⁵⁵ See SD 28.11 (3.2).

define it; whatever we have put into words is *not* nirvana. We cannot define anything into being. No matter how well we describe or present graphically a unicorn—in words, pictures, animation or digital media—it does not exist, except in our imagination and stories.

The closest we can talk about nirvana to give ourselves the idea that overcoming suffering (including greed, hatred and delusion) is possible. The suttas use two common techniques to avoid defining nirvana: negative (apophatic) language and metaphors.

A well-known example of negative or **apophatic language** (also called “intentional language”) is found in **the (Arahatta) Mālunkya,putta Sutta** (S 25.95). The “nirvana” of experience can be momentarily experienced when we “see” an experience as something as only *the seen, the heard, the sensed or the known*, and leave it at that. Anything else is our own talk and thought. When we understand this, then, we are not created “by that” (*na tena*), we are not caught “therein” (*na tattha*); then we are “neither here nor beyond nor between the two” (*n’ev’idha na huraṃ na ubhayam antarena*), meaning that we would not be reborn anywhere.⁵⁶

The Vaccha,gotta Sutta (M 72) contains the famous metaphor of **the extinguished fire**, which cannot be said to go anywhere, in any direction.

The statement “it arises”	does not apply to the extinguished fire.
The statement “it does not arise,	does not apply to the extinguished fire.
The statement “it both arises and does not arise”	does not apply to the extinguished fire.
The statement “it neither arises nor does not arise”	does not apply to the extinguished fire.

(M 72,20), SD 6.15

A practical method of understanding the nature of nirvana is to reflect on **ripples** on a still water surface. The ripples seem to move outwards from its centre towards us, but in reality the waves are only moving up and down, giving us the idea that it is moving outwards!⁵⁷

2.1.4 “Thus come” into the world

2.1.4.1 We have come to know all these subtle truths and see these profound realities *not* because of some academic or religious research or by way of scriptural texts giving us all these canonical words, which are then presented to us like computer programmes. These clear insights are those of the Buddha himself, and whose truth, usefulness and goodness can be verified by our own examination and application in daily life.

The Buddha shows us where to begin to investigate true reality. This is not about beliefs we must accept with faith, without question, from some authority, whether a person or scripture or some external source. Instead, the Buddha advises us to begin by cultivating the tools of perception; our own sense-faculties (seeing, hearing, and so on), and developing the mind to be calm and clear so that we better understand how they (the 6 senses) function.

Then we examine how through these 6 senses we experience and create **virtual realities** for ourselves, and how to know these virtual realities for what they are, see through them and understand true reality. In this way we know ourselves, we know others and we know both (how they interact). When we see true reality as **nonself**, we have safely grasped the water-snake by the neck. Then, we fling that snake as far away as we can (this is true renunciation), and we quickly go up to safe, dry land, where we take the path to safety and freedom.

2.1.4.2 One could rightly imagine someone like the Buddha arising amongst humans in terms of evolutionary time. However, in early Buddhism, **evolutionary time** continues over countless lives, over

⁵⁶ S 25.95,13 (SD 5.9).

⁵⁷ See SD 17.8b (2.1.3). For other reflections on the nature of nirvana, see SD 2.16 (6).

world-periods. Perhaps we may speak of biological or scientific evolution as spanning earth's historical time, while **spiritual evolution**,⁵⁸ as envisaged by the Buddha, takes as many lives and world-cycles as needed for beings to gain human awakening.⁵⁹

Following this idea, we can imagine someone who persistently and naturally chooses *to do good, avoid evil and cultivate the mind* over numerous lives until his last life, when he becomes the Buddha. In this way, **the Buddha** is neither a prophet nor divine messenger but someone who arises through a natural process, evolving into the highest of beings in terms of spiritual wisdom; he is said to be one **thus come** (*tathāgata*). "One thus come" awakens to true reality by his own efforts, and then compassionately teaches his wisdom to awaken others, or at least to guide them to the path of awakening.

When we are unawakened, we are we "know," that is, our ignorance, we create phantoms and believe in them. The Buddha comes along and tells us: Look! See for yourself, *there is no self but only self-effort*. Self is not a thing, but what we do that frees us the idea of self as a thing.

2.1.5 Seeing the tathagata

2.1.5.1 The question now is: **How do we "see" the Buddha?** That is to say, how do we benefit from his teachings, to live happily and benevolently, even reach the path, especially now that he has passed away? To the monk **Vakkali** who is lustfully attracted to the Buddha's body, the Buddha responds by instructing him, thus:

Who sees Dharma sees me;	<i>yo kho ... dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati</i>	
who sees me sees Dharma.	<i>yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati.</i>	(S 22.87) ⁶⁰

We need to examine this important statement in the light of **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2),⁶¹ where the Buddha declares that the teaching is above the teacher; even the Buddha looks up to the Dharma. The Buddha has awakened to the Dharma as true reality; it is this awakening to Dharma that makes him buddha. In the spirit of **nonself**, the Buddha *is* Dharma, the Dharma *is* Buddha. The Buddha is what the Buddha knows, what awakens him, and frees him from ignorance and suffering.⁶²

2.1.5.2 When we really **see** the Buddha, whether in living form or as some image, we only see the 5 aggregates: *form, feelings, perception, formations* and *consciousness*. The Buddha's form is nothing but earth, water, fire, wind and space; so is our human *form*. The feelings that arise when we see the Buddha are in reaction to memories of our past experiences and understanding of the Dharma, what we have learned from the Buddha's teachings. We perceive the Buddha or his image as those memories, rightly or wrongly. Being intentional beings, we do not just "see" the Buddha, we actually create an image of him; the Buddha is one of our innumerable formations. Our consciousness of the Buddha *is* that buddha, an idea of awakening, but it is merely a mind-made construction. We call this "Buddha" but in reality it is merely a figment of our own consciousness.

Now when we apply the **principle** of nonself, we begin to understand what goes on when we see or think of the Buddha. There is only nonself; moments of knowing arising and passing away, right now. Yet this ceaseless rising and falling, this conditionality of causes-effects-causes goes back to the Buddha himself, and way back to the buddha before him and so on endlessly, with neither beginning nor ending.

⁵⁸ On the doctrine of evolution in the light of Buddhism, see SD 60.1d (4.4.3).

⁵⁹ On the Buddha as the ideal of human awakening, see SD 63.8 (3.1).

⁶⁰ **Vakkali S** (S 22.87,13/3:120), SD 8.8; Miln 71; SA 2:252; AA 1:250; DhA 4:118; UA 311; ItA 2:116; ThaA 2:147; ApA 492.

⁶¹ S 6.2 = **Uruvelā S 1** (A 4.21), SD 12.3.

⁶² SD 10.4 (2.2.5); SD 51.25 (2.2.2.6); SD 55.8 (1.2.2.2).

This is **samsara**; this is **ignorance**. By seeing ignorance, we see wisdom—by keeping to the principle of nonself.

2.2 “A PERSON WHO TEACHES THE DHARMA-VINAYA PROCLAIMED BY THE TATHAGATA IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.2.1 The wise hear and see

2.2.1.1 Next to the Buddha, the best person in the world is the arhat (one who is awakened like the Buddha himself), that is, the Buddha’s direct disciple. That disciple **teaches the Dharma**, and we, hearing it, reach the path. It is difficult to hear such Dharma in the world not because the Buddha did not arise or that the Dharma is not available, but rather *we are unable or unwilling to know yje Dharma*. Often, we either hear wrong teachings, from the wrong people, or we take the teachings the wrong way. These are the teachings of the unawakened.

However, **the mind**, in its natural free state is able to learn, know and change, that is, to develop into something better. There are those who understand Dharma the moment they hear or see it. More often, people need some explanation for a better understanding of the Dharma. Even more often, others need to be guided step-by-step in the learning process. The vast majority of people in the world today, however, only know “the word” of the Dharma at best.⁶³

“The word”—we have noted—*is not the thing* [2.1.3.5]. We can rephrase this as “the word is not the teaching,” or “the word is not the truth,” or “**the word is not true reality**.” Putting true reality into words is like trying to describe the vastness of the sky, the beauty of someone or something, the joy or the pain we feel; the words are not what they describe. These words often only create more ideas that flood and confuse the situation. Understanding and liberation comes from a direct experience of true reality.

When we are burnt, we dread the fire (a case of *nibbaidā*)—we are more careful with it and so master it.

2.2.1.2 At best, **words**—wise words, to be sure—are like signs on the path or directions for using or operating an instrument. In the absence of the living Buddha today, we are left only with the Buddha’s word (*buddha, vacana*). We learn *with* the words by going “hands on” following what is recorded. In this way, we can benefit by carefully and wisely following the words as instructed. In important ways, the Buddha’s teachings have been worded into suttas so that with careful study and mindful practice, and then more study and more practice and observation, we better understand the teachings.

