SD 65.12

Saṅgaṇikā,rāma Sutta

The Discourse on the One Delighting in Company | **A 6.68**
Theme: To awaken, the mind must free itself from everything
Translated and annotated by Piya Tan 2010, ©2026

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The Saṅgaṇikā,rāma Sutta (A 6.68) is a short text on how to free the mind so that it will gain awakening. The Sutta records the Buddha as advising that one should:

(1)	be free of social engagement so that one can have	mental solitude	[1.2.1]
(2)	to be able to focus on	the meditation sign (object),	[1.2.2]
(3)	which frees one from unwholesome roots and brings	right view,	[1.2.3]
(4)	when the mind is able to have	full concentration,	[1.2.4]
(5)	with which the mind abandons all	the mental fetters,	[1.2.5]
(6)	and with that one attains	nirvana.	[1.2.6]

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 When one is socially engaged, the mind is busy externally

1.2.1.1 The Saṅgaṇikā,rāma Sutta does not state that socializing in itself is bad and should be avoided. Rather, it states that mental defilements often arise when we are engaged in social intercourse. When we are socially engaged, it is likely that all our sense-faculties—*seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching*—and the mind (*perceiving, feeling, emotions, and minding*) are all engaged externally.

When we socialize, we are engaged with someone else, often with more than one person at a time, even with a crowd. This means that our minds will be always busy minding the various sense-experiences and mental processes. The mind will be unable to fully see itself in a wholesome light, since it is more likely to engage with greed, hatred and delusion.

1.2.1.2 Solitude (*viveka*), on the other hand, refers to the effort and attitude of keeping oneself in an ambience of peace and pleasantness conducive to mental stillness and development. In this sense, there are 3 kinds of solitude, that of *the body,* of *the mind* and *the spiritual.*[1] Specifically, such solitude refers to the attaining of the 1st dhyana, as laid out in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2). The Sutta speaks of the 3 kinds of solitude as follows:

> (1) **Physical solitude** (*kāya,viveka*). A remote and pleasant place such as a forest setting, an empty building, or an open space (usually under a tree). Therein, the meditator "sits down, crosses his legs, keeps his body erect, and establishes mindfulness before him."
>
> (2) **Mental solitude** (*citta,viveka*). The meditator clears his mind of the 5 mental hindrances, that is, *sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and spiritual doubt*.
>
> (3) **Spiritual solitude** or "solitude from acquisitions" (*upadhi,viveka*), that is, letting go of and having freedom from the 5 aggregates, sensual desire, mental defilements and karma

[1] See **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4 (4.2).

(collectively, known as "acquisitions," *upadhi*), which hold us in samsara.[2] This is the solitude of the path. The phrase "the abandoning of all acquisitions" (*sabb'upadhi paṭinissagga*) refers to nirvana.[3]

(D 2,67-69/1:71) + SD 8.10 (4.2)

1.2.2 A mind free from the senses easily focuses on the present

1.2.2.1 In our daily life, when we are not mindful or meditating, our mind is likely to be incessantly engaged with some sense-object or mental object: we are processing what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think*. Our mind is absorbed with this external processing and will not be able to mind itself. This happens because our **attention** is entirely engaged in the *content* of our sensing or thought. We cannot be both the **actor** and the **audience** at the same exact moment.

1.2.2.2 Think of our mind as being like **a cinema**:

- The **screen** is our awareness.
- **Watching the movie** is our sensing, feeling, and thinking.

When the movie is playing, we get so wrapped up in the story that we forget we are just sitting in a chair watching light and sound.

When we get lost in a thought or an emotion, we slip into **cognitive fusion**.[4] This means that we treat what our mind tells us as absolute truth. For example, if we think, "I am suffering," then we believe it as a fact rather than just noticing a passing thought. By saying "I," we have "owned" that negative thought or emotion; we keep feeling the negative emotion even when the actual thought has passed.

1.2.2.3 We cannot see the thought itself because we are looking *through* it into the past. A memory takes over and we have lost the present; we have lost the mind in the past or in the future!

To "mind" itself, the mind needs to take a step back. It must shift from active **thinking** to mindful **observing**. Instead of being swept away by the thought current, we sit safely by the riverbank watching the water flow by. The mind is then focused in the present.[5]

1.2.3 One has "right view" when the mind is free from the unwholesome roots

1.2.3.1 "**Right view**" (*sammā,diṭṭhi*) in Dharma training is not about having the correct or authoritative view;[6] it is not about knowing the right teachings and propositions.[7] We may even know the Abhidhamma or have some deep understanding about Buddhism; the point is that we can still have wrong view even of the best teaching of Buddhism.

