# SD 65.2

# Kāḷak'ārāma Sutta

The Discourse at Kāḷaka's Park | **A 4.24**
Theme: How the Buddha knows things rightly and fully
Translated and annotated by Piya Tan 2009, ©2026

## 1 Sutta summary and significance

### 1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

**The Kāḷak'ārāma Sutta** (A 4.24) is about the Buddha's awakened state and range of knowledge. The Buddha knows and understands "**whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued**" (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6). The Buddha's knowledge encompasses the whole of the inhabited universe, "**this world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people**" (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Since the Buddha is awakened, he neither conceives (*maññati*) [§§4-8] nor is he caught up with views [§§30 f]. He is "just that" (*tādī*) [1.2.1.2], a unique being of wisdom and compassion.

### 1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

#### 1.2.1 The contents of the Buddha's knowledge

**1.2.1.1** The Buddha knows and understands "**whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued**" (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6). "Whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known" refers to both his awakened state and that of the world; "attained, sought after, mentally pursued" refers basically to the experiences of the unawakened.

**1.2.1.2** The Buddha's knowledge is in accordance with true reality; he directly understands things just as they are. His omniscience (*sabbaññutā*) is simply that (***tādī***) [§6]: he knows "the all" (*sabba*), that is, the sense-based and the mind-based, beyond which nothing can be known [4.2.1.1]. This does not mean that there *is* nothing to know beyond the senses and the mind, but rather that **knowing and understanding** are the natural activities of the awakened mind. [1.2.2.2]

The Commentary speaks of the Buddha's **ground of omniscience** (*sabbaññuta,bhūmi*) as indicated by the verbs *jānāmi, abbhaññāsiṁ* and *viditaṁ,* which we will examine more closely below. [1.3.1]

**1.2.1.3** The Sutta Commentary applies a framework of **the 5 grounds** (*bhūmi*) encompassing the wisdom and nature of the Buddha, which are in fact the key categories of the Sutta in terms of Dharma subject-matter. The 5 grounds are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) The ground of omniscience | *sabbaññuta,bhūmi* | (AA 3:38,24) | [1.3.1] |
| (2) The ground of influx destruction | *khīṇ'āsava,bhūmi* | (AA 3:39,7) | [1.3.2] |
| (3) The ground of truth | *sacca,bhūmi* | (AA 3:39,15) | [1.3.3] |
| (4) The ground of emptiness | *suññatā,bhūmi* | (AA 3:40,5) | [1.3.4] |
| (5) The ground of suchness | *tādi,bhūmi* | (AA 3:30,14) | [1.3.5] |

Each of these grounds will be elaborated accordingly *below* with the cross-references indicated above.[1]

[1] For a study, see K Ñāṇananda, *The Magic of the Mind: An exposition of the Kālakārāma Sutta,* Kandy, 1974.

### 1.2.2 The range of the Buddha's knowledge

**1.2.2.1** The Buddha's knowledge encompasses the whole of the inhabited universe, "**this world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people**" (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6) [§2]. A special quality of the Buddha's knowledge—an awakened knowledge that is also found in the arhats who have awakened just like him—is that he knows what there is to know, whether sense-based or mind-based.

**1.2.2.2** With his full knowledge and awakened understanding of the world and beyond, he teaches others who are willing to listen and ready to benefit from the teaching. He openly teaches to others what he knows and understands, and the listener who practises accordingly gains the very same awakening as he has: the knowledge and joy of nirvana while alive and freedom from time and space after death.

## 1.3 THE TATHAGATA'S 5 GROUNDS

### 1.3.1 The ground of omniscience (*sabbaññuta,bhūmi*)

**1.3.1.1** The Sutta uses *3 key verbs* of knowing to indicate **the ground of omniscience** (*sabbaññuta,-bhūmi*) of the Buddha [1.2.1.3]; in other words, these 3 verbs indicate how the Buddha knows or can know whatever he wants at any one time. **The 3 verbs**[2] are as follows:

(The 2nd round brackets at the end—with §—refer to the location of the verbs.) [The square brackets at the end refer to the comments on the verbs; thus:]

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | ***jānāmi*** | (present 1 singular) | "I know, understand" | (§2) | [1.3.1.2] |
| (2) | ***abbhaññāsiṁ*** | (aorist 3 singular of *abhijānāti*) | "I directly knew"[3] | (§3) | [1.3.1.3] |
| (3) | ***viditaṁ*** | (present participle of *vindati*) | "is known" (to me) | (§3) | [1.3.1.4] |

**1.3.1.2** The 1st verb ***jānāmi*** ("I know," pres 1 sg) is found in the sentence, "in this world … " whatever that is "seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued" (*diṭṭhaṁ sutaṁ mutaṁ viññātaṁ pattaṁ pariyesitaṁ anuvicaritaṁ manasā*)— "*that* **I know**" (*tam ahaṁ jānāmi*) (§2). The present tense functions as a universal and enduring truth: the Buddha *knows*, just as it is, what he senses and what his thoughts are.

In this sense, he neither conceives nor imagines—both actions encompassed in the verb *maññati*—but he is fully aware (*sampajāna*) of his thought-processes even as he speaks. Hence, even when he is using a metaphor or relating a story, he is well aware of its contents and significance. Even if we are

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[2] Comy: "By these 3 terms—*jānāmi*, *abbhaññāsiṁ, viditaṁ*—the ground of omniscience (*sabbaññuta,bhūmi*) is indicated" (AA 3:38,19-24). The Buddha rejects the notion that one could know everything *all the time* (**Te,vijja Vaccha,gotta S** (M 71,5/1:482,4-18) or that one could know everything *at the same time* (**Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S**, M 90,8/-2:127,28-30). He also says that he does not totally reject the possibility of omniscience (**M 90**,5/2:126,31-127,11). He can thus know anything he wants at any one time: **Sandaka S** (M 76,21+52) SD 35.7 (3.2); also SD 36.2 (5.1.1.2); but it is unlikely to incl much knowledge of the future, since that is neither fixed nor fated: SD 36.2 (5.10.3). On the Buddha's knowledge of the future: **Pāsādika S** (D 29), SD 40a.6 [2.4.2].

[3] In the English idiom, this **aorist** form has to be stated as "I have directly known," ie, what happened in the past, but continues to be true. In Pali grammar, the **aorist** (*ajjattanī*) is the primary past tense. It is the most common verb form used to narrate past events, tell stories, and describe actions that have already been completed, usually referring to the recent past (in this life) or today. In Pali, older distinctions between historical, imperfect, and past perfect tenses merge into the aorist. Hence, an aorist phrase or sentence has to be contextually translated. [PaliGrammar] [Youtube] [PaliStudies] [TipitakaNet] 11 June 2026.

unable to imagine how the Buddha does this, the point is that this is the wholesomely ideal way the mind should work. This entails the application of mindfulness and full awareness (*sati,sampajañña*).[4]

**1.3.1.3** The 2nd verb ***abbhaññāsiṁ*** ("I directly knew," aor 1 sg) is found in the sentence, "in this world … " whatever that is "seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued"— "*that* **I directly knew** [have directly known]" (*tam ahaṁ abbhaññāsiṁ*) (§3). The Commentary resolves *abbhaññāsiṁ* as ***abhi-aññāsiṁ*** (indicating that it comes from *abhi-jānāti,* "to directly know") and adds the synonym ***jāniṁ*** (to know).[5]

The **aorist** ["undefined" or "indefinite"] in Pali is the primary and most commonly used inflected past tense, covering general past actions, the recent past, and the present perfect.[6] Here it relates that the Buddha gained or has gained this direct and full knowledge with his awakening under the bodhi tree, and once awakened, remained so even until the final nirvana.[7] This aorist formulation of the Buddha's knowledge means that it is ever present in him.

**1.3.1.4** The 3rd verb is ***viditaṁ*,** "it is made known" (§3), describes that the Buddha has formulated his awakening in such a way that others, hearing it, may understand it, practise it, and so themselves awaken just like the Buddha. These are the **teachings** (*dhamma*) he has taught and left behind as our spiritual legacy for us *to study, practise, realize*, and in that way *perpetuate* through the ages.

In this broad sense, then, as explained by the Commentary, ***viditaṁ*** means "clarified, made known." "It shows that just as I have understood so I have clarified it so that others may understand it, too."[8]

With these 3 words, **the ground of omniscience** is described. (AA 3:38,19-24)

### 1.3.2 The ground of influx destruction (*khīṇ'āsava,bhūmi*)

**1.3.2.1** Yet there is a caveat to this ever-present knowledge of the Buddha: "**the tathagata did not subject himself to it**" (*taṁ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi*). The verb ***upaṭṭhāsi*** is aorist 3rd person singular of *upaṭṭhāti* or *upatiṭṭhati,* "to approach, go near, stand close to (in order to serve); to tend; worship"; here it implies: "to wait on, attend on, serve"; hence, to be subservient or subject to it (DP).