This is what, in fact, the Buddha’s teachings are—hands on words. Most of the Buddha’s word is instructions, or they are stories and examples of *how to avoid evil, do good and purify the mind* (Dh 183). These words are not to be taken on blind faith, or for pious worship, or for mere rote learning. The Buddha’s word is best lived. In *living* the Buddha’s word, we taste true freedom.

2.2.2 Self-reliance means self-mastery

2.2.2.1 A well-known Dhammapada verse says:

You are your own master [refuge];	<i>attā hi attano nātho</i>
for, who else can a master be?	<i>ko hi nātho paro siyā</i>
With a self [mind] that is well-tamed,	<i>attanā ‘va sudantena</i>
one gains a master difficult to find.	<i>nātham labhati dullabham</i> (Dh 160) ⁶⁴

⁶³ These 4 types of learners are, respectively, *ugghatitaññū*, *vipacitaññū*, *neyya* [*ñeyya*], and *pada, parama*: **Ugghatitaññū S** (A 4.143), SD 3.13(3.3).

⁶⁴ For an idiomatic tr, see SD 60.1f (4.5.8.2). See also SD 20.9 (II Mod Comy: Tha 1138); SD 26.3 (2.1); SD 27.3 (3.1); SD 34.1 (5.2); SD 36.1(3.4.3); SD 38.4 (3.3.3.4); SD 49.2 (3.6.2); SD 57.33 (2.3.4.2); SD 64.7 (3.2).

The Pali word *nātha* means “protector, patron, lord; a husband; a prop, support, refuge.” As a “refuge,” it can also refer to the Buddha (Sn 1131).

That we are our own “master and refuge” means that we have a **mind**, the capacity for sensing, for learning, for thinking, for intending, for growing. Our mind grows when we learn to see causes and effects, and understand their relationship.

When we let others think for us, then we have put our remote in their hands! When we do not use our mind, it will not grow. We become puppets and slaves of religions and beliefs. The Buddha teaches that we all each have our own mind, and this is the tool of our spiritual freedom.

Our mind—use it or lose it!

2.2.2.2 The wise hear and see. Just think of this terse sentence. You probably only *heard* it but failed to *see* it. Or, perhaps you are sharp enough to *hear and see* this sentence; then you say, “So what?” and end up with your own views and mental chatter. Learning is best when the mind stops chattering, seeking for our attention, being distracted from fully learning what could bring us wisdom. Then, we mostly remember what we do not know or what is not worth knowing. On the other hand, the mind may whoop joyfully in wonder; this is how we remember something beautiful and important.

“**The wise hear**” means that we learn best when we attend to the present moment with mindfulness and clear awareness. “Mindfulness” means properly keeping the mind on the mind-object (the present moment).

“**The wise see**” means the mind, with “clear awareness,” carefully examines the present state of mind, noticing its arising and falling, its changes. It sees only impermanence and conditionality.

This is a great way to reflect on self-reliance.

2.3 “REBIRTH IN THE SPHERE OF THE NOBLE ONES IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.3.1 “The sphere of the noble ones” (*ariy’āyatana*)

2.3.1.1 The Aṅuttara Commentary, following common usage⁶⁵ in the texts, glosses *ariy’āyatana* literally with “the middle country” (*majjhima, desa*, AA 3:414,15). Considering the dense population of India today, including “the middle country,” and the present poor condition of Buddhism in India, even in “the middle country” (centering around Bodhgaya), the commentarial gloss should not be taken literally. Moreover, following the drift of the Sutta, it makes good sense to read *ariy’āyatana* in a figurative or spiritual sense to mean “**the sphere (or realm) of the noble ones**,” that is, the path of awakening.

In fact, since around the 11th century, there was a negligible number of Buddhists in northern India as a result of the protracted extermination of Buddhism in India by Turk Muslims. Hinduism however survived because of the sheer numbers of its believers and practical presence as the dominant religion. Even the non-violent Jain faith survived on account of their unassuming practice in the homes of lay followers. The Buddhist monasteries and universities were the target of plunder and destruction on account of their opulence, idolatry and worldliness.⁶⁶

2.3.1.2 The 3rd “difficult appearance” (*pātubhāva dullabha*) is stated as “**rebirth in the sphere of the noble ones is rare in this world**” (*ariy’āyatane paccajāti dullabhā lokasmim*). “The sphere of the noble ones” (*ariy’āyatana*) here is not “the middle country” (*majjhima desa*), as suggested by the Commentary [above]; rather, as already noted [2.3.1.1], it is an allusion to the path of awakening, that is,

⁶⁵ On *ariyam āyatanaṃ* as “Aryan realm,” ie, northern India, esp the central Gangetic plain: Mv 6.28.8 (V 1:229,-9) = D 16,1.28/2:87,33 (DA 2:540 f) = U 8.6/88,25 (UA 2:422,8-10).

⁶⁶ SD 36.1 (1.9.2.1-4).

the attaining of arhathood, of nonreturning, of once-returning, and of streamwinning. It is rare for worldlings to attain the path in this world.

This is certainly true today, in the absence of the living Buddha, and the proliferation of those who claim to be “Living Buddhas.” However, nowhere does the Buddha allow anyone to take his place in the Buddhist community. **The Go,paka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 108) states that the Buddha has appointed neither a single person nor a council to take his place of authority. As with the Buddha, who puts the Dharma above himself [2.1.5.1], the sangha, too, should be guided by the Dharma and defined by the Vinaya. Ānanda declares, “The Dharma is our refuge,” where *dhmma* refers to both the teaching and the training-rules.⁶⁷

There is also a proliferation of the textualization and dogmatization of **the word and letter of Dharma** today and ritual obeisance to holiness as status, and “enlightenment” as *lineage, franchise and licence*. The Buddhist market is huge and growing in a very competitive way, and Buddhism is openly peddled as a well-priced product. Under such circumstances, it is certainly difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to the noble path.

2.3.2 The arhat, the highest of nobles

2.3.2.1 The first **arhat**—the true liberated saint worthy of respect and support by the world—is the Buddha himself. Hence, the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) opens with the Buddha’s very first quality as being that of “arhat,” thus:

So, too, is he the Blessed One: for, he is **arhat** [worthy] ... (*iti pi so bhagavā: araham̐ ...*).⁶⁸

Further, **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 2.59) closes by recording the awakening of the group of 5 monks as arhats, thus:

And while this discourse was being given,⁶⁹ the minds of *the group of 5 monks* were, through non-clinging, freed from the influxes.⁷⁰

[At that time, there were **6 arhats** in the world.]⁷¹

Then, the Vinaya record of the conversion and awakening of Yasa’s 54 lay friends, closes by stating thus:

Then, the Blessed One advised and taught these monks with a Dharma talk. Being advised and taught with a Dharma talk, the minds of these monks were freed of influxes, freed of clinging.

There were then 61 arhats in the world.⁷²

⁶⁷ M 108,5 + 8 + 10 f (SD 33.5).

⁶⁸ SD 15.7 (3).

⁶⁹ On the nature of listening as the basis for arhathood, see **Assaji S** (S 22.88) @ SD 42.8 (2.3.3).

⁷⁰ “Influxes,” *āsava*, from *ā-savati*, “flows towards” (ie, either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as “taints (‘deadly taints,’ RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence),” or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is older and found more frequently in the suttas: **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.10(20)/3:216); **Sammā,diṭṭhi S** (M 9.70/1:55), SD 11.14; **Āsava S** (S 38.8/4:256); **(Te,vijja) Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 3.59.4/1:167); **Nibbedhika Pariyāya S** (A 6.63-/3:410), SD 6.11. The destruction of these influxes is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

⁷¹ *Tena kho pana samayena cha loke arahanto honti*. This parenthesis is only in Mv 1.6.47 (V 1:14,36).

⁷² *Tena kho pana samayena eka,satthi loke arahanto honti*: Mv 1.11.1 (V 1:20,34 f); **(Māra) Pāsa S 2**, S 4.5/1:105 f; Mvst 3:415 f; see SD 11.2 (6).

The 61 arhats comprised the Buddha (the first arhat) and the 60 monks, who went forth before the Buddha himself, and also became arhats after him; hence, they were called “Buddha followers” (*anubuddha*).⁷³ These first 60 arhats were the 5 monks, Yasa and his 54 friends.⁷⁴ The Buddha then sent these 60 arhats in different directions and they brought back numerous converts, forming the core of the first sangha.⁷⁵

2.3.2.2 Numerous other suttas and texts record those who, after listening to the Buddha or practising on their own, attained arhathood (*arahatta*).⁷⁶ **The Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9), for example, records the attainment of arhathood by Citta the son of the elephant-trainer⁷⁷ as follows:

He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,
the holy life has been lived,
done what is to be done,
there is no more of this state of being.”