A wrong understanding of even wholesome teachings can lead to *attachment* to them; thus one has craving. A right understanding of both wrong teachings as wrong and right teachings as right should free one from being attached to either teachings as mere views. In other words, one is free from craving and attachment.[8]

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[2] Sn 33c, 33d ‖ 364a, 34c, 374c546a = 572a, 728ce = 1051ac.

[3] Occurrences of *upadhi* in the Nikāyas: **D** 2:36, 37; **M** 1:136, 137, 168, 436, 2:93, 245; **S** 3:133, 134, 136, 5:226 (×2); **A** 1:133, 2:118, 3:164, 4:423 (×2), 424, 425, 426 (×2), 5:8, 110, 111, 319, 320, 322, 354, 356, 357, 358.

[4] A Comninos, "Negative thinking—What your poor brain doesn't know" [mi-psych]. 19 July 2026.

[5] D R Vago & F Zeidan, "The brain on silent" [nin]. 19 July 2026.

[6] See SD 65.9 (3.4) On pragmatics and truth.

[7] See SD 65.6 (2) On right view and propositions.

[8] One should not be attached to knowledge, SD 65.9 (3.4.2).

1.2.3.2 The mind needs to be wholesomely focused to gain calm and clarity. A calm and clear mind is at least temporarily free from *greed, hatred and delusion*. One is then able to see into the true nature of things, that is, that they are *impermanent, unsatisfactory and without an abiding entity*. Such a mind will not be distracted by a sense-object or a thought as being pleasant or unpleasant and react to it with lust or ill will. One does not identify with any such experience.

1.2.4 A mind free from the unwholesome roots concentrates fully

1.2.4.1 A mind free from *greed, hatred and delusion* is, as such, a wholesome mind. It means that the mind is not easily distracted by sense-objects or mental objects, by any sense-experience or any thought [1.2.3.2]. Such a mind is calm and joyful, happy and focused just the way it is.

1.2.4.2 Two short suttas—**the (Ekaka) Udaka,rahada Suttas 1 and 2** (A 1.45 f/1:9)—use the parable of a pool of water (*udaka,rahada*) to illustrate these 2 types of minds, one that is turbid and one that is limpid.

The whole **(Ekaka) Udaka,rahada Sutta 1** (A 1.45) reads thus:

> Bhikshus, suppose there were a pool of water that was **cloudy, turbid[9] and muddy**. Then, a person with good eyesight standing on the bank is unable to see shellfish, gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish swimming about and resting.[10]
>
> So, too, it is impossible for a monk with a cloudy mind to know his own good, the good of others, or the good of both, or to realize the superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.[11] Why is that? Because, bhikshus, his mind is cloudy."[12]
>
> (**A 1.45**/1:9)

1.2.4.3 The (Ekaka) Udaka,rahada Sutta 2 (A 1.46) which gives the positive version of the Sutta teaching reads thus:

> Bhikshus, suppose there were a pool of water that was **limpid, clear and still**. Then, a person with good eyesight standing on the bank is *able to see* shellfish, gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish swimming about and resting.[13]
>
> So, too, it is possible for a monk with an unclouded mind to know his own good, the good of others, or the good of both, or to realize **the superhuman state that is the distinction in know-**

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[9] "Turbid," *luḷito,* meaning "unstill (flowing)" (*aparisaṇṭhito.* AA 1:10). Subcomy explains ***luḷito*** as "made turbid by the wind" (*vātena āluḷito*): "Because the water was agitated by the wind, the pool's surface became uneven and unsettled, not still, not steady. Due to the wind, the water looked dull, it was muddy; hence, it was said to have become muddy (*kaddamā,bhūto*, Comy)." (AAṬ:Be 1:98,3-6)

[10] *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave udaka,rahado **āvilo luḷito kalalī,bhūto**, tattha cakkhumā puriso tīre ṭhito na passeyya sippi,sambukam pi sakkhara,kaṭhalam pi maccha,gumbam pi carantam pi tiṭṭhantam pi.* (A 1.45,7-10/1:9).

[11] Comy: "Cloudy," *āvilena,* shrouded by the 5 hindrances (AA 1:57,23). Elsewhere, eg, **(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgāvara S** (S 46.55,8/5:123), SD 3.12, and **(Pañcaka) Saṅgārava S** (A 5.193,5/3:223,3-19), SD 73.3, cloudy water is identified with the hindrance of doubt, and limpid water with freedom from doubt.

