SUTTA DISCOVERY 62c 2025c

Theme: Conflict resolution, mental and social

THE LIVING WORD OF THE BUDDHA

The Buddha's Teachings in the Oldest Texts

Sutta Discovery Vol 62c

Theme: *Conflict resolution, mental and social*

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Conflicts are resolved by the singular mind

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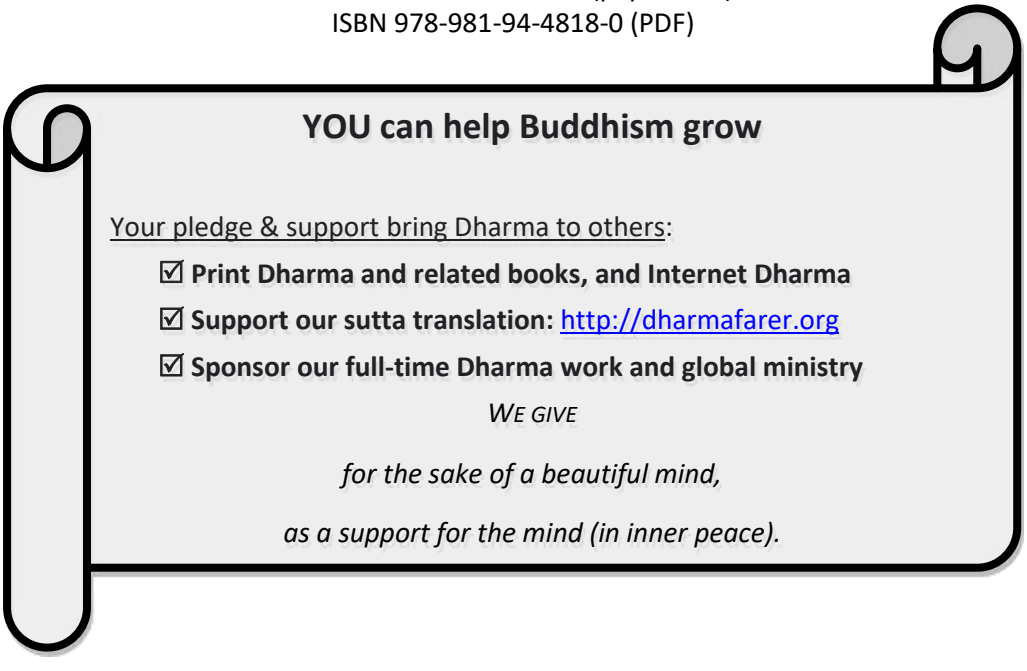

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As **a full-time Dharma teacher,** he runs Sutta and related classes like the basic Pali course series, the Sutta Study Group (NUSBS), Dharma courses (the Singapore Buddhist Federation), Sutta Discovery classes (Buddhist Fellowship and elsewhere), and Sutta-based (including meditation) courses (The Minding Centre), besides his own full-time **Pali translation and research project**, the Pali House, and doing a comparative study of the Pali Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas. As a Theravāda monk, he learned insight meditation from **Mahasi Sayadaw** himself in the 1980s, and forest meditation from various forest monks. He has run numerous **meditation courses and retreats** for students and adults (including non-Buddhists) since 1980s. In 1992, he taught meditation at the University of California at Berkeley, USA, and also to BP, JPMorgan, the Defence Science Organization, GMO, HP and SIA. He writes weekly reflections and gives daily online teachings on Facebook. All this for the love of Dharma and of Ratna and posterity.

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SD 62.11 Aspiration for Buddhahood and Disciplehood

Becoming Buddha, Pacceka-buddha, Disciple and Practitioner

A study by Piya Tan ©2025

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1 Aspirations to awakening

1.1 THE ASPIRANTS

1.1.1 Lives of the buddhahood-aspirant

1.1.1.1 One may make an **aspiration** (*abhinīhāra*) to achieve 3 distinct goals—those of becoming:

(1) a fully awakened buddha,
(2) a pacceka ("lone") buddha, or
(3) a disciple (*sāvaka*), that is, a great disciple (*mahā,sāvaka*)[1] or foremost disciple (*agga,sāvaka*).[2]

Any such aspiration must be made before the living Buddha of the epoch. **The aspirant to buddhahood** (*buddhattā*)[3] must fulfill **the 10 perfections** (*dasa,pāramī*): those of giving, moral virtue, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truthfulness, determination, lovingkindness and equanimity.[4] These 10 perfections[5] are cultivated on 3 levels of "self-sacrifice" (*atta,pariccāga*), that is, those of:

(1) perfection	*pāramī*	sacrificing of what we have (external),
(2) higher perfection	*upapāramī*	sacrificing what we are (one's limbs), and
(3) highest perfection	*param'attha,pāramī*	sacrificing one's life itself.[6]

For example, in the case of giving,

(1) as the perfection of giving, one is willing and able to give or give up *all* that one has;
(2) as higher perfection, one is willing and able to give one's limbs;
(3) as the highest perfection, one is willing and able to give one's own life.

In the other perfections, one cultivate that perfection (such as moral virtue) even when it entails giving or giving up all that one has. In the cultivation of higher perfection, one is willing and able to sacrifice one's limbs. In the case of the highest perfection, one is willing and able to sacrifice one's life to cultivate moral virtue), and so on.[7]

In this way, there are a total of 30 perfections of the aspirant (bodhisattva).

1.1.1.2 The 10 classic stories that close the Jātaka Commentary (*jātak'aṭṭhakathā*)—forming **the *Mahā,nipāta***—centre on the remarkable and noble acts of the bodhisattva which illustrate not just *one* perfection but as number of them. The Siamese Buddhist tradition have long associated, or highlighted,

[1] A "great disciple" usu refers to one of the 80 great disciples (*asīti mahā,thera*), SD 15.10a (7).

[2] These are disciples who are "foremost" (*agga*) in certain qualities, such as wisdom (Sāriputta) and eidetic memory (Ānanda).

[3] On *buddhattā* and *sāvakattā*, see PmA 3:537; cf AAṬ:Be 1:137.

[4] *Dāna,pāramiṁ pūretvā sīla,nekkhamma,paññā,vīriya,khanti,sacca'adhiṭṭhāna,mettā,upekkhā,pāramiṁ pūretvā*: ItA 1:117,26-29. On the Buddha being called ***tathāgata*** and its detailed meanings, see UA 133-159.

[5] For a detailed study of the 10 perfections, see CA 276-332 (tr in Bh Bodhi, *All-embracing Net of Views,* 2nd ed, Kandy, 2007:254-330).

[6] ItA 1:117,27-30.

[7] **BA 59** notes that the sacrifice of one's wealth is an example of the perfection of giving; the sacrifice of one's limb is the higher perfection of giving; and the sacrifice of one's life is the highest perfection. Cf **Dasa,bodhisatt'uppatti,katha**: Dbk 10.

each of these 10 Jātaka stories with one of the 10 perfections.[8] However, there is no known tradition in the suttas or the Commentaries that show any consistent identification of these 10 stories with a particular perfection.

Mahā,nipāta, Mahā,jātaka or Dasa,jātaka		**Occasion for story in Jātaka Commentary**	**Perfection (*paramī*)**	
Temiya[9]	J 538	discussion of the great renunciation	renunciation	*nekkhamma*
Mahā Janaka	J 539	discussion on the great renunciation	effort	*viriya*
Suvaṇṇa,sāmā[10]	J 540	debate on supporting one's parents	lovingkindness	*mettā*
Nimi[11]	J 541	a smile (renunciation)	determination	*adhiṭṭhāna*
Mahôsadha[12]	J 546	on perfection of wisdom	wisdom	*paññā*
Bhūridatta	J 543	discussion on keeping the uposatha	morality	*sīla*
Canda,kumāra[13]	J 542	discussion on Devadatta's attempts on the Buddha's life	patience	*khanti*
Mahā Nārada,kassapa	J 544	on the convervsion of Uruvelā Kassapa	equanimity	*upekkhā*
Vidhūra (Paṇḍita)[14]	J 545	on perfection of wisdom	truth	*sacca*
Mahā Vessantara	J 547	on the rain shower over the Sakyas at Kapilsvatthu	giving	*dāna*

Table 1.1.1.2 The perfections highlighted by the 10 the Mahā,nipāta Jātakas (Siamese tradition)[15]

1.1.1.3 For countless lives preceding the 10 classic Jātaka stories given in the Mahā,nipāta [1.1.1.2], the bodhisattva lived his lives cultivating some kind of perfections not only as a human, but also as an animal, or even as a deva (usually of Tāvatiṁsa, and as lord of the devas). In some stories, the bodhisattva commends another for the perfection or virtue.

Here is **a brief list of shorter Jātaka stories (other than those of the Mahā,nipāta) highlighting each of the 10 perfections**.

[8] The earliest Western edition of the Jātaka Commentary (JA), done by V Fausboll (1887-97) followed the J titles of the Ce (Sinhala) editions.

[9] Se so; Be *mūga,pakkha jataka*; Ce Ee *muga-.*

[10] Be Se so; Ce Ee *sāma jataka.*

[11] Be Ce Ee so; Se *nemi,rāja jataka.*

[12] Se so; Be *umaṅga jataka;* Ce *ummagga jataka;* Ee *mahā ummagga jataka.*

[13] Be Se so; Ce Ee *khaṇḍahāla jataka.*

[14] Be Ee Se *vidhura jataka*; Ce Ee *vidhura,paṇḍita jataka* (uddāna).

[15] For studies on these variations, see **Oldenberg** [St Petersburg, 1892; Russian], "On the Buddhist Jātakas," *J of the Royal Asiatic Soc* 1893:301-356; **Bh Bodhi**, "A treatise on the Pāramīs" (tr CA 276-332), in *The Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views,"* Kandy, 1978:254-330; **Appleton**, *Jatāka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism,* 2010:71-78. **N Appleton & S Shaw** (tr), *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha* vol 1, Bangkok, 2015:1-7.

1. Giving (*dāna*)

Sasa J (J 316); Dassanaka J (J 401); Kummāsa,piṇḍa J (J 415); Āditta J (J 424); Saṅkha J (J 442); Bilāri Kosiya J (J 450); Akitti J (J 480); Bhikkhā Paramparā J (J 496); Sivi J (J 499).

2. Moral virtue (*sīla*)

Tittira J (J 36); Sīla Vīmaṁsana J (J 86); Amba J (J 124); Sīl'ānisaṁsa J (J 190); Sādhu,sīla J (J 200); Kacchapa J (J 215); Kuru,dhamma J (J 276); Seyya J (J 276); (Tika) Sīla,vīmaṁsa J (J 290); Eka,rāja J (J 303); (Catukka) Sīla,vīmaṁsa J 1 (J 305); (Catukka) Sīla,vīmaṁsa J 2 (J 330); Gijjha J (J 399); Baka Brahmā J (J 405); Gaṅga,māla J (J 421); Cakka,vaka J (J 451); Suruci J (J 489); Mahā Mora J (J 491); Dasa Brāhmaṇa J (J 495); Campeyya J (J 506); Kumbha J (J 512); Saṅkha,pāla J (J 524).

3. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*)

Makha,deva J (J 9); Sukha,vihāri J (J 10); Kuddāla J (J 70); Maṅgala J (J 87); Pañca,garu J (J 132); Asadisa J (J 181); Sayha J (J 310); Kumbha,kāra S (J 408); Susīma J (J 411); Harita J (J 431); Pānīya J (J 459); Culla Nārada J (J 477); Akitti J (J 480); Bhisa J (J 488); Somanassa J (J 505); Hatthi,pāla J (J 509); Ayoghra J (J 510); Sarabhaṅga J (J 522); Saṅkha,pāla J (J 524); Culla Sota,soma J (J 525).

4. Wisdom (*paññā*)

Baka J (J 38); Athassa,dvāra J (J 84); Mahā,sara J (J 92); Paro,sahassa J (J 99); Sabba,saṅkhāraka,pañha J (J 110); Gadrabha J (J 111); Amara.devī J (J 112); Mita,Cinti J (J 114); Kusa,nāli J (J 121); Naṅguṭṭha J (J 144); Tiṇḍuka J (J 177); Puṇṇa,nadī J (J 214); Kūṭa,vaṇija J (J 218); Mūla,pariyāya J (J 245); Chavaka J (J 309); Mata,rodana J (J 317); Devatā,pañha J (J 350); Sujāta J (J 352); Dabbha,puppha J (J 400); Maṭṭa,kuṇḍali J (J 449); Mahā,maṅgala J (J 453); Siri,manda J (J 500); Pañca,paṇḍita J (J 508); Sambhava J (J 515).

5. Effort (*viriya*)

Vaṇṇu,patha J (J 2); Cullaka Seṭṭhi J (J 4); Gāmani J (J 8); Kaṇha J (J 29); Culla Janaka J (J 52); Kāka J (J 146); Saṅgāmâvacara J (J 182); Khurappa J (J 265); Saṁvara J (J 462).

6. Patience (*khanti*)

Khanti,vaṇṇana J (J 225); Seyya J (J 282); Eka,rāja J (J 303); Khanti,vādi J (J 313); Kāla,bāhu J (J 329); MAṇi,kuṇḍala J (J 351); Ghaṭa J (J 355).

7. Truthfulness (*sacca*)

Taṇḍula,nāli J (J 5); Naḷa.pāna J (J 20); Vaṭṭaka J (J 35); Saacaṅ,kira J (J 73); Maccha J (J 75); Sigāla J (J 113); Kāya,vicchinda J (J 293); Cetiya J (J 422); Kaṇha,dīp'āyana J (J 444); Suppāraka J (J 463); Mahā,-paduma J (J 472); Mittâmitta J (J 473).

8. Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*)

Naḷa,pāna J (J 20); Khadiraṅgāra J (J 40); Khurappa J (J 265); Kacchapa J (J 273); Visayha J (J 340).

9. Lovingkindness (*mettā*)

Uraga J (J 154); Nakula J (J 163); Araka J (J 169); Kesava J (J 346).

10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*)

Anabhirati J (J 65); Loma,haṁsa J (J 94); Araka J (J 169); Vāl'okaka J (J 183); Mahisa J (J 278); Ananu-sociya J (J 328); Pīṭha J (J 337); Culla Dhamma,pāla J (J 358); Nandiya,miga J (J 385); Kaṇha J (J 440); Culla,bodhi J (J 443); Dasa,ratha J (J 461); Bhisa J (J 488); Rohanta,miga J (J 501); Jayaddisa J (J 513).

1.1.2 Qualities of the buddhahood-aspirant

1.1.2.1 The aspirant to Buddhahood is attributed numerous wholesome qualities. Of special mention are **the "5 great sacrifices"** (*pañca mahā,pariccāga*), as a category of their own, by a buddhahood-aspirant, that is:

			significance
(1)	the sacrifice of limb	*aṅga,pariccāga*	giving up what are most vital to one;
(2)	the sacrifice of self (one's life)[16]	*atta,pariccāga*	giving up what is most precious to one;
(3)	the sacrifice of wealth	*dhana,pariccāga*	giving up what one has (material wealth);
(4)	the sacrifice of wife (and children)	*dāra,pariccāga*	giving up one's family and lineage;
(5)	the sacrifice of kingdom	*raja,pariccāga*	giving up one's worldly power.

It should be understood here that such sacrifices are not "standards of practice" for the ordinary person, but challenges and "karma neutralizers" for one who is to become a world saviour or cosmic liberator, a buddha. When such sacrifices are made, ironically, nothing is really lost; they are only *hastening* or *compounding* such losses, as it were, to tweak the samsaric cycle, speeding it up. By giving up all these worldly things, the bodhisattva gains spiritual goodness and greatness: he is liberated as the Buddha and is thus able to liberate others, without their each having to make such great sacrifices.

1.1.2.2 In short, a buddha-to-be supremely excels in giving (including self-sacrificing) inspired by moral virtue.[17] In fact, all **the perfections** (other than the first) are various forms of *giving* or *giving up* (renunciation) on 3 different levels, those of "perfection," or "higher perfection," and of "highest perfection" [1.1.1.1]. In summary, all these levels of perfections encompasses the following:

the bodhisattva's **giving**,	encompasses various levels of sacrifices;
his **moral virtue**,	encompasses giving up of wrong speech and wrong action;
his **renunciation**,	encompasses giving up the world and worldliness;
his **wisdom**,	encompasses giving up wrong views and ignorance;
his **effort**,	encompasses giving all his physical and mental energies in his endeavours;
his **patience**,	encompasses giving his time in the face of failures and evil states in others;
his **truthfulness**,	encompasses giving up falsehood, and teaching truths beneficial to others;
his **determination**,	encompasses giving all his attention in right speech and right action;
his **lovingkindness**,	encompasses giving up negative emotions; and
his **equanimity**,	encompasses giving up all expectations of others and the world, accepting them as they are in accordance with their conditions.

1.1.2.3 Before making the initial resolve for buddhahood, the aspirant has to fulfill the following **8 prerequisites** (*aṭṭha dhamma samodhāna*):

(1)	he is human;	*manussa*
(2)	he is male;	*liṅga sampatti*
(3)	the supporting spiritual conditions;	*hetu*
(4)	seeing the teacher (meeting the Buddha);	*satthāra dassana*
(4)	going forth;	*pabbajjā*
(5)	attainment of virtues;	*guṇa Sampatti*

[16] **BA 59**,25-28 oddly mentions "sacrificing one's limbs" as the perfection of giving (*tāva aṅga,pariccāgo pāramī nāma*), and sacrifice of "external things" as the higher perfection (*bahira,bhaṇḍa,pariccāgo upapāramī nāma*).

[17] ApA 49 f; BA 59 f; CA 273; J 1:45; DhsA 32.

(6) act of merit; and *adhikāra*
(7) will-power. *chandatā*

These prerequisites are only briefly stated here by way of introduction, and they will be explained in some detail below [2.2].

1.2 ASPIRATION TO PACCEKA-BUDDHAHOOD

1.2.1 The pacceka-buddhahood aspirant

The aspirant to pacceka-buddhahood (**pacceka,buddhattā*)—that is being a solitary buddha who does not establish a dispensation (*sāsana*)[18]—should at least possess these 4 conditions: he should *be a human, a male, the act of merit and will-power* [2.2.0]. He must have also "seen" (that is, has lived with) arhats, those who have destroyed their influxes (*vigat'āsava,dassana*).[19] The term arhat of course includes the Buddha himself, who is the first arhat [2.2.3.1(1)]; the pacceka-buddha, too, is an arhat. In short, an aspirant to pacceka-buddhahood *sees* that he will himself become an arhat and a recluse.

When buddhas arise in the world after having fulfilled the perfections (*pāramī*) that they have aspired to and have undertaken them for the duration mentioned [2.1.4.1], they arise in the world either in a kshatriya family or a brahmin family. What about pacceka-buddhas?

1.2.2 The pacceka-buddha

1.2.2.1 Pacceka-buddhas arise in a family of kshatriyas, brahmins, or householders. But **the chief disciples**, like the buddhas, arise only in families of kshatriyas or brahmins. Buddhas never arise when the aeon is devolving, but they arise when the aeon is evolving (that is, the phase just before open stasis or stable state).[20] Buddhas attain awakening themselves and awaken others. Pacceka-buddhas attain awakening themselves but do not awaken others.

They penetrate the taste of the goal (nirvana) only but *not the taste of the Dharma*. For they are not able to apply conceptual description to the world-transcending Dharma and thereby teach it. Their breakthrough to the Dharma is like that of a dumb person trying to describe the things he has seen in an amazing dream or like a country-dweller trying to describe the exquisite dishes he tasted in the city.

Apparently, as we shall see below, some pacceka-buddhas do teach, but not as successfully as the Buddha or the great arhats. [1.2.2.2]

1.2.2.2 Pacceka-buddhas achieve all the psychic powers [2.2.6.2], meditative attainments [2.2.6.1], and analytic knowledges.[21] Their excellent qualities are however inferior to those of the buddhas but superior to those of disciples. They give others the going-forth, train them in moral conduct, and in mental effacement but this practice does not reach the goal of awakening.

This is based on **the Sutta Nipāta Commentary** reading of the Sinhala (Ce) and PTS (Ee) manuscripts.[22] The Burmese and Siamese manuscripts read the contrary: "They *neither* give others the going-forth *nor* train them in proper common conduct."[23]

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[18] Which means that the Dharma as teaching does not continue after his death.

[19] SnA 1:51; ThaA 1:12; ApA 142.

[20] Also at ApA:Be 1:150, where it adds: "so too pacceka-buddhas" (*tathā pacceka,buddhā*).

[21] The 4 analytic skills (*paṭisambhidā*) are those of: (1) meanings (*attha,paṭisambhidā*); (2) teachings [truths] (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*); (3) language (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*); and (4) ready wit (*paṭibhāṇa,paṭisambhidā*): SD 28.4 (4); SD 41.6 (2.2); SD 58.1 (5.4.2.13).

[22] SnA: Ce + Ee read: *aññe pabbājetvā ābhisamācārikaṁ sikkhāpenti*.

[23] SnA: Be Se read the opposite: *na aññe pabbājetvā ābhisamācārikaṁ sikkhāpenti* … , "they do not give others the going-forth and train them in proper common conduct." On *ābhisamācārika,* see SD 55.8 (3.3.2). SnA accounts

The Sutta Nipāta Commentary states that buddhas self-awaken and awaken others; pacceka-buddhas self-awaken but do *not* awaken others.[24] Pacceka-buddhas, however, do teach others. **The Aṅguttara** Commentary, however, speaks of the elder Nāḷaka, who was taught by a pacceka-buddha and gained the state of a pacceka-buddha (*pacceka,bodhi*), that is, became an arhat.[25]

Pacceka-buddhas however observe the uposatha with this teaching: "One should practice mental effacement, one should not stop practising" (*citta,sallekho kātabbo, vosānaṁ nâpajjitabban ti*), or else they merely say: "Today is the uposatha." When observing the uposatha, they do so after they have assembled on the jewelled terrace at the foot of the Mañjūsaka tree on Mount Gandha,mādana.[26]

1.2.2.3 The Sutta Nipāta Commentary states that the above account was given by the Buddha himself, explaining the nature of pacceka-buddhas,[27] to Ānanda. This serves as an introduction to **the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3/35-75), the discourse of the rhinoceros, beginning with the words, "Having laid down the rod toward all beings." (SnA 52,3-8) [1.2.2.5]

Such accounts show that the common conception of the pacceka-buddha—such as that amongst some Sinhala Buddhists—as "a silent buddha" and one who lives in complete solitude is mistaken. However, due to their near-solitary nature and because they do not establish a dispensation (*sāsana*), we may call them "**solitary buddhas**."

1.2.2.4 The Pali Commentaries seem to agree that pacceka-buddhas do not meet the buddha, and arise only when no buddha has arisen.[28] Moreover, the suttas nowhere record that the Buddha speaks of any contemporary pacceka-buddhas, but do mention pacceka-buddhas, such as 500 of them, in the past, dwelling on Mount Isigili, one of the 5 mountains around Rāja,gaha,[29] and that alms were offered to them; after the Buddha, pacceka-buddhas are most worthy of alms-offering.[30] [1.2.2.5]

However, as we have noted [1.2.2.2], the Sinhalese and the PTS commentarial tradition say that pacceka-buddhas *do* teach: "having ordained others, they are trained in the common moral conduct" (*aññe pabbājetvā ābhisamācārikaṁ sikkhāpenti*); but the Burmese and the Siamese commentarial traditions say that the pacceka-buddhas *neither* ordain others *nor* train them (*na aññe pabbājetvā ābhisamācārikaṁ sikkhāpenti*).

Such contradictory traditions support the view that the idea of pacceka-buddhas was a late teaching. In fact, the Buddhist *pacceka,buddha* doctrine closely parallels the Jain teachings on ***patteyabuddha*.** This could mean that either the Jain idea was assimilated by the early Buddhists into their idea of *pacceka,-buddha,* or vice versa; or perhaps there is a third explanation, that both traditions developed their own

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of pacceka-buddhas never mention them as giving the going-forth or basic moral conduct to their pupils, Be and Se must be correct here. [SnA:B n380 states the opposite!] On this textual contradiction, see [1.2.2.4].

[24] *Buddhā sayañ ca bujjhanti pare can bodhenti, pacceka,buddhā sayañ bujjhati na pare bodhenti* (SnA 2:51,21-23).

[25] *Nāḷaka,thera,sadiso … pacceka,buddhānaṁ santuke ovādaṁ labhitvā paṭividdha,pacceka,bodhi,ñāṇa ca* (AA 2:192,7-9).

[26] SnA 51,14-52,3. Gandha,mādana is one of the 5 mountains surrounding lake Anotattā (Akt *anavataptā,* "not heated"), prob is Mt Kailash today. **Anotattā** is prob Aral Sea, lying between Kazakhstan (north) and Uzbekistan (south). It began to shrink in the 1960s when Russian irrigation projects diverted rivers feeding it to cotton fields in Central Asia. By 2007, the lake had declined to 10% of its original size, splitting into 4 lakes. [Wiki] 14 Feb 2024.

[27] SD 22.5 (3); SD 34.8 (2.3); SD 36.2 (2.2.2).

[28] SnA:Ee 1:51, also Be Ce Se read here: *pacceka,buddhā buddhe appatvā buddhānaṁ uppajjana,kāle yeva uppajjanti*. ApA:Be 1:150, similarly states: "But pacceka-buddhas do not arise at a time when buddhas arise" (*te pana buddhānaṁ uppajjana,kāle na uppajjanti*).

[29] M 116/3:68-71.

[30] **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5(2)) n, SD 1.9.

pacceka,buddha or patteyabuddha teachings from a common older source, perhaps an urtext.[31] A 4th possibility—which I think is the most likely—is that the early Buddhists found that the term *pacceka,-buddha* best describes the kind of arhat who is like the Buddha but does not establish a dispensation (*sāsana*).[32]

1.2.2.5 R F Gombrich, in his review of Kloppenberg, *The Paccekabuddha: A Buddhist ascetic* (1983), points out that in early Buddhism one might differentiate a buddha who discovered the Dharma for himself and taught it to others, that is, his disciples (*sāvaka*), making the teacher *sammā,sambuddha*. This raises the possibility of an interstitial (in-between) category, one who, like a buddha, discovers the Dharma for himself, but unlike him, does not teach it.[33]

K R Norman,[34] on the other hand, thinks that early Buddhism and Jainism learned of a category of buddhas (from another sect, teaching in a different dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan), and from whom they assimilated the idea into their own systems. There was a gap in between buddha and sāvaka, and it was into that gap that they located the pacceka-buddha. Gradually, they defined attributes until they exactly filled the gap as suggested by Gombrich.[35]

1.2.2.6 Theravāda similarly shows signs of **inconsistency** in its attitude towards pacceka-buddhas. Although pacceka-buddhas do not arise in a buddha's time (*buddha,kāla*), pacceka-buddhas are mentioned in the following **canonical texts**:

- **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16/2:142,16), SD 9
  Pacceka-buddhas, after death, are said to be worthy of stupas.[36]
- **Isigili Sutta** (M 116/68-71), SD 99.6
  The Buddha mentions that 500 pacceka-buddhas once lived on this hill.[37] [1.2.2.4]
- **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142/3:253-257), SD 1.9(3)
  After the Buddha, pacceka-buddhas are most worthy of offerings.[38]

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[31] See J **Charpentier**, *Paccekabuddhageschichten,* Uppsala, 1980:35-44. See also M **Wiltshire**, *Ascetic Figures Before and in Early Buddhism,* Berlin & NY, 1990: xxxix f, 124-127, 130. Wiltshire proposes the thesis that *pacceka,-buddha*s were pre-Buddhist and pre-Jain "proto-śramaṇas" and that the idea later evolved into Buddhist pacceka,-buddhas and Jain *patteyabuddha*s (1990:xiii, xv f, 20, 46, 125, 128, 153, 156, 160, 165, 190, 202, 226 f, 239, 295). However, reviewers have pointed out (eg, **Collins**, "Problems with Pacceka-Buddhas" (rev of Wiltshire 1990), *Religion* 22,3, 1992b:271 f; **Norman**, rev of Wiltshire 1990. BSOAS 55,1 1992:144 f), some serious problems with Wiltshire's hypothesis, and his grasp of the sources (and the languages of their composition) leaves much to be desired. [N Appleton, "On pratyekabuddhas," "Pratyekabuddhas continued" & "Hanging out with solitary buddhas"] 9 Sep 2025.

[32] For a study, see R Kloppenberg, *The Paccekabuddha: A Buddhist ascetic: A study of the concept of the pacceka-buddha in Pali canonical and commentarial literature,* Kandy, 1983, WH 305-7; online 2006. 14 Feb 2025.

[33] *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 74 1979:78 f.

[34] K R Norman, "The Pratyeka-buddha in Buddhism and Jainism" in Denwood & Piatigorsky (edd), *Buddhist Studies, Ancient and Modern* 4, 1983a: 100 f (= *Collected Papers II*, PTS, 1992f:246-248).

[35] Norman, 1983:101 f. Norman himself notes that his suggestion is similar to that of Fujita's theory: K Fujita, "One vehicle or three?" (tr L Hurvitz), *J of Indian Philosophy* 3 1975: 79-166.

[36] Cf parallels: DĀ 2 (T1.20b23 + T7 @ T1.200a24), EĀ 26.9 (T2.642b20), and A 4.245/2:245,17; cf also Kloppenborg 1974:23.

[37] See Analayo, "Paccekabuddhas in the Isigili-sutta and its Ekottarika-āgama parallel," *Canadian J* of Buddhist Studie 6, 2010:5-36. Cf Analayo, "Pratyekabuddhas in the Ekottarika-āgama," *J of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 8 2015: 10-27 esp 17.

[38] See also **S 3.20**/1:92,4 and its parallels SĀ 1233 (T2.337c8), SĀ2.60 (T2.394b15), and EĀ 23.4 (T2.613a5) report the fruitfulness of giving to a pratyekabuddha in the past combined with the dire consequence of not having had

- **Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3/*35-*75/6-12)
  One of the oldest Theravāda texts, suggesting that the pacceka-buddha concept was assimilated into Buddhism at a very early stage. [1.2.2.3]
- **Puggala,paññatti** (Pug 9.1/73,17-22)
  This means that at the start of the Abhidhamma period, the Buddhists (like the Jains) still regarded both sammā,sambuddhas and pacceka-buddhas as being "self-enlightened) (*sāmaṁ*); their difference lie in their attributes and powers; not in the way of their awakening.

Only in the Commentaries do we find the difference of awakening (*bodhi*) being mentioned (eg SnA 51,21-23). [1.2.2.2]

1.2.2.7 Norman, in his paper, "The pratyeka-buddha in Buddhism and Jainism" (1983:102), gives his conclusions as follows:

> The fact that the concept of the pratyeka-buddha is pre-Buddhism and pre-Jainism is shown not only by its presence in both religions, but also by the fact that there are differences in the treatment of the stories about the pratyeka-buddhas in the oldest Buddhist and Jain texts of such a kind that they could only have arisen over a long period of time. The non-Jain nature of the concept is emphasized by the fact that the form of the term *patteya-buddha* is anomalous in Jain Prakrit, and must be a borrowing from another dialect, and probably another religion.
>
> The philological evidence shows that it is possible for the terms *patteya-buddha/pacceka-buddha* to be derived from **pratyaya-buddha**. The form *pratyaya-buddha* allows an interpretation which might be thought to be more appropriate than the customary "individual buddha, buddha for himself" which is given for *pratyeka-buddha.*
>
> The inconsistent and changing views about the pratyeka-buddha both in Jain and Buddhist texts indicate an attempt to assimilate a concept which was alien to early Jainism and Buddhism,[39] to find a place for pratyeka-buddhas in both religions, and to define more clearly the differences between them and the recognized buddhas of Jainism and Buddhism.
>
> (Norman, "The pratyeka-buddha in Buddhism and Jainism," 1983. Paragraphed with highlights)[40]

1.2.3 Nothing is worth clinging to

1.2.3.1 We are used to the notion that (my) religion is *perfectly worded, powerfully preached, faithfully right and eternally true for us*. Yet, for all that, our lives remain unchanged; perhaps it has gotten worse in terms of self-view. Of course, that is not the way *we* see it. After all, we have pronounced what *our* religion is; it should prove us right. The reality is that we have created religion in our own image.

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an attitude of faith towards him; cf also **U 5.3**/50,16 where it is not not-giving to a pacceka-buddha but being disrespectful to him brings disastrous results. Another similar instance is at MĀ 66 (T1.508c26), which reports that in a past life Anuruddha had offered food to a pratyekabuddha, which brought abundant merit. Parallels to this in Chin canon incl T44 (T1.829b19), T190 (T3.928b21), and T203 (T4.470c25). In Pāli, versions of this tale are found only in **Comys**; cf. a brief ref at **ThaA** 3:72,23 (comy on Tha 910) and a more detailed version in **DhA** 4:120,23. For another account of offering to a pratyekabuddha: EĀ 52.2 (T2.824b18.

[39] The fact that the pacceka-buddhas were thought of as being inferior to the sammā,sambuddhas seem to have led to the idea that the word *pacceka* meant "inferior." This prob accounts for such cpds as *pacceka-brahma* (a brahma without a retinue) in Pali, and pratyeka-brahman and *pratyeka-rājan* in Buddhist Skt.

[40] See K R Norman, "The pratyeka-buddha in Buddhism and Jainism," in P Denwood & A Piatigorsky (edd), *Buddhist Studies, Ancient and Modern*, (*Collected Papers on South Asia*, 4), London & Dublin: Curzon, 1983:92-106; repr Norman, *Collected Papers* 2, 1991:233-249.

When we look at our own image in the water of life, we see it echoes every act we do or don't do. We fall in love with this obedient follower. When we look at others, they do not repeat our actions like our watery follower. Those others must surely be wrong. We are but image-worshippers.[41]

1.2.3.2 Difficulties and contradictions like the above teachings [1.2.2.7] can well teach us to be wise just as any well-taught doctrine can inspire us to be better persons. If and when we courageously and clearly reflect on how we view Dharma problems as mentioned, we will discover that we can have a better view of things (instead of being caught up in controversies or creating them).

The Buddha reminds us that "**Nothing is worth clinging to**" (*sabbe dhammā nâlaṁ abhinivesāyā,* literally, "all dharmas are not worth grasping").[42] *Dhammā* (pl) here means "states, truths, teachings, views" or whatever we are experiencing (whether speech, action or thought). Let's apply this understanding to the *pacceka-buddha* controversy. We are here looking at ancient views that the early Buddhists and Jains struggled with.

1.2.3.3 A **view** is simply a perception of something bigger, like looking at one side of a huge mountain. There are other views of the mountain, depending on where we stand. Then, when we are on the mountain itself or its peak, we have a broader view of it. Hence, there is no single right "view"; there is only a "vision" of the whole mountain, that is, the nature of the mountain and of our seeing [wisdom].

We may reflect right here and now—that reading this will end in a moment—how time flies. Often, we have read a passage or seen a word; then we have a new and better understanding of it. We have cast off an old empty shell; we know better.

Time is the value and priority we give to things in our life. If we love people, we always have time for them; if we love Dharma, we always have time for it—time for Dharma is the best time for our spiritual growth. When such time is spent with others, it is called **spiritual friendship**.

The truth is that when we leave this life, we cannot take anything with us except our karma, the good and bad we have done, along with our views. We cannot take with us anything we have, not even our body. Even our breath—what we take in—we have to give back.[43] We cannot bring with us any thing we have gotten or received—only the good that we have and have happily given away.[44] The more good we give away, the better and more of it we get.

1.3 ASPIRATION TO DISCIPLEHOOD

1.3.1 The aspirant to **disciplehood** (*sāvakattā*)[45]—that is, arhathood-aspirant—is also ready, *if necessary,* to make sacrifices for Dharma in the literal sense (sacrifice of limb or life) (***atta,pariccāga***), and, *necessarily*, in the spiritual sense (giving up of self-view) and to show great compassion and skillful means to assert Dharma-spirited effort (*kattu,kamyatā*). The term ***kattu,kamyatā*** refers to one's willingness and ability to make every wholesome effort to *avoid evil, do good, purify the mind and attain awakening*. [3.1.2]

1.3.2 It should be noted here that **arhathood** has both a broad sense and a narrow sense. The broad sense is the self-awakening that characterize all awakened beings, buddhas, pacceka-buddhas and arhats

[41] On the significance of the Narcissus myth, see SD 34.1 (2.5.2.2); SD 60.1d (7.7.5.4).

[42] This is the advice the Buddha gives Moggallāna at the close of **Pacalā S** (A 7.58), SD 4.11.

[43] On meditation as renunciation, see **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; ***Bhāvanā***, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

[44] On the arhat's charity (*cāga*), see **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,27), SD 4.17.

[45] I use "disciplehood" for *sāvakattā,* the state of being the Buddha's direct disciple, esp arhathood. "Discipleship" has a broad sense of commitment to the Dharma-spirited life in the modern sense.

themselves. In the narrow sense, the arhat are those awakened by their own effort, or guided by the buddha, but are neither sammā-sambuddhas nor pacceka-buddhas (these are the disciples, *sāvaka*).

2 The duration of aspirant transformation

2.1 THE AEON (*KAPPA*)

2.1.1 The length of an aeon

2.1.1.1 The duration for aspirant transformation, attaining their respective awakened goals of buddhahood, pacceka-buddhahood or disciplehood, are described in terms of **incalculables** (*asaṅkheyya*) and **aeons** (*kappa*). **An aeon** is a "world-period"—technically, a "great aeon" (*mahā,kappa*) [2.1.3]—that is, a cycle of 4 phases of our universe [2.1.3.1]. At least 2 well-known metaphors are used in the suttas to illustrate the "incalculability" of an aeon, that is:

• **(Kappa) Pabbata Sutta**	S 15.5/2:182 f	the mountain metaphor;	SD 2.19 (9.2)
• **(Kappa) Sāsāpa Sutta**	S 15.6/2:183	the mustard seed metaphor.	SD 2.19 (9.2)

2.1.1.2 The mountain metaphor is explained by the Buddha, thus:

> *6* Suppose, bhikshu, there were a great mountain of rock, a yojana [league][46] long, a yojana wide, and a yojana high, with neither holes nor crevices, one solid mass of rock. At the end of every hundred years, a person would stroke it just once with a piece of Kāsī cloth.[47] That great mountain of rock might, by this effort, be worn away and eliminated, but **the aeon**, bhikshu, would still not have come to an end. Bhikshu, so long is an aeon.
>
> *7* And for aeons of such length, we have wandered through so very many aeons, so very many hundreds of aeons, so very many thousands of aeons, so very many hundreds of thousands of aeons.
>
> *8* And what is the reason for this? Because, bhikshus, this cycle of lives (*saṁsāra*) is without discernible beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on shrouded by ignorance and fettered by craving. For such a long time, bhikshus, you have experienced suffering, anguish, and disaster, and filled the cemetery full. It is enough to feel revulsion towards all formations, enough to become dispassionate towards them, enough to be free from them. (S 15.5/2:182 f)

2.1.1.3 The mustard seed metaphor is worded thus:

> Suppose, bhikshu, there were a city with iron walls a yojana long, a yojana wide, and a yojana high, filled with mustard seeds as dense as a topknot. At the end of every hundred years, a person would remove just *one* mustard seed from there. That great heap of mustard seeds might, by this effort, be depleted and eliminated, but **the aeon** would still not have come to an end. Bhikshu, so long is an aeon.
>
> [The rest reads just as paragraphs *7* + *8* of the mountain metaphor above.] (S 15.6/2:183)

[46] A "league" (*yojana*) is the distance travelled by a yoke of oxen, ie, about 7 miles (11.3 km), and is divided into 3 *gāvutā* (DhA 2:13; cf DhA 1:108). See SD 47.8 (2.4.4.1); also Dh 60, J 5:37.

[47] "With a piece of Kāsī cloth," *kāsikā vatthena.* This cannot be silk since it was not found in India in the Buddha's time. Comy explains that this is very delicate cloth made of thread spun from 3 cotton fibres. (SA 2:158,3-5)

2.1.2 How many aeons have passed?

2.1.2.1 Two other suttas in **the Anamatagga Saṁyutta** (S 15) employ metaphorical language to help us imagine the number of aeons that have since passed (from our time); that is, the (Kappa) Sāvakā Sutta (S 15.7) and the (Kappa) Gaṅgā Sutta (S 15.8).

2.1.2.2 The (Kappa) Sāvakā Sutta (S 15.7) gives an interesting simile in terms of 4 monks trying to recollect the world-cycles that have since passed. Suppose that there were **4 disciples** (*sāvaka*), each living for 100 years. Every day each of them would recollect 100,000 world-cycles.[48] Even if they were able to do so to the end of their days, they would still not have recollected all the world-cycles that have passed. (S 15.7/2:182 f)

2.1.2.3 The (Kappa) Gaṅgā Sutta (S 15.8) records the Buddha pointing to the number of sand-particles that there are in the Ganges banks from its source right down to where it enters the great ocean. Even very much more than all this huge number of sand particles is the number of world-cycles that have passed. (S 15.8/2:183)

The aeon, despite its "incalculability," is still finite; the universe evolves in 4 stages [2.2.5.3], we may not know its beginning, but we can get out of it, that is, we can end it for ourselves.

2.1.3 The great aeon (*mahā,kappa*)

2.1.3.1 A great aeon (*mahā,kappa*) (often spoken of as simply *kappa*) consists of **4 incalculables**—that is, the 4 phases of the universe.[49] **The 4 phases of the cosmic cycle** are described in **the (Catukka) Kappa Sutta** (A 4.156),[50] as follows:

	modern parallels
(1) the universe rolls back [collapses],[51]	a "big crunch";
(2) it remains in a rolled-back (stable) state,[52]	a black hole;
(3) it rolls open [expands],[53] and	a "big bang";
(4) it remains in a rolled-open state [expanded (stable) state],[54]	a steady state.

This whole 4-stage world-cycle is called **an aeon** (*kappa*; Skt *kalpa*), and each of these 4 phases is called **an incalculable** (*asaṅkheyya*) or incalculable aeon (*asaṅkheyya kappa*), and is described by the Sutta as "*cannot easily be reckoned as so many years, or so many hundreds of years, or so many thousands of years, or so many hundreds of thousands of years*."[55] This should not be confused with the term "incalculable" as a time-period of itself [2.1.4.1].

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[48] Comy: One would recollect 100,000 world-cycles beginning with the stable phase (incalculable) (*ṭhita-ṭ,ṭhāna-to*); the 2nd would recollect from there for another 100,000 world-cycles; and so on, totalling 400,000 world-cycles. (SA 2:158,11-14)

[49] Our universe is only *one* amongst numerous others, separate universes in a multiverse. See SD 2.19 (9.5).

[50] A 4.156/2:142; see SD 2.19 (8.3).

[51] "Rolls back," *saṁvaṭṭati,* ie, closes into itself, a collapsing universe, a "big crunch."

[52] "Remains in a rolled-back state," *saṁvaṭṭato* [vl *saṁvattate*] *tiṭṭhati,* ie, a collapsed universe or "black hole."

[53] "Rolls open," *vivaṭṭati,* ie, closes into itself, an evolving universe, a "big bang."

[54] "Remains in a rolled-open state," *vivaṭṭato* [vl *vivattate*] *tiṭṭhati,* ie, an expanded or steady-state universe.

[55] See SD 2.19 (9.4).

2.1.3.2 This description clearly reflects a kind of "**pulsating**" **universe**, a concept with which we are very familiar today. Such a universe, despite being said to be "incalculable"[56] and comprising of 4 "incalculables," is still *finite*. Since the aeon (or the universe) will end at some point in time, so too will an incalculable.

The connotation of this metaphorical language is to remind us not to take "all our time" to see the way out of suffering. After all, **time** is what keeps us alive and suffering in samsara.

2.1.4 Incalculable (*asaṅkheyya*) and aeon (*kappa*)

2.1.4.1 In the case of **the buddhahood-aspirant**, the duration of learning for awakening will be at least be 4 incalculables (*asaṅkheyya*) and 100,000 aeons (*kappa*).

The pacceka-buddhahood-aspirant will take 2 incalculables and 100,000 aeons.

And the duration for **the disciplehood-aspirant** varies, depending on whether one aspires to be a chief disciple (*agga,sāvaka*) (1 incalculable and 100,000 aeons) or a great disciple (*mahā,sāvaka*) (100,000 aeons).[57]

Here, the term **incalculable** (*asaṅkheyya*) should not be confused with *asaṅkheyya,kappa* (which is often referred to also as an "incalculable"). In the phrase, "4 incalculables and 100,000 aeons" and similar expressions, **incalculable** is *not* a stage of an aeon but a time-period of its own and is "incalculably" longer than an aeon. It can get more confusing here as the scholiasts delve into astronomical numbers.[58] So what is suggested here can only be tentative.

In terms of aspiration time, especially where "incalculables" and "aeons" are used, an **incalculable** is a fabulously long period of time. The most common values given for an incalculable are 10^{51}, 10^{59}, or 10^{63} years.[59] Childers says that an incalculable is "10,000,000^{20} or 1 followed by 110 cyphers" (DPL 59).

All such aspirations will take an astronomically long time, during which the aspirant lives *learning from suffering in a meaningful and purposeful manner*. From physical and emotional sufferings, the aspirant learns the nature of suffering that is the aggregates—the true nature of *form, feeling, perception and consciousness*, seeing them ever more clearly over time as the working of **conditionality**.

2.1.4.2 We will here briefly look at the ability of people to recollect past lives (their own and those of others). Buddhaghosa, in his **Visuddhi,magga** states the following:

> Six classes of people are able to recall past existences: outside sectarians, ordinary disciples, great disciples, chief disciples, pacceka buddhas, and buddhas. Of these, **sectarians** recall 40 aeons and no more. Why not? Because of their weak understanding; they at best have a weak understanding of the classification of mind and matter (*nāma,rūpa,pariccheda*). **Ordinary dIsciples** recall a 100 or a 1000 aeons, because their deep understanding. **The 80 great disciples** recall a 100,000 aeons. **The 2 chief disciples** recall an incalculable and a 100,000 aeons. **Pacceka-buddhas** recall 2 incalculables and 100,000 aeons, for to such extent carries their aspiration. As to the buddhas, there is no limit to their recollection. (Vism 13.15 f/3411)

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[56] See SD 2.19 (9.3).

[57] **MA 2:155**: The aspirations to disciplehood of **Puṇṇa** (foremost of monks who are Dharma-speakers, A 1:23) took 100,000 world-periods; **Sāriputta** 100,000 world-periods and 1 incalculable (*puṇṇa-t,thero kappa,sata,sahassaṁ abhinīhāra,sampanno sāriputta-t,thero pi kappa,sata,sahass'ādhikaṁ ekam-asaṅkheyyaṁ,* MA 2:155,10-12; AA 1:153,17 + 21). Sāriputta took longer for his aspiration to fruit because he (and Moggallāna) aspired to the position of chief disciple (*agga,mahā,sāvaka*), ie, as the Buddha's right-hand disciple (and left-hand disciple).

[58] Further confusion may arise when "incalculable aeon" or "uncountable kalpa" is used in place of simply, "incalculable."

[59] D Keown, *A Dict of Buddhism,* Oxford, 2003: kalpa.

2.2 CONDITIONS FOR ASPIRATION TO BUDDHAHOOD

2.2.0 The 8 prerequisites (*aṭṭha dhamma,samodhānā*)

The Buddha,vaṁsa and the Commentaries list a set of 8 prerequisites[60] for an aspirant to buddhahood so that he is able to successfully make the initial resolve (*pubba,patthāna* or *mūla,paṇidhāna*), namely: [1.1.1.4]

manussataṁ liṅga,sampatti	(1) The human state, (2) the attainment of gender,
hetu satthāra,dassanaṁ	(3) the cause, (4) seeing the teacher,
pabbajjā guṇa,sampatti	(5) going forth, (6) attainment of virtues,
adhikāro ca chandatā	(7) act of merit and (8) will-power—
aṭṭha,dhamma,samodhānā	with these 8 things coming together
abhinihāro samijjhati.	the aspiration succeeds.

(B 2.59/9 = J 1:14; B:H IIA.59/15)[61]

The 8 prerequisites for buddhahood aspirants have been explained in **the Sutta,nipāta Commentary, the Udāna Commentary**, **the Jātaka Commentary, the Buddha,vaṁsa Commentary** and **the Cariyā,-piṭaka Commentary**, and a summary follows.[62]

2.2.*1*[63] The human state (*manussatā*)

2.2.1.1 The aspirant to buddhahood succeeds only when he is **a human**, not one born as a naga,[64]a suparna,[65] or even a deva, a brahma,[66] and so on. This is because such non-human states lack the 3 wholesome root-causes (*ahetuka,bhāva*) and 8 prerequisites [2.2.0].[67] If one is a woman, or a non-human, such as a deva, one should first aspire to be a human male. As a human male, having done good such as giving, one should then dedicate the merit, resolving for the right conditions for aspiration to buddhahood and so on.[68] [2.2.0]

2.2.1.2 The term ***manussatā*** is derived from *manussa,* "human," + *-tā,* a suffix for a state, that is, as an abstract noun such as "-ness, -ity, -hood." We can thus translate *manussatā* as "the human state, humanness, **humanity**." Similarly, we have rendered ***sāvakatā*** (the state of a disciple) both as "disciple-

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[60] The term *aṭṭha dhamma,samodhānā* lit means "combination of 8 conditions."

[61] Also at MA 4:122; AA 2:15; UA 133; ItA 1:121; SnA 1:48, 51; ThaA 1:11 f; J 1:14, 44; ApA 16, 48, 140, 142; BA 91, 271; CA 16, 282; DhsA 32; VbhA 437; NettA:Be 159; Upās:Ce 149.

[62] SnA 148 f; UA 133; J 1:14,16-33; BA 91 f; CA 276-332.

[63] This last digit is *italicized* to denote the numbering sequence of the 8 prerequisites of Buddhahood-aspiration.

[64] Naga (*nāga*), a serpent spirit or Indian dragon; some of whom are able to shape-shift [foll n]; SD 27.5a (6.2.0) n. The best known *nāga* was Mucalinda: SD 27.5a (6.2.1.1); SD 63.1.

[65] Suparna, anglicization of *supaṇṇa* ("well-winged"); in ancient Indian mythology, a fabulous harpy-like being with bird-like lower torso and wings, and a human upper torso. The most famous suparna was called **Garuḍa**. Suparnas were the mortal enemies of the **nagas** (*nāga*) [prec n]. Historically, they were prob the falcon-worshipping or falcon-rearing Iranians who conquered the Naga territories of north-west India. Sometimes, they might refer to the ancient dragon-worshipping Chinese. Some believe that they were a race of intelligent Dragons in the family of Dinosaurs, that became extinct during the dawn of human civilizations. SD 27.6a (6.2.0) n.

[66] *Deva* usu refers to celestial beings of the sense-world, and whose form is characterized by pure light. *Brahmā* are the celestial beings of the form heavens and formless heavens, characterized by pure energy.

[67] The wholesome root-conditions are *non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion*. Cf VbhA 402, 417, 419; Vism 456.

[68] SnA 1:48,18-23.

hood," the state of being the Buddha's direct disciple [1.3, 3.1], and as "discipleship," an inspired commitment to Dharma [3.2]

The term **humanity** is especially significant in connoting the spirit of the person who is a buddha-aspirant. Buddhas arise among humans *not* because it is the highest existential state, which would be the "peak of existence" (*bhav'agga*), a superhuman state of mental freedom. Thus, it is stated in **the Arahata Sutta 1** (S 22.76)[69] and **the Bhaddaji Sutta** (A 5.170)[70] (among others)[71] that the foremost state of existence is the base or attainment of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva,saññā,nâsaññā*), the highest of the 4 formless realms and of the 31 states of existence.[72]

2.2.1.3 Buddhas arise *only* amongst humans because **humanity**, that is, human beings, firstly, have the ability to think and reason, see conditionality, and distinguish between good and evil, and choose the wholesome path.

Secondly, humans undergo both suffering and pleasure, and are able to understand, in the long run, their difference and its significance.

Thirdly, humans have a mind embodied as the 5 sense-faculties, which are both the tool and the personal state of being that transforms itself by rising out of craving and ignorance to attain freedom and awakening.

Fourthly, humans—with the benefit of the first 3 reasons—are capable of wholesomely relating to others, that is, both to other *humans* and to *life* as a whole, and appreciating the value of life and living. Hence, buddhas do *not* "die for the world"—loud but delusive words that signifying nothing. Buddhas **live** so that beings *live* better lives and awaken to mental freedom.

Buddhas *die* simply because they have arisen as humans in the world to manifest awakening of which only humans can attain. To exist is to be impermanent: the buddha's body is impermanent, capable of suffering and is nonself—just like any living being. Awakening is expressed through the buddha-mind, of which we are all capable of attaining.

Other beings, too, can attain awakening, but they must evolve through humanity to experience *impermanence, suffering and nonself*, and by fully understanding this reality, awaken to buddhahood. Hence, the buddha is may be said to the ideal of human awakening.

2.2.1.4 The word ***manussa*** ("human"; Skt *mānuṣa*),[73] in the Sanskrit tradition, derives from *manu*, the Vedic term for the first man; hence the mythical derivation, *manuno apaccā ti* ***manussā*****,** "they are humans (*manussa*) because they are the offspring of Manu." The Ancients (early Buddhist fathers) however prefer: *manaso ussannatāya* ***manussā,*** "they are humans because of the prominence of mind,"[74] with alternative readings, *manassa ussannatāya* ***manussā***,[75] and *mano ussannamassā ti* ***manusso*** (sg), "one is human because of the prominence of mind."[76]

The early Buddhists see the human state as the "**prominence**" (*ussanata*) of the mind; that is, we rely on the minds or intention by which we act creatively or productively, unwholesomely or wholesomely. The mind defines the moral quality of our being. The emphasis on the mind here clearly shows that a human is capable of mental and spiritual cultivation, that is, to see the true nature of reality.

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[69] S 22.76,10/3:83,14 (SD 26.7); SD 40a.12 (3.5.2).

[70] A 5.170/3:202.17 (SD 95.4); SD 57.17 (2.8.3).

[71] See A 4.75/2:79,5, 4.75/2:79,5; Vbh 426,8 and often in Comys.

[72] On the 31 states of existence, see SD 1.7 App; SD 57.10 (2.2).

[73] The form *manusa* occurs at It 94; Pv 2.9,21 + 56. Pl *mānusā* Sn 361, 644; Pv 2.22,7. The rare form *manuja* is found at Sn 458. As neut *mānusaṁ,* "mankind, humankind," Pv 2,22,3.

[74] MA 2:37; KhpA 123; UA 140,16; ItA 1:128; NcA 69.

[75] SnA 1:300; VvA 18, 19; BA 32; VbhA 454.

[76] Only in the early Pali dictionary **Abhidhānap-p,padīpikā** (Abhp:Be 164).

The prominence or advantage placed on **the human mind** rather than *the human body* means that it is not speciesism (the assumption of human superiority, leading to the exploitation of animals and other beings). It means that of all the existential states—the celestial, the human, the asura, the preta, the animal, and hell-being—humans have the greatest capacity for not only using their mind, but also cultivating it to rise above its dependence on the physical senses to gain spiritual liberation.

Moreover, the 1st of the 3 trainings—that of **moral conduct**—is the cultivation of the body by way of restraint and refinement of *speech and bodily action*. This is done out of regard for other beings and the environment. This should not be done merely as a "moral duty" but out of love (*mettā*), with a joyful mind in a simple appreciation of being[77] of others, human and non-human. Hence, the 1st of the 5 precepts is that of *the value and respect for life*. Life means we can grow physically, mentally and spiritually.

Furthermore, of all religions, only early Buddhism speaks of **nonself**, less so in a religious or philosophical manner, but more so as a spiritual determination to see and show the meaninglessness and disadvantages, even dangers, of self-centredness, including speciesism. Psychologically, nonself means that there is no fixed or eternal state called human, celestial, asura, preta, animal or hell-being. Even though they each may seem to be abiding states for some, they are all conditioned states that depend on how well their minds are used to facilitate the right conditions for spiritual development whenever such conditions appear. In this sense, we can meaningfully speak of nonself as the basis for an existential spiritual ecology (that is, we must turn away from "ego" and cultivate and respect the "eco").

2.2.1.5 The human state or the human world is the ideal place for the aspiration to buddhahood because it straddles midway, as it were, between the heavens (where devas and brahmas have wholesome conditions but are too drawn into their heavenly pleasures and state) and the subhuman states of deprivation, suffering, downfall, hell (*apāya duggati vinipāta niraya*) (that is, the asuras, pretas, animals, and hell-beings).[78] Therein beings are so caught up with *greed, hate, delusion and fear* that it is very difficult for them to attain even the human state, much less aspire to buddhahood.

The human state, on the other hand, is the best condition for cultivating the wholesome qualities of non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), non-delusion (*amoha*) and moral courage (*vesārajja*). The last, **moral courage**, is mentioned because it is the basis for the diligence and determination to face suffering and overcome it, and to bring wisdom and joy to others.[79] It is another term for *kattu,kamyatā.* [1.3]

Moral courage also means that we are willing to set aside the accumulation of "merits" (*puñña*)—merits are for averting suffering and attaining good rebirths—and to be joyfully inspired to cultivate the "wholesome" (*kusala*): *faith, moral virtue, wide learning, energy and wisdom*.[80] These qualities build up our intrepidity, resolute courage, to learn from **suffering** so that we understand what suffering really is, why it arises, how we can end it, and live that path for ending suffering for ourselves and for the many. This courage is called **humanity**.

2.2.*2* The attainment of gender (*liṅga,sampatti*)

2.2.2.1 As a human, the aspirant must be a male. The aspiration does not succeed for women or for eunuchs, or for those of indeterminate gender, or for hermaphrodites.[81] This is regarded as the incompleteness of characteristics. For women in traditional Chinese society, their 3 stages of life is not a very

[77] "Appreciation of being," ie, the fact that they are living beings.

[78] The 4 "states of deprivation" (*apāya*), a shorthand for ***apāyaṁ duggatiṁ vinipātaṁ nirayaṁ*,** ie, respectively, the pretas, animals, asuras and hell-beings. See SD 2.22 (1.7).

[79] On moral courage, see SD 28.9a (3).

[80] See **Sārajja S** (A 5.101), SD 28.9a(3).

[81] Among the benefits (*ānisaṁsa*) of the Buddhahood aspirant is that "he will be reborn as neither as a female nor a hermaphrodite" (*itthi,bhāvaṁ na gacchanti ubhato,vyañjana,paṇḍakā,* CA 330,20).

happy one, even as they age; so too with women, especially, in ancient India and to some extent in modern India, too.[82]

According to the Confucian notion of the "3 obediences" (Chinese 三從 *sāncóng*), women have to lead a servile life, obeying the men in their lives. Before marriage (when young), a woman must obey her father; during marriage, she has to obey her husband; and after her husband's death, she must obey her son (禮記 *lǐjì*, "Book of Rites").[83]

Although any human or divine being with the right conditions can awaken to the path, only a human male can become buddha. Hence, **the Bahu,dhātuka Sutta** (M 115) and **the Aṅguttara Nikāya** (Eka,nipāta ch 15 *Aṭṭhāna*) speak of "5 impediments" for women, that is, it is "impossible and inopportune" (*aṭṭhānaṁ … anavakāso*) that a woman could be *a buddha, a universal monarch, Sakra, Māra or Brahmā*.[84] In other words, there is neither possibility nor opportunity for a woman to become **an arhat, fully self-awakened one** in any patriarchal society.