And the venerable Citta, the son of the elephant trainer, **became one of the arhats.**

(D 9,56.4/1:203), SD 7.14⁷⁸

2.3.3 Winning the stream

2.3.3.1 In most cases, the Buddha’s disciples first attained **streamwinning**, that is, gained the first step on the path of awakening. **Koṇḍañña**, the eldest of the 5 monks and the 1st arhat after the Buddha, was also the 1st streamwinner. Towards the end of **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), it is said:

And while this discourse was being given, there arose in the venerable **Koṇḍañña** the dust-free, stainless Dharma eye,⁷⁹ thus:

“Whatever is of the nature to arise is also of the nature to cease.” (S 56.11,16), SD 1.1

⁷³ *Anubuddha*, (1) past part of *anubujjhati*. “understood, known, awakened (to)”: M 1:168,28* (*dhammaṃ vimalenānubuddham*) = S 1:137,24*; V 1:5,32* = Mvst 3:317,18* ≈ Sn 384; + *patividdha*, D 2:90,25, 122,28 = A 2:1,20 = 4:105,21 (qu Kvu 115,10); D 2:123.8*. (2) *anu-buddha*, “after the buddha,” a disciple: J 1:408,17 (viz, Sāriputta); pl, ~ā, DhA 2:237,22 (*buddhā ca paccekabuddhā ca* +); KhpA 181,2 (*-*pacceka.buddha,saṅkhātesu*). See **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58) SD 49.10.

⁷⁴ For details on these 60 arhats and those immediately coming after them, see SD 45.16 (1.3.1.4).

⁷⁵ See **The great commission**, SD 11.2; SD 45.16 (1.3.1).

⁷⁶ For defs of arhathood: D 9,56.4 n, SD 7.14. On the full arhathood pericope: **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.3), SD 7.14. On the essential arhathood pericope: SD 12.4 (5); SD 51.18 (2.3.2.2). On the abbhaññāsi pericope: D 9,56.3 (SD 7.14).

⁷⁷ *Citta hatthi.sari,putta*, or “the young elephant trainer.”

⁷⁸ On which see for detailed notes and refs.

⁷⁹ “Dharma-eye,” *dhamma,cakkhu*. The opening of the Dharma-eye refers to the perception of the law of change, denotes the attainment of streamwinning, thus gaining irrevocably the path of awakening. It is, as such, spiritually superior to the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) (D 2,95/1:82), which is an advanced form of clairvoyance. It is, however, inferior to the wisdom eye (*paññā,cakkhu*) which is the arhat’s wisdom (full awakening). **Cūla Niddesa** mentions 5 kinds of eyes: (1) the physical eye (*maṃsa,cakkhu*); (2) the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*); (3) the wisdom eye (*paññā,cakkhu*) of the arhats; (4) the buddha eye (*buddha-cakkhu*); and (5) the universal eye (*samanta,cakkhu*), the omniscience of the Buddhas (Nc 235; It 2.2/52): see **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (2) & **Sandaka S** (M 76), SD 35.7.

The youth **Yasa**,⁸⁰ too, is recorded as first attaining “the Dharma-eye” (that is, streamwinning) upon listening to the Buddha giving “the gradual teaching” followed by a lesson on the 4 noble truths (Mv 1.7.6 (V 1:15 f)). Later, the Buddha taught Yasa’s father (who was unable to see Yasa). While his father listened to similar teachings and attained streamwinning, too, Yasa himself (listening to the same teaching), attained arhathood.⁸¹

2.3.3.2 In the course of the Buddha’s 45-year ministry, numerous people, having heard the Dharma, became streamwinners, once-returners and even nonreturners. **The Jana,vasabha Sutta** (D 18), for example, records the Buddha as telling us that:

More than 50 deceased followers [disciples] from **Nādikā**,⁸² those long gone, have completely destroyed the 5 lower fetters,⁸³ passed utterly away, attained **spontaneous rebirth** (in the pure abodes),⁸⁴ attained nirvana, never to return from there.

Over 90 deceased followers from Nādikā, too, those long gone, have completely destroyed the 3 fetters and diminishing lust, hatred and delusion, became **once-returners**, will return only once to this world and make an end of suffering.

Over 500 deceased followers from **Nādikā**, too, those long gone, have completely destroyed the 3 fetters,⁸⁵ became **streamwinners**,⁸⁶ no longer bound for the lower world,⁸⁷ sure of going over to self-awakening. (D 12,1.2), SD 62.3

Similar accounts and explanations are also found in texts like **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) and **the Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28).⁸⁸

2.3.3.3 While the Buddha lived, it was easy for listeners amenable to the Buddha’s teaching to gain the path. The Buddha guided numerous beings to the path of awakening, “**the sphere of the noble ones**.” Awakened disciples of the Buddha preserved his teachings and handed them down right to our

⁸⁰ Yasa *seṭṭhi,putta* (SD 11.2): “seth” (*seṭṭhi*) is a kind of commercial entrepreneur; his father is also called a “merchant householder” (*seṭṭhi,gahapati*), prob the leading business entrepreneur in the city.

⁸¹ See **Yasa Pabbajjā** (Mv 1.7.1-15 @ V 1:15-18), SD 11.2(7).

⁸² **Nādikā** or **Ñātikā** (according to Buddhaghosa, 2 villages of the same name on the same riverbank) was on the highroad between Koṭi,gāmaka and Vesālī (V 1:230 ff; D 2:90 f, 200; M 1:205).

⁸³ “The 5 lower fetters” (*oram,bhāgiya samyojana*) are: 1. self-identity view; 2. spiritual doubt; 3. attachment to rituals and vows; 4. sensual lust; and 5. aversion. See **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179) + SD 50.11 (2); SD 10.16 (1.6.7).

⁸⁴ “The pure abodes” (*suddh’āvāsa*) are the 5 highest heavens of the form-dhyana world (*rūpa,loka*), inhabited by only nonreturners, where they live their last life to become arhats (attain nirvana). These worlds are Aviha (“non-declining”), Atappa (“untroubled”), Sudassā (“clearly visible”), Sudassī (“clear-visioned”) and Akaṇiṭṭhā (“peerless”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46); SD 10.16 (13.1.6); SD 23.14 (Table 3).

⁸⁵ “The 3 fetters” are: 1. self-identity view; 2. spiritual doubt; and 3. attachment to rituals and vows. See SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

⁸⁶ See **Entering the stream** (SD 3.3). On lay streamwinning, see SD 4.9 (1.2).

⁸⁷ *Avinipāta,dhammā. Avinipāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinipāta*, “the world of ruin/suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), esp as *niraya,tiracchāna,pettivisaya,asurakāyā* (KhpA 189,12 = DA 2:496,11 (on D 2:55,27) = SA 2:97,5 (on S 2:92,16); Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 courses (*pañca,gati*) (D 33,2.1(4)/3:234; A 9.68/4:459) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tiracchāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*petti- or pittī,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see A:ÑB 1999:14-19. See **Pañca,gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.20. On a late work, *Pañca,gati,dīpana*, ed L Feer (JPTS 1884:152 ff); tr Feer, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 5, 1883: 514-528: sv Naraka,kaṇḍa, Tiracchāna~, Peta~, Manussa~, Deva~.

⁸⁸ **D 16,2.7.8** (SD 9) and **D 28,13** (SD 14.14).

own time. The Pali canon today has the most complete and faithful collection of the Buddhist teachings on “early Buddhism.” These teachings are said to be difficult to be accessed or understood, much less realized by “the world.” But with faith and diligence in our study and practice of teachings, the suttas will speak to us for themselves.

By **world** here refers to those who live relying only on their sense-faculties and the mind, thus limiting “all” that they can know to the body (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and the mind. This is worldly knowledge, that is, they are characterized by *lust, hatred and delusion*. Such knowledge is mostly defined by notions of pleasure and displeasure; attraction to pleasure arouses lust; nursing displeasure arouses hatred. We are fettered to this cyclic existence by our delusion.

Pleasure is defined mostly by pleasant memories which are projected to our present experiences. Displeasure is felt mostly by projecting unpleasant memories on to our present experiences. Or, we could imagine some hopeful situation, thinking “we” will enjoy it in the future; but when the future comes, we usually change our mind about it.

Since we are able to recall the past, we tend to think of this memory as our permanent **self** or unchanging soul. This habit of thinking and acting is rooted in **delusion**, that is, taking the “world” based merely on our sense experiences and thoughts. We imagine that such experiences are essentially *lasting, pleasant, and real*; that this is the abiding self or eternal soul.

2.3.3.4 The Buddha, through awakening to true reality, realized that all that are sense-based are **impermanent, unsatisfactory** and **nonself**. By **impermanent** is meant that whatever we experience, whether bodily or mental, lasts but a moment, that is, exists only in the present. We know what is present before us only *after* the event has passed. In other words, we tend to follow this “event” into the past and see it as if it is still going on.