[12] *Taṁ kissa hetu? Āvilattā bhikkhave udakassa. Evam eva kho bhikkhave so vata bhikkhu āvilena cittena attatthaṁ vā ñassati, paratthaṁ vā ñassati, ubhayatthaṁ vā ñassati, uttariṁ vā manussa,dhammā alam-ariya,ñāṇa.dassana,-visesaṁ sacchikarissatī ti n'etaṁ ṭhānaṁ vijjati. Taṁ kissa hetu? Āvilattā bhikkhave cittassā ti.* (A 1.45,10-16/1:9).

[13] *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave udaka,rahado **accho vipassano anāvilo**, tattha cakkhumā puriso tīre ṭhito passeyya sippi,sambukam pi sakkhara,kaṭhalam pi maccha,gumbam pi carantam pi tiṭṭhantam pi.* (A 1.46,17-20/1:9).

ledge and vision truly worthy of the noble ones. Why is that? Because, bhikshus, his mind is unclouded.[14] (**A 1.46**/1:9)

*Commentary on ***uttariṁ manussa,dhammā alam-ariya,nana.dassana,visesaṁ***

The Commentary treats *uttariṁ manussa,dhammā* ("superhuman state") as a complex ablative[15] phrase relative to *alam-ariya,nana.dassana,visesaṁ* ("distinction in knowledge truly worthy of the noble ones").

"**Superhuman state**" means superior human virtue consisting in the 10 courses of wholesome karma. For this tenfold virtue is called "human virtue" because it is undertaken by people on their own—even without anyone to encourage them—but moved by spiritual urgency (*jāta,saṁvegehi*) such as at the end of "the sword-interval" (*satth'antara,kappa*).[16] The things superior to this are *dhyanas, insight, the path and the fruit*.

Distinction in knowledge and vision truly worthy of the noble ones: the excellence consisting in knowledge and vision that is truly fitting for the noble ones or able to produce the noble state. Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) itself is that which *knows*, and it is called "vision" (*dassana*) in that it *sees* [understands]. This is a designation for the knowledge of *the divine eye, insight knowledge, path knowledge, fruition knowledge, and review knowledge*. (AA 1:58,5-16)

1.2.5 A concentrated mind is able to abandon the mental fetters

1.2.5.1 Those states opposing the path of awakening are **the 10 mental fetters** (*dasa saṁyojana*),[17] so called because they hold one back in the world, preventing one from gaining the path. The fetters are here [1.2.5] numbered 1-10, which shall be discussed in sets showing how breaking a particular set brings about a stage of the path, that is, streamwinning [1.2.5.1], once-returning [1.2.5.2], nonreturning [1.2.5.3],and arhathood [1.2.6].

The first 3 fetters—those preventing the arising of **streamwinning**—are those of:[18]

1. self-identity view *sakkāya,diṭṭhi*,
2. spiritual doubt *vicikicchā*,
3. attachment to rituals and vows *sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*.

Self-identity view refers to our ingrained habit of identifying with *the body or the mind* (that is, feelings, perception, formations or consciousness) as being what "I am," as "me," or as "mine"—that is, through self view, conceit or craving. This leads to the belief that there is some kind of fixed or eternal Self or Soul.

Spiritual doubt is a lack of understanding and acceptance of the Buddha, the Dharma and the noble sangha. This means respectively that one has neither understanding nor acceptance of possibility of human awakening; nor understanding or acceptance of the Buddha's teaching on awakening; nor under-

[14] *Taṁ kissa hetu? Anāvilattā bhikkhave udakassa. Evam eva kho bhikkhave so vata bhikkhu anāvilena cittena attatthaṁ vā ñassati, paratthaṁ vā ñassati, ubhayatthaṁ vā ñassati, uttariṁ vā manussa,dhammā alam-ariya,-ñāṇa.dassana,visesaṁ sacchikarissatī ti ṭhānam etaṁ vijjati. Taṁ kissa hetu? Anāvilattā bhikkhave cittassā ti.* (A 1.46,10-16/1:9). Cf **(Catukka) Udaka,rahada S 1** (A 4.104/2:105 f).

[15] The 5th Pali case (*pañcama*), indicating the agent in passive sentences or the instrument or manner or place of the action described by the verb. It denotes *the point starting from which* an action proceeds, denoting "whence" or "from." See O H de A Wijesekera, *Syntax of the Cases in the Pali Nikayas,* Kelaniya, 1993: ch V.