2.2.2.2 Advocates of **feminism**[85] may try to counter patriarchy; but patriarchy had persisted, persists today, and will still persist in yet subtler or grosser widespread forms.[86] Patriarchy persists because it serves a psychological function. By requiring us to forego love for the sake of power (via control and hierarchy), patriarchy apparently shields us from the challenges and vulnerability of loving and works as a defense mechanism against loss or lack. Patriarchy is especially dominant in power-based systems whether it is religion or politics.[87]

Patriarchy causes many men to experience or interpret their affability as well as vulnerability as weak and shameful. It causes some women to perceive self-confidence and self-care as selfish—or expressing their mind and heart, one that stands up for what they really think or feel, as aggressive. Patriarchy thus tends to reinforce stereotypes (eg, masculinity or machismo) that one might consciously disagree with.[88]

In a positive way, feminism helps in exposing and addressing the violence, falsity, frailty of patriarchy, and the flaws and disadvantages of fixing gender roles (that is denying women roles outside of culturally defined ones). Unaddressed, this only leads to **sexism**, which is discrimination against or subjugation of women or men on account of gender and sexuality. Sexism is inherent to patriarchy, but it

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[82] See Dharma,śāstra, eg Vāśiṣṭha 5.1-2; Baudhāyana 2.2.3.44-45; Viṣṇu 25.12-13; Manu 9.2-3.

[83] See SD 66.13 (3.7.1.3). On the traditional lot of Indian women, see SD 54.2c (1.2.1.3); also K **Muta** & S Gregory, "Images of the family in Meiji journals," *US-Japan Women's J, Eng Supple* 7 1994:53-82 (58 f). On religious attitudes towards women in Japan, see also R **Jaffe**, "Meiji religious policy, Sōtō Zen, and the clerical marriage problem," *Japanese J of Religious Studies* 25,1-2 1998:45-85.

[84] **M 115**,15(12)/3:65), SD 29.1a; **A 1.279-283**/1:28. The fact is that so far only men have become buddhas, but this does not mean that a woman cannot become buddha in due course. However, in time, she would be reborn as a man.

[85] **Feminism** is the belief and activity in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism occurs worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. A similar term, **femininism**, is the promotion or appreciation of femininity or "womanliness," and is the direct counterpart to masculinism [F Christensen, "Masculism," in T Honderich (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2nd ed), 2005:562 f]. The concept goes back to the 19th cent. It is a philosophy of elevating and attempting to live by traits or virtues that accentuate the femininity of women, while still supporting intellectual equality between the sexes. It is acceptance of womanhood as strength. Feminism specifically refers to the advocacy of the rights and interests of women and girls, with the goal of gender equality, and is the direct counterpart to masculism (Christensen 2005).

[86] See C Enloe, "The persistence of patriarchy," *New Internationalist* 1 Oct 2017.

[87] See eg C Gilligan & N Snider, *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* Polity Press, 2018.

[88] See Naomi Snider, "Patriarchy hurts men and women—how can therapy help us get rid of it?" *International Psychoanalytical Assoc,* nd. [IPA] 12 Feb 2025.

can also occur in powerful women. However, since both feminism (and matriarchy) and patriarchy are *sex-based*, they each may lead to ideas of stereotypes; that our *sex* is the basis for our roles and rights.

2.2.2.3 The Saññoga S (A 7.48)[89] records the Buddha as exhorting us not to see ourselves merely as sexual beings; we will then be incomplete and insecure:[90]

> ***2*** **A woman** considers her own womanly faculty, her own womanly ways, her womanly looks, her womanly pride, her womanly desires, her womanly voice, her womanly adornments.
>
> She is aroused by them and delights in them.
>
> *2.2* Thus aroused, she considers another in terms of a man's faculty, his manly ways, his manly looks, his manly pride, his manly desires, his manly voice, his manly adornments.
>
> She is aroused by them and delights in them.
>
> *2.3* Thus aroused, she desires external union, and she desires the (physical) pleasure and (mental) joy arising on account of such a union.
>
> Bhikshus, attached to her womanliness, she enters into union with men.
>
> *2.4* In this way, bhikshus, **a woman does not rise above her womanliness**.

The same is then said of **a man**, with the appropriate changes in context:

> "Attached to his manliness, he enters into union with women.
> In this way, bhikshus, **a man does not rise above his manliness**."

2.2.2.4 Interestingly, the suttas do *not* mention the practice of aspiring for buddhahood at all; the idea is post-Buddha. Siddhattha, feeling disillusioned with worldly life (represented by the 4 sights),[91] renounces his worldly status to seek freedom from *decay, disease and death*. Using and building on traditional yogic meditation, he attains dhyana, and with his calm and clear mind directly sees into the true reality of *impermanence, suffering and nonself*, thus awakening to total spiritual freedom, nirvana.

Anyone, using the Buddha's teachings and methods can awaken to spiritual freedom. Thus the implication here is not that a woman cannot become fully self-awakened *in a future life* but that the Buddha is always male—not as a Dharma teaching but rather as a reflection of social reality. [2.2.2.2]

When a woman is determined to aspire for buddhahood, she will be reborn as a male, and *he* will progress on the path to buddhahood. This is simply because, despite feminism and sexual harmony being justified, **patriarchy** will persist in some form. This was (and is) certainly the case in India, where authority is, as a rule, in the hands of men (as noted above).

According to later texts, such as **Buddhavaṁsa**, if a woman resolves to attain buddhahood in the presence of the Buddha, her resolution does not succeed (ie, the sutta compilers state that she does not receive the prediction of future buddhahood). For the resolve to succeed, the aspirant must be a male renunciant.[92]

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[89] A 7.48/4:57-59 (SD 8.7). Also SD 61a (2.4.4.3 (*11*)).

[90] On the dichotomy of male and female, see SD 52.1 (18.4.1.1).

[91] **The 4 sights** are said to be "divine messengers" (*deva,dūta*), ie, devas appearing as the 4 visions to the young Siddhattha. They are actually metaphorical or visual representations or signs (*nimitta*) of the fundamental universal realities of decay (the old man), disease (the sick man) and death (the corpse). Freedom from these 3 "great evils" is represented by the vision of the renunciant, letting go of the worldliness by cultivating the mind. See **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,2.1-2.14) + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4 + 1.0.4.5).

[92] BA 91 f. **MĀ 181**, a Chin parallel of M 115, omits the section on the inabilities of women. However, the declaration that a woman cannot become a buddha is found at **T17**.713b2o-22, another Chin parallel of M 115. It

2.2.2.5 As a woman, one should dedicate merits for rebirth as a male living in the right conditions for aspiring for buddhahood and so on.[93] Such was the case with wise **Sumedha** (the bodhisattva);[94] for having gone forth at the feet of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, he was capable of attaining arhathood in that same existence.[95]

Although it is said that Sumedha "was capable of attaining arhathood" we are not told that he actually became one as a disciple of Dīpaṅkara. This probably means that Sumedha has attained at least the path as a streamwinner; which means that he would never be reborn in any suffering state. This is in fact the ideal condition for his cultivation for buddhahood.

This should not be interpreted as Sumedha "postponing" arhathood since he did not aspire for it. He aspired for Buddhahood which meant that he had to take that *path* to experience and vanquish "the suffering of **the all** [all that is suffering]" (*sabba,dukkha upaccagaṁ*),[96] that is, courageously face and overcome all suffering (*sabba,dukkhâtikkantā nāma honti*.[97] The "all" (*sabba*)[98] refers to the roots of suffering, craving, the activity of the formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) arising in our existence, and the aggregate of form (*rūpa-k,khandha*). Through the all, our sense-faculties and sense-objects arise the aggregates of feelings (*vedanā-k,khandha*), of perception (*saññā-k,khandha*) and of consciousness (*viññāṇa-k,khandha*). [2.2.8.2]

2.2.*3* The cause (*hetu*)

2.2.3.1 The cause is the attainment of the supporting conditions for arhathood. The buddhahood aspirant should have fulfilled all the necessary conditions such as the perfections (*pāramī*) [1.1.1.1], culminating in the attaining of arhathood in his last life. Such was the case with the wise Sumedha; for having gone forth at the feet of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, he was capable of attaining arhathood in that same existence [2.2.2.5].[99]

2.2.3.2 Understandably, to become a buddha one must first become an arhat. The suttas tell us that the Buddha is himself **an arhat** (*arahata*), thus:

(1) **The Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58). Both the Buddha and the arhats are said to similarly awaken "on account of revulsion towards ⟨the 5 aggregates⟩, through dispassion [letting go], through cessation (of suffering)." Hence, the Buddha and the arhats awaken in the very same way; it is a state of spiritual freedom, not some *status* of a supreme being. The only difference between the two is that the Buddha is the first to awaken, and the arhats awaken after the Buddha (*anubuddha*).[100]

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also occurs in a sutra quoted in Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā (**T26**.502bi6-i8), and in *Śāriputrābhidharma Śāstra (**T28**.600bio-i2). See A:B n157; Bodhi, *All-embracing Net of Views,* [1978:262-264] 2nd ed, Kandy, 2007:251-253.

[93] See **Jina,kāla,mālī** (Ratana,paññā, 16th cent Siam), where it is said that our Buddha was a woman in a distant past life (Jink:J 1978:3): see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples,* 2004: §18.

[94] Sumedha was a past birth of Gotama Buddha in which he made his vow to attain Buddhahood. He did this at the feet of the Buddha Dīpaṅkāra and received the prediction or confirmation of future Buddhahood. (B 2.34-69)

[95] SnA 1:49,23-27.

[96] **M 130**,34/3:187, SD 2.23.

[97] MA 4:238.

[98] **S 35.23**, SD 7.1.

[99] SnA 1:48,29-49,4; BA 91,30 f; CA 282,24-26.

[100] S 22.58,5/1:190 f (SD 49.10).

(2) **The Pavāraṇā Sutta** (S 8.7). The Buddha discovers the path of awakening for himself, and then teaches it to others for their own liberation. In terms of awakening, there is no difference between the Buddha and the arhats, only that the Buddha is the pathfinder, the arhats those who walk the path; both have attained nirvana.[101]

Hence, the Buddha declares:

tumhehi kiccam ātappaṁ	You yourself should make the effort:	
akkhātāro tathāgatā	the tathagatas [buddhas] are teachers—	
paṭipannā pamokkhanti	meditators who practise the path	
jhāyino māra,bandhanā	are freed from Māra's bonds.	(Dh 296)[102]

2.2.3.3 Since there is **the Buddha**—we are living in his dispensation (*sāsana*)—we do not need to become *the* Buddha; he is historically the *first* to arise in our epoch in this world-system. Broadly speaking, we need not become a buddha but an arhat. It's like we each already have a father and a mother; we do not need to usurp the status of our parent. We can however become a parent with wisdom and compassion for our children.

For most of us, especially with our worldly priorities and commitments, we will claim that it is very difficult, even impossible, to be an arhat, what to say of being a buddha. We also understand that taking such an aspiration merely as a ritual or vow would not work. The aspiration to buddhahood needs the confirmation from a living buddha himself [2.2.3.1, 2.2.4.1]. Merely to "vow" for buddhahood as a ritual or vow is clearly a fetter that prevents us from ever attaining the path, even as a streamwinner.[103]

2.2.*4* Seeing the teacher (*satthāra,dassana*)

2.2.4.1 "Seeing the teacher" means to be in the presence of the teacher, the Buddha. The aspiration only succeeds when it is made before a living Buddha. The aspiration does not succeed when it is made after the Buddha has passed into parinivana, whether before a shrine, at the foot of the Bodhi tree, in front of an image, or in the presence of pacceka-buddhas or the Buddha's disciples. Why? Because they lack the power to confirm the aspiration. The aspiration only succeeds when made before the Buddha, for he alone possesses spiritual power adequate to the loftiness of the aspiration.

Why? Though knowing those beings who are fit and unfit for buddhahood,[104] because they lack the knowledge of the delimitation of karma and its fruitions (*kamma,vipāka,pariccheda,ñāṇa*), these witnesses are incapable of declaring the success of the aspiration.

Wise Sumedha's successful resolution was made before Dīpaṅkara Buddha.[105]

2.2.4.2 Why should the aspirant meet the living historical Buddha himself? How do we really know what we are aspiring to if we do not see for ourselves the kind of awakened person we are aspiring to be? Otherwise—not seeing a living buddha ourselves—we can only rely on the religious views, theologies and philosophies that have conditioned us. Then, we are only aspiring to what those unawakened worldlings have thought out or fabricated. We are then following Buddhism, not **Buddha Dharma**.

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[101] S 8.7/1:190-192 (SD 49.11).

[102] Dh 296; SD 26.3 (4.3.4); SD 39.5 (1.3.3 n); SD 45.8 (4.3.1); SD 60/1d (2.1.2.4). Cf M 131,3.3n (SD 8.9).

[103] "Attachment to vows and rituals" (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*) is one of the 3 fetters (*saṁyojana*); the other 2 being those of self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*): SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

[104] *Bhabbâbhabbake*, refers to those who have the capacity for aspiration (those who are not obstructed by bad karma and fruition, defilements, and so on) and those who do not have the capacity for it (due to karmic obstruction, defilements and so on) (Vbh 341 f).

[105] SnA 1:49,4-6; BA 91,32-92,2; CA 282,26-33.

Thus, seeing the Buddha as teacher, we are truly inspired to abandon our self-views, doubts, and attachment to rituals and vows (superstitions). In important ways, we are seeing the path and nirvana, and making that initial move on the path of awakening. We are then following Buddha Dharma, not Buddhism. This is not to say that "Buddhism" is not useful at all. They are mostly the views and teachings of the unawakened, which may or may not reflect Buddha Dharma. However, they may serve as signs directing towards a better understanding of Buddha Dharma. But only our self-effort in practising Buddha Dharma brings self-realization and the freedom of the path of awakening.

2.2.*5* Going forth (*pabbajjā*)

2.2.5.1 One should not only see the Buddha but be some kind of **renunciant** (*pabbajita*), either a hermit (*isi*) or an ascetic (*tāpasa*) like Sumedha, or a homeless monk (*bhikkhu*); in any case, one understands or at least accepts the teaching of karma, that is, the efficacy of moral action (of body, speech and mind).

Even**,** for a householder meeting the Buddha, the lay follower's aspiration would not succeed. Why? Because the household state is not that of the Buddha (who has himself gone forth). The great bodhisattvas (buddhahood-aspirants in their last existence) attain supreme awakening only after they have gone forth into homelessness, not while they are still householders. Therefore, at the time of making the resolution,[106] it is only one who has gone forth, endowed with the appropriate qualities and determination, who can succeed.[107]

Again, the example is wise Sumedha; for Sumedha was a hermit when he made his resolution before Dīpaṅkara Buddha.[108]

2.2.5.2 Going forth means that even for one aspiring before the Buddha, the aspiration succeeds only for one who has gone forth as a renunciant who upholds the efficacy of karma, not for a householder. Why? The short answer is that the Buddha was himself a renunciant and trained other renunciants as monks and nuns who were his disciples.

The term ***saṅgha*** (monastic community) evinces the significance of renunciation, especially the "noble sangha," that is, the community of noble disciples: *the streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats*. These disciples are called "noble" (*ariya*) because they have reached the noble eightfold path as "true learners" (*sekha*) or have attained awakening (as arhats) who are "spiritual adepts" (*asekha*). These noble saints comprise both monastics and the laity; for anyone who properly traverses the path can attain it and awaken. However, arhathood, as a rule, is attained almost only by renunciants.

Understandably, then, one who aspires for buddhahood (which includes arhathood) must be a renunciant and attain arhathood.

2.2.*6* Attainment of virtues (*guṇa,sampatti*)

2.2.6.1 Attainment of virtues (special qualities) means that the aspiration succeeds only for one who has gone forth and has obtained the 8 attainments (*attha,samāpatti*) and the 5 superknowledges (*pañcâbhiññā*) [2.2.6.2], and not for one who lacks these special qualities. Why? Because of not-becoming that state from the lack of the special qualities (*nigguṇassa tad-abhavato*).[109]

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[106] Cf a princess's aspiration (*paṇidha*) before Vipassī Buddha (VvA 270).

[107] CA 282,26-283,33; BA 92,3-7.

[108] SnA 49,4-7.

[109] BA 92,8-10.

The 8 attainments are the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa-j,jhāna*) and the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa,-samāpatti*).[110] To master these 8 attainments is the ideal and full meditative accomplishment. In fact, one who masters the 4th form dhyana may go on to develop various psychic powers (*iddhi*).[111] Yet even with the 1st dhyana (dhyanas must be developed successively), one may use the ensuing calm and clarity of mind to see directly into true reality and gain awakening.[112]

2.2.6.2 The 5 superknowledges are mundane psychic powers (any, a few, or all of them) that any accomplished yogi (a meditative seer, recluse or renunciant) may have. These 5 superknowledges are:

(1) psychic powers (*iddhi,vidha*);[113]
(2) divine ear (*dibba,sota*), that is, clairaudience;
(3) mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*); also called *ādesanā pāṭihāriya*;
(4) retrocognition (*pubbe,nivāsânussati*), recollection of one's own past lives;
(5) divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*), that is, recollection of the karmic destinies of others (*cutûpapāta,ñāṇa*).

The sage Asita, who visited the infant Siddhattha, was said to have both the 8 attainments and these 5 superknowledges, but not the 6th:[114]

(6) knowledge of the destruction of influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*)[115] or full awakening knowledge.

Only an arhat has this 6th knowledge, which is his "direct knowledge" of full awakening.[116] With this knowledge, he knows that he has attained total spiritual freedom from the 4 influxes (*āsava*)—sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance—they bind one to samsara, the endless cycle of births and deaths. Overcoming these 4 influxes, one becomes **an arhat**, who is also known as "one whose influxes are destroyed" (*khīṇ'āsava*), that is, one who has won nirvana.

2.2.6.3 It is difficult to understand the meaning of the closing sentence of **the Buddha,vaṁsa Commentary** above: *nigguṇassa tad-abhavato,* (literally, "that non-state of non-virtue"). **The Cariyā,-piṭaka Commentary** explains why one who lacks these qualities will fail in his aspiration. Why? Because one devoid of them is incapable of investigating the perfections (*pāramī*). With all these necessary supporting conditions—at least all the 6 prerequisites mentioned so far—the aspirant is a "great man" (*mahā,purisa*) (which serves here as a synonym for "bodhisattva").[117]

The wise Sumedha, for example, had already acquired the 8 attainments and the 5 kinds of super-knowledge when he made his buddhahood resolution before Dīpaṅkara Buddha.[118]

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[110] The 4 formless attainments (*arūpa,samāpatti*) are those of (1) the base of infinite space (*ākāsânañc'āyatana*); (2) the base of infinite consciousness (*viññānāñc'āyatana*); (3) the base of nothingness (*ākiñcañ'āyatana*); and (4) the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva,saññā,nâsaññ'āyatana*); see **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.1), SD 24.11 (5); on *arūpī,* see SD 53.23 (2.1.3).

[111] SD 25.5a (5.3.7).

[112] See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

[113] SD 27.5a (6).

[114] SD 49.18 (1.1.4.2).

[115] See **Jhānâbhiññā S** (S 16.9,29) SD 50.7; **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,42-44), SD 49.4; SD 1.12 (excerpt).

[116] On the 6th superknowledge: SD 27.5a (5.6.1).

[117] CA 283,6-12.

[118] SnA 1:49,10-13.

2.2.*7* Act of merit (*adhikāra*)

2.2.7.1 By "**act of merit**" is meant the willingness to make self-sacrifice, that is, even give up one's life like no other.[119] This is a mark of total dedication (*adhikāra*), unexcelled devotion and sacrifice. In fact, the aspirant must be prepared to sacrifice even his own life for the Buddha and his disciples.[120] Again, the example is that of wise Sumedha; for he made the resolution after showing his willingness to sacrifice his life, thus:

akkamitvāna maṁ buddho	Let the Buddha with his pupils	
saha sissehi gacchatu	proceed stepping upon me.	
mā naṁ kalale akkamittho	Tread not upon this mud:	
hitāya[121] *me bhavissati*	that will be for my good."[122]	(Bv 2.52)

2.2.7.2 It is important to understand the devotion and sacrifices of aspirants like Sumedha. We must understand that Sumedha is aspiring not only to be awakened, but to be the future Buddha, that is, our Gotama. While we are often admonished to follow the Buddha's example, we are not advised to take Sumedha's example as our daily or normal practice. The point of the Sumedha story is to show the difficulties and heroism in the attaining of Buddhahood.

The Buddha is like some heroic ancestor who has, say, brought independence, freedom, development and wholesomeness into our country and society. Now that we have such a society, we can live productive, creative and spiritual lives. We do not have to reinvent the country, be another "hero" or pioneer to revise the good that works.

We need to live morally spirited social lives that conduce to wholesome social and mental development of oneself and of others. So long as we continue to enjoy these benefits, our task is to live and let live in wholesome ways. We need to wisely, compassionately and diligently see and live these fundamental values, rights and freedom, in order to improve the situation *even if we must do it alone*—just as the Buddha had done. In this matter, we must truly prepare well for the extraordinary undertaking.

2.2.*8* Will-power (*chanda*)

2.2.8.1 The 8th and last prerequisite for the buddhahood aspirant is that he must possess wholesome **desire** (*chanda*), strong enough to keep his resolve even though he fully knows that he has to suffer much through repeated births, even in woeful states, to reach the goal of buddhahood. Here is a parable for the greatness of his will-power:

Whoever, by the power of his own arms, will cross over the whole universe that has become one mass of water and reach the far shore, he will achieve buddhahood. And if he does not deem this a difficult task for himself but thinks: "I, having crossed over this, will get to the far shore," and if he is thus possessed of great will-power and endeavour, the aspiration succeeds for him.[123]

2.2.8.2 The other Commentaries, in fact, give **4 parables** for the aspirant's desire to act. For the aspiration succeeds for one who has will-power. And the strength of that will-power should be understood in this way.

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[119] ApA 140,28-30.

[120] CA 283,12-15.

[121] All 4 Bv eds, SnA:Be Se, BA 88, J 1:13, ApA 15 = 140, DhsA 32 read *hitāya.* But SnA:Ce Ee read *sukhāya,* "happiness,"

[122] SnA 1:49,13-19; BA 92,11-13.

[123] BA 92,14-22; ApA 1:17,7-20.

If he were to hear:

"Who desires buddhahood after walking across the universe filled with flameless hot coals?"—

he would say: "I do."

If he were to hear:

"Who desires buddhahood after walking across the whole universe that has become a solid mass of sharp-pointed stakes?"—

he would say: "I do."

If he were to hear:

"Who desires buddhahood after crossing the whole universe filled with water up to the brim?"

he would say: "I do."—

If he were to hear:

"Who desires buddhahood after trampling upon the whole universe covered with bamboo thickets, with no space in between?"—

he would say: "I do."

If he were to hear:

"Who desires buddhahood after being tortured in hell for 4 incalculables and 100,000 eons?"—

He would say, "I do."

Wise Sumedha possessed such will-power when he made the aspiration.[124]

Note the language here; it does not say that these are preconditions he must fulfill, but rather the kinds of trials or tribulations he is willing to undergo for the sake of attaining Buddhahood.

2.3 THE 18 IMPOSSIBILITIES FOR THE BODHISATTVA

2.3.0 Bodhisattvahood

2.3.0.1 When the resolve of the buddhahood-aspirant succeeds, he becomes a bodhisattva (a buddha-to-be). As **a bodhisattva**, there are 18 impossible conditions or moral impossibilities (*aṭṭhārasa abhabba-ṭ,ṭhānāni*)[125] that will not befall him. My comments and explanations follow each condition with cross-references for further details where applicable (below); that is, the buddha-aspirant or bodhisattva.[126]

(1)	he is never born blind or deaf;	[2.3.1]
(2)	he does not become insane;	[2.3.2]
(3)	he is neither dumb nor crippled;	[2.3.3]
(4)	he does not take birth among the uncivilized;	[2.3.4]
(5)	he is not born of a slave woman;	[2.3.5]
(6)	he does not hold any wrong view with fixed consequences;	[2.3.6]
(7)	he does not undergo gender change;	[2.3.7]
(8)	he does not commit any of the 5 deeds with immediate retribution;	[2.3.8]
(9)	he is not a leper;	[2.3.9]
(10)	he does not become an animal smaller than a quail or bigger than an elephant;	[2.3.10]
(11)	he does not arise among pretas, afflicted with insatiable hunger and thirst;	[2.3.11]

[124] SnA 49,19-33 = ApA 1:141,1-15; J 1:14,33-15,9; CA 283,19-284,3.

[125] SnA 49,33-50,12 = ApA 1:141,15-25.

[126] Following the Pali, if we list every discrete condition, the total is actually 21. To make 18 conditions, (1) has 2 conditions; (3) has 2; and (13) (qv) has 2, too. The reason for these combinations is explained or is implicit in the main notes.

(12) he does not arise among *kāla,kañjaka* asuras; [2.3.12]
(13) he arises neither in Avīci hell nor in the intergalactic regions; [2.3.13]
(14) in the sense-world, he does not become Māra; [2.3.14]
(15) in the form world, he does not arise in the non-conscious plane; [2.3.15]
(16) he does not arise in the pure abodes; [2.3.16]
(17) he does not arise in a formless world; [2.3.17]
(18) he does not migrate to another universe. [2.3.18]

2.3.0.2 Since the aspiration is to Buddhahood comprising the wisdom of self-awakening and the compassion of the liberating welfare of the whole world of immeasurable beings, it should be seen as the loftiest, most sublime of aspirations and greatest distinction of merit, endowed with boundless potency, the root-cause of the states culminating in buddhahood.

With his successful aspiration to buddhahood, the great man (*mahā,purisa*) enters into the practice of the true great vehicle to awakening (*mahā,bodhi,yāna,paṭipatti*). His destiny is fixed, irreversible and therefore properly gains the designation **bodhi,sattva**, "the being bound for awakening" (*bodhi*,*satta*).[127]

2.3.1 *(1)* The buddha-aspirant is never born blind or deaf

The bodhisattva has to be able to see and hear so that he can be of service to others and to be able to learn from every situation, whether difficult or pleasant. In the remarkable **Temiya** or **Mūga,pakkha Jātaka** (J 538), the first of the last 10 classic jātakas,[128] however, the bodhisattva, recollecting how the absolute powers of kingship only bring hellish suffering, pretends to be a deaf-mute paraplegic for 16 years.[129]

2.3.2 *(2)* The buddha-aspirant does not become insane

The bodhisattva needs a calm and clear mind to be able to grow in virtue and perfection. Moreover, he is already one with a mind growing in calm and clarity, realizing greater wisdom and showing greater compassion. He is one who, on account of greater control over *greed, hatred and delusion*, and with ever clearer vision of the true reality of *impermanence, suffering and nonself*, will never go mad, as happens when one clings to wrong views, fails to see true reality, or is habitually caught in ritual behaviour.

2.3.3 *(3)* The buddha-aspirant is neither dumb nor crippled

He must be able to speak articulately, wisely and freely, and move around adroitly and unaided, to communicate with others or help them. An abundance of good karma, especially that of wisdom, has brought the aspirant to his aspiration. This abundant karma can only snowball into liberating wisdom. In the meantime, his good karma provides him with proficiency of his karmic deeds, that is, his thoughts, speech and actions are all wholesome.

2.3.4 *(4)* The buddha-aspirant does not take birth among the uncivilized[130]

The Pali for "uncivilized" here is *milakkha* (Skt *mleccha*)[131] which means "a barbarian, foreigner, outcaste, hilltribesman." Basically, *milakkha* refers to pre-literate people living in groups or tribes remote from the areas of the 2nd urbanization of northern India that was seeing the rise of the 16 great countries

[127] See CA 276,5-20.

[128] The last 10 jātakas for the "great collection" (*mahā,nipāta*) of the Jātaka Commentary.

[129] J 538/6:1-30; told in ref to the Buddha's renunciation, the story is versified in **Temiya Paṇḍita Cariyā** (C 3.6/96 f) and qu in BA 51 as an example of the bodhisattva's great determination. **(Chakka) Dhammika S** (A 6.54/3:373) mentions a Mūga,pakkha in a list of ancient teachers. For a tr of **Temiya J**, see "The Birth Story of Temiya, or of the Dumb Cripple," Appleton & Shaw, *The Ten Great Birth Stories of the Buddha,* Bangkok, 2015: Figs 1-11, pp 51-79 (ch 1).

[130] *na milakkhesu uppajjati.*

[131] S 5:466; J 6:207; DA 1:176; SnA 236**.**

(*mahā janapada*),[132] especially in the central Gangetic plains of the Buddha's time (600-500 BCE). The 16 great states and the smaller urbanized cultures of the central Gangetic plains for "the Indian civilization" of the Buddha's time.

The bodhisattva is reborn in the heart of such a civilized society, usually amongst the kshatriyas (ruling or warrior class) or the brahmins (the priestly class), the two dominant classes of Indian society at that time. The future Buddha Gotama was born into a Sakya kshatriya (*khattiya*) clan amongst its ruling elite. Historically, the Buddha has arisen in India, which then had the ideal conditions for such a human awakening. This should be understood that the Buddha arises only in India (which is a modern name for the country) but that he arises where *the social and spiritual conditions are ideal for the Buddha to arise*.

2.3.5 *(5)* The buddha-aspirant is not born to a slave woman

When reborn of a slave woman, the bodhisattva would also be a slave, compelled to always be servile and serve others, yet usually badly treated socially. Hence, he will lack any social standing with which to perform acts of wisdom and compassion. In modern language, it may be said that the bodhisattva would not be born in a low servile class.

The size and prosperity of the civilized society the buddha-aspirant is born into would be characterized by political peace, social stability, fertile agriculture, burgeoning commerce, a stable economy and travels beyond India (especially to the South and to Southeast Asia). Hence, it is a wealthy society deeply divided by **class**. In order to reach out to such a class-minded society, the bodhisattva has to arise in the most dominant class of that society to be able to command respect, charisma and resources.

2.3.6 *(6)* The buddha-aspirant does not hold any wrong view with fixed consequences[133]

2.3.6.1 "Wrong views with fixed consequences" (*niyati micchā,diṭṭhi*) are mechanistic beliefs and views that all actions have fixed consequences, meaning that **karma** is denied its fruits, the validity of moral distinctions, and causes for defilement and purification. This wrong view often overlaps with those that reject karma (*n'atthika,vāda*), that hold that there is neither good nor evil, neither karma nor moral accountability (*akiriya,vāda*), and that there is no such thing as conditionality (causes and effects of good and bad) (*ahetuka,vāda*). Such views are said to prevent higher rebirths and block the path to liberation.[134]

2.3.6.2 For nirvana to be understood and accepted as total freedom from the enslavement of worldliness, people must know that they are capable of **self-effort**, so that they are neither subjugated by the God-dogma and Soul-idea of the brahmins and God-believers, nor led astray by the false pride and promises of materialism (that this is our only life, or that nirvana is here and now).

The path to salvation is **the middle way** that avoids these two extremes, by way of ethical regulation of action and speech, and the sustained cultivation of a wholesome mind. In this way, **the mind** is able to free itself from the distractions of the senses and gain the full mental development and acumen to dismantle self-views, doubts and superstitions bringing one full spiritual freedom.

2.3.7 *(7)* The buddha-aspirant does not undergo gender change[135]

This condition can be interpreted in either of 2 ways, both of which apply.

(*1*) He will not be reborn in a different sex (that is, as a woman, or hermaphrodite).

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[132] SD 4.18 App; SD 9 (16): map (16.3): **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39) @ SD 10.13 (1); **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.70,-18), SD 4.18 & App; SD 57.8 (3.2.2.1); SD 6.1 (1).

[133] *na niyata,micchā,diṭṭhiko hoti.*

[134] See VismMHṬ 1:187.

[135] *nâssa liṅgaṃ parivattati.*

(*2*) In that life itself (such as that of Sumedha), he will not undergo any gender change (such as becoming a eunuch).

The first is clear enough, that is, once the aspirant is confirmed and becomes a bodhisattva, he will always be born a male.

The second case means that he will not commit any karmic act that will make him a female, as illustrated by the case of **the elder Soreyya**.[136] A seth's son[137] (*seṭṭhi,putta*), Soreyya was named after the city where he was born. He married and had 2 sons. One day, he saw the golden-skinned elder arhat Mahā Kaccāna adjusting his robes and fantasized what a great "wife" Mahā Kaccāna would make for him. At that very thought, he physically changed into a woman.

Ashamed, Soreyyā (feminine form of Soreyya) fled, following a caravan to Takkasilā (in Pakistan today), where he became the wife of the seth there. They had 2 sons. In due course, a former friend invited her to his home. Upon revealing her true identity, her friend compassionately advised her to seek forgiveness from the elder.

Following the friend's advice, Soreyyā went to Sāvatthī, approached Mahā Kaccāna, and bowed at his feet. She related to him what had happened and asked for his forgiveness. The elder forgave her; and she reverted to a male Soreyya. People who heard about this remarkable transformation, asked him which of these sons he loved more—those he *sired* or those he *mothered*—and he replied, "Of the two of whom I'm *mother*."

Realizing the difficulties of life as a man and as a woman, he decided to renounce under Mahā Kaccāna. In due course, going into solitary meditation, he became an arhat. When people asked him the same question about his sons, he then replied: "My affections are set on no one."

2.3.8 *(8)* The buddha-aspirant does not commit any of the 5 deeds with immediate retribution[138]

2.3.8.1 The 5 karmic acts of immediate retribution (*pañc'ānantariya,kamma*)—or simply, the 5 immediate karmas—are *matricide, patricide, murdering an arhat, drawing the blood of the Buddha with a mind of hatred, and causing a schism in the sangha*. While these teachings are mentioned in such texts as **the Voropitā Sutta** (A 6.87)[139] and **the Abhabba-ṭ,ṭhāna Sutta 3** (A 6.94),[140] the term *ānantariya(ka),-kamma* is found only in the Vinaya and the Commentaries.[141]

The 5 bad karmas are clearly, in societal and spiritual terms, the most heinous. The formulation of these teachings is not punitive in nature (karma works on its own) but a cautionary warning to others that in this life itself the perpetrator would fall into the subhuman states, especially the hells, remaining there for a long period where it is impossible to give rise to wholesome karma. Hence, one would have no opportunity to aspire for buddhahood.

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[136] **Soreyya-t,thera Vatthu** (DhA 3.9/1:325-332) on Dh 42 f; tr Dha:B 2:23-28.

[137] A ***seṭṭhi*** (Skt *śreṣṭhin*)—anglicized as "seth"—was a finance banker who had abundant liquid funds with which he loaned or invested in agriculture, business or trade (see U Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism,* New Delhi, 1996:73-79). The suffix *-putta* can mean (1) "a son of … "; (2) simply someone "young"; or (3) a member of a group, eg, *sakya,putta*, "a Sakya male," but in this case, it can also mean, "a true offspring of the Sakya (viz, the Buddha)."

[138] Also *ānantarika, ānantariyaka.*

[139] A 6.87/3:436. It has a 6th quality: (6) one is "unwise, stupid, obtuse."

[140] A 6.94/3:439 (SD 97.5). It has a 6th case of incapability: (6) "incapable of acknowledging another teacher (other than the Buddha)." Other suttas that list the "5 immediate karmas" are **Bahu,dhātuka S** (M 115,13/3:64), SD 29.1a; **Aṭṭhāna Vagga** (A 1.271-275/1:27) separately; **(Catukka) Kamma S** (A 4.234,7/2:234 f), SD 89.14; **Parikuppa S** (A 5.129/3:146); **Vbh** 336,10-19; **Kvu** 12.7/471, 22.1/593; **Paṭṭh:Be** 1:148 + *passim.*

[141] V 2:193,70; AA 2:27,16 f; PugA 185,15; Sārs 116,26; Vvn 286, Uttvn 740.

2.3.8.2 MOGGALLĀNA'S PARINIRVANA. However, it is possible, at the right time, for one to aspire to or attain discipleship, as in the case of **Moggallāna**. In the arhat Moggallāna's last life, outside sectarians (followers of wrong views) were deeply annoyed by Moggallāna's knowledge of how merits brought heavenly rebirths for Buddhist practitioners, and how bad karma relegated outside sectarians to sub-human suffering states; thus, attracting huge followings and offerings to the Buddhist sangha and community. The sectarians paid a thousand pieces to some wandering brigands to assassinate Moggallāna at the black rock (*kāla,silā*), by the side of Mount Isigili.

For 2 months, the brigands tried to kill Moggallāna but, using his psychic powers, Moggallāna eluded them. On the 3rd month, recollecting his karma, Moggallāna realized that the brigands' attempt on his life was the result of some bad karma he had committed in the distant past. Although arhats do not create new karma, they can still be subject to the certain heinous past karma; in this case, his attempt to kill his own parents in a past life.[142]

2.3.8.3 MOGGALLĀNA TRIED TO KILL HIS OWN PARENTS. In Moggallāna's story of the past, the Commentaries relate that he married a young woman who had to care for his old blind parents. Annoyed by these duties, she badgered Moggallāna about them. Moggallāna then decided to get rid of his old parents. Pretending to take them to some relatives' house, he instead led them into the forest. There he made a ruckus, as if being attacked by a band of thieves, and then to kill his parents. His parents then cried out in desperation to the supposed thieves to spare their son. Moved by shame, Moggallāna gave up the whole charade.

In the 3rd month, Moggallāna let the brigands beat him, breaking all his bones, leaving him for dead. Before passing into nirvana, Moggallāna went to the Buddha to take leave. He talked on Dharma to the Buddha, and at his request, performed many miracles. Then Moggallāna returned to Kālasilā to die.[143]

2.3.8.4 MOGGALLĀNA'S PAST ASPIRATION. In the time of Anoma,dassī Buddha,[144] Moggallāna was the brahmin youth (*māṇava*) **Sarada** who renounced as an ascetic. One day, when Sarada witnessed the Buddha established 2 of his monks as his chief disciples, Sarada was inspired to do the same. He intimated this desire to his close friend, the householder (*kuṭumbika*) Sirivaḍḍha (the future Sāriputta), who agreed to it. They made their aspiration before the Buddha who confirmed that their aspiration would fruit in Gotama Buddha's time.[145]

2.3.9 *(9)* The buddha-aspirant is not a leper

2.3.9.1 In the Buddha's time, **5 diseases**—leprosy (*kuṭṭha*), abscesses (*gaṇḍa*), white leprosy (*kilāsa*), tuberculosis (*sosa*), epilepsy (*apamāra*)—were common and feared because they were contagious, infectious, debilitating or incapacitating. Although **leprosy** was described in India as early as the 6th century BCE,[146] it probably ravaged ancient northern India since 2000 BCE. The word *kuṭṭha* is derived from *kuthati,* "to become putrid, stink," or Skt *kusnati*(?)*,* "to tear away," that is, "eating away" (the limbs and

[142] Intro to **Sarabhaṅga J** (J 522), J 5:125-127.

[143] DhA 10.7a/3:68-71.

[144] Anoma,dassī was the 18th buddha from Gotama, our buddha.

[145] On the conversion and renunciation of Sāriputta and Moggallāna: Mv 1.23 f (V 1:39 f). Their past lives: AA 1:148-152; Ap 3.2/31-33 (tr Ap:W 54-57), ApA 238 f; Comy on **Dhamma S** (Sn 2.8), SnA 1:325-328 (tr SnA:B 801-803).

[146] Analysis of pathological conditions in skeletal remains shows that leprosy existed in India from as far back as 2000 BCE: G Robbins et al, "Ancient skeletal remains evidence for leprosy in India (2000 BC)," 27 May 2009, PLoS ONE 4,5: e5669.

face).[147] **White leprosy** (*kilāsa*) causes the skin to become spotted but without ulcers, probably a type of tuberculoid leprosy.

2.3.9.2 Abscesses (*gaṇḍa*) was probably a palpable symptom of a venereal disease, suggesting that it was painful and infectious.[148] These were merely symptoms and probably included the anal fistula (*bhagandalâbādha*) of king Bimbisāra which was healed by Jīvaka, a renowned Buddhist doctor, with a single dose of ointment.[149] Most abscesses are caused by the Staphylococcus bacteria infecting the body causing an inflammation, filled with pus, and killing the tissues nearby—they can occur on the skin, the face, throat, armpits or groin, or as dental abscesses (inside the tooth or gum); pilonidal abscesses or cysts (occurring near the tailbone usually in the upper end of the intergluteal cleft). These are painful and troubling, which would be difficult for a renunciant, especially when he was living alone in some remote retreat.

2.3.9.3 The oldest non-European references to **tuberculosis** are probably those in the Ṛgveda (1500 BCE), which called it *yaksma.*[150]

2.3.9.4 Epilepsy (*apamāra*)[151] was understood in ancient India as being internally caused by some mental condition that makes one lose normal consciousness, or externally, caused by Māra or some spirit, that is, the environment (which perhaps could be repetitive loud sounds, religious belief or some kind of suggestion). An epileptic seizure includes falling down; shaking of the hands, legs, and body; rolling up of the eyes; teeth grinding, and foaming at the mouth. Such symptoms can be simply embarrassing when they occur in a monk or nun.

In fact, anyone afflicted with any of these 5 conditions are forbidden by the Vinaya from being ordained.[152]

2.3.10 *(10)* The buddha-aspirant does not become an animal smaller than a quail or larger than an elephant[153]

2.3.10.1 This condition can be read in either of 2 ways:

(1) the bodhisattva is not reborn as an animal (one of the subhuman planes) [2.2.1.4], whether small like a quail or large like an elephant; or

(2) the bodhisattva, when reborn as an animal (such as in the Jātaka stories) will never be reborn smaller than a quail (which makes him an easy victim for other animals and humans) or larger than an elephant (which would make him grotesque and unapproachable for humans).

Should a bodhisattva be reborn as an animal, he would still be *wise*, *compassionate* and *courageous*, as he would be as a human being.

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[147] N Rastogi, "Leprosy in ancient India," *International J of Leprosy and Other Mycobacterial Diseases* 52,4 Jan 1985:541-543. 16 Feb 2025.

[148] P R Bhat & T A Vipin, "Complex anterior supralevator anal fistula with prostatic abscess treated with kshara-sutra: A case report," *Case Report in Surgery* vol 2024, art ID 6019946. [Wiley] 16 2 2025.

[149] On Bimbisāra's fistula being successfully treated by Jivaka: Mv 8.14 f (V 1:272 f).

[150] K G Zysk, *Medicine in the Veda: Religious Healing in the Veda,* Delhi. 1998:12.

[151] Its Skt form, *apa-smāra,* is found at AA 2:191,9.

[152] Mv 1.76.2 @ V 1:93 f.

[153] *na tiracchāna,yoniyaṃ vaṭṭakato pacchim'attabhāvo hatthito adhik'attabhāvo hoti.*

2.3.10.2 The Tittira Jātaka (J 37) is a tale of a wise partridge (the bodhisattva) who showed his companions, a monkey and an elephant, that he was the eldest of the 3. The monkey and the elephant said that they each recalled the banyan tree that sheltered them when its crest just touched their belly. The partridge said that he was the one who had voided the seed that grew into the tree. On account of his age and wisdom he was respected by the other two. (J 37/1:217-220)

2.3.10.3 The Mahā Kapi Jātaka (J 407) relates how the monkey king (the bodhisattva) saved his entire troop by having them cross over the river to the safety of the far shore to avoid being killed by a human king who loved the mangoes in the tree they inhabited. The monkey king tied a vine around himself, swung across the river and just barely managed to hold on to the branch of a tree on the other bank. The last monkey (Devadatta), seeing his opportunity, jumped on the monkey king's back and broke it, killing him. The human king, inspired by the monkey king's compassion, cremated the monkey king's body, inlaid his skull with gold and enshrined it in a stupa for public veneration. (J 407/3:369-375)

2.3.10.4 The Sasa Jātaka (J 316) is about the bodhisattva being reborn as a hare. He ate only grass and one day realized he would have nothing to give any beggars who came asking for food. So he vowed to give his own flesh. Noticing this, Sakra, king of the gods, came to test the hare's pledge, and asked for food. True to his word, the bodhisattva jumped into a fire (conjured by Sakra). But Sakra spared his life (the fire was cool, just an illusion) and painted a hare's image on the moon so everyone knew about the hare's courage to this day. (J 316/3:52-56)

2.3.11 *(11)* The buddha-aspirant does not arise among pretas, afflicted with insatiable hunger and thirst

2.3.11.1 Although the bodhisattva may be reborn as an animal (10), he will not be reborn in any of the other 3 subhuman states, that is, the *pretas, asuras and hell-beings*. Beings in these "fallen" states have great difficulties in generating wholesome thoughts, and remain in their suffering state for indefinite durations. Hence, a bodhisattva does not arise amongst them, and none of them (as they are) can aspire to Buddhahood or even awakening itself. They are burdened and blinded with the unwholesome roots.

Pretas (*peta*) do not have any specific form but tend to look like their past habitual unwholesome demeanour and more grotesquely so, but sometimes have divine-like forms—depending on their past karma. Pretas are (as in the caption here) said to be "afflicted with hunger craving [with the hunger that is craving] and thirst" (*nijjhāma,taṇhā khippipāsā*).[154] Or to elaborate: "they are those who feed on vomit, who are dependent on what is given by others, who are tormented by hunger and thirst, [consumed by craving]; as departed ones, they receive dependent on what is given by others only when they recall them as departed ones."[155]

Pretas, as a rule, spend their existence wandering in a futile search for food and drink (echoing their acquisitive nature as humans). When they approach a river to drink, the water turns into blood and pus, and when they find food, it turns into phlegm or snot (*kheḷa,siṅghāṇikâdi,vasena* (AA 5:75). Or they are unable to swallow it due to various impediments, such as knots in their throats, or suffer when it is swallowed, when food turns into spears and molten iron; hence, their insatiable hunger and thirst (like their insatiable greed when they were humans).

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[154] This phrase is also at Miln 294,16 f; KhpA 214. *Khuppipāsā*: Pv 1.11.10, 2.2.2.; PvA 10, 32, 37, 50, 80; Vism 601.

[155] *Vantāsikā khuppipāsino nijjhāma,taṇhikā, labhanti petā para,dattûpajīvino, te pi saramānā yeva labhantī ti* (Miln 294,16 f). More briefly, "those who are tormented by hunger and thirst, who feed on vomit, [consumed by craving]" (*khuppipāsika,vantāsa,para,dattûpajīvi,nijjhāma,taṇhikā … ,* KhpA 241,27 f).

2.3.11.2 In significant ways, the "**preta-mind**"—or "asura-mind," or "animal-mind" or "hellish mind"—can arise, and often arises in humans amongst us.[156] It is more meaningful for us to understand these are not disembodied states or pious "stories." They are actual states we can see around us in our daily lives, often enough even within ourselves. If we see them merely as dreadful disembodied "forms," then, they may be said to be "mythical."[157] However, when we understand them *also* as being actual psychological states into which we fall with the negative biases of *greed, hatred, delusion and fear*,[158] then, knowing the symptoms, we can better treat the disease and heal ourselves with Dharma as salve.

We may have a human body, but rarely are **our minds** human. The mind tends to fall into the preta state (when we are driven by insatiable desires); into the asura state (when we habitually demean and exploit others); into the animal state (when we are driven by fear and ignorance); or into the hell-state (when we habitually think and act with hatred and violence). These subhuman beings are all caught in protracted repetitive unwholesome routines, seeing and running after "something" out there. The *preta* runs after food; the *asura* seeks power [see *(12)* below]; the *animal* is driven by sense-pleasure; the *hell-being* lives in violence [see *(13)* below].

Pretas do not have a locational realm like the devas. Like the pure abodes of the nonreturners, the "**preta range**" (*petti-* or *pitti.visaya*) is an existential dimension that is neither physical nor organized (like those of the sense-world devas). Often, they exist right amongst us (they had human bodies before, but preta-minds), invisible like radio waves or sound waves. Their presence amongst humans is because they are dependent on us to feed them; yet they are unable to enjoy the kind of food we take or offer them. Such offerings only benefit them—such as lessening their sufferings—by our recalling their past good and by our radiating lovingkindness towards them.[159]

2.3.12 *(12)* The buddha-aspirant does not arise among *kāla,kañjaka* asuras[160]

2.3.12.0 According to **the Kathā,vatthu** (a canonical Abhidhamma text), **asuras** do not form their own destiny-plane (*gati*) [below], although they are collectively known as the "asura host" (*asura,kāya*),[161] less commonly, "asura group" (*asura,gaṇa*).[162]

The asuras fall into 2 distinct classes:[163]

(a) the *kāla,kañjaka*[164] asuras and (b) Vepacitti's host (*vepacitti,parisā*). (Kvu 360 f)

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[156] The depiction of pretas as pot-bellied, flat like a leaf with a pin-like neck does not appear in Pāli and South-east Asian sources until late cosmological texts that date to the 2nd millennium CE, suggesting that this is a Sanskrit or northern (esp Chinese) tradition.

[157] See eg "Who are hungry ghosts?" R97 090826 RB3 Hungry ghosts.

[158] The 5 biases (*agati*) or "motives" (*ṭhāna*): **Sigal'ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7, **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

[159] On how pretas can benefit from our dedication of merits to them, see **Tiro,kuḍḍa S** (Khp 7 = Pv 1.5) + SD 2.7 (2, 4); also SD 2.6a (6); SD 2.6b (3); SD 61a (2.6.3) (18). On the evolution of preta doctrine, see SD 37.10 (3.2.5).

[160] **D 20**,12/2:259,9 (DA 2:689), 23,1.7/3:7,17 f; DA 510, 789, 820; BA 271,18. J Comy glosses the "asura host" as those that prosper or grow in the "womb" (realm) of *kāla,kañjika* asuras: ***asura,kāyan*** *ti kāla,kañjika,asura,yoniñ ca vaḍḍhenti ti attho* (J 5:187).

[161] Kvu 361,1-4 (KvuA 105,1). Also D 3:7,17-8,11, 264,11; Thī 475 (ThīA 285,29); J 5:186,24*; SA 2:97,5; ItA 2:118,-17; UA 418,18; Vism 427,22; pl *dibbā kāyā parihāyissanti, paripūrissanti asura,kāyā,* A 1:143,17 (= *cattāro apāyā,* AA); in cpd *asura,tama(s),* SnA 310,21. Sakra is known as *asura,gaṇa-p,pamaddana,* "defeater of the asura group" (*sa deva-rājā ~o* [on metre, cf Sn 685b 697d 698a], J 5:139,18). On Sakra overthrowing the asuras: SD 61.21 (2.1.2).

[162] MA 2:302,29.

[163] Pañcagd 69.

[164] So Ee; also spelt *kāḷa,kañjika* (Ce Ke Se); *kāla,kañcika* (Be); also *kāla,kañja* (D:Ce D:Ee).

(a) ***THE KĀḶA,KAÑJAKĀ***

2.3.12.1 The *kāḷa,kañjakā* ("born of black lotus" or "the dark one, lotus-born"). It is possible that they dwell in lotus-lakes, and that they are dark-looking. These asuras are little different from the pretas, and are sometimes regarded as *a kind of preta*. **The Buddha,vaṁsa Commentary**, in fact, describes them as being "afflicted with craving and thirst" (*nijjhāma,taṇhā khippipāsā*, BA 271); these are the same words that describe the pretas (11). They are also said to be of the same complexion as pretas, with whom they intermarry.[165] Due to their suffering state, they are said to look "very terrifying" (*mahā'-bhiṁsā*)[166] and are "all wretched" (*sabba,nihīna*).[167]

(b) **THE *VEPACITTI,PARISĀ***

2.3.12.2 The *vepacitti,parisā* (Vepacitti's host) (Kvu 360,21) were the old devas of Tāva,tiṁsa. On account of their drunken nature they were overthrown by Sakra and his host.[168] This also launched the protracted war between the devas and the asuras (*devâsura saṅgāma*).[169] Being former devas, the Vepacitti asuras, especially their leaders (*asur'inda,* "asura lord") Vepacitti, Sucitti, Pahārāda, Verocana, and Rāhu, have asura magic (*asura,māyā*).[170] Asura lord **Vepa,citti**'s original name was Sambara and is said to be the eldest of them all (*asurānaṁ sabba,jeṭṭhako*).[171]

Sakra, lord of the devas, later married **Sujā**, Vepacitti's daughter (which thus showed she still had deva-nature).[172] The marriage ended the war between the devas and the asuras, and unified them. Understandably the Vepacitti asuras have their deva status again. Hence, they are not included amongst the traditional asuras. This leaves the Kāḷa,kañjakā as "the asuras" amongst whom no bodhisattva is reborn.

2.3.13 *(13)* The buddha-aspirant arises neither in Avīci hell nor in the intergalactic regions

2.3.13.0 This condition for the Buddhahood-aspirant mentions "Avīci-hell," and, since "the intergalactic regions" are also said to be hells by the early Buddhists, the two have been placed together to help adjust the numbering so that we have a total of 18 conditions.[173]

(a) AVĪCI HELL

2.3.13.1 Avīci is the nethermost (the lowest) of the 8 hot hells, containing those who have committed the most evil karma—such as any of the 5 heinous karmas with immediate effect [2.3.8]—who must endure excruciating torments there, which though not eternal, seem unending and to be "without a break" (*avīci*), lasting for millions of years.

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[165] *Kāḷa,kañjakā **asurā** petānaṁ samāna,vaṇṇā … petehi saha āvāha,vivāhaṁ gacchanti*, Kvu 360,12; cf DA (3) 1061,9 f, 820,27-31; UA 140,14; BA *271; BA:Ce 224,10*. Cf J 1:44,32*, 525/5:187,1 f; SA 2:290,26-291,14 = VbhA 5,6-30; D 2:259,9*.

[166] **D 20**,12/2:259 (SD 54.4); D 2:259, 3:7; also 3:789-820; J 5:187; PvA 272.

[167] D 24/3:7,17; Pañcgd 69 *sabba,nihīno asura,kāyo*.

[168] SA 1:342,9.

[169] On the deva-asura war, see **Devâsura,saṅgāma S** (A 9.39,1) SD 61.20.

[170] J 5:19,26; (cf *Sambarī māyā* (Vepacitti's former name was Sambara), S 1:239,1; SA 1:355,3-9); D 2:259,7* f ≈ *Königlich Preussische Turfan-Expeditionen,* kleinere Skt texte, Berlin, 1911 4:179,11*.

[171] On his change of name, see **Isayo Samuddaka S** (S 11.10/1:227 f) + SD 39.2 (2). See **Vepacitti S** (S 11.4), SD 54.6; also DPPN: Vepacitti.

[172] SD 54.8 (6.3.5).

[173] SnA 1:50; ApA 141.

The Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta (D 26) describes Avīci as crowded, tightly packed with hell-beings,[174] "as a jungle is thick with reeds and rushes."[175] The hell-beings are tortured by hell-wardens[176] in gruesome ways, whereas other hell-beings violently kill one another.[177] This is an imagery of **the crowd and crowdedness**. It seems that Buddhist cosmology shows a structural progression from violently crowded living conditions of the hells to the relatively space for human development, and **the radiant vastness** of the blissful heavens.

2.3.13.2 Now, it is said that the hells are crowded places of violence and suffering. The hell beings are inflicted with all kinds of horrendous tortures, repeatedly—but they do not die from them. If they were to die, then the tortures would have been meaningless. It also means that such sufferings are *not* bodily but mental. We keep on suffering the kinds of pain we have contemplated or inflicted upon others. Of course, such pain can also come from others inflicting it upon us.

Greek mythology has a similar story about recurrent hellish pains, but they are inflicted not by karma but by capricious gods. The Titan **Prometheus**, for example, was punished by Zeus (the king of the gods) for bringing fire from the heavens to the humans in mythical times. Fire was beneficial to humans but the god did not think that humans should have such a benefit.

Prometheus was then caught and punished by the gods who chained him to a mountain-rock, where an eagle comes each dawn to tear him open and feast on his liver. He suffers hellish pains, but does not die. His liver regenerates in the night. The whole samsaric cycle of bodily suffering recurs every day until he was released by the demi-god Hercules. In Buddhist light, Hercules may be seen as representing a human who has accumulated enough good karma to give him divine powers that benefit others.

The point remains that, while Prometheus was tortured by the gods *for doing good,* that is, for bringing fire to the early humans, the hell-beings were punished by their own karma for doing bad to others![178] It seems that in ancient Greek religion, the gods controlled human lives and fate. This idea became more sophisticated in modern God-religions, where humans and all "creation" are dependent of "God's will." A poet compared such sophistication to a hippopotamus going to heaven![179]

The Buddha, on the other hand, teaches **self-reliance and self-accountability**; by our actions (karma), we evolve as humans, become gods, or devolve into subhumans *even in our human form* (that is, mentally). This is basically early Buddhist psychology. Hence, we see early Buddhism as a mind-centred teaching. Or we may speak of humans being reborn as *gods* or as *subhumans*; this is Buddhist mythology.[180]

2.3.13.3 The excruciating pains and sufferings of the hells are very real all right. The Buddha and early teachers employed well-structured metaphors and mythology to impress upon the Indian audience (and us today) the reality of suffering when our karma ripens. This reality creates a karmic problem iden-

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[174] There are the only two places—D 26 + A 3.56—in the 4 Nikāyas where the word *avīci* is used in this way. Perhaps, for this reason, some scholars think that "'hell' does not seem to be its meaning." See T W Rhys Davids (D:RW 3:73 n1) and M Walshe (D:W 602 n801). F L Woodward, in his tr of **A 3.56** renders *avīci* as "the Waveless Deep" (A:W 1:142). On the hells as allegories, see **Deva,dūta S** (M 130), SD 2.23 (3).

[175] The simile recurs in **Paloka S** (A 3.56/1:159), SD 72.3, regarding the pre-Buddhist population of ancient India (*jambu,dīpa*); clearly this refers to the central Gangetic plains in northern India, not the whole of the sub-continent, much of which would still be jungle and unpopulated areas. See D 26,23/3:75 (SD 36.10).

[176] See Reflection R494 "Hell robots," RB177, 2017. 21 Feb 2025.

[177] M 3:182 f; A 1:14; J 3:46;

[178] SD 1.4 (2.1(7)).

[179] T S Eliot's "The Hippopotamus" (1919) is a satirical poem on the hypocritical and self-important nature of the established Church, and of Eliot's journey from one Christianity to another. The poem can be read as a delightful and profound criticism of God-religion.

[180] See esp SD 51.11 (3.1.2). For a study, see **Myth in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 & 49.8b (9.1.3). On Buddhist mythology, see SD 2.19 (1); SD 57.10 (5.4.1.1); SD 60.1c (1.16.1).

tified in the Commentaries: if the hell-wardens who torture the hell-beings were real (conscious of their actions) then imagine the kind of karma that they themselves would have to face!

The Kathā,vatthu, discussing this controversy, recorded **the Andhaka sect**[181] as suggesting that the hell-wardens must be like "mechanical forms" (*yanta,rūpaṁ viya*), or what we today know as "**robots or androids**."[182] This futuristic imagination suggests that hell-wardens were simply an imagery that the hell-being's karma works on its own, without the need of any conscious external agency.[183]

The Andhakas quoted a sutta teaching they recalled as follows:

na vessabhū no pi ca petti,rājā 'Tis neither Vessabhū nor the preta-king,
somo yamo vessavaṇo ca rājā nor the kings Soma, Yama or Vessavaṇa.
sakāni kammāni hananti tattha One's own karma punishes one,
ito paṇunnaṁ para,loka,pattan ti who ending here reaches other worlds.