Because all such experiences have already passed, when we try to cling to them or to collect them, we are never satisfied by them—this is **suffering**. All that we are *seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling and thinking* only “make sense” when we see them as being conditioned, that is, part of a network of causes and effects working ceaselessly, giving us the effect of some “movie.” It is a series of closely related still images that flow and flicker in our mind. None of the individual images in themselves in the series will make sense to us; we only begin to better to connect the images when we are mentally focused and see them as a flowing narrative. This is a dramatic way of reflecting on **nonself**; we may have to do this numerous times in order to really understand how this works.

2.3.3.5 The 3 refuges (*ti,saraṇa*)—the Buddha, Dharma and sangha—help us to direct and focus our mind to see the 3 characteristics of *impermanence, suffering* and *nonself* in our lives, in others and the environment. When we reflect on **the Buddha**, we see him as one who has direct vision and wisdom into true reality, and by that vision he has gained freedom from ignorance and suffering. He is one fully self-awakened, and thus worthy of emulation so that we too will attain the path and freedom.

The Buddha, fully awakened and liberated, arises in the world and passes away in the world. Having himself experienced and understood the true realities of *impermanence, suffering* and *nonself*, the Buddha formulates his wisdom compassionately into teachings by which the world can hear and practise for the happiness and good of the many. This is by taking refuge in **the Dharma**, the true teaching.

When we take refuge in **the sangha**, the community of noble disciples, we know and accept that there were many great disciples of the Buddha when he lived, both as monastics keeping to the Vinaya and as the laity who kept to at least the 5 precepts. Emulating these great arhats, nonreturners, once-returners, and streamwinners, we cultivate our body and mind so that we are tempered with love towards others and the environment.

With our body well cultivated with mindfulness, we go on to cultivate the mind so that it is calm and clear [1.2.3.4]. With *a healthy mind in a healthy body* [2.4.3.1], we readily see and understand true

reality; this is the active wisdom of self-understanding with which we relate with others for their benefit for a better society and world.

Refuge-going (*saraṇa, gamana*) thus means that we recollect and follow the examples of the Buddha and the great saints so that we see the Dharma in ourselves, too. Living in Dharma, we become examples to others, so that they, too, are inspired to go for refuge. In simple terms, refuge-going means that we know and accept the vital practice of **self-reliance** that brings self-awakening and be *buddha-like*.

2.4 “HAVING UNIMPAIRED SENSE-FACULTIES IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.4.1 The tools of sensing

2.4.1.1 Our very first action when we were born was to breathe so that we start living. Then, our senses enable us to perceive information about our external environment or the state of our bodies in relation to the environment. We “sense” the world and self, and form ideas—“make sense”—of them through our senses.

More accurately, these are **sense-faculties**, “the ability and activity of sensing.” The sense-organs cannot exist or function in themselves, but are each connected with the rest of our body, and, most importantly, with the brain and the mind.⁸⁹

Most humans—like many animals—are born with **the 5 sense-faculties**, that is, *the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body*. We learn to live in a safe and effective way through our **physical senses**. [2.4.2]

The eye is the sense-faculty for sight, allowing us to see colours and shapes.

The ear is sensitive to mechanical vibrations and allows us to hear so that we perceive sounds like speech and music.

The nose detects odours by the sense of smell.

The tongue gives us the sense of taste, allowing us to distinguish between flavours such as sweet, sour, salty, bitter and savoury.⁹⁰

The body or, precisely, the skin and joints are the senses of touch; they respond to mechanical stretch or pressure, to hot or cold.

2.4.1.2 The actual sensing process or **feeling** (*vedanā*), to use an early Buddhist term, is the intermediary between attention (*samannāhāra*, or reception) and perception (*saññā*). **Perception** includes a representation, a reconstruction or an interpretation of the world as sensed and thought. Modern science helpfully tells us that “[w]ithin the nervous system, the interpretation is generated by multiple feedback loops, so there is no distinct point at which sensation ends and perception begins.”⁹¹ In Buddhist terms, we can speak of the endless networking of causes and effects (*hetu, paccaya*) of our experience so that we are caught in a habitual cycle of actions and reactions.

The individual sense-faculty does not sense things, but are simply our responses to *light, sound, smell, taste and touch*. All such sensings are processed and conditioned by **the mind**—the 6th sense-faculty according early Buddhism—which makes each person experience the very same sense-based experiences in individual ways. Basically, our sense-faculties are our tools for responding to and learning from the environment and the world.

⁸⁹ From the teachings of early Buddhism—which does *not* mention the brain as the centre of mental activity—**the mind** is not located anywhere; it works everywhere in and beyond the body. For example, a complex network of faculties and mental activities allows me to write this paper which you are intelligibly reading and in some way being processed by your mind, too. On the Abhidhamma attempt to locate the brain in the heart (*hadaya, vatthu*): SD 17.2a (9.6.2).

⁹⁰ SD 53.5 (5.5.3.5).

⁹¹ Michael W Levine, “Sensation,” in *McGraw-Hill Ency of Science and Technology* vol 16, 10th ed. 2007:292.

2.4.1.3 Our senses allow us to remember and learn, that is, gather information from the environment through our sense-faculties, which send signals to the brain for processing. In other words, by sensing the world we adapt ourselves to it; we are shaped and influenced by the world. This is called **sensory adaptation**.

The effect of sensory adaptation is worth noting. When our senses are over-stimulated, they become less sensitive, so the more we are drawn into it, as the excitability is reduced. For example, continually applied pressure to an area of skin eventually causes the area to become numb to feeling and a considerably greater pressure has to be applied to that area to effect a similar response. For this reason, too, the more we “enjoy” something (such as taking strong drinks or watching pornography), the more we desire it.

On the positive side, this form of adaptation enables humans and animals to ignore most of their skin most of the time, freeing their attention for more pressing concerns. Whether occurring within a span of minutes, over an organism’s lifetime, or over thousands or millions of years, adaptation serves to increase the efficiency of organisms and thus, ultimately, their chances of evolution and survival.

2.4.2 The sense-faculties and their limits⁹²

2.4.2.1 Our **eye** works so long as we are awake and aware; it constantly works to collect light-based data, mainly of colours and shapes. The brain then analyzes these data and supplies us with a detailed picture of our self and surroundings. We are also aware of distance, see in bright and in dim light, and experience colour vision. Light reflected by objects around us meet on the retina at the back of the eye. There they trigger electrical signals that are sent to the brain, which interprets them.

The human visual system has two types of receptors: rods and cones. Rods are more sensitive than cones, being able to be stimulated by a single photon;⁹³ cones cannot detect such dim light, but allow faster and more accurate vision in brighter lights, and also give colour vision.

Vision disorders are pathologies that affect the sense of sight. Some are caused by infections or allergies, like conjunctivitis, but most are caused by structural abnormalities of the eye or changes in the eye, either congenitally or due to ageing. Some diseases that affect the whole body, like diabetes, may eventually cause vision problems in addition to other symptoms.

Refractive errors are a type of vision disorder in which the person cannot see clearly because the eye cannot properly focus on the light that enters the eye. These include **hyperopia** (farsightedness), **astigmatism** (blurred vision due to the irregular shape of the eyeball), and **myopia** (nearsightedness). They develop when the lens of the eye is too strong or too weak for the length of the eyeball or when the cornea (the transparent front part of the eye) has an abnormal curvature.

Strabismus is a vision disorder in which the eyes are not aligned because the muscles that control eye movements are weak and uncoordinated. Cataracts and glaucoma are vision disorders associated with aging. **A cataract** is a yellowish or cloudy discoloration of the lenses of the eye, while **glaucoma** is due to rising pressure in the liquid in the eyeball that causes permanent damage to the optic nerve and eventual blindness.

⁹² The technical details on the sense faculties here are taken from *The Gale Ency of Psychology*, 2nd ed, 2000; *McGraw-Hill Ency of Science and Technology*, 2007.

⁹³ A **photon** is the fundamental particle or quantum of the electromagnetic field, incl all forms of light and other electromagnetic radiation such as radio waves and gamma rays. They are elementary particles, meaning that they have no smaller components.

2.4.2.2 The ear is sensitive to mechanical vibrations and allows us to hear so that we perceive sounds like speech and music. The auditory system has two different types of receptors, the inner and the outer hair cells or cilia. Like the rods and cones of vision, the outer cilia are more sensitive to weak stimuli than are the inner cilia.

Hearing loss may inflict one or both ears; it may occur suddenly or develop slowly over a period of years; it may be temporary or permanent, and vary in severity from mild hearing loss to total deafness. There are many possible causes of hearing loss ranging from birth defects and ear infections (common causes in children) to exposure to high levels of noise (including music) and the aging process (common causes in adults).

There are two major categories of hearing loss, defined by whether the loss results from problems in the structures of the outer or middle ear, or whether it results from damage to the cilia (hair cells) of the inner ear. The first type is called conductive hearing loss (CHL) and the second type is called sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL). CHL is often reversible while SNHL is not. People who have both CHL and SNHL are said to have mixed hearing loss.