[16] **Cakka,vatti S** (**D 26**,21/3:73,4), SD 36.10.

[17] On the 10 fetters, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8); SD 11.1 (5.1.4); SD 3.3 (2); SD 56.1 (4.4).

[18] On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

standing or acceptance of the path of awakening open to those who overcome the unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hatred and delusion.

Attachment to rituals and vows means that because of one's lack of wisdom and faith in the Dharma of self-reliance and self-awakening, one instead resorts to seeking succour and salvation from some external agency such as a God-idea or some kind of superstition.

Giving up the self view regarding one's body and mind, giving up all doubt regarding the 3 jewels, and giving up attachment to superstition, one gains **streamwinning**.

1.2.5.2 The streamwinner, due to his wisdom and faith in self-reliance in awakening to the path, will never break any of the 5 precepts (against *killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, falsehood or intoxication*). However, a streamwinner still has some level of latent tendencies of sensual lust and aversion. This means that a streamwinner may still live as a family person, with a husband or a wife; but they will be chaste and self-restrained.

When the streamwinner is able to significantly weaken the 3 unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hatred and delusion, he attains **once-returning** (*sakad-āgamita*). Upon dying, he will be reborn one more time in a spiritually conducive life; during the last life, he will resolve his karma to remove the 5 lower fetters to become a nonreturner [1.2.5.3] or, to remove all the higher fetters, too, to become an arhat [1.2.6].[19]

1.2.5.3 When one has broken all the 5 lower fetters, especially the last two, that is,[20]

4. sensual lust *kāma,rāga*,
5. aversion *paṭigha*,

one attains the stage of **nonreturning** (*anagāmita*). This means that upon dying from the sense-world, one *will never return* to it. Even as a nonreturner living in this world, one would happily live a life of full celibacy and renunciation, very much like a virtuous monastic.

Upon dying in this world as a nonreturner, one is reborn in one of **the pure abodes** (*suddh'āvāsa*)[21] a special 4th-dhyana dimension inhabited only by nonreturners; hence, these abodes are not called "stations of consciousness" (*viññāṇa-ṭ,ṭhiti*), like almost all the other realms.[22] The nonreturners live there for the rest of their lives cultivating their minds to gain arhathood.

1.2.6 When one is free of all the mental fetters one gains the path and nirvana

1.2.6.1 The first 5 fetters are also called "**the lower fetters**" (*orambhāgiya saṁyojana*) [1.2.5.3] because they hold beings to the "lower" or sense-world. While the streamwinner and the once-returner are still reborn in the sense-world, the nonreturner breaks free from it to be reborn in the highest of the

[19] See SD 10.16 (12.1.2.1).

[20] On the 5 lower fetters (1-5) (*orambhāgiya saṁyojana*), see **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179) + SD 50.11 (2); SD 10.16 (1.6.7).

[21] The pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*) are the 5 highest heavens of the form-dhyana world (*rūpa,loka*). They are not listed as "stations of consciousness" (*viññāna-ṭ,ṭhiti*) because they are inhabited only by nonreturners, who assume their last birth there to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are Aviha ("non-declining"), Atappa ("untroubled"), Sudassā ("clearly visible"), Sudassī ("clear-visioned") and Akaṇiṭṭhā ("peerless") (**D 33**,2.1(17)/3:237, **M 120**,28-32/3:103 (SD 3.4), Vbh 425, Pug 42-46); SD 10.16 (13.1.6); SD 23.14 (Table 3).

[22] The "base of non-percipient beings" (*asaññā,sattā*) is also not a "station of consciousness": see SD 23.14 (Table 3).

4th dhyana form worlds, that is, in one of the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), which are conducive to deep meditation.

The last 5 fetters are known as "**the higher fetters**" (*uddham,bhāgiya saṁyojana*),[23] so called because they still hold the saint in the "higher" worlds, that is, the form dhyana world or the formless dhyana world. Those who desire to be reborn in the heaven worlds, with the right karma, will be reborn there. However, with the exhaustion of the supporting karma, they will fall from those heavenly worlds, and, if they are not at least streamwinners, they will fall into one of the lower suffering states, and remain there for a long time.[24]

1.2.6.2 The nonreturners in the highest of the 4th-dhyana worlds, the pure abodes [1.2.5.3], spend their time mostly in deep meditation to resolve their remaining karma and attain arhathood. They are not troubled by any desire for rebirth; on account of their meditative state, even the nonreturner with the slowest progress will attain arhathood in one of the pure abodes—Aviha, Atappa, Sudassā, Sudassī or Akaṇiṭṭhā.