Kvu 597,1-4 (untraced quote)

In reply, the Theravāda side then quotes a passage on hellish tortures from **the Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130), thus:

Now, the hell-wardens **[183]** torture him with **the fivefold pinion**:[184]
They drive a red-hot iron rod through one hand;
then another red-hot iron rod through the other hand.
They drive (another) red-hot iron rod through one foot;
then another red-hot iron rod through the other foot.
They drive (another) red-hot iron rod through the middle of his chest.
There, he suffers feelings that are sharp, piercing, racking pains.[185]

Yet, he does not die, so long as the result of that bad deed [bad karma] is not exhausted.[186]

(M 130,10/3:182 f), SD 2.23

The Theravādins (at least the Kathā,vatthu compilers) thus interpret this passage *literally* as referring to the hell-wardens torturing the hell-beings. Modern Buddhists are likely to find the Andhaka view more reflective of the spirit of early Buddhism, that is, if we actually take the spirit of sutta teachings seriously. In this same spirit, we are reminded of **the Pātāla Sutta** (S 36.4), where the Buddha explains thus:

Bhikshus, when the untutored ordinary person makes the statement:
"In the great ocean there is **a bottomless abyss** (*pātāla*),"
he makes such a statement about something that is non-existent and false.
This "bottomless abyss," bhikshus,
is only a designation (*adhivacana*) for painful bodily feelings.[187] (S 36.4), SD 2.25[188]

[181] This could be a Telegu sect from South India that broke away from the Theravāda.
[182] Kvu 20.3/596. See also MA 3:388,1 f, 4:231,5 f; AA 2:227,24-29; NmA 2:424,14-19.
[183] See SD 2.23 (3.4.3.1).
[184] This description of hell is found in **Bāla,paṇḍita S** (M 129,10-16) & A 1:141 f; also mentioned at J 1:174.
[185] *So tattha dukkhā tippā kaṭukā vedanā vedeti.*
[186] *Na ca tāva kālaṁ karoti yāva na taṁ pāpaṁ kammaṁ vyanti,hoti.*
[187] *Sārīrikānaṁ kho etaṁ bhikkhave dukkhānaṁ vedanānaṁ adhivacanaṁ yad idaṁ **pātālo ti***. Cf **Ajjuna Tha** (Tha 88bc) & **Deva,sabha Tha** (Tha 89b) for similar figures. See also **Tāla,puṭa Tha** (Tha 1104) & SD 20.9 II:1104 & SD 10.9 (8.4.3).
[188] SD 2.23 (3); SD 89.10 (1); SD 53.16 (2).

Anyway, the point remains that a buddha-aspirant does not arise in Avīci or any of the hells for the simple reason they have not done any heavy bad karma that would fruit in hellish suffering. Moreover, hell-beings spend very long periods in hellish suffering; this would not be expeditious for one aspiring to become buddha to train in the various spiritual perfections.

(b) THE INTERGALACTIC REGIONS (*LOKÂNTARIKA*)

2.3.13.4 The Andha,kāra Sutta (S 56.46) records the Buddha using the imagery of darkness as a metaphor for the **ignorance** that prevents us from seeing the 4 noble truths and so be liberated from suffering. The metaphor is remarkable since the Buddha is apparently alluding to the remote reaches of outer space:

> There is, bhikshus, a groundless [bottomless] abysmal dark, **a blinding darkness of the spaces amongst the worlds** [an intergalactic dark],[189]
>
> where even the lights of the moon and the sun, so mighty as they are, cannot prevail.
>
> (S 56.46/5:454 f), SD 53.2

The Commentaries explain (in identical words)[190] that amongst every 3 world-systems, there is an intergalactic space (***lok'antarika***) measuring 8,000 yojanas (56,000 mi = 90,123 km). It is like the space amongst 3 cart-wheels or almsbowls touching one another. This is a zone of total blinding darkness.[191] Beings are reborn in this "**great interworld hell**" (*lok'antarika mahā,niraya*)—a kind of phantom zone—as a result of something great evil, such as the 5 heinous karma [2.3.8]. The hell-beings there look like huge bats, three-quarter yojana high,[192] long-clawed, clinging onto "the edges of cliff-sides" (*pabbata,pāde … laggitvā*).[193]

An aspirant to buddhahood will not arise in such a hell for the simple reason that he does not perform any kind of karma that would fruit in his being reborn there.

2.3.14 *(14)* The buddha-aspirant, in the sense-world, does not become Māra

2.3.14.0 A detailed study of Māra from the perspectives of early Buddhism and ancient India is found in **SD 61a**. Early Buddhism speaks of Māra in different ways: ethical, psychological, spiritual, cosmological and existential terms (respectively as *kilesa,mārā, khandha,māra, abhisaṅkhāra,māra, deva.putta,māra, maccu,māra*). If you are not familiar with these, stop here and go on to read about them in SD 61a (3.2).

2.3.14.1 In our contemporary lives, we can encounter Māra in either of 2 realistic ways, that is, (1) existentially and (2) personally.

(1) Māra works existentially from within us working on our greed, hatred and delusion to keep us driven by our lust, negative emotions and wrong views. This is the kind of Māra often spoken of in the suttas.[194] This is the Māra we are unlikely to recognize when we lack Dharma training and mindfulness.

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[189] On its parallel in **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,1.18) & **Acchariya,abbhuta S 1** (A 4.127,2), SD 52.2a. Cf **Mahā,vastu** (Mvst 1:35; Mvst:J 1:35).

[190] DA 2:433,11-26 = MA 4:177,13-178,4 = AA 3:126,14-127,6.

[191] DA 2:433,11 = MA 4:177,13 = AA 3:14; see SD 53.2 (1.2.2.3).

[192] 3-*gāvuta* = 5.25 mi = 8.45 km. 4 *gāvuta* = 1 *yojana* = 11.25 km or 7 mi.

[193] Excerpts from: DA 2:433,27-434,12 = MA 4:178,5-26 = AA 3:127,7-128,3; VbhA 4,14-31. See SD 53.2 (1.2.3.2).

[194] A number of such suttas are found in SD 61b.

Here, Māra is likely to distract or manipulate us so that we are drawn to the crowd, seeking its approval, measuring ourselves against others, and ignoring people we feel have no worth for us. We are likely to be *narcissists, collectors and seekers of "something."*

Narcissists are those who are asura-like, seeing themselves as above others, arrogantly or deviously demanding the attention and deference of others on account of their perceived status and power. A narcissist only sees himself; a narcissist cannot really see another person. He only perceives the effect that other people are having on him.

Collectors are preta-like persons who see others as objects being worthy of their attention or unworthy of it; what they see as worthy—whether it is teachers, teachings or things—they tend to "collect" by having some kind of addictive connection with them, without any appreciation for them but seeing them as trophies and specimens to pride themselves with.

The something seeker predictably moves animal-like in the rut of instinctively running after what they see as palpable, something pleasing or comforting to their senses or emotions, even if it is an idea of "something" that seems to give meaning to them. Māra here works in very subtle ways with our minds. With what we know we would rationalize why we should *be* at the centre of things, why we should *have* those things, and why there are those "things" in the first place.

(2) At some point in our lives, especially when we are deeply moved *to avoid evil, do good and tame the mind*, or to be deeply devoted to Dharma work, or to some human-centred endeavour, there is likely to be someone or some group who would dislike or distract us. Often these distractors are *narcissists, collectors or something-seekers*—who would hate us mainly because they perceive that we are a threat to the attention and admiration that they seek and demand for themselves, or that we are depriving them of their object of desire or something they are seeking or collecting.

They are our **personal Māra and his horde** who will work in every way to distract us, to distract others from us, and hopefully to destroy our work or our faith in our work or ourself, even in the Dharma —they would deeply delight when we fail or give up.

We are unlikely to understand that this Māra is dedicating himself personally to our misery, failure even destruction. The more dedicated we are to our work, the less likely we are to unveil the personal Māra's machinations against us. In fact, we may even mistake Māra as being friendly and kind to us.

Perhaps with a deeper understanding of the Dharma, understanding how the deity Māra works against the Buddha, we may realize that we have **a personal Māra**. By then it may be all over, and looking back at our inexplicable difficulties and sufferings we then realize it was Māra's past attention to us. Perhaps, by then, Māra had already faced his own dark dues and vanished from our life.

The bodhisattva would never be an existential Māra (such as the *devaputta māra*). The bodhisattva is in fact working to be just **the antithesis of Māra**, the conqueror of Māra, and to teach us how to deter, even overcome, Māra, and progress spiritually. Even less so would the bodhisattva ever be our "personal Māra," since he is dedicated to the welfare and happiness of all beings, including ourself.

2.3.14.2 We are not likely to notice Māra, or Māra may not notice us, when we are naturally **giving** and forgiving to others, moved by lovingkindness to cultivate **morally virtuous** speech and action. For ourself, our Dharma joy inspires us to **renounce** not only bad speech and wrong action, but also wrong views and violent thoughts. We are eager to learn Dharma neither for status nor for gain, but for **wisdom**, seeing things more clearly and truly.

All this goodness empowers us with **effort** in good, and loving **patience** at the faults and weaknesses of others. We understand and speak **truth**, timely and proper for others or each person or situation. Our unswerving **determination** is to know true Dharma and make it known, to inspire others not in the arrogance of being learned, but with radiant **lovingkindness** to accept themselves unconditionally and to

embrace others just as they are. Even in the face of great challenges, we look on with **equanimity**, learning how karma works, standing like the bodhi tree heading heavenward, while sheltering those under it.

This is what the bodhisattva aspired to, and this is what we can do, even without aspiring for buddhahood, because we are followers of Buddha Gotama, in whose dispensation we live. The Buddha teaches, we listen and practise—that is the Buddha's dispensation. [1.1.1.1]

2.3.14.3 It is well known that the bodhisattva is reborn in **Tusita** (heaven of the contented devas) in his penultimate birth, that is, before "descending" into a human birth to become buddha. However, no buddha arises in any of these sense-world heavens, since they are populated by celestial beings who enjoy the pleasures and powers of their past good karma in a divine setting. Hence, as a rule, they are unlikely to care about events in the lower worlds.

The sense-world deva realms, by way of increasing length of lifespan are as follows:[195]

		lifespan
Cātu,māha.rajīka heaven	the 4 great kings (protectors of Tāvatiṁsa)	500 cy
Tavatimsā heaven	the heaven of the 33 devas (Sakra's heaven)	2,000 cy
Yāma heaven	the heaven of the Yāma devas	8,000 cy
Tusita heaven	the contented devas	16,000 cy
Nimmāna,ratī heaven	devas who delight in creation	64,000 cy
Para,nimmita Vasa,vattī heaven	devas who lord over others' creations	128,000 cy

2.3.15 *(15)* The buddha-aspirant, in the form world, does not arise in the non-conscious plane

2.3.15.1 The non-conscious beings (*asaññā,sattā*)[196] are the 4th formless plane just below those of the pure abodes,[197] or the 4th of the 9 abodes of beings (*satt'āvāsa*).[198] These beings have neither perception nor feeling;[199] hence, they are *unconscious* and experience nothing.[200] However, as soon as an idea occurs to them, they fall from their state. Brahmin ascetics, having a sustained practice of meditation and attained the 4th dhyana, seeing the disadvantages attached to thinking, try to do away with it altogether. Dying in this condition, they are reborn among the Asaññā,sattā, having form only but without feelings, perceptions, formations or consciousness. Their lifespan is only as long as their power of dhyana; then an idea occurs to them, and they die at once and are reborn.[201] These devas are long-lived,[202] lasting 500 aeons.[203]

2.3.15.2 Interestingly, this unique plane of existence is one of virtual non-being, characterized by the suspension of consciousness. Since these beings exist in a state of suspended animation, they actually *do nothing* and nothing happens to them. The bodhisattva, on the other hand, lives proactively, cultivating spiritual qualities, wholesomely responding to the needs of others, and learning from it all. Understandably, a bodhisattva would not want to be reborn amongst the Asaññā,sattā.

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[195] "Cy" = celestial years. For further details, see **Early Buddhist** cosmology (SD 57.10 esp 1.5.4.6).

[196] DhA 4:132,2; cf SnA 359,26.

[197] On the 31 realms, see SD 1.7 (App).

[198] On the 7 stations of consciousness: **Satta Viññāṇa-ṭ,ṭhiti S** (A 7.41), SD 57.17; on the 9 abodes of beings: **(Navaka) Satt'āvāsa S** (A 9.24), SD 57.18.

[199] D 33,3.2(3)/3:263.

[200] A 9.24/4:401.

[201] D 1,2.31/1:28; DA 1:118.

[202] ThaA 2:42.

[203] Vbh 424,23 f.

2.3.16 *(16)* The buddha-aspirant does not arise in the pure abodes

2.3.16.1 The pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*) are neither a physical nor structured realm, but an invisible dimension of form-world beings (like radio waves). The "form world" (*rūpa,loka*) comprises beings who are free from the 5 physical senses. They have form (*rūpa*) that is not sense-based like that of humans, but are of a refined kind like radiant colours. They are "divine, having form, mind-made, endowed with all the limbs and organs, without defect in any faculty."[204]

Among **the form beings** (like the nonreturners of the pure abodes), the decads (*dasaka*) of *nose, tongue, body, sex and material groups arising from food* are not found in them. Hence, to these beings, at the time of rebirth-linking[205] there arise 4 material groups (*kalāpa*) produced by karma: the 3 decads of eye, ear and heart-base,[206] and the life nonad. During the course of existence, material phenomena produced by consciousness and by heat (temperature) also occur.[207]

Since the beings of the form realms are free from the sense-faculties, including a physical body (like a human's), they are asexual; they lack the 2 decads of sex.[208] Even though they have physical forms of the nose, tongue and body, these organs lack any sensitivity. In other words, these organs are merely aesthetic.

In short, the form-world beings, including the nonreturners of the pure abodes, do not *smell, taste or feel or touch* (or need to). They do not need to sense things the way humans and sense-world beings do. The form-world beings have highly developed senses of sight and hearing on account of their dhyanic minds, which are able to process smell, taste or touch mentally (thus directly), while humans depend on their sense-faculties, further aided by their sensitivities and skills.

2.3.16.2 The pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the dimension of the nonreturners (supramundane 4th dhyana) located in the 4th-dhyana form world (*rūpa,loka*) comprises the following realms:[209]

			life-span
5	*akaniṭṭhā*	the supreme	16,000 aeons
6	*sudassī*	the clear-visioned	8,000 aeons
7	*sudassā*	the clear-beauty	4,000 aeons
8	*ātappā*	the serene	2,000 aeons
9	*avihā*	the durable	1,000 aeons

2.3.16.3 Beings in **the form world**—wherein the pure abodes are located—are called brahmas (*brahmā*), on account of their divine or perfect form and nature, of whom Mahā,brahmā is the most radiant and most beautiful of them. They feed on joy and are luminous. Those who attain nonreturning as humans but do not go on to attain arhathood are reborn as brahmas in the pure abodes. Therein the nonreturners practise until they gain arhathood without ever being reborn on earth again.

The bodhisattva does not arise **in the pure abodes** for obvious reasons: only nonreturners arise there, or rather the abodes are the dimensions of the nonreturners. For the very same reason, the

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[204] *Dibbo rūpī mano,mayo sabbaṅga,paccaṅgī ahīndriyo*: D 1,3.12/1:34 (SD 25); Vbh 384,9.

[205] See SD 60.1b (12.2.3.4).

[206] "Heart-base," *hadaya,vatthu,* the Abhidhamma term for the mind's "location." See SD 26.2 (3.1.3.6); SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4).

[207] "Nonad" and "decad" refer to molecular "clusters" (*kalāpa*) that comprise each of the faculties, according to Abhidhamma. See SD 26.2 (esp 3).

[208] Ie, male and female. On the sex decads, see SD 60.1b (12.3.2).

[209] The numbering sequence (5-9) refers to their ranking in the scheme of the 31-plane cosmology [SD 1.7 (App)].

Buddha declares that *there is no place that he has not been born into except the pure abodes*.[210] However, due to his awakened powers, the Buddha is able to fathom, even visit, any of these abodes if he wishes to.[211]

2.3.17 *(17)* The buddha-aspirant does not arise in a formless world

2.3.17.1 The formless world is the highest of the 3 worlds—the sense-world, the form world and the formless world—that is, existential states, in early Buddhist cosmology. It comprises the following realms:[212]

(1)	the base of infinite space,	*ākāsânañc'āyatana*	[SD 24.15]
(2)	the base of infinite consciousness,	*viññānāñc'āyatana*	[SD 24.16]
(3)	the base of nothingness,	*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*	[SD 24.17]
(4)	the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.	*n'eva,saññā,nâsaññ'āyatana*	[SD 24.18]

Because they have transcended all materiality by attaining the 4th dhyana, the beings here retain only the subtlest form of the last 4 of the 5 aggregates, that is, *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*; that is, they lack physical form (*rūpa*) of the sense-world. Since these are profoundly meditative states of the formless dhyana, they spend much of their time in meditation.

2.3.17.2 The 4 stages of the formless realms are ultimately rooted in **the 4th dhyana**. When all perceptions of material form belonging to the 4 dhyanas, and the objects of these perceptions (the form-dhyana counterpart signs), are transcended, the meditator attains **the base of infinite space** (*ākāsānanc'āyatana*), the 1st of the 4 formless attainments. This means that there is no more "perception of diversity" (*nanatta,saññā*). However, there is still some very subtle perception of mind-objects (*dhamma,-saññā*) in this 1st formless attainment.[213]

In the 2nd formless attainment, the meditator perceives space as infinite (and has no sense of time either). Consciousness of both time and space (as external realities) as we know them disappears. The mind is directed *inward* to consciousness itself. This is that rare occasion when there is no more consciousness *of*; thus consciousness appears to be *infinite*; hence, it is called **the base of infinite consciousness** (*viññāṇañc'āyatana*).[214]

In the 3rd formless attainment, as the meditator sustains his focus on infinite consciousness, consciousness itself begins to disappear. This leaves behind only the infinity, that is, of "**nothingness**" (*ākiñcaññā*). In other words, in letting go of the perception of infinite consciousness, one proceeds to the next level. Otherwise, one could remain stuck in that particular state: what is meant to free us becomes a fetter, holding us back. Dhyana, in short, is about *supreme letting go*—until there is *nothing* more to let go of. This is true renunciation. Then we are ready for liberation.[215]

Finally, as our experience of "nothingness" (*ākiñcaññā*) steadily deepens, we begin to understand that underlying it is a perception that goes *beyond nothingness*. If our mind is refined enough to see this, then the perception of nothingness disappears and is best described as being neither-perception-nor-

[210] D 2:50, 52, 3:237; DA 3:1029.

[211] On the Buddha's visit to the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), see **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,3.34 f), SD 49.8a.

[212] For a summary on the formless realms, see SD 24.11 (5). On the "formless" (*arūpī*), see SD 53.23 (2.1.3). Related suttas are: (1) **Ākāsānañc'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.5), SD 24.15; (2) **Viññānañc'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.6), SD 24.16; (3) **Ākiñcaññ'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.7), SD 24.17; (4) **N'eva,saññā,nâsaññ'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.8), SD 24.18.

[213] See **Ākāsānañc'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.5), SD 24.15.

[214] See **Viññānañc'āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.6), SD 24.16,

[215] See **(Pañcāla,caṇḍa) Sambādha S** (A 9.42/4:449-451), SD 33.2.

non-perception (*n'eva saññā nâsaññā*). The consciousness here is so refined that *it cannot be said whether there is perceiving or not*. In other words, our consciousness is at its subtlest level.

2.3.17.3 Why is it that the bodhisattva does not arise in any of these formless states that are so remarkably subtle? That is the very reason! These remarkable mental experiences blissfully frees one from the suffering world, whose beings mostly do not experience form-dhyanas; they are caught in the world of sense-experiences with which they react with pleasure or displeasure deluded by the appeal and promises of these experiences, fettered to craving, blinded by ignorance.

The bodhisattva arises in the sense-world as the Buddha to free it from the prison of the senses and the captivity of the worldly mind. The Buddha teaches the true nature of the world—its impermanence, suffering and nonself—which is easier for the sense-world beings to experience and understand since these characterize their senses and minds.

2.3.18 *(18)* The buddha-aspirant does not migrate to another universe[216]

2.3.18.1 This last condition is a very remarkable one: it implies that the Buddha and the early Buddhists were aware of or envisioned **the multiverse**, a multiplicity of universes like ours that exist at the same time, separated remotely from one another by astronomical distances. Apparently, the Buddha was aware of such a reality through his profound powers of meditation and boundless wisdom.

The (Tika) Abhibhū Sutta (A 3.80) preserves a remarkable statement by the Buddha on this definition of ***loka,dhātu*** (world system), thus:[217]

"Ānanda, a thousand times the world in which the sun and the moon turn and light up the quarters with their radiance[218]—this, Ānanda, is called **a 1,000 small world system** (*sahassī cūḷanikā loka,dhātu*).[219]

In that 1,000 small world system,[220] there are:[221]

a thousand moons,	
a thousand suns,	
a thousand Sinerus, kings of the mountains,	(the world-hubs)[222]
a thousand Jambu,dīpas,[223]	(the Indian subcontinent)
a thousand Apara,go.yānas,	(the Western Ox-wains)
a thousand Uttara,kurus,	(the Northern Kurus)
a thousand Pubba,videhas,	(the Western Videhas)
a thousand 4 great oceans,	
a thousand Cātu,māha.rajīka heavens,	(the 4 great kings)
a thousand Tavatimsā heavens,	(the 33 devas)

[216] For a reflection, see R140 Parallel universes RB150 2016.

[217] A 3.80/1:226-228 (SD 54.1). [Download] 20 Feb 2025

[218] *Yāvatā ānanda candima,suriyā* (Ce Ee Ke Se; Be *candima,sūriyā* throughout) *pariharanti disā bhanti virocanā, tāva sahassadhā loko*.

[219] See SD 54.1 (2.1.2.4). Comy: This is the range of a disciple (*ayaṁ sāvakassa visayo,* AA 2:341,1).

[220] The "1,000" here, then, is simply an adjective referring to a collection of neighbouring world-systems; hence, the phrase is tr in the singular. See SD 54.1 (2.1.2.2+2.1.2.4).

[221] All this, up to the Para,nimmita Vasa,vatti heaven, constitutes our "physical" universe, or, the "sense world" (*kāma,loka*). The brahma realms mentioned here constitute only the 1st of the 4 form worlds (*rūpa,loka*), which are all dhyanic in nature. For their locations in the early Buddhist cosmology, see SD 1.7 (App).

[222] This is the early Buddhist conception of the hub or centre of the revolving galaxy.

[223] *Jambu,dīpa* is the textual name for the ancient Indian subcontinent, the southernmost of the 4 great continents, surrounded by the 4 oceans. See SD 16.15 (3). For descriptions, see KhpA 123; SnA 2:443; DhsA 298.

a thousand Yāma heavens,
a thousand Tusita heavens, (the contented devas)
a thousand Nimmāna,ratī heavens, (devas who delight in creation)
a thousand Para,nimmita Vasa,vattī heavens, (those who lord over others' creations)
and a thousand brahma worlds. (A 3.80,11/1:227 f)[224] + SD 54.1 (2.2.3)

2.3.18.2 The galaxies comprise world systems (*loka,dhātu*) of different sizes, thus:

(1) Our solar system and its quadrant as imagined by the early Buddhists, known simply as "**the universe**" (*loka,dhātu,* "world-system," or *cakka,vāḷa,* "world sphere"),[225] that is, our "immediate" universe.
(2) A "small **chiliocosm**,"[226] or a thousandfold world system (*sahassī cūḷanikā loka,dhātu*), which is 1,000x larger than our own universe [*1*]; this is defined in **the (Tika) Abhibhū Sutta** (A 3.80). [2.3.18.1].
(3) A "**dichiliocosm**," a kind of "mega" universe, larger than (*2*) by 10^6 or 1,000,000 (a million).
(4) A "**trichiliocosm**," a kind of "**tera**" **universe**, larger than (*3*) by 10^{12} or 1,000,000,000,000 (a trillion); **a trichiliocosm**. As for the size of this tera-universe, the north Indian tradition—as found in Vasubandhu's Abhidharma,kośa[227]—sees it as comprising *a billion* (1,000,000,000) world systems,[228] while the southern tradition—in Buddhaghosa's commentaries[229]—it is *a trillion* (1,000,000,000,000).

2.3.18.3 Why does a bodhisattva not *move from our universe to another*? This may be explained in terms of the concept of **buddha-field** (*buddha,khetta*), that is, as follows:[230]

- his field of **birth**—the "10,000 world system" (*dasa,sahassa cakka,vāḷa*); this is where he can be born;
- his field of **authority**—the "1,000,000,000,000 [trillion] world system" (*koṭi,sahassa cakkavāḷa*) = a "tera-universe" [2.3.18.2]; this is the reach of or accessibility to his teaching (dispensation, *sāsana*);
- his field of **range**—an infinite number of world systems; this is how far the Buddha's mind can survey.

This means that, basically, the Buddha would not move away from his birth-universe, which he well knows and is well-known. The significance is that his teaching (*sāsana*) will remain long to benefit that universe (that is, us) even after his death, so that even then, awakening or attaining the path is possible. If the Buddha were to move away from our universe, then, he is likely to become some kind of "mythical memory," "mystical myths" or "imaginative piety" such as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of later Buddhisms.

2.4 THE IDEAL BEING

2.4.1 The freedom from these 18 impossible conditions *neither* authenticates *nor* confers on the bodhisattva any kind of status or power. He has earned the benefit of those conditions through aeons of cultivating what is wholesome. Some of these conditions (such as nos. 8, 15, 16), he has *chosen* or *determined* not to have to expedite his attaining buddhahood.

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[224] Nc 235.2b; DĀ T1.114b20c7. See SD 54.1 (2.1.2) for nn. Cf Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos,* 2018:41 f.
[225] On these 2 terms, see SD 57.10 (2.1.1.2).
[226] See SD 57.10 [1.5.2.4]. The term "chiliocosm" first appeared in Abel Rémusat, Julius von Klaproth & C Landresse, *The Pilgrimage of Fa Hian,* Calcutta, 1848:131 (tr from French): https://archive.org/details/pilgrimagefahia00rmgoog.
[227] SD 59.10 [2.1.3.1].
[228] Abhk 3.73 f. On the "power of 10," see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_of_10.
[229] A 1:227 f; AA 2:340 f.
[230] See SD 57.10 [4.3.2.2].

2.4.2 In a scriptural and literary way, the ancient Indian Buddhist story-tellers invoke these conditions to declare that the bodhisattva is **the** "**great man**" (*mahā,purisa*), a highly evolved individual, who will become a trans-existential human, one who is capable of crossing over samsara or cyclic existence by his own effort and self-awakening.

2.4.3 Hence, he is also **the ideal being**, one that all beings should look up to, reminding them that they, too, are capable of rising above their current state or station, no matter how evil, how unholy, how subservient or how powerless, they may be now. They only need to seek the path of awakening and follow it, the path that leads to true spiritual freedom and awakening.

3 Disciplehood and discipleship

3.1 DISCIPLEHOOD

3.1.2 The aspirant to **disciplehood**—being a path disciple of the Buddha [1.3]—must have an earnest desire to act or practise (*kattu,kamyatā*) so as to attain the path [1.3]. **The Vibhaṅga** explains the term "desire to act" as "the will (or desire) for Dharma [seeing true reality]" (*dhamma-c,chanda*) and it also means "effort (*vāyāma* or *padhāna*)" or "energy (*vīriya*)"; one puts one's "mind" (*citta*) into that Dharma.

In other words, the aspirant to disciplehood must practise right effort (*samma-p,padhāna*): *do no evil, end evil; initiate good, cultivate good.* The aspirant must cultivate the fourfold path of spiritual success: willfulness or purposefulness (*chanda*), effort (*vīriya*), the mind (*citta*) and dharma-investigation (*vīmaṁsā*);[231] these are the qualities that make the aspirant an accomplished meditator.

3.1.3 Both kinds of aspirants for disciplehood—the foremost disciples and the great disciples [2.1.4.2]—are arhats, just like the Buddha [2.2.3.2(1)]. Apparently, disciples who are *neither* chief disciples (like Sāriputta and Moggallāna) *nor* great disciples (such as Koṇḍañña, Mahā Kassapa and Mahā Kaccāna) do not need to take such a long time (in terms of aspiration and the ensuing practice for awakening).

The reality is that non-aspirants actually take a very much longer time to reach the path, since they are still stuck in samsara, *shrouded in ignorance and fettered in craving*, like cattle being led to the slaughter. Realistically, then, aspirants take a relatively shorter time to attain awakening than those on the path of the ordinary practitioners!

The only "consolation" for the ordinary practitioner is that they are unaware of this astronomically long time that they spend in samsara because of either *not knowing the Dharma* or *not accepting it* as our life's goal. For example, while scholars who are expert in Buddhism take it as merely an academic subject and remain, arguably, unawakened, the mindful practitioner, whether a scholar or not, is more likely to reach the path of awakening in this life itself.

3.2 DISCIPLESHIP

3.2.1 Commitment to the 3 jewels

3.2.1.1 While disciplehood (*sāvakattā*) usually begins with an aspiration to be the future Buddha's disciple in some capacity (such as a chief disciple, or one of the great disciples), **discipleship** (*dhamma,-*

[231] Vbh 209-223. On the 4 right efforts, see SD 10.16 (6); on the fourfold path of spiritual success (*iddhi,pāda*), see **Cattāro Iddhi,pāda**, SD 10.3.

cariya), "living the Dharma," involves *study, practice and realization*,[232] of the path of *moral conduct, mental cultivation and liberating wisdom*[233]—the former triad is the 3 stages of training, the latter the 3 trainings themselves (*sīla samādhi paññā*).

Discipleship is basically our commitment to the 3 jewels, taking the historical **Buddha** as "refuge" (*saraṇa*), meaning that we understand and accept the Buddha as our one and only true *teacher*. Secondly, we go for refuge in the **Buddha Dharma**, the teaching of the nature of the Buddha and the Dharma. Thirdly, we take the **noble sangha** as our path of practice leading to streamwinning in this life itself.

3.2.1.2 It is vital to understand why we should aspire for **streamwinning**[234] in this life itself—because we now have the right conditions for such an aspiration. If we miss this opportunity, we may neither be human again nor find the favourable conditions for Dharma practice. If we should fall into any of the 4 subhuman states, it would take a very long time before we get this chance for discipleship again. Even if we are reborn as humans, our mind may not be able to attain the level of opening to the study, practice or realization of the path.

Aspiring for discipleship thus means to see the urgency of awakening, and to work for the path in this life itself—as taught in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1).[235] The point is that it is not the *belief* that all things are impermanent that changes us, but our actions and understanding in the spirit of impermanence does. Our beliefs do not make us better persons, our conduct does. Such conduct supports the mind that will awaken.

3.2.2 Significance of the long duration for aspirant transformation

The time that one must take in one's aspiration to awakening—as the buddha, a pacceka-buddha or a disciple—is really many aeons. **An aeon** (a world-cycle), as we have noted [2.1] is described as being "immeasurable" or "incalculable," in the prescientific times of the Buddhist India. This immeasurability and incalculability are described (not "measured") in metaphors [2.1.1].

We may well claim that the early Buddhists were basically making the point that **time is relative**. But this would be like trying to measure Buddhism up to modern science—it would be like comparing Cinderella (as a scullery maid) against Prince Charming (as royalty). It could be argued who is like Buddhism and who is like science! But then in trying to compare them, we are missing the whole idea of the aspiration to awakening: that early Buddhism and science share the same love, that of understanding nature.

Further, the point of speaking of such astronomical lengths of time is that we should make our spiritual aspiration right here and now. We have actually vacillated that long to gain the path. We should right now aspire to attain at least **streamwinning**. [3.2.1.2]

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[232] This triad of "study, practice, realization" (*pariyatti, paṭipatti, paṭivedha*) are known as **the 3 good dharmas** (*saddhamma* 3): SD 40a.1 (3.4.2); SD 40a.4 (6.2.1).

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

[234] On streamwinning (*sotāpatti*), see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3; **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5,29-30) SD 22.8 Kūṭadanta's streamwinning. On the certainty of attaining streamwinning, see SD 3.3 (7).

[235] S 25.1/3:225 (SD 16.7).

SD 62.12ab The Two (Udāna) Dabba Suttas

(Udāna) Dabba Sutta 1 **(U 8.9);** (Udāna) Sutta 2 **(U 8.10)**
Theme: The elder Dabba's parinirvana
Translated by Piya Tan ©2025

1 Sutta summaries

There are two (Udāna) Dabba Suttas, both recording the Parinirvana of the arhat Dabba:

(1) **(Udāna) Dabba Sutta 1** (U 8.9): the arhat Dabba's parinirvana. [SD 62.12a]
(2) **(Udāna) Dabba Sutta 2** (U 8.10): Dabba's parinirvana related by the Buddha. [SD 62.12b]

2 Dabba Malla,putta

2.1 A 7-YEAR-OLD ARHAT

2.1.1 Origins and name

2.1.1.1 Dabba was a 7-year-old arhat,[1] born at Anupiya[2] in a Malla family of **Kusinārā**.[3] Interestingly, Dabba's remarkable birth portends that he would master the fire element (*tejo,dhātu*) by way of the fire-kasina (*tejo,kasiṇa*). Born of the funeral fire, Dabba later self-cremated himself through dhyanic self-combustion (like the elder Ānanda[4] and the elder Bakkula[5]).

2.1.1.2 Although **the Udāna Commentary** mentions that the 7-year-old Dabba approached his parents for permission to be ordained (UA 430,13 f), other commentarial sources say that it was from his grandmother that he sought permission to do so. According to **the Aṅguttara Commentary**, **the Thera,-gāthā Commentary** and **the Vinaya Ṭīkā** (Sār'attha,dīpanī) his mother had died when she was about to give birth. As her body was being cremated, her belly split open and Dabba rose into the air by the power of his merits, landing on or at the wooden pillar (*dabba-t,thambhe*) of the funeral pyre.[6]

The Apadāna and its **Commentary** give a different detail: it says that the boy rose from his mother's body on the funeral pyre and landed on a heap of **darbha** grass (*dabba,puñjamhi*);[7] hence, he was given the name *Dabba.*[8] The account clearly plays on the word *dabba* as referring to the *kusa* grass (another name for darbha) [2.1.1.3].[9]

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[1] Dh Comy gives accounts of five 7-year-old arhats: a girl Cīrā (DhA 14.12/3:210 f); 4 novices (DhA 26.23/4:176-180): Saṅkicca (DhA 8.9/2:240-253), Paṇḍita (DhA 6.5/2:127-147), Sopāka (DhA 26.23/4:176) and Revata (DhA 7.9/-2:188-200); Sukha (DhA 10.1/4:48 f); Sumana (DhA 25.12/4:120-127) and Tissa (DhA 5.15/2:84-103).

[2] A township in Malla country to the east of Kapila,vatthu.

[3] Ap 531/(2:)471-473 (tr Ap:W 889).

[4] Ānanda died at 120; after his self-cremation, his bodily relics fell in equal proportion on both sides of the river Rohinī, for his relatives in the Sakya and the Koliya clans. See DhA 2:99 f.

[5] **Bakkula S** (M 124,40 f/3:127 f), SD 3.15. Bakkula died at 160 [M 124,3 n (SD 3.15)]. In his case, it is said that his bodily relics were found after the cremation (MA 4:196).

[6] AA 1:274,13 f; ThaA 1:43,13-16; VAṬ:Be 2:342 f. See also DPPN 1:1060, sv Dabba-Mallaputta Thera.

[7] Be Ce Se *patito dabba,puñjamhi tato dabbo vissuto | brahmacari,balenâhaṁ* vimutto satta,vassisako ‖* Ap 531/*36/473 (tr Ap:W 894). Ee **brahmacera,phalenâhaṁ.*

[8] *Ath'ekho tassā sarīraṁ jhāpanatthāya citakasmiṁ āropetvā kumāraṁ dabb'antare patitaṁ gahetvā paṭijaggāpesi* (ApA 505,4-7).

[9] On the miraculous birth of another 7-year-old arhat, Saṅkicca, see DhA 8.9/2:240-253 qu at Vism 379 (story tr DhA:B 2:238-246).

2.1.1.3 The word ***dabba*** has 4 important senses:[10]

***dabba*[1]** (Skt *dravya* (neut) from *dravati,* √DRU)
wise, fit, capable;[11] a wise, skilled or worthy person.[12]
***Dabba*[2]** (Skt *dravya,* from √DRU)
(Skt *dravya*), what is from a tree; wood (P *daru*).[13]
***dabba*[3]** also *drabya*
(Skt *darbha;* P *dabbha*) a kind of grass, that is, kusa (Skt *kuśa*) often used in Vedic sacrifices[14] [2.1.1.4].
***dabba*[4]** (Skt *dravya,* from √DRU)
(Skt *dravya*), what is from a tree; wood (P *daru*).[15]

The third sense—a kind of grass, kusa—applies to the *dabba* in the two **Dabba Suttas** (U 8.9+10). [2.1.1.4]

2.1.1.4 ***Dabba*** (Skt *darbha*)—henceforth anglicized as "darbha"— is also a name for a well-known sacred Indian grass, called as **kusa**[16] (DhA 3:484) or kusha (Poa cynosuroides) (PED),[17] or muñja (Saccharum munja);[18] when used as Vedic sacrificial grass, it is called *pavitram* (SED). Most likely, it is Demostachya bipinnata (big cordgrass and salt reed-grass), or Saccharum cylindricum[19] (SED).[20]

Clearly, these names refer to certain kinds of grass common in various regions of the central Gangetic plain. Apparently, *dabba, kusa* and *muñja* are subspecies of the same species, or actually different types of grass, since **the Loma,sak'aṅgiya**[21] **Thera,gāthā**, in one of its verses, says:

dabbaṁ kusaṁ poṭakilaṁ	With my chest,[22] I shall push aside dabba grass,	
usiraṁ muñja,babbajaṁ	kusa grass, poṭakila grass, usīra,	
urasā panudissāmi	muñja grass, and bulrushes,	
vivekaṁ anubrūhayaṁ	devoting myself to seclusion.	(Tha 27)[23]

[10] See DP: svv dabba[1], dabba[2], and dabba[3].
[11] V 3:164,32; S 1:187,5* = Tha 1218; Tha 5.
[12] Pañca.gati,dīpana 14.
[13] J 2:405,4; Ap 559,8.
[14] D 1:141; M 1:344, 2:162; A 2:207; Pug 56.
[15] J 2:405,4; Ap 559,8.
[16] On *kusa,* see SD 22.8 (3.3) D 5 qu n; SD 52.1 (15.1.1); **Nadi S** (S 22.93,3), SD 42.19.
[17] *Poa* is Gk for "fodder." Also known as meadow-grass (mainly in Europe and Asia), bluegrass (in N America), tussock (some New Zealand species) and speargrass. [Wiki]
[18] D 2:174; Sn p28, 440. The reed itself is called *isīka* (D 1:17,12 = M 2:17,27; Vism 6:406; DA 105,12; J 6:67,24*).
[19] Or, imperata cylindrica, in **W D Clayton**, K T Harman, H Williamson, World Grass Species - Synonymy database The Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 2006; **Z Wu** & P H Raven (eds), *Poaceae. Flora of China* 22 2006:1-733. Missouri Botanical Garden Press, St. Louis. [IPNI] 8 Feb 2025.
[20] See SED darbha; G M Meulenbeld, *The Madhavanidāna and its chief commentary*, 1974:561 f], a kind of grass.
[21] On his name, MA 5:6,27-29.
[22] "With my chest" (*urasā*) prob means "with all my heart."
[23] Tha 27 = Ap 545.18/505; Ce *dabbaṁ*; Be *kāsaṁ*; Ee *dabbhaṁ*; Se *sabbaṁ*), Tha 27abc = J:Be *1833abc/6:508. **ThaA 1:90**,15: ***dabban** ti dabba,tiṇaṁ āha yaṁ saddulo ti pi vuccati,* "Dabba grass is also called saddula." Saddula, however, in Skt is durva, used esp in Ayurveda medicine and Hindu rituals: this is Cynodon dactylon. 8 Feb 2024. See Tha:N 127 n27.

The Commentaries also explain darbha as follows: "Poor wandering Ātharva mendicants, it is said, not taking salt for 7 days, lying down on darbha on the ground, perform austerities."[24] However, such a practice would very likely be post-Buddha.

2.1.1.5 The word **Malla,putta**, literally, "Malla son (of family)," refers either to a "young Malla" or a member of a renowned Malla family. **The Udāna Commentary** explains *malla,putta* as "son of a Malla rajah" (*malla,rājassa putto,* UA 2:430,9). Here, however *rāja* does not mean "king" since the Mallas (like the Sakyas) were a tribal confederation, not a kingdom (like Magadha or Kosala). *Rāja* here refers to a kshatriya noble, especially of the ruling class. In short, Dabba was from a noble Malla family.

2.1.2 Renunciation

2.1.2.1 The 7-year-old Dabba saw the Buddha when the latter was visiting in Malla country, and Dabba asked his grandmother (his mother having died at his birth) [2.1.1.2] if he might join the sangha under the Buddha. She brought him to the Buddha, who seeing his spiritual potential (*upanissaya*) for the undertaking, gave him permission to go forth. Dabba returned with the Buddha to **Rājagaha** where Dabba was ordained.

2.1.2.2 As a result of the Buddha's exhortation to Dabba on the occasion of his going forth, the 3 states of existence (*bhava-t,taya*) presented themselves as if ablaze.[25] Established in insight, even while still in the tonsure-hall, he attained **arhathood**.[26] **The Aṅguttara Commentary** details that Dabba was established in fruition of streamwinning with the falling of the first lock of hair, in the fruit of once-returning with the second, in the fruition of nonreturning with the third. And in the fruition of arhathood by the time the rest of his hair had been shaven (A 1:274 f).

2.1.2.3 Upon reaching arhathood, the 7-year-old arhat, Dabba, attained all the qualities of **a disciple** (*sāvaka*), that is, the 3 knowledges,[27] the 4 analytic insights,[28] the 6 superknowledges,[29] the 9 supramundane states,[30] and so on. Having attained all that, he became one of **the 80 great disciples** (ThaA 3:205).[31]

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[24] NmA 1:413,24 (*āthabbaṇ'iddhikā kira sattāhaṁ aloṇikaṁ bhuñjitvā **dabbe** attharitvā pathaviyaṁ sayamānā tapaṁ caritvā*) = DhsA 92,8 f (Be Se *dabbe*; Ce Ee *dabbhe*).

[25] On *bhavattaya* as Māra's range, cf UA 321,27-39).

[26] UA 430,8-20.

[27] **The 3 knowledges** (*te,vijjā* or *ti,vijjā*) are those of: (1) recollecting one's own past lives, (2) recollecting of the past lives of others, and (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes (sense-desire, existence, views, ignorance). See **Te,vijja S** (D 13) @ SD 1.8 (2.2.2); **Cūḷa Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 27,23-25), SD 40.5. As nos. 7-9 of the Buddha's 10 powers (*dasa,bala*): **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,17-19), SD 49.1 = 2.24 (abr).

[28] **The 4 analytic insights** (*catasso paṭisambhidā*) are those of: (1) meanings, (2) teachings, (3) language, and (4) ready wit. See SD 28.4 (4); SD 41.6 (2.2); SD 58.1 (5.4.2.13).

[29] **The 6 superknowledges** (*cha ābhiññā*) are those of: (1) psychic powers, (2) clairaudience, (3) mind-reading, (4) retrocognition, (5) clairvoyance, and (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes. See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,89-99), SD 8.10; **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5).

[30] **The 9 supermundane states** (*nava lok'uttara,dhammā*) are the 4 paths (magga) of streamwinning, once-returning, nonreturning and arhathood, + their 4 respective fruitions (*phala*), + nirvana: SD 15.9 (2.0); SD 54.2b (1.2.0.3).

[31] Ie, the 80 great elders (*āsīti mahā,thera*), see SD 15.10a (7); SD 55.11 (3.4.2.2).

For this was said by the venerable elder:

"Arhathood has been realized by me even years after my birth. Whatever is to be reached by a disciple, all that has been reached by me."[32]

2.1.3 Dabba's glowing finger

Even as an arhat, Dabba wished to be of service to the sangha. With the Buddha's permission, Dabba took upon himself the task of appointing night-lodgings to travelling monks and of assigning them their meals. He performed his duties most diligently and with great skill; his fame spread far and wide.[33]

Monks coming from afar, wishing to witness his skill, would deliberately arrive late and ask for lodgings in some place remote from Rājagaha. Dabba would walk ahead of them, with his **finger radiating light** to show them the way. In due course, he was declared the foremost of monks who assign lodgings (*senāsana,paññāpakānaṃ*, A 1:24).[34]

It was the sight of Dabba on one of his residence-assigning journeys which led to **Puṇṇā**, a slave-woman of Rājagaha, meeting the Buddha. She made a simple offering of a rice-flour cake baked over a fire, which the Buddha accepted. Upon hearing the Buddha's admonitions, she became a streamwinner.[35]

2.2 Accusations against Dabba

2.2.1 Mettiya,bhummajakā

Dabba's enthusiasm and meticulousness in his service to others made him famous and popular. This must have made some unawakened monks jealous. It once happened that meals were allotted by Dabba to **the Mettiya-Bhummajakā** (a group of 6 monks, followers of Mettiya and Bhummajakā) at the house of a rich man, who, discovering their identity, gave orders that they were to be fed without care. The Mettiya-Bhummajakā were greatly offended, and thinking (wrongly) that Dabba had intended to slight them, had one of their members, the nun Mettiyā, to falsely accuse Dabba of having seduced her. The charge was investigated, Mettiyā was expelled, and Dabba's fame increased.[36]

2.2.2 Other accusations

The Mettiya-Bhummajakā persuaded the Licchavi, **Vaḍḍha**, to make a similar charge against Dabba regarding his wife[37] (V 2:124 f). **The Taṇḍula,nāli Jātaka** (J 5/1:123 f) mentions another dispute, where the boastful monk, **Lāḷudāyī**, charges Dabba with not performing his duties conscientiously. Thereupon Lāludāyi was appointed to the task but he proved a failure.

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[32] V 3:158; UA 431,24-26.

[33] For details on Dabba's renunciation, see UA 430 (tr UA:M 1063).

[34] **A glowing finger** familiarly appears on an alien being[34] in the 1982 American science fiction film, "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial," produced and directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Melissa Mathison. It tells the story of Elliott, a boy who befriends an alien being he names "E.T." who has been stranded on Earth. Along with his friends and family, Elliott must find a way to help E.T. find his way home. In the movie, ET has incredible powers: Telekinesis and telepathy, not to mention his iconic glowing finger which heals all things including wounds and dying plants.

[35] DhA 17.6/3:321-325; **Kuṇḍaka,kucchi,sindhava,potaka J** (J 254/2:287-291) was related in her connection: even in a past life, she made a similar offering to the bodhisattva.

[36] Tha 5; V 2:74-80 (Cv 4.1-11) ≈ 3:158-163 (Saṅgh 8) + 166-168 (Saṅgh 9); V 4:37 f; VA 3:598 f; ApA 505.

[37] Cv 5.20 (V 2:124-127). The sangha inverted the almsbowl (*patta,nikkujjana*) or boycotted the Licchavī Vaḍḍha for making a false accusation against Dabba (which means Vaḍḍha was deprived of an opportunity for making merit). This canonical precedent was used in Sep 1990 by the Burmese sangha against the leaders of the armed forces for their atrocities. [Trinity] [HumanRights] 5 Feb 2025.

2.2.3 Dabba's past karma

2.2.3.1 In the time of **Vipassī Buddha** (the 19th of the 24 past buddhas), Dabba made false accusation against an arhat elder; hence, the conspiracy against Dabba by the Mettiya,bhummajakā.[38]

In the time of **Kassapa Buddha** (the buddha before Gotama) Dabba, with 6 others, went up to a hill-top, determined not to leave until they had accomplished their purpose. The assembly leader attained arhathood, and another nonreturning—both were unnamed. The remaining 5 of them died before this came to pass. These 5 were Pukkusāti, Kumāra Kassapa, Bāhiya Dāru,ciriya, Dabba Malla,putta and Sabhiya.[39]

2.2.3.2 In the time of **Padum'uttara Buddha** (the 10th of the 24 past buddhas), Dabba was a seth's son in Haṁsa,vatī. It was then that he **aspired** [2.2.3.3] to be a disciple (*sāvaka*), one who is foremost of monks who assign lodgings.[40]

For 103 times he became king among *devas* and 105 times king of humans.[41]

3 Dabba's parinirvana

3.1 Dabba's age at his parinirvana

The suttas do not tell us Dabba's age when he died; apparently, he entered parinirvana quite young. **The Udāna** (U 8.9; UA 431 f) contains accounts of his passing [1].

One day, returning from his almsrounds in Rājagaha, he realized that he had but a short while yet to live. He approached the Buddha and, with his leave, showed various psychic powers and passed away by way of self-cremation. [2.1.1.1]

3.2 Dabba's reason for attaining parinirvana

3.2.1 The reason for Dabba's parinirvana

Dhammapāla, the Udana Commentator, was diligent in informing us the real reason for Dabba's parinirvana.

> "**Now is the time for my final nirvana**" (*parinibbāna,kālo me ti*), should be understood as follows (*dasseti*):
>
> "Blessed One, the time for my final nirvana without remnant of substrate has presented itself. I wish to attain parinirvana, once I have informed the Blessed One of this."
>
> Some however say that the elder (*thera*)[42] asked for leave from the Teacher for the sake of attaining parinirvana, despite the fact that he was neither aged nor sick, with this reason: that he begged leave of the Teacher after coming to the conclusion."
>
> 'The monks Mettiya and Bhummajaka previously charged me with a defeat (*pārājika*) offence that was groundless. Yet they would still curse me even though the case has been settled. Whilst other worldlings, believing them, treat me with irreverence and contempt.
>
> Why should I be hauling this useless burden of suffering? Thus, I should attain parinirvana right now.'

[38] ApA 504,19-23.
[39] DhA 2:212; UA 81; VA 2:578 f; ThaA 1:44 Jātaka (Ap quote); Ap 2:471 f (ApA 504,31-505,3).
[40] ApA 504,10-19, 505,9-506,8.
[41] Ap 531,15*/471 + 16*/472.
[42] Although young, he was firmly established (*thira*) in path and nirvana.

But this is without basis. (*Taṁ akāraṇaṁ*)

For those in whom the influxes have been destroyed do not, so long as their life-formations are not fully exhausted, set their hearts on parinirvana, apply and exert themselves for the sake of it, for fear or blame and so on from others. Nor do they remain long for the sake of applause and so forth from others.

Rather they await the full exhaustion of their own life-formations solely as a result of their functioning of which it is said:

I delight not in death, nor do I delight in life; I shall cast aside this body fully aware and mindful.
I delight not in death, nor do I delight in life; but I await my time as a servant his wages.
(**Sāriputta Tha**, Tha 1002 f)[43]

The Blessed One, having surveyed Dabba's life-formations and come to know of their complete exhaustion, said:

"Dabba, now is the time you may consider (doing what is right)." [U 8.9,4]
(UA 431,18-432,6)

3.2.2 Description of Dabba's Parinirvana

3.2.2.1 The elder Dabba, having saluted the Buddha, circumambulated (rightwise) him thrice; then, standing at one side, said:

"Having lived 100,000 aeons with you, Blessed One, doing meritorious deeds in various places with you, I acted in connection with this goal alone. That very same goal has today reached its climax—this is your last sight of me."

To some amongst those who were worldling monks or streamwinners and once-returners, there arose great compassion; some others ended up weeping. (UA 432,13-20)

3.2.2.2 Then the Blessed One, having discerned the course of Dabba's mind, said,

"In that case, Dabba, display psychic wonders to me and the sangha of monks."

When the whole sangha had assembled, Dabba displayed all the wonders, common to all the disciples, that is to say, "Having been one, he becomes many," and so on.[44]

At the end of the psychic display, Dabba once more went before the Buddha and saluted him.

Then, having seated himself cross-legged in meditation, Dabba rose into the sky. Creating the earth kasina, he remained there in the sky.

Having attained the heat element (*tejo,dhātuṁ samāpajjitvā*), Dabba then reached the attainment of the 4th dhyana in the fire kasina.[45] Then, emerging from the fire kasina, Dabba adverted to his own body, and resolved that the fire element would consume it, and thus entered parinirvana.[46]

Following that resolution, Dabba's whole body blazed up. And through that power of resolution, that fire—like the fire ushering in the end of world-period—instantaneously cremated whatever had

[43] Only Tha 1003 is qu in UA here. Elsewhere, these are well quoted verses. Tha 1002 = 607; 1003 = 606, qu at SA 1:126 (on S 1:126) &UA 432 (on U 8.9); Tha 606 f qu at Miln 45 & DA 810 (with a variation). Cf Tha 20, 196 & Manu 6.45. See also **Chann'ovāda S** (M 144) @ SD 11.12 (7.4); SD 39.3 (1.4.4).

[44] Traditionally, there are 8 types of psychic wonders: (1) multi-transformation, (2) dematerialization, (3) moving through solids, (4) earth-diving, (5) walking on water, (6) levitation, and (7) touching the sun, and (8) astral travel. They are fully listed in, eg, **D 2**,1:87-98 (SD 8.10); **D 11**,4-5/1:215 (SD 1.7).

[45] Vism says that Dabba first gets into **the earth kasina** to project the earth element so that he is able to remain midair (*paṭhavī,kasiṇe pana paṭhamaṁ jhānaṁ samāpajjitvā*) (Vism374).

[46] Apparently, this process occurs at the "subconscious" of the life-continuum (*bhav'aṅga*)

taken formation, even the size of an atom, without leaving anything remnant, not even mere soot, thus extinguishing itself.[47] (UA 432)

3.2.2.3 The Udāna Commentary goes on explicating a note of **apologetics**:

Why did the elder perform a display of psychic wonders, that is said to be a show of superhuman state (*uttari,manussa,dhamma*)? Had not such a performance been rejected by the Buddha?[48]

This question should not be raised since it was a display of psychic wonders before the sangha, not before the laity, which is prohibited.[49] It was not a self-willed display of mere psychic transformations.[50] Moreover, the elder only displayed the psychic wonder upon being instructed by the Buddha himself.

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SD 62.12a Paṭhama Dabba Sutta

The First Dabba Discourse

Theme: Dabba's parinirvana

U 8.9

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying at the squirrels' feeding ground in the bamboo grove at Rājagaha.

2 Then the venerable[51] **Dabba Malla,putta** approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One and saluted the Blessed One, he sat down at one side.

3 As he sat at one side, the venerable Dabba Malla,putta said this to the Blessed One:

"Now is the time for my final nirvana (*parinibbāṇa*),[52] sugata [happy one]."

4 "Dabba, now is the time for what you think (is the right thing to do)."[53]

5 Then, the venerable Dabba Malla,putta having risen from his seat, saluted and then circumambulated the Blessed One (sunwise).

Then the venerable Dabba Malla,putta rose up into the air, and sitting cross-legged in the sky,[54] entered the fire-element, and emerging, attained final nirvana.[55]

6 And as the venerable Dabba Malla,putta's body was burning and blazing away, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen.[56]

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[47] On the Buddha's own display of the "twin wonder" (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*)—the simultaneous display of the fire and water elements, see Pm 594 f/1:125; UA 1:141 f,

[48] See **Miracles**, SD 27.5a (7.2). On arhats without psychic powers, see **(Arahatta) Susīma S** (S 12.70), SD 15.8.

[49] V 2:112; esp VA 1203.

[50] *Tañ ca kho vikubbana,vasena, na pan'evaxm adhiṭṭhāna,vaseva* (UA 433,10 f).

[51] "The venerable," *āyasmā,* is not a status-marker, but "a loving appellation" (*piya,vacanaṁ,* UA 2:8).

[52] *Parinibbāna* (Skt *parinirvāṇa*), anglicized as "parinirvana."

[53] *Yassa'dāni tvaṁ dabba kālaṁ maññasi.* This is stock; see essay **SD 60.7**; **D 2,**103 n (SD 8.10); SD 60.6 (3.3.1).

[54] *Atha kho āyasmato dabbassa malla,puttassa vehāsaṁ abbhuggantvā ākāse antalikkhe pallaṅkena nisīditvā*.

[55] *Tejo,dhātuṁ samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhahitvā parinibbutassa*.

[56] *Sarīrassa jhāyamānassa ḍayhamānassa n'eva chārikā paññāyittha na masi.*

7 Just as butter or oil burning and blazing, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen,
so too *the venerable Dabba Malla,putta rose up into the air, and sitting cross-legged in the sky, entered the fire-element, and emerging, attained final nirvana*.
And as the venerable Dabba Malla,putta's body was burning and blazing away, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen.

8 Then the Blessed One, understanding the significance of this, at that very moment, uttered this udāna:

9 *abhedi kāyo nirodhi saññā* The body has broken up, perception ceased;
vedanā sīti,bhaviṁsu[57] *sabbā* all feelings have been cooled;

vūpasamiṁsu saṅkhārā formations have been stilled;
viññāṇaṁ atthamāgamā ti consciousness has come to an end.[58]

—evaṁ—

SD 62.12b (Udāna) Dabba Sutta 2

The (Udāna) Second Dabba Discourse

Theme: The Buddha announces Dabba's parinirvana
U 8.10

1 Thus have I heard.
At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's monastery in Jeta's grove.
2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks:
"Bhikshus."
"Bhadante," the monks replied to the Blessed One.

3 The Blessed One said this:
"Bhikshus, when the venerable Dabba Malla,putta rose up into the air, and sitting cross-legged in the sky,[59]
entered the fire-element, and emerging, attained final nirvana;[60]
4 and as the venerable Dabba Malla,putta's body was burning and blazing away, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen.
5 Just as butter or oil burning and blazing, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen,
so too *the venerable Dabba Malla,putta rose up into the air, and sitting cross-legged in the sky, entered the fire-element, and emerging, attained final nirvana*.
And as the venerable Dabba Malla,putta's body was burning and blazing away, neither ash nor soot was there to be seen."

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[57] Se Be Ce; Ee *pi 'tidahaṁsu;* Se *pītidahaṁsu*; Ka *sītidahiṁsu* (Ka)
[58] "The body" (form), perception, feelings, formations and consciousness are the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*): SD 17.
[59] On Ānanda and Bakkula, see (2.1.1.1).
[60] *Tejo,dhātuṁ samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhahitvā parinibbutassa*.

6 Then the Blessed One, understanding the significance of this, at that very moment, uttered this udana:

7	*ayo,ghana,hatass'eva* *jalato jāta,vedaso*[61] *anupubbûpasantassa* *yathā na ñāyate gati*	Just as when iron is struck, though the fire continues to blaze, (the iron's) gradually fading glow— it's not known where the glow has gone—
8	*evaṁ sammā,vimuttānaṁ* *kāma,bandh'ogha,tārinaṁ* *paññāpetuṁ gati n'atthi* *pattānaṁ acalaṁ sukhan ti*	even so, for those fully purified, who have crossed over the floods of pleasures' bonds, no rebirth-destiny exists— they have attained unshakeable joy.