**The Commentary** gives a synonym, ***upagañchi***, which is aorist 3rd sg of *upagacchati,* "to go to, approach, arrive at, visit"; figuratively, it implies to become, acquire a quality (CPD), that is, to be subject to (DP). The Commentary explains: "The tathagata was not subject to any of the 6 sense-objects, that is, he did not take any of them up (*na upagañchi*) through craving or views.[9]

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[4] SD 13.1 (3.6).

[5] ***Abbhaññāsin*** *ti abhi-aññāsiṁ, jānin ti attho* (AA 3:38,21). ***Jāniṁ*** in this sense is rare (V 2:54,34 *na jāniṁ,* "not known"; ThīA 90,5 *na jāniṁ*). More often, it is ***jāni*** (Skt *jyāni*), "destitution, loss; a fine, confiscation": **M 19**/1:115,-34, "confiscation"; **Dh 138**, "destitution;" **A 11.9**/5:324,18, "a loss." Dh 138's parallel at Uv 28.28 does not have *jāniṁ*. See Dh:CP 208, tr *jāniṁ*, "destitution," ie, "loss of (what) has been gained with difficulty" (***jānin*** *ti kicchâdhigatassa dhanassa* ***jāniṁ,*** DhA 3:70; Dh:CP 207); Dh:N 20 (138*), "loss." See DP: jāni[2]; Oberlies, *Pāli Grammar,* 2019:16.1 (144).

[6] [Andy], [Warder], [Glossary]. 6 September 2026.

[7] The term *parinibbāna* is often understood as referring to "final nirvana," but the proper sense is that of "full (*pari*) nirvana or awakening." SD 50.1 (2.1.1.7; 2.2); SD 50.13 (1.3.1.2).

[8] ***Viditan*** *ti pākaṭaṁ katvā ñātaṁ. Iminā etaṁ dasseti—aññe jānanti yeva, mayā pana pākaṭaṁ katvā viditan ti* (AA 3:38,22 f).

[9] Comy, more fully: For it is said: 'The Blessed One sees a form with the eye, but he has no desire and lust for it; the Blessed One is fully liberated in mind … . The Blessed One cognizes a phenomenon with the mind, but he has no desire and lust for it; the Blessed One is fully liberated in mind' [**S 35.232**/4:164 f]. By this the ground of arhathood (*khīṇ'āsava,bhūmi)* is meant." (AA 3:38,25-39,8)

**1.3.2.2** The Buddha himself is not attached to his own teachings—in fact, he warns us against taking the teaching merely on the word level, but to taste the freedom that the teaching brings. This utilitarian emphasis is clearly and beautifully stated in **the 2 key parables**—those of the water-snake and of the raft—found in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), summarized here:

**The parable of the water-snake** (*alagaddūpamā*) highlights the dangers of the misuse or "wrong grasping" (*dugahītattā*) of the Dharma as teaching, that is, "only for the sake of criticizing others and for winning arguments or debates" (M 22,10). But the errant monk, Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, who claims that sensual pleasures are not detrimental to Dharma training, "misrepresents us by his wrong grasp, injures himself and stores up much demerit. For this will lead to his harm and suffering for a long time." (M 22,10).[10]

**The parable of the raft** (*kull'upamā*) highlights the meaningfulness and purposefulness of the Dharma, and specifically warns us against ritualizing or dogmatizing it. The Dharma he has taught is meant for our practice so that we ourselves will attain awakening and be free from suffering. It is like we put together a workable raft to cross the waters (where there is neither a bridge nor a ferry), and, having reached the safety of the far shore, we leave the raft behind or leave it to float in the water.[11]

**1.3.2.3** The Buddha, highlighting his mindfulness and awareness, states that "**the tathagata did not subject himself**" to any sense-object or any mind-object; **the (Saṁyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta** (S 35.232) explains it thus:

> The Blessed One sees this form with his eye, **[39]**
> but there is no desire or lust in the Blessed One; his mind is fully pure.
> The Blessed One hears a sound with the ear.
> The Blessed One smells a smell with the nose.
> The Blessed One tastes a taste with his tongue.
> The Blessed One feels a touch with the body.
> The Blessed One knows a thought with the mind.
> *but there is no desire or lust in the Blessed One; his mind is fully pure*.
> Therefore, it is said — "**The Tathagata did not subject himself**." (**S 35.232**,8/4:164 f, SD 28.4)
>
> This phrase indicates that **the ground of the destruction of the influxes (arhathood)** is described. (AA 3:38,25-39,8)

### 1.3.3 The ground of truth (*sacca,bhūmi*)

**1.3.3.1** We have noted that the 3 verbs—*jānāmi, abbhaññāsiṁ* and *viditaṁ*—encompass the Buddha's ground of omniscience [1.3.1]. This refers to the Buddha's awakened knowledge of true reality; in other words, these are *words of truth*, in every sense of the words. By his self-awakened knowledge, he **knows** this; hence what he says is true [§2].

When he declares these knowledges, he is stating the natural truth; he is neither being boastful nor deluded, nor making a false claim. He is simply saying, "I have directly known (this)" (*tam aham abbhaññāsiṁ*) [§2]. "If I were to say otherwise, even to say '**I do not know**'—that would be a falsehood on my part." [§4]

[10] M 22,10/1:133 + SD 3.13 (3.1.1.3).
[11] M 22,11,13 f/1:133 f + SD 3.13 (3.1.1.4).

**1.3.3.2** We see here the Buddha applying **the tetralemma of truth** well-known amongst Indian philosophers and teachers of his day; that is, something (1) "is," (2) "is not," (3) "both is and is not," or (4) "neither is nor is not" [3.3]. In the Sutta, the Buddha applies each of these tetralemma in the following ways:

(1) The Buddha not only "**knows**" [§2] but "**has directly known"** [§3] the full nature of true reality, and that he has also "**made known**" what he knows [§3]. This is all true.
(2) He does not say, "I do **not** know," which would be a lie on his part (*tam mam'assa musā*). [§4].
(3) He does not say (casuistically), "I both know and do not know." That too would be just a lie (*tam p'assa tādisam eva*) [§5].
(4) He does not say (evasively), "I neither know nor do not know." This would be a fault on his part (*tam mam'assa kali*) [§6].

Up to this point, notes the Commentary, it is to be understood as **the ground of truth**. (AA 3:39,9-15)

### 1.3.4 The ground of emptiness (*suññatā,bhūmi*)

The 4th ground is the basis for the Buddha's experience of **the seen, heard, sensed, and known** [§§7-10]. The Commentary takes up only the 1st passage, that on his experience of the seen [§7]— "seeing things *as they really are*"—as the template for the other 3 kinds of experiences, those of the heard, sensed and known [§§8-10]. The Commentary explains (the words in **bold** are quotes from the Sutta itself):

> **Seeing, what can be seen** (*daṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṁ*) [§7]; he *saw* what is to be seen.
> **One does not conceive the seen** (*diṭṭhaṁ na maññati*); he does *not* think, "I have seen this through the masses (the world)," and does *not* consider it with craving and wrong view.
> **One does not conceive the unseen** (*adiṭṭhaṁ na maññati*); "I have seen this through the great people"; he does not conceive it with craving and wrong view.
> **One does not conceive what can be seen** (*daṭṭhabbaṁ na maññati*); meaning that he does *not* conceive, thinking, "I have seen this through the masses." Even with regard to what must be seen, so too with what is not seen.
> Such sayings are obtained in 3 different times. The meaning of this has been explained [1.2.1.2].
> **One does not conceive one who sees** [a "seer"] (*daṭṭhāraṁ na maññati*), meaning he does not conceive that there is a single (or abiding) being who is the seer.
>
> For the others, too, the meaning should be understood in the same way.
> By this, the term "**the ground of emptiness**" has been explained.
>
> (AA 3:39,24-40,5)

### 1.3.5 The ground of suchness (*tādī,bhūmi*)

**1.3.5.1** The Commentary explains the last set of related, important and interesting terms related to "**such**" (*tādī*) found in the Sutta as follows (the words in **bold** are quotes from the Sutta):

**So, bhikshus** (*iti kho bhikkhave*) [§7] means "It is such, monks" (*evaṁ kho bhikkhave*).
**Thus so … being just such** (*tādī-yeva tādī*) [§11] means "suchness [thatness]" (*tāditā*) referring to the nature of being one and the same (*eka,sadisatā*). The tathagata, in terms of what is gained or what is not gained [losses], is of the same (happy) nature as such.[12]
Therefore, it is said—

[12] *Tathāgato ca yādiso lābh'ādīsu, tādiso'va alābhādisu* (AA 3:40,7 f).