2.4.2.3 The nose and tongue [2.4.2.4] have various kinds of receptors sensitive to a variety of chemicals. In the sense of smell, the chemical is volatile or airborne. Inhaled through the nostrils or ingested through the throat by chewing and swallowing, it passes through either the nose or an opening in the palate at the back of the mouth, and moves towards receptor cells in the lining of the nasal passage. As the chemical moves past the receptor cells, part of it is absorbed into the uppermost surface of the nasal passages called the olfactory epithelium, located at the top of the nasal cavity. There are two patches of nasal mucosa dissolve the chemical, stimulating the receptors lying under the mucus. The chemical molecules bind to the receptors, triggering impulses that travel to the brain to be processed.

When the nasal passage is blocked, such as when our nose is stuffed up by a cold or flu, smells cannot reach the receptor cells that are stimulated by smells. As a result, we lose much of our ability to enjoy a food's flavour. This is how closely our senses of smell and taste work together. Without the smell sensory neurons, familiar flavours such as chocolate or orange would be hard to distinguish. Without smell, foods tend to taste bland and have little or no flavor.

Our sense of smell is also influenced by something called the common chemical sense. This sense involves thousands of nerve-endings, especially on the moist surfaces of the eyes, nose, mouth, and throat. These nerve-endings help us sense irritating substances—such as the tear-inducing effect of onion—or the refreshing coolness of menthol.

Some smell disorders include:

- **anosmia** the complete inability to detect smells. In rare cases, one may be born without a sense of smell, a condition called congenital anosmia;
- **hyposmia** a reduced ability to detect smells;
- **parosmia** a change in the normal perception of smells, such as when the smell of something familiar is distorted, or when something that normally smells pleasant now smells foul;
- **phantosmia** the sensation of a smell that isn't there.

2.4.2.4 The tongue, like the nose [2.4.2.3], is triggered by chemical stimuli. We each have roughly 10,000 taste buds. Most are on the tongue, and some are located in the back of the throat. Grouped together in bumps or papillae on the surface of the tongue, the taste buds contain receptors that respond to 4 basic tastes: sweet, salty, sour, and bitter.⁹⁴ A 5th taste—called (Jap) *umami*, the savoury (or meaty)—has been proposed. The effect of monosodium glutamate (MSG) and ribonucleotides is found in foods

⁹⁴ SD 53.5 (5.5.3.5).

like miso (fermented soybeans), aged cheeses, mushrooms, tomatoes, and cured meats. Umami is known for its lingering, mouthwatering sensation that can also help balance other flavors and reduce the need for salt.

As food is chewed, its chemicals act as the stimuli for taste, being broken down into molecules, mixing with saliva, and infiltrating the areas that contain the receptors. The activated taste buds trigger nerve impulses that travel to the brain where they are transformed into sensations of taste. Because of their relatively “toxic” environment, taste buds live short lives, being replaced about every 10 days.

2.4.2.5 Our sense of taste often works in conjunction with our sense of **smell** by combining sensations to achieve the perception of flavor. In fact, the sense of smell actually contributes more to the perception of specific flavors than does the sense of taste. This phenomenon is commonly demonstrated in people whose sense of taste becomes dulled by colds. When our nose is congested, for example, we are likely to detect little or no taste in such strong substances as onions, cinnamon and peppermint.

When we eat, chemical stimuli taken in through chewing and swallowing pass through an opening in the palate at the back of the mouth and move toward receptor cells located at the top of the nasal cavity, where they are converted to smell nerve impulses that travel to the brain, just like the impulses from smell stimuli taken in through the nose [2.4.2.3]. The smell and taste pathways are known to converge in various parts of the brain, although it is not known exactly how the two systems work together.

2.4.2.6 Another way to regard the relationship between taste and smell is as two components of a perceptual function identified as the “**flavor system**,” which also includes temperature and tactile receptors. Warm foods seem tastier because warming releases additional aromas from the mouth to the olfactory receptors. Warm foods also seem *sweeter*, although temperature has no effect on the perception of salty foods.

A food’s tactile properties (how it feels in one’s mouth) influence perception of its flavour, hence distinctions such as that between smooth and crunchy peanut butter. **Pain** receptors are even included among the mouth’s nerve endings involved in flavour perception, and may account for some of the appeal of hot and spicy foods, and for soysauce on cooked eggs.

A person’s nutritional state can influence perceived tastes, as well as the desire for particular foods: salt deficiency and food deprivation increase the desire for salty foods. The sweet properties of saccharin and aspartame were discovered by accident in laboratory settings, and new artificial sweeteners allowed consumption of sweet foods that are low in calories.

2.4.2.7 Gustatory dysfunction or problems with the sense of taste can manifest as *a diminished, absent, distorted, or phantom taste perception*. While often associated with smell disorders, true taste pathologies result from issues affecting the tongue’s taste buds, the neural pathways to the brain, or the brain itself.

Dysfunctions of taste can be categorized as quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative disorders involve a change in the intensity of taste perception:

- **ageusia** a complete loss of the sense of taste, which is a rare condition;
- **hypogeusia** a reduced ability to taste;
- **hypergeusia** an abnormally heightened sense of taste, which is not as common as other disorders.

Qualitative disorders involve a distortion of taste perception:

- **dysgeusia** a persistent, unpleasant, and distorted taste sensation (eg, metallic, bitter, or rancid);
- **phantogeusia** the perception of a taste that is not actually present.

Dysfunctions in taste can arise from a wide range of factors, which affect different parts of the taste system. Briefly, there are local factors, systemic and metabolic diseases, neurological factors and other causes.

Local factors (affecting the oral cavity) include:

- **poor oral hygiene and dental problems:** inflammation or infections in the mouth, like candidiasis or gingivitis, can alter taste;
- **oral appliances:** dentures that cover the palate can obstruct taste receptors;
- **dry mouth (xerostomia):** saliva is necessary to dissolve food chemicals so they can reach the taste buds. Conditions like Sjögren's syndrome, radiation therapy, or medication side effects can cause dry mouth and impair taste;
- **infections:** viral illnesses like the common cold, the flu, and COVID-19, as well as chronic conditions like HIV and hepatitis, can damage taste buds or the nerves that supply them.

Systemic and metabolic diseases can affect taste, thus:

- **nutritional deficiencies:** deficiencies in zinc or vitamin B12 can impair taste perception;
- **endocrine disorders:** conditions such as diabetes and hypothyroidism can cause taste issues;
- **kidney and liver disease:** waste products can accumulate and cause a metallic or bitter taste;
- **autoimmune diseases:** conditions such as Sjögren's syndrome (causing dry mouth) and systemic lupus erythematosus can cause changes in taste;
- **cancer and cancer treatment:** head and neck cancers, and particularly radiation therapy and chemotherapy, are common causes of dysgeusia and ageusia.

Neurological factors behind taste problems include:

- **nerve damage:** trauma or surgery to the head, neck, or ear can damage the cranial nerves responsible for taste sensation (VII, IX, and X);⁹⁵
- **neurological disorders:** diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, and epilepsy have been associated with taste dysfunction;
- **central nervous system lesions:** strokes or tumors affecting the brainstem or cortex can disrupt the central taste pathways.

Other causes of taste dysfunctions include:

- **medications:** many drugs, including antibiotics, antidepressants, and antihistamines, can affect taste;
- **smoking:** tobacco use can alter taste perception by damaging taste buds;
- **hormonal changes:** fluctuations during pregnancy can lead to dysgeusia;
- **aging:** the sense of taste naturally diminishes with age due to a decrease in the number and sensitivity of taste buds and reduced salivary flow.

2.4.2.8 The body basically refers to the skin and joints as the senses of touch; they respond to mechanical stretch or pressure, to hot or cold. This is merely the physical nature of the body. Even at a young age, after exerting our body vigorously, we feel the tiring, even painful, effects of the stretch and pressure on the body. As we age, such physical reactions become even more pronounced and persistent.

⁹⁵ Cranial nerves VII, IX, and X are the primary nerves responsible for transmitting **taste sensation (gustation)** from the tongue and other parts of the oral cavity to the brain: **VII** facial nerve (anterior 2/3 of the tongue), **IX** glossopharyngeal nerve (posterior 1/3 of the tongue), and **X** vagus nerve (the epiglottis, palate, pharynx and esophagus).

Hence, even the Buddha, in his old age, suffered from back-aches on a number of occasions.⁹⁶

The physical body, by its very nature of being composed of the 4 elements—*earth, water, fire and wind*—is subject to the effects of their instability. Hence, **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** reports that the Buddha has the symptoms of “severe illness,” probably dysentery. Although the pains are severe, “he endured all this mindfully and fully aware, and without complaining.”⁹⁷ In fact, the suttas report that even arhats tire, since their body is just like ours.⁹⁸ Bearing such a physical body, even the Buddha and the arhats die.