—evaṁ—

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[61] *Dabbassa bhikkhave malla,puttassa vehāsaṁ abbhuggantvā ākāse antalikkhe pallaṅkena nisīditvā.*

SD 62.13 (Iti) Desanā Sutta

The (Iti,vuttaka) Discourse on Teaching

It 39/**2.2.2**/33 f
Theme: The 2 steps for overcoming evil
Translated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2025

1 Sutta summary

The (Iti) Desanā Sutta (It 2.2.2) records a brief teaching on knowing evil and fully rejecting it.

2 Meaning of *pariyāya*

2.1 MEANINGS AND USES OF *PARIYĀYA* IN THE SUTTAS

2.1.1 Mūla,pariyāya Sutta (M 1)

The term ***pariyāya***, as used in the suttas,[1] has these 3 basic senses:

(1) exposition or teaching (*desanā*), (2) cause (*karaṇa*), and (3) occasion, time or turn (*vāra*).

In **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), *pariyāya,* such as in the phrase, *sabba,dhamma,mūla,pariyāya*, "the exposition on the root of all things," which is the Sutta's full title (MA 1:16 f), refers to the special condition that maintains the continuity of the process of cyclic existence (that is, craving, conceit and views).[2]

Ñāṇamoli's *Pali-English Glossary* (1994:71) gives ***pariyāya*** the following definitions:

(1) metaphor, figure of speech (grammatical); [1994:132]
(2) manner, way, method;
(3) presentation, discourse [MA 1:18, 89];
(4) *p[accatta],vacana* [nominative case]—as paraphrased in **the Khuddaka,pāṭha Commentary**.[3]

This list seems not to include the 3 senses of *pariyāya* as defined in the Commentaries, though we may include "teaching" in (3). Hence, we may add the remaining two commentarial senses as (5) cause or reason, and (6) turn. There are probably other senses which we need to explore and list, but we will properly do this in a separate study: ***Pariyāya nippariyāya*** (SD 68.2).

2.1.2 Three senses of *pariyāya*

2.1.2.1 The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1) opens with the wanderer Suppiya speaking "In many ways" (*aneka,pariyāyena*) (D 2,21-23) in dispraise of the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha, while his pupil, Brahma,datta, speaks "in many ways" in praise of the 3 jewels.[4] (D 2,23-3,3)

The Sutta Commentary explains that the term, ***pariyāya,*** is used in 3 senses in the suttas, that is, in the sense of "teaching" (*desanā*), of "reason" (*kāraṇa*), and "turn" (*vāra*). In the Sutta, *pariyāya* is used in the sense of "reason." Thus, *aneka,pariyāyena* means "for many reasons." (DA 1:36,21 f)

[1] See DA 36; MA 1:18.
[2] See M 1,2 nn (SD 11.6).
[3] KhpA 16.
[4] D 1,2/2 f.

2.1.2.2 Similarly, **the Iti,vuttaka Commentary** (UA 151 f) gives the term pariyaya as being used in these different contexts in the suttas, that is, as "teaching" (*desanā*), as "reason" (*kārana*) and as "turn" (*vāra*). The following examples are quoted:

(1) The simplest meaning of *pariyāya* is "**teaching or discourse**," as in "the teaching of the honey-ball" (*madhu,piṇḍika pariyāya*), that is, **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18)[5] and so on.

(2) *Pariyāya* has the sense of "**reason**," as stated in **the Verañjā Sutta** (A 8.11): "There is, indeed, this reason (*pariyāya*). By means of which reason (*pariyāyena*) one may, speaking rightly, say of me: 'The recluse Gotama professes non-action'," [6] and so forth.

(3) *Pariyāya* has the sense of "**turn,**" as in "Now, whose turn (*pariyāya*) is it today, Ānanda, to exhort the nuns?" as the Buddha asks Ānanda in **the Nandak'ovāda Sutta** (M 146),[7] and so on.

2.2 *PARIYĀYA* IN (ITI) DESANĀ SUTTA (IT 2.2.2)

2.2.1 Two senses of *pariyāya* in It 2.2.2 (ItA 151 f)

2.2.1.1 In **the (Iti) Desanā Sutta** (It 2.2.2), *pariyāya* is used in 2 senses, that is, in the sense of "a turn," that is, a series, and in the sense of "(for) a reason." Thus it is said with these meanings in this connection: "**Bhikshus, there are two Dharma teachings of the tathagata**," either by way of a reason or else in turn (serially).

For the Blessed One, in teaching Dharma conforming with the disposition of those capable of being guided,[8] does so clearly distinguishing unwholesome states from wholesome states, classifying whether states are wholesome or unwholesome by way of "these states are wholesome; these states are unwholesome. These states are blameworthy; these states are blameless. These are to be indulged in; these are not to be indulged in," and so on. Then, he says: "You should see that which is evil as evil."[9]

2.2.1.2 At other times, the Buddha teaches Dharma urging them by way of being revulsed with evil (*pāpato nibbidā*) and so forth, the dangers of which are clarified in **the Sabba,lahusa Sutta** (A 8.40), thus:

> Bhikshus, **the killing of living beings**, resorted to, cultivated, often done,[10]
> brings about hell, the animal womb, the preta realm.[11]
> The lightest fruit of *the killing of living beings*,
> *for a human being*, conduces to a short life,[12] (and so on.)[13] (A 8.40,1/4:147,8-10), SD 6.5

[5] M 18/1:114 (SD 6.14).

[6] A 8.11/4:174.

[7] M 146,3/3:270 (SD 66.12).

[8] "Conforming … guided," *veneyy'ajjhāsayânurūpaṁ.*

[9] ItA 151 f.

[10] *Pāṇâtipāto bhikkhave āsevito bhāvito bahulī,kato.*

[11] This sentence: *Niraya,saṁvattaniko tiracchāna,yoni,saṁvattaniko, pitti,visaya,saṁvattaniko.* (A 8.40/4:247,8-10), SD 6.5 = ItA 1:152,8-10.

[12] This sentence: *Yo sabba,lahuso pāṇātipātossa vipāko manussa,bhūtassa app'āyuka saṁvattaniko hoti* (A 4:247,10 f). "Lightest," *sabba,lahusa* = *sabba,lahuka* (AA:Be+Se). Comy glosses as *parittaka,* "small."

[13] **A 8.40** goes on to say the same for each of the remaining precepts against wrong action, wrong speech, and the basis for wrong mindfulness, ie, against (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) false speech, (5) divisive speech, (6) harsh speech, (7) frivolous speech, and (8) taking intoxicants. (A 8.40, SD 6.5)

The Itivuttaka Commentary quotes the above passage, but it reads the second sentence as follows:

> "The lightest of all, the killing of living beings conduces to a short life" (*yo sabba,lahuso pāṇātipāto so app'āyuka,saṁvattaniko ti*),[14] omitting the phrase "the lightest karmic fruit … for a human being" (*vipāko manussa,bhūtassa*). (ItA 1:152,10-13)

The lemma (headword) in the Aṅguttara Commentary (on A 8.40) similarly omits the phrase, *vipāko manussa,bhūtassa,* reading only as *sabba,lahuso app'āyuka,saṁvattaniko ti.* The lemma is explained as follows:

> One comes to be short-lived through that deed's small fruition, perishing either as soon as there is rebirth-relinking, or else as soon as one emerges from the mother's womb. For that which is of such a form is the outcome of no other (deed); this is just the destiny taken by one who has killed living beings.[15] (AA 4:128,13-17)

Hence, we can see that, even in the absence of the phrase *vipāko manussa,bhūtassa,* this passage, the Itivuttaka Commentary and the lemma of the Anguttara Commentary all refer to the same karmic fruition of one who indulges in killing living beings.

The only difference in the two passages—from A 8.40 and the ItA passage quoting it—is that while in A 8.40 and its Commentary, *sabba,lahusa* qualifies *vipāka* (the fruition), the ItA quote qualifies *pāṇātipata* (the karma itself). Either way, the fact remains that the karma of killing brings upon its perpetrator a short life, since one has been depriving others of life.[16]

2.2.2 Revulsion towards evil

2.2.2.1 "**You should see evil as evil**" (*pāpaṁ pāpākato passatha*). You should see all evil states, both in the present conditions and in the future, as bringing in non-well-being and suffering; see it as wretched. These states bring suffering and hinder personal growth and spiritual progress even. And after that, it brings further rebirth, which repeats the whole cycle of suffering, without end. Hence, it is said: "**one should thereby be revulsed, dispassionate, fully freed.**"[17][§3]

2.2.2.2 The Dharma teaching is twofold here in the sense of "**exposition**" (*pariyāya*), that is, there is first the teaching (*desanā*): "See evil as evil." This insight is then followed up in turn (*pariyāyena*) by being "revulsed, dispassionate, fully freed." In other words, by seeing true reality, one is able to free oneself from suffering.

— — —

[14] ItA 1:152,8-10.

[15] ***Sabba,lahuso app'āyuka saṁvattaniko*** *ti tena parittakena kamma,vipākena app'āyuko hotri, dinna,mattāya vā paṭisandhiyā vilīyati mātu,kucchito mikkhanta.matte vā; evarūpo hi na aññena kassaci nissando pāṇātipātass' eva gata,maggo eso ti.* (AA 4:128,13-17)

[16] Peter Masefield (in his ItA tr) notes this but seems to think that the two passages have different senses, which is unwarranted (ItA:M 1:380 n2).

[17] For a detailed study, see ***Pariyāya nippariyāya***, SD 68.2.

(Iti) Desanā Sutta

The (Iti,vuttaka) Discourse on Teaching

It 2.2.2

1 This was indeed heard by me spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the arhat, thus have I heard:[18]

2 "Bhikshus, there are two Dharma teachings of the tathagata, arhat, fully self-awakened one that come into being in turn.[19]

What are the two?

3 **See evil as evil**[20]—this is the first Dharma teaching.

Having seen evil as evil, **one should thereby be revulsed, dispassionate, fully freed**[21]—this is the second Dharma teaching.

4 Bhikshus, there are two Dharma teachings of the tathagata, arhat, fully self-awakened one that has come into being in turn.

5 The Blessed One said this matter [meaning][22]; therein [of that matter] he says this**:**[23]

6	*Tathāgatassa buddhassa*		See the sequential word	*c*
	sabba,bhūtânukampino		of the Tathagata Buddha,	*a*
	pariyāya,vacanaṁ passa		the two teachings [dharmas] declared,	*d*
	dve ca dhammā pakāsitā.	**It 70**	out of compassion for all beings.	*b*
7	*Pāpakaṁ passatha c'etaṁ*[24]		See this evil (as it is),	
	tattha câpi virajjatha		and therein just let it go!	
	tato viratta,cittāse		Thereby let the mind be lust-free,	
	dukkhass'antaṁ karissathā ti.	**It 71**	and make an end of suffering.	

8 This matter, too, was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.

— evaṁ —

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[18] *Vuttaṁ h'etaṁ bhagavata, vuttam arahatā'ti me sutaṁ.* This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj'uttarā**: see SD 57.2 (1.2.2.3); SD 16.14 (1).

[19] "In turn" (*pariyāyena*). On the various uses and aspects of *pariyāya,* see ***Pariyāya nippariyāya***, SD 68.2.

[20] *Pāpaṁ pāpakato passatha.*

[21] *Tattha nibbindatha virajjatha vimuccatha.* Through revulsion (*nibbidā*) (the n of v *nibbindati,* pl *nibbindatha*), one *sees evil for what it is* and is revulsed with it; like a burnt child, one will never put one's hand into the fire again. Thus one frees oneself from lust (*virajjati*; pl *virajjatha*); this is called detachment from lust (*virāga*) or dispassion. This detachment brings full freedom (*vimutti*); one frees oneself (*vimuccati*; pl *vimuccatha*) from suffering. On **revulsion,** see ***Nibbidā,*** SD 20.1.

[22] *Attha* is polysemic: we can take "matter" as referring to the preceding, and "meaning" as given in the foll.

[23] *Etam atthaṁ bhagavā avoca, tatth'etam iti vuccati.* This may be seen thus: the former phrase refers to the teaching in meaning (*attha*) (true reality), reflecting the 1st 2 noble truths; the latter is its purpose (*attha*).

[24] Ee *so*; Ce Ee c'ekaṁ; Se *chekā.*

SD 62.14 (Iti) Aggi Sutta

The Iti,vuttaka Discourse on the Fires

Theme: The 3 unwholesome roots are fires to be extinguished

It 3.5.4

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2025

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUMMARY

1.1.1 Karmic fires

The (Iti) Aggi Sutta (It 3.5.4) explains the 3 unwholesome roots—*greed, hatred and delusion*—as fires. These fires consume beings, fettering them to subhuman states. In sutta terms, these are karmic fires, the fruition of unwholesome karma. These fires are extinguished by mental cultivation—which ends rebirth—that is, by freeing the mind from the limitations of the physical senses, and so attaining nirvana without residue.

1.1.2 Karmic fires reach even the heavens

The 3 fires are similarly but very briefly listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33):[1] "The 3 fires: the fire that is lust (*rag'aggi*), the fire that is hatred (*dos'aggi*), the fire that is delusion (*moh'aggi*)." They are explained in its commentary [1.2.2] as reaching out into even the heavens. Beings spend a sort of "karmic holiday" in the heavens, enjoying long periods of bliss and beauty, oblivious of the fires burning right below their realms. Ultimately, the weight of their unawakening will sink them into those fires.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF FIRE

1.2.1 Iti,vuttaka Commentary

According to the Sutta's commentary, the unwholesome roots [1.1] are like fire because they consume and torment (*anudahan'aṭṭhena*) beings.[2] These beings are driven to act and live by dominating and appropriating others, by hurting, alienating and destroying others, even their own kind, by blindly being caught in the rut of unwholesome actions and their fruits. (ItA 2:117,16-19)

1.2.2 Dīgha Commentary

1.2.2.1 The Dīgha Commentary (DA 3:994) on the Saṅgīti Sutta passage [1.1.2] explains "fire" (*aggi*) metaphorically in the same way as the Iti,vuttaka Commentary [1.1.1]. But DA adds significantly that even some gods in the celestial realms are "burned" by the karmic fires of unwholesome karma, such as in the cases of the Mano,padosikā devas [1.2.2.2] and the Khiḍḍa,padosikā devas [1.2.2.3].

Such gods, says **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1) commentary,[3] are "destroyed" (*vinassanti*) by their own actions. They are "defiled" (*padussanti*) (by karma)—this is the verb for *padosikā*. These names clearly refer to the karmic state of the gods—the gods of the sense-world, to be exact. That is to say, these gods are destroyed by their own unwholesome thoughts [1.2.2.2] or by their divine playfulness [1.2.2.3].In

[1] D 33,1.10 (32)/3:217.

[2] DA 3:994,20-33.

[3] DA 1:113,3-11.

short, these gods, like any beings, are destroyed by their own actions by the very fact that they exist and are unawakened.

1.2.2.2 The *mano,padosikā devā*—"gods defiled by mind"[4]—they are so called because they are tormented by hatred (*dosassa pana anudahanatāya **mano,padosikā** devā*).[5] When these gods' minds are defiled, they are "destroyed," that is, they die.[6] These gods clearly are those of the lowest of the heavens, that is **the Cātum,mahā,rājika**, the heaven of the 4 great kings.[7]

For example, a young god, wishing to join in a festival celebration, set out by chariot with his retinue. Another god, out on a walk, sees the first riding on the chariot ahead of him. Becoming angry (out of envy), he exclaims:

"That wretch! There he goes all puffed up with rapture to bursting point, as if he had never seen a festival before!"

Then the first god turns around and notices that the other god is angry—angry people are easy to notice. Seeing another angry in this manner easily makes one angry, too. He retorts:

"So you're angry: what business is it of yours? This fortune of mine is won on account of giving, moral virtue and so on, and not on your account!"

Now if one of them becomes angry, but the other does not, the latter prevents the former's destruction. But when both are angry, the anger of one adds on to the other's anger, and both will pass away, leaving their harems weeping. This is the nature of things.[8]

1.2.2.3 The second karmic category of gods are **the Khiḍḍa,padosikā deva**, "gods defiled by play."[9] These gods of the sense-world are tormented by delusion.[10] They fall (*cavati,* die) from their state due to their forgetting to take their food. It is said that these gods are so carried away frolicking and reveling in their great beauty and splendour that they become oblivious of whether they have taken their meals or not.

Missing even a single meal causes them to pass away immediately afterwards. Even when they do eat *after* that meal-time, it would not nourish them effectively enough; they would still pass away immediately afterwards.[11] This is because of the power of their karma-generated heat element (*kammaja,teja*) and the delicacy of their physical body (*karaja,kāya*).[12] In human beings, the karma-generated heat element is delicate but the physical body is strong. As such, humans can stay alive for even a week on warm water, clear gruel, and so on.

But in the case of these gods, the heat element is strong, but their body is delicate. They cannot survive if they miss even a single meal. A lotus placed on a hot rock at noon during the hot season would wilt by the evening, and even if one were to pour a hundred jars of water over it, it would still perish. In the same way, even though these devas eat and drink after missing a meal, they cannot survive; they pass away.

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[4] D 1,47 (SD 25.3).

[5] DA 3:994,30.

[6] Like the Khiḍḍā,padosika devas, mentioned only in 2 other suttas: in a list of gods in **Mahā Samaya S** (D 20/-2:260) & in a passage on the beginning of things in **Pāṭika S** (D 24/3:32 x2, 33).

[7] That is, the lowest of the sense-sphere heavens.

[8] DA 1:114,9-23.

[9] D 1,45 (SD 25.3).

[10] DA 3:30-32.

[11] *Moha,vasena hi tāsaṁ sati,sammoso hoti. Tasmā khiḍḍā,vasena āhāra,kālaṃ ativattitvā kālaṁ,karonti* (DA 3:994,30-33).

[12] VbhA 498.

The Old Commentaries do not say who these gods are. But according to Buddhaghosa, since it is said, "In the case of these gods, their heat element is strong, but their body is delicate," without any distinction, we can take it as referring to those gods sustained by material food in this manner. There was also the view that only **the Nimmāna,rati gods** (who delight in creating) and **the Para,nimmita,vasavatti gods** (who lord over others' creations) are meant.[13] (DA 1:113 f)

2 Metaphors and similes in Buddhism

2.1 Definition and uses of metaphors and similes

2.1.1 Metaphor and simile as psychospiritual tools

2.1.1.1 There are at least two helpful ways of talking about ourselves, others and our current state, our being and our becoming:

(1) by way of **metaphors**: by what they are, how they are, and where they are heading, and

(2) by way of **similes** by what they are like, what they can be, and what they must be.

Although this may sound like a literary exercise, my purpose is the application of these terms in personal growth, psychological change and spiritual transformation according to early Buddhism. The application of metaphors and similes in great literature and religious texts remains as instructive and as magical as ever.

I'm using the terms "metaphors" and "similes" in a non-technical manner to reflect change and transformation in our *personality, humanity and individuality* for good and awakening. We thus begin by seeing and accepting what we really **are**; then, what we **can** be and envisioning that; thus, we work and become **true individuals** (*sappurisa*). In a psychospiritual way—by means of mindful vision—we are then able to identify our *unwholesome* roots, transform them into *wholesome* roots, and we then embody and *become* that wholesomeness, thus becoming wise and free.

2.1.1.2 A **metaphor**, as used here, describes what we are, the way things are, and what they will be. Such a dynamic reflects our human state, one of change, seeing change and desiring change for the better. We are only *born* human with a mirror-like mind that tends to imitate and become what is reflected in it. Here we use the notion of "the 3 roots"—greed, hatred and delusion—with a broader emotional range as mental biases (*agati*), that is, as *greed, hatred, delusion and fear.*

To the ancient Indians, the 4 subhuman states of *the asura, animal, preta and hell-being* are **a mythology of being**. These ideas of existential states give meaning to the lives of those Indians, which were fraught with lack and pain. Such a meaning still well applies to us even today. Our purpose then is to transcend these unwholesome states by creating good karma. The foundation for such good karma is that of living morally good lives that respect life, property, freedom, truth and the mind (**the values** underlying each of the 5 precepts respectively).

2.1.1.3 In significant ways, the 4 subhuman states—*those of asura, animal, preta and hell-being*—can be seen as **metaphors** for the 4 biases in how we think and live our lives here and now. We *become* our biases. The subhuman states each embody one of the 4 biases as our *primary* negative emotion in these ways, but they are each otherwise driven by *all* the 3 unwholesome roots:

[13] That is, the gods of the two highest sense-sphere heavens.

	dominated by	**characterized by**
(1) the asura;	greed;	measuring, exploiting and appropriating;
(2) the hell-being;	hatred;	crowdedness, tribalism and violence;
(3) the preta;	delusion;	quests for wants, especially food, rooted in insatiability;
(4) the animal;	fear;	ignorance, and repetitive and predictable herd instincts.

(1) When we are filled with **greed**, lusting for things, running after them and appropriating them, we *become* **asuras** right here and now. In their greed, asuras lust for bodies, beings and things to be collected and exploited in terms of numbers, and to be discarded or ignored when this usefulness is gone. Asuras have no appreciation of being whatsoever; they only see or seek "things" by measuring them as "something" that affirms their asura state. They are those who tend to see others as "How much are you worth to me?" "I must get my money's worth from you no matter what." "You have no worth except when purposeful to me." And so on. Thus, they are not only *subhuman*; they are also nonhuman.

(2) Habituated by **hatred** we *become* **hell-beings**, driven to dominate, to exclude, to discriminate, and then to deprive and destroy those who are different from or disagree with us, regarding them by some unholy name, as "outsiders" or "others." Hell-beings live in crowds driven by violence, even against their own kind, and die by violence in no time. Their minds of violence imprison and trap them by desires for greater power and greater means of violence and destruction.

(3) **Delusion** dominates the minds of **pretas**, driving them on quests for pleasure and fulfilment. Upon obtaining what they see as desirable, these things simply turn into dirt and muck. Their insatiability enslaves them to a perpetual state of wanting and seeking, especially for food and sustenance. Hence, they tend to be collectors who are never satisfied with what they find. Unable to enjoy anything, they are caught in a Sisyphean quest for seemingly desirable objects.

(4) **Fear** arises due to survival instinct in reaction to any kinds of unfamiliar *sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches*—which characterizes **animals**. Animals' fear is rooted in utter ignorance of why they have fear. Hence, they tend to keep to repetitive routines, familiar pastures and the safety of the herd. Of all the subhuman states, theirs is probably the most short-lived, subject to being devoured by stronger and more cunning predators, even by the more powerful of their kind. Hence, they are driven to keep to their pack or group, seeking food, finding mates, raising the young, living by tooth and claw, and often dying prematurely.

2.1.1.4 Clearly, what we have stated above is neither a description of species nor an advocation of speciesism, but a typology of **existential being**, that is, of "existing" in the 4 subhuman states**.** These are metaphors for mental states that humans fall into when driven by any of the 4 biases (greed, hatred, delusion and fear), which can be briefly described as follows.

When we are **greedy** or lustful, never satisfied with what we have or what we are, unwilling and unable to restrain ourselves, that is, lacking any respect for self or others, driven only by taking things and having them—we fall into **the asura mind**. We become the asura, measuring others, exploiting them, collecting them, callous towards them; to us might is right, and nothing else matters.

When we are habitually **hateful** and often violent, we may have a human body but our mind is that of **the hell-being**. We have neither respect for life nor restraint in respect for others. While the asura is an adept in the notion of power and may resort to subterfuge, the hell-being is simply naïve and purblind, and who is habitually and reactively violent, lacking any insight or subtlety towards others.

Deluded by promises of pleasure and power, endlessly driven by images of what is desirable and consumable—this is **the preta mind**. Such a mind is *deluded* in seeing everything in black and white:

either we like it or dislike it. We seek to appropriate what we like, and reject what we dislike. Yet, upon obtaining anything, we at once see nothing in it. The preta is neither happy nor satisfied with anyone or anything, even with oneself. In modern terms, the preta is a chronic consumer driven by marketing and products; a loyal consumer who is beyond satisfaction.

When we lack understanding or wisdom, and lack the ability or will to learn, we are often shadowed by **fear** towards what is new, different or unfamiliar. Often then we tend to resort to hearsay, habit, superstition or instinct. When we live in fear in this way, we are likely to have **an animal mind**. We are driven by habits and routines, bowing and lowing to the herd for safety and succour. We are then exploited, conned and controlled by the crowd, by strangers after our wealth and resources. Moreover, we are chained to rituals and cycles of seeking food and sustenance. We see bodies as merely objects for loveless mating and pleasure, for routine play and rest; our life being but a preparation for its end.

2.1.1.5 These subhuman states are not merely people or beings but conditions and states that affect and drive us. As **asuras** we tend to become cynics who "know the price of everything and the value of nothing."[14] As **pretas** we seem to have everything but enjoy nothing. As **animals** we routinely seek things out of fear and want. As **hell-beings** we simply use force and violence for what we want whether these are beings and things.

In modern society, what we see as "cost of living crisis" is often what we have to pay in terms of our humanity. That crisis is a lessening or loss of our humanity that turns us into subhumans caught in an unhappy crowd of things and a crowdedness of inhuman busyness. The greatest *cost of living crisis* is the forgetting that we are human and being driven by our lower nature.

2.1.2 Purpose of similes

2.1.2.1 While a metaphor identifies what we are with a certain state (the Buddha is the "lion of man," *nara,sīha*), **a simile** is a comparison of a state to another highlighting their likeness in good or in bad, such as, *like* lotuses in a pond given in **the Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26):

Some lotuses are born and grow submerged in the water; some lotuses stand level with the water-surface, and some lotuses rise above the water and stand unsoiled by the water. These are respectively like beings *blinded* by dust in their eyes, beings with *little* dust in their eyes (ready to learn Dharma), and beings with *no dust* in their eyes (those on the path).[15]

When we are **blinded** by the dust of greed, hatred, delusion or fear, we will not see charity, love, wisdom or moral courage. When we accept the reality that we *are* blinded by any unwholesome bias, we are *encouraged* (inspire moral courage within ourself) to learn to see ourself as we really are. Then, we are buddha-like or arhat-like.

2.1.2.2 For this reason, it is vital that we do not disvalue or take lightly the nature of **buddhahood**. We are *not* Buddha merely by saying it or believing in some dogma or nodding to a wakeless quip; this may be conceit, even delusion. When we are not what we think we really are, we are truly blinded from seeing true reality. There is only one way we can become buddha, that is by aspiring before another buddha and working for that awakening.[16]

However, we can aspire even here and now to be **buddha-like**, which is the same as to be **arhat-like**. We constantly ask ourselves: What would the Buddha do here? What would an arhat do here? Then, we

[14] This is a quote from Oscar Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), used to describe a cynical person who understands monetary costs but is unable to grasp the intrinsic worth of people, objects, or principles.

[15] M 26,21 (SD 1.11).

[16] See **Aspiration to buddhahood and disciplehood**, SD 62.11.

emulate the Buddha or the arhat, such as keeping the being determined and diligent in keeping the precepts, even observing the uposatha regularly.[17]

As lay practitioners, we should at least keep to **the 5 precepts**, that is, make every effort to:

(1) respect life, harm none, and offer the joy of emotional security to those who need it;
(2) respect others' property, and show generosity for the happiness of others;
(3) respect the freedom of another's person and keep moral restraint with love;
(4) respect truth by practising right and timely speech (which is true, unifying, pleasant, useful); and
(5) respect the mind by keeping it intoxication-free, and calm, clear and ready for learning.

We do this mindfully, determined to be a better person, and out of love for others that they may be free from fear, want and harm, so that we can all live our lives as fully as possible.

2.1.3 A mind that frees

2.1.3.1 Metaphors and similes are mental tools that help us to see the *goodness* of certain states in ourselves or in others, and to cultivate them further to better ourselves, so that we directly know and see true reality. These tools empower us to see ourselves just as we are here and now, bad or good. Seeing the bad, we abandon it and cultivate the good; seeing the good, we further refine it into what is better to bring us true joy; joyfully and wisely, we cultivate moral virtue. Rejoicing in moral virtue, we calm and clear the mind. With this mirror-like mind we directly see true reality and grow in wisdom and freedom.

When we see ourselves as we really are, as **asuras**, we at once work to cleanse our minds and transmute our *greed and lust* with other-regard and generosity.

When we see ourselves as we really are, as **hell-beings**, we reflect on the pain and ugliness of *hatred.* We should see impermanence in all things. Everything before us changes whether we hate or we love it. When we hate, hate is in us; when we love and show kindness, we accept ourselves fully, too. Why not love, then, so that we can grow in joy and freedom?

When we see ourselves as we really are, as **pretas**, we will realize how deluded we were with *pleasure and power*. We live joyfully and mindfully in the wholesomeness of the present moment. We recall the Buddha's warning of the dangers of "gain, fame, praise" (*lābha,sakkāra,siloka*),[18] and live humbly with self-effacement.[19]

When we see ourselves as we really are, as **animals**, we see how we live in the shadow of *fear*, goaded and nose-led by the crowd of *hearsay, habit, superstition and instinct*. We seek the light of learning with zest. We fear not our lapses and mistakes since we respectfully review them so that our wisdom will grow. Even as we learn, we will teach others timely and compassionately; even as we teach, we will learn.

2.1.3.2 The human state is unique and advantageous in the sense that for humans, of all their faculties, the mind is the most prominent:

"They are humans because of the prominence of mind" (*manaso ussannatāya **manussā***).[20]

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[17] See eg **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.70), SD 4.18.

[18] M 1:192; S 2:229, 237; A 2:73, 3:343 f, 377; Vbh 352 f. They are a "splinter, precipice" (*papaṭā*), S 2:227.

[19] "Self-effacement" (*sallekha*) refers to diligence in removing any unwholesome state that arises in our mind: **Sallekha S** (M 8,12/1:42 f), SD 51.8.

[20] MA 2:37; KhpA 123; UA 140,16; ItA 1:128; NcA 69. See SD 62.11 (2.2.1.3).

This especially refers to our awareness that we are our minds, that "as we think so we are" (*mano,maya*), as laid down in the first two verses of **the Dhammapada**, thus:

> The mind precedes all mental states; the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
> when, with a defiled mind, one speaks or acts,
> suffering follows one like a wheel that dogs a draught ox's foot.[21] (Dh 1)
>
> The mind precedes all mental states; the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
> when, with a pure mind, one speaks or acts,
> happiness follows one like a shadow that leaves not.[22] (Dh 2)[23]

This does not mean that the mind is not prominent in other beings. Indeed, the mind works in the same way in any being: "As we think so we are." Amongst the suffering (subhuman) states, the mind is predominated by suffering due to some kind of lack:

- **asuras** lack *restraint, charity and love*; they are dominated by suffering due to greed and lust;
- **hell-beings** lack *love, compassion and joy*; they are dominated by suffering due to hatred and violence;
- **pretas** lack *giving, contentment and peace*; they are dominated by suffering due to delusion and ignorance.
- **animals** lack *learning, insight and wisdom*; they are dominated by suffering due to fear and darkness.

Due to the prominence of unwholesome mind amongst the subhumans, they are unable to work for spiritual awakening and freedom.

2.1.4 The mind that holds

2.1.4.1 The celestial beings, on the other hand, are dominated by their good karmic fruits, enjoying that which distracts them from spending time in spiritual development. **The sense-world devas** are dominated by celestial pleasures so that they usually become unmindful of mental cultivation. When the signs of their death arise, their negative reactions to such signs relegate them to be reborn in some lower states, even amongst the subhumans.[24]

2.1.4.2 The form-world brahmas inhabit 16 realms, divided into 4 dhyana-worlds, that is, those of the 1st, the 2nd, the 3rd and the 4th dhyanas. In place of a sense-based body, their form consists of pure radiant light. As conscious beings, they have only 2 senses: sight and hearing.[25] Compared to sense-world beings who depend on the 5 faculties to "sense" things, these brahmas are far more advanced sensually. Not only are they able to better sense what we bodily experience, but they do so with profound pleasure,

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[21] *Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā | manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhasati vā karoti vā | tato naṁ dukkham anveti cakkaṁ va vahato padaṁ.*

[22] *Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā | manasā ce pasannena bhasati vā karoti vā | tato naṁ sukham anveti chāyā va anāpayinī.*

[23] For further details, see SD 8.3 (3).

[24] The 5 omens that precede a sense-world deva's demise are: (1) his garlands wither, (2) his garments become soiled, (3) his armpits exude sweat, (4) his body gives off a foul smell, and (5) he delights not in his celestial seat. On the (*pubba,nimitta*); see **Pañca Pubba,nimitta S** (It 83), SD 23.8a(1.2).

[25] Except in the case of the non-percipient beings (*asaññā,satta*) of the 4th dhyana, who live in a suspended state of animation for 500 aeons. Once a thought arises in them, they fall from that state and are reborn elsewhere. See SD 23.14 (3.2.6).

if they need or want to, just by putting their minds to it. Without the physical senses, they have no sense-desires, and they have very long lifespans.[26]

2.1.4.3 The formless-world brahmas inhabit the highest of the 31 planes of existence. They have or need *only* consciousness, without any physical basis. Each of these 4 realms is successively subtler than the preceding one and longer-lived. They have no need of the physical senses because they constantly enjoy the profound bliss of the formless dhyanas. In other words, they are essentially beings in deep meditation, or those who enjoy the bliss arising from their formless attainment (*arūpa samāpatti*) (these high formless states are technically not called "dhyanas," *jhana*).[27]

2.2 THE HUMAN STATE

2.2.1 The minds that we are

2.2.1.1 For our purposes, we see the metaphors above as describing beings currently caught in the various subhuman states [2.1.1]. When we see such a subhuman state as a *metaphor,* we identify with it, reflecting how we *are losing or have lost our humanity* and have become such a subhuman being. Seeing and accepting our current condition as a vivid reality, we are better willing and able to rise above such an unwholesome state and return to **the human state**, especially by examining and understanding the nature of our own mind.[28] [2.1.2.2]

When we are overcome with greed and lust, we *are* **asuras**. We want to be buddha-like; we need to cultivate *moral restraint, charity and love*.

When we are burning with hatred and violence, we *are* **hell-beings**. We want to be buddha-like; we need to cultivate *love, compassion, and joy*.

When we are blinded by delusion and ignorance, we *are* **pretas**. We want to be buddha-like; we need to cultivate *giving, contentment and peace*.

When we are pursued by fear and darkness, we *are* **animals**. We want to be buddha-like; we need to cultivate *learning*, *insight and wisdom.*

2.2.1.2 Animals, in their natural state, are driven by the negative tendencies in the context of the psychology of the subhuman states. This "subhuman psychology" is about how the mind, despite our body, defines our real existential state. In other words, even humans can be caught in the rut of any of these subhuman states, depending on how humans live and think.

On the other hand, we have suttas and stories about how animals often have better qualities than humans. In **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51), for example, the elephant-trainer's son Pessa, rejoices in the Buddha's teaching of the 4 satipatthanas, and that he, too, and other lay followers practise it. Pessa declares that it is remarkable that the Buddha knew just how to teach mental cultivation to humans, who are so difficult to train.

As an elephant trainer, Pessa says that, from his own experience, animals, unlike humans, are much easier to train: "**Humans, bhante, are this tangle; and animals, bhante, are this open clearing!**" Humans are often messed up with their views, emotions, devices and cunning; whereas animals are more straight-forward, loyal and tamable.[29]

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[26] See **Early Buddhist cosmology**, SD 57.10 (6.1.2); see App for the 31 planes. For details on the individual categories of these beings (and others of the 31 planes), see Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos.* 2018: ch 3.

[27] See **Early Buddhist cosmology**, SD 57.10 (6.1.3).

[28] See "Man the minder," SD 57.10 (3.1.2).

[29] **Kandaraka S** (M 51,4.3/1:340), SD 32.9; also SD 62.15 (2.2).

2.2.1.3 Besides this sutta account, we have a number of **stories of animals**, who, on account of their encounter with the Buddha or the Dharma, are **reborn in heaven**, such as in the following accounts:[30]

The horse Kaṇṭhaka, on seeing his master Siddhattha renouncing, realizing that he would not see him again, died of a broken heart. He at once arose as the deva Kaṇṭhaka in Tāva,tiṁsa heaven.[31]

The bull elephant Pārileyya attended to the Buddha spending solitary retreat in Pārileyyaka forest during the 10th rains. When, at the end of the rains retreat, the Buddha left the forest, the elephant, unable to follow him, died broken-hearted and was reborn in Tāvatiṁsa heaven.[32]

Besides the elephant Parileyya, **a monkey**, too, attended to the Buddha during the 10th rains retreat. The monkey offered the Buddha a honeycomb which the Buddha accepted. Joyfully excited, the monkey scampered in the trees, but fell and was impaled on a sharp tree stump. He dies immediately and was reborn in Tāva,tiṁsa heaven. (DhA 1.5b/1:59 f)

The elephant Erāvana. Sakra, in his last human life was Māgha, who, with 33 other friends, spent their lives in public works (such as planting trees, digging wells, levelling roads, building rest-houses for travellers and so on). The king of Magadha gave his own elephant to Māgha to help him in his works. When the elephant died, he was reborn in Tāvatiṁsa as Sakra's elephant, Erāvana. (DhA 2.7/1:273 f; SnA 368 f)

A frog. While the Buddha was teaching on the shore of the Gaggarā lotus lake at Campā, a frog sitting at the edge of the crowd was fascinated by the Buddha's voice. A cowherd, standing nearby, leaning on his stick, accidentally pierced the frog, killing him instantly. The frog was reborn in Tāvatiṁsa with a 12-yojana wide celestial mansion. Learning of his good karma, the young frog-deva (*maṇḍūka deva,putta*) appeared before the Buddha to show him his gratitude.[33] Then, listening to the Dharma, the frog-deva attained streamwinning. (Vv 51/*852-*855/17; VvA 216-219; VA 121; Vism 208; SD 36.2 (5.1.1.4))[34]

Bats. A Commentarial story tells us that A cluster of 500 bats in a cave were captivated by the resonance of the voices of monks reciting the Abhidhamma texts. Upon dying, the bats were reborn in Tāvatiṁsa heaven. In their last birth, they were reborn as humans in our Buddha's time and became monks. (DhA 14.2/3:222 f; SD 26.1 (7.2))

2.2.2 The versatility of humanity

2.2.2.0 Our human state or humanity is defined, defended and developed by our living a moral life that abstains from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying and from unmindfulness. The human state is thus rooted in **the values** of *life, labour, love, light and mind.*

2.2.2.1 Life exists in all conscious beings, while existence refers to bodily change and adapting to external change, even with mere sense-consciousness, especially with that of touch. Consciousness involves the ability to learn, to recall and organize that learning so that one can cultivate or choose how to adapt to change, and to deal with challenges and crises, especially with death. Thus, life is of natural

[30] See also Piya Tan, "Animals go to heaven" (R68a, *Simple Joys* 1 2009: 16.1) R152 (11 Mar 2025). On the debate in other religions: https://thedogpress.com/Funny/All-Dogs-To-Heaven.asp. (Thanks Matt Jenkins for this link. 20 Sep 2025).

[31] Vv 7.7/81; VvA 311-319; J 1:65,22-29; BA 284,22-30; SD 52.1 (10.4).

[32] V 1:337-357; DhA 1.5/1:58 f; SD 6.1 (3).

[33] The 1st verse, Vv 852, is often qu in Comys: DA 961,1-3; MA 1:129,25-27, 2:124,24 f; AA 2:375,25-30; KhpA 114,10-14.

[34] The story is retold in **Saddhamma,saṅgaha** (JPTS 1890:80 f). A similar story is found in the Jain texts: W Schubring, *Die Lehre der Jainas,* Berlin, 1935:130. On E J Thomas' n (VvA:H 1974:102 n2).

value since we humans and sentient beings change and grow. Life is especially precious to humans since we use this life-learning to use our minds to transcend our bodily limitations.

2.2.2.2 Labour. Unlike the higher gods—especially those of the form world and the formless world—who do not have a physical body, humans do. On account of our human body, we need to keep it moving often enough and in some beneficial ways in order to stay healthy. Technically, we call this wholesome bodily movements "**exercise**." Even monastics exercise by daily walking, both on almsround, and whenever the body tires from long sitting in Dharma lessons or in meditation.

For beneficial change and growth, all beings with physical bodies—especially humans and animals—must **labour** for food and things they need for their health and happiness. This is the value of *having* that comes from their labour, meaning to work for things we need to support life. Hence, they have the right to *having* health and happiness, which should not be alienated or taken away from them—to do so is stealing, a karmic wrong.

2.2.2.3 Karma as "work or effort"—differentiates divine beings, humans and subhumans. Divine beings do not need to make much physical effort on account of the fact that their existence is that of pure minds or highly purified minds (nonetheless they are still unliberated). As a result of various good karma they have done, they have attained this divine mental existence. [2.1.4]

The brahmas of **the formless realms** (the 4 formless dhyanas), for example, are disembodied beings of *pure energy,* who exist in profound formless dhyanas; hence, they are, as a rule, invisible to others. They can, if they wish, assume some physical or palpable form visible to lower beings.[35]

The brahmas of **the form realms** (the 4 form dhyanas) have bodies of *pure light*; hence, they are beautifully radiant beings. These beings (including those of the formless world) have superpowered senses of sight and hearing. They have no need for the senses of *smell, taste or touch* since with their mental powers they can conjure any of these sensings to their liking. The gods of the form world often have great heavenly hosts each lorded over by their own Mahā Brahmā ("high god"), the most powerful amongst their respective hosts.[36]

The devas of the sense-world have bodies of highly refined matter with which they are able to exercise much greater powers and dexterity than humans do with their feeble physical frames. Like brahmas of the form-world, devas of the sense-world, too, can assume a physical form visible to humans and other beings.[37]

Yet, despite the feeble frames of their bodies, humans are capable of cultivating their minds to attain great powers for bad as well as for good. In terms of **good**, the human mind is ideal for labouring in quest of awakening by freeing their minds from sense-based defilements and wrong views. Hence, buddhas arise in the human world.[38]

2.2.2.4 Love (*mettā*) begins with seeing meaning in one's life that is bigger than oneself; thus, its purpose is to include more of others so that they too are able to grow in joy and freedom in true fellowship.

Love is the full respect for one's own body and mind, keeping them healthy. Love is that same respect one shows others for their bodies and minds. Love is a joyful acceptance of "no" just as we rejoice in being embraced by others.

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[35] On the formless realms, see SD 62.11 (2.3.17). On the "stations of consciousness" of the form and formless gods, see SD 57.24 (2.2.1).

[36] On the form-world realms, see SD 62.11 (2.3.16).

[37] On the sense-world devas, see SD 62.11 (2.3.14.3).

[38] On the human state as the 1st of 8 preconditions for Buddhahood, see SD 62.11 (2.2.1).

Love is the unconditional acceptance of oneself, joyfully able and willing to learn from one's own errors and grow with experience. Love is the unconditional embrace of others, inspiring them to learn from their lapses and grow with such learning.

2.2.2.5 Light is the vision of goodness in others, and in their ability to learn and free themselves from the unwholesome by their own effort. Light is the wholesome truth that inspires us with our own effort to do good, be good, give good so that we can free our *humanity* to become divinity even here and now, with *love, ruth,*[39] *joy and peace*.

2.2.2.6 The mind, when cultivated wholesomely, makes us human; when our mind is unwholesome, we lose our humanity and fall into subhuman states. We cultivate the human body with moral virtue, seeing others as we see ourselves; we cultivate our mind to free itself beyond our sense-based world, and realize the full reality of the liberated mind, nirvana.

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(Iti) Aggi Sutta

The (Iti,vuttaka) Discourse the Fires

It 3.5.4

1 This was indeed heard by me spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat.[40]

2 There are these 3 fires, bhikshus. What are the three?

(1) The fire of lust,	*rāg'aggi*
(2) the fire of hatred,	*dos'aggo*
(3) the fire of delusion.	*moh'aggi*

These, bhikshus, are the 3 fires.

3	*rāg'aggi dahati macce*	The fire of lust burns mortals;
	ratte kāmesu mucchite	drenched in pleasures they are made foolish.
	dos'aggi pana vyāpanne	The fire of hatred, moreover, burns
	nare pāṇātipātino	people who kill living beings.
4	*moh'aggi pana sammūḷhe*	The fire of delusion burns the muddle-minded,
	ariya,dhamme akovide	those unskilled in the noble teachings.
	ete aggī ajānantā	These fires (consume) the ignorant
	sakkāyā,bhiratā pajā	folks who delight in identifying with their body.
5	*te vuḍḍhayanti nirayaṁ*	They (the ignorant) swell the hells,
	tiracchānañ ca yoniyo	the wombs of beasts,

[39] "Ruth" is a good old early Middle English word for "compassion" which should be resurrected. See SD 60.2 (5.4.2.2).

[40] *Vuttaṁ h'etaṁ bhagavata, vuttam arahatā'ti me sutaṁ.* This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj'uttarā**: see SD 57.26 (1.2.2.3): see SD 16.14 (1).

	asuraṁ petti,visayaṁ *amuttā māra,bandhanā*	the asuras, and the preta realm— they are not freed from Māra's bonds.	
6	*ye ca rattin,divā yuttā* *sammā,sambuddha,sāsane* *te nibbāpenti rāg'aggiṁ* *niccaṁ asubha,saññino*	And they that are devoted night and day to the fully self-awakened one's teaching, they put out the fire of lust by constantly perceiving the body's impurity.	
7	*dos'aggiṁ pana mettāya* *nibbāpenti nar'uttamā.* *moh'aggiṁ pana paññāya* *yāyaṁ nibbedha,gāminī*	The superior person extinguishes hatred's fire with lovingkindness and delusion's fire with wisdom— this is how one goes to the path of penetrating truth.	*b* *a*
8	*te nibbāpetvā nipakā* *rattin,divam atanditā* *asesaṁ parinibbanti* *asesaṁ dukkham accaguṁ*	The prudent who untiringly, night and day, put out these (fires), they win nirvana without residue— they fully overcome suffering.	
9	*ariy'addasā*[41] *veda,guno* *samma-d-aññāya paṇḍitā* *jāti-k,khayam abhiññāya* *nâgacchanti puna-b,bhavan ti*	The knowledge-masters, seeing the noble truths, are wise through right knowing, by directly knowing the destruction of birth— they return not to be born again.	

10 This matter, too, was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.

— evaṁ —

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[41] *Ariy'addasā,* seeing or knowing the noble truths. Comy: "One is ***ariy'addasā*** on account of seeing noble ones, such as the Buddha and other noble ones, and (seeing) the 4 noble truths and nirvana that is remote from defilements" (*ariyaṁ nibbānaṁ ariyaṁ catu,saccam eva vā diṭṭhavanto,* ItA 2:119,20-22).

SD 62.15 (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta

The (Satipatthana) Discourse at Sālā

S 47.4

Theme: Even the saints practise satipatthana

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2010; 2025

1 Sutta summary and highlight

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta (S 47.4) records the Buddha as declaring the primary position of the 4 satipatthanas [2.1.5.1] in Buddhist practice, that is, they have been mastered by the arhats, they are being mastered by the path saints (the streamwinners, once-returners and nonreturners),[1] and should be properly cultivated by novice monks (*bhikkhu nava*), those new to the sangha.

1.2 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT

1.2.1 The Sutta's commentary notes that in the above Sutta context, both the novice monks and the arhats have cultivated the same preliminary parts of the 4 satipatthanas [2.1.0], while the 7 path saints (the streamwinner-to-be and the streamwinner-become, the once-returner-to-be and once-returner-become, the nonreturner-to-be and the nonreturner-become, and the arhat-to-be) have cultivated the rest of satipatthana.[2]

The meaning of this explanation is that beginners *start with* satipatthana just as where the arhats themselves have done. The other practitioners—the 7 kinds of path-saints (the stages in between)—practise the rest of satipatthana training to attain their meditative goal.

1.2.2 The Kandaraka Sutta (M 51,3) records the Buddha as mentioning that the arhats and the learners "dwell with their minds well established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)." Then, Pessa, the elephant-trainer's son, exults, declaring to the Buddha that there are also lay followers like himself who, from time to time, practise the 4 satipatthanas.[3] [2.2.1]

2 The 4 satipatthanas

2.1 DYNAMICS OF SATIPATTHANA

2.1.0 The 4 satipatthanas

Briefly, the 4 satipatthanas or "focuses of mindfulness" are as follows: [§4]

(1) contemplation of the body	*kāyânupassanā*;	body-based meditation;
(2) contemplation of feelings	*vedanā'nupassanā*;	feeling-based meditation;
(3) contemplation of mind	*cittânupassanā*;	mind-based meditation;
(4) contemplation of dharmas	*dhammânupassanā*;	reality-based meditation.

[1] On these first 2, see **Kandaraka S** (M 51,3), SD 32.9.

[2] *Imasmiṁ sutte navaka,bhikkhūhi c'eva khīṇ'āsavehi ca bhāvita,satipaṭṭhānā pubba,bhāgā, sattahi sekhehi bhāvitā missakā* (SA 3:200,6-8).

[3] M 51,4 (SD 32.9).

2.1.1 Body-based meditation

2.1.1.1 Satipatthana (***sati'paṭṭḥāna***) is the best known of early Buddhist meditation methods, since it is rooted in the breath meditation (*ānâpāna,sati*) used by the Buddha himself to gain awakening. Based on this key body-based practice, the Buddha developed a 4-stage system for "setting up mindfulness" (*sati-upaṭṭḥāna,* euphonically combined into *sati'paṭṭhāna*). It is popularly known as "focuses of mindfulness" since it is the best way for meditators, especially beginners and the unawakened, to effectively direct their mindfulness to the meditation object to develop samadhi or concentration.

Traditionally, every satipatthana practice begins with **breath meditation** because it is easy to do. Breath meditation quickly brings one some level of calm, even concentration or "unified mind" (*ekodi,-bhūta*), explained by the Commentaries as "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*) [§4(1) n]. This mental concentration can be said to be the first and basic goal of satipatthana that all meditators need to master. This is also called **mental unification**, or simply "concentration."

2.1.1.2 Meditation beginners will often be **distracted**, that is, their meditation will be intruded or disrupted by sense-experiences: *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or touches* (including the weather). In practical terms, Buddhist meditation, as a rule, develops with our understanding and management of these distractions. We only need to choose one such distraction (the most dominant one) to "note," that is, strategically acknowledge it with lovingkindness (with an inner smile), and then let go of that distraction and return to the breath.

Thus, we are only "distracted" when we try to "fight" off a distraction. Neither the senses nor the sense-objects distract us on their own. It is only when the mind is unhappily or deludedly lost with the sense-object that we are *distracted*, meaning that we are following the capricious sense-consciousness instead of settling into the stillness of the breath.

When we learn to "let come, let go" of a **sense-consciousness** as it arises, we have, as it were, "befriended" it and it will not distract us; we then at once bring the mind (attention) back to the breath. As a beginner, we need to master this skill in "letting come, letting go" or freeing the mind of any sense-consciousness so that our attention is better focused on the breath as a mental image (*nimitta*). Every time we bring the distracted mind back to the breath with lovingkindness (with a smile), we get better at freeing the mind from distractions.

2.1.1.3 As we become more naturally comfortable with managing and letting go of distractions, our mind will more easily concentrate and will do so in a sustained way. When the mind is fully unified in a sustained manner, it is called **concentration** (*samādhi*). This gives the mind a profound sense of calm and clarity. As we have mentioned, this is the basic goal of satipatthana practice. Even at this simple level of mental management, we will be able to function well with our daily activities and focus on our work and creativity. Bodily health, too, should be nurtured alongside proper diet, exercise, social interaction and rest.

2.1.2 Feeling-based meditation

2.1.2.1 Proper meditation as mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*), as a rule, begins with letting go of the 5 sense-faculties so that their respective sense-consciousnesses neither intrude nor interrupt the directing of the mind to the mind-object. "Letting go" of the senses does not mean stopping or ending them, since, so long as we live, our senses will function in our mental background. Thus, **letting go** properly means giving these senses enough peaceful space so that none of them fight for our attention, and we are not distracted from directing our mind to the meditation-object, the breath.

Sense-consciousness is the most common distraction for the untrained beginner in meditation. We are *distracted*—dissipating our mental energy and focus—because we are trying to attend to whatever sense-consciousness that arises when a sense-faculty meets a sense-object. This meeting between consciousness, faculty and object is called "**sense-contact**"—this is the perceptual triad from which sense-consciousness (of *sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch*) takes over the mind, preventing it from focusing on the breath, or disrupting that breath-based attention, preventing oneness of mind and breath.

2.1.2.2 Early in our meditation, we are likely to be confronted with **feelings** on two levels: the sensual (sense-based) and the mental (mind-based). In both cases, distraction arises in the form of **feelings** (*vedanā*) that captivate us as familiar or enticing memories (reconstructions of the past). We will first examine sense-based feelings, which usually arise first and are more manageable than *thought-based feelings* [2.1.3.2 (2)].

Sense-based feelings are "grosser" than mind-based ones, which are "subtle" (*sukhuma*). Sense-based feelings are gross (*oḷārika*) in the sense that they are each a sense-faculty (or sense-element, in Abhidhamma terms), all rooted in the mind (how we think). These feelings are the result of how the mind reacts through each of the senses.

For example, when we happen to *see* someone or something while meditating, experienced teachers will remind us to simply "**note**" it for what it really is, neither as a "thing" (a being, etc) nor as "something" (that seizes us in wonder or doubt). It is merely "seeing … seeing." This "noting" skill is vital (and easy) for a beginner to master; and the without which one will be easily distracted. Hence, it is imperative that we have a clear idea of the following noting skills and practise them whenever we can, thus:[4]

sight	*seeing* something externally;	there is only seeing:	"Seeing, seeing …"	(smile and let go);
sound	*hearing* something externally;	there is only hearing:	"Hearing hearing …"	(smile and let go);
smell	*smelling* something externally;	there is only smelling:	"Smelling, smelling …"	(smile and let go);
taste	*tasting* something externally;	there is only tasting:	"Tasting, tasting …"	(smile and let go);
touch	*feeling* something externally;	there is only feeling:[5]	"Feeling, feeling …"	(smile and let go).

2.1.2.3 By "**externally**" [2.1.2.2] is meant that these sense-experiences arise *through* the senses, stimulated by an *external* sense-object. When we "note" an experience just as it is, we keep it "objective"—as an external object—and leave it where it has arisen. Thus the sense-object arises and ceases all on its own: something simple and beautiful in itself. This is how we keep our meditation and mindfulness *simple and beautiful*.

On the other hand, when we are caught in the gravity of any sense-experience, we are "made to feel or know" (*vedeti*)[6] it as being more than it really is. We then "subjectify" that mere sense-experience by "internalizing" it. Based on our recall, or rather reconstruction, of the past,[7] we reshape that mere experience into something complicated, coloured and magnified by what we *like* or what we *dislike* in those memories. For example, when we see someone who resembles (in our mind) someone we hated in the past, we then feel *fear or hatred* in this projected vision. [3.2.2.2]

When we are unskillful towards such an *external* sense-experience, we then internalize it by projecting all kinds of ideas to that bare sense-object. We do this, often instinctively, by heaping negative or

[4] See eg **(Arahatta) Māluṅkya,putta S** (S 35.95), SD 5.9.

[5] We can also note it as: "Touching … " if this works better.

[6] *Vedeti,* "to cause (ourself) to know or feel," a causative verb form of *paṭisaṁvedeti,* "to feel, experience, undergo."

[7] Such projections can also be to the future, by way of some hope, wish or desire for something (material, non-material or mental).

unhappy remarks and notions onto this perception. Hence, our mind explodes into a "mindfull"[8] of unwholesome thoughts. This dangerous development is called "**thought proliferation**" (*papañca*). This reaction is best avoided immediately and totally before it develops into symptoms of mental ill-health.

2.1.3 Mind-based meditation

2.1.3.1 Even though we speak of "sense-based experiences" or simply, "sense-experiences," all such experiences are actually *conscious moments*. They are occasions of **sense-consciousness** (*viññāṇa*)[9] since they arise in the mind. The suttas remind us that they arise from the outside (*bahiddhā*),[10] and should not be internalized, especially during meditation. We need to understand this nature of the senses and the mind intuitively (in an experiential sense, more than just theoretically); we need to be very mindful when **sensing and thinking** arise during meditation.

Once we are able to sustain a good level of clear mindfulness, we should spend some peaceful time observing these 2 aspects of how the mind proliferates itself; that is, know and manage *the sense-based* and *feeling-based* aspects of the active mind. The benefit of such an exercise is that we get to clearly know what we need to manage during meditation so that we will gain full concentration. This exercise may be done directly with the mind-object here and now, or retrospectively as meditative review. In short, this is an exercise in **wise attention** (*yoniso manasikāra*).

2.1.3.2 These two exercises are interconnected, one exercise being the basis for the other. Let us, for example, look at a flower (such a natural object is easier to work with as a start):

(1) **On a sense-based level**, notice the flower's shape, colour/s and a few other characteristics as noticeable, ignoring other things around it. This flower arises as an image in our mind; it is a purely cognitive process, arising according to natural causes and conditions. We call it "flower," but we cannot isolate any part or feature of it that is in itself *the* flower. As we watch the flower, it moves somewhat or some features of it change, such as an insect may land on it, and so on. This is a series of images (say, of which we had taken a video or photos). Yet none of these images alone is *the* flower. All we can know is that it is *a* flower. Even more simply, we can just see it simply as "flower" (with neither "the" nor "a").

We should go on with this exercise until we notice a clear pattern of noticeable reality (some of which may be ineffable; we just know it but have difficulty describing it). Once we feel ready, try this exercise with something else, such as **a person**, simply as a cognitive experience without any emotional colour to it. In other words, delay the "feeling" aspect of our experience until the next level of observation (the feeling-based level).

We have perceived it as a flower or a person. It's just *perception*; it is just *seeing*.

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[8] Ironically, this negative n is the opposite of the positive adj "mindful." This is a rare occasion when a word is its own (close) opposite!

[9] Such sense-consciousnesses are part of the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-k,khandha*) and are of 11 kinds: "past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near," by way of the totality formula. See **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,27/1:138 n), SD 3.13.

[10] Although *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches* exist as external realities, independent of our sensing of them, in early Buddhist psychology, "**external**" qualifies the sense-object, while "**internal**" refers to the mind's own minding of the sense-objects. Also, the sense-faculties themselves are regarded as "internal" bases (*ajjhatt'āyatana*) and their objects are "external" bases (*bahiddhâyatana*).

(2) **On a feeling-based level**, look at the flower (the same one or a similar one) again.

"Do I like this flower? How do I feel when I like this flower?" "What aspect of the flower do I like?" "Where is this pleasant feeling located?" Nowhere; it's just a feeling.

"Will I like this flower when it has been blown down by the wind, or when it is old, faded and decayed?" "Where is this unpleasant feeling located?" Nowhere; it's just a feeling.

"Whether it is pleasant to me or unpleasant to me, it's just a feeling."

It can get difficult when we direct this feeling-based exercise to someone we know [2.1.3.2]. So delay this until we are well ready for it. Use some other simpler or less complicated object like a piece of music or a cat.

We have conceived it as a feeling. It's just *feeling*.