"With gains, it is so; with losses, it is so. Even with fame, it is so; and even with obscurity it is so. Or, when blamed, it is so; and even when praised, it is so. Whether in happiness or in suffering, it is so." (Nd 1:114,21-23)

**And amongst the suchness of this nature** (*tamhā ca pana tāditamhā*) [§11]: Here, "suchness" refers to the tathagata's nature; there is no higher or more refined suchness.[13]

Thus far, suchness has been spoken of as "**the ground of suchness**." [5]

(AA 3:40,7-14)

**1.3.5.2** When the teaching of these **5 grounds** is concluded, the great earth trembled by way of witnessing.[14]

At the end of the teaching, the 500 youths of good family who had recently renounced, for the first time drank the nectar of immortality (*amata,pāna*) in that very place.

(AA 3:40,15-19)

## 2 "The world with its devas …" (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

### 2.1 THE INHABITED UNIVERSE

**2.1.1** The phrase "**the world with its devas, with its Māra, with its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers**[15] **and people**" (*sa,devakassa lokassa sa,mārakassa sa,brahmakassa sa-s,samaṇa,brāhmaṇiyā pajāya sa,deva,manussāya*) [§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6] refers to the whole of the inhabited world, that is, *the sense world, the form world and the formless world*.[16] The phrase can be translated as follows, with brief notes based on the Sutta,nipāta Commentary (SnA 153, 228 f) [2.1.2]:[17]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (1) | *sa,devakassa lokassa* | "of this world with its devas," |
| (2) | *sa,mārakassa* | "with its Māra," |
| (3) | *sa,brahmakassa* | "with its brahmas," |
| (4) | *sa-s,samaṇa,brāhmaṇiyā* | "with its recluses and brahmins," |
| (5) | *pajāya* | "(this) generation" [people and beings]," |
| (6) | *sa,deva,manussāya* | "with its rulers and humans." |

[13] This interesting idea of the Buddha's unique nature (his self-awakening and the nature of the awakening as knowledge and being) evokes the philosophical idea of **sub specie aeternitatis**, "under the aspect of eternity," of seeing things from a universal perspective, namely, the nature of self-awakening, as such, is a necessary, timeless, and total reality, universally and eternally true, without any reference to or dependance upon the merely temporal aspects of reality. The idea was popularized by Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) in his *Ethics* (Part V, Proposition XXIII, Scholium; 1677). See also SD 26.8 (1.1.3, 2.2.5); SD 50.13 (2.3.2.1).

[14] This is an example of ancient Indian literary tradition and commentarial licence of highlighting the universal significance of a teaching or event.

[15] "Rulers," *devā*, here in the sense of "gods by convention" (*sammati,deva*), ie, kings and royalty. The other 2 types of *deva* are "gods by rebirth" (*upapatti,deva)* and "gods by purification" (*visuddhi,deva*), ie, the buddhas, pratyeka-buddhas and arhats. (Nc 307; KhpA 123).

[16] See S 56.11,13.2 (SD 1.1).

[17] See SD 61a (2.5.2.9).

**2.1.2** These phrases are (briefly) explained as follows:

(1) The "**devas**" here, specifically, are those of the 5 sense-world planes.[18] Broadly, "devas" is a generic term for all celestial beings, that is, devas (of the sense-world) and brahmas (of the form world and the formless world).

(2) "**Māra**" is, as listed, singular; just as there is only one buddha in a universe, there is only one Māra, as the Buddha's antithesis. When the plural "Māras" is used, it refers to the various "generations of Māras."[19]

(3) The term ***brahmā***, anglicized as "brahma," when used by itself usually refers to Mahā Brahmā, the lord of a brahma-realm, that is, each one of the 4 form worlds. The plural, "brahmas" refers to the inhabitants of the form world and formless world.[20]

(4) Specifically, "**recluses**" (*samaṇa*) refers to the Buddha's renunciant followers, but broadly the term refers to any religious practitioner or wanderer who is not of the **brahmin** class. Hence, the dvandva *samaṇa,brāhmaṇa* refers to 2 predominant classes of religious people, that is the brahmins and those who reject the Vedas and Brahminism.[21]

(5) The term "**generation**" (*pajā*) relates to its following phrase *sa,deva,manussa,* "rulers and people" of that particular time. This is a synchronic reference, referring to a particular time. The others are diachronic in sense, that is, referring to unlimited time, that is, their existence as a whole.

(6) In the phrase "**rulers and people**" (*sa,deva,manussa*), *deva* refers to conventional devas (kings and royalty), and *manussa,* "humans," *to* the rest of humankind.[22]

## 3 *Diṭṭha suta muta viññāta patta pariyesita anuvicārita manasā*[23] (§2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

### 3.1 THE *DIṬṬHA,SUTA,MUTA,VIÑÑĀTA* PERICOPE [SD 3.13 (5.2.2)]

#### 3.1.1 The grounds for wrong views (*diṭṭhi-ṭ,ṭhāna*)

**3.1.1.1** The phrase or pericope, "**whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued**" (*diṭṭha,suta,muta,viññāta,patta,pariyesita,anuvicarantā.manasā*) is related to the 6 "grounds" (*ṭhāna*) or bases for wrong views. The 6 grounds for wrong views (*diṭṭhi-ṭ,ṭhāna*), briefly, as stated in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), are:

(1)-(4) One regards *form, or feeling, or perception, or formations*: "this is mine; I am this; this is my self."
(5) One regards what is *seen, heard, sensed, or known*: "this is mine; I am this; this is my self."
(6) One regards *the world* as the self … "after death I will endure for eternity."
The wise noble disciple regards all these as "This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self."[24]

(**M 22**,15 f/1:135 f), SD 3.13

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[18] Ie, Cātum,mahārājika, Tāvatiṁsa, Tusita, Yāma, Nimmāna,ratī, Para,nimitta,vasavattī: SD 57.10 (3.2); for table, SD 1.7 (App).

[19] On Māra, see **Māra**, SD 61a. On the 4 kinds of Māra—the 5 aggregates, mental defilements, karmic accumulations and the *devaputta*—see SD 61a (1.2.3.3).

[20] For a table of worlds (the 3 worlds) and realms (the 31 planes), see SD 1.7 (App 3).

[21] On ***samaṇa,brāhmaṇa*** as the 2 dominant religious groups in the Buddha's time: SD 25.1 (1); SD 64.11 (1.1) n.

[22] On the 3 kinds of devas: (1) by convention (*sammuti,deva*) royalty, the upper class; (2) by birth (*upapatti,deva*) celestial beings; and (3) by purity (*visuddhi,deva*) the arhats: **Saṅgārava S** (M 100), SD 10.9(3.3).

[23] This full formula occurs at **M 22**,15 (SD 3.13); **M 143**,14 (SD 23.9); **S 24.1-19**/3:202-216; **A 4.23**/2;23 f = **It 112**,2-/122 (SD 15.7(2.1.2); **SD 3.13** (5.2.1).

[24] See **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,15 f/1:135 f), SD 3.13.

**3.1.1.2** The first 4 ways in which a self-based wrong view arises is through thinking about any of **the first 4 aggregates**, that is, (1) *form* (the body), (2) *feeling,* (3) *perception* and (4) *formations.* Consciousness is not mentioned because it is included in all these 4 aggregates; these 4 are all rooted in consciousness through our memory of events related to our physical form. In other words, our body or body-parts are connected to our feelings arising in connection with them, our memory (perception) that recognizes them, and how we form karmic notions from these ideas (by liking, disliking or ignoring them).[25] We are likely to form wrong views at any or all of these stages of our cognitive process. [3.1.1.3]

**3.1.1.3** Similarly, through what we "**see, hear, sense or know**"—the cognitive tetrad—we then go on to form ideas and views; thus, this tetrad also constitutes the aggregate of formations (*saṅkhāra*). Consciousness, too, is at work behind each of these experiences. When we **see** something, we relate to a memory of it. When we recall a memory of liking it or something similar to it, we tend to **like** or desire the present sight—or *sound*, or *smell*, or *taste*, or *touch*, or *thought*. Or when we recall a memory of disliking such an experience in the past, we tend to **hate** the present experience.

When we have no memory of a similar experience—a *sight, sound*, *smell*, *taste*, *touch*, or *thought*—then we ignore it; by ignoring it, we root the mind in **delusion** which then feeds the latent tendency of ignorance. This is how **the 3 roots of karma**—*greed, hatred and delusion*—arise when we form wrong views. These 3 karmic roots then feed their respective **latent tendencies** of sensual lust (*kāma,rāgânusaya*), of aversion (*paṭighânusaya*) and of ignorance (*avijjā'nusaya*).[26]

**3.1.1.4** The suttas and Commentaries use ***muta*** in a number of different but related ways to describe the cognitive process. The best known usage of ***muta*** is that of "sensed," which should be its translation in the well-known phrase, *diṭṭha,suta,muta,viññāta,* "seen, heard, sensed and known." The Vinaya's Old Commentary explains *muta* as follows:

> ***muta*** refers to what is smelt by the nose, what is tasted by the tongue, what is touched [felt] by the body" (*mutaṁ nāma ghānena ghāyitaṁ jivhāya sāyitaṁ kāyena phuṭṭhaṁ*, V 4:2,25 f).[27]

Technically, in the experiences of seeing and hearing, the sense-faculty (the eye or the ear) is directed to a **distal** object (at the far end) to the source of the experience. In the cases of smelling, tasting and touching, the object may be said to be **proximal** (in contact) with the source of the experience; thus, **smell** molecules contact or impact the mucous membrane of the nose; **taste** molecules contact the taste-buds; and the tactile object comes into contact with the skin or body. Hence, these 3 experiences are generically classed as "**the sensed**" (*muta*).