2.4.2.9 Despite the natural frailty of the Buddha’s body, he is said to have the “32 marks of the great man” (*mahā, purisa, lakkhaṇa*), which, according to ancient lore, means that he would either become a world-ruler (if he remained as a family man) or the fully awakened one (if he renounced the world).⁹⁹ **The Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (D 30) explains these 32 marks as the karmic fruits of the bodhisattva’s wholesome deeds in his past lives.¹⁰⁰ **The Brahm’āyu Sutta** records how the brahmin Brahm’āyu sends his pupil, Uttara, to ascertain that the Buddha was truly endowed with the 32 marks.

The 32 marks of the great man lists the ideal state and qualities of one who will be either a virtuous world ruler or an awakened world teacher. Apparently, this implies that the Buddha had a perfect human body—as far as the human body goes—but his was still a human body. Despite its physical perfection, such a body still suffers the impermanence and unstability of the 4 elements that constitute the body.

2.4.3 The way of freedom

2.4.3.1 The (Dve) Roga Sutta (A 4.157) records the Buddha as mentioning the 2 kinds of diseases:

Bhikshus, there are these 2 kinds of diseases. What are the two?

Disease of the body and disease of the mind.

Bhikshus, there are to be seen beings who can claim to be **physically healthy** [disease-free] for a year, ... for a hundred years.

But, bhikshus, hard to find are those beings who can claim to be **mentally healthy** for even a moment—except for those [arhats] whose mental influxes are destroyed.

(A 4.157,1-4/2:142 f), SD 42.16

The significance of this statement on the 2 kinds of diseases is that **bodily health** is secondary to mental health. It is easier to notice and maintain bodily health than it is to notice, much less maintain, mental health. The reason for this is that, so long as we are unawakened, we are constantly defiled with *greed, hatred and delusion*, blinded by **craving** and driven on by **ignorance**.

Ignorance means that we are unable to see true reality—*impermanence, suffering and nonself*—and **craving** means that, on account of that ignorance, we are driven to make “something” (*kiñcana*) out of nothing, and tend to seek *something* that is eternal, joyful and perfect, like ideas of an eternal heaven, immortal soul or omnipotent God. None of these are possible for the simple reason that to exist is to happen in time; whatever exists is impermanent.

What we speak of as being “eternal” such as love, happiness and so on, are either merely our wishes, hope or imagination. This is not to say that good things, like love, happiness and kindness, do not exist,

⁹⁶ **Avassuta Pariyāya S** (S 35.202,8/4:184,8) [S:Be 35.243], SD 60.6; cf SA 1:78; UA 403; VbhA 345; **(Navaka) Nandaka S** (A 9.4,2 /4:359); **(Dasaka) Naḷaka, pāna S** (A 10.67/5:122 f).

⁹⁷ D 16,4.20+2.23 (SD 9).

⁹⁸ SD 32.6 (2.4).

⁹⁹ See **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30/3:142-179), SD 36.9. See further **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (7) The Buddha’s body.

¹⁰⁰ D 91/2:133-146 (SD 63.8).

but that they are intentions moved to action that harm neither self nor others, but benefit them. While religion tends to have people show love, be kind and bring joy *in the name of religion, for its own benefit*, the Buddha teaches that one should love, be happy and be kind selflessly. Love, kindness, joy and peace have no religion.

2.4.3.2 The human body is composed of the 4 primary elements—*earth, water, fire and wind*—that is, the state of our highly unstable ever-changing physical being.

Earth is the solid aspects of our body experienced as physical pressure and resistance, and felt as hardness, roughness, softness or smoothness.

Water is the liquid aspects of our body experienced as flowing and sticky effects of the fluids of which our body is mostly composed.

Fire is the temperature that we feel in our body as hot or cold, which is really the effect of the heat that encompasses the breath (oxidation), digestion (combustion), and decay that accompanies aging, trauma and sickness.

Wind is the moving aspects of our body, both of its internal components and its visible parts, and as a whole, such as the 4 postures (standing, walking, sitting and reclining). Wind is also expressed as our bodily gestures, such as chewing, coughing, stretching our limbs, nodding, smiling, blinking and numerous other gestures.

2.4.3.3 We may also reflect on each of the 4 elements as the embodiment of our emotions, negative and positive. Let us first look at **the negative emotions** manifested in palpable ways.

The earth element is the sense of heaviness and solidity induced by greed, which is characterized by the desire to touch people and things (the earth element), to grasp them, to cling to them, to own them, and keep on collecting them without end. We are burdened and grounded by our desires, and rendered immovable; we are anchored and leashed to the objects of our desire, which shape and limit our feelings, our growth, our communication with others, and our freedom. The earth element as desire thus imprisons us in our own self-centredness.

The fire element is the burning that is hatred, which is the dark companion of greed or lust, on account of which the body burns and is consumed by its own anger and frustration at not getting what it wants or losing what it has. This dark fire wants to burn whatever it sees as standing in its way of collecting people, seeking objects or enjoying them. This burning wants to hurt others, or even be rid of them, just as fire burns things down. But the fire only consumes and harms the one who plays with it.

The water element is the dangerously deep and dark still waters that can flow and rage as silent floods that drown beings in delusion. During a tsunami, when the waters rush back into the ocean, fish, life and things on the seabed are stranded as if on dry land, deluding people that they have found bounty; the huge wall of waves suddenly rushes back to drown and destroy everything everywhere.

The wind element is moving air that pushes things about and that howls fearfully; it takes forms that arouse fear in both people and animals. Or, it can rise as a storm, stirring dust into the air, blinding beings so that they are trapped right where they are. Or, the windstorm can be so fearfully strong as to rip up the very ground from underneath us, destroying things and people.

2.4.3.4 On the wholesome side, the 4 elements can be related to **positive emotions**, that is, as *love, compassion, joy and equanimity*.

Love—or lovingkindness (*mettā*) to be exact—is the fire that burns warmly and brightly, like the sun, giving life to self and others alike. It is the warm love that accepts all unconditionally, seeing the best in others, wishing the best for them.

Compassion or active love (*karuṇā*) is the water, like rain gently falling from heaven and flowing in bubbling streams, that brings life and happiness to all alike. Just as water cleans us and keeps things clean, compassion is the active care to bring the good and best out of others.

Joy—rejoicing in the goodness of others—is the wind that gently blows and cools us, moving us away from the fires of lust and hatred, and warms us with friendship and kindness. This is the joy that brings people together in the best way even in the worst of times.

Equanimity is like the earth, solid and stable, the ground that supports all beings, and in which all life grows. It is the calm presence that gives confidence to others in the best of times, in the worst of times. This is the peace of having done good, giving our best and letting things go their way to touch others in the best of ways.

2.4.3.5 “Having unimpaired sense-faculties is rare in the world,” says the **Pātubhāva Sutta**, but even when the body is blessed with functionally optimal sense-faculties, such as in the Buddha’s case [2.4.2.9], his human body still decays, feels pain and ends in death. It is the nature of the body to be *impermanent, suffering* and *nonself*. Just as the elements of world are unstable, unstill even for a moment, even so when the 4 elements assume life as humans, our bodies are naturally unstable—*impermanent, suffering* and *nonself*.

In the **Nakula, pitā Sutta** (S 22.1), when the elderly Nakula, pitā complains that he is old and frail, “sick in body, always ill,” the Buddha comforts him instructively thus,

So it is, houselord; so it is, houselord. Sick is this body, **burdened, hampered** (by suffering). Houselord, anyone, caring for this body, who claims even a moment’s health would be nothing but foolishness.

Therefore, houselord, you should train yourself thus:

‘My body may be sick, but my mind will not be sick.’¹⁰¹ (S 22.1/3:1-5), SD 5.4

2.5 “BEING INTELLIGENT AND WISE IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.5.1 Suffering as “mental illness”

2.5.1.1 Whatever **exists** is impermanent; whatever is impermanent is suffering. Whatever is impermanent and suffering has no essence, no self; it is connected to everything else.

Whatever **lives** is impermanent, suffering, has no self. To live is to change, to grow, to become other. To live is to learn: impermanence teaches us not to cling to things; suffering moves us to seek wholesome ways of joy and relief; nonself reminds us that, just as we are, so are others, we differ mostly in mind.

When we seek to resist this change, that is **greed** [lust].

When we seek to cause suffering, that is **hatred**.

When we refuse to see change or know suffering, that is **delusion**.

The nature of existence and life is *impermanence, change, becoming other*.

Because we see impermanence, we are restlessly driven to stop it, but we cannot.

When we refuse to stop, we feel *suffering*; we are moving against life itself.

Impermanence means the present goes away, leaving nothing;

suffering is when we want the empty past to be something present;

delusion is when we make something out of nothing.

¹⁰¹ *Ātura, kāyassa me sato cittaṃ anāturaṃ bhavissati*. On the 2 kinds of pain, see **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6,9-10), SD 5.5.

This truth and reality are in our breath:

Breathing in, breathing out—	that is impermanence .
When we are not at peace with our breath—	that is suffering .
When we breathe rightly and in peace—	that is nonself .