With mindful practice, we will see and understand how the feeling-based aspect leads to the cyclic round, pulling us back into the floods of *lust, existence and ignorance*. By perceiving the feelings as "pleasant" or "unpleasant," we create a **duality** of "self" and "other," caught in a push-pull cycle of liking and disliking. We are thus caught up in a *consuming* frenzy, a serpent devouring its own tail.

Now, since feeling is the key factor leading to the cyclic round due to mental proliferation, we can and must break the cycle here by not reacting to the feelings. We simply know feelings as they are: a natural process of conditioned causes and effects, without any being, self or person. We have thus initiated a **turning away** (*vivaṭṭa*) from the duality of the consumer and the consumed. We simply let it all *arise and fall away* in a natural cycle. We are at peace at least for the moment.[11]

2.1.3.3 With our understanding of the sensing and the feeling aspects of experience [2.1.3.2], we should be ready to embark on the main exercise of **mind-based satipatthana**, that is, the contemplation of the mind (*cittânupassanā*). **The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) coaches us with the following 8 mindful observations, thus:

(1) I understand a **lustful mind** as	"Lustful mind;"
or, I understand a lust-free mind as	"Lust-free mind."
(2) Or, I understand **a hating mind** as	"Hating mind;"
or, I understand a hate-free mind as	"Hate-free mind."
(3) Or, I understand **a deluded mind** as	"Deluded mind;"
or, I understand an undeluded mind as	"Undeluded mind."
(4) Or, I understand **a narrowed mind** as	"Narrowed mind" [with sloth and torpor];
or, I understand a distracted mind as	"Distracted mind" [with restlessness and worry].
(5) Or, I understand **a great [exalted] mind** as	"Great mind [in dhyana];"[12]
or, I understand a small mind as	"Small mind [out of dhyana]."
(6) Or, I understand **a surpassable mind** as	"Surpassable mind;"
or, I understand an unsurpassable mind as	"Unsurpassable mind."[13]

[11] On sensing and feeling, see SD 60.1e (7.5.2).

[12] "Great mind" or "the mind grown great," *maha-g,gataṁ cittaṁ*, ie made great or "exalted" because all the mental hindrances have been overcome, thus attaining a form dhyana or a formless attainment. See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4) @ SD 24.14 (4). Properly speaking, only the first 4 form dhyanas are called *jhāna*, while the higher 4 formless bases are called *samāpatti* (attainment); and that the 4 formless attainments actually belong to the 4th form dhyana since they all possess the same two factors (ie equanimity and samadhi).

[13] Unsurpassable (*anuttaraṁ*) mind, may be syn with "great" mind or perhaps well calmed for the moment. See D:W 592 n667 & Anālayo 2005 ad M 1:59.

(7) Or, I understand **a concentrated mind** as	"Concentrated mind;"	
or, I understand an unconcentrated mind as	"Unconcentrated mind."	
(8) Or, I understand **a freed mind** as	"Freed mind,"	
or, I understand an unfreed mind as	"Unfreed mind."	(M 10,34/1:59), SD 13.3

In simple terms, we mindfully note whether the mind is distracted by any of the 5 hindrances [2.1.4.1 (1)], or by any of the 3 roots (greed, hatred and delusion), or whether the mind is in dhyana or out of it, or whether the mind is well-focused or not, whether it is freed from the defilements or not.[14]

2.1.4 Dharma-based meditation

2.1.4.1 Dharma-based satipatthana is unique in the sense that we should have proper grounding in the Dharma both as teaching and as experience of true reality in order to cultivate it effectively to free the mind from the dharmas themselves. **The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) clearly defines 5 sets of dharma-teachings that we should directly experience and understand as they really are, thus:

(1) the 5 hindrances;	*pañca nīvaraṇā*	***Nīvaraṇa,*** SD 32.1;
(2) the 5 aggregates;	*pañca-k,khandha*	SD 17;
(3) the 6 sense-bases;	*saḷ-āyatana*	**Sal,āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), SD 29.5;
(4) the 7 awakening factors;	*satta bojjhaṅga*	**(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3), SD 10.15;
(5) the 4 noble truths.	*catu ariya sacca*	**Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), SD 1.1.

(1) The 5 hindrances

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 5 hindrances, those factors that prevent us from gaining mental calm, clarity and focus, that is to say:

(1) sensual desire,	*kāma-c,chanda;*
(2) ill will,	*vyāpāda;*
(3) sloth and torpor,	*thīna,middha;*
(4) restlessness and worry, and	*uddhacca,kukkucca;*
(5) doubt.	*vicikicchā.*

In each case, the meditator understands,	"There is [the hindrance'] in me."
	"There is *no* [hindrance] in me."
He understands the arising	of the unarisen hindrance.
He understands the letting go	of the arisen hindrance.
He understands the non-arising further	of the hindrance.

The satipatthana refrain[15]

So he dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas internally [in oneself];
or, contemplating dharma in the dharmas externally [in another];
or, contemplating dharma in the dharmas both *internally and externally* [either way, alternately];
Or, he dwells contemplating states that arise in dharmas,
or, he dwells contemplating states that cease in dharmas,
or, he dwells contemplating states that arise and cease in dharmas;
Or else, he maintains the mindfulness thus:

[14] Properly, we can only note the hindrance-free mind after we have abandoned all the hindrances. See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4) @ SD 24.14 (4).

[15] See SD 13.1 (3.7).

"There are dharmas [these realities], merely for knowing and awareness.
And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.

(2) The 5 aggregates of clinging (*pañc'upādāna-k,khandha*)

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 5 aggregates, those factors that constitute our body and mind, thus:

(1) form,	*rūpa-k,khandha;*
(2) feeling,	*vedanā-k,khandha;*
(3) perception,	*saññā-k,khandha;*
(4) formations, and	*saṅkhāra-k,khandha;*
(5) consciousness.	*viññāṇa-k,khandha.*

In each case, the meditator understands, "Such is [the aggregate]" such is its arising; such is its ending."

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(3) The 6 sense-bases

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 6 internal sense-bases and the 6 external sense-bases, thus:

the internal sense-bases		**the external sense-bases**		
(1) the eye	(*cakkhu*),	forms	(*rūpe*);	shapes, colours, etc.
(2) the ear	(*sota*),	sounds	(*sadde*);	voices, vibrations, etc.
(3) the nose	(*ghāna*),	smells	(*gandhe*);	sweet, floral, minty, foul, etc.
(4) the tongue	(*jivhā*),	tastes	(*rase*);	salty, sweet, sour, bitter, umami, etc.[16]
(5) the body	(*kāya*),	touches	(*phoṭṭhabbe*);	warm, cold, hard, soft, etc.
(6) the mind	(*mana*),	dharmas	(*dhamme*).	thoughts, emotions, realities.

In each case,
he understands ***the internal sense-base*** and understands ***the external sense-base*.**
He understands any fetter[17] that arises dependent on both. [Sense-consciousnesses as fetters.]
He understands the arising of an unarisen fetter.
He understands the letting go of an arisen fetter.
He understands the non-arising further of the fetter that he has given up.

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(4) The 7 awakening factors

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 7 awakening factors, thus:

(1) the awakening factor of mindfulness;	*sati sambojjhaṅga;*
(2) the awakening factor of dharma-discernment;	*dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*
(3) the awakening factor of effort;	*viriya sambojjhaṅga;*
(4) the awakening factor of zest;	*pīti sambojjhaṅga;*

[16] See (3.3.2.5) n; also **Suda S** (S 47.8), SD 28.15.

[17] Whatever that holds us back in samsaric or worldly conduct and life, esp the influxes (*āsava*) of sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance: **Cūḷa Gopālaka S** (M 34,6) n SD 61.3.

(5) the awakening factor of tranquillity; *passaddhi sambojjhaṅga;*
(6) the awakening factor of samadhi; and *samādhi sambojjhaṅga;*
(7) the awakening factor of equanimity; *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga.*

When there is [*the awakening factor*] in him,
he understands, "There is [*this awakening factor*] in me."

Or, when there is *no* [*awakening factor*] in him, he understands,
"There is *no* [awakening factor] in me."
And he understands the arising of an unarisen [*awakening-factor*];
and he understands the perfecting of the arisen [awakening-factor].

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(5) The 4 noble truths

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 4 noble truths, thus:

He understands, as it really is,	'This is suffering';	*dukkha ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the arising of suffering';	*samudaya ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the ending of suffering';	*nirodha ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the way leading to the ending of suffering.'	*dukkha,nirodha,gāminī,paṭipadā ariya,sacca*[18]

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

2.1.4.2 It is important to understand that the contemplation of dharmas is not to be done ritually. It is an **experiential cultivation** or **spiritual exercise**, that is, we begin by carefully understanding what each factor in each teaching-set is. Then we observe each of them, as instructed, in our own experience of it. Some insight into aspects of the individual factors will then arise as we contemplate thus.

We begin our practice with the teaching-set we understand best, and progress from there. As we understand the set, we see the connections of their individual factors with those of other sets. The pieces of the contemplation puzzle slowly fall into their rightful places, and the picture becomes more complete over time.

Insight into a teaching-set occurs at some level. As we see how the factors of the set fit together, and how they fit with those of other sets, our insight into the dharma (truth and reality) deepens accordingly. At some point, even when we seem not to be making any effort in such a contemplation, our mind will subconsciously process what we know and whisper to us some deeper insight with joy and clarity. These momentary flashes of insight will gradually build up in us greater insights that will bring us closer to the path of awakening.

2.1.5 Satipatthana as the basis for a calm and clear mind

2.1.5.1 The fact that **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta** (S 47.4) unequivocally states that novice monks (*bhikkhu nava*) should "be made to take up, be settled, be established in the cultivation" of the 4 sati-patthanas [§3] means that satipatthana is to be cultivated to help the mind become concentrated, not

[18] Here, **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,18-21/2:305-313) gives a detailed analysis of the 4 noble truths, one which is more elaborate than its parallel in **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141/3:248-252). On the lateness of this whole section, see SD 13.1 (1.1).

necessarily for the attainment of dhyana (yet).[19] The attainment of dhyana, however, is clearly suggested in the 4-satipatthana formula given in **the Satipatthāna Sutta** (M 10) and **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), thus:

> Here, bhikshus,
> a monk[20] dwells [21]exertive, clearly aware, mindful, **contemplating body in the body**,[22]
> …[23] **contemplating feeling in the feelings**,
> … **contemplating mind in the mind**,
> … **contemplating dharma in the dharmas**,
> removing[24] covetousness and displeasure [discontent][25] in regard to the world.[26]
> (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3 (= D 22,1.4/2:290) SD 13.2

2.1.5.2 Note that this M 10 abridged passage should be read in full for each of the 4 satipatthanas. In the line "**removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world**" (*vineyya loke abhijjhā,-domanassaṁ*), the phrase "covetousness and displeasure" refers to "sensual desire (*kāma-c,chanda*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*)"—the first two of the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) [2.1.4.1 (1)]—and "in regard to the world" (*loke*) means "by way of the 6 sense-bases" [2.1.4.1 (3)]. The bigger picture here is that the phrase "covetousness and displeasure" is a shorthand for the 5 hindrances, and that:

> the main purpose of cultivating satipatthana is to let go of "**the world**"—the 6 sense-bases—
> and focus the mind so that it is lucid and still.

This is the training for the novice monks and, we may add, lay meditators [2.2]; but at this stage, they do not have to cultivate satipatthana to attain dhyana. For this reason, notice that the phrase "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** is *omitted* from **the Sālā Sutta** satipatthana formulas [§§3 f]. This is because satipatthana here (in S 47.4) is meant to be taught to novice monks, those newly ordained, and also to lay practitioners [§7].

However, even when the full satipatthana formula with "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" is present, it only suggests that dhyana may be cultivated by those who are able to

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[19] See "Satipatthana with dhyana," SD 13.1 (4.3.2).

[20] Here "a monk" (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipatthana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5).

On meditation as renunciation, see **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; ***Bhāvanā***, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

[21] *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṁ.* Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'-indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1 (4.2).

[22] "Contemplating body in the body" (*kāye kāyânupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

[23] This is an **ellipsis**—an omission of a familiar repeated passage—which is to be supplied by the reciter or reader for a fuller understanding of the passage. Such an ellipsis is known as *peyyāla* in Pali, abbreviated as *pā* or *pe.* Such ellipses should only be used when the omitted repeated passage can be easily supplied and understood, and not for the sake of economy of space, as is common in commercial translations of the suttas.

[24] *Vineyya* can mean "would or should remove" (as pot or opt, like *vineyya*, Sn 590) or as "having removed" (as ger or absol, like *vineyya,* Sn 58, or *vinayitvā,* Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in Satipaṭṭhāna S. U Silananda similarly ends the sentence with "removing covetousness and grief in the world" (1990:177); also 1990:22-25. See Sn:N 170 n58 + 284 n590. See SD 13.1 (4.2c) above.

[25] "Covetousness and displeasure," *abhijjhā,domanassaṁ,* alt trs: "desire and discontent," "desiring and disliking," or "longing and loathing." Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as "hankering and fretting [in regard to the world]." See SD 13.1 (4.2).

[26] "World" (*loka*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

do so. Naturally, even learners (streamwinners, once-returners and nonreturners) practise satipatthana, and some streamwinners and once-returners may not be able to attain dhyana. We will also see, in **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51) that some lay followers, too, from time to time practise satipatthana. [2.2.1].

2.2 SATIPATTHANA FOR THE LAITY

2.2.1 The Karandaka Sutta (M 51)

2.2.1.1 The Kandaraka Sutta (M 51) is an inspiring account of **laity** practising satipatthana *with its full formula*, that is, including the phrase "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" [2.1.5.2]. This phrase actually keeps the satipatthana practice "open," that is, it includes the more advanced meditators (such as the arhats and learners) who are able to attain dhyana, and also beginners or lay meditators who may not be able to attain dhyana. We are not told in the Kandaraka Sutta, for example, whether any lay practitioner attained dhyana.[27]

2.2.1.2 The relevant passage in **the Kandaraka Sutta** is where **Pessa**, the elephant-trainer's son, joyfully declares that lay followers, too, from time to time, practise satipatthana; but this is not easy since humans, unlike animals, are often more unamenably stubborn and devious than animals are.

The passage explains the amenability of animals despite their stubbornness and deviousness:

> **4** When this was said [2.2.1.1], Pessa, the elephant driver's son, said this to the Blessed One:
>
> "It is wonderful, bhante! It is marvellous, bhante! How well laid down are **the 4 focuses of mindfulness** for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of physical and mental pain, for gaining the right way, for realizing nirvana.[28]
>
> For, we, bhante, as **white-dressed householders**, from time to time dwell with our minds well-established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness.[29]
>
> (1) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] *body in the body*, **removing covetousness and displeasure in the world**.[30]
>
> (2) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *feeling in the feelings*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
>
> (3) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *mind in the mind*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
>
> (4) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *dharma [phenomena] in the dharmas*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.
>
> 4.2 It is wonderful, bhante! It is marvellous, bhante!
>
> For, bhante, how the Blessed One knows what is good or not for beings amidst such human tangles, such human vices, such human wiles.
>
> 4.3 **Humans, bhante, are this tangle; and animals, bhante, are this open clearing**!

[27] However, elsewhere it is stated that there are lay disciples who are able to attain dhyana. The best known of such laymen is Citta the householder, who has not only mastered the 4 dhyanas but is also a non-returner: S 41.9/-:300-302 (SD 45.3). Cf **Acela Kassapa S 1** (S 12.17/2:18-22), SD 18.5. Also SD 40a.7 (1).

[28] This para as at **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,2/1:55), SD 13.3.

[29] Comy: We are engaged in various duties to the monks, but from time to time, we find the occasion for practice. We do not completely neglect meditation. (MA 3:6).

[30] The phrase in bold is omitted from these 4 satipatthanas in this key formula in **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā S** [§4]; see (2.1.5.2).

4.4 Bhante, I can still make a training elephant remember the journey to and from Campā even though during that journey to and fro, it will try to show every kind of deception, treachery, deviousness, and dishonesty.

4.5 But, bhante, as for those who are called our slaves, messengers, and workers—*they act in one way, speak in another way, and think in yet another way*.[31]

It is wonderful, master Gotama! It is marvellous, master Gotama!

4.6 For, bhante, how the Blessed One knows what is good or not for beings amidst such human tangles, such human vices, such human wiles.

For, bhante, humans are this tangle; but animals, bhante, are this **open clearing**."[32]

(M 51,4), SD 32.9

2.2.2 The 4 kinds of persons

2.2.2.1 The Buddha affirms Pessa's statement that "Humans are this tangle; but animals are this open clearing" [2.2.1.2]. Then the Buddha goes on to describe **4 kinds of persons** in terms of their tormenting practices, whether religious or secular, that is:

(1) one who torments himself, intent on self-torment;[33]
(2) one who torments others, intent on tormenting others;[34]
(3) one who torments himself, intent on self-torment, and who torments others, intent on tormenting others;[35]
(4) one who *neither* torments himself, not intent on tormenting himself, *nor* torments others, not intent on tormenting others.[36]

"Neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others, he dwells here and now hunger-free, quenched, cooled, abides enjoying bliss, by becoming divine himself [becoming Brahmā himself]?"[37]

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[31] Comy: An animal's guile and trickery are very limited, while those of a human are unlimited. (MA 3:7)

[32] Dh Comy quotes this as a scholium in the moving episode of the pratyeka-buddha and the faithful dog in **Sāmā,vatī Vatthu** (DhA 2.1): "Animals, they say, are straightforward, not given to deceit; but for humans, the heart thinks one way, the mouth speaks another. Hence, it is said, 'For, humans, bhante, are this tangle; and animals, bhante, are this open clearing'" (*Tiracchānā kira nām'ete uju,jātikā honti akuṭilā. Manussā pana aññaṁ hadayena cintenti, aññaṁ mukhena kathenti. Ten'ev'āha, "gahanañ h'etaṁ, bhante, yad idaṁ manussā, uttānakañ h'etaṁ, bhante, yad idaṁ pasavô ti*) (DhA 2.1/1:173).

[33] M 51,8 (SD 32.9). Such austerities were practised by the Buddha's contemporaries, such as the naked ascetics, and the bodhisattva himself experimented with these painful austerities: see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,45/1:77 f), SD 49.1.

[34] M 51,9 (SD 32.9). Such as those engaging in hunting, killing, stealing, cheating others and other wrong livelihood. As listed at **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,37/1:412), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,10/2:162), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,3/2:206), SD 56.7.

[35] This is where both the perpetrator suffers from loss of lives and wealth, and impending bad karma, and those serving him also suffer in the process. For such a sacrifice, involving 500 animals each, see **(Pasenadi) Yañña S** (S 3.9/1:75 f) + SD 22.11. This passage on the self-tormentor and the other-tormentor [M 51,10] recurs in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,38/1:412), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,11/2:161), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,4/2:207), SD 56.7.

[36] This passage on the non-tormentor of self or of others [M 51,11-28] recurs in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,39-56/1:412 f), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,12/2:16), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,5-16/2:208-211), SD 56.7.

[37] Here, the arhat is meant. To stress that the Buddha neither torments himself nor anyone else, he next describes the path of practice by which he himself gained at awakening.

2.2.2.2 The first 3 kinds of tormentors clearly refer to those who are **devoted to self-mortification** (*atta,kilamathânuyoga*)[38]—declared by the Buddha to be "painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]."[39] This is an unequivocal warning to Buddhist practitioners to avoid self-torment in any form, especially as personal "devotion to ritual and vow" (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), which is a hindrance to the attaining of even the first stage of the path (streamwinning).

The Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta (S 56.11) records the Buddha as also warning against the opposite extreme of "enjoying" the physical body, that is, "**devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures**[40]—it is low, vulgar, worldly, *ignoble, not connected with the goal* [*unprofitable*]."[41] Both "devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures" and "devotion to self-mortification" are extremes to be avoided by the Dharma practitioner, who should keep to the "**middle way**," that is, the noble eightfold path, that is, the 3 trainings in moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom.[42]

2.2.2.3 Mental cultivation, the 2nd training of the middle way, comprises "right mindfulness" (*sammā sati*) and "right concentration" (*sammā samādhi*). While **right mindfulness** is defined as the practice of the 4 satipatthānas,[43] **right concentration** comprises the attainment of dhyana.[44] Both these limbs of the eightfold path prepare us with a calm and clear mind to see directly into true reality so that we are freed from suffering.

3 Satipatthana as renunciation

3.1 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING THE BODY

3.1.1 Freeing the breath

3.1.1.1 There is a very important aspect of Buddhist training which should be highlighted here; in fact, it is the most vital aspect of Dharma-based life. In terms of Dharma spirit and practice, this is where **true renunciation** (*nekkhamma*) of the world begins. While monastic renunciation may be said to be conventional renunciation, both monastics and laity have to practise at least some level of **spiritual renunciation**, that is, letting go of unwholesome states, anything that hinders progress to mental concentration and to the path of awakening.

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[38] *Atta,kilamathânuyoga* (D 3:113,21 (DA 3:109,12); M 3:230,10 (MA 2:384,9); S 4:330,30, 5:421,5 = V 1:10,13).

[39] On these **2 extremes**, see SD 1.1 (3.1). Note that while "the devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures" (*kāma,sukh'allikânuyoga*) is described as being "low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]" (*hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anattha,saṁhito*), "the devotion to self-mortification" (*atta,kilamathânuyoga*) is *not* said to be "low, vulgar," but only "painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]" (*dukkho anariyo anattha,saṁhito*). Despite being "painful," self-mortification, with some moral virtue, can still bring about a divine afterlife; but such a goal is still "ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]," because we are still caught up in samsara, unliberated from suffering. See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1). On *sukh'allikânuyoga,* see **Pāsādika S** (D 29,23/3:130), SD 40a.6.

[40] *Kāma,sukh'allikânuyoga* (V 1:10,12 = S 4,330,29 = 5:421,4; D 3:113,20; S 5:421; MA 1:104,15; UA 351,23). Comy on **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,18/3:113,19) glosses *kāma* here as "the objects of sense-pleasure" (*vatthu,kāmesu*, DA 896,27). On *vatthu,kāma* and *kilesa,kāma,* see SD 38.4 (3.1.2); SD 41.4 (2.3.1).

[41] "Low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]," *hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anattha,saṁhito.* On *gamma = gāma,dhamma,* see **Gavesī S** (A 5.180,17) n, SD 47.16.

[42] On the noble eightfold path (*ariy'aṭṭh'aṅgika magga*), see SD 10.16. On the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*), see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; ***Sīla samādhi paññā***, SD 21.6.

[43] See SD 10.16 (7).

[44] See SD 10.16 (8).

3.1.1.2 A very useful tip for proper satipatthana meditation is that there is neither a goal to attain nor any ritual to complete: satipatthana is **the letting go** of all sense-consciousness and then to free the mind from mind-consciousness. The fruit of this mental renunciation is concentration (*sāmadhi*), which when properly developed attains dhyana. This is the broad principle of satipatthana as mental renunciation.

3.1.2 Becoming the breath

3.1.2.1 In the contemplation of the body, we can take **the breath meditation** as a practice in mental renunciation. First, we must clearly know the breath:[45]

"This is the in-breath; is it long, or is it short?" (Note it as it is: "In long," or "In short".)

"This is the out-breath; is it long, or is it short?" (Note it as it is: "Out long," or "Out short.")

This is a simple yet effective way to begin the breath meditation. Do note here that we should *not* lead the breath, but follow it as it slows down and becomes subtler. The "long and short" of the "in and out" breaths are simply means of letting go of any thoughts, so that the mind is fully seeing the breath as it is, and in due course *becomes* the breath.

The mental verbalization (the words) must be dispensed with once we can *silently* feel the "long and short" of the "in and out" breaths. You will know this without thinking about it. If you have to ask or think about it you are not there yet. When we let go of the medium of words or thought, there is the direct experience of the breath. We *are* then the breath, but concentration needs to be sustained long enough.

3.1.2.2 As we *simply* focus on the in-breath and out-breath, we begin to notice that they are actually connected by peaceful space, a thought-free gap of mental stillness, following each phase of the breath: "In … *space*, out … *space*." They are, as a rule, uneven; we just *feel* the joyful stillness, and *smile* at it if we like.

You may sometimes feel this beautiful process of the calming breath as "rising and falling." Just keep watching this process of rising and falling so that you are familiar with it. When you do this properly (without a thought) you will notice this rise-and-fall getting subtler with growing silent spaces which may also appear radiant. All this is mind-made; silently see them without a thought or you will lose them.

3.1.3 Calmness and insight

What has been described [3.1.2.2] is **calmness** (*samatha*) of meditation as experience. Once we emerge from this calmness, the mind is profoundly clear. We are then ready for the practice of **insight** (*vipassanā*); we review (*paccavekkhati*) the beautiful moments of the breath that we have just experienced. If we do not review these precious moments, we will either forget them or recall them intellectually, which is merely talking about them, like talking about a piece of beautiful music (music is to be heard). When we have done Dharma-spirited meditation we will know what this means.

The calm and clarity of the mind having just emerged from deep meditation is the best time to review the beauty and truth of breath meditation. For example, in reviewing your breath meditation, you may realize:

"What rises must fall away. It is all impermanent."

"We take in air that is the wind element; we must give back the wind element. We do not own it."

"We breathe in, we live. To continue living, we must let go of the breath, renounce it."

To live, we must free the breath.

[45] For a study, see **Ānâpāna,sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

3.2 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING FEELINGS

3.2.1 We feel, then we perceive

3.2.1.1 According to the sequence of the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—and sutta explanations of the cognitive process, **feelings** precede perception. When we experience a sense-object or a mind-object, we first react to it *affectively* (with feelings), and then we *perceive* this reaction. Either we end the process there and that's that; or we go on to evaluate it willfully (conatively), that is, it forms karma. In other words, we are now karmically caught with the fruits of such actions.

3.2.1.2 An important benefit of satipatthana training is that we learn to notice and manage **feelings** before they become karmic. In terms of **the 5 aggregates**—*form (body), feelings, perception, formations and consciousness*—we can see that the 1st satipatthana, the contemplation of the body (*kayânupassanā*), is *mindfulness of the body*. In this 2nd satipatthana, we go on to observe the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā'nupassanā*).

In this 2nd satipatthana, we observe feelings as what feeds the body, that is, something *pleasant*, or something unpalatable or *unpleasant* to the body (the senses). The unmindful person is likely to be drawn to feed on the pleasant, and so fuel the fire of **lust**. But lust is a two-sided coin; its other side is **ill will**, dislike for what is unpalatable to the body (to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) and to the mind. When we are unmindful, we are likely to be drawn to what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think of* as being pleasant.

This is Nature's way of guaranteeing her own survival and proliferation. When we feel what seems palatable to the body, we desire to appropriate it. The ultimate act of appropriation is the **sex act**, which takes our time, multiplies our bodies and fills samsara. This is not to say "sex is evil," but rather we should understand that when we bring beings into the world, they will have to go through suffering as all beings do. Even the awakened have to face the fruits of some past karma, although they do not create new karma. When we bring new beings into the world, we should wisely and ably train them to understand and learn from suffering so that they will themselves be free and awakened in due course.

This is called parenting and humanizing. Good **parenting** is not only raising children in a healthy way, but in a loving way. This entails teaching them to respect *life, happiness, freedom, truth and the mind* (the 5 values underpinning the 5 precepts); these values shape bodily acts and speech in a wholesome way.[46]

Humanizing means teaching our offspring the skills to *become* wholesomely human. This means that
- we should fully accept ourselves and love others proactively,
- we should show compassion when necessary,
- we should rejoice in the good in oneself and in others, and
- we should be at peace with the ways of reality (especially karma) after all the good that we have done.

This is known as cultivating positive emotions or the divine abodes (love, ruth,[47] joy and peace) to ennoble our being and interbeing (society).

3.2.1.3 In terms of satipatthana, to know **feelings** is to see them for what they really are, that is:

They are reactions of liking (lust) or disliking (ill will) towards external stimuli (sights, sounds, etc).

These reactions are conditioned by **memories** (reconstruction of the past) projected onto the present sense-objects and mind-objects. We are thus reliving our past but dead to the present. [2.1.2.3]

[46] On the 5 values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

[47] "Ruth" is a good old early Middle English word for "compassion" which should be resurrected. See SD 60.2 (5.4.2.2).

When we unmindfully follow the pull of the pleasurable and the push of the displeasurable, we are then likely to feel **dull** or **bored** in the absence of pleasure and displeasure. For example, when we have never before experienced samadhi (or even dhyana)—the settling of the mind when we rise above pleasure and displeasure with a neutral mind (*tatra,majjhatā*) (otherwise called "equanimity," *upekkhā*) —we do not recognize this wholesome state. We may instead react with fear or apprehension, mistaking it for some experience of preconceived "divine state." Deluded by the notion of divinity, we are likely to swing to some extreme view and see ourselves as "divinely inspired," and others as being "evil," "sinful," and so on.

3.2.1.4 Thus, when we encounter feelings, we must know a feeling for what it really is, thus:
we see a pleasurable object as simply being "impermanent," and let it pass;
we see an unpleasant object with lovingkindness and let it go;
we see a neutral object as *rising and falling away,* and smile at it.

When we notice lust arising, we see it as:	"Lust, lust … "	and let it go.
When we notice ill will arising, we see it as:	"Ill will, ill will … "	and let it go.
When we notice boredom arising, we see it as:	"Boredom, boredom … "	and let it go.

We see all three as being *impermanent* and not mine (they are not worth having); let them go.

In **the Pacalā Sutta** (A 7.58), the Buddha instructs Moggallāna that "**nothing is worth clinging to**" (*sabbe dhammā nâlaṁ abhinivesāyā,* literally, "All dharmas are not worth clinging to").[48]

The Buddha then adds:

> Having fully understood all things,
> he fully understands whatever **feelings** there are,
> whether pleasant, painful or neither painful nor pleasant.
> As regards those feelings,

he dwells contemplating	impermanence	in them.
He dwells contemplating	dispassion	[fading away of lust] in them.
He dwells contemplating	ending	[of suffering] in them.
He dwells contemplating	letting go	[of defilements].

Thus, the meditator abandons mental hindrances by the contemplations

of impermanence,	*anicânupassanā*,
of fading away (of lust),	*viragânupassanā,*
of cessation (of suffering) and	*nirodhânupassanā,*
of letting go (of defilements),	*paṭinissaggânupassanā,*

and thus looks upon **feelings** (all experiences) with equanimity (accepting them as they are).[49]
Overcoming the hindrances, one attains dhyana.

3.2.2 We tend to feel what isn't

3.2.2.1 So long as we are unawakened and ruled by our biases (greed, hatred, delusion and fear),[50] we are likely to feel only what we have been conditioned by our past (family and schooling), by others (social and religious background) and by personal needs. We are thus likely to find only **the familiar** to be interesting and delightful, while the unfamiliar is likely to be seen as boring and alien.

[48] A 7.58,11.2 (SD 4.11).
[49] **Gelañña S 1** (S 36.7/4:212), SD 76.8 (forthcoming).
[50] On the 4 biases (*agati*), see **Sigal'ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,-6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

"What's wrong with being delighted with the familiar?" we might ask.

The familiar things that captivate us often are what our sense-faculties habitually, even instinctively, delight in. Notice how the crowd is drawn instinctively to the loud, the lustful and the violent. Such reactivity is almost unthinking, which means that we are likely to have little, if any, control of our own selves. The crowd does not think. We tend to be driven by external[51] stimuli (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts) without any mind of our own, without any vision of the causes and effects they have on ourselves and on others.

3.2.2.2 To be distracted is to lose sight of present reality. While we are watching the breath in our meditation (or in any kind of Dharma-based meditation), our distraction may be time-based or root-based. In either case, our attention is removed from the present mind-object and led astray in terms of *time* or dissipated by an *unwholesome root* or *a bias.*

In terms of **time**, we may be distracted by the past or by the future. As already noted [2.1.2.3], when we are drawn to something "pleasant" in a thought—whether an intrusion or a projection displacing the meditation-object—it is because we see some pleasant memory in it. And when we are repelled by something "unpleasant" in a distracting thought, it is because we see some unpleasant memory in it. In either case, we have been sucked back into **the past**. Thus, we lose track of present reality. We are blocked by the hindrance of **restlessness** (*uddhacca*).

Or, we may be dragged into some future imagining, something as simple as "What shall I eat after the meditation?" or as complex as "What will I be?" Caught in thinking in this way, we open ourselves to the hindrance of "**worry**" (*kukkucca*).

In terms of **root**, we may be distracted by *greed, hatred or delusion,* or by an extended version of the roots, that is, by any of the 4 biases: *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*. We are captivated by a lust-drenched image and lose ourselves in it. Or we are driven by uneasy hatred over some troubling thought (arising, for example, from a painful posture). Or we could just be darkly deluded or muddle-headed with sleepiness. If we have not been keeping the precepts, we may be wondering what bad karma is, what its fruit will be, and so on. Fear may also arise as a result.

We are thus lost in the past or the future, or hijacked by the biases of *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*. None of these are in the present moment. It's much ado about nothing since we have lost our focus on the presence of the meditation-object. Our boat has lost its rudder in a stormy sea.

3.2.3 Free feelings

3.2.3.1 To be distracted is to be mentally caught in false feelings that block any direct or clear vision of the meditation-object. Such feelings arise from sense-contact in *a meeting of sense-faculty, sense-object and sense-consciousness*. When feeling arises, we go on to perceive it as pleasant or as unpleasant, when we are familiar with the object; or we may feel bored towards a neutral feeling. usually arising from an unfamiliar mind-object. [3.2.1.3]

It is crucial that we do not direct any lust (by desiring a pleasant feeling), any hatred (by disliking an unpleasant object), or even ignoring an unfamiliar object that is neutral, thus allowing delusion to arise. When any of these unwholesome roots have arisen, we form karma; hence, it is called **karma-formation** (*saṅkhāra*). Such karmic fruits will continue to pursue us life after life, and may continue to fruit even after we are awakened![52]

[51] On sense-objects and mind-objects being "external," see (2.1.2.3).

[52] Of course, an arhat (like the Buddha) does not fear any karmic fruition and will let it arise naturally and pass away as such. See, eg, the case of the arhat Aṅguli,māla: **Aṅguli.māla S** (M 86,17/2:104), SD 5.11.

To prevent any **karma** from arising through feelings, we must simply allow the feelings to fall away just as they have arisen. It helps that we see such feelings as being "impermanent … impermanent … ," which expedites our letting go of them. Just as after breathing in, we naturally breathe out, we simply let go of the arisen feeling; free the feeling.

3.2.3.2 In our routine lives as non-renunciants (that is, as lay followers), we are likely to enjoy "distractions," especially as individuals. What we call "leisure" is often filled with what we enjoy doing, often in the positive sense of the word. So long as we feel wholesome **joy** in such leisure neither harming self nor others, it is harmless, even beneficial, for a wholesomely healthy body and mind.

So long as such leisurely "distractions," such as doing physical exercises, enjoying sports and playing games, reading, travelling and so on, do not entail breaking any of the 5 precepts, we may pursue them in a timely manner, keeping ourselves joyful and contented. Notice that we best enjoy such leisure when we feel joy arising on account of winning a game (or even losing it), have a feeling of fellowship, mental stimulation and so on.

In mundane terms, we use such words as "sportsmanship" or "game" (adj) to show that we are a joyful part and partners in such happy and healing leisure. There is a good sense of "give-and-take" without being arrogant with victory or dismayed by defeat, but simply enjoying friendship and having a good time.

In a simple way, then, to be truly happy, we must let go of feelings. The whole idea of leisure is in the feeling of **joy** (*pīti*), which is impermanent, yet fun enough for us to seek it again in doing what we enjoy and are good at, and doing so in a wholesome manner. Understanding impermanence can bring joy as well as wisdom. This is learning while at play.

3.3 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING MIND

3.3.1 Mind is a learning process

3.3.1.1 All earthly sentient beings, especially humans, are made up of **body and mind**.[53] The body functionally consists of the 5 physical senses[54] and the mind of feelings, perception, formations and consciousness.[55] As conscious beings, our **embodied mind** (*nāma,rūpa*) serves as the interface between our self (*nāma*) and the world (*rūpa*); properly, "world" here refers to "formations" (*saṅkhārā*), that is, what we construct of the world through our senses and thoughts. Technically, *nāma* is our mind (the internal senses) and *rūpa* is the world (the external sense-bases or sense-consciousnesses).[56]

3.3.1.2 Our experiences arise from the contact (*phassa*) between the sense-faculties (*ajjhatt'āyatana*), their sense-objects (*bahiddhâyatana*) and their **sense-consciousnesses** (*viññāṇa*), respectively. 'This is the most we can know (and only so long as we are unawakened). Generically then there are only 6 kinds of knowledges: *the sight-based, the sound-based, the smell-based, the taste-based, the touch-based and the thought-based*. These are the 6 kinds of sense-data we call **knowledge**, the information by

[53] On the senses of the celestial beings, see SD 62.14 (3.2.2.2).

[54] Structurally, the "body" is made up of the 4 elements [foll].

[55] **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9) defines the embodied mind, "name-and-form" (*nāma,rūpa*), as comprising ***nāma*,** ie, feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention, and ***rūpa*** comprises the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind) (*vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro, idaṁ vuccat'āvuso nāmāni. Cattāri ca mahā,bhūtāni catunnañ ca mahā,-bhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ idaṁ vuccat'āvuso rūpaṁ,* M 9/1:53,11-13).

[56] See Analayo, "Mind (Buddhism)," *Buddhism and Jainism* (Ency of Ind Rels), 2017:779-781; P D Premasiri, "Mind," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Colombo, 2003 7:1-12.

which we live, and which initiate and define all our actions, and the tools with which we construct our reality, personal and social.

According to **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23) all (*sabba*) that there *are*, or the "all" are *the 6 sense-bases and their respective sense-objects*, thus:

	sense-faculties		**sense-objects**		
(1)	**The eye**	and	forms,	*cakkhuñ c'eva*	*rūpā ca*
(2)	**the ear**	and	sounds,	*sotañ ca*	*saddā ca*
(3)	**the nose**	and	smells,	*ghānañ ca*	*gandhā ca*
(4)	**the tongue**	and	tastes,	*jivhā ca*	*rasā ca*
(5)	**the body**	and	touches,	*kāyo ca*	*phoṭṭhabbā ca*
(6)	**the mind**[57]	and	mind-objects.[58]	*mano ca*	*dhammā ca*

(S 35,23/4:15) SD 7.1

This is the process by which we create our samsara (cyclic world of habitual tendencies); understanding this very same process frees us from it, bringing us closer to the path and to nirvana. In this sense, only in this sense, we may say that samsara is nirvana, nirvana is samsara. This is a description of our experience of what nirvana is like, but not a definition of nirvana.

3.3.2 Growing is letting go

3.3.2.1 Reflecting on how **knowledge** arises in this manner [3.3.1.2], we can say that there are 2 kinds of knowledge:

(1) **experiential** or sense-based (including mind-based) knowledge: pragmatic or practical; and
(2) **spiritual** or direct knowledge: liberating and awakening (by seeing the 4 noble truths).

All knowledge arise either *at any of the physical senses* (as sensing[59]) *or within the mind* (by way of perception, reasoning, insight, and so on), but *all* are created and processed in the mind; the mind precedes all such states of knowing, they are thus mind-made (*mano,maya,* Dh 1 f).

3.3.2.2 There are 3 ways by which we **learn**, that is, gain knowledge or wisdom, as laid out in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga,** as follows:

			described as
(1)	wisdom through **thinking**,	*cintā,maya paññā*	philosophical knowledge;
(2)	wisdom through **listening**, and	*suta,maya paññā*	academic knowledge;
(3)	wisdom through **cultivation.**	*bhāvanā,maya paññā*	insight knowledge.

(D 33,1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh 324)[60]

The most common way we know things and learn—rightly or wrongly—is by forming views or by **thinking**, including reasoning, that is, seeing and relating to causes and effects. We continue to form views, and we revise and refine them (or fall into wrong conclusions) through **listening**, including academic, religious

[57] 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).

[58] "Mind-objects," *dhammā,* alt tr "mental phenomena." In satipatthana practice, *dhamma* is tr as "realities," ie, they are no ordinary mind-objects but those capable of freeing the mind, or at least bring calm and clarity.

[59] Here "sensing" is a simple term for "being conscious of; sense-consciousness."

[60] Further see SD 40a.4 (6.1).

learning and hearsay. Most of our learning and knowing at this stage is based on second-hand knowledge, that is, through *hearing from others* or through *reading* or being informed by *the mass media* or *hearsay* (which may in turn be based on other "sources," which makes it "third-hand" information). These are neither direct nor personal knowledge or understanding but mere rumours.

Even when we have a "direct" experience of things, especially by way of **religious experiences** (such as a vision of God or of Buddhas), it is likely to arise from past conditioning from parents and others during childhood and religious upbringing, indoctrination or inclination (including past karma). Such pre-conditioning can be difficult to notice and even harder to give up. Hence, we need **the contemplation of mind** (*cittânupassanā*) to see and understand how our mind is conditioned, and how to free it.

3.3.2.3 Another triad of types of learning helps us in understanding how we can know and understand things *as they really are*, and so free ourselves from blinkered knowledge and past conditioning. This is dharma-spirited or reality-based learning by way of **the 3 right ways** (or "good dharmas," *ti sad-dhamma*), as follows:[61]

			described as
(1)	**theoretically,**	*pariyatti*	through listening or thinking and reasoning;
(2)	**practically,** and	*paṭipatti*	through personal observation, especially direct experience;
(3)	**penetratively**.	*paṭivedha*	through personal experience, especially cultivation.

From the time we take our first breath, we begin to instinctively learn by simply reacting to stimuli. Our earliest habits were natural and primary in the sense of being *life-supporting*: we instinctively breathe, take food and get rid of waste. These are natural processes without involving much of our conscious awareness of them; they are samsara's way of perpetuating itself.

3.3.2.4 Our **conscious learning** begins with feeling hunger, cold and discomfort—body-based states—that we instinctively want to be rid of by mother's milk, human warmth and bodily posture or contact. We then spend most of our time sleeping and growing. When we wake, we cry out, to instinctively make known our needs. This is an instinctive and powerful exhalation of our breath by which we communicate with others, those who mother us or are close to us. Thus we grow physically.

Infants show signs of rudimentary consciousness and awareness of their surroundings from birth, including reflexes, emotional expressions, and processing of sensory input, as the extent and clarity of their awareness continues to develop, helped by colourful noise-making toys that are safely manipulable and chewable, and also with human contact and interaction.

Simply then, our earliest learning consists of seeing, touching, and being aware of our body (especially limb movements), reacting to our primary feelings (such as hunger and comfort), reacting to external stimulation (human touch and smell) and to sensory stimulation (toys, human interaction). In due course, we learn to express ourselves by certain sounds and simple words.[62]

Early Buddhist teachings, however, say that human consciousness arises at **conception**,[63] which defines a living being. The sutta term for "**conception**" is "descent of the birth-being" (*gabbhâvakkanti*).[64] This seems to be a very rudimentary form of consciousness that comes with bodily growth and mental

[61] VA 225; AA 5.33. See **The levels of training**, SD 40a.4 (6.2.1); **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (3.4.2). On *sacca,ñāṇa kicca,ñāṇa kata,ñāṇa,* see SD 46.18 (1.2).

[62] See, eg, T Bayne et al, "Consciousness in the cradle: On the emergence of infant experience," *Trends in Cognitive Science* 27,12 Dec 2023:1135-1149 [TrendsCS]. 16 Mar 2025.

[63] Early Buddhism however does not say exactly when this rebirth-consciousness descends into the womb. Modern medicine says that touch is the first sense to develop, starting around 7 weeks of pregnancy.

[64] M 38,26/1:265 f (SD 7.10).

development. In due course, actual learning—the ability to initiate or repeat actions expressing needs or emotions—begins, when babies learn to express themselves verbally.[65]

3.3.2.5 Like babies, we often learn by practical experience, but as adults we also learn by observation, imitation, experimentation and reasoning. Such practical knowledge is experiential, like tasting salt at "the tongue-tip" (*jivh'agge thāpetvā*),[66] meaning that one knows directly or empirically through one's own experience. When such learning combines with insight into seeing how causes and effects work, we are likely to grow in wisdom. Thus, learning comes from knowing what we *are*, with which we work to better ourselves.

The best, indeed, the *only,* right way of learning is by understanding **conditionality** (interdependence of causes and effects),[67] how it works in the situations before us, and what's wrong and what's right with them. We must carefully set wrong ideas aside (remembering that false views can arise in many disguised forms), and diligently work with the good ideas so that we better understand ourselves (the mind) and the world to free ourselves from greed, hatred, delusion, fear, superstition and ignorance.

3.3.3 Freeing the mind

3.3.3.1 **Spiritual freedom** is true beauty and true goodness. **Beauty** is in seeing and understanding true reality; **goodness** is enjoying this beauty with others so that they, too, know and enjoy spiritual freedom. A good education is both a means of sustenance of bodily health and the joy of mental health. This is spiritual freedom: being free to love oneself, in the same way to love others, to be joyful in each others' presence, and to be at peace with the world. This is the ideal freedom.

By **spiritual learning**, I mean the personal freedom to understand ourselves and free ourselves from *superstition, delusion and ignorance*; this, of course, is easier said than done. Religion (like the mass media) thrives on superstition, delusion and ignorance.

Religion is **superstition** when it demands or persuades others to accept an *external* agency to solve or succour our lacks and pains that originate from *within* us, from our own minds.

Religion is **delusion** when it believes that words and stories are divine and are liberating without understanding the origin and nature of such languages; or to twist or hide these truths for power over the masses.

Religion is **ignorance** when it has to keep revising and updating its dogmas and beliefs when challenged with better learning, clearer science and greater human freedom.

3.3.3.2 True religion, on the other hand, is **spirituality**; is when we seek to see directly into true reality, and to learn for ourselves the goodness of these truths so that we are free from ignorance,

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[65] Modern medicine thinks that it is possible that the capacity for sense-consciousness may emerge towards the end of gestation, possibly as early as 35 weeks (after the development of thalamocortical networks around 26 weeks). See, eg, C Koch, "When does consciousness arise in human babies?" *Scientific American* Sep 1 2009 [SciAm]. 16 Mar 2025.

[66] DhA 2:33. The truth is the whole tongue is able to taste any of the 5 kinds of taste (salty, sweet, sour, bitter and umami), with some areas being more sensitive to certain tastes: V B Collings, "Human Taste Response as a Function of Locus of Stimulation on the Tongue and Soft Palate," *Perception & Psychophysics* 16 1974:169-174. On the tongue-map myth: [Wiki] 15 Mar 2025.

[67] **Conditionality** or dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*) is not causation or causality (where the causes bring effects in a temporal sequence). In early Buddhism, causality (*hetu,paccaya*) is only one of the 24 conditions (*paccaya*) that define conditionality, where conditions work in different ways (besides temporally) to produce effects which in turn become causes and so on. On the 24 conditions (*paccaya*), see SD 60.1e (13.12 f).

craving and suffering. Spirituality is the true quest of **the open mind**; the mind that is allowed to seek truth and to see true reality, and so be free from untruth and unreality.

Our first line of learning is through the physical senses: we learn from what we *see, hear, smell, taste, or touch*. However, we often know that we have been wrong before with sense-based data; what we see, hear, smell, taste or touch is not always what we think it is. We are merely working with beliefs or views. Broadly, this is what is meant by "**theoretical knowledge**" (*pariyatti*), especially when applied to our daily sense-based experiences: it is what we choose to believe even though we are certain of its truth and reality. It is provisional knowledge, steps in learning and understanding.

The term ***pariyatti*** is commentarial, often applied as *pariyatti,dhamma* in the sense of "mastering the Dharma," that is, having memorized it well, being able to teach Dharma from memory, and to properly rectify wrong views (that is, as views or teachings neither found in the suttas nor in their spirit). Yet the Buddha warns us that even an elder who is "of long standing … well known … recipient of robes, etc, …. deeply learned … , but he could be one of wrong view and perverted vision" (*micchā,diṭṭhiko hoti viparīta,dassano*).[68]

3.3.3.3 We may think that we have "received" Dharma transmission from an elder who is a Dharma-spirited, Vinaya-abiding, experienced monk or nun, or from a titled priest of high status—but this is just a ritual status. Or we may think that we have well understood the Dharma that has been taught to us. Even though we may not be wrong, we may not have properly understood its context or finer points.

Hence, the Buddha reminds us of **the 12 steps of Dharma-learning**, such as recorded in **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), thus:

(1)	One who has **faith** (in a teacher)	approaches the teacher.
(2)	Having approached him,	one draws near [attends] to him.
(3)	Having drawn near to him,	one lends his ear to him.[69]
(4)	One who lends his ear,	listens to the Dharma.
(5)	Having listened to the Dharma,	one remembers [memorizes] it.[70]
(6)	Having remembered the teachings,	one examines their meaning.
(7)	Having examined their meaning,	one reflectively accepts[71] the teachings.[72]
(8)	Having reflectively accepted the teachings,	(wholesome) desire for mindfulness arises in one.
(9)	Having (wholesome) desire for mindfulness,[73]	one exerts himself.
(10)	Having exerted oneself,	one weighs [harmonizes] it.[74]

[68] **(Pañcaka) Thera S** (A 5.88,2 (5)), SD 40a.16.

[69] Alt tr: "Respectfully sitting close, he listens attentively."

[70] This and next line: *Sutvā dhammaṁ dhāreti | dhātānaṁ dhammānaṁ atthaṁ upaparikkhati:* here *dhammaṁ* (sg) in the 1st line becomes *dhammānaṁ* (pl) in the 2nd line. In the 1st line, *dhammaṁ* refers to the teaching as a whole; in the 2nd line, individual aspects or topics are meant.

[71] ***Nijjhānaṁ khamanti,*** lit, "insights are endured," ie, "capable of bearing insights"; idiomatic meaning "he is pleased with, approves of, finds pleasure in" (M 1:133 f; 479 f, 2:173, 175; S 3:225, 228, 5:377, 379; Vv 84.17). ***Khanti*** usually means "patience" but here it means "choice, receptivity, preference, acceptance." The BHSD defines *kṣānti* as "intellectual receptivity; the being ready in advance to accept knowledge." *Khanti* is often used in the Canon in this latter sense (see SD 12.13(2a) for refs). The phrase can also be freely rendered as "a receptivity in harmony with true reality." On ***dhamma,nijjhāna,khanti*****,** see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4 Comy 3a(8). On *khanti* as "mental receptivity," see **Aniccā S** (A 6.98), SD 12.13(3).

[72] This and the next line: *Atthaṁ upaparikkhatto dhammā nijjhānaṁ khamanti; dhamma,nijjhāna,khantiyā sati chando jāyato.* M:ÑB: "when he examines their meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings."

[73] From here to end of para: *Chanda,jāto ussahati; ussahitvā tuleti; tulayitvā padahati; pahit'atto samāno kāyena c'eva paramaṁ saccaṁ sacchikaroti paññāya ca naṁ ativijjha passati.* Alt tr: "With his desire, he applies his will." On *ussahati,* see CPD: I have conflated both the normal ("he is able") and the conative ("he strives") senses in the tr.

(11) Having weighed it, one strives.[75]
(12) With a resolute [striving] mind, one **realizes** the ultimate truth.
(M 70,24), SD 11.1; (M 94,20-33), SD 21.15

In this 12-step Dharma-learning, notice that the stages or aspects of learning are gradual, and often overlap (the phases of learning are interrelated), except for the last, that is, the fruit: "one realizes the ultimate truth."

3.3.3.4 In terms of **the 3 good dharmas** [3.3.2.3], we can sort out the 12 steps and their fruition in connection with the 12-step Dharma-learning, as follows:

(1)	theoretical knowledge	*pariyatti*	1-5;	study: reading, recitation etc;
(2)	practical knowledge	*paṭipatti*	6-11;	practice: mindfulness and meditation;
(3)	penetration	*paṭivedha*	12.	realization: wisdom, awakening.

On a deeper level, these 12 steps are training to know the mind (1-5), to tame the mind (6-11) and to free the mind (12). They are said to be a gradual progress in the sense that when each step or set of steps is mastered, one lets it go for the next step and so on. Spiritual learning, then, is like peeling the layers of an onion: *the peeling away of layers of views goes on and on, so that in the end **the "I"** is not there anymore*: "on-i-on."

To truly know the mind, we must let it go.

3.3.4 From natural learning to spiritual insight

3.3.4.1 Early Buddhism is sometimes described as being **empirical**, that is, understanding that what we know comes *naturally* from experience, and that everything that exists in the mind comes from our senses. The contents of our *mind,* then, are rooted in the senses. As stated by the Buddha in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), all that we can know is rooted in the senses and the mind [3.3.1.2].

Early Buddhist psychology tells us that although the mind shapes the contents of the senses, **the mind** is also capable of creating its own sense-objects *without* the sense-faculties. Thus, the mind can, and often does, project itself as our experiences. We thus experience what the mind wants us to see, hear, smell, taste, touch (feel) and think. These habits of the mind are so common that there is an early Buddhist term for them: **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*).[76]

The Pali term ***anu-saya*** literally means "that which lies habitually." In English, we can see a wordplay in "lie"—which the Pali term takes literally to mean "always present, usually in a dormant state"—while in English it also means "something untrue," which also applies here, unfortuitously. Thus, experientially, we tend to be creatures of habit, and such habits also tend to bring us suffering since they are rooted in greed, hatred and delusion.

3.3.4.2 Early Buddhism can also be described as being **naturalistic** in the sense that the Buddha teaches us to see and understand life as it really is (*yathā,bhūta,ñāṇa,dassana*). In terms of the 5 aggregates [2.1.4.1 (2)], **human knowledge** is rooted in body-based experiences that are interpreted by various mental processes, that is, feelings and perceptions. Human knowledge is not only *informative* but also discursive (rational), intuitive (experiential) and, above all, psychological (mind-made).

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[74] Alt tr: "Having applied effort, he harmonizes his practice."
[75] Alt tr: "Harmonizing his practice, he strives on."
[76] See **Anusaya** (SD 31.3).

Psychologically, human knowing has moral significance. Knowledge rooted in *greed, hatred or delusion* is unwholesome (*akusala*) and has negative karmic consequences; knowledge rooted in *non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion*[77] is wholesome (*kusala*); it helps us better understand ourselves. By "**wholesome**" here is meant that such knowledge, functioning as intention (*cetanā*), creates good karma in the sense that it gives us a happy and meaningful life whose natural purpose is developing the mind and disseminating happiness. In fact, the mind defines the value of all our actions (bodily, verbal and mental).

Although we imagine much of our actions as *conscious* events (we are conscious of what we do, say or think), the reality is that we are actually **unconscious** of most of our karmic actions. Most of what we do, speak or think are driven by the dark forces of habit, conditioned by the past, including past lives, and also by social conditioning. In this sense, we have no control of ourselves; we have no free will. For the will to be truly free, we must free our mind! In this sense, arhats have free will.

3.3.4.3 A moral life (especially one regulated by the 5 precepts, or the Vinaya in the case of renunciants) prevents us from moral breaches and their karmic consequences. We are often driven by our feelings that colour and distort our experiences; we tend to be biased by some past *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*, and enticed by some future *belief or hope*. But these are, as a rule, conditioned reactions. This is where mindfulness and clear awareness are helpful in reminding us to take feelings just as they are, to let them come and let them go, and to form neither liking nor disliking for them, but to note them as being *mind-made and impermanent.* This is how we deal with distractions on **a sense-based level**. [2.1.2]

Next, we must remember that the drive to commit moral lapses lurk deeper in the dark unconscious or latent tendencies (*anusaya*) (lust, aversion and ignorance).[78] This inner darkness is best lightened up and cleansed by a regular dose of **mind contemplation** (*cittânupassanā*), that is, mind-based satipatthana.[79] This is when we expose the skulking negative mind for what it is, and welcome the positive radiant mind by cultivating it. [2.1.3]

3.4 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING DHARMAS

3.4.1 Seeing realities

3.4.1.1 We have explained how satipatthana practice begins with body-mindfulness, especially with the breath [3.1]. We then explained how body-mindfulness is cultivated as the avenue for focus on mindfulness of feelings [3.2]. Then, we described mind-based satipatthana to see how the mind masters feelings.

Then we have briefly surveyed "**dharma-based meditation**" or contemplation of dharmas (*dhammanupassanā*) [2.1.4] of each of *the 5 sets of dharma-teachings*.

Now we will go on to the 4th satipatthana to see how we can observe the mind and mind-contents, and free the mind of even such contents, so that the mind is free to gain full concentration, that is, samadhi, even dhyana.

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[77] In positive terms, these include *charity, love and wisdom*.

[78] These are, respectively, *kāma,rāga, paṭigha* and *avijjā*: **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9,65-67), SD 11.14; ***Anusaya,*** SD 31.3 (8.2).

[79] Much of what is explained in (3.3.4) is remarkably close to the ideas of the Scosman **David Hume** (1711-1776), one of the greatest philosophers who has ever written in English, esp as expressed in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748, 1757). [Wiki] [IEP] all 17 Mar 2025.

Here we will first briefly examine the significance of each of these 5 sets of teachings:

(1) the 5 hindrances;	*pañca nīvaraṇā*	factors that prevent concentration and dhyana;
(2) the 5 aggregates;	*pañca-k,khandha*	basic components of our body-mind being;
(3) the 6 sense-bases;	*saḷ-āyatana*	the 5 physical senses and the mind;
(4) the 7 awakening factors;	*satta bojjhaṅga*	the factors of focusing the mind for freedom;
(5) the 4 noble truths.	*catu ariya sacca*	the aspects of true reality leading to freedom.

spiritual faculty (*indriya*)		**mental hindrance** (*nīvaraṇa*)		**dhyana-factor**[80] (*jhān'aṅga*)
(2) effort	suppresses	(4) sloth and torpor	countered by	(1) initial application
(5) wisdom		(5) doubt		(2) sustained application
(1) (joyful) faith		(2) ill will		(3) zest
(4) concentration		(3) restlessness and worry		(4) happiness
(3) mindfulness		(1) sensual desire		(5) one-pointedness of mind

Table 3.4.1 Spiritual faculties, mental hindrances, and dhyana-factors[81] [SD 32.1 (5.3)]

3.4.1.2 The 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) are the factors that prevent mental concentration and attaining of dhyana [2.1.4.1 (1)]. In satipatthana practice, our first and foundation meditation is **the mindfulness of the breath** (*ānâpāna,sati*) or breath meditation [3.1.2], and once we have begun our practice, we will notice that:

(1) we are distracted by sense-experiences (sights, sounds, etc);
(2) we may even feel annoyed by pain from our posture;
(3) we become restless and have concerns;
(4) as a result of all this, we are likely to feel slothful and tired; or
(5) we may even doubt whether we are doing it right, and so on.

3.4.2 What the hindrances can teach us

3.4.2.1 These [3.4.1.2] are, of course, manifestations of the 5 mental hindrances (simply, hindrances). We should not be discouraged by them; their initial presence means that we have started meditating. Otherwise, we would probably not have noticed any of the hindrances so that they operate without our knowledge! At this early stage of satipatthana training we should *primarily* acknowledge the sensual distraction for what it is [2.1.2.2]. This is the application of the spiritual faculty (*indriya*) of **mindfulness**, which dispels sensual desire (any distractions from sense-experiences). [Table 3.4.1]

[80] On the dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*), see SD 8.4 (6).
[81] See also the explanations given at SD 62.16 (3.1.1.2).