**3.1.1.5** The term ***viññāta*** in the phrase *diṭṭha suta muta viññāta* is not easy to render into English. If we take *muta* as a collective term of the 3 physical object-bases, that is, those of the nose-object, tongue-object, and body-object,[28] then, clearly, the whole phrase is a shorthand for the 6 sense-bases, that is, the seen, heard, smelt-tasted-touched, and thought. This may well apply to the early Buddhist context. *Viññāta*, then, refers to thinking and other mental processes, including minding, thinking and knowing.

Specifically, *viññāta* refers to the mind knowing through the physical sense-faculties and the mind itself. *Viññāta* here refers to our "making sense" (however that may work out to be) of the other experiences. "Knowledge," then, is simply a construal or construction of what the mind *thinks* of what it sees,

[25] For an explanation on the 5 aggregates work, see SD 52.2e (1.2.1).
[26] On the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), see **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9,65-67), SD 11.14; ***Anusaya***, SD 31.3 (8.2).
[27] On usages of *muta,* see SD 53.5 (5); on *muta* as "the sensed": SD 53.5 (5.5
[28] See SD 53.5 (5.5.1).

hears, smells, tastes, touches, and thinks. This sense conveniently applies to the Buddhist context when we speak of the unawakened mind.[29]

### 3.2 *PATTA,PARIYESITA,ANUVICARANTĀ.MANASĀ* [SD 3.13 (5.2.3)]

#### 3.2.1 Processing what we know

**3.2.1.1** The phrase "**what is attained, sought after, mentally pursued**" (*patta,pariyesita,anuvicarantā.manasā*) is explained by the Saṁyutta Commentary as simply being an elaboration of "the known" (*viññāta*).[30] In the suttas, the verb ***anuvicarati***, "mentally pursued," often refers to the practice of meditation.[31]

From **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), we know that the verb ***pariyesati*** has the sense of seeking the wholesome, the spiritual quest. However, in this pericope the phrase refers to a wrong view, such as that of the Upaniṣadic *ātman*—an eternal soul or abiding entity—which is said to be realized through meditation, as clearly suggested at BĀU 4.4.23.[32] Based on this idea, the Buddha *naturally adapts* the Upaniṣadic pericope to show that identifying oneself with the *Ātman*, whether through meditative realization or otherwise, is clearly misconceived.

**3.2.1.2** The very last component of the whole *diṭṭha suta muta* pericope, that is, the phrase, ***anuvicarantā manasā,*** "mentally pursued,"[33] as used by the Buddha here, was to unequivocally reject the Upanishadic view of the cosmic soul such as proposed by the "great saying" (*mahā vākya*) *Tat tvam asi*[34] (literally, "that thou art" or "you are that";[35] or the new rendition, "that is how you are"). It encapsulates the idea that our innermost self (*Ātman*) is fundamentally identical to the ultimate reality of the universe (*Brahman*).

The idea of a "Universal Soul" that pervades self, all life and the universe, and is eternal, is a view that is utterly alien to early Buddhism. This wrong view is profoundly false since it goes against the universal characteristics that everything in this world is *impermanent and unsatisfactory, and thus nonself*. To counter the deleterious wrong view related to the self-notion, the Buddha teaches this formula for the deconstruction of any **self-view**, by teaching thus:[36]

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[29] See SD 3.13 (5.2.1.4 f); SD 53.5 (7).

[30] See SD 5.13 (5.2.1.2).

[31] PED, DP sv *anuvicarati*, *anuvicāra*.

[32] BĀU 4.4.23: *tasmād evaṁ vic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātmany evātmānaṁ paśyati*, *sarvam ātmānaṁ paśyati*. "Therefore, the one with this understanding becomes calm, tamed, restrained, patient and concentrated; he sees the self in his very self, he sees everything as the self."

[33] As suggested in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, BĀU 4.4.23 thus: *tasmād evaṁ vic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātmany evātmānaṁ paśyati*, *sarvam ātmānaṁ paśyati*. "Therefore, the one with this understanding becomes calm, tamed, restrained, patient and concentrated; he sees the self in his very self, he sees everything as the self."

[34] ChU 6.8.7, 6.11.3 *tat tvam asi*. Early modern scholars, such as Max Muller (*Sacred Books of the East* 1 xxxv f, 103) tr *Tat tvam asi* as "Thou art it; That art thou": Brereton, "'Tat tvam asi' in context," ZDMG 136 1986:109; Olivelle, *Upanishads,* 2008:349 nn 8.7-16.3; Doniger, *The Hindus: an alternative history,* 2009, 2010:168; B Black, *The Character of Self in Ancient India,* 2007, 2012: 36. Modern scholars generally prefer the tr "That's how you are": Brereton 1986:36; Olivelle 2008:xvii, 560 n 8.7-16.3; Doniger 2010:711 (ch 7 n10).

[35] Olivelle, *Upanishads: a new translation,* [1996] 2008:349 nn 8.7-16.3.

[36] See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,3), SD 3.11 on the 5 aggregates; **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,12-16), SD 1.2 on the 5 aggregates; **(Catukka) Rāhula S** (A 4.177,2-5), SD 3.11(6.1) the 6 elements. The opp formula, ie, of the 3 graspings [SD 6.1(5)] "This is mine, this I am, this is my self": **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17-21), SD 1.2.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| "**this is not mine**" | *n'etam mama* | overcomes craving. |
| "**this I am not**" | *n'eso'ham asmi* | overcomes conceit. |
| "**this is not my self**" | *na m'eso attā* | overcome views. |

This is a first-person deconstructive reformulation of the Upanishadic "You are that" or "That's how you are" (*tat tvam asi*) dogma. "**Let go of what is not yours!**"[37] declares the Buddha. This teaching helps us to see and understand that there is no abiding entity anywhere but that everything is related and relative to one another by way of causes and effects.[38]

## **4** The Buddha does not conceive views (*na maññati*)

### 4.1 *MAÑÑATI*

#### 4.1.1 "He does not conceive" (*na maññati*)

**4.1.1.1** One of the key statements of **the Kālak'ārāma Sutta** is that the Buddha and the arhats do *not* conceive (*na maññati*) views regarding any cognitive process, that is, either a sense-experience or a thought-process [§§7-10]. An awakened being experiences the object directly without any negative emotions, that is, without any *greed, hatred or delusion*.

In the early Buddhist texts, the term ***maññati*** means "to conceive" ideas and have views. In other words, *maññati* results in the process of mental proliferation (*papañca*), the habitual or unconscious process of identifying with an object and allowing *greed, hatred or delusion* to construct self-centred views in countless ways. This means that one is driven by **conceit** (*māna*) to measure oneself against others in terms of similarities and differences, or of beauty and ugliness, or of desirable and undesirable qualities, or of power and status; and so on.

**The Yava,kalāpi Sutta** (S 35.248) describes **conceiving** (*maññita*) as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bhikshus, | | |
| "I am," | this is a mental conceiving.[39] | *asmī ti* |
| "I am this," | this is a mental conceiving. | *ayam aham asmī ti* |
| "I will be," | this is a mental conceiving. | *bhavissan ti* |
| "I will not be," | this is a mental conceiving. | *na bhavissan ti* |
| "I will be [have] form,"[40] | this is a mental conceiving. | *rūpī bhavissan ti* |
| "I will be formless," | this is a mental conceiving. | *arūpī bhavissan ti* |
| "I will have consciousness," | this is a mental conceiving. | *saññī bhavissan ti* |
| "I will be non-conscious," | this is a mental conceiving. | *asaññī bhavissan ti* |
| "I will be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient," | this is a mental conceiving. | *n'eva,saññī,nâsaññī bhavissan ti* |

Mental conceiving, bhikshus, is a sickness; mental conceiving is a tumour; mental conceiving is a dart!

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[37] *Yaṁ na tumhākaṁ taṁ pajahatha*, **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,40/1:140 f), SD 3.13; SD 19.3 (3.3).

[38] On the Jetavana parable countering this view, and a summary of related wrong views and their refutation, see SD 3.13 (4).

[39] "Mental conceiving," *maññita;* see SD 40.3a (2.2).