2.5.1.2 The very nature of life is to change; when we let go of the past, we become other; this change is impermanence, clinging to the past is suffering, and becoming other is nonself.

We will not see *impermanence* when we are driven by **greed**.

We will *suffer* when we are driven by **hatred**.

We are *empty* when we are lost in **delusion**.

The mind that does not see impermanence suffers by not accepting change; that mind is empty but seeks to fill itself with the world. This is like looking into the mirror and trying to grasp, to have, to own what we see in the mirror. The mind then suffers; it is ill.

We are thus driven by “mental illness,” that is, being sick due to **greed, hatred or delusion** [2.4.3.1].

2.5.2 Understanding suffering brings wisdom

2.5.2.1 There are 2 purposes in living a good life, ones that benefits self and others.

The **1st purpose** is that one should neither harm oneself nor harm others. *Not harming oneself* includes keeping one’s body healthy; *not harming others* entails cultivating one’s body in moral virtue. Cultivating one’s body means that one shows **the 5 respects** that are the roots of the 5 precepts, thus:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| (1) one respects <u>life</u> , | one lives and lets live; |
| (2) one respects <u>property</u> , | that is the life’s support and source of happiness for others; |
| (3) one respects <u>freedom</u> , | one shows restraint towards the person of others; |
| (4) one respects <u>truth</u> , | for the sake of wholesome communication and learning; and |
| (5) one respects <u>the mind</u> , | for the sake of happiness and personal growth. |

The **2nd purpose of life** is based on bodily cultivation so that it is the basis for **mental cultivation**. This is a natural extension of the 5th precept—the abstention from drunkenness (mental clouding)—that is, cultivating the mind for the sake of knowledge and wisdom, so that one is *intelligent and wise* in the world.

Intelligence is the ability and willingness to learn, understand and think in a logical and reasoned way so as to understand things. Intelligence should be the basis for learning and knowledge.

Knowledge is the information, understanding and skills that we gain through experience and learning or education. It is also the state of knowing a particular fact or situation. Knowledge should ripen into wisdom.

Wisdom is the ability to make sensible and beneficial decisions, and give good advice because of the wholesome knowledge and experience that we have.

Knowledge is usually sense-based, while wisdom involves a significant amount of thinking and reasoning. Knowledge can be received from *others*, but wisdom is mostly cultivated from *personal* experience and understanding.

2.5.2.2 Suffering differentiates between the foolish and the wise. For the foolish, suffering arises from not understanding pain, that it is our awareness and acceptance of the instability of the 4 elements interacting in our lives. When the foolish suffer physical pain, they worsen and prolong it by thinking about it in negative ways, such as blaming others for it, or trying to destroy the pain, without understanding what it is and how it arises, thus knowing how to end it and actually ending it.

The wise understand the nature of pain, that there are 2 kinds of pain, *the bodily* and *the mental*. This is based on the Buddha's advice to the aged Nakula, pitā to constantly reflect thus:

"My body may be sick, but my mind will not be sick." [2.4.3.5]

2.5.2.3 The Sall'atthēna Sutta (S 36.6) records the Buddha explaining the deeper aspects of the teaching on the 2 kinds of pain, thus:

Bhikshus, when **the untutored ordinary person** is being touched by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, becomes confused.

Hence, he feels **2 feelings**: the bodily and the mental.

Bhikshus, it is just as if they were to wound a person with **a dart** [an arrow],¹⁰² and then they were to wound him with a second dart.

As such, bhikshus, that person would feel the sensation of **2 darts**.

Even so, bhikshus, when the untutored ordinary person is touched by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, becomes confused.

So, he feels 2 feelings: *the bodily and the mental*.¹⁰³ (S 36.6,7-8), SD 5.5

The foolish, when touched by a painful feeling, shows aversion to it. In doing so, **the tendency of aversion** towards painful feeling lies latent in him; anger and hatred arise in him and grow. Then, the foolish seeks pleasure and delights in pleasure because "he knows no other escape than through sensual pleasure."¹⁰⁴

When the foolish delights in sensual pleasure, **the tendency of lust** towards pleasant feeling lies latent in him, and he does not truly understand "the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings."¹⁰⁵ Lust grows in him and overwhelms him.

Not understanding the true nature of feelings, **the tendency of ignorance** towards neutral feeling lies latent in him. Thus, whether he feels a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling or a neutral feeling, *it is yoked to him*. He is called a foolish person "who is yoked to birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair—he is one who is yoked to suffering, I say!"¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Comy: The second wound (*anugata, vedham*) would be just a finger's breadth or two-fingers' breadth away from the first one. For the one wounded, as such, would feel twice the pain; the subsequent pain is worse than the first. (SA 3:76).

¹⁰³ "The bodily and the mental"; this teaching is about moral training, ie, keeping the body and speech from being tainted by *greed, hate or delusion*. The basic Dharma training starts here. When we have strengthened this moral aspect, we are better prepared to deal with the mental "dart," ie, negative thoughts, feelings and emotions.

¹⁰⁴ Comy: The escape is *mental concentration, the path and the fruit*, but he does not know this, knowing only sensual pleasure. (SA 3:77)

¹⁰⁵ Cf **Cūḷa Sīha, nāda S** (M 11,7/1:65), SD 49.2, where Comy says the arising (*samudaya*) of the views of being (*bhava, diṭṭhi*) and of non-being (*vibhava, diṭṭhi*) are due to any of these 8 conditions (*aṭṭha-ṭ, thāna*): the 5 aggregates, ignorance, sense-contact, perception, thought, unwise attention, bad friends, and another's voice [Pm 1:138]. Their disappearance (*atthaṅgama*) is the path of streamwinning which eradicates wrong views. Their gratification (*assāda*) may be understood as the psychological satisfaction that they give; the danger (*ādīnava*) is the continual bondage that they entail; the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them is nirvana (MA 2:11). See **Cha Chakka S** (M 148) where latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses (M 148,28-33/3:285), SD 26.6.

¹⁰⁶ **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38, SD 7.10) concludes with an interesting, broader explanation of how an unawakened person delights in all kinds of feelings—whether pleasant, painful or neutral—"he delights in that feeling, welcomes it, and remains clinging to it." It also describes how the Buddha responds to these feelings (M 38,30-41/1:266-271), SD 7.10. See SD 7.20 Intro & also **Cūḷa, vedalla S** (M 44,25-28/1:303 f), SD 40a.9.

2.5.2.4 The wise, on the other hand, on being touched by a painful feeling, shows *neither hatred nor liking* to it; hence, *neither the tendencies of aversion nor of lust* lies latent in him. On being touched by a pleasant feeling, the wise delights not in it, because he knows the escape other than through sensual pleasure.¹⁰⁷

Not delighting in sensual pleasure, **the tendency of lust** towards pleasant feeling does not lie latent in him.

He truly understands “the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings.” Understanding thus, **the tendency of ignorance** towards neutral feeling does not lie latent in him.

Hence, when the wise feels a pleasant feeling, or a painful feeling, or a neutral feeling, *he is unyoked to any of them*.

This **wise noble disciple** “is not yoked to birth, or death, or sorrow, or lamentation, or physical pain, or mental pain, or despair—he is one who is not yoked to suffering, I say!” (S 36.6,9-10), SD 5.5

When the wise understands pain in this way, when he is touched by a painful feeling, “he *neither sorrows nor grieves nor laments nor beats his breast nor becomes confused*. Hence, he feels **(only) one feeling: the bodily, not the mental**.”¹⁰⁸

With this understanding, we may thus remind ourselves that **pain is natural, suffering is optional**.¹⁰⁹

2.6 “THE WILL FOR WHOLESOME STATES IS RARE IN THE WORLD”

2.6.1 Kusala,dhamma-c,chanda

2.6.1.1 The 6th and last point of **the Pātubhāva Sutta** is “**The will for wholesome states is rare in the world**.” The Pali for “the will for wholesome states” is *kusala,dhamma-c,chanda*. **The Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9) defines “**the wholesome**” (*kusala*) as the 10 wholesome courses of karma (*kusala kamma,patha*), that is, as follows:

(1) abstention from	killing living beings;	}	bodily karma
(2) abstention from	taking the not-given;		
(3) abstention from	sexual misconduct;		
(4) abstention from	false speech;	}	verbal karma
(5) abstention from	malicious speech;		
(6) abstention from	harsh speech;		
(7) abstention from	frivolous chatter;	}	mental karma
(8) non-covetousness;			
(9) non-ill will;			
(10) non-delusion.			

(M 9,6/1:47), SD 11.14

¹⁰⁷ The noble disciple is one who meditates, is joyfully mindful, and thus able to attain dhyana. He experiences great spiritual joy so that he is not drawn to sensual pleasures. When such a lay person indulges in sensual pleasures, he does so within the limits and spirit of the precepts, and knows when to stop, when to refrain from sensual pleasures.