3.4.2.2 Even if we have difficulty or only limited success with such experiences (they tend to recur when we least expect it), it is all part of our training (otherwise, why meditate at all?). When we notice there is ill will in our mind, we direct our mind to **joyful faith** in the Dharma. This is an inspiring reflection by way of the spiritual faculty (faith) that counters ill will. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.3 Even when we have difficulties with sense-based distractions, or we are upset with them, and we become restless or worry about something we have done or not done, we simply bring the mind (attention) back to the breath with a smile; get back to the **concentration**. The inner smile actually helps in warding off distractions. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.4 Some days we may have distraction after distraction, until we are crushed, as it were, with sloth and torpor; we just feel physically and mentally tired. This is just a *feeling*. After exerting ourself for some time, we may become impatient. We should then imagine ourself to be a marathon runner or an athlete who does not give up, especially when we only need a tiny push, "the last wind" (as the athletes call it). Just make that **effort** by smiling at tiredness, and bring the mind back to the breath. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.5 At some point in our meditation, we find our mind chatting with us asking whether we are meditating correctly, or we may even have some doubt about some teaching, or about some strange thoughts. This is where we can apply the most basic of Buddhist teachings: the **wisdom** of impermanence. We will get over all this doubt *after* we have meditated. Now is the time to be *meditating*. The point remains that Dharma study and understanding correctly what we know of Dharma are vital for effective meditation.[82]

3.4.2.6 From **Table 3.4.1**, we can see how **dhyana-factors** (*jhān'aṅga*) suppress the hindrances, and with the arising of the 1st dhyana, the hindrances are countered or neutralized by dhyana-factors. While a spiritual faculty has to be *actively* applied to suppress the respective hindrances, the 5 dhyana-factors work as a set to counter the hindrances. Technically, once the hindrances are all suppressed by the spiritual faculties, the 1st dhyana arises, and its dhyana-factors suppress the hindrances.

One way to understand how the spiritual faculties suppress the hindrances is as follows:[83]

(1) **Effort**, having suppressed sloth and torpor, is successfully directed as **initial application** to the breath.
(2) **Wisdom**, having overcome doubt, applies *clear awareness* for **sustained application** of the mind to focus on the breath.
(3) **Faith**, having joyfully removed ill will, strengthens itself as **zest**, feeding the dhyana.
(4) **Concentration**, having overcome restlessness and worry, brings about **happiness**.
(5) **Mindfulness**, having suppressed sensual desire, induces **one-pointedness of mind**, that is, dhyana.

This is only an analytical explanation of how the faculties suppress the hindrances, allowing dhyana with its factors to arise. The dynamic of dhyana is such that all this happens almost all at once. The dhyana-factors also disappear with the cessation of dhyana, but the faculties need to be cultivated continuously.

[82] On an interesting riddle on the spiritual faculties and the hindrances, see **Jāgara S** (S 1.6): read just the Sutta, verse S 10, and look up the nn.

[83] On how the hindrances are overcome and the form dhyanas arise, see SD 62.16 *3.1.1).

3.4.3 The 5 aggregates and our being

3.4.3.1 The 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) are the 2nd dharma listed in the contemplation of dharmas [2.1.4.1]. Our sentient being consists of *body and mind*. Our **body** (*kāya*)[84] may be seen as made up of either the 5 physical sense-faculties—*the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body*—or the 4 primary elements—*earth, water, fire and wind*.

The 5 sense-faculties, mediated by the mind, experience 5 material or physical realities by way of *sight* (light, colours, shapes), *sounds* (vibrations, words), *smells, tastes and touches* (bodily contact, temperature, softness, hardness, smoothness, roughness, etc). The 5 sense-faculties and the mind form the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*) [3.4.4].

Although the 5 sense-faculties are, as a rule, common to all humans, vision and hearing are the only faculties common to all sentient beings, including devas and brahmas. These divine beings, because of their highly developed minds and subtle forms, do not need the faculties of "molecular contact," that is, those of *smell, taste and touch*, sometimes bundled together as ***muta***, "sensed," as in the expressions, *diṭṭha,suta,muta* or *diṭṭha,suta,muta,viññāta*.

In the phrase ***diṭṭha,suta,muta,*** *muta* has the broad sense of "known or sensed," that is, all the senses other than seeing (*diṭṭha*) and hearing (*suta*).[85] In other words, *muta* here refers to smell, taste and touch, faculties that are sensed by way of molecules coming into contact with sensitive body surfaces, that is, those of *the nose, the tongue and the skin*. It seems that early Buddhist psychophysiology regarded the faculties of *smell, taste and touch* as being "tactile," that is, they are stimulated by chemical molecules in the case of smell and taste, and by "physical" touch (especially pressure and temperature) in the case of the skin.

3.4.3.2 The teaching that our body consists of **the 4 primary elements** (*cattaro mahā,bhūta*)—earth, water, fire and wind—is a reflection of *impermanence, conditionality and nonself*. The tetrad of elements is a "pre-scientific" (a non-scientific)[86] term used by the Buddha simply as a reflection on our body as composed of the 4 elements thus:[87]

			examples
earth element	*paṭhavī dhātu*	solidity	head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, etc;
water element	*āpo dhatu*	liquid	bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, etc;
fire element	*tejo dhatu*	heat	what warms, ages, burns us, and digests our food;
wind element	*vāyo dhatu*	air	our bodily movements, the breath.

All the elements are conditioned and impermanent; they arise and fall away every moment;

- our body is **solid** with bones and flesh which grow, change, age and die;
- our body is mostly **liquid**, that is, blood, urine and other fluids;
- from day one, our body is the **fire** that burns up the food we take, and the body burns itself up, too; and

[84] "Body" (*kāya*) here is a broader collective term for our sentient human frame; the "body" (also *kāya*) is a narrower term for the tactile body, esp its skin.

[85] See SD 53.5 (3.1); SD 60.1e (1.1.6).

[86] Early Buddhism should not be described as "scientific," which may relegate it to being merely a category in science. Early Buddhism is a pre-scientific spiritual system that has some scientific parallels, remarkable for its time, which modern science may help to explain in contemporary terms.

[87] See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 11,8-11, with §12 on "space"), SD 3.11; **Mahā Hatthi,pādôpama S** (M 28,6), SD 6.16.

- our body moves like air or **wind** with every breath we take in, and with the breath that we give back each time.

In the end we give it all back to the elements. We are conditioned beings; the conditions work our body and our mind; the conditions are all around us. Whatever that lives, that exists, is conditioned.

All that we are—*form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—"whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near"[88] should be seen, as they really are, with right wisdom, thus: "**This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self."**[89]

3.4.4 The 6 sense-bases are the tools of our being

3.4.4.1 As already noted [3.4.3.1], **the 6 sense-bases** (*saḷ-āyatana*) consist of the 5 physical senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and the mind. In other words, this is the way we experience the 4 primary elements (plus space as the 5th), through the mind, that is, consciousness, which is the 6th element.[90] Although there is the physical world "out there," what we experience of it is, as a rule, our own construction or projection of the world in our own minds by way of the 6 elements: *earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness*.

In modern terms, we may see **earth** as *solidity* or matter (which includes light and sound); **water** as *cohesiveness* or "contact" as in smell, taste and touch (their molecules impact sensory surfaces); **fire** is heat, that is, combustion, oxidation, digestion and decay (including the aging process); **wind** is basically *motion.* However*,* it is not only perpetual motion of each of the 4 primary elements (earth, water, fire and wind) themselves, but it is their mutual transformation or interchanges.

For example, technically, we can see the contact of the molecules of smell, taste and touch as a manifestation of *the earth element.* The speed of light and of sound is technically a measure of *the wind element* in these 2 elements. The rapid motion of these elements generates *the heat element,* which we understand today as the decaying process of those states. In short, *the wind element* as motion embodies one of the most basic early Buddhist key teachings: **impermanence**.

Space is usually understood as vacuum or emptiness. We know today that there is no perfect vacuum because it contains extremely low pressure and density of matter; it contains the earth element. Outer space vacuum, in fact, has no perfect vacuum as it still contains diffuse particles, such as atoms, dust, protons, and electrons (all of which are forms of the earth element), forming the interstellar medium (ISM; the space between stars), filled with radiation (the fire element) and magnetic fields (forms of the water element).

The multi-phase medium is crucial for star formation, with dense regions known as molecular clouds acting as stellar nurseries. The ISM's varying densities, temperatures, and compositions allow for the

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[88] The totality formula: *atītânagata,paccupannaṁ ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddhā vā oḷarikaṁ vā sukhumaṁ vā hīnaṁ vā panītaṁ vā yaṁ dūre santike vā.* See **(Dve) Khandha S** (S 22.48) + SD 17.1a (3); **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17-21), SD 1.2.

[89] This sentence refers to negating the 3 graspings (*ti,vidha gāha*), which are: (1) "This is mine" (*etam mama*), which arises from craving (*taṇhā*); (2) "This I am" (*eso ham'asmi*), which arises from conceit (*māna*); (3) "This is my self" (*eso me attā*), which arises from self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*): see SD 19.1 (1.2). **Mahā Hatthi,padopama S** (M 28,7) more concisely says: "There can be no considering that (element) as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'" (M 28,7/-1:185), SD 6.16, which represents respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), craving (*taṇhā*) and conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f), or as "graspings" (*gāha)*, namely, view (*diṭṭhi*), craving, conceit (MA 2:111, 225). On their opp: *n'etaṁ mama, n'eso 'ham asmi, na mêso attā ti,* applied to the 5 aggregates, see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,12-16), SD 1.2. On the nature of the 3 graspings, see respectively: **I: The nature of identity,** SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit,** SD 19.2a & **Mine: The nature of craving,** SD 19.3.

[90] On the 6 elements, see **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 11,8-12), SD 3.11.

formation of complex molecules and play a vital role in the lifecycle of matter within a galaxy. A similar microcosmos of elements works to produce change and growth in our own bodies. The only difference is that we have **consciousness**. We know of these processes; we notice the changes that we undergo; we wonder and fret over the termination of such processes.

We notice how pain arises in the wake of such changes; we suffer in our desire for these processes to remain unchanged. This can never be: *to exist is to change*. Looking deeper, we will notice that there is no fixed state in any of these processes. Even a "steady state" phase of the universe is undergoing subtle but sure changes; the steady state is itself part of the whole process of this changing universe.

Hence, by reflecting on impermanence, we see how at even the most fundamental level of all existence and our lives, all the elements change, they end and re-arise, without any fixed or final state. When we apply this understanding to our own being, we begin to see more of the true reality of ourselves. When we fully understand this, we reach awakening: the mind is free of the elements. There is neither mind, nor elements, nor nothingness. This is as far as we can put "it" into words.

3.4.4.2 Through **language**, we create *words, symbols and names* to represent what we have fabricated or imagined. Using language, we formulate and evolve theories and ideas about good, evil, right and wrong, God, heaven and hell; we create societies and destroy them, and we tell stories about them for our glorification or to control the masses. We live in a world of concepts and make-believe where *names are not the things named*.

In other words, we live in a virtual reality constructed by our mirror-like mind, and we, as a rule, take this inner virtual reality as more real than the actual reality out there. In this way, we fail to see what is really out there and live in our own private reality forming private views. Since we are habitually not in sync with true reality, we are likely to have a deluded view of things, such as the notion of an abiding self, some external agency we depend on for succour, and so on.

We thus have 2 kinds of beliefs or religions: one thinks that these names are real and wants us to believe them to be so; the other reminds us that these are merely names and forms, and to learn to see things as they really are. The Buddha teaches that we should learn to see true reality and thus be free.

3.4.4.3 In the context of **the 5 aggregates**, *form* refers to our body and any physical reality; our mind is made up of the other 4 aggregates, that is, *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*. This listing is only a theoretical taxonomy for teaching purposes. In practical reality, we create "**name-and-form**" (*nāma,rūpa*); we mentally project (*rūpa*) what we experience (*nāma*). For example, when there is an old tree-trunk on the beach, stripped bare and washed smooth by the sea, a Town Council worker may see it as mere junk and have it removed; a poor wood-cutter sees it as fuel for his fire; children have fun climbing and playing on and around it; an artist sees an exquisite piece of natural art.

3.4.4.4 In early Buddhist psychology, ***nāma*** is made up of *contact, feeling, perception, volition, and attention.* In our daily experience, even during meditation, we tend to direct our mind to a sense-object or a mind-object (say, the breath) with the mind. With some proper attention, there arises **contact**: we mentally "see" the breath. Then, we **feel** calm for this breath-sign, and **perceive** joy for it due to the absence of greed, hatred and delusion. A deep sense of acceptance and satisfaction follows: this is **volition** (a karmic or intentional act). With joyful faith, we pay **attention** to this breath-experience.[91]

What is described above is a case of the arising of *nāma,rūpa* with a mind-object. ***Rūpa*** is the form (or "feel") of the breath. It is the earth element that we feel when the breath contacts our nose-tip (for

[91] The mind (*citta*) arises as interaction between *rūpa* (form) and *nāma* (name), comprising contact, feeling, perception, volition, and attention. In modern terms, this is "cognitive consciousness": see **Nagara S** (S 12.65), SD 14.2 (2); & ***Viññāṇa***, SD 17.8a (6).

example); when the breath fogs up a cool glass surface, the breath is the water element; the warmth of the breath that we feel is the fire element; and the movement of inhalation and exhalation is the wind element. All this is ***rūpa***. The deep joyful peace we feel in the breath is ***nāma***; it is a mental state.

Briefly then, ***nāma*** comprises the *contact, feeling, perception, volition and attention* arising on account of our mindfulness of the breath. Even a thought or reflection of the breath brings us joyful peace and inspiration. In this case, *nāma,rūpa* is a wholesome part of our cognitive consciousness.[92]

3.4.5 The 7 awakening factors

3.4.5.1 The 7 awakening factors (*satta,bojjhaṅga*), the stages to deep and liberating meditation, are namely:[93]

(1) mindfulness,	*sati sambojjhaṅga*;
(2) investigation of states,	*dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*;
(3) effort,	*viriya sambojjhaṅga*;
(4) zest,	*pīti sambojjhaṅga*;
(5) tranquillity,	*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*;
(6) concentration, and	*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*;
(7) equanimity.	*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*.

These 7 awakening-factors work in 2 ways: as a sequence or as sets. For the adept meditator or when the meditation is successful, the 7 awakening-factors work sequentially to bring about dhyana, as illustrated in **the Bojjhaṅga Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3).[94]

For the unawakened meditator, especially when the mind is "stuck," factors 2-4 as a set should be applied; and when the mind is "restless," factors 5-7 as a set should be cultivated. Factor 1 (mindfulness) applies to both cases. This is laid out in **the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta** (S 45.53) [4.3].

3.4.5.2 In satipatthana practice, the 7 awakening factors are properly applied in the following ways:

(1) **Mindfulness** (*sati*) refers to when all the 5 hindrances [3.4.1.2] have been temporarily removed. The calm and clear mind is then directed to the 1st satipatthana, **contemplation of body** [2.1.1], such as the breath meditation [2.1.1.1].

(2) **Dharma-investigation** (*dhamma,vicaya*) here refers especially to observing the rise and fall of the breath, and the spaces that arise between the breaths as one's concentration builds up.[95]

(3) **Effort** [energy] (*viriya*) comes as a result of dharma-investigation. It is making effort to bring back the wandering mind each and every time, and to keep the mind anchored on the breath (the right efforts).[96]

(4) **Zest** [joy] (*pīti*) is transomatic joy (mild form of dhyana) that arises from dharma-investigation and builds up with effort in minding the breath, especially when the breath is finally stilled.[97]

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[92] On *nāma,rūpa* as ordinary cognitive consciousness: **Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S** (S 22.57,26-29), SD 29.2; ***Viññāṇa*** SD 17.8a (6.1.1).

[93] See **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15, see "doctrinal summary" (1.0.3); **Mahā Sakul'udāyī S** (M 77,20) + SD 6.18 (7); **Aggañña S** (D 27,30), SD 2.19.

[94] S 46.3, SD 10.15 (4.1 f).

[95] On the breath's rise, fall and pause, see SD 17.2b (1.1).

[96] SD 10.16 (6).

[97] **Vimuttâyatana Sutta** (A 5.26,2.3), SD 21.5 (2) on *pāmojja.*

(5) **Tranquillity** (*passaddhi*) follows from zest, and settles the body (that is, feeling, perception and formations are temporarily suspended).[98]

(6) **Concentration** (*samādhi*) becomes deeper and stills the mind, too, bringing about dhyana (*jhāna*).[99]

(7) **Equanimity** (*upekkhā*) refers to joyful composure and peace resulting from samadhi or dhyana, which is a preparatory stage to the formless dhyanas.[100]

3.4.5.3 The above explanation of the awakening-factors is a simplified one based on the breath meditation. The awakening-factors can be similarly applied to other aspects of satipatthana practice. Such a practice helps bring concentration to an ordinary practitioner, and brings dhyana to an experienced meditator.

On an even simpler level, a new or inexperienced meditator should apply **the 5 grounds for freedom** (*pañca vimutt'āyatana*) that leads to concentration, even dhyana, as taught in **the Vimutt'āyatana Sutta** (A 5.26), thus:

> **Inspired by the meaning [goal] and by the Dharma** [knowing the Dharma in the spirit and in the letter],[101]
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | **gladness**[102] arises in him; | ***pāmujjaṁ*** *[pāmojjaṁ] jāyati* |
> | because of gladness, **zest** arises; | *pamuditassa **pīti** jāyati* |
> | because of zest, the body[103] becomes **tranquil**; | *pīti,manassa kāyo **passambhati*** |
> | when the body is tranquil, he feels **happiness**; | *passadha,kāyo **sukha**ṁ vedeti* |
> | a happy mind becomes **concentrated**. | *sukhino cittaṁ **samādhiyati*** |
>
> (A 5.26,2.3), SD 21.5

This teaching is a kind of simplified set of awakening-factors focusing on **being joyful** in our meditation. What we think during meditation, whether something negative or something positive, affects our meditation. To help suspend thinking during meditation, we should habitually **smile** (an inner smile) to help us focus. Hence, we should also *smile with lovingkindness* towards any distraction or hindrance, and then return to our meditation-object.

3.4.6 The 4 noble truths

3.4.6.1 The 4 noble truths (*catu ariya sacca*) are the defining teachings of early Buddhism, formulating the reality of *suffering, its arising, its ending and the path to the ending of suffering*. The truths are here listed in the well-known sequence of (1) truth, (2) arising, (3) ending, and (4) path, that is, the teaching sequence, such as that given in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11).[104] This sequence is meant for neophytes to understand the truths sequentially, and then move to the path of awakening, that is, take up the 3 trainings of moral conduct, mental concentration and insight wisdom.

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[98] SD 10.15 (4.4).

[99] ***Dhyana***, SD 8.4.

[100] **Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140,20-21), SD 4.17**.**

[101] On this phrase, see SD 101.7 (2.2.4).

[102] Comy explains *pāmujja* or *pāmojja* as "weak zest" (*taruṇa,pīti*) (AA 3:230).

[103] Comy glosses "body" (*kāya*) here as "the mental body" (*nāma,kāya*), ie, the mind or mental aggregates (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness) (AA 2:230; ThīA 160): see ***Viññāṇa,*** SD 17.8a (5.2).

[104] S 56.111/5:420-424 (SD 1.1) = Mv 1.6.16-32 (V 1:10-12).

3.4.6.2 The original or oldest sequence of the 4 noble truths, as taught in the actual "first turning of the Dharma-wheel"[105] to the 5 monks, must have been sequenced as 1-2-4-3, that is, *first the truths of suffering, its arising, and the path are taught, and then its ending is explained*. Hence, this may be called **the practice sequence**, which is listed in at least one sutta, **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149).[106]

3.4.6.3 In simple terms, the 4 noble truths are the transcendental problem-solving formula in both secular and spiritual senses, as shown in the following sequence, thus:

	definition	**description**
(*1*) suffering	lack, unsatisfactoriness, like/dislike	identifying the problem
(*2*) arising of suffering	craving, habitual dissatisfaction	knowing the conditions
(*4*) path to the ending of suffering	training in body, mind and the world	morality, mindfulness, wisdom
(*3*) ending of suffering	satisfaction, contentment, freedom	resolving the conditions, joy

At the root of the above **truth-training** is the wisdom of nonself. Our suffering—bodily, mental, social or spiritual—is not to be blamed on anyone or any one thing. *No one* is the cause of suffering. It arises from our notion of Self—"I, me, mine"—by way of self-identity view (identifying with any aspect of our body or being),[107] of conceit (measuring self and other),[108] or craving (desiring to have or to be).[109] Simply, it means that our suffering, failure or lack arise from conditions. Remove the conditions or remove ourselves from the conditions, and we will begin to solve the problem.

3.4.7 Renouncing dharmas, realizing Dharma

3.4.7.1 The 4th and last satipatthana is the contemplation of dharmas (*dhammânupassanā*), mindful observation of truths and realities arising in our mind. We will only know what that dharma (as teaching and training) is when we have learned and understood the Dharma (as reality); then, in practice, we will recognize it; and with mindfulness realize its truth, which will free us from ignorance at this stage [3.3.3.4].

Studying the Dharma as teaching and true reality begins with mindfully reciting or hearing it with joy. We take it at the word level at first; maybe that is all we understand for a start. We must take care not to simply interpret or re-interpret it with some views we hold, or piously repeat what we have been told. Then, we have only reinforced our old wrong views; we remain unmoved and unchanged.

3.4.7.2 Practising the Dharma as we understand it means that we reflect on it, and then apply that teaching to our daily life, observing how it actually operates in real life. This usually takes some time, like fruit taking time to ripen, but the awakening moment seems sudden, like ripe durian falling on its own. It may come as a "Eureka!" (I've found it!) moment of insight, and we begin to notice how it is connected to

[105] We do not have a "historical" record of the 1st sermon. **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11) is prob a reconstruction of the teaching as recalled by the Buddha much later for the benefit of posterity. The only difference between the historical teaching and the sutta reconstruction is in the sequence of the truths, which is a minor but useful technicality. We are given an example of "theory, practice and realization," ie, the 3 good truths (*saddhamma*) [3.2.2.3].

[106] M 149,11 etc, + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

[107] **"I: The nature of identity,"** SD 19.1.

[108] "**Me: The nature of conceit**," SD 19.2a.

[109] "M**ine: The nature of craving**," SD 19.3.

other realities. It thus happens slowly at first, and then all at once. The most significant "all at once" Eureka moment is when we realize something wholesome about ourself:[110]

- that we have *neither* known nor accepted evil when it encountered *us*; or
- that we have done *evil* but we know now how to reject it; or
- that we have *not* done the truly good, and now we know how to do it; or
- that we have *done* good, and will now cultivate it.

3.4.7.3 Realizing the Dharma that is true reality means that we begin to notice and feel terrified at the idea that since we have been *born*, we will *age*, we will fall *sick* bodily or mentally, and we will eventually *die*. When we react with some profound fear or sadness, we have understood it; this is called **spiritual urgency** (*saṁvega*). First, there is a sense of seeming powerlessness to do anything about it.

Then, we notice that it is the fear that we must be rid of; for, those who let *fear* choke their lives are already dead. Yet, no one really dies since we are reborn, unless we are awakened. We must thus learn to live with true happiness. The happy life is best lived with Dharma-life, *knowing the mind, taking it, freeing it*. This urgent knowledge is what draws us closer to the path, to realization of nirvana.

3.4.8 The 2 parables on true renunciation

3.4.8.1 The Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22) records the Buddha's warnings against the wrong grasp (misunderstanding, misusing and abusing) of the Dharma by way of 2 parables. The first, **the parable of the water-snake**, runs thus:

> 10.4 Suppose **a man who needs a water-snake**,
> looking for a water-snake, wandering in search of a water-snake,
> sees a large water-snake and grasps its coils or its tail.
> It would turn back and bite his hand or his arm or one of his limbs, **[134]**
> and because of that he would suffer death or deadly pain.
> Why is that? Because, bhikshus, of the wrong grasp of the water-snake.
>
> 10.5 So, too, here, some misguided person learns the Dharma … but having learnt the Dharma,
> they do not wisely examine the (true) purpose [meaning] of those teachings.
> 10.6 Without examining the purpose of those teachings with wisdom,
> they are not convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom].
> Instead, they learn the Dharma *only for the sake of criticizing others and for winning debates*,
> and *they do not enjoy the good for the sake of which one learns the Dharma*.
> Those teachings, wrongly grasped by them,
> bring them *harm and suffering* for a long time to come.
> Why is that? Because, bhikshus, of the wrong grasp of the teachings.
>
> (M 22,10.4-10.6), SD 3.13

The parable of the watersnake warns us against misunderstanding and misusing the Dharma; that we must simply let go, renounce, all wrong views, especially about the Dharma.

We should instead have **the right grasp** of the Dharma, thus:

> Suppose a man who needs **a water-snake**,
> looking for a water-snake, wandering in search of a water-snake,
> sees a large water-snake and catches it rightly with a cleft stick,

[110] The foll are the 4 right efforts in practice: SD 10.16 (6).

and having done so, **grasps it rightly by its neck**.
Then, although the snake might coil around his hand or his arm or one of his limbs,
still he would *not* suffer death or deadly pain.[111]
Why is that? Because of the right grasp of the water-snake.
12 Therefore, bhikshus, when you *understand* the meaning of my word, *remember* it accordingly,
and when you do *not* understand the meaning of my word,
then you should question and counter-question either me or the learned monks about it.
(M 22,11.2-12), SD 3.13

The essence of the parable of the watersnake is that:
(1) we should not misunderstand the Buddha's teaching, especially by simply accepting what we hear (even from popular and respectable teachers), but courageously question the teachers, and carefully investigate and master the Dharma for ourselves.
(2) Conversely, we should fully renounce and totally avoid wrong views—based on greed, hatred, delusion or fear—especially religious teachings, whether in the name of Buddhism or from other systems, but carefully study and master the Dharma for ourselves.

3.4.8.2 The 2nd parable—**the parable of the raft**—is about *proper study, practice and realization of the Dharma*—that having *become* Dharma, we must *let go* of all dharmas, both Dharma and not-Dharma. This means that the Dharma as teaching and true reality should be used "for crossing over [the waters and landing on the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping; thus:

"Bhikshus, suppose a man in the course of his journey saw a great stretch of water,
whose **near shore** is dangerous and fearful, and whose **far shore** is safe and fear-free,
but there is neither ferry nor bridge for going across to the far shore. **[135]**
Then, he thinks:
There is **this great stretch of water**, *whose near shore is dangerous and fearful, and*
whose far shore is safe and danger-free,
but there is neither ferry nor bridge for going across to the far shore.

13.3 What now if I were to collect grass, wood, branches and leaves,
and bind them together into **a raft**, and supported by the raft,
and exerting effort with my hands and feet, I go safely across to the far shore?
Then, the man *collects grass, wood, branches and leaves, and*
binds them together into a raft, and supported by the raft.
He exerts himself using his hands and feet, goes safely across to the far shore.[112]

13.4 Then, when he has gone across and arrived on the far shore, he might think thus:
'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it,
and exerting effort with my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore.
Suppose I were to *hoist it on my head or bear it on my shoulder, then go wherever I want?*'

13.5 Now, bhikshus, what do you think?
By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with the raft?"
"No, bhante."

[111] Cf Buddhaghosa's parable of the fisherman and the watersnake: catching in his hand a watersnake and recognizing it so, he at once casts it as far away as possible and scrambles on to a high and dry place for safety (Vism 21.49/652), SD 20.1 (6.2.1.3).
[112] Cf a similar parable at **Asīvisôpama S** (S 35.238,8/4:174), SD 28.1. See also SD 52.11 (1.2.2.2).

13.6 "By doing what, would that man be doing what should be done with the raft?
Here, bhikshus, when that man has gone across and arrived on **the far shore**,
he might think thus:
'This raft has been very helpful to me, since, *supported by it and*
using my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore.
Suppose I were to haul it onto dry land or set it adrift in the water, and go wherever I wish?'
13.7 Now, bhikshus, by doing so, that man is *doing what should be done with that raft*.

13.8 Even so I have shown you that **Dharma**[113] is comparable to **a raft**, which is *for crossing over* (the waters to the far shore), not for the purpose of grasping.

14 Bhikshus, having understood the parable of the raft, **you should abandon even dharmas [the good], how much more so what are not-dharmas [the bad]!**[114]

(M 22,13 f), SD 3.13

These 2 parables highlight the truth that all teachings, especially religious teachings, are merely tools for individual understanding, social harmony and spiritual development. A religion is good with regards to such qualities. Even then, such teachings can be better effected by good education and wholesome socialization.

Yet all this goodness—personal, social and spiritual—are trends and training for becoming better individuals, for a better society and for spiritual freedom from *craving and ignorance*. When we are free from craving and ignorance—with just some wisdom of what they really are—as awakened beings or as compassionate persons, or just as we are, we can inspire happiness, goodness and peace in others, *free from religious dogma, beliefs, rituals and power*. We can then help awaken and free others from samsaric blindness and bondage.

3.4.8.3 Daily awakening. Life is but a karmic slumber from which we awake each karmic day. We wake and the sun brightens the day. Even when the sky is overcast, we know that the sun is up there behind the clouds, keeping the time and rhythm of life. When day is done, the sun sets and so must we rest in our own time.

We daily awake to the sun rising and setting, samsara's breath, just as we take in each breath and give it back. It's a really long karmic slumber with intermittent waking moments called "life." When we understand this, we then awake each day with joy ready to move on, searching the suttas and settling our minds so that we, with light-dust eyes, can see better. The real awakening begins here.

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[113] Here *dhamma* (sg) has a broad uncountable sense encompassing "teaching/s; the good; the wholesome; mental states and objects; truth; reality and associated states and ideas." For comy, see SD 3.13 (3.3), esp (3.3.2).

[114] *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā*. See prec n.

(Satipaṭṭḥāna) Sālā Sutta

The (Satipatthana) Discourse at Sālā

S 47.4

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at the brahmin village of **Sālā** in Kosala.

2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

The novice monks (newly ordained) (*bhikkhu nava*)

3 "Bhikshus, those monks who are **newly ordained**,
not long gone forth, recently come to this Dharma-Vinaya,
should by you be made to take up, be settled, be established
in the cultivation of the 4 focuses of mindfulness.[115]
What are the four?

"[They should be instructed thus:]

4 'Come, avusos,

(1) dwell contemplating **body in the body**, *kāye kāyânupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,[116]
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,[117]
for knowing the body as it really is.[118]

(2) Dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings**, *vedanāsu vedanā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing feelings as they really are.

(3) Dwell contemplating **mind in the mind**, *citte cittā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing the mind as it really is.

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[115] *Ye te bhikkhave **bhikkhū navā** | acira,pabbajitā adhun'āgatā imaṁ dhammavinayaṁ, | te vo bhikkhave bhikkhū catunnaṁ satipaṭṭhānānaṁ bhāvanāya samādapetabbā, nivesetabbā patipaṭṭhāpetabbā.*

[116] *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā*. This is an abridgement of the sentence in **Satipaṭṭhāna** (M 10), which reads: "exertive, clearly aware, mindful, … removing covetousness and displeasure [discontent] in regard to the world" (*ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṁ*) (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3 (where see nn). These lines apply only to the practice of the novice monks and the unawakened.

[117] *Ekodi,bhūtā vippasanna,cittā samāhitā ekagga,cittā*. Comy explains "unified (mind)" (*ekodi,bhūta*) as "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*) and "one-pointed mind" (*ekagga,citta*) as "the mind that is rightly fixed by way of access concentration or full concentration (viz, dhyana)" (*upacār'appaṇā,vasena sammā ṭhapita,citta ca ekagga,cittā ca*) (SA 3:200,4-6).

[118] *Kāyassa yathā,bhūtaṁ ñāṇāya.*

(4) Dwell contemplating **dharma [reality] in the dharmas**, *dhammesu dhammā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing dharmas as they really are.' **[145]**

The learners (*sekha*)

5 Bhikshus, those monks who are **learners**,
who have not attained perfection,[119] who dwell aspiring for supreme safety from the yoke:[120]

(1) they too dwell contemplating **body in the body**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding the body.[121]

(2) They too dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings,**
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding feelings.

(3) They too dwell contemplating **mind in the mind**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding the mind.

(4) They too dwell contemplating **dharma [reality] in the dharmas**
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding dharmas.

The arhats (*arahata*)

6 Bhikshus, those monks who are **arhats**,
whose influxes are destroyed,
who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden,
reached their own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and
are fully freed through final knowledge:

(1) they too dwell contemplating **body in the body**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached [freed] from the body.[122]

---

[119] "Who have not attained perfection" (*a-p,patta,mānassa*, lit "having not attained one's wishes"); qu at DhsA 140,16.* Comy on **Godhika S** (S 4.23,11.4/1:121,19*) glosses it as "not attained arhathood" (*appatta,arahatto*, SA 1:183.20). *Appatta,mānaso* occurs in **Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1), SD 11.8.

[120] *Ye'pi te bhikkhave bhikkhū **sekhā** appatta,mānasā anuttaraṁ yoga-k,khemaṁ patthayamānā viharanti*. On *yoga-k,khema*, see SD 51.11 (2.2.2); SD 55.9 (1.3.2.3).

[121] *Kāyassa pariññāya*.

(2) They too dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from feelings.

(3) They too dwell contemplating **mind in mind**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from the mind.

(4) They too dwell contemplating **dharmas in the dharmas**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from dharmas.

7 Bhikshus, those monks who are **newly ordained**, not long gone forth,
recently come to this Dharma-Vinaya,
should by you be made to take up, be settled, be established
in the cultivation of these 4 focuses of mindfulness."

—evaṁ—

250309 250321 251022 251116

[122] *Kāyena visaṁyuttā*.

SD 62.16 (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse to Tapussa

or **Tapassu Sutta** The Tapassu Discourse

A 9.41

Theme: Renunciation and the 9 progressive abodes

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2025

Notes and cross-references numbering 3 and above are found in **SD 62.17,** "Truth and Path: Some key terms."

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The householder Tapussa [2] expresses to Ānanda that it is difficult for the laity, enjoying sensual pleasures, to renounce the world, and expresses his surprise that young men in their prime are willing and able to renounce worldly pleasures for life in the sangha. Ānanda takes Tapussa to see the Buddha, who explains the joy of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) in terms of how he, that is the Buddha himself, gained full awakening by way of the 9 successive abodes[1] (experiential stages) of meditation, namely, *the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments and cessation of perception and feeling*.

The Sutta closes with the Buddha making 2 important statements. The first is that he has attained all these 9 abodes **in both the direct order and the reverse order** [§14.2]. The second is that on account of this he has won "**unshakable freedom of mind**" (*akuppa ceto,vimutti*) [§14.3].

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 The Sutta's 2 key points

1.2.1.0 The (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta teachings have 2 important implications:

(1) **§§2-4**. The Buddha's teaching, in essence, is about **renunciation** [1.2.1.1].

(2) **§§5-14**. That renunciation consists of letting go of mental defilements so that one attains ever **higher states of mental freedom**, culminating in awakening itself [1.2.1.2].

1.2.1.1 The Sutta opens with **the layman Tapussa** meeting Ānanda and telling him:

"We laymen enjoy sensual pleasures … " [§2.1].

Hence, "renunciation is like a precipice to us" [§2.2], meaning that it is almost impossible for laymen (like Tapussa) to let go of sense-pleasures and become renunciants.

Yet, Tapussa is surprised to hear that there are many young renunciants, happily enjoying the monastic life, finding total peace in it. [§2.3]

[1] *Nava anupubba,vihāra:* **Jhānâbhiññā S** (S 16.9), SD 50.7 (1.2.1.2); **(Navaka) Jhāna S** (A 9.36), SD 33.8; SD 1.8 (2.2.3) (3)n. These 9 are the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti* or *āruppa*) and the attainment of cessation (*nirodha,samāpatti*). **Analayo**, in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya,* notes that these 9 attainments blinding Māra, "occur in similar terms in the preceding discourse, **the Nivāpa Sutta** [M 25/-1:159 f], where the passage fits the context better than in the present instance." (2005:95): cf A 9.39/4:433 f.

Tapussa then concludes thus:

"This **renunciation** … is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd." [§2.4]

meaning that letting go of sensual pleasures is what distinguishes true renunciants from members of the worldly crowd.

Since Tapussa has such an insight into the nature of renunciation, Ananda feels that Tapussa would benefit from a deeper teaching from the Buddha himself. Ānanda suggests that Tapussa meet the Buddha [§2.5].

1.2.1.2 In the second part of the Sutta (that is the bulk of the Sutta), the Buddha elaborates on **true renunciation** as rooted in seeing the danger in sensual pleasures [§4.4]. In due course, says the Buddha,

" … having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I developed myself, and having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I pursued it." [§4.9]

The Buddha then goes on to define renunciation—from the Buddha's own experience of awakening—as the attaining of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anububba,vihāra*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas [§§5-8], the 4 formless attainments [§§9-12], and the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling [§13]. The textual format of each of the 4 form dhyanas and 4 formless attainments is similar as seen in this comparative table:

	form dhyanas	**danger**		**formless dhyanas**	**danger**
1.	the 1st dhyana	sensual pleasures	5.	the 1st formless attainment	forms
2.	the 2nd dhyana	thoughts	6.	the 2nd formless attainment	base of infinity of space
3.	the 3rd dhyana	zest (joy)	7.	the 3rd formless attainment	base of infinity of consciousness
4.	the 4th dhyana	equanimity	8.	the 4th formless attainment	base of nothingness

The "**danger** or disadvantage" (*ādīnava*) should be transcended in order to attain dhyana or attainment. This *danger* is then said to be an "**affliction** or disease" (*ābādha*)—a metaphor or euphemism for "suffering"—since it prevents the meditator from attaining the following state. In other words, that danger must be renounced for one to progress higher until one is able to overcome all mental defilements.

We thus see in the Buddha's account of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*anupubba,vihāra*) [§§4-13] a progressive renunciation of dhyana-factors in each of the "abodes" (the dhyana or the attainment) until the attainment of cessation, when all mental defilements are overcome.

Upon renouncing all mental defilements—basically these are sensual desires, existence, views and ignorance—one attains **arhathood**, and experiences nirvana in this life itself. This nirvana experience is called **the cessation of feeling and perception** (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*) or simply "cessation." Another term for this cessation is the "nirvana with residue" (*sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna*). The "residue" here are the karma-free 5 aggregates, where "formation" (*saṅkhāra*) cease to create new karma (whether bad or good). However, some old karma may ripen when the conditions are right but the arhat has no problem at all in facing their fruitions. Upon dying, that is, when the remnants of the 5 aggregates cease to function, the arhat is no more reborn, since consciousness in all its forms (including rebirth-consciousness) have ceased. This is the nirvana without residue (*anupādi,sesa nibbāna*).[2] This is **the highest renunciation**.

[2] *Upādi*, "substrates," refers to the 5 aggregates: **D 22**,22.16 (SD 13.2). On *upādi,sesa,* see **Sa,upādi,sesa S** (A 9.12), SD 3.3(3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1), SD 45.18 (2.5).

1.2.2 The 9 progressive abodes

1.2.2.1 The Buddha's teaching to both Ānanda and Tapussa, as recorded in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta**, is to show how meditation—listed as **the "9 progressive abodes**" (*anupubba,vihāra*) [3.1]—is practised as **true renunciation**. By renouncing the world of senses and thoughts (the 6 senses)—represented by the 5 hindrances[3]—one attains the 1st dhyana [3.1.1.1]. And then by progressively renouncing the 5 dhyana-factors, one progresses through **the 4 form-dhyanas** [3.1.1]. By progressively renouncing consciousness itself, one attains **the 4 formless bases** [3.1.2]. Giving up the mind itself, that is, all consciousness—perception and feeling—one attains **cessation** [3.1.3].

1.2.2.2 The 9 progressive abodes are mentioned in a number of suttas either briefly as a set or as part of a lesson to others. They are listed, mostly briefly, in the following suttas:

Raho,gata Sutta	S 36.11/4:217	summary of [§§5-13]	SD 33.6 (3.2);
(Navaka) Anupubba Nirodha Sutta	A 9.31/4:409	= D 33,3.2(6)/3:266	SD 33.6(3.2.3);
(Navaka) Anupubba,vihāra Sutta	A 9.32/4:410		SD 95.1;
(Navaka) Anupubba,vihara Samāpatti Sutta[4]	A 9.33/4:410 f	with some details;	SD 95.2;
(Navaka) Tapussa Sutta	A 9.41/4:438-447		SD 62.16.

2 Tapussa

2.1 WHICH TAPUSSA?

2.1.1 Neither **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41) nor its commentary (AA 4:203 f) tells us who Tapussa really was. The Sutta (A 9.41) only tells us about a certain Tapussa who tells Ānanda that to laymen who enjoy sensual pleasures "renunciation seems like a precipice" [§2.2]—it is difficult, even impossible for them— and expresses his surprise at so many young monks who are able to happily enjoy the peace of renunciation. He concludes that "this renunciation is what divides the crowd from the monks in this Dharma Vinaya" [§2.4].

Due to the doubts that **Tapussa** of the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta has in renunciation, it is highly unlikely that he is a streamwinner. Hence, he cannot be Tapussa 1, the layman streamwinner, who is Bhallika's brother [2.1.3]. For convenience, we can call the former, **Tapussa 2**, the protagonist of A 9.41. Otherwise, we have no other information about him.

2.1.2 Tapussa and Bhallika

2.1.2.1 Tapussa 1 appears early in the Buddha's ministry, in fact, on the 49th day after the great awakening. This Tapussa, a householder, was the brother of Bhallika, both of whom were merchants. On meeting the newly awakened Buddha, they became the first to go for refuge before the Buddha, thus

[3] The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) are: (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c,chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), (4) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): see ***Nīvaraṇa*,** SD 32 esp (1) & **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12. Cf **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39,13/1:274); see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,13), SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36), SD 13.3, on how to deal with the hindrances in one's meditation; **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,68/1:71), SD 8.10.

[4] Also called **Anupubba Vihāra Sutta 2**.

becoming the first lay followers. There is no mention of Bhallika, even indirectly, in the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta or its commentary.

2.1.2.2 The Thera,gātha Commentary—commenting on **the Bhalliya Thera,gāthā** (Tha 7)—recounts that the brothers Tapussa and Bhallika (called Bhalliya in the Thera,gāthā) visited the Buddha again after taking refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma. After the Buddha had given the 1st discourse to the 5 monks in the deer park at Benares, he walked in stages and reached Rāja,gaha, where he stayed.

There, Tapussa and Bhallika approached the Buddha and were given Dharma teachings. On account of listening to that teaching, **Tapussa** became a layman streamwinner, while Bhallika renounced the world to join the sangha, and became an arhat in due course. (ThaA 1:50,25-30)

2.2 (CHAKKA) TAPUSSA SUTTA (A 6.110), SD 87.15

2.2.1 Besides the Tapussa of **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41), there is another Tapussa mentioned in **the (Chakka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 6.119), SD 87.15. The Sutta Commentary says that this Tapussa is the lay follower who was "a two-refuge goer" (*dve,vācika,upāsako*) (AA 3:416,2). We shall call this **Tapussa 1**—the elder brother of Bhallika, both of whom were the first lay disciples by taking the 2 refuges [2.1.2].

2.2.2 Tapussa 1 is described at **A 6.119** as having 6 special qualities, that is, faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha, and who has the moral virtue, the wisdom and freedom of the noble ones. In short, Tapussa 1 is a streamwinner. As a streamwinner, it is impossible that Tapussa would have held any view of the difficulties regarding renunciation, as **Tapussa 2** does as recorded in **A 9.41**.

Clearly, Tapussa 2 (of **A 9.41**) could not be the same Tapussa as that of **A 6.110,** which describes him as "having gained certainty" by way of wise faith in the 3 jewels, that is, as a streamwinner who is "a seer of the deathfree, one who lives having realized the deathfree."[5]

[For passages numbering "3, 3.1," and so on, see **SD 17.18**.]

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[5] A 6.119/3:450 f (SD 87.15).

Navaka) Tapussa Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse to Tapussa

A 9.41

(Thus have I heard.)

1 At one time the Blessed One was staying among the Mallas.[6] There was a Malla market-town called Uruvela,kappa.[7] Then, in the morning, the Blessed One dressed, took his bowl and robe, and entered Uruvela,kappa for alms.

1.2 When he had walked for alms in Uruvela,kappa, after his meal, on returning from his almsround, he addressed the venerable Ānanda:

"Stay right here, Ānanda, while I enter the great wood (*mahā,vana*) to pass the day."

"Yes, bhante," the venerable Ānanda replied.

1.3 Then the Blessed One entered the great wood and sat down at the foot of a certain tree to pass the day.

2 [Ee 2][8] Then, the householder **Tapussa** approached the venerable Ānanda, saluted him, sat down at one side, and said to him:

"Bhante Ānanda, we laymen love sensual pleasures, enjoy sensual pleasures, delight in sensual pleasures, rejoice in sensual pleasures.

2.2 On account of *our loving sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, delighting in sensual pleasures, rejoicing in sensual pleasures*,[9]

renunciation seems to us to be a precipice![10]

2.3 Bhante, I have heard that 'In this Dharma-Vinaya there are many very young monks, whose minds plunge into renunciation, radiant, settled, freed,[11] seeing, "This is peaceful."'

2.4 This **renunciation**, bhante, is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd."[12] **[439]**

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[6] Be Ee *mallesu*; Se *mallakesu;* Ce AA 4;203,16 *malatesu.* **Bhadraka S** (S 42.11/4:327), SD 55.7, is also set at Uruvela,kappa, which is said to be a town of the Mallas.

[7] *Ekaṁ samayaṁ bhagavā mallesu viharati, uruvela,kappaṁ nāma mallānaṁ nigamo*. This sentence does not actually say in which place the Buddha is staying. A similar sentence structure is used in the opening of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,1), SD 13.2, **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,1.1 n), SD 13.1; **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15,1), SD 5.17; see esp SD 13.1 (1.3.1.2). The quaint opening sentence—like D 22,1 = M 10,22, *kammāsa,dhammaṁ nāma kurūnaṁ nigamo*—is to simply highlight that Uruvela,kappa is a crowded, prosperous market-town, and that the Buddha would not stay in such a place. However, he stayed nearby so that its people would benefit from the Dharma.

[8] "Ee" (European ed of the Pali), ie, PTS numbering within [square brackets] throughout. The Ee numbering conforms to the paragraph numbering in Be, reflecting the transitions in the Sutta better than in Ce.

[9] *Tesaṁ no bhante amhākaṁ gihīnaṁ kāma,bhogīnaṁ kām'ārāmānaṁ kāma,ratānaṁ kāma,sammuditānaṁ.*

[10] *Papāto viya khāyati, yad idaṁ nekkhammaṁ*. ***Khāyati*** is or 3 sg of *khāti,* "is known, named; seems, appears, is known."

[11] Comy glosses *vimuccati* here as "liberated from the opposing qualities" (*paccanīka,dhammehi ca vimuccati*). Since all MSS read *vimuccati* which Comy follows, the tr follows this. However, it is likely that the original reading was *adhimuccati, "*resolved upon" or "focused on." Following the text, we see the bodhisattva *vimuccati/adhimuccati* each successive meditative attainment before he actually achieves it. Clearly, then, the context dictates "focused on" rather than "liberated in."

[12] *Tayidaṁ bhante imasmiṁ dhamma,vinayaṁ bhikkhūnaṁ bahunā janena visabhāgo yad idaṁ nekkhamman ti.* Paraphrased, this sentence means "Renunciation is what separates the Dharma-spirited monastics from the world."

2.5 "This, householder, is a talk that is worthy of our seeing the Blessed One.

Come, let's go and see the Blessed One and report this matter to him. We shall keep in mind what the Blessed One explains to us."

"Yes, bhante," the householder Tapussa replied.

3 [Ee 3] Then, the venerable Ānanda, together with the householder Tapussa, went to the Blessed One, saluted him, sat down at one side, and said:

"Bhante, this householder Tapussa speaks thus:

3.2 '*Bhante Ānanda, we laymen love sensual pleasures, enjoy sensual pleasures, delight in sensual pleasures, rejoice in sensual pleasures*.

3.3 *On account of our loving sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, delighting in sensual pleasures, rejoicing in sensual pleasures*,

***renunciation** seems to us to be a precipice!*

3.4 *Bhante, I have heard that "In this Dharma-Vinaya there are many very young monks, whose minds plunge into renunciation, radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'*

3.5 *This **renunciation**, bhante, is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd*."

3.6 "So it is, Ānanda! So it is, Ānanda![13]

Before the awakening

4 [Ee 4] Before my awakening, Ānanda, while I was still a bodhisattva, not yet fully awakened, it occurred to me, too:

'**Good is renunciation! Good is solitude!**' (*sādhu nekkhammaṁ, sādhu paviveko ti*)

4.2 Yet, my mind neither plunged into renunciation, nor became radiant, settled, freed, (though) seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

4.3 It occurred to me, Ānanda:

'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into renunciation, nor became radiant, settled, freed, though seeing, "This is peaceful"*?'

4.4 It occurred to me, Ānanda:

'Indeed, I have not seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I have not developed that (insight); neither have I penetrated it **[440]** nor pursued it.

4.5 Therefore, my mind *neither plunged into **renunciation**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."*'

4.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I would have developed myself; having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I would enjoy it.

4.7 It is, then, possible that my mind will plunge into renunciation, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

4.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I developed myself, and having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I pursued it.

Comy interprets renunciation (*nekkhamma*) here as "going forth" (*pabbajjā*) into homelessness. But the text itself seems to highlight **renunciation** as an internal quality, implicitly identified with being firmly established in the 1st dhyana, ie, the overcoming of sensual pleasures.

[13] I follow the section divisions of Ee, which conform to the paragraph divisions in Be and show the transitions in the Sutta better than the divisions in Ce. The open quote at the start here closes right at the end of the Sutta [§14.3].

THE 9 PROGRESSIVE ABODES [1.1]

NAVA ANUPUBBA,VIHĀRA

(§§5-13)

(1) The 1st dhyana

5 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **renunciation** and became radiant with faith, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'[14]

5.2 Ānanda, quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects,[15] secluded from unwholesome mental states,

I attained and dwelled in **the 1st dhyana**,

accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and

with zest and joy born of solitude.[16]

5.3 Then, Ānanda, as I was dwelling in this state,

perception and attention **accompanied by *sensuality*** arose in me:

I felt it as an affliction![17]

5.4 Just as pain, Ānanda, would arise for one feeling pleasure, only to afflict one,

so, too, when perception and attention accompanied by *sensuality*, arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

(2) The 2nd dhyana

6 [Ee 5] Then, Ānanda, it occurred, to me:

'What now if I, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,

gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,

were to attain and dwell in **the 2nd dhyana**,

free from initial application and sustained application,

with zest and joy born of concentration?'[18]

6.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind, neither plunged into **the thought-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

6.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

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[14] **(Chakka) Paṭhama Jhāna S** (A 6.73/3:428 f) states that the 1st dhyana is attained only with the transcending of the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*), viz: *sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*.

[15] On the tr of *kāmehi* (pl), see SD 8.4 (5.1.1.1).

[16] "Born of solitude," *viveka,ja;* ie, it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see **The body in Buddhism,** SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of "one-pointedness of mind" (*cittassa ek'aggatā*) and "stillness" (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana** @ SD 8.5.

[17] This para also describes Moggallāna's experience: **Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.2), SD 24.12a. Both this and foll para recur in **Nibbāna Sukha S** (A 9.34), SD 55.1.

[18] The 2nd dhyana is known as "the noble silence" (*ariya,tuṇhī,bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka,vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī,saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to "either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence" (ie either talk Dharma or meditate). See **Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.

'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind did not plunge into the thought-free nor became *radiant, settled, freed, though I see that "This is peaceful"?'*

6.4 Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *thoughts***, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in being thought-free **[441]** nor pursued it.[19]

6.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into **the thought-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'*

6.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen the danger in *thoughts*,[20] I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the thought-free**, pursue it,[21]

6.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the thought-free, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

6.8 On another occasion,[22] Ānanda,
having seen **the danger in *thoughts***, I would develop that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in *the thought-free*, I pursued it;

6.9 then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into the thought-free, became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

6.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,
with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,
by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,
I attained and dwelled in **the 2nd dhyana**,
free from initial application and sustained application,
with zest and joy born of concentration.

6.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention accompanied by thinking[23] assailed me:[24] *I felt it as an affliction*.

6.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,
so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by thought [initial application] arose in me,
I felt it as **an affliction**.

(3) The 3rd dhyana

7 [Ee 6] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What now if I, with the fading away of zest,
remaining equanimous, mindful and clearly understanding, and

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[19] *Vitakkesu kho me ādīnavo adiṭṭho, so ca me abahulīkato, avitakke ca ānisaṁso anadhigato, so ca me anāsevito*.

[20] During meditation, here, preparing for the 1st dhyana.

[21] *Sace kho ahaṁ vitakkesu ādīnavaṁ disvā taṁ bahulaṁ kareyyaṁ, avitakke ānisaṁsaṁ adhigamma tam āseveyyaṁ.*

[22] "At another time" (*aparena samayena*). In this Sutta this time-marker refers the same night of the great awakening.

[23] Here "thinking" (*vitakka*) is a shorthand for both "initial application and sustained application" (*vitakka,vicāra*) but when the mind is already concentrated.

[24] *Tassa mayhaṁ, āvuso, iminā vihārena viharato vitakka,sahagatā saññā,manasikārā samudācaranti.* Comy to S 40.2,5 (SD 24.12a): One is distracted by sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*) (SA 3:90,2 f).

feeling joy with the body,[25]
were to attain and dwell in **the 3rd dhyana**,
of which the noble ones declare, "Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness"?'

7.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind, neither plunged into **the zest-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

7.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'What is the reason, what is the cause that my zest-free mind *neither plunged into the zest-free nor became radiant, nor settled*, **[442]** *nor freed, seeing, "This is peaceful"*?'

7.4 Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *zest***, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in being zest-free nor pursued it.

7.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into **the zest-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'*

7.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen **the danger** in *zest*, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the zest-free**, were to pursue it,

7.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the zest-free, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

7.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,
having seen **the danger in *zest***, I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in *the zest-free*, I pursued it.

7.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into the zest-free, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

7.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,[26]
with the fading away of zest,
I remained equanimous, mindful and clearly understanding, and
felt joy with the body.
I attained and dwelled in **the 3rd dhyana**,
of which the noble ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.'

7.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by *zest*** arose in me: *I felt it as an affliction*.

7.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,
so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by *zest* arose in me,
I felt it as **an affliction**.

(4) The 4th dhyana

8 [Ee 7] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What now if I, with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,[27]

[25] On this point, see **The Buddha discovers dhyana,** SD 33.1b (6.4.1): On coming out of dhyana.

[26] Ee Se read *aparena samayena* here and in each of the corresponding sections that follow. Be and Ce omit it in later sections.

and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,
were to attain and dwell in **the 4th dhyana**
that is neither painful nor pleasant, and
with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity?'[28]

8.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into **the neither pleasurable nor painful** [the neutral], nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

8.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into the neither pleasurable nor painful, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful"*?'

8.4 Then it occurred to me:
'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger** in ***the pleasure in equanimity***,[29] and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the absence of pleasure and pain[30] nor pursued it.

8.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into* ***the absence of pleasure and pain*****,** nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

8.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'If, having seen **the danger** in the pleasure in equanimity, **[443]** I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in ***the absence of pleasure and pain***, were to pursue it,

8.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the absence of pleasure and pain, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

8.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,
having seen **the danger** in ***the pleasure in equanimity*****,** I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in *the absence of pleasure and pain*, I pursued it.

8.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged in absence of pleasure and pain, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

8.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,
with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,
and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,
I attained and dwelled in **the 4th dhyana**
that is neither painful nor pleasant, and
with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.'

8.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by pleasure in equanimity** arose in me:[31] *I felt it as an affliction*.

8.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,

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[27] "Joy and pain," *sukha,dukkha:* this refers to the physical feelings. The next phrase—"pleasure and displeasure," *domanassa,somanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the physical sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see **Sall'atthena S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

[28] Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives, according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), 3 factors of the 4th dhyana—equanimity (*upekhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek'aggatā*); and, according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164), 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—(Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana** @ SD 8.4 (5.4).

[29] *Upekha,sukhe … ādīnavo.* See A 9.34,7.2 n (SD 55.1).

[30] *Adukkham-asukha.*

[31] This follows Be MSS listed in Ee, which read *upekhā,sukha,sahagatā,* "accompanied by the pleasure in equanimity." This fits the context better than the reading *upe(k)khā,sahagatā* found in Be Ce Se.

so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by *pleasure in equanimity* arose in me,
I felt it as **an affliction**.

(5) The base of the infinity of space

9 [Ee 8] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What now if I, by completely transcending the perceptions of form,
with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction,[32]
with non-attention to perceptions of diversity,
aware that 'Space is infinite,'
were to attain and dwell in **the base of the infinity of space** [the base of infinite space]?'

9.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of the infinity of space, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

9.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into the base of the infinity of space, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'*?

9.4 Then it occurred to me:
'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *forms***, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of space, nor pursued it.

9.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into* ***the base of the infinity of space***, nor became radiant, settled, freed, **[444]** seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

9.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'If, having seen the danger in forms, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in ***the base of the infinity of space***, were to pursue it,

9.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of the infinity of space, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

9.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
having seen **the danger** in forms, I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of space, I pursued it.

9.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of the infinity of space**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

9.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending perceptions of form,
with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction,
with non-attention to perceptions of diversity,
aware that 'Space is infinite,'
I attained and dwelled in **the base of the infinity of space**.

9.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by *forms*** arose in me: *I felt it as an affliction*.

9.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,

[32] "Perceptions of sense-reaction," *paṭigha,saññā,* also "sensory impact" (M:ÑB 267), "resistance-perception, reflex-perception" (BDict), said to be absent in the formless dhyanas. This is one of those terms that are only used contextually. See Vibh 245, §262; Vism 10.12-16.

so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by *forms* arose in me,
I felt it as **an affliction**.

(6) The base of the infinity of consciousness

10 [Ee 9] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What now if I, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space,
aware that "Consciousness is infinite,"
were to attain and dwell in **the base of the infinity of consciousness**?'
10.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of the infinity of consciousness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

10.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the base of the infinity of consciousness*, *nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'*?

10.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *the base of the infinity of space***, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of consciousness, nor pursued it.
10.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into the base of the infinity of consciousness*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

10.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'If, having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of space, **[445]** I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in ***the base of the infinity of consciousness***, were to pursue it,
10.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of the infinity of consciousness, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

10.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,
having seen **the danger** in the base of the infinity of space, I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I pursued it.
10.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of the infinity of consciousness,** and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

10.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space,
aware that 'Consciousness is infinite,'
I attained and dwelled in **the base of the infinity of consciousness**.

10.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by *the base of the infinity of space*** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.
10.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,
so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by *the base of the infinity of space* arose in me,
*I felt it as **an affliction***.

(7) The base of nothingness

11 [Ee 10] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'What now if I, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness,
aware that 'There is nothing,' (*n'atthi kiñcī ti*),
I were to attain and dwell in **the base of nothingness**?'