[40] This refers to one aspiring for rebirth in the form world (*rūpa loka*) or one who has attained any of the 4 form-dhyanas (*rūpa,jhāna*).

Therefore, bhikshus, thinking, "I will dwell with a mind free of mental conceiving,"
thus, indeed, bhikshus, you should train yourselves.

(S 35.207,8/4:202) = Be S 35.248, SD 40a.3

From the above passage, we can see strong hints of self-view, a notion that one exists as an abiding entity in one's body or actions. Hence, any thought that affirms or promotes the self is an act of mental conceiving.

**4.1.1.2** The unawakened mind habitually conceives (*maññati*). Even now as we are reading this, our mind is chatting away, commenting on what we are reading, or some stray thought is wildly, ferally, mischievously, desperately seeking to intrude and gain our full attention. Even now, we may be forming such ideas over what we like or do not like, or we find something difficult to comprehend, and so on.[41]

Habitually, when we are conceiving, we are constructing ideas and views; often one thought leads to another and so on; and we tend to like something we read, or not like something, or find something eluding our ken. Technically, there are 4 forms of **conceiving** (*maññita*), which we should understand so that we can refine and strengthen our mental processes related to conceiving:

(1) **Mental construction** (*abhisaṅkhāra*)**:** One is driven by self-centred imaginings in relation to a sense-object or a mind-object, that is, the craving-driven notion "This is mine" (*etam* mama), the conceit-driven notion "I am this" (*eso'ham asmi*), and the view-driven notion "This is my self."
(2) **Mental proliferation** (*papañca*): The mind chasing and devouring its own "tail," that is, the drive or control based on past conditioning, present biases, and future desires. One idea leads to many others: craving-driven views, conceit-driven views, and views fabricating more views.
(3) **Latent tendencies** (*anusaya*): These are unconscious habits or reactivity that initiate and record one's negative actions, speech and thoughts (emotional reactions) so that one is defined and delimited by these reactive tendencies that characterize one's thoughts and actions.
(4) **Conceit** (the measuring of "self" against others) comes from the same root as "to conceive," that is, √MAN, "to think"; hence, we have "conceit that is a latent tendency" (*mānânusaya*). It can be translated as "personality complex" since it is basically "status consciousness." A rich, influential person, for example, is likely to see himself or herself as "apart" from other lesser persons; a deeply religious person (especially in a power-based faith) may see unbelievers as "against us"; someone who sees himself or herself as poor and common may fear or hate those perceived as rich and influential.[42] Due to its latent but powerful and pervasive presence in the depths of our minds as a persistent driver of our thoughts and actions, conceit is classed as one of the 7 latent tendencies.[43]

Psychologically, all these thought-processes are forms of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). Even in a simple act of seeing "a cat sleeping on the mat," we do not merely see *a cat sleeping on a mat*; we are

[41] It is of course possible to keep the mind focused on a wholesome action, with mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness (*sampajañña*). See SD 13.1 (3.6).

[42] **Conceit** (*māna*) can be said to be the most dominant defilement amongst affluent urban society members where people and things are measured in terms of money and wealth.

[43] **The 7 latent tendencies** (*satta anusaya*) are those of (1) sensual lust (*kāma,rāgânusaya*), (2) aversion (*paṭighânusaya*), (3) views (*diṭṭh'ānusayo*), (4) doubt (*vicikicchā'nusaya*), (5) conceit (*mānânusaya*), (6) desire for existence or "being" (*bhava.rāgânusaya*), and (7) ignorance (*avijjā'nusaya*): **D 33**/3:254, 282 to be abandoned; **S 45.175**/5:60 (SD 19.1) overcome with direct knowledge; **A 7.12**/4:9 (SD 19.1(3.3)) the purpose of religious life is to uproot them; **Pm** 1:123; **Vbh** 340, 383; **Kvu** 92; **Yam**:Be 2:55 (*mānânusaya* is mentioned passim). An older set of the same items, but arranged slightly differently is listed as the 7 bonds (*satta saṅga*) in **Niddesa** (Nm 91,26-28 (Sn 791), 432,27-29 (Sn 948); Nc:Be 88,10-11 (Sn 1060b)): see SD 54.2e (2.4.1.3).

likely to form ideas like "What a pretty cat!" "Whose cat is this?" "I must be careful not to step on her." "What now if it scratches up the mat?" "I hope she doesn't mess up the place." And so on.

Then, one thought leads to another until we find ourselves lost in some thoughts vastly different from what we are supposed to be focused on. In a more wholesome but worldly sense, this is called **imagination**. A poet, artist, writer, thinker or anyone who is creative in an artistic or intellectual way would anticipate and value the visions and breakthrough that such imaginings offer. Often these imaginings deepen into daydreams or arise as dreams.[44]

**4.1.1.3** In **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), the Discourse on the Root Teaching, the Buddha describes **the root cognitive error** that traps beings in the rut of suffering by contrasting simple perception (*saññā*) with the complex, defiled process of conceiving (*maññati*). The Sutta applies this distinction across 24 aspects of reality—ranging from 4 primary elements; beings and gods of the sense-world, the form world and the formless world; the modes of perception (the seen, the heard, the sensed and the known); the modes of personal identity (unity, diversity and all); and nirvana.[45]

In the Sutta, the verb ***maññati*** (translated as "conceives," "imagines," or "construes") is the primary psychological mechanism by which an unawakened mind distorts reality and creates the illusion of a self. This is the root cause of ego-driven clinging and all suffering.

**4.1.1.4** The process of ***maññati***, as analyzed in the suttas [4.1.1.3], is explained through the following concepts:

(1) **The difference between knowing and conceiving**
An awakened being directly "knows" something (such as "earth as earth") for what it truly is—impermanent, unstable and lacking an abiding core. However, the unawakened ordinary person (*puthujjana*) begins with a neutral perception but then lapses into conceptual distortion (*maññati*).

(2) **The 3 root defilements**
*Maññati* is driven by 3 main psychological distortions by way of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*). These tendencies drive us to project our own subjective biases onto reality, thus preventing us from seeing things objectively.

(3) **The 4 modes of conceiving**
The Mūla,pariyāya Sutta [4.1.1.3] explains that the mind conceives (*maññati*) an object in 4 specific, distorted ways, constructing a self-identity by:

1. conceiving the object itself (such as conceiving "earth" or "God" as an inherent reality);
2. conceiving "in" the object (such as thinking, "I am established in earth (or in God)");
3. conceiving "apart from" the object (such as considering oneself as separate from or having power over earth; "I am *apart* from God who created me");
4. conceiving it as "mine" (that is, imagining that one is identical with "earth" or "God").

## 4.1.2 Overcoming *maññati*

**4.1.2.1** Instead of "conceiving" experiences, we should properly train ourselves to rightly **perceive** (*sañjānāti*) things as a start. Perception (*saññā*) is the basic, necessary mental function that recognizes,

[44] See SD 63.13 (3.3.3).
[45] **M 1**,3-26/1:1-6 (SD 11.8).

recalls and names sense-data based on past memory and understanding. It functions as memory and is the most basic and most common human way of knowing and learning.

In the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta [4.1.1.3], the Buddha notes that even an ordinary, unawakened person begins with perception: For example, when the eye sees a visual object, *saññā* steps in to say, "This is a solid state," "This is earth," and so on. We know this based on our memory of a past experience of such a state or thing.

The bottom line is that cognition (here meaning "knowing things") is relatively natural and functional. We need it for navigating our experiences and processing our thoughts. For that reason, even the Buddha and arhats continue to use perception to function and speak. The problem is not in the perception itself, but what the unawakened mind does immediately after it.

**4.1.2.2** In an unawakened person, immediately after perceiving a visual object (for example), he "**measures**" (*mināti*) it against a similar memory of it; if that memory is of something pleasant or "good" he then feels "good" about it and desires it and more of it. He forms craving for that object (which by then has become but a memory, too!). This craving-driven action is karma-formation (*saṅkhāra*). When he craves, he feeds the latent tendency of sense-desire. He will react in the same way to similar sense-stimuli in the future.

The mental process that rushes in immediately following perception up to karma-formation is called "**conception**." In conceiving, we identify with the mind-object; we construct our sense of "self": "This is what I am" and so on. In this sense, conceiving is also part of the self- or ego-construction. [4.1.1.4]

Conceiving is thus an unwholesome, distortional step where the mind goes beyond simple recognition of an experience. Driven by hidden attachments—specifically craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*)—the mind projects an independent, subjective "self" onto what was just perceived.

**4.1.2.3** To end the toxic process of conceiving, we should understand and apply wholesome **perception**. Perception (*saññā*) registers the data ("There is this object"), while conceiving (*maññati*) builds a narrative of selfhood around it (*"*I have this object; it makes me feel great; it is mine"). Perception can and should be pure, bare awareness. Conceiving is sooner or later toxic, acting as the "root of all things" —that is the root of all suffering caused by delusion, rooted in ignorance.