The main reason for the nonreturner remaining in the pure abodes is that they *enjoy* the deep meditation instead of letting it go![25] Moreover, the lifespans of the various heavens of the pure abodes are very long indeed, compared to the average human lifespan and those of other devas.[26]

Other reasons for a nonreturner to be slow in attaining arhathood may be because they still have **conceit**, that is, the subtle, even joyful, sense of pride in their attainment, that they *are* nonreturners. Or, being compassionate and concerned about other beings, they feel a sense of **restlessness** when they see beings suffering and slow in seeing the true nature of Dharma. The final remnant of the fetters is that of **ignorance**; they have yet to realize the higher wisdom that brings awakening.

The 5 higher fetters are as follows:[27]

6. lust for form existence — *rūpa,rāga*,
7. lust for formless existence — *arūpa,rāga*,
8. conceit — *māna*,
9. restlessness — *uddhacca*,
10. ignorance — *avijjā*.

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[23] On the 5 higher fetters (6-10) (*uddhambhāgiya saṁyojana*), see **Uddham,bhāgiya S** (S 45.180) + SD 50.12 (2.4); SD 10.16 (1.6.8).

[24] See **(Catukka) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a; SD 64.8 (2.1.1.2).

[25] On letting go of dhyana to progress: SD 64.6 (1.1.3.3).

[26] The lifespans of the pure abodes are as follows: Avihā (1,000 aeons), Atappā (2,000 aeons), Sudassā (4,000 aeons), Sudassī (8,000 aeons), and Akaniṭṭhā (16,000 aeons). See Vbh 422-426; Vism 7.40-44; Abhs ch 5; for table, see SD 1.7 (App).

[27] On the evolution of the fetters formula, see SD 18.7 (9.1.5.9); SD 55.17 (3). On the fetters and sainthood, see SD 40a.1 (15.4.4) n; SD 49.14 Table 2. On the fetters and the influxes (*āsava*), see SD 30.3 (1.3.3): 3 influxes; SD 50.-12 (2.5.2.2) + Table.

Saṅgaṇikā,rāma Sutta

The Discourse on the One Delighting in Company

A 6.68

WHEN AWAKENING IS IMPOSSIBLE

1 Bhikshus,

(1) it is **impossible** that a monk who delights in company,[28] is delighted with company, is devoted to delight in company;

who delights in a group, is delighted with a group, is devoted to delight in a group,

will find delight in **being alone in solitude**.[29]

(2) It is impossible that one who does *not* delight in being alone in solitude **[423]** will gain **the mind's sign**.[30]

(3) It is impossible that one who does *not* acquire the mind's sign will fulfill **right view**.

(4) It is impossible that one who does *not* fulfill right view will fulfill **right concentration**.

(5) It is impossible that one who does *not* fulfill right concentration will **abandon the fetters**.

(6) Without having abandoned the fetters, it is impossible that one will realize **nirvana**.

WHEN AWAKENING IS POSSIBLE

2 Bhikshus,

(1) it is **possible** that a monk who does *not* delight in company, is not delighted with company, is not devoted to delight in company;

who does *not* delight in a group, is not delighted with a group, is not devoted to delight in a group,

will find **delight in being alone in solitude**.

(2) It is possible that one who finds delight in being alone in solitude will acquire **the mind's sign**.

(3) It is possible that one who acquires the mind's sign will fulfill **right view**.

(4) It is possible that one who fulfills right view will fulfill **right concentration**.

(5) It is possible that one who fulfills right concentration will **abandon the fetters**.

(6) Having abandoned the fetters, it is possible that one will realize **nirvana**."

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[28] "Delights in company," *saṅgaṇikā,rāmo.* Subcomy says that ***saṅgaṇikā*** refers to mixing with one's own companions (*saka,parisa,samodhānaṁ*), while ***gaṇa*** refers to mixing with other people (such as the laity) (*nānā,jana,-samodhānaṁ*) (AAṬ:Be 3:142).

[29] *Eko paviveke abhiramissatī ti n'etaṁ ṭhānaṁ vijjati,* "(That one will think,) 'I will delight in being alone in solitude'—this is impossible."

[30] *Cittassa nimittaṁ.* Comy: "The object of the mind with concentration and insight, the aspect of concentration and insight" (*samādhi,vipassana,cittassa nimittam samadhi,vipassanâkāraṁ*) (AA 3:410,20 f). Comy here points to the 2 senses of the word *nimitta,* as object and as sign or aspect.