¹⁰⁸ SA 3:77: Of the noble disciples, the stress here is on the arhat, though it would also apply to the nonreturner. Comys say that both have abandoned aversion (*paṭigha*) or ill will (*dosa*), and thus are no longer subject to mental pain or displeasure (*domanassa*). However, anyone with a body, incl the Buddha, is subject to bodily painful feeling. Even in the case of the unawakened wise, the mental pain troubles one not or is significantly reduced.

¹⁰⁹ SD 48.9 (6.2.5); SD 51.14 (3.2.3).

In practice, **nos. 1-3** constitute bodily karma, that is, abstention from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct which are the right action of the body; **nos. 4-7** constitute the 4 kinds of right speech, cultivated through speech; and **nos. 8-10** are the mental karma constituting right thought, that is, one cultivates mindfulness and awareness. These 10 wholesome courses of karma are defined “negatively” (apophatically) because they constitute the 10 precepts (*dasa sikkhāpada*) or moral training rules; they list the 10 wrong actions one should abstain from.

2.6.1.2 The Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9) then continues by defining **the wholesome roots** (*kusala, mūla*) as non-greed (*alobha*), non-hate (*adosa*) and non-delusion (*amoha*). These 3 wholesome roots, too, are defined “negatively” to show that in moral training, one begins by avoiding any **intentions** of greed, of hatred, or of delusion. On the mental training level, one then cultivates their wholesome opposites, those of charity, of love [lovingkindness] and of wisdom.¹¹⁰

2.6.2 Chanda

2.6.2.1 The term **chanda**, by itself, broadly means “desire, intention, will,” and has 3 dimensions of application, thus:

(1) **“Will.”** As a wholesome quality, it is wholesome will or zeal (*dhamma-c, chanda*) and occurs, for example, in the formula of the 4 right efforts (*samma-p, padhāna*):¹¹¹ “The monk rouses his will (*chandam janeti*)” When strengthened, it works as one of the 4 paths to spiritual power (*iddhipāda*).¹¹²

(2) **“Intention.”** As a psychological term, intention is one of the general mental factors (*cetasika*),¹¹³ according to the Abhidhamma, whose moral quality is determined by the nature of the volition (*cetanā*) behind an action. The Commentaries often explain *chanda* as “a wish to do” (*kattu, kamyatā*)¹¹⁴ in a wholesome sense, but it can be a neutral term.¹¹⁵ When strengthened, it acts also as a “predominance condition” (*ādhipati paccaya*).¹¹⁶

(3) **“Desire.”** As an English term, this can have a neutral sense when it functions as sense 1. But it here has an unwholesome sense of “wanting or seeking,” frequently coupled with terms for “sensuality,” “greed,” and so on, for instance: *kāma-c, chanda*, “sensual desire,” one of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*);¹¹⁷ and *chanda, rāga*, “lustful desire” (a synonym for *kāma*).¹¹⁸ It is one of 4 “biases” or wrong paths (*agati*), that is, greed, hatred, delusion and fear, that is, bad motives (*thāna*).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ M 9,7/1:47 (SD 11.14).

¹¹¹ The 4 right efforts are those of: (1) restraining an unarisen bad, (2) abandoning an arisen bad, (3) cultivating an unarisen good, and (4) guarding an arisen good. See SD 10.16 (6); for refs, see (6.1.2).

¹¹² The 4 paths to spiritual power are: (1) will or zeal (*chanda*); (2) effort (*virīya*); (3) mind (*citta*); and (4) investigation (*vīmaṃsā*): **Cattāro Iddhi, pāda** (SD 10.3); **Cakka, vatti Sīha, nāda S** (D 26,29), SD 36.10; **Mahā Sakul’udāyī S** (M 77,17) SD 49.5; **Chanda Samādhi Sutta** (S 51.13), SD 10.3(3.2); **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20), SD 28.14; SD 57.22 (1.2.39).

¹¹³ See BDict Table II.

¹¹⁴ As a wholesome quality: DA 2:642, 3:1006; MA 1:41; SA 3:256; Vbh 208, 209, 213, 216, 220, 223.

¹¹⁵ As a neutral quality: MA 3:426; AA 2:276; SnA 1:49; ThaA 3:82; ApA 141.

¹¹⁶ As one of the 24 conditions (*paccaya*), see SD 60.1e (13.12.3). BDict: paccaya 3.

¹¹⁷ The 5 hindrances are: (1) sensual desire; (2) ill will; (3) sloth and torpor; (4) restlessness and worry; and (5) doubt. See **Nīvaraṇa** (SD 32.1); (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12.

¹¹⁸ Esp as desire for the 5 cords of sensual pleasures (*kāma, guṇa*): SD 32.2 (1.2.2).

¹¹⁹ See **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

2.6.2.2 The context of *chanda* in the **Pātubhāva Sutta** is clearly stated as *kusala, dhammo chando*, “**the will for wholesome states.**” By “wholesome states” (*kusala, dhamma*) is meant actions (thought, speech and action) that are free from greed, hatred and delusion. “The will” here means “intention,” that is, wholesome intention [2.6.1.1].

This is defined as the 6th and last of what is “rare in the world.” **The world** (*loka*) here refers broadly to “beings,” and specifically to “humans, especially as society.” Without some form of moral conduct (such as ethical code, customs or a legal system), people are likely to behave in ways that disadvantage themselves and harm others.

Even when it is *customary* for people in a society to treat others with respect or with restraint, such attitude may easily be lost or forgotten due to various personal and social challenges (such as poverty and religious influence). Hence, it is vital that each person has the Dharma-spirited tendency to having **wholesome intention** so that moral goodness prevails, making possible the good society, or at least personal moral conduct.

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Pātubhāva Sutta

The Discourse on Events

A 6.96

(Originating in Sāvattihī.)

Bhikshus, 6 events are rare in the world. What are the six?

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) The appearance of a tathagata ,
the fully self-awakened arhat
is rare in the world. [2.1] | <i>tathāgatassa arahato sammā,sambuddhassa
pātubhāvo dullabho lokasmim̃</i> |
| (2) A person who teaches the Dharma-Vinaya
proclaimed by the tathagata
is rare in the world. [2.2] | <i>tathāgata-p,paveditassa dhamma,vinayassa
desetā puggalo dullabho lokasmim̃</i> |
| (3) Rebirth in the sphere of the noble ones
is rare in the world. [2.3] | <i>ariy'āyatane¹²⁰ paccajāti¹²¹ dullabhā¹²² lokasmim̃</i> |
| (4) Having unimpaired sense-faculties
is rare in the world. [2.4] | <i>indriyānaṃ¹²³ avekallatā¹²⁴ dullabhā lokasmim̃</i> |
| (5) Being intelligent and wise
is rare in the world. [2.5] | <i>ajaḷatā¹²⁵ aneḷa,mūgatā¹²⁶ dullabhā lokasmim̃</i> |
| (6) The will for wholesome states
is rare in the world. [2.6] | <i>kusale dhamme chando¹²⁷ dullabho lokasmim̃</i> |

These 6 events, bhikshus, are rare in the world.

—evaṃ—

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¹²⁰ Comy: *ariy'āyatane ti majjhima,dese*, “the middle country” (AA 3:414,15). See [2.3].

¹²¹ *Paccajāti* (fem; BHS *prtyājati*; cf *paccājāyati*, “is reborn”), birth, rebirth.

¹²² Be Ee so; Se *paccā,jāto dullabho*.

¹²³ *Indriyānaṃ ti mana-c,chatṭhānaṃ*, “the 6 (senses ending) with the mind” (AA 3:414,16).

¹²⁴ *Avekallatā* = *na* (without) + *ve-kalla* (deficiency) + *tā* (abstract n suffix).

¹²⁵ *Ajaḷatā* = *a-jaḷa* (not stupid) + *tā* (abstract n suffix): D 3,265,16; A 1:35,20 (pl; Comy *amūḷhā*), 3:137,16, 175,22, 176,11, 437,4, 4:227,3.

¹²⁶ *Aneḷa,mugatā* = *an-ela-mūga* (not a fool or imbecile): Sn 70 (~o *sutavā satīmā*; = *a-lālā-mukho, athavā an-eḷo ca a-mūgo ca, paṇḍito vyatto ti vuttarṃ hoti*, SnA & NmA); D 3:265,16 (*paññavā ajaḷo ~o paṭibalo subhāsita,dubbhā-sitānaṃ attharṃ aññātum*) = A 4:227,3 ≠ A 1:35,20 (pl ~ā; AA: *yesarṃ elā mukhato na galati te ~ā nāma*); A 3:137,18 (*paññavā hoti ajaḷo ~o*) = 262,3 = 437,4; S 5:100,6 (*paññavā ~o*); M 1:32,23 (*paññāvanto ~ā*) = A 3:199,16. °-*tā*, fem abstr, A 3:441,8; SnA 34,19.

¹²⁷ Be so; Ce Ee Se *kusala,dhamma-c,chando*.