In good Buddhist training, we are constantly reminded not to treat the Buddha's teaching as a mere religion, to be believed in, worshipped or proven right to others. Like any unawakened idea, views of Buddhism or of any religion are easily conceived, and often are. The problem is that we do not even know that we have conceived our religious ideas. The more we "know" religion, the *more* likely we have conceived it; the *better* we are at conceiving it. Thus, an unawakened Buddhist, in a fit of faith may claim *to see nirvana; or to conceive himself as nirvana; or to conceive himself as "in" nirvana; or that nirvana is out there and he sees it; or that nirvana is "mine"*—as explained in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1).[46]

**4.1.2.4** In order to avoid the trap of *maññati* here is summarized how we can transcend conceiving the 5 aggregates—*form (the body), feelings, perception, karma-formations and consciousness*:

(1) The aggregates should be seen as "events," not a "self." The awakened mind sees the 5 aggregates just as they are—impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty of any abiding essence. There is no longer the thought "I am the aggregate," such as "I am this body" or "this body is mine."

(2) Let go of clinging. Being unawakened, we tend to view the aggregates as "aggregates of clinging" (*upādāna-k,khandha*). When we do not conceive an aggregate as we notice it, we are simply experiencing a natural process of daily life, using the cognitive tools to navigate the world.

[46] M 1,26/1:4 (SD 11.8).

(3) When we are mindful, fully aware and without any attachment, the mind still processes visual forms (the body) (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), formations (*saṅkhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (sensory awareness and awareness of thoughts), but it does *not* construct, measure, or name a subjective identity.

(4) In the case of an awakened being like the Buddha or an arhat, they are like the wood and cool ashes that remain after the fire is completely extinguished. The physical body and mind of an arhat still operate, but the "fire" of conceiving has been fully put out; there is no more fuel for rebirth or suffering.

### 4.2 "THE GROUND OF EMPTINESS"

#### 4.2.1 "The all"

**4.2.1.1** The climax of the Kālak'ārāma Sutta (A 4.24) may be said to be the Buddha's explanation of how he experiences everything, that is, "**the all**" (*sabba*)—the *locus classicus* of which is **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23).[47] According to the Sutta, the all encompasses the 12 sense-bases (*dvādas'āyatana*) or "12 senses," that is, the 6 internal sense-faculties and their respective external sense-objects, thus:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | **The eye** | and | (2) forms, | *cakkhuñ c'eva* | *rūpā ca* |
| (3) | **the ear** | and | (4) sounds, | *sotañ ca* | *saddā ca* |
| (5) | **the nose** | and | (6) smells, | *ghānañ ca* | *gandhā ca* |
| (7) | **the tongue** | and | (8) tastes, | *jivhā ca* | *rasā ca* |
| (9) | **the body** | and | (10) touches, | *kāyo ca* | *phoṭṭhabbā ca* |
| (11) | **the mind**[48] | and | (12) mind-objects.[49] | *mano ca* | *dhammā ca* |

(S 35.23,3/4:15), SD 7.1

The 12 senses are listed as the cognitive tetrad**,** that is, **the seen (*diṭṭha*), heard (*suta*), sensed (*muta*) and known (*viññāta*)**. The "sensed" encompasses the nose + smelling, the tongue + tasting, and the body + touching (feeling) [3.1.1.2].

**4.2.1.2 In the Kāḷak'ārāma Sutta**, §§7-10, the Buddha lays down in 5 ways how he knows and sees [understands] the "12 senses" applied as the cognitive tetrad (the seen, heard, sensed and known) [4.2.1.1]. Since he has directly "seen [understood] **what can be seen**" (*daṭṭhā*), he does not conceive (*na maññati*) the seen (*diṭṭhaṁ*), the unseen (*adiṭṭha*), the seeable (*daṭṭhabbaṁ*) and a seer (*daṭṭhāra*).[50]

The same format is then applied to "**what can be heard … sensed … known**" [§§8-10]. These mental processes describe how the Buddha and the arhats experience the world through the senses without creating any sense of self, desire or ownership around that experience.

This means that the awakened mind has overcome conceiving (*maññanā*) through ideas and language. When one conceives, the mind takes a simple sense-experience or thought and builds a self-centred story or narrative around it. It engages with layers of "I," "me," and "mine."

When, in the Sutta, the Buddha says that he **"does not conceive"** (*na maññati*), it means that he stops right at the raw, direct perception (*saññā*). He does not let the self or ego mess with the data and

[47] S 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1).

[48] Note that while all the above 5 faculties are based on physical sense-organs, the mind is by itself: see SD 60.1e (12.7).

[49] "Mind-objects," *dhammā,* alt tr "mental phenomena."

[50] Notice here the wealth of precise terms for various aspects of cognition, which helps when reflecting on these processes of an experience of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself.

distort them. He sees things just as they are—free from conceiving—without any mental proliferation (*papañca*) [4.1.1.1] or any mental fabrication (*saṅkhāra*).

### 4.2.2 Deconstructing *maññati*

**4.2.2.1 How then do we prevent or deconstruct the 4 kinds of conceiving?** Let's examine these 4 conceivings based on the 4 cognitive processes:

- **The seen (*diṭṭha*)** is the actual object or image that is being perceived. The arhat does not think, "This is beautiful; I like this; it is mine," or "This is ugly; I hate this; I do not want this." It is just visual data.
- **The unseen (*adiṭṭha*)** is currently out of sight, in the past, or not yet arisen (that is, in the future). The arhat does not mind or entertain any unwholesome desires, or wallow in anxieties, or elaborate on views about what he cannot see.
- **The seeable (*daṭṭhabba*)** is the potential for future sights or objects capable of being seen. The mind does not arouse expectations or longings for future sensory experiences.
- **A seer (*daṭṭhāra*)** is an idea of an internal "self," "ego," or "soul" that does the seeing. The arhat knows that there is only the process of seeing due to conditions, but there is no abiding or permanent "subject" inside him pulling the strings.

For an ordinary unawakened person (*puthujjana*), the process looks like this:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| eye + visual object | → seeing | → "I see this; I want it; it is mine." |
| ear + sound | → hearing | → "I hear this; I want it; it is mine." [So too with nose, tongue, body.] |
| the mind + idea[51] | → thinking | → "I think so; I want this; it is mine." |

For an awakened being or mindful person, the process stops before the self steps in:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| eye + object | → seeing | → "There is just the seen or seeing." |
| ear + sound | → hearing | → "There is just sound or hearing." … |
| the mind + idea | → thinking | → "There is just a thought or thinking." |

By directly understanding the seen (*daṭṭhā*), the arhat sees only **the 3 characteristics of existence**: impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and nonself (*anatta*). The arhat experiences the world of the senses and thoughts as fleeting and empty of any abiding essence or permanent core; hence, the mind naturally does not build an idea around it, of something beautiful or ugly, of liking or disliking it, or identifying with any of it in any way.

**4.2.2.2** We can and must apply this teaching in practice (which is the purpose of this whole study). In our own meditation practice—and in our daily life, too, as necessarily and habitually as we can—when we hear any sound or speech (for example), we simply "note" (at the ear-door) as "sound … sound," without noticing any feeling of like or dislike for it. We have thus stopped cognizing the sound at the perception stage, without falling into the feeling (*vedanā*) stage, and then the formations stage, when karma is formed.

An alternative practice can be done when, for example, we actually experience something that is beautiful (a Dharma talk, or music we like, or a painting we see, or some personal experience), we simply

[51] Or "mind-object" (*dhamma*).

note the arising and falling away of the feeling (without processing it as "pleasurable" or otherwise), simply as "feeling ... feeling," or "impermanent … impermanent." This is not as easy as stopping at perception, but we are safe so long as we do not conceive false ideas. This is called "the emptiness practice."

Hence, the Commentary says:

> "He does not conceive (*na maññati*) visible form by way of craving, conceit, or views; and so for the other objects. … By this passage, the ground of emptiness (*suññatā,bhūmi*) is explained."
>
> (AA 3:39,17-40,5)

Since the Buddha is awakened, he sees things as they really are. He does not form or construct ideas of something in his mind, but simply sees or knows them as they are. Since the awakened do not "conceive" any ideas beyond the perception, they cannot be said to "misconceive," either. In the Sutta, ***maññati*** means "conceive"; indeed, *to conceive is to misconceive*.

## 5 *Tādī*

### 5.1 "BEING SUCH A ONE, HE IS JUST SO"

#### 5.1.1 "Exactly one and the same"

The Commentary, explains *"***Being such a one, ... he is just so**" (Be Ce *tādīyeva tādī*; Ee *tādi se yeva tādi;* Se *tādisova tādī*), thus:

> "**Such a one**" (*tādī*) means "exactly one and the same" (*eka,sadisatā*). Comy: The tathagata is the same both in gain and loss; fame and obscurity, blame and praise, and pleasure and pain.[52] … . By this, the ground of such a one (*tādi,bhūmi)* has been explained [1.3.5]. As he concluded the teaching with these 5 grounds, on each of the 5 occasions the earth quaked in witness."
>
> (AA 3:40,7-14).