11.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

11.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'What is the reason, what is the cause that *my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful'*?

11.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *the base of the infinity of consciousness***, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of nothingness, nor pursued it.

11.5 As such, *my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

11.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in ***the base of nothingness***, were to pursue it,

11.7 it may then be possible that my **[446]** mind will plunge into the base of nothingness, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

11.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,
having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in the base of nothingness, I pursued it.

11.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of nothingness**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

11.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness,
aware that "*There is nothing*,"
I attained and dwelled in **the base of nothingness**.

11.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by the base of the infinity of consciousness** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.

11.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,
so, too, when that perception and attention
accompanied by *the base of the infinity of consciousness* arose in me,
*I felt it as **an affliction***.

(8) The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception

12 [Ee 11] Then, Ānanda', it occurred to me:
'What now if I, by completely transcending the base of nothingness,
were to attain and dwell in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**?

12.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

12.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,* nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful'?

12.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *the base of nothingness,*** and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor pursued it.

12.5 As such, my mind neither plunged into *the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,* nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

12.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen **the danger** in the base of nothingness, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**, I would pursue it,

12.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."' **[447]**

12.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,
having seen **the danger** in the base of nothingness, I developed that (insight), and,
having penetrated the benefit in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I pursued it.

12.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,** and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

12.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of nothingness,
I attained and dwelled in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.

12.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by the base of nothingness** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.

12.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,
so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by the base of nothingness arose in me,
*I felt it as **an affliction***.

(9) The cessation of perception and feeling

13 [Ee 12] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:
'What now if I, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,
were to attain and dwell in **the cessation of perception and feeling**.

13.2 Yet, Ananda, my mind neither plunged into the cessation of perception and feeling, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

13.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the cessation of perception and feeling,* nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful'?

13.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in *the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception*,** and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the cessation of perception and feeling nor have pursued it.

13.5 As such, my mind neither plunged into *the cessation of perception and feeling*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

13.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

'If, having seen **the danger** in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I would develop that (insight), and if, having penetrated the benefit in **the cessation of perception and feeling**, I would pursue it,

13.7 it may be possible that my mind will plunge into the cessation of perception and feeling, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, "This is peaceful."'

13.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,,
having seen the danger in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I developed that (insight);
[448] and, having penetrated the benefit in the cessation of perception and feeling, I pursued it.

13.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the cessation of perception and feeling**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'

13.10 Then, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I attained and dwelled in **the cessation of perception and feeling**, and having seen with wisdom, my influxes were utterly destroyed.

Conclusion

14 [Ee 13] So long, Ānanda, as I did not attain and emerge
from these **9 attainments of progressive dwellings** in *direct order and reverse order*,
I did not claim to have awakened to the peerless perfect awakening
in this world with its devas, its brahmas and Māra,[33]
this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers[34] and people.

14.2 But when I had attained and emerged from these 9 attainments of progressive dwellings
in direct order and reverse order,
then I claimed to have awakened to the peerless perfect awakening
in this world with its devas, its brahmas, and Māra,
this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people.

14.3 The knowledge and vision arose in me:
'Unshakable is my freedom of mind; this is my last birth; now there is no more (for me)!'"[35] **[449]**

— evaṁ —

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

[34] "Rulers," *devā*, here in the sense of "devas by convention" (*sammati,deva*), ie, kings and rulers. 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; KhA 123)

[35] *Akuppā me ceto,vimutti. Ayaṁ antimā jāti, n'atthi dāni punabbhavo ti.* See SD 4.25 (2.3-2.4).

SD 62.17 Truth and Path: Some key terms

The singularity and individuality of early Buddhism
Theme: The noble individuals, 8, 9, 10 and related terms
by Piya Tan (TAN Beng Sin) ©2025

The paragraph numbering of this chapter—from [3]-[5.4.1]—continues from the introductory notes to **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41), SD 62.16, since they originally served as part of the introductory notes to that Sutta translation. They have been given a separate SD number since it deals with a number of important sutta terms and ideas at length, as evident from the title.

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3 Key Dharma terms

3.1 *ANUPUBBA,VIHĀRA*: MEDITATION AS RENUNCIATION

3.1.1 The form dhyanas

3.1.1.1 These **9 progressive abodes** (*anupubba,vihāra*)[1]—the Sutta calls them "the 9 attainments of progressive dwelling"—consist of the 4 dhyanas (*jhāna*) [§§5-8], the 4 bases (*āyatana*) (the 4 formless attainments) [§9-12], and the peak of mental concentration, that is, the "cessation of perception and feeling" (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*) [§13]. In summary, the 9 progressive abodes are:

The 4 form dhyanas		**Sources**	
1. the 1st dhyana	*paṭhama jhana*;	**Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha Sutta**	S 40.1/4:262 f, SD 24.11
2. the 2nd dhyana	*dutiya jhana*;	**Dutiya Jhāna Pañha Sutta**	S 40.2/4:263 f, SD 24.12a
3. the 3rd dhyana	*tatiya jhana*;	**Tatiya Jhāna Pañha Sutta**	S 40.3/4:264 f, SD 24.13
4. the 4th dhyana	*catuttha jhana*.	**Catuttha Jhāna Pañha Sutta**	S 40.4/4:265 f, SD 24.14
The 4 formless bases or attainments			
respectively, the bases of:		**… Pañha Suttas**	
5. the infinity of space		*ākāsanañc'āyatana*	S 40.5/4:266, SD 24.15
6. the infinity of consciousness		*viññāṇañc'āyatana*	S 40.6/4:266 f, SD 24.16
7. nothingness		*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*	S 40.7/4:267 f, SD 24.17
8. neither-perception-nor-non-perception		*n'eva,saññā,nâsaññâyatana*	S 40.8/4:268, SD 24.18
9. signless freedom of mind[2]		*animitta ceto,samādhi*	S 40.9/4:268 f SD 24.19

Table 3.1.1.1 The 4 form dhyanas, 4 formless attainments and sources

3.1.1.2 Here follows a summary of the nature of the 4 form dhyanas, which will form the basis for our understanding of the other progressive abodes (that is, the formless bases and cessation). With the cultivation of the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) [Table 3.4.1], the 5 mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) [1.2.2] are suppressed or overcome, and the mind develops the respective dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*), leading up to concentration, thus:[3]

	initial application	**sustained application**	**zest**	**joy**	**one-pointedness of mind**
1st dhyana	*vitakka*	*vicāra*	*pīti*	*sukha*	(*ek'aggatā*)[4]
2nd dhyana	…	…	√	√	*ek'aggatā*
3rd dhyana	…	…	…	√	√
4th dhyana	…	…	… …		√

Table 3.1.1.2 The dhyana-factors

[1] See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,34.2-42), SD 1.11; **Jhānâbhiññā S** (S 16.9), SD 50.7 (1.2.1.2); **(Navaka) Nibbāna S** (A 9.34), SD 55.1; **(Navaka) Jhāna S** (A 9.36) + SD 33.8 (2); SD 1.8 (2.2.3) (3) n.

[2] From such teachings as those of **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,17/1:184) we know that this is the same as **cessation of perception and feeling** (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*) (SD 7.14).

[3] See SD 62.15 Table 3.4.1 + (3.4.2.6).

[4] On "one-pointedness" (*ek'aggatā*) in the 1st dhyana, see SD 8.4 (5.1.2).

The key Pali terms for the dhyana-factors are as follows:

vitakka	*"*initial application,"	the mental effort to direct the mind to the object;
vicāra	"sustained application,"	the mental effort to fix the mind on the object;
pīti	"zest or joy,"	the exuberant joy arising when mind is fixed on the object;
sukha	"happiness,"	the settling of that joy into a psychosomatic ease;
ek'aggattā	"one-pointedness of the mind,"	when the mind is free from all sense-distractions.

3.1.1.3 A meditator overcomes *the 5 hindrances* by cultivating **the 5 spiritual faculties** [Table 3.1.1.3]. We may thus begin by invoking our joyful **faith** in the 3 jewels, in the training and in ourself, with which we dispel the hindrance of ill will (such as negative thoughts) [§5]. As a rule, this is the easiest hindrance to overcome;[5] hence, we should begin our practice with faith. When properly done, we feel ***zest*** or active joy, which then energizes us to strengthen the spiritual faculties.

Asserting **effort**, the 2nd faculty, we suppress the hindrance of sloth and torpor as soon as it arises; this brings about ***initial application***. Simply, this is diligently directing and re-directing the mind to the meditation-object (such as the breath).

(The 3rd faculty is that of mindfulness, but we will use this last to overcome the most difficult of the hindrances.)

Next, we cultivate the 4th faculty, **concentration**—the mind fixes itself to the meditation-object and remains there—which cuts off any hindrance of restlessness and worry. In this way, we overcome all thinking and the mind begins to "see" only the meditation-object. This brings a subtle form of bliss, that is, ***joy*** (*sukha*)**.** While zest arises as an exuberant mental reaction to being freed from the hindrances, joy arises from the settling satisfaction for the same reason.

Using the 5th faculty, **wisdom**, we overcome the hindrance of doubt (arising through thinking). *Initial application* is the directing of the mind to the meditation-object; ***sustained application*** is the act of keeping the mind with the object, so that it is fixed there.

The 3rd and key faculty is **mindfulness** (watching the mind to harmonize its efforts). Its special function is to suppress sensual desire. Mindfulness then harmonizes all the other spiritual faculties: faith with wisdom; effort with concentration, empowering the mind to be fully fixed on the meditation-object—in breath meditation, the breath ceases to be a bodily formation and becomes a mental formation that is the breath—bringing about concentration. With the disappearance of all the 5 hindrances, the mind is said to be "born of solitude" (*viveka,ja*).[6]

[5] On *dosa* (hatred, anger, ill will) as the easiest of the 3 unwholesome roots to overcome, see **(Akusala Mūla) Aññā Titthiyā S** (A 3.68), SD 16.4 (1.1).

[6] See SD 8.4 (5.1.1.3).

The following **Table 3.1.1.3** gives a visual representation of what is described above:

spiritual faculty (*indriya*)		**mental hindrance** (*nīvaraṇa*)		**dhyana-factor**[7] (*jhān'aṅga*)
(2) effort	suppresses	(4) sloth and torpor	countered by	(1) initial application
(5) wisdom		(5) doubt		(2) sustained application
(1) (joyful) faith		(2) ill will		(3) zest
(4) concentration		(3) restlessness and worry		(4) happiness
(3) mindfulness		(1) sensual desire		(5) one-pointedness of mind

Table 3.1.1.3 Spiritual faculties, hindrances, and dhyana-factors [SD 32.1 (5.3)]
The traditional set sequences of spiritual faculties and mental hindrances have been given in round brackets, but have been re-arranged to reflect their relationships with dhyana-factors.

In this connection, too—regarding **the 1st dhyana**—the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta (A 9.41) says:

… quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects, secluded from unwholesome mental states,
I attained and dwelled in **the 1st dhyana**,
accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and
with zest and joy born of solitude. [§5.2]

3.1.1.4 Strictly speaking, during the 1st dhyana, the 5th dhyana-factor is concentration (*samādhi*), the 5th or last faculty; but the mind has yet to attain one-pointedness. This is because the subtle workings of the faculty of mindfulness still have to manage *initial application* and *sustained application*—these are subtle cognitive processes—that attempt to keep the mind fixed and focused on the meditation-object.

When we have learned to renounce all sensual pleasures [§4], that is, let go of thoughts and feelings, we also have no more need for *initial application* and *sustained application.* We then feel ***zest*** and ***joy***. Now that the mind is free from even the subtlest thought [§6], the dhyana-factor of ***one-pointedness of mind*** arises.

3.1.1.5 Hence, in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41), the Buddha describes how he attained the 2nd dhyana in the following way:

6.9 … then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into the thought-free,
became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful.'
6.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,
with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,
by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,
I attained and dwelled in **the 2nd dhyana**,

[7] On the dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*), see SD 8.4 (6).

free from initial application and sustained application,
with zest and joy born of concentration. (§§6.9 f)

This is thought-free **2nd dhyana**. The Sutta records the Buddha's warning that even while in this dhyana, one can be distracted by any kind of thought (*vitakka*):

"While I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention accompanied by thinking assailed me: I felt it as an affliction." [§6.11]

The meaning here is that, while we are in the 2nd dhyana, thinking may intrude either as a "perception" (an idea) or when we seek the meditation-object. We then fall out of dhyana: this is an affliction, like a sickness (*abādha*). [§6.12]

3.1.1.6 The 3rd dhyana arises when ***zest*** (exuberant joy) settles and disappears [§7], leaving only the factors of ***joy*** and of ***one-pointedness of mind.*** Besides these 2 key dhyana-factors, the 3rd dhyana also has 3 additional mental factors (*cetasika*) (not included amongst the dhyana-factors), that is, equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness (*sampajañña*). This is a peculiarity of the 3rd dhyana.

The mindfulness and full awareness of the 3rd dhyana is that of equanimity. It is a profoundly joyful experience since the mind is "one-pointed." In worldly terms, it is like one enjoying a great football match or listening to beautiful piece of music with deep joy and focus. This means that the mind is free of its mundane cognitive processes, but feels only the joy of equanimity [3.1.3.2].

Here again, the Buddha warns us that the 3rd dhyana (like any dhyana) is fragile; the slightest thought or sensing will disrupt it, thus:

Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by pleasure in equanimity** arose in me:[8] I felt it as an affliction … just as pain were to arise to one feeling pleasure only to afflict one. [§§8.11 f]

3.1.1.7 In **the 4th dhyana**, we see the deepening presence of equanimity, that is, the peaceful mind freed from both pleasure and pain [§8]. Simply, **the 4 form dhyanas** refer to the calm and clarity of the mind when it is freed from all engagement or attachment to sensual activities and thoughts.

Since the mind is now fully freed—having transcended both feeling and minding—the meditator emerges from **the 4th dhyana** with a mind that is fully calm and clear. This is the open mind that is *able to manipulate matter, space and, to some extent, time*:[9] the meditator is able to develop the various psychic powers.[10]

More importantly, this is the kind of mental calm and clarity that can bring liberating wisdom. With the calm and clear mind, one is able to see directly and fully into true reality; seeing and understanding the nature of *impermanence, suffering*, and even *nonself*; one is then awakened.

3.1.2 The formless bases

3.1.2.1 In the 4 form dhyanas, "**form**" (*rūpa*) refers to our ideas of shape and colour that limit space. In the **formless bases**, however, form is experienced as being both infinite and empty, immeasurable and indefinable; therein we transcend any such perception. Hence, they are called "**formless**" (*arūpa*).

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[8] This follows Be MSS listed in Ee, which read *upekhā,sukha,sahagatā,* "accompanied by the pleasure in equanimity." This fits the context better than the reading *upe(k)khā,sahagatā* found in Be Ce Se.

[9] Simply put, although the arhats with psychic powers may be able to recall past lives, they are not able to travel in time.

[10] On the psychic powers, see **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,6 f), SD 1.7.

The meditation-objects of the formless dhyanas are known as "**mind-bases**" (*āyatana*) [§§9-12], because the mind in these attainments (*samāpatti*) rests on these bases or supports for consciousness.[11] These profoundly still mind-bases are progressively more refined and more empty than the 4th form dhyana, progressively freeing itself from even consciousness. [3.1.1.5]

3.1.2.2 Strictly speaking, the 4 formless bases are all rooted in **the 4th dhyana** since they possess *the same 2 factors of equanimity and one-pointedness of mind*. Hence, the 4th dhyana is the base or foundation dhyana (*pādaka,jhāna*) for the arising of psychic powers [3.1.1.7], as well as for the formless bases, beginning with the base of the infinity of space.

The 4th attainment or form dhyana is also **a foundation for the arising of insight** (as a base for gaining the path and for awakening). However, *any of the 4 form dhyanas* can just as effectively be the foundation for liberating insight. To do this one emerges from the dhyana and applies the mind's calm and clarity to seeing *impermanence* and so on for the development of liberating insight.

Since any of the 4 form dhyanas can be a foundation for developing liberating insight, there is no need for cultivating or depending on any of the formless bases. Moreover, the formless bases are essentially more refined levels of the 4th dhyana, experiencing consciousness in ever subtler form until the 4th formless base where consciousness is too subtle to be detected.

Hence, there is no need for the formless bases to act as foundations for insight when any of the 4 preceding form attainments can bring the meditator insight. The 4 formless bases are, as it were, states of mastery over mind and matter. In order to attain any of them, one must have first mastered all the 4 form dhyanas; or, strictly speaking, mastered the 4th dhyana. Hence, they are called "progressive abodes" [3.1.1.1].

3.1.2.3 The **1st** formless attainment, **the base of the infinity of space** (*ākāsânañc'āyatana*), is rooted in the 4th form dhyana [3.1.2.2]—just as the preceding form dhyanas are rooted in the 1st dhyana and arise by the meditator renouncing the preceding dhyana; hence, they are called "progressive abodes" (*anupubba,-vihāra*). The base of the infinity of space arises from the meeting of these 5 conditions:

(1) "**By completely transcending the perception of form**,"[12] which is already accomplished with the attaining of the 1st formless attainment and climaxed in the 4th formless attainment. "Form" (*rūpa*) here refers to any engagement with an extraneous idea or thought.[13]
(2) "**With the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction**,"[14] that is, the absence of all cognitive activity between any of the 5 sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects, similarly accomplished with the 1st-4th formless attainments. Only very subtle perception of mind-object remains.
(3) "**With non-attention to perceptions of diversity**,"[15] that is, without any idea of "self" and "other," "this" (internal) or "that" (external); meaning that the notion of subject and object does not arise.
(4) "**Aware that 'space is infinite**,'[16]" that is, the meditator is mentally "unified" with the meditation-object. There is only a very subtle awareness of infinite space. Since time is the perception of space, we will here experience time as infinite, too; in other words, there is no more experience of time as we know it.

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[11] On *āyatana* as "mind-base," see SD 40a.12 (3.6.2) & **(Āsava-k,khaya) Jhāna S** (A 9.36): SD 33,8 (2.2). On *āyatana* as "sense-base," ie, sense-faculty, see **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:216-222), SD 29.5.

[12] *Sabbaso rūpa,saññānaṁ samatikkamā,* SD 21,15 (2.1).

[13] On how this happens, see *nāma,rūpa,* SD 62.15 (3.4.4).

[14] *Paṭigha,saññānaṁ atthaṅgamā,* SD 21,15 (2.2).

[15] *Nānatta,saññānaṁ amanasikārā,* SD 21,15 (2.3).

[16] *Ananto ākāso'ti,* SD 21,15 (2.4).

(5) "Having seen the danger in forms, I developed that (insight),
and having penetrated the benefit in **the base of the infinity of space**, I pursued it.
Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of the infinity of space**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, 'This is peaceful'." [§9 excerpts]

The base of the infinity of space (*ākāsanañc'āyatana*) is described in **the Ākāsānañc'āyatana Pañha Sutta** (S 40.5).[17]

3.1.2.4 The **2nd** formless attainment, **the base of the infinity of consciousness** (*viññāṇañc'āyatana*), is developed by letting go of the base of the infinity of space. This means that the meditator renounces the meditation-object, that of the idea "space in infinite," and what is left is merely **the consciousness** behind that meditation-object. The meditator then focuses on just that consciousness, and experiences it as infinite; hence, it is called "the base of the infinity of consciousness." [§10.6 f]

The Buddha reminds the meditator not to fall back on the idea of *the infinity of space* which one was familiar with. Doing so will make one lose focus on the base of the infinity of consciousness, and bring one right back to that earlier base.

The meditator in the base of the infinity of consciousness experiences consciousness (the mind) as infinite (with neither beginning nor end). The experience is that of the profoundly blissful peace of the boundless mind.

The base of the infinity of consciousness is described in **the Viññānañc'āyatana Pañha Sutta** (S 40.6).[18]

3.1.2.5 The **3rd** formless base, **the base of nothingness** (*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*), is when the meditator renounces the mind-object of consciousness. Hence, nothing is left, and this becomes the meditation-object at this profoundly radiant but subtle level of formless meditation.

Even at this profound level of formless attainment, there is the danger of the meditator falling back on to the base of infinite consciousness, with which he was familiar. When the mind falls back in this way, the meditator loses the base of nothingness.

The "nothingness" here refers to the meditation-object, which is an unimaginably subtle one. The meditator is still *aware* of nothingness. There is still a subtle presence of the mind that is the focus on nothingness as meditation-object. The moment the meditator sees "something," that is, the mind that is focused on nothingness, he falls from that base, back into the base of the infinity of consciousness.

The base of nothingness is described in **the Ākiñcaññ'āyatana Pañha Sutta** (S 40.7).[19]

3.1.2.6 The **4th** and last formless attainment is **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception** (*n'eva,saññā,nâsaññâyatana*). At this stage, the meditator renounces even the meditation-object, that is *nothingness* itself. With the mind having no object whatsoever at this profound level of concentration, consciousness itself becomes so subtle that it cannot be said to exist or not exist. Hence, this is called the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. "Perception" (*saññā*) here means "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*). *Saññā* is used here (instead of *viññāṇa*) since consciousness is itself the meditation-object, one that is almost imperceptible.

The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is described in **the N'eva,saññā,nâsaññ'āyatana Pañha Sutta** (S 40.8) SD 24.18.

[17] S 40.5/4:266 (SD 24.15).
[18] S 40.6/4:266 f (SD 24.16).
[19] S 40.7/4:267 f (SD 24.17).

3.1.3 The cessation of perception and feeling

3.1.3.1 These 8 attainments (or the first 8 progressive abodes), properly used, are described in the early Buddhist texts as being capable of bringing arhathood itself. **The (Navaka) Jhāna Sutta** (A 9.36), for example, includes parables in its explanations of the abodes, how letting go of an abode becomes the basis for attaining the following abode until cessation is reached.[20]

3.1.3.2 "The peak of mental concentration" (*samādh'agga*)[21] (the highest state possible for the mind to reach) is **the cessation of perception and feeling** (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*; or simply "cessation"). This state is attained only as a result of being totally free from any perceptual and affectual activity, that is, an experience of nirvana here and now. Hence, it is attainable only by arhats and some nonreturners; in the latters' case, it is merely a vision of nirvana.

It is called "**cessation**" because therein all breathing, all thinking and all perceiving have stopped. Life as we know it is not present; by modern measurements, the meditator is "dead," or technically *lifeless.*

Only the arhat experience cessation, that is, initially as their fruition moment. The arhat may remain for a week in cessation, sometimes longer, says the Commentaries.[22] During the state of cessation, the meditator may be said to be in "suspended animation." Nonreturners, too, may be able to experience cessation when they temporarily overcome all the 5 higher fetters.[23]

The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) explains the difference between death and cessation as follows:

> In the case of one who is dead, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, life is exhausted, the vital heat extinguished, the faculties destroyed. In the case of one who has entered the cessation of perception and feeling his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, but his life is not exhausted, the vital heat is not extinguished, the faculties are purified.
>
> (M 43,25/1:296 abridged; see M 44,16-21 & also M 43,42 & cf SD 1.11 (4.1))

While a dead body has neither vitality nor heat, and its sense-faculties "broken up" (dysfunctional), a person in cessation still has vitality and bodily heat, and his sense-faculties are "purified" (subtle).[24]

While in cessation, the meditator neither knows nor feels anything in the ordinary sense. On emerging from it, the meditator is fully aware of "joyful equanimity," the happiness of being freed from both thinking and feeling; hence, it is a living experience of nirvana. In this connection, **the (Udāyi) Nibbāna Sutta** (A 9.34) records Sāriputta as exulting to Udāyi, "Indeed, avuso, it is truly happiness where nothing is felt!"[25]

4 Dharma as narrative and as teaching

4.1 MEDITATION OR THE PATH?

4.1.1 Significance of the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta

4.1.1.1 The (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta (A 9.41) records the Buddha as laying out in systematic sequence how he meditated through *the 4 form dhyanas*, *the 4 formless attainments*, and reached *the cessation of perception and feeling*. Anyone who has gone for some residential meditation retreat or a monastic who

[20] A 9.36/4:422-426 (SD 33.8).
[21] **(Catukka) Agga S 1** (A 4.74/2:79).
[22] MA 1:125, 152; AA 1:152; DhA 1:109; BA 163.
[23] A nonreturner is one who has overcome all the 5 lower fetters: **Table 5.2.1**.
[24] **Mahā Vedalla S** (**M 43**,25/1:296), SD 30.2; **Pāyāsi S** (**D 23**/2:334), SD 39.4; **Vism 23.51**/709
[25] A 9.34,2/4:414 f (SD 55.1). On cessation, further see SD 30.2 (4); SD 48.7 (3.2); SD 50.7 (1.2).

regularly meditates knows that one's meditation, for various reasons, does not always follow a neat sequence of stages. Often, we are distracted by various external stimuli such as sounds and the weather, or internal conditions such as bodily discomfort and pains, and negative thoughts.

In the case of the Buddha, he had meditated by way of the ancient yogic tradition sitting for long hours of deep meditation for some 7 years. What he described in **A 9.41** is a systematic sequence of dhyanic states from the overcoming of external sense-distraction to the focusing of the mind free of the body (the dhyanas), the gradual renunciation of consciousness itself (the formless attainments), and, finally, with the attaining of awakening, he was able to transcend perception and feeling themselves, which is, in modern terms, a state of "suspended animation," in which he blissfully stayed for as long as a week each time.

4.1.1.2 The key themes of **A 9.41** are stated in the Buddha's own words of his joy in spiritual striving, exulting, "Good is renunciation! Good is solitude!" (*sādhu nekkhammaṁ, sādhu paviveko ti*) [§4.1]. **Renunciation** develops through a few important stages. First, the candidate formally renounces before the monastic sangha: this is conventional renunciation. It is a renunciation of the body in the sense that the renunciant removes his or her **body** from worldliness and distractions (especially sensual pleasures). This is regulated and expedited by the practice of the Vinaya rules, keeping to right livelihood, cultivating fellowship in the noble sangha, and developing spiritual friendship with experienced teachers.

Secondly, the renunciant himself or herself trains **the mind** to let go of negative thoughts and sensual distractions, and to cultivate positive emotions beginning with lovingkindness. The meditator then works to focus more fully on the mind by renouncing *all* thoughts and feelings. This is the renunciation of **the mind**. In fact, this is what **A 9.41** describes by way of the 9 progressive abodes (*anupubba,vihāra*)[§§5-13].

Thirdly and finally, there is the renunciation of mental defilements, called "**influxes**" (*āsava*), that is, overcoming sensual desires (this world), existence (the divine world) and ignorance (whatever that binds one to samsara), including wrong views. While the first two constitute "true renunciation," this third and final renunciation is that of awakening itself, or at least the attaining of streamwinning. This is the final renunciation, the highest letting go.

4.1.1.3 When we examine the 9 progressive abodes—as listed in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41) and related suttas[26]—these abodes are "non-conceptual" direct experiences of the mind, bringing profound peace and clarity. Emerging from such a calm clarity of mind *at any stage,* especially any of the first 4 dhyanas, one then dwells, directly examining—"**one touches with the body** (personally, with one's mental body)" (*kāyena phusitvā* or *phassitvā*)—the nature of true reality. This expression "touching with one's body" is often used in describing one's experience of any of the "8 liberations" (*aṭṭha vimokkha*) [5.3.1], but is also used in describing "personal experience" in deep meditation, or realizing nirvana, thus:

• the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*)	Ākaṅkheyya S, **M 6,10**/1:33; Kīṭā,giri S, **M 70,15**/1:477-479; Susīma S, **S 12.70**/2:123+127; **A 4.87**/2:87, **4.89**/-2:90x3, **4.90**/2:91, **8.72**/4:315 f x4, expanded **10.9**/5:11.
• *kāya,sakkhī* "touches" the 8 bases (*āyatana*), viz, 4 form dhyanas + 4 formless attainments	**A 9.43**/4:451 f.
• one freed both ways (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*)	**A 9.45**/4:453; **Pug** 11, 14, 15, 29, 72 f. [5.3.3.7]
• the 4 paths (*magga*)	**Kvu** 104-106 *passim,* 214-216 *passim.*
• the 4 noble truths (*ariya,sacca*)	**Kvu** 107 f.

[26] **(Kassapa) Bhikkhuṇûpassaya S** (S 16.10/2:216), SD 92.7; **(Kassapa) Cīvara S** (S 16.11/2:221); **Anupubba,vihāra S** (A 9.32/4:409), SD 95.1 abridged; **Anupubba,vihāra Samāpatti S** (A 9.33/4:410), SD 95.2. The 9 states are briefly listed or alluded to in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.2(5)/3:265); **Das'uttara S** (D 34:2,2(9)/3:290); **Kaccāna S** (U 7.8/78*) *anupubba,vihārī*; **Pm** 1:5; **Vbh** 317, 335, 343; **Kvu** 419.

• the 8 individuals (*aṭṭhamaka*)	**Kvu** 241-244 *passim.*
• learners and adepts (*sekhâsekha*)	**Kvu** 303 f.
• personal experiences in meditation ("bodily touching") [see next]	Kosambī S, **S 12.68**/2:118, Āpaṇa S, **S 48.50**/5:226x2, Sekha S, **S 49.53**/5:230x2.
• "dwell, bodily touching"	*Ye amataṁ dhātuṁ kāyena phusitvā viharanti,* "who dwells having realized the deathfree element,"[27] Mahā Cunda S (**A 6.46**/3:356).

4.1.2 *Nāma,kāya* in the Upasīva Māṇava Pucchā (Sn 5.6)

4.1.2.1 We should understand the model of the 9 progressive abodes (*nava anupubba,vihāra*) as a meditative or non-conceptual description of the Buddha's own practice leading up to awakening. This model is to guide and inspire meditators in their own practice; it is also a very interesting description of the powers of the mind and consciousness. When we thus know and see how our mind works, we will be able to refine its powers so that we experience and attain a higher level of being that frees us from the distraction and demands of the sense-based world.

In simple terms, there is the "form body" or physical being (*rūpa,kāya*), composed of the 5 sense-faculties each of which projects itself to form a "mental image" (*nāma*) of an external object (*rūpa*). This is the worldly mind at work, or the mind applied to worldly tasks. In deep meditation, the mind is free from external objects and is directed to wholesome meditation objects, such as the breath. When the mind is fully focused on the breath, for example, the experience is said to be one of *nāma,kāya*; or one "touches the breath with the mind-body."

Simply (in daily usage), we can take *nāma,kāya* as meaning "all that is connected with the mind," in the wholesome sense.

4.1.2.2 The earliest occurrence of the term ***nāma,kāya*** is at **Sn 1074** where it is mentioned by itself in **the Upasīva Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.6/205-207). We shall look at only Upasīva's main question and 2 verses germane to our study:

1069 [Upasīva:] "Tell me, O universal eye, the basis, depending on which I might cross this flood."[28]

1070ab	*ākiñcaññāṁ pekkhamāno satimā* *upasīvā ti bhagavā* *n'atthī ti nissāya tarassu oghaṁ*	Mindfully looking on at nothingness, (Upasīva, said the Blessed One,)[29] supported by "There is not, [It is not (so),]" cross over the flood.
Sn 1074[30]	*accī yathā vāta,vegena khitto* *upasīvā ti bhagavā* *atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṁ*	Just as a flame tossed out by strong gust, (Upasīva, said the Blessed One,) goes out and is no longer reckoned (as "fire"),

[27] Comy: In connection with the nirvana-element called "the deathfree" because it is devoid of death. Having taken up a meditation subject, one dwells, in stages, having touched it [gained full concentration and realization] with the mental body" (*maraṇa,virahitaṁ nibbāna,dhātuṁ sandhāya kammaṭṭhānaṁ gahetvā viharantā anukkamena taṁ nāma,kāyena phusitvā viharanti*, AA 3:379). "The mental body" fig refers to one's mind fully attaining nirvana.

[28] Upasīva is one of the 16 brahmin youths (*māṇava*), pupils of the aged ascetic Bāvarī. They lived on an island in the Godhāvarī river in the Deccan. SD 49.6b (2).

[29] This line denoting the speaker is hypermetrical, thus not originally part of the verse. It was prob inserted by the council elders for our convenience. Thus the designation a b c d refers to only the other 4 lines respectively.

[30] Sn 1074 is qu in PugA 190,18-22 with variants: *acci … khittā … paḷeti … saṅkhyaṁ … paḷeti … saṅkhyaṁ.* The sense of the 2 passages are otherwise the same.

*evaṁ munī **nāma,kāyā** vimutto*	so too the sage, freed from the mental body,
atthaṁ pāleti na upeti saṅkhaṁ	goes out and can no longer be counted.[31]

According to **the Cūḷa,niddesa** (Nc, the canonical commentary on the Sutta,nipāta)[32] and **the Sutta,-nipāta Commentary** (SnA, Param'attha,jotikā 2), Upasīva is one who has attained the formless base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*), and interprets the Buddha's verses said to him in terms of this formless attainment.[33] Cūḷa,niddesa, commenting on "**mindfully looking on at nothingness**" (Sn 1070a), says that Upasīva habitually (*pakatiyā*) attains the base of nothingness, but he is not aware of it as his support.[34]

4.1.3 *Nāma,kāya* and nothingness

4.1.3.1 How does one relate to the nothingness base as a support for spiritual progress? **Sn 1070b** records the Buddha as instructing Upasīva that he should, upon emerging from the attainment,[35] "look on at it" (that is, regard it) as "**There is not**" or "**It is not**" (*natthī ti*). This instruction is profoundly significant: it is found neither in the usual description of getting into the nothingness base nor getting out of it to get into the following base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception [§§10-12].

From what has been said above, it follows that the expression, ***natthī ti***, refers to the directing of **insight** to see *the true nature* of the nothingness base. This is described by **the Cūḷa,niddesa** as follows: "Having emerged from the nothingness base, and looking on, discerning, surveying, meditating on, and investigating the mind and its mental factors:

> 1. as impermanent; 2. as suffering; 3. as an illness; 4. as a boil; 5. as a dart; 6. as misery; 7. as affliction; 8. as other; 9. as disintegrating; 10. as adversity; 11. as a calamity; 12. as fear; 13. as a disaster; 14. as trembling; 15. as fragile; 16. as unstable; 17. as not a shelter; 18. as not a cave; 19. as not a refuge; 20. as hollow; 21. as void; 22. as empty; 23. as nonself; 24. as disadvantage; 25. as subject to change; 26. as coreless; 27. as the root of misery; 28. as a murderer; 29. as extermination; 30. as subject to influxes; 31. as conditioned; 32. as Māra's bait; as subject to 33. birth, 34. old age, 35. sickness, and 36. death; as subject to 37. sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair; as subject to 38. defilement, 39. to arising, 40. passing away, 41. to gratification, 42. to danger, and 43. to escape (from suffering).[36]

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[31] Comy glosses ***nāma,kāya*** as meaning "freed both ways" (***nāma,kāya** pi **vimutto** ubhato.bhāga,vimutto,* SnA 594,28). On *upeti saṅkhaṁ,* cf Sn 209. See also R Morris, "Notes and Queries," JPTS 1885:44-46.

[32] Found as part of **Niddesa**, the 11th volume in the Khuddaka Nikāya. Niddesa comprises Mahā,niddesa + Cūḷa,-niddesa; abbreviated as Nm and Nc respectively.

[33] *Ākiñcaññā'yatana,samāpatti(ṁ)* (Nc:Be 25:103,14, 104,8 + 9 + 11 + 22, 105,22, 107,3); *ākiñcaññ'āyatana,vimokkho* (Nc:Be 25:105,26, 107,7); *ākiñcaññ'āyatana,brahma,loke* (SnA 594,123 f).

[34] ***Ākiñcaññaṁ pekkhamāno satimā*** *so brāhmaṇo pakatiyā ākiñcaññ'āyatana,samāpattiṁ lābhiy'eva nissayaṁ na jānāti, "ayaṁ me nissayo" ti* (Nc:Be 25:103,13-15).

[35] Since no thinking occurs *during* the meditation itself, one can only progress by fully scrutinizing insight on emerging from the state: this is in fact described in Cūḷa,niddesa: *Ākiñcaññ'āyatana,samāpattiṁ sato samāpajjitvā tato vuṭṭhahitvā tattha jāte citta,cetasike dhamme aniccato pekkhamāno dukkho* … , "Having mindfully attained the nothingness base, and emerged from it, looking on, discerning, surveying, meditating on, investigating the mind and its mental factors arising therein as impermanence, suffering … (Nc:Be 256:103,16 f). See below for the full register of 43 insight terms: "Impermanent, suffering … "; see also foll.

[36] The 43 insight terms: (*tīrana,pariññā*) 1. *aniccato,* 2. *dukkhato,* 3. *rogato,* 4. *gaṇḍato,* 5. *Sallato,* 6. *aghato,* 7. *ābādhato,* 8. *parato,* 9. *palokato,* 10. *ītito,* 11. *upaddavato,* 12. *bhayato,* 13. *upasaggato,* 14. *calato,* 15. *pabhaṅguto,* 16. *addhuvato,* 17. *atāṇato,* 18. *aleṇato,* 19. *asaraṇato,* 20. *rittato,* 21. *tucchato,* 22. *suññato,* 23. *anattato,* 24. *ādīnavato,* 25. *vipariṇāma,dhammato,* 26. *asārakato,* 27. *agha,mūlato,* 28. *vadhakato,* 29. *vibhavato,* 30. *sâsavato,* 31. *saṅkhatato,* 32. *mār'āmisato,* 33. *jāti,dhammato,* 34, *jarā,dhammato,* 35. *vyādhi,dhammato,* 36. *maraṇa,dham-*

While temporarily freed from lust and hatred (on account of dhyana), one renounces the nothingness base by regarding it with insight as being "impermanent," or by way of any of the 43 modes of insight [above].

4.1.3.2 So too the sage, freed from the mental body (Sn 1074c) is a metaphorical expression for the path of practice, especially of the one who is "mentally silent," a true sage (*muni*). The sage (muni) is naturally freed from the physical body (the senses) by way of the form dhyanas, and freed from form (mental projections of sense-based states) itself (*rūpa,kāya*) by way of the formless dhyanas. This freedom, gained by abandoning form by way of "suppression" (*tad-aṅgaṁ samatikkamā*), can only be temporary. (Nc:Be 25:109,15-17)

Free from both lust and hatred, the sage gains the 4 noble paths. As an arhat, he has fully understood the mental body and the form body. With this understanding, he is freed from the mental body and from the form body—he is *well freed*, by way of the highest liberation through non-clinging. Thus the sage freed from the mental body, *goes out,* is extinguished: attains final nirvana, that is, the nirvana without any residue. Hence, such a one "cannot be reckoned" (*na upeti*).

The words "reckoned" (Sn 1074b) and "counted" are the same Pali word *saṅkhaṁ.* The fire that has gone out is non-existent since all one's defilements have been abandoned by uprooting (*samuccheda,-pahāna*). The sage (*muni*) who is awakened is no more a mere "statistic," to be counted amongst the crowds of worldlings.

The Commentary explains that because he has attained final nirvana that is *without residue*, he cannot be indicated, reckoned or described as belonging to any social class or any kind of being, divine or otherwise, or as one with form or formless or non-percipient or neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient. There is no cause, no condition, no means by which he may be designated. He has gone out, is quenched, and can no longer be reckoned. This is as far as we can go to try to *describe*—set down in words, speech or ideas—a being who has attained final nirvana. (Nc:Be 25:109,23-28)

4.1.4 *Nāma,kāya* in meditation

4.1.4.1 Both the terms *nāma,kāya* and *rūpa,kāya* [4.1.3.2] occur in **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15,20).[37] ***Nāma,kāya*** comprises the 4 formless groups of existence (*arūpino khandhā*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), formations (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is distinguished from ***rūpa,kāya,*** the body-group comprising form (*rūpa*), that is, the 4 elements (*dhātu, mahā,bhūta*) [SD 17.1 & 2]. Broadly speaking, whenever the mind is in full concentration, the mind "touches the meditation object with the body." By "**body**" (*kāya*) here is meant the "mental body" (*nāma,kāya*) (AA 3:379).

The term ***nāma,kāya*** also occurs in **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** (Pm 1:183), where it is defined as "feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention and naming; and as *nāma.kāya* they are also called mind-formations (*vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro nāmañ ca, nāma,kāyo ca ye ca vuccanti citta,saṅkhārā*).

The Netti-p,pakaraṇa similarly says, "*nāma,kāya* is feelings, perception, intention, thought, contact and attention" (*nāma,kāyo nāma vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṁ phasso manasikāro ti*, Nett 77).[38]

4.1.4.2 Pm's and Nett's broad definitions of *nāma,kāya* [4.1.4.1] may also apply to the mind in ordinary situations, but it is too broad to be applied to deep meditative states. In dhyana, for example, think-

mato, 37. *soka,parideva,dukkha,domanass'upāyāsa,dhammato,* 38. *saṅkilesa,dhammato,* 39. *samudayato,* 40. *atthaṅgamato,* 41. *assādato,* 42. *ādīnavato,* 43. *nissaraṇato tīreti.* (Nm 1:53,7-16; Nm:Be 40,15-22)

[37] SD 5.17 (5.1.1.2).

[38] See also DA 2:501,1-14 on **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15,20), SD 5.17.

ing as we know it is finely marginal or fully ceases. Hence, none of the terms in the broad definitions of *nāma,kāya* applies to these dhyanic states. What then does *nāma,kāya* mean in such dhyanic states?

Simply, we can say that in dhyanic states, ***nama,kāya*** refers to *what remains of the mind when thinking ceases*. Even in the absence of thinking—especially in the absence of thinking—the mind is calm and clear. It's like listening to a beautiful piece of music: we do not *think* about it but simply "lose" ourselves in the beauty of the sounds and silence. We "feel" the music; we *become* the music. We are still conscious without the thinking, perhaps with some thoughts, or with some stray or marginal thoughts. But in dhyana, there is no thinking at all.

However, the non-thinking mind in dhyana is subtly or subliminally aware—yet, it is "*clearly aware*"[39] —like we are aware of the beautiful sounds of music. In fact, in dhyana, the gap between the knower and the known closes up; there is neither subject nor object; there is only the meditation experience. We have noted how the 5 dhyana-factors [3.1.1.2] become less as we progress through the form dhyana. In the last 2 form dhyanas there is only the equanimous mind with the refining and diminishing of consciousness.

As we have noted, too, **the nothingness base** is the highest stage of the "conscious" mind [4.1.3.3]. In the next stage—**the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**—consciousness is too subtle to be known or felt [3.1.2.6]. And in **cessation**, all perception (including thinking) and feeling are suspended; this is the "peak of mental concentration" [3.1.3.2]. There is no one who experiences such states, only the mind, that is, the mind-body; in the highest meditative stages, "nothing" is experienced! [3.1.2.5]

4.1.5 Something and nothing

4.1.5.1 ***Kiñcana*** literally means "something, anything," referring especially to things one has, owns or wants, which may or may not exist. Since a key practice in early Buddhism is **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*), the habit of having things and of ownership is regarded as a burden and a hindrance to spiritual freedom. The Commentaries highlight the meaning of *kiñcana* as things, material and mental, that drag one down: hence, it has come to mean an "impediment" or "defilement."

The opposite of *kiñcana*, "something," is ***akiñcana,*** "nothing," a state of having no possessions (Sn 976); a state of nothingness (Sn 1070ab) [4.1.2.2], of "not having." Since *akiñcana* describes the state of an arhat—one who has nothing by way of worldly possessions and views—we can say that it is a word for true renunciation. An arhat, by eradicating the 3 unwholesome roots of suffering, *lust, hatred and delusion*, is thereby ***akiñcana***, "one who owns or has nothing" or "one who is ownerless," that is, one who is unburdened with things and who is not subject to anyone.

These ideas are based on the statement made by Sāriputta to Koṭṭhita, as recorded in **the Mahā,-vedalla Sutta** (M 43): "Lust, avuso, is a something, hate is a something, delusion is a something. For a monk with influxes destroyed, these are abandoned, cut off at the root."[40] This explanation is expanded in the Commentaries.

The line, "having nothing, not attached to sensuality and existence" (*akiñcanaṁ kāma,bhave asattaṁ*) is found in **the Hemavata Sutta** (Sn 1.9/176b) and **the Mettagū Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.5/1059b). The Cūḷa,-niddesa, commenting on ***akiñcanaṁ kāma,bhave asattaṁ***, says:

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[39] **Cūḷa Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 27) eg says of the 3rd dhyana: "… with the fading away of zest (*pīti*), he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly aware, and experiences happiness with the body. He enters and remains in **the 3rd dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness. (M 27,21/1:182), SD 40a.5. Similarly, in **satipaṭṭhāna**, one is "clearly aware" in all the 4 contemplations: of *the body, feeling, of mind and dharmas*: SD 62.15 (2.1.5.1).

[40] *Rāgo kho, āvuso, kiñcano, doso kiñcano, moho kiñcano. Te khīṇ'āsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā, ucchinna,mūlā*. (M 43,36/1:298,14-18), SD 30.2.

> In the phrase "**owning nothing**," lust is *something*, hatred is *something*, delusion is *something*, conceit is *something*, views are *something*, defilements are *something*, misconduct is *something*. One for whom these "somethings" have been abandoned, calmed, stilled, not subject to arising [to rebirth], burnt up by the fire of knowledge is called "one owning nothing."[41]
>
> (Nc 25:84,21-25)

4.1.5.2 The Upasīva Māṇava Pucchā is a rare sutta where **the nothingness base** (*ākiñcañ'āyatana*) is described as the "foremost of sentient meditative states," the highest of those attainments accompanied by perception. Both the two subsequent states—neither-perception-nor-non-perception and cessation [3.1.1.1]—are free of any consciousness as we know it. Hence, the nothingness base is said to be "**freedom of perception**" (*saññā,vimokkha,* Sn 1071c, 1072c),[42] in the sense that one is here intent on freeing intention itself (*adhimutti,vimokkhena adhimutto*) (Nc:Be 25:107,9).

I think here "intention or intent" (***adhimutta***) does not mean that one has not yet attained the nothingness base and is intent on attaining it. Rather, it means that one is determined *to let go of that base itself* by way of renunciation (the theme of A 9.41). It means getting rid of karma itself, which arises from making "something" of nothing. This is the same as transcending samsara, rebirth and suffering.

This is what I think "**freedom from intent**" (*adhimutti,vimokkha*) means in the Cūḷa,niddesa commenting on *saññā,vimokkhe paramêdhimutto*[43] where Ee Se read *saññe,vimokkhe parame vimutto,* "freed in the highest freedom of perception" (Sn 1071c 1072c). The majority reading *vimutto* (freedom) instead of *adhimutto* (intent) supports my interpretation above. Thus, by letting go of that meditation-object that is the "highest perception" (*parame*), one is "freed from perception itself" (*saññā,vimokkhe*).

4.1.5.3 Like *aneja*,[44] the word *akiñcana* is applied only to the Buddha and arhats. The yaksha **Hemavata** [4.1.5.1], for example, praises the Buddha as one "owning nothing, unattached to sensuality and existence" (*akincanaṁ kāma,bhave asattaṁ*, Sn 176b).

The Buddha, in his reply to **Mettagū's** question, uses the very same phrase to describe the true brahmin, an arhat (Sn 1059b), and to **Todeyya's** question, he answers by describing the sage (*muni*) (Sn 1091d). Another of the 16 brahmin youths, **Dhoṭaka** (Sn 5.6) [4.1.2.2] praises the Buddha as "a brahmin, moving about, owning nothing" (*akiñcanaṁ brāhmaṇaṁ iriyamānaṁ,* Sn 1063b).

In **the Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 3.4), when a curious brahmin asks the Buddha about his social class (*jāti*), the Buddha first replies,

> "Neither a brahmin am I nor am I a prince; neither a vaisya [merchant class] nor anything else."

Then he describes himself as *akiñcana*, "one who has nothing" (Sn 455), meaning that he is freed from all karma; thus he is one awakened.

4.1.5.4 In two places, the Buddha declares "**one who owns nothing, takes nothing**" (*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ*) to be a true brahmin (Sn 620c, 645c). In a unique case, the Buddha even uses the phrase

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[41] ***Akiñcanan*** *ti rāga,kiñcanaṁ dosa,kiñcanaṁ moha,kiñcanaṁ māna,kiñcanaṁ diṭṭhi,kiñcanaṁ kilesa,kiñcanaṁ duccarita,kiñcanaṁ, yass'ete kiñcanā pahīnā samucchinnā vūpasantā paṭipassaddhā abhabb'uppattikā ñāṇ'agginā daḍḍhā, so vuccati akiñcano* (Nc:Be 25:84,21-25). Here ***kiñcana*** explained as *palibodha,* "impediment" (*rāga,kiñcanan ti rāga,palibodhaṁ. Dosa,kiñcanan ti ādi pi es'eva nayo,* NcA 27,15 f). Hence, *akiñcana* may also be tr as "one without (mental) impediments."

[42] Nc:Be 25:105,25-28.

[43] **Sn 1071c** Be *saññā,vimokkhe paramêdhimutto*; Ce *saññā vimokkha* (sic) *parame vimutto*; Ee *saññā,vimokhe parame vimutto*; Se *saññe,vimokkhe parame vimutto.* **Sn 1072c** Be Ee as for 1071c; Ce *saññā,vimokhe parame dhimutto*; Se as for 1071c.

[44] "Unmoved, unshaken; free from lust," Sn 87, 368, 422, 477, 751, 953, 1043; Dh 414; Tha 38, 372.

akiñcana to describe nirvana: "Owning nothing, taking nothing (*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ*): this is the island with nothing beyond it. I call this nirvana" (Sn 1094).[45]

The word *akiñcana* thus suggests an ideal of total renunciation, of casting off of both worldliness and religiosity. First, it signifies one who has left behind all external or worldly possessions so that one can wander freely, untroubled by concern over anything. And second, a kind of *higher renunciation* refers to one who has given up internal possessions—mental defilements—which may impede even one who lives the religious life, settled or itinerant.

4.1.5.5 When *akiñcana* is taken as an abstract noun, it becomes ***ākiñcañña***, "nothingness." This word is used for the 3rd formless attainment, **the base of nothingness** (*ākiñcañña'āyatana*) [3.1.2.5]. This was the meditative attainment that the Buddha, before his awakening, attained during his apprenticeship under Āḷāra Kālāma, as related in **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26).[46]

In **the Pārāyana Vagga** (the last chapter of the Sutta,nipāta), one of the oldest layers of the early Buddhist texts, the term appears without any explicit reference to the nothingness base except that **Upasīva** is told to contemplate *ākiñcañña* and then renounce it in order to cross the flood (that is, samsara) (Sn 1070-1072) [4.1.5.1].

Another of Upasīva's colleagues, **Posāla** is instructed to see with insight the arising of *ākiñcañña* in order to understand that "Delight is a fetter," and gain "the true knowledge of the brahmin who has lived the holy life"[47] (Sn 1115).

From the Sutta,nipāta, it seems that the terms *kiñcana* and *akiñcana* were well known in the meditative and ascetic culture to which the Buddha belonged, and thus were readily understood across traditions. But while non-Buddhist meditators were able to attain the base of nothingness as a formless attainment, only an arhat—because of his true and full renunciation—can be described as *akiñcana*.

4.2 THE TRUTHS AND THE PATH

4.2.1 What the Buddha teaches

4.2.1.0 The Buddha famously declares, "**I teach only suffering and the ending of suffering**" (*dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi*[48] *dukkhassa ca nirodhan ti*)[49] [4.2.2.6]. If we do not like the word "suffering," it is for that very reason we should seek to understand why we dislike it and why the Buddha makes suffering his central teaching for the world. This statement is elaborated in the well-known "first sermon"—**Dhamma,-cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), the discourse on the turning of the wheel of truth[50]—taught to the 5 monks in the deer park at Isi,patana (modern Sarnath), near Benares, in the heart of the central Gangetic plains of India.

The focus of **S 56.11** is the 4 noble truths and the noble eightfold path. In other words, **the 4 noble truths** are the guiding principles for the practice of **the noble eightfold path**. Simply put, the Buddhist path training has the following implications and significance:

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[45] See Nc 25:139; NcA 27; SnA 2:467. On *akiñcana* as an epithet for the Dharma and nirvana, see Nett 55,20-23*.

[46] M 26,15.15/1:165 (SD 1.11). The oldest record of the first sermon is found in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,29-43/-1:173-175, the bulk of which is called **Pāsarāsi S:** SD 1.11 (7)).

[47] *Etaṁ ñāṇaṁ tathaṁ tassa brāhmaṇassa vusimato* (Sn 1115).

[48] 1 sg of ***paññāpeti,*** *paññayati, paññapeti,* or *paññapayati,* here meaning "makes known, declares; defines; teaches; prescribes." *Paññāpemi,* lit, "I cause to know," 1 sg caus of *pajānāti*, "he knows, understand."

[49] **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,21.2), SD 21.13; **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,38), SD 3.13; **Yamaka S** (S 22.85,37), SD 21.12; SD 40a.1 (11.1.1); SD 58.1 (1.2.2.2).

[50] S 56.11/5:430-424 = Mv 1.6.16-31 @ V 1:10-12 (SD 1.1). On the 5 monks, see SD 1.1 (1).

4.2.1.1 (*1*) Suffering

The 1st universal truth is that suffering or unsatisfactoriness of some kind exists at all levels of human and sentient existence. This means that we are all evolving beings; we have yet to discover our full potential for personal good and social growth.

This is **the 1st noble truth** that is *suffering*: it means we can and need to grow, but we fail to see this potential in ourselves. We call this the 5 aggregates, basically, our body and mind, our very being.[51]

4.2.1.2 (*2*) The arising of suffering

Suffering arises from beings always seeking "something" or creating "something" in the quest for power, for having things, for controlling others, for dominating the environment, or even as the meaning and purpose of their lives. This is **craving** (*taṇhā*) or existential "thirst."

This is **the 2nd noble truth** that is *the arising* of suffering: suffering arises when we fail to see and accept others (beings and things) as we positively see and love ourselves. Often, we see other people as simply "good" or "bad" without really understanding the real situation; thus we fail to see the real causes behind the effects that we notice. We should properly understand people and events as arising inter-dependently.

4.2.1.3 (*3*) The path to the ending of suffering

Suffering can be overcome, avoided or at least minimized at the lowest common level, that is, socially, by people learning to relate to one another as extensions of their individual selves, and to respect others, other beings and the environment, as moral realities:[52] this is society at peace in a spiritual and creative sense. This entails wholesome social development, including living healthy lives bodily and socially; we call this **moral training** (*sīla,sikkhā*).

With wholesome social well-being, we are better equipped for individual development; we call this **mental training** (*samādhi,sikkhā*), that is, developing the mind to enjoy calm and clarity. "Calm" (*samatha*) refers to a focused mind that readily and healthily enjoys our body (the senses) with self-respect and respect for others; this is a basis for various levels of creativity, especially in the appreciation of truth and beauty. "Clarity" (*vipassanā*) is a clear mind capable of deep insight for seeing directly into true reality and so freeing ourselves from basic ignorance.

This is **the 3rd noble truth** that is *the path to the ending* of suffering: the mind can and needs to be trained to become free from suffering.[53] This is the noble eightfold path.

4.2.1.4 (*4*) The ending of suffering

On the individual level, we must each be at peace with ourselves: this is the ideal, meaning that it has to do with the mind (it can and needs to be trained); that is, the mind at peace. At the highest level, the peaceful mind blossoms with the total ending of craving, that is, **nirvana**.

This is **the 4th noble truth**, *the ending of suffering*: our understanding and acceptance that there is no self and others, only the mind shapes us and frees us. This is nirvana, freedom from time and space.

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[51] On the 5 aggregates as our body and mind, see SD 52.2e (1.2.1.3).

[52] One way to understand this "moral reality" is respect for **the 5 universal values** of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and the mind*. These are that give meaning and goodness to the 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*). See SD 1.5 (2.7 + 2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

[53] I have here followed the "practice model" of the 4 truths with the sequence 1-2-4-3, as given in **Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

4.2.2 The greatest story ever told: The 4 truths

4.2.2.1 The Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26) seems to tell the story of the "first discourse" in a *different* way from that told in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11)—they are *not* different stories, but the *same* story told in *different* ways. They are simply *new perspectives* into the first sermon, that together with the details of **S 56.11** give us the bigger view of the "greatest story."

This is the versatile nature of an oral tradition (that is, not a word-based faith) where oral accounts are given for the benefit of the audience, even down to our own times. In such oral retellings of the Buddha's historic past (the earlier years of the ministry), every different detail adds a new piece to the jigsaw puzzle of **the** "**great story**" (*mahā,vatthu*; Skt *mahā,vastu*) of awakening.[54]

For over 2,500 years, since the Buddha first taught us the 4 noble truths—*on suffering and the ending of suffering*—no one has proven these truths to be false. Indeed, even a very negative reaction to these truths—that they are "negative" or depressing—only proves the point of the truth: it is the basic nature of life that it is "unsatisfactory" in some way.

Yet without turning to any religious fiction, power theology or external agency, the Buddha declares that we are ourselves capable of rising from this inadequacy to gain the peak of consciousness, and be free of suffering, free even of the heavens, and gain true freedom and happiness that is nirvana. This is **the greatest story** ever told.

4.2.2.2 The Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta (S 56.11) relates the Buddha as teaching the 5 monks how to thoroughly "experience" the 4 noble truths as *theory, practice and realization*, that is, the 3 principles of good truths or "**the 3 good truths**" (*saddhamma*) thus:

(1)	the true Dharma as theory	*pariyatti,saddhamma*	(textual and theoretical),
(2)	the true Dharma as practice	*paṭipatti,saddhamma*	(moral virtue and meditation), and
(3)	the true Dharma as realization	*paṭivedha,saddhamma*	(sainthood and freedom).[55]

These 3 phases are to be fully applied to each of the 4 truths, as laid out in **S 56.11**, fully and clearly explaining the functions of each of the 4 noble truths (by way of the teaching model). This gives us the 12 aspects of **reality-experience**, thus:

truth (theory)	**practice**	**realization**	
(1) the 1st truth:	*1.* suffering;	*2.* it is to be *fully understood*;	*3.* it has been *understood*.
(2) the 2nd truth:	*4.* the arising of suffering;	5. it is be *abandoned*;	*6.* it has been *abandoned*.
(3) the 3rd truth:	7. the ending of suffering;	*8.* it is to be *realized.*	*9*. it has been *realized*.
(4) the 4th truth:	*10.* the way to the ending of suffering;	*11.* it is to be *cultivated.*	*12.* it has been *cultivated*.

(S 56.11,9-12) + SD 1.1 (6.2.2.1)

Table 4.2.2 The 4 good truths and their 12 aspects

[54] For a brief comparative study of **S 56.11** and **M 26**, see SD 1.11 (7.2).

[55] Here, these 3 good truths are applied to the progress of the path saints. Worldlings (the unawakened) who apply these 3 good truths still need to attain the path, ie, gain at least streamwinning. See VA 225; AA 5.33; cf Nm 143 for the first two. For a variant, where the last 2 functions are inverted, see **Mahā Saḷ'āyatanika S** (M 149,10.6/-3:289) + SD 41.9 (2.4) & **Abhiññā S** A 4.251/2:246 f [A:B 5:254], SD 85.3.

These are **the 12 modes or aspects** (*dvādas'ākāra*) of true reality.[56] Clearly then, the teaching of the 4 truths, as related in **S 56.11**, is not an "intellectual exercise," as we may otherwise surmise at *the word level* of the text. It is a description of what happens when the mind awakens to true reality. As unawakened beings, we tend to see truth as words (theories, dogmas, etc) which we argue over. The words don't actually change, but we change; we must, if we are to grow. To awakening and awakened beings the words are windows through which they see true reality and smile: they know and see what words hide.

4.2.2.3 The 12 modes of the 4 noble truths clearly imply that there are different levels of profundity in understanding the 4 truths, which range from the first appreciation of one who has just stepped on the path all the way to the penetrating insight of one who has reached full awakening. These truths are clearly not presented as an intellectual exercise in merely reasoned understanding.

Rather, the truths have to be experienced in a prolonged task, highlighted with the metaphor of "3 turnings." Only on completing the 12 modes of engaging with the truths does Buddha declare that he has reached awakening, thus:

> **13** [*Mv 1.6.27*] So long, bhikshus, as my knowledge and vision of these 4 noble truths as they really are in their **3 phases and 12 aspects** were not thoroughly purified in this way, **[423]**
>
> up until then, bhikshus, I did *not* claim to have awakened to the incomparable full awakening in this world … .
>
> **14** [*Mv 1.6.28*] But when my knowledge and vision of these 4 noble truths as they really are in their *3 phases and 12 aspects* are thoroughly purified in this way, then I claim to have awakened to the incomparable full awakening *in this world … .* (S 56.11,13 f/5:423), SD 1.1

4.2.2.4 A careful scrutiny of the "truth" passage of **S 56.11** (§§5-15) will convince us that the 4 noble truths are *not* the actual content of the experience of awakening. That content of awakening is:

> **the middle way**, awakened to by the Tathāgata, that gives rise to vision, to knowledge, to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana. … That is to say,
>
> right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. (S 56.11,4), SD 1.1

Then, and only then, the lay-out of **the 4 noble truths** follows in some detail (S 56.11,5-15), that is, by way of the 3 good truths (*saddhamma*) bringing about the 12 aspects of true reality [4.2.2.2]. In other words, **the noble eightfold path** is the "content" of awakening [4.2.2.3], the full realization of true reality. This is the actual experience of awakening as "the path" (*magga*) which will be prescribed again and again to all Dharma practitioners. This leads to the **experience** of awakening.

To *describe* the realization of awakening with the help of the model of the 4 noble truths may be said to be an intellectual exercise; in other words, these truths as **words** do not necessarily imply that such realization occurs in a way that directly involves the formulations used for describing these 4 noble truths.[57]

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[56] SD 1.1 (6.2).

[57] G Polak, "How was liberating insight related to the development of the four jhānas in early Buddhism?" JOCBS 2016:103 suggests that the early Buddhist notion of liberating insight at the time of awakening needs to be understood as involving a "psychological mechanism which does not have to be deliberately and consciously practised … It need not necessarily produce any explicit knowledge as a direct result, but should still be cognitive in character and able to cause change in a human being." Hence, the intent reflection on the truths can help prepare the ground for awakening by informing the cultivation of insight during the early stages of the path.

4.2.2.5 Hence, the teachings of **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** and its parallels do not imply that the Buddha, at the moment of awakening, mentally said to himself: "This is suffering; this is the arising of suffering," and so on. **The 4-truth model** is a mental tool for presenting to the unawakened as the Buddha's or an arhat's review knowledge or retrospective overview of the awakening process, based on a medical model describing *disease, cause, prescription and cure*[58]—as found in, for example, **the Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149). Evidently, the Buddha was himself very familiar with traditional medicine and medical health,[59] as evinced by such documents in both the Vinaya (eg, **the Bhesajja Khandha**) and[60] the suttas (eg, **the Sīvaka Sutta,** S 36.21).[61]

4.2.2.6 The realization itself at the moment of awakening is, of course, the experience of **nirvana** (*nibbāna*). This is clearly evident from the formula of realization behind the 3 turnings describing the 3rd noble truth as that of *the ending of suffering* [4.2.1.3] found in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta**. It is with the realization of nirvana that suffering ends.

Thus the Buddha declares that he teaches "*only suffering and its ending*" [4.2.1.0]. To clarify suffering (*dukkha*) entails clarifying its arising (*samudaya*). To prescribe suffering's ending (*nirodha*) is also to prescribe the way (*magga*) to end it. Here we have the well-known "**teaching model**" sequence of the 4 noble truths as used in the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta.

In either truths scheme—the teaching model or the practice model—the terms used in the truth descriptions [4.2.2.2, 4.2.2.5] above also clarify the relationship between the 3rd noble truth (the ending of suffering) and the other 3 truths. When we have experienced the ending of suffering, we also know what suffering is or is like. Having understood the ending of suffering, we would also want to take the way to end suffering. We have thus nursed ourselves to spiritual health.

4.2.2.7 The 4-truth scheme is thus a panoramic vision of the true reality that is suffering and the right path that is its ending. We can thus clearly see the real problem and its true solution. A vital implication of this two-truth overview of true reality is that we now know that *suffering arises in the mind* (by way of craving)—craving *is* suffering—and thus its ending is also in our own minds—there is the need for self-reliance.

Thus in a single vision we are able to see what is preventing us from being healthy in mind and spirit, and how we can and must be healthy without need of any external agency or faith in dogmas. The word may lead to the path, but the word is *not* the path. It is the path that inspires us with the words to see the journey for what it is and to make that journey. Our body is the path, our mind is the journey.

A single finger points to the moon, but 3 others hold down the thumb and point back to ourselves.[62] The moon reflects an ancient light from the past; the 4 fingers and the up-thumb are reminders that we should move ahead where the light shows the path. That moon is the Buddha; the fingers are the 4 truths with the thumb as the goal, nirvana.[63]

4.2.3 Putting the sutta jigsaw pieces rightly together

4.2.3.1 On the word level, the teachings of **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26) seem to tell a story about the 5 monks, different from that of **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), but this differ-

[58] On this "practice model" of the 4 truths, see (4.2.1.3) n on the 1-2-4-3 sequence of the truths.

[59] On the Buddha as a "doctor," see Sn 560; also SD 43.7 (2.2); also **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 63,5.2), SD 5.8. On early Buddhism and Indian medicine, see SD 1.1 (5.3).

[60] Mv 6 @ V 1:199-252.

[61] S 36.21 + SD 5.6 (1).

[62] See SD 1.1 (5.1) Personal experience of reality.

[63] In this imaginative metaphor, the thumb should be curled under the middle finger.

ence is only apparent and complementary. While **S 56.11** is a cameo of the teaching on the 4 truths to the 5 monks, **M 26** gives us, amongst other things, details about how the Buddha meets and convinces the 5 monks (§§26-28) that he is now buddha, awakened. Such a narrative is helpful in giving us a panoramic historical perspective to S 56.11, which gives only an account of the Dharma teaching.

M 26 then recounts the Buddha's "first sermon" at the deer park at Isi,patana [4.2.1.0] to the 5 monks (§§26-30). While S 56.11 gives a succinct set of teachings on the 4 truths and the noble eightfold path, M 26 gives a broad narrative about *how* the Dharma was taught to the 5 monks:

> **29** Bhikshus, I was able to convince the group of 5 monks.
>
> Bhikshus, sometimes I instructed 2 monks while the other 3 went out for alms, and the 6 of us lived on what those 3 monks brought back.
>
> Bhikshus, sometimes I instructed 3 monks while the other 2 went for alms, and the 6 of us lived on what those 2 monks brought back. (M 26,29/1:173), SD 1.11

Naturally, numerous teachings were given by the Buddha to the 5 monks during the narrative time of the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta. Imagine the 5 monks living with the Buddha, interacting with him individually or in twos or more, daily conversing with the teacher, listening to his talks, asking him questions, and also meditating by themselves.

What has come down to us are recollections of such Dharma sessions and moments of spiritual friendship, formalized as **suttas** for our benefit today. As we study the suttas, we must also remember that they are excerpts from ongoing conversations the Buddha had with saints, people and beings of his day.

The suttas are selected episodes of **the great story** of the Buddha, his disciples and the Dharma. The story becomes *greater* when we study, practice and understand it. It becomes the greatest story when this story is told and retold to others.

4.3.3.2 The main part of **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26) closes with the words:

> "Then, bhikshus, the group of 5 monks, thus taught and instructed by me, … realized the undefiled supreme security from bondage, **nirvana**. The knowledge and vision arose in them:
>
> 'Unshakeable is *our* freedom of mind. This is *our* last birth. Now there is no more rebirth (for us)!'" [64] (M 26,30.7/1:173,7-20), SD 1.11

There is nothing unusual about this statement: at some point, the 5 monks, doing their own practice of meditation, personally guided by the Buddha himself, gained arhathood.

Then follows an ancient textual fragment known as **Pāsa,rāsi Sutta**,[65] the discourse on the pile of snares, which closes M 26. The first of 2 Suttas' themes is a warning about the 5 cords of sensual pleasure as "**Māra's snares**": mindlessly indulging in the senses prevents us from focusing our minds to see true reality and so gain true happiness.

The second M 26 common theme is that of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anupubba,vihāra*). Dhyanas not only keep us safely out of Māra's sight—dhyana "blinds" Māra—the dhyanas, properly used, can bring us awakening; we are then fully freed from Māra.

We are not told whether the 5 monks experienced the 9 progressive abodes. However, from the contemplative tradition, we know that a meditator may attain *any dhyana*, especially the 1st dhyana,

[64] At **M 26**,18.7, the Buddha says this of his own awakening. Compare this ancient account of the arhathood of the 5 monks with that of **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1. On the significance of this passage: SD 1,11 (5.3.5.2).

[65] For a discussion on **Pāsa,rāsi S**, see SD 1.11 (7).

which is the basis for the other 3 form dhyanas. Then, on attaining the 4th dhyana, one with just a bit more effort will be able to attain the 4 formless attainments.

Then, the meditator emerges from dhyana and directs his mind to scrutinize true reality, and thereby gains awakening [Table 5.3.5]. Thus, the teaching on the 9 progressive abodes—like the one in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** [§§5-12]—is the gamut of the Buddha's meditative experience and are listed in the Sutta as the stages of true renunciation leading to awakening itself.

5 The 2 paths or the one way?

5.1 SATIPAṬṬHĀNA, THE "ONE-GOING PATH"

5.1.1 *Ekâyana,magga*

5.1.1.1 The Sati'paṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) opens with the Buddha declaring:

> [66]"Bhikshus, this is **the one-going path** (*ekâyano maggo*),[67]
> for the purification of beings, **[56]** for overcoming sorrow and lamentation,
> for the disappearance of pain and displeasure,[68] for gaining the right way,[69]
> for realizing nirvana,
> that is to say, **the 4 focuses of mindfulness**.[70] (M 10,2/1;55 f), SD 13.3

What does it mean to say that **satipatthana** is the "one-going path"?

Sati'paṭṭhāna is resolved as *sati* (mindfulness) + *upaṭṭhāna* (setting up), meaning the establishment or focuses of mindfulness by way of the following:

(1)	contemplation of the body	*kāyânupassanā*;	body-based meditation;
(2)	contemplation of feelings	*vedanā'nupassanā*;	feeling-based meditation;
(3)	contemplation of mind	*cittânupassanā*;	mind-based meditation;
(4)	contemplation of dharmas	*dhammânupassanā*;	reality-based meditation.

One "dwells [71]exertive, clearly aware, mindful," meditating on the body (especially the breath meditation), on feelings, on the mind and on realities that arise in the mind, "removing covetousness and displeasure [discontent][72] in regard to the world."[73]

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[66] Quoted at Kvu 158.

[67] *Ekâyano maggo*, lit, "one-going path," alt "the path where one goes by oneself," ie "the direct one-way path to samadhi." See SD 13.1 (3.2). *Ekâyana* should not be confused with the post-Buddha term *eka,yāna*, "one vehicle," which, in Mahāyāna polemics against early "Hīnayāna" teaches that the ultimately true path is Buddhahood, that even arhats have to become Buddhas.

[68] *Dukkha,domanassa,* sometimes tr as "pain and sadness." Tr here follows **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,18 (4.3 + 4)), SD 13.2, = **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,16+17), SD 11.11. Cf **(Bhaya) Vera S** (A 5.17) where we have "mental pain or displeasure" (*cetasikam pi dukkhaṁ domanassaṁ*) (A 5.17,4/3:205, passim), SD 6.4. See Walshe 1996 (D:W 589 n627). For a broader sense of *domanassa,* see SD 13.1(4.2).

[69] "For gaining the right way," *ñāyassa adhigamāya;* ie, the eightfold path. See SD 13.1 (3.3).

[70] "Focuses of mindfulness," *sati'paṭṭhāna:* see SD 13.1 (3.1).

[71] *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṁ.* Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1 (4.2).

[72] "Covetousness and displeasure," *abhijjhā,domanassaṁ,* alt trs: "desire and discontent," "desiring and disliking," or "longing and loathing." Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as "hankering and fretting [in regard to the world]." See SD 13.1 (4.2).

[73] "in the world (*loka*)," refers to sense-experiences and worldliness. See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

Simply put, this means that **the purpose of satipatthana** is primarily to help the mind to renounce any engagement with the senses so that the mind is able to fully focus on itself for the attaining of dhyana. Emerging from dhyana, the meditator then applies the dhyanic calm and clarity to directly scrutinize true reality, that is, impermanence, suffering and possibly nonself. This is the very same principle underlying all meditations, which we will briefly survey below.[74]

5.1.1.2 The term ***ekâyana*,*magga*** is resolved as ***eka*** (one), ***ayana*** (going),[75] and ***magga*** (path). Buddhaghosa, in the Majjhima Commentary, gives us a brief survey of the polysemy of the term, *ekâyana,* which I will briefly explain, thus:[76]

(1) ***eka,maggo na dvedhā,patha,bhūto***: "the single way, comprising a path that is not (broken) in two." Satipatthana is a single undivided learning and practice; it is neither a sectarian highway nor a theological "Way of the Word." It is the path of one who is *single-minded* in seeking true reality.
(2) ***ekena ayitabbo***:[77] "that which should be reached by one," that is, to be traversed by oneself; not through someone else or some outside agency; the "one" (*eka*) also means the mind or "mental concentration," that is, meditation (neither blind faith nor ostentatious rituals nor religious power) by which the path is traversed; in short, we progress up the path by self-effort;
(3) ***ekassa ayano***: "the going of one," that is, to be travelled by one alone (it's like being born or dying: we evolve alone on the path and awaken *alone*), because it is a mental journey and spiritual path. Aloneness is not loneliness, since there are others who will awaken, too;[78]
(4) ***ekasmiṁ ayano***: "the going (found only) in one," that is, found only in the Buddha's teaching;
(5) ***ekaṁ ayati***: "it goes to the one," that is, it leads directly to only one goal, nirvana.

(DA 743 = MA 1:229 f; cf PmA 485 f, NmA 52 f) [3.5.3+4]

From this key teaching, it is clear that there is a single path of Dharma-centred practice. All meditation practice is for the purpose of calm or of insight, or of both, and the ultimate purpose of this is to gain awakening.

5.1.2 The truths, the path and satipatthana

5.1.2.1 We have already looked at **the 4 noble truths** [4.2], that is, the realities of *suffering*, its *arising*, its *ending*, and *the path* leading to its ending. We have also seen that the noble eightfold path is none other than the 4th and last truth in the well known teaching model [4.2.2.6]. The path is the 3rd truth in the practice model, wherein the path is placed 3rd because it leads to the 4th truth, that of nirvana [4.2.1.4].

We can thus say that the 4 truths and the eightfold path are actually a single network of teaching and practice, leading to only the "one" goal [5.1.1.2]. There is only the "one dharma," *the same truth, teaching and goal*. The difference lies in whether one knows and accepts it or not, whether one practises it or not, whether one realizes it or not.

From **Table 5.1.2** we can see that **right mindfulness** (*sammā sati*) (the 4 satipaṭṭhānas) precedes **right concentration** (the dhyanas), showing how the first leads to the second. We can also see that **right view**

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[74] For an overview of the 4 satipatthanas, see SD 62.15 (2).

[75] Cf the commentarial form, ***āyana*** (from *eti = ayati,* "he goes")*,* "coming; producing; a path or way"; a late term (Nc 104,16; Vism 26,30; DhsA 259,24).

[76] For citations, see CPD: *ekāyana.* See also Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:27-29.

[77] *Ayitabbo, ayano,* and *ayati* here come from √i (to go); *ayati = eti,* "he goes, goes toward; he reaches, obtains; he reaches (a state); he is involved (in)" (see DP: *eti*[1]).

[78] There are, of course, others, too, who do likewise, but the real effort is always a personal one.

is depicted as "seeing the 4 truths." Thus we can see that *the truths, the path and satipatthana* are not separate teaching systems or ways of practice, but are all closely interrelated teachings, leading to the same goal.

the noble eightfold path			**the 3 trainings**
right view	*sammā diṭṭhi*	directly seeing the 4 truths	**wisdom** (*paññā*)
right intention	*sammā saṅkappa*	charity lovingkindness compassion	
right speech	*sammā vācā*	refraining from false speech refraining from divisive speech refraining from harsh (hurting) speech refraining from frivolous talk	**moral conduct** (*sīla*)
right action	*sammā kammantā*	refraining from taking life refraining from taking the not-given refraining from sexual misconduct	
right livelihood	*sammā ājīva*	refraining from wrong speech and action	
right effort	*sammā vāyāma*	preventing unarisen unwholesome states abandoning arisen unwholesome states cultivating unarisen wholesome states maintaining arisen wholesome states	**mental concentration** (*samādhi*)
right mindfulness	*sammā sati*	contemplation of the body contemplation of feeling contemplation of the mind contemplation of dharmas	
right concentration	*sammā samādhi*	cultivating the 4 dhyanas	

Table 5.1.2 The eightfold path, its limbs and components

5.1.2.2 The 4 satipatthanas [5.1.1.1] embody right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), forming the 2nd of the 3 trainings, that of "concentration or mind training" (*samādhi sikkhā*), and the 7th limb of the path, itself, as shown in **Table 5.1.2**. Both the 4 satipatthanas and the eightfold path constitute the "one-going path" (*ekâyana magga*). In practice, they both keep us moving on in the direct path of spiritual growth by way of focusing ourselves to mindfully cultivate *the body, feelings, mind and dharmas.* This frees us from negative karma so that we cultivate a wholesome mind to see directly into true reality and free ourselves. We can see them as two perspectives of the one and same way, one *descriptive* (the eightfold path), the other *practical* (satipatthana); one is a map, the other the journey.

5.1.2.3 We can also see both the eightfold path and satipaṭṭhāna as the same path of practice, that is, **the eightfold path** as the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*) in *moral virtue, concentration and wisdom*, and **satipaṭṭhāna** as the details of concentration training, that is, the 4 contemplations (*anupassanā*), those in

the body, feelings, the mind and realities. Both the path and satipaṭṭhāna ("the one-going path") [5.1] lead to the same goal.

5.1.3 On *bhāvitā* and *bhāvanā*[79]

5.1.3.1 Although the Pali canon contains many passages recording the Buddha speaking on the arhat's full cultivation or self-mastery, we only find a handful of suttas where all the 4 factors—that is, mastery over **the body** (*bhāvita,kāya*), in **moral virtue** (*bhāvita,sīla*), in **the mind** (*bhāvita,citta*), and in **wisdom** (*bhāvita,paññā*)—are defined or stated together, such as these texts:[80]

Mahā Saccaka Sutta	M 36/2 and *passim*	SD 49.4
(Piṇḍola) Bhāra,dvāja Sutta	S 35.127/4:111	SD 27.6a(2.4)
Loṇa,phala Sutta	A 3.100/1:249-253 x5	SD 3.5
(Dasaka) Mahā,cunda Sutta	A 10.24/5:42-45 x6	SD 72.12
Cūḷa,niddesa	Nc:Be 26,3 f	(lists the 4 terms mentioned)

Other passages in the canon mention at most *3 kinds of cultivation*. Following on from the 3 trainings, for example, **the Saṅgīti Sutta** arranges 3 kinds of cultivation as follows:

> The threefold training entails the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla,sikkhā*), the training in higher mind (*adhicitta,sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā,sikkhā*).
>
> The 3 kinds of cultivation entail bodily cultivation (*kāya,bhāvanā*), mental cultivation (*citta,bhāvanā*), and wisdom cultivation (*paññā,bhāvanā*). (D 33,1.10(47+48)/3:119)

5.1.3.2 The suttas do not otherwise define the 4 terms—*bhāvita,kāya, bhāvita,sīla, bhāvita,citta* and *bhāvita,paññā*—probably because the Buddha's disciples in his time were familiar with these terms and there was thus no need to define them. The passages containing these definitions tend to be answers or explanations the Buddha gives to non-Buddhists, for example, to wanderers and ascetics of other traditions [5.1.3.1]. Similarly, the 4 kinds of **cultivation** (*bhāvanā*)—which lead to self-mastery (*bhāvita*)—are not found as a set in the Pali canon, unless one counts the Burmese edition, which includes **the Peṭakopadesa** (Peṭk),[81] which says:

> In the eightfold path is found the fourfold cultivation: moral cultivation (*sīla,bhāvanā*), bodily cultivation (*kāya,bhāvanā*), mental cultivation (*citta,bhavanā*), and wisdom cultivation (*paññā,-bhāvanā*). (Peṭk 191,14-16)[82] [5.1.3.4]

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[79] This section is partly based on Payutto, *Buddhadhamma*, 2021:799-802 (§7.12 Appendix 2).

[80] Payutto, however, states that "there is no single passage in which these four factors are defined together. There exist only cases in which one or a few of these factors are defined in specific circumstances, for example by correcting a misunderstanding about one or more of these aspects of development. … the four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*)—which lead to selfmastery (*bhāvita*)—are not found together as a group in the Tipiṭaka." (2021:799).

[81] Both **Peṭakôpadesa** (*piṭaka,* "basket of texts," + *upadesa,* "disclosure") and **Netti-p.pakaraṇa** (*netti*, "guide," + *pakaraṇa,* "literary text") are paracanonical works on Pali hermeneutics, written c 2nd-1st cent BCE as a guide for interpreting the suttas. Peṭk was written earlier prob as a trial or draft project, and was outshone by the far superior Nett, both attr to one "Kaccāna" (the name of the Buddha's disciple foremost in elaborating Dharma taught in brief). The actual author is unknown. Nett has a comy (by Dhammapāla), but not Peṭk. The Burmese regard both Peṭk and Nett as canonical and locate them in the Khuddaka Nikāya.

[82] Here moral cultivation is placed before bodily cultivation.

5.1.3.3 The Commentary on **the Lona,phala Sutta** explains "**of uncultivated body**" (*abhāvita,kāya,* A 3.99,2 + *passim*) as referring to a worldling caught in cyclic life bereft of any bodily cultivation.[83] "Body" here refers to the 5 senses. Hence, "one bodily cultivated" is said to be developed in the 5 sense-doors; this means that one is well restrained in the senses.[84]

The contrasting terms "**bodily cultivated**" (*bhāvita,kāya*) and "**bodily uncultivated**" (*abhāvita,kāya*) are explained in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), where Saccaka initially identifies *kāya,bhāvanā* ("bodily cultivation") as "self-mortification."[85] The Commentary explains that the Buddha takes "bodily cultivation" to mean "cultivation of insight" (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), and "mental cultivation" to be "cultivation of calmness" (*samatha bhāvanā*) (MA 2:285).

Considering the bifurcation of meditation into "calm" and "insight" appears only in post-canonical texts, we may take the term ***abhāvita,kāya*** to simply mean "torturing the body" or "not taking proper care of one's physical health" and ***bhāvita,kāya*** to mean "keeping oneself sensually restrained and bodily healthy." This fits well with the Buddha's own daily routine:

After sitting for long hours giving teachings, the Buddha would do some walking, often in meditation. Then he would rest, and just before dawn, meditate; again, at dusk, he would do some walking and then meditate. Walking meditation (*caṅkamana*) entails slow, focused, mindful walking with the meditation focus usually at the point of contact the foot makes with the ground or the movements of the other foot, or both alternately.

5.1.3.4 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) speaks of the *bhāvita* terms as follows:

> **9** "**And how, Aggivessana, is one cultivated in body and cultivated in mind?**
> Here, Aggivessana, a pleasant feeling arises in **an instructed noble disciple**.
> 9.2 When touched by that *pleasant feeling*,
> he is neither infatuated with pleasure *nor* goes on being infatuated with pleasure.
> Then, that pleasant feeling *ends* for him.
> With the ending of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises.
> 9.3 When touched by **painful feeling**,
> he neither sorrows, nor grieves, nor laments, nor weeps, nor beats his breast, nor falls into confusion.
> 9.4 For him, Aggivessana, the arisen pleasant feeling
> does *not* overwhelm his mind and remain—
> because of his **cultivated body**,
> and the arisen painful feeling, too, does *not* overwhelm his mind and remain,
> because of his **cultivated mind**.
> 9.5 In whomever, Aggivessana, there are such twin aspects—
> that arisen pleasant feeling **[240]** does not overwhelm his mind and remain,
> because of his cultivated body,[86]
> and that arisen painful feeling, too, does not overwhelm his mind and remain,

[83] ***Abhāvita,kāyo*** *ti ādīhi kāya,bhāvanā,rahito vaṭṭa,gāmī puthujjano dassito* (AA 2:361,3 f).

[84] *Pañca,dvāra,bhāvanāya vā* ***bhāvita,kāyo****. Etena indriya,saṃvara,sīlaṃ vuttaṁ*" (AA 2:361,9-11).

[85] M 36,4/1:237 + SD 49.4 (1.2.3).

[86] *Yassa kassaci, aggivessana, evaṁ ubhato,pakkhaṁ uppannā'pi sukhā vedanā cittaṁ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati bhāvitattā kāyassa:* see §8.4+n. The Sutta here relates pleasant feelings to bodily cultivation and painful feelings to mental cultivation [M 36,8.4, SD 49.4]. Comy then glosses "bodily cultivation" as insight and "mental cultivation" as concentration. See (5.1.3.3).

because of his cultivated mind[87]—
he, Aggivessana, is thus cultivated in body and cultivated in mind."[88]

(M 36,9/1:237), SD 49.4

The Commentaries explain that *kāya,bhāvanā* here refers to insight meditation (*vipassanā*), while *citta,-bhāvanā* refers to concentration (*samādhi*), that is, calm meditation (*samatha*) (MA 2:285,1-4).

5.1.3.5 The special term for "exercise" for monastics is ***jaṅghā,vihāra***, "walking exercise." This involves some kind of free walking around, a bit more rigorous than walking meditation. Normally, such a walking exercise would be done in a suitably peaceful or cool place, such as in the shade of a vihara (dwelling quarters), along a forest path or in open ground in the park or forest.

Another form of monastic exercise occurs as **the daily almsround** (*piṇḍa,cāra;* Sn p414) during early morning. Like "walking exercise," this almsround may be slightly more rigorous. Furthermore, the Buddha and monastics often go on **long walks** (*carika*), wandering around the country, from village to village, town to town, city to city, teaching Dharma, and accepting converts and candidates for renunciation.

5.1.4 *Bhāvita* and *bhāvanā* as used outside the canon

5.1.4.1 Note also that the term ***sīla,bhāvanā*** ("moral cultivation") does not appear at all in the canon (apart from the Peṭakopadesa) [5.1.3.2 n]. The term *sīla,bhāvanā* thus only exists inherently in the term *bhāvita,sīla*. In contrast, the Commentaries frequently mention all 4 aspects of self-mastery (*bhāvita*) and all 4 kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*) as sets, and provide a fair number of explanations for these terms.[89]

These explanations, however, sometimes seem to conflict with one another. This is often because the Commentaries tend to explain words and expressions contextually. The terms *citta,bhāvanā* and *paññā,-bhāvanā* tend not to be problematic and are clear enough. Apparent confusion and contradictions tend to arise in regard to the terms *kāya,bhāvanā* and *sīla,bhāvanā* (and by extension to the terms *bhāvita,kāya* and *bhāvita,sīla*). Here again we should read these respective expressions *contextually,* as if applying them to a particular passage or situation.

5.1.4.2 The Peṭakopadesa [5.1.3.2] seems to give definitions at variance with other texts for all 4 kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*). Note the following passage:

In the eightfold path are found **the fourfold cultivations**: moral cultivation, bodily cultivation, mental cultivation and wisdom cultivation.

Therein **the body** is cultivated by way of	right action and right livelihood.
Moral conduct is cultivated by way of	right speech and right effort.
The mind is cultivated by way of	right thought and right concentration.
Wisdom is cultivated by way of	right view and right mindfulness.

[87] *Uppannā'pi dukkhā vedanā cittaṁ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati bhāvitattā cittassa.* Essentially, **§§8+9** are saying that the Buddha (and his disciples, too) are able to maintain natural inner calm even when painful feelings arise in the body (in terms of bodily actions and speech) or the mind (in terms of thoughts).

[88] In the Skt version, Saccaka simply asks if the monks cultivate both body and mind. When the Buddha answers yes, he asks if the Buddha himself also cultivates both body and mind. The Buddha replies that if anyone were to speak rightly he would say that the Buddha has cultivated both body and mind. The Pali and Skt versions agree that Saccaka asks if the Buddha has ever experienced pleasant or painful feelings that overwhelm his mind. The Buddha then gives a detailed account of his ascetic practices as bodhisattva. On *bhāvita,kāya + bhāvita,citta,* see (5.1.3.1).

[89] For refs, we only need to search **CSCD** using the words like "kāyabhāvit*," "sīlabhāvit*," "*bhāvit*" and "*bhāvan*," in turn, each with a wild-card asterisk tag. Using the initial * and final * will yield practically all words that contain *-bhāvita-* and *-bhāvāna-* in them and you have to select the words you need.

By way of these fourfold cultivations, these 2 factors come to fulfilment: the mind (*citta*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

Citta here refers to calm meditation (*samatha*) and *paññā* refers to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). (Peṭk 191,14-23)

Let us compare this Peṭk passage with a parallel in **the Nettipakaraṇa** (Nett) [5.1.3.2 n]. Here, the 4 kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*) are not explained, but **the fourfold self-mastery** (*bhāvita*), which is inherently connected to the kinds of cultivation, is explained.

One will see that here the explanation contradicts in part that of Peṭk 191 above (the variant terms are *italicized*):

Of the 3 aggregates (*khandha*), the aggregate of morality (*sīla,khandha*) and the aggregate of concentration (*samādhi,khandha*) constitute calm meditation (*samatha*), while the aggregate of wisdom (*paññā,khandha*) constitutes insight meditation (*vipassanā*) … .

That monk is cultivated in body, cultivated in moral conduct, cultivated in mind, cultivated in wisdom.[90]

When **the body** is cultivated, 2 factors are cultivated: right action and *right effort*;
when **moral conduct** is cultivated, 2 factors are cultivated: right speech and *right livelihood*;
when **the mind** is cultivated, 2 factors are cultivated: right *mindfulness* and right concentration;
when **wisdom** is cultivated, 2 factors are cultivated: right view and *right thought*.
(Nett 91, excerpts)

5.1.4.3 Note that the terms *bhāvanā* and *bhāvita* can also be translated as "cultivation" + "(fully) cultivated" or "training" + "(fully) trained." The suttas use the term *vaḍḍhita,* adjective of *vaḍḍhana* ("growth, development") as a synonym for *bhāvita-* in the term, ***bhāvita,kāya***, thus:

The Mahā Niddesa Commentary on the Tissa Metteyya Sutta (Sn 5.3/119) explains *bhāvita,kāyo ti vaḍḍhita,kāyo*, "Bhāvita,kāya means bodily developed" (NmA 2:267,3), and **the Aṅguttara Commentary** on the Loṇa,phala Sutta (A 3.99) details the term and adds: "one is *bhāvita,kāya* by way of contemplation of the body, or, on account of bodily development, he is said to be bodily cultivated,"[91] and adds that ***bhāvita,sīla*** means "morally developed" (*bhāvita,silo to vaḍḍhita,sīlo*) (AA 2:361,9-12).

In fact, most commentarial explanations conform with the Netti-p,pakaraṇa, but often seem to be at odds with the Peṭakopadesa. Take, for example, this passage from **the Netti-p,pakaraṇa Commentary** on *bhāvita,kāya* and *bhāvita,sīla*:

With the fulfilment of proper common moral conduct (*ābhisamācārika,sīla*),[92] one is **bodily cultivated** (*bhāvita,kāya*);

with the fulfilment of moral conduct fundamental to the holy life (*ādi.brahma.cariyaka,sīla*),[93] one is **morally cultivated** (*bhāvita,sīla*).

Moreover, by way of sense-restraint (*indriya,saṁvara*) one is bodily cultivated (in the 5 sense-doors) (*bhāvita*(*,pañca,dvāra*)*,kāya*);

by way of other forms of moral conduct one is morally cultivated. (NettA:Be 155,1-9)

5.1.4.4 The Aṅguttara Commentary on the Loṇa,phala Sutta (A 3.99) elaborates on the same 2 terms, *bhāvita,kāya* and *bhāvita,sīla*, with some distinctiveness, thus:

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[90] Cf **S 35.127**/4:111; **A 3.99**/1:249; Peṭk 191. [5.1.3.1]

[91] *So hi kāyânupassanā,saṅkhātāya kāya,bhāvanāya* ***bhāvita,kāyo*** *nāma. Kāyassa vā vaḍḍhitattā bhāvita,kāyo.*

[92] On *ābhisamācārika,sīla,* see SD 55.8 (3.3.2).

[93] On *ādi,brahma.cariyaka,sīla,* see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,30), SD 7.14; SD 10.16 (1.6.2.6).

By way of bodily cultivation (*kāya,bhāvanā*), that is, by contemplation of the body (*kāyânupassanā*), one is called **bodily cultivated** (*bhāvita,kāya*) … .

Moreover, by cultivating the 5 (sense-)doors (*pañca,dvāra*) one is **bodily cultivated**.

The term "bodily cultivated" refers here to moral conduct as sense-restraint (*indriya.saṁvara,-sīla*).

As for the term "**morally cultivated**" (*bhāvita,sīla*), it refers to the 3 remaining kinds of moral virtue.[94] (AA 2:361,9-15)

In connection with the 4 pairs of terms connected with *bhāvanā* and *bhāvita*, other Commentaries and Subcommentaries give only occasional explanations of the terms *bhāvanā* and *bhāvita*. For example, **the Saṁyutta Commentary** states:

"The term *bhāvita,kāya* refers to the body endowed with the 5 (sense-)doors." (SA 2:395).

This passage is consistent with the two commentarial passages cited above.

Furthermore, some commentarial and subcommentarial passages emphasize that the term ***bhāvanā*** in the context of the 4 kinds of cultivation does not refer to spiritual practice currently engaged in—to practice applied in order to reach the goal—but rather to the practice of arhats which is completed or has already reached the goal. For example, **the Dīgha Subcommentary** says:

"It is cultivation by the fact of having been cultivated." (*bhāvita,bhāvena bhāvanā,* DAṬ 3:277).

5.1.4.5 The apparent anomalies described in this section regarding the definitions and meanings of the 4 terms—*bhāvita,kāya, bhāvita,sīla, bhāvita,citta* and *bhāvita,paññā*—and their correlated terms, *kāya,bhāvanā, sīla,bhāvanā, citta,bhāvanā* and *paññā,bhāvanā,* can be explained by the "rule of contextuality," which is based on the later canonical term, ***attha,rasa***,[95] meaning "the taste or essence of the meaning (in facts as opposed to theory)."[96] It shows the rich versatility and polysemy of Pali suttas.

"**Context**" means to bring together (con-) the texts or words (*vyañjana*) where their meaning (*attha*) coincides. We can then and thus see how the meaning of the text is brought out by the usage of the related terms. Thus, the words of the canon (or any Dharma-rooted teaching) are not a fixed lexicon or prison of words; rather, the words are mental work to free the meanings behind the letters: we need to *read in between the lines*, free the spirit from the letter. This is the living Dharma. Thus by the living Dharma, we experience the Dharma and see the light.

5.2 Living the Dharma through practice

5.2.1 The noble individuals: 4 and 8

5.2.1.1 Early Buddhism speaks of the noble saints and those bound for sainthood as "**individuals**" (*puggala*). Since they have attained some level of sainthood or awakening—they have attained the noble path as *streamwinners, once-returners, nonreturners and arhats*—they are called "**noble individuals**" (*ariya puggala*). Apparently, the Buddha was making a statement against notions of racial supremacy

[94] The 3 remaining kinds of moral virtue are those in regard to the Pātimokkha (*pāṭimokkha.saṁvara,sīla*), to purity of livelihood (*ājīva.pārisuddhi,sīla*), and to the reflective use of supports (*paccaya.paṭisevana,sīla*).

[95] Nm 143,2 + NmA; Pm 2:88,34, 491,11 = 544,4, 3:12,12; Yam 1:54,10.

[96] CPD sv attha-rasa.

(rejecting the notions that the fair-skinned priestly brahmins were the highest class) and of class discrimination (rejecting the notion that other caste-members are inferior and some even outcastes).[97]

One is neither "pure" nor "impure" by *jāti,* birth or class,[98] nor by appearance;[99] truly, one is *pure* when one does good; one is *impure* when one does evil. Thus those who habitually live moral lives, have stilled and freed their minds, and have gained the wisdom that brings them spiritual freedom are called "**noble**" (*ariya*; Skt *arya*). These are the saints of the Buddhist path of awakening.

5.2.1.2 The most important of the noble saints is **the arhat** (*arahata*), who is fully awakened and liberated just like the Buddha. The only difference is that the Buddha is *the first arhat in the world*, and the other arhats and learners (*sekha*), the 3 remaining individual types, are regarded as "Buddha followers" (*buddhânubuddha*).[100] Like the Buddha, the arhats have uprooted all defilements, beginning with the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hatred and delusion), and so will not be reborn. The Buddha, due to the duration of numerous lives he has taken on the path to awakening, also has boundless wisdom.[101]

In other words, generically speaking, the most important individual in early Buddhism is **the arhat** (which includes the Buddha) who is an "adept" (*asekha*), so called because he has no more need of spiritual training. The other saints—the streamwinners, the once-returners and the nonreturners—are thus generically classed as "learners or trainees" (*sekha*), since they are still undergoing some kind of path-training, that is, in breaking the remainder of the fetters[102] [**Table 5.2.1.3**].

So we have here *the simplest grouping of saints*, that is, into 2 groups of noble individuals, comprising **the adepts** (*asekha*) or the arhats, and **the learners** (*sekha*), who are on the way to awakening. We may think of the latter as "beings bound for awakening" but we do not call them Bodhisattvas (*bodhi,satta*), since the term is only used for the historical Buddha before his awakening, specifically in his last life, and broadly, when he is identified as the future buddha, that is, after he has aspired before another living buddha to become a fully awakened buddha himself.[103]

5.2.1.3 The 2nd group of noble individuals (after the 2 groups of noble individuals) are **the 4 noble individuals** (*ariya,puggala*), as described by the Buddha in **the Mahāli Sutta** (D 6)[104] and in many other suttas.[105] The 4 individuals are defined by the kinds of "fetters" (*saṁyojana*), of which there are a total of 10, that they each have broken or weakened. These 4 noble individuals and the fetters they have overcome may be summarized as follows:

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[97] Technically, there were, in the Buddha's time, only 3 social classes (*jāti*) who regarded themselves as "noble: (*ariya;* Skt *arya*); a 4th group, artisans (*sudda;* Skt śūdra), was a fluid group of any kind of menial workers, who were not regarded as *ariya,* and were regarded as "outcastes." There is the *pañcama* ("the 5th")—the dark-skinned autochthonous people—who were also regarded as outcastes. See **Tevijja S** (D 13,19) n, SD 1.8.

[98] **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98,12.3 = Sn 650/122), SD 37.1; SD 10.8 (6.2).

[99] Dh 393.

[100] SD 15.10a (1.1.1).

[101] See SD 50.19 (1.2.1.1 (4), 1.3. 4).

[102] On the 2 types of noble individuals, *sekha* and *asekha*: A 1:63, 231 f.

[103] For a special study on "Aspiration to buddhahood and disciplehood," see SD 62.11.

[104] D 6,28-35/1:156 (SD 53.4).

[105] On the 4 types of noble individuals, see: **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,62/2:251 f); **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,13/3:107), SD 14.14; **Pāsādika S** (D 29,25/3:132), SD 40a.6; **Ānâpāna,sati S** (M 118,9-12/3:80 f), SD 7.13; Pug 63.

noble individual (*ariya,puggala*)	**training** (*sikkhā*)	**fetters broken** (*saṁyojana*)
1. **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*)	perfect moral conduct; proficient level of concentration and wisdom	1. self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*); 2. doubt (*vicikicchā*); 3. attachment to ritual and vows (*sila-b,-bata,parāmāsa*);
2. **once-returner** (*sakad-āgamī*)	perfect moral conduct; proficient level of concentration and wisdom	weakened greed, hatred and delusion;
3. **nonreturner** (*anāgāmī*)	perfect moral conduct and concentration; proficient level of wisdom	4. sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*) 5. aversion (*paṭigha*);
4. **arhat** (*arahata*)	perfect moral conduct, concentration and wisdom	6. lust for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*); 7. lust for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*); 8. conceit (*māna*); 9. restlessness (*uddhacca*); 10. ignorance (*avijjā*).

Table 5.2.1.3 The 4 noble individuals and the 10 fetters [Payutto, 2021:653 Table 7.1; modified]

Essentially, **the streamwinner**[106] is regarded as a "noble individual" because:

(1) he does *not identify* with his body (as self or soul), nor with his feelings, nor perception (memories) nor consciousness (the mind);

(2) he has *no doubt* about the nature of the Buddha's awakening, nor about the nature of true reality, nor his ability to progress on the path to gain arhathood in due course; and

(3) he does *not rely on any external agency* (any kind of God-idea, gods, demons) for faith or support; he is neither religious in the blind or ritualistic sense, nor superstitious.

The once-returner,[107] in addition to having broken the first 3 fetters (like the streamwinner), is *less troubled or controlled by greed, hatred and delusion*. In other words, he has weakened fetters (4) and (5) [Table 5.2.1.3]. This means that he may attain arhathood in his next life right here as a human; hence, he is called "once-returner." However neither the streamwinner nor the once-returner has broken *all* the 5 lower fetters; hence, they are still subject to rebirth (but not more than 7 lives for the former, and 1 more for the latter); although they still have some (but manageable) level of greed, hatred and delusion.

The nonreturner has *broken all the 5 lower fetters* that would hold them back in the sense-world. Upon dying, they are reborn in their own dimension known as the "pure abodes" (*suddhāvāsa*) where they end their karma and gain arhathood.[108] The suttas mention some laymen nonreturners, too.[109]

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[106] On the streamwinner, see SD 50.19 (1.2.1.1 (1)).

[107] On the once-returner, see SD 50.19 (1.2.1.1 (2), 1.3.1).

[108] **The pure abodes** (*suddh'āvāsa*) are the 5 highest form dimensions populated by only nonreturners, where they attain arhathood and nirvana. Their pure-abode lifespans are: **Āviha** ("Non-declining," 1000 MK), **Ātappa** ("Untroubled," 2000 MK), Sudassā ("Beautifully Visible," 4000 MK), **Sudassī** ("Clear-visioned," 8000 MK) and **Akaniṭṭha** ("Peerless," 16000 MK) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). MK = *mahā kappa,* ie, a full cycle of a world-period or cycle of the universe (V 3:4 = D 3:51, 111 = It 99; D 1:14; A 2:142). See SD 10.16 (13.1.6); SD 23.14 (Table 3). For cosmological map, see SD 1.7 Appendix; for world cycle, see SD 2.19 (9); SD 49.8b (15.2).

[109] See SD 50.19 (1.2.1.1 (3)), 1.2.1.2, 1.3.2 f.

The arhat, as we have noted [5.2.1.2], like the Buddha, is fully awakened; the only difference is that the Buddha was the first arhat in the world, and the other arhats and learners (*sekha*) [5.2.1.2] came after the Buddha and are thus his followers (*buddhânubuddha*). Another unique quality of the Buddha is that he has boundless mental powers (including psychic powers) and wisdom. It is thus proper to remember that the Buddha is always an arhat, too.[110]

The Kandaraka Sutta (M 51,3) records the Buddha as stating that the arhats and the learners "dwell with their minds well established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)."[111] (SA 3:200,6-68). This shows that they practise the same kind of Dharma taught in the suttas which are accessible to us, too, except that the arhats have fully mastered the teachings and realized true reality.

5.2.1.4 When the 4 noble individuals [5.2.1.3] are further considered with the 10 fetters [**Table 5.2.1.3**], we get the group of **the 8 noble individuals** (*aṭṭha purisa,puggala*). These 8 are also classified as "**the 4 pairs of individuals**" (*cattāri purisa,yugāni*): these are 2 well known terms found in the recollection of the sangha (*saṅghânussati*).[112] The 4 noble disciples become the 8 individuals when we relate them according to the fetters they have broken, in the following way (like undergraduates and graduates in progressive university training):

A. **Learners** (*sekha*) or "individuals who still have clinging" (*sa,upādisesa,puggala*): the 3 noble individuals

I. Streamwinners (*sotāpanna*)

1. The streamwinners-to-be (*sotāpanna,magga*). Those training to walk the noble path. They work to perfect moral conduct, and master concentration and wisdom.

2. The streamwinners-become (*sotāpanna,phala*). Those who truly and rightly walk the noble path.[113] They have perfect moral conduct and an adequate level of concentration and wisdom. They have abandoned the first 3 fetters, those of *sakkāya,diṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā* and *sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*.[114] [Table 5.2.1]

II. Once-returners (*sakadāgāmī*)

3. The once-returners-to-be (*sakad-āgāmī,magga*). Those who have abandoned the first 3 fetters and have perfect moral conduct and an adequate level of concentration and wisdom. They train to overcome the stronger forms of greed, hatred and delusion.

4. The once-returners-become (*sakad-āgāmī*). Those who will return to this world one more time and eliminate all suffering. They have perfect moral conduct and an adequate level of concentration and wisdom. Apart from abandoning the first 3 fetters, they have attenuated *greed, hatred and delusion* to a greater degree than streamwinners.[115]

III. Nonreturners (*anāgāmi*)

5. The nonreturners-to-be (*anāgāmi,magga*). They have weakened the 5 lower fetters, and almost overcome lust and aversion. They have perfect moral conduct and concentration, and an adequate level of wisdom. With their mastery of dhyanas, they are able to break all the lower fetters.

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[110] On the Buddha as arhat, see **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10; **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7), SD 49.11; SD 62.11 (2.2.3.2).

[111] SA 3:200,6-8. See SD 62.15 (1.2).

[112] On the recollection of the sangha, see **Saṅghânussati**, SD 15.10a; **(Mahānāma) Gilāyana S** (S 55.54,5), SD 4.10.

[113] See **Sāriputta S 2** (S 55.5/5:347 f), SD 16.5.

[114] **(Chakka) Abhabba S 7** (A 6.91/3:438) states that those "accomplished in view" (*diṭṭhi,sampanna*), ie, streamwinners, are also free from (acute) *greed, hatred and delusion* which lead to states of woe (*apāya*).

[115] **MA 2:94 f** states that once-returners have abandoned the fetters of *coarse* lust and ill will, and that nonreturners have abandoned even *subtle* lust and ill will. Visuddhimagga states that once-returners have reduced lust and aversion (Vism 22.22/676 f). All of these interpretations are complementary.

6. The nonreturners-become (*anāgāmi,phala*). They reach final awakening while in the pure abodes [5.2.1.3 n] where they arise after death without returning to this world. They have perfect moral conduct and concentration, and an adequate level of wisdom. They have abandoned two more fetters, those of sensual lust and aversion, thus destroying the first 5 (that is, the lower) fetters, which bind one to the sense-world [Table 5.2.1.3].

B. **Adepts** (*asekha,* "those who have finished training") or *anupādisesa,puggala* ("those without clinging"):

IV. Arhats (*arahata* or *arahanta,* "worthy ones")

7. The arhat-to-be (*arahata,magga*). They have almost overcome almost all 5 the higher fetters. They have perfect moral conduct, concentration and wisdom. They may, like the nonreturners, still have some concern for promoting the Dharma or feel *restless* towards those unwilling or unable to progress on the path.[116]

8. The arhat-become (*arahata,phala*). They are those worthy of offerings and respect; those who have broken the spokes of the wheel of *saṁsāra*; those free from mental influxes (*āsava*). They have perfect moral conduct, concentration and wisdom. They have abandoned the remaining 5 fetters (the higher fetters), which bind one to rebirth in the dhyanic planes. Thus they have abandoned all the 10 fetters and are not reborn.

5.2.1.5 The 8 noble individuals are precisely these 4 noble individuals (*ariya,puggala*) described above [5.2.1.4], but each level of awakening is subdivided as a pair (like apprentice and master craftsman:[117]

1. One practising to realize streamwinning.
2. Streamwinner (one who has realized the fruition of streamwinning).
3. One practising to realize once-returning.
4. Once-returner (one who has realized the fruition of once-returning).
5. One practising to realize nonreturning.
6. Nonreturner (one who has realized the fruition of nonreturning).
7. One practising to realize arhathood.
8. Arhat (one who has realized the fruition of arhathood).

These 4 pairs of noble individuals are known as "**the community of disciples**" (*sāvaka,saṅgha*), that is, the noble disciples (*ariya,sāvaka*) of the Buddha, the accomplished "listeners" (*sāvaka*) and spiritually exemplary beings. They form the 3rd of **the 3 jewels** (*ti,ratana*) of Buddhism in whom followers take refuge (*saraṇa,gamana*), that is, whom they emulate in their own lives. There is also **the recollection of the sangha** (*saṅghânussati*) which speaks of "the 4 pairs, the 8 kinds of noble individuals; these are the Blessed One's disciples" (*yad idaṁ cattāri purisa,yugāni, aṭṭha purisa,puggalā, esa bhagavato sāvaka,-saṅgho*).[118]

5.2.1.6 In the suttas, these disciples of the Buddha are later referred to as the "**noble sangha**" (*ariya,-saṅgha*). In the older texts, the term *ariya,saṅgha* is used only once as a synonym for *sāvaka,saṅgha*, in a

[116] A famous example is that of Brahmā Sahampati who shows his concern when he thinks that the Buddha was "hesitating" to teach the Dharma: **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,19.4) SD 1.11; **Why the Buddha "hesitated" to teach** SD 12.1 (2.1.3, 2.3.4).

[117] D 3:255; A 4:292. The Abhidhamma divides these 8 into 2 groups: those accomplished in the path (*magga,-samaṅgī*) and those accomplished in the fruition (*phala,samaṅgī*): Pug 73.

[118] Eg, **Vatthûpama S** (M 7.7/1:37), SD 28.12; **(Chakka) Mahānāma S** (A 6.10/3:286), SD 15.3.

verse of **the (Chakka) Dhammika Sutta** (A 6.54).[119] The phrase *ariya,saṅgha* is, however, very common in the Commentaries, especially the Visuddhi,magga.[120]

When the term *ariya,saṅgha* was more widely used than *sāvaka,saṅgha*, the term, "**conventional sangha**" (*sammati,saṅgha*) was used to refer to the monastic *bhikkhu,saṅgha*. ***Sammati,saṅgha*** means the "agreed-upon or authorized" sangha, referring to any gathering of more than 3 properly ordained monks. While the conventional sangha comprises only ordained monastics, **the noble sangha** encompasses *all the 4 kinds of noble individuals* [5.2.1.3], both ordained and lay.

The following terms are often paired in contrast: *sāvaka,saṅgha* with *bhikkhu,saṅgha*, and *ariya,saṅgha* with *sammati,saṅgha*. In any case, the later terms *ariya,saṅgha* and *sammati,saṅgha* do not contradict the older terms but give a wider perspective on the meanings of the word ***saṅgha***, especially in highlighting that the sangha is not merely an organized monastic group or ecclesiastical hierarchy, but *a Dharma-spirited community of all true practitioners*.

5.2.2 The noble individuals: 9 and 10

5.2.2.1 The (Navaka) Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta (A 9.12) divides streamwinners into 3 types and nonreturners into 5 types; together with once-returners, they make **9 types** of "individuals with residues of clinging" (*sa,upādi,sesa,puggala*), a term synonymous with *sekha,* "learners"[121] [5.3.3 B].

Sa,upādisesa puggalā are thus the same as the first 3 noble individuals below [5.3.3 A]. They still have "fuel" (***upādi***), that is, "clinging" (*upādāna*) or mental impurities. ***Anupādisesa puggalā***, that is, the arhats, are free from clinging and impurity, and fully awakened.

Note that ***upādi*** here is synonymous with *upādāna* ("clinging").[122] This differs from the *upādi* in *sa,upādisesa nibbāna* and *anupādi,sesa nibbāna*, where *upādi* translates as "that which is clung to," that is, the 5 aggregates of clinging.[123] The equating of *upādi* with *upādāna* corresponds with the Buddha's teachings on essential spiritual qualities, such as the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati'paṭṭhāna*), the 4 paths to success (*iddhi,pāda*), and the 5 faculties (*indriya*), which often end with the possibility of one of two results from cultivating these qualities: *either arhathood in this very life, or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning*.[124] The term *upādi* in these contexts refers to *upādāna* but generally refers to mental defilements (*kilesa*).

5.2.2.2 The (Navaka) Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta (A 9.12) opens with saying the following:

> [T]hese **9 persons**, who, having died with residues of clinging (*sa,upādi,sesa*), are
>
fully freed from hell,	*parimutto nirayā*
fully freed from the animal birth,	*parimutto tiracchāna,yoniyā*
fully freed from the preta realm,	*parimutto pitti,visayā*
fully freed from the state of misery,	*parimutto apāya,-*
the bad destination, the suffering state.	*duggati,vinipātā*

(A 9.12,2-10/4:380 f), SD 3.3(3)

[119] A 6.54/3:373 (SD 84.3).

[120] Eg Vism 7.89-100/218 f; VAṬ:Be 1:13.

[121] **(Navaka) Sa,upādi,sesa S** (A 9.12/4:380 f), SD 3.3(3).

[122] This follows Comys eg AA 4:40, 174.

[123] See SD 17 series, eg SD 17.8a (13.2.2).

[124] *Diṭṭh'eva dhamme aññā sati vā upādi,sese anāgāmitā*. **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,22/2:314), SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62, 481), SD 13.3; **Aṭṭhika S** (S 46.57/5:129); **(Indriya) Phala S** (S 48.65/5:237), SD 88.17; **(Iddhi,pāda) Phala S 1** (S 51.25/5:285); **(Pañcaka) Iddhi,pāda S 1** (A 5.67/3:81 f) SD 106.15, **Sati Supaṭṭhita S** (A 5.122/3:143), **(Dasaka) Pabbajjā S** (A 10.59/5:108); It 39; Sn 140, 148. Explained in Comys, eg ItA 1:169; SnA 2:503.

The Sutta then lists the following **9 noble individuals** who die with residues of clinging, that is, still unawakened, (beginning with the highest, *in descending order*), thus:

(1) an attainer of nirvana in the interval [the intermediate state],[125]	a*ntarā,parinibbāyī;*
(2) an attainer of nirvana upon landing,[126]	*upahacca,parinibbāyī;*
(3) an attainer of nirvana without exertion,[127]	*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*;
(4) an attainer of nirvana with exertion,[128]	*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*;
(5) one bound upstream (*uddhaṁsota*), heading for the Akaniṭṭha realm.[129]	*akaniṭṭha,gāmī*;
(6) the once-returner,[130]	*sakad-āgamī*;
(7) the single-seeder,[131]	*eka,bījī*;
(8) the clan-to-clan-goer,[132]	*kolaṁ,kola*;
(9) the seven-at-most,[133]	*satta-k,khattu,parama*.

(A 9.12,4-10/4:380 f), SD 3.3(3)

This list begins with the 5 kinds of nonreturners, then the once-returner and finally the 3 kinds of stream-winners. They are said to be "with residues of clinging" (*sa,upādi,sesa*) because they still have some defilements to be removed; but they are all on the path of awakening as learners or trainees (*sekha*).

5.2.2.3 The (Dasaka) Niṭṭha Sutta (A 10.63) goes on to detail 10 kinds of noble individuals, "accomplished in right view." The first 9 are the same as the 9 individuals mentioned in **the (Navaka) Sa,upādi,-sesa Sutta** (A 9.12) [5.2.2.2] but are here categorized into 2 groups, that is, as those who win their goals *here* (who awaken here in our world) and those who win their goals *after leaving this world* (in the ensuing rebirth or rebirths). The 10th individual is the arhat who is listed as the 5th of those who awaken in this world itself.[134]

The 10 noble individuals, all of them said to be "accomplished in right view" (*diṭṭhi,sampanna*), are as follows:

(1) the seven-at-most,	*satta-k,khattu,parama*;
(2) the clan-to-clan-goer,	*kolaṁ,kola*;
(3) the single-seeder,	*eka,bījī*;
(4) the once-returner, and	*sakad-āgamī*;
(5) the arhat [worthy one].[135]	*araha.*

[125] **Saṅgīti S**: D 33,2.1(17)/3:237. For a discussion of the doctrinal problem here and on the intermediate state, see **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

[126] **D 33**,2.1(17)/3:237, one who while living beyond half of the life-span, or at the moment of death, attains the holy path for overcoming the higher fetters (Pug 1.43). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

[127] **D 33**,2.1(17)/3:237, one who overcomes the higher fetters without exertion (Pug 1.44). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

[128] **D 33**,2.1(17)/3:237, one who overcomes the higher fetters with some exertion (Pug 1.45). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

[129] **Niṭṭha S** (A 10.63,3) SD 3.3(1.2); SD 2.17 (4-5): for refs to the 5 kinds of non-returners, see SD 2.17 (4.4.2).

[130] This is resolved as *sakad = sakid* or *sakiṁ* ("once") + *āgāmī* ("return").

[131] "Having taken only one more human rebirth, (one) makes an end of suffering." (A 9.12,8/4:380 f): see below.

[132] "Having re-arisen and wandered amongst two or three families, (one) makes an end of suffering." (A 9.12,9 /4:381), SD 3.3(3): see below.

[133] "Having re-arisen and wandered amongst gods and humans for 7 lives at the most, (one) makes an end of suffering." (**Sa,upadisesa S** A 9.12,10/4:381), SD 3.3(3): see below.

[134] A 10.63/5:119 f (SD 3.3(1.2)).

[135] *Arahā* here (as at Sn 1003) is 3 sg nom: see Geiger & Norman, *A Pāli Grammar,* 2000 §98.1.

Those who win their goals after leaving this world[136] are **the 5 kinds of nonreturners**, as follows

(6)	an attainer of nirvana in the interval [the intermediate state],	*antarā,parinibbāyī*
(7)	an attainer of nirvana upon landing,	*upahacca,parinibbāyī*
(8)	an attainer of nirvana without exertion,	*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*
(9)	an attainer of nirvana with exertion,	*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*
(10)	one bound upstream (*uddhaṁsota*), heading for the Akaniṭṭha realm.	*akaniṭṭha,gāmī*

(A 10.63/5:119 f), SD 3.3(1.2)

Table 5.2.2.3 The 10 noble individuals

In this categorization of saints—all unified under the designation, "accomplished in right view"—all of them are "learners" (*sekha*) except for the arhat, who is an "adept" (*asekha*). The 9 learners are the theme of **