#### 5.1.2 *Tādī*

The word ***tādī***, originally a deictic[53] pronoun meaning "that one," takes on a special sense of "one such or just so," to designate the Buddha or an arhat, that is, as *sub specie aeternitatis* [5.2]. It overlaps in sense with *tathā,gata,* "one who has become thus." **Mahā Niddesa** explains that an arhat is called *tādī* because he has transcended preferences, given up (*catta*) defilements, crossed over (*tiṇṇa*) the floods, and has a freed (*mutta*) mind; *tādī* is "such a one" (Nm 114 f).[54]

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[52] These are the 8 winds of worldly vicissitudes (*aṭṭha loka,dhamma*): **Loka,dhamma S 1+2** (A 8.5+6), SD 42.2+3.

[53] "Deictic" (n & adj): (A word) designating the semantic property of "pointing," expressed lexically or grammatically, ie having the function of relating a sentence or utterance to its extralinguistic context (time, place, etc). The 4 demonstratives are the prime deictic elements in English, with *this* and *these* pointing to what is proximal [nearby] in space or time, and *that* and *those* pointing to what is distal [distant] in space or time. Other words commonly included in this category are *here*, *there*, *now*, *then*, *today*, *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, and the personal pronouns (I, we, you, etc). Tense is also a deictic category. (*Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, 2nd ed 2014)

[54] On significance of ***tādī***: SD 15.7 (2.2.2); SD 49.20 (1.3.1). On ***tādino*** (gen sg): **Sabba Kamma Jaha S** (U 3.1.12/21) + SD 39.3 (1.4.3); as being "impartial (*tādi,bhāva*)," see **M 47**,10.2 n (SD 35.6).

## 5.2 AWAKENING AS "SUB SPECIE AETERNITATIS"

### 5.2.1 Where the term fits

**5.2.1.1** This idea of the Buddha's unique nature (his self-awakening and the nature of the awakening as knowledge and being) interestingly evokes the philosophical idea of ***sub specie aeternitatis***, "under the aspect of eternity," of seeing things from a universal perspective. The significance of this is that the nature of self-awakening, as such, is a necessary, timeless, and total reality, universally and eternally true, without any reference to or dependance upon the merely temporal aspects of reality. The idea was popularized by Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) in his *Ethics* (Part V, Proposition XXIII, Scholium; 1677).[55]

Spinoza used the term *sub specie aeternitatis* in an attempt to provide an objective, philosophical perspective that frees human beings from the suffering caused by time-bound, emotional attachments. By looking at our experiences—such suffering, failure, loss, or anxiety—globally rather than egocentrically, we see them as necessary parts of an infinite causal chain. This loosens the grip of destructive passions and offers rational tranquility.

For Spinoza, viewing things *sub specie aeternitatis* is the highest form of understanding. It means seeing things as they truly exist in nature and in God (whom Spinoza argued are one and the same). Philosophically, this view is called pantheism: he famously declared, "God, or Nature" (*Deus sive Natura*). In his view, God is the only infinite substance, and the universe (Nature) consists merely of the infinite attributes and finite "modes" of this singular, divine being. Orthodox Christianity however rejects such a view.[56]

**5.2.1.2** Spinoza's term accurately captures the detached, objective scope of the Buddha's awakened consciousness. From the "objective" viewpoint, in Western philosophy, *sub specie aeternitatis* describes seeing the world from a totalizing, detached perspective, free from personal bias or temporal distortion. This parallels the Buddha's state of things "as they are" (*yatha,bhutaṁ*), detached from the narrow, craving-driven perspective of worldly existence.

Spinoza's concept involves stepping outside of time and emotional turbulence so that one understands the true nature of God. Similarly, the Buddha transcended the illusion of time (*saṁsāra*) and achieved a state of timefree peace, nirvana. Spinoza formulated the 3 kinds of knowledge, which seems to parallel the early Buddhist teachings on the 3 knowledges, that is, *knowledge through hearing, through thinking and through cultivation*.[57]

### 5.2.2 Where the term may fall short

**5.2.2.1** Since Spinoza's views were clearly theological (even though not reflecting mainstream Christian beliefs), there are some areas of conflict with Buddhist teachings. To begin with, Spinoza's view of "eternity" is, simply put, based on the idea that there is some kind of abiding essence running through the whole of nature, and that this is the timeless "presence" of God; He is everywhere, in everything, every time.

The Buddhist idea of the "**timelessness**" (*akālika*) of the Dharma is very different from Spinoza's idea of "eternity." ***Akālika*** here means that the understanding of the Dharma as liberating (*vimutti*) "does not

[55] See also SD 26.8 (1.1.3, 2.2.5); SD 50.13 (2.3.2.1).

[56] Historic and orthodox Christian theology draws a strict distinction between the Creator and creation; it views the universe as the product of God's will, rather than God itself.

[57] For a comparative study of the early Buddhist teachings on the 3 knowledges—*suta,mayā paññā, cintā,mayā paññā* and *bhāvanā,mayā paññā*—and Spinoza's conception of the 3 kinds of knowledge, see Soraj Hongladarom, "Buddhism and Spinoza on the three kinds of knowledge," *Asian Philosophy* 32,2 2023:176-189 (1-14). [tandfonline] 13 June 2026.

take time"—such as arising in the afterlife, in heaven or meeting the Buddha—but by way of practice, the path of realization or the awakening is *immediate, here and now*.

Even though nirvana, being unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), has no attributes, we can *speak of it,* that is, refer to our idea of nirvana as something *time-free, beyond time and space*. This is just like we can talk about the beautiful sunset in various ways—but it is still *not* the sunset, which we have to mindfully see for ourselves.

**5.2.2.2** The theological trap of "eternity" is that it refers to an eternal, unchanging essence. A basic and key teaching of the Buddha is the universal characteristic of **impermanence** (*anicca*), which naturally has the corollary of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), since we are unable to "have" it especially when we crave for it. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory is necessarily nonself (*anattā*), without any abiding essence or self.

These are the 3 characteristics of **samsara**, conditioned existence. Since nirvana is unconditioned, it has no such characteristics or any attributes. Simply, **nirvana** (*nibbāna*) is just a convenient term for that time-free liberation from samsara; when the fire of *greed, hatred and delusion* is put out, there is no way of describing where it has gone!

**5.2.2.3** On a simple level, we can say that **awakening** (*bodhi*) does not put the Buddha or an awakened person in something "eternally" real; to say something is "real" is to condition and contrast it with something "unreal." Rather, awakening removes the illusion of an abiding self or fixed being, but reveals to us a reality of constant change, becoming other, cessation, and then rearising of the cycle of being. Spinoza speaks of an eternal and absolute state of God in Nature.

In contrast, the Buddha's teaching on nirvana as "**unconditioned**" refers to the cessation of conditions, clinging, and suffering. **The brief nirvana formula**—the shortest statement on nirvana—found in **the Nibbāna Paṭisaṁyutta Sutta 3** (U 8.3) is that it is "the birth-free, non-become, non-created, unconditioned" (*ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṅkhataṁ*).[58]

— — —

[58] U 8.3//73/p80 f (SD 50.3).

# Kāḷak'ārāma Sutta

## The Discourse at Kāḷaka's Park

A 4.24

[Thus have I heard.][59]

**1** At one time, the Blessed One was staying at Kāḷaka's Park[60] at Sāketa.[61]
There the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Bhikshus!"
"Bhante!" those monks replied. The Blessed One said this: **[25]**

**The 5 states of knowledge**

**2** "Bhikshus, of the world with its devas, Māra and brahmas,[62] this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,[63]
whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued[64]—
that **I know**.[65]

**3** Bhikshus, *of the world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,*
*whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued—*
that **I have directly known**.[66]
It **is made known** by the tathagata, but the tathagata is not subject to it.[67]

**4** Bhikshus, if I were to say, '*Of the world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people*,

---

[59] Only Ce has this opening. *evaṁ me sutaṁ.* This opening tag is usu only given at the start of the *nipāta* or "(numerical) book," or at the start of the chapter. In other words, the suttas in the book or chapter are treated as one work by the reciter.

[60] Comy: **Kāḷaka** was a wealthy financier and the father-in-law of Anātha,piṇḍika's daughter Cūḷa,subhaddā. At the time of her marriage, he had been a devotee of the naked ascetics and knew nothing about the Buddha or his teaching. Cūḷa,subhaddā contrived to get him to invite the Buddha and the monks for a meal offering. After the meal, the Buddha gave a discourse that established him in the fruit of streamwinning. Kāḷaka then built a monastery in his park and donated both monastery and park to the Buddha. One day, when the monks who were natives of Sāketa were sitting in the meeting hall discussing the Buddha's success in converting Kāḷaka, the Buddha read their minds and knew they were ready for a discourse that would bring them arhathood. It would also cause the great earth to quake up to its boundaries. Hence, he addressed the monks. (AA 34,17-38,18)

[61] **Sāketa** was a town on the banks of the Sarayu river in Kosala, lying between Sāvatthī and Patiṭṭhāna (in modern Uttar Pradesh). The distance between Sāketa and Sāvatthī was 6-7 yojanas (about 113 km = 70 mi). Its name was changed to Ayodhyā in Gupta times.

[62] On this phrase, "brahmas and Māra," see SD 61a (2.5.2.9).

[63] *Sa,devakassa lokassa sa,mārakassa sa,brahmakassa sa-s-samaṇa,brāhmaṇiyā pajāya sa,deva,manussāya* (§§2, 3, 4, 5,6). This phrase encompasses the whole of the living universe within the Buddha's range. See [2].

[64] *Diṭṭhaṁ sutaṁ mutaṁ viññātaṁ pattaṁ pariyesitaṁ anuvicaritaṁ manasā* (§§2, 3, 4, 5, 6). This full formula occurs at **M 22**,15 (SD 3.13); **M 143**,14 (SD 23.9); **S 24.1-19**/3:202-216; **A 4.23**/2;23 f = **It 112**,2/122 (SD 15.7(2.1.2); **SD 3.13** (5.2.1). [3]

[65] *Tam ahaṁ jānāmi* [1.3.1.2].

[66] *Tam ahaṁ abbhaññāsiṁ.* ***Abbhaññāsiṁ*** is aor 3 sg of *abhijānāti,* "to know (by intuition), understand" (CPD). [1.3.1.3]

[67] *Taṁ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi.* [1.3.2.1]

*whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued'*—
that **I do not know**—that would be a falsehood on my part.

**5** Bhikshus, if I were to say, '*Of the world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people*,
*whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued*—
that I **both know and do not know**'—that too would be just the same.[68]

**6** Bhikshus, if I were to say,
'*Of the world with its devas, Māra and brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,*
*whatever is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after, mentally pursued*—
that I **neither know nor do not know**—that would be a fault on my part.[69]

**The Buddha's total experience**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | (1) So, bhikshus, having **seen** | what can be seen, | *daṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṁ* |
| | the Tathagata does not conceive | the seen; | *diṭṭhaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | the unseen; | *adiṭṭhaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | what can be seen [the seeable]; | *daṭṭhabbaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive[70] | one who sees [a seer]. | *daṭṭhāraṁ na maññati* |
| **8** | (2) Having **heard** | what can be heard, | *sutvā sotabbaṁ* |
| | he does not conceive | the heard; | *sutaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | the unheard; | *asutaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | what can be heard [the hearable]; | *sotabbaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | one who hears [a hearer]. | *sotāraṁ na maññati* |
| **9** | (3) Having **sensed** | what can be sensed, | *mutvā motabbaṁ* |
| | he does not conceive | the sensed; | *mutaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | the unsensed; | *amutaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | what can be sensed [the sensable]; | *motabbaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | one who senses [a senser]. | *motāraṁ na maññati* |
| **10** | (4) Having **known** | what can be known, | *viññātvā viññātabbaṁ* |
| | he does not conceive | the known; | *viññātaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | the unknown; | *aviññātaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | what can be known [the knowable]; | *viññātabbaṁ na maññati* |
| | does not conceive | one who knows [a knower]. | *viññātāraṁ na maññati* |

[68] *Tam p'assa tādisam eva.* Comy: "That too would just be false speech." (AA 3:39,11 f)

[69] *Tam mam'assa kali.* Comy: "That statement would be a fault of mine. With the above 3 statements, the ground of truth (*sacca,bhūmi*) is meant." (AA 39:13 f)

[70] Comy: "He does not conceive (*na maññati*) visible form by way of craving, conceit, or views; and so for the other objects. … By this passage, the ground of emptiness *(suññatā,bhūmi)* is explained." (AA 3:39,17-40,5). See "The Buddha does not conceive ideas" [4].

**11 Being such a one**, bhikshus, **he is just so**[71] among things *seen, heard, sensed, and known*, the tathagata is **such a one**.[72]

And amongst the suchness of this nature, I say, there is no such a one, or other such a one, more excellent, more sublime than the tathagata's suchness."[73]

**Closing verses**[74]

**12** *yaṁ kiñci diṭṭhaṁ va sutaṁ mutaṁ vā*
*ajjhositaṁ sacca,mutaṁ paresaṁ*
*na tesu tādī saya,saṁvutesu*
*saccaṁ musā vâpi paraṁ daheyya*

Whatever is seen, heard, or sensed,
clung to by others who regard it as true,[75]
even among those self-restrained[76] as such,
one should not deem as true or false, or beyond.[77]

**13** *Etañ ca sallaṁ paṭikacca*[78] *disvā*
*ajjhositā yattha pajā visattā* **[26]**
*jānāmi passāmi tath'eva etaṁ*
*ajjhositaṁ n'atthi tathāgatānan ti*

Having seen this dart[79] well in advance,[80]
to which people bend and cling,
[saying,] "I know, I see, it is just so"[81]—
there's no clinging for tathagatas.

—evaṁ—
260606 260613 260906.2 2601028

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[71] "Being such a one … " etc, Be *tādī-yeva tādī*; Se Ke *tādiso'va tādī*; Ee *tādise yeva tādī*; Ka *tādī-yeva tādī-yev'ekā*.

[72] "**Being such a one, ... he is just so**" (Be Ce *tādī-yeva tādī*; Ee *tādi se yeva tādi;* Se *tādiso'va tādī*), On ***tādī,*** see [5].

[73] *Tamhā ca pana tādimhā* [Be Se; Ce Ee *tādī tamhā*] *aññotādī uttaritaro vā paṇītataro vā natthī ti vadāmī.* Ee *tamhā ca pana yādi tamhā aññotādi uttaritaro … .*

[74] **Comy on verses** (§§12 f). One should not entertain any of these speculative views or claims. Their speculators are "self-constrained" (*saya,saṁvutesu*) in the sense that they are restricted and blocked by their own conceptions —by the notion that they are categorical or supreme. One should not trust, believe, or fall back on any of them whether true or false (*evaṁ saccaṁ musā vâpi param uttamaṁ katvā na odaheyya, na saddaheyya, na pattiyāyeyya*), thinking: 'This alone is true and all else is false'." In other words, just as "the Tathagata was not subject to it," we should not entertain them, either. (AA 3:40,20-41,18 paraphrased)

[75] Comy: "Here, '**clung to what is regarded (*muta*) as truth by others**' means that having swallowed, concluded, and grasped [a view] as truth, having imagined it to be so out of faith in others or by relying on others' authority." (AA 3:41,1-3). Among those dogmatic speculators who are absorbed in their own views, the tathāgata is "just so" (*tādī*). He would not believe or trust any such notion in such a way as to make it supreme, [thinking] "This alone is true, everything else is false."

[76] Comy: "Even in the case of those who are **self-restrained** (*saya,saṁvutesu*), who are beloved and well-trained, and in the context of those who have seen the truth." (AA 3:41,4-6). Here, "**as such**" (*tādī***)** is used to reflect true reality in its mundane negative sense.

[77] Comy (paraphrased): Even amongst speculators who are considered self-restrained (by one's own community), when they deem their own view as truth or others' as falsehood, claiming, "This alone is truth, everything else false," holding it to be supreme, the tathagata, being "such" (*tādī*), would not believe, would not place faith in, would not accept even a single word of theirs. (AA 3:41,7-11)

[78] Be Se *paṭikacca;* Ce Ee *paṭigacca. Paṭikacca* = *paṭigacca* absol of *paṭikaroti*, "previously; before (something else happens), beforehand; in advance, in preparation, in anticipation." (DP)

[79] Comy identifies the "**dart**" (*salla*) as the dart of views (*diṭṭhi,salla*) (AA 3:41,12). Elsewhere craving is spoken of as the dart (**M 105**,24/2:258,27, SD 63.3; **S 1.66**/214*/1:40,7); or, the dart is sorrow (**A 5.48**/3:54, SD 42.1; **5.50**/-3:58).

[80] Comy: "**Having seen this dart well in advance":** [Meaning] having seen it even earlier, right at the foot of the bodhi tree," meaning the Buddha at the time of his awakening. (AA 3:41,13)

[81] Comy: "**I know, I see, it is just so**:**"** Just as the masses have clung to, swallowed, concluded, and become stuck, attached, and obstructed [by their views], I know and see it just as it is. The meaning is this: that which is grasped by the masses in such a manner—such cleaving does not exist for the tathāgatas. (AA 3:41,15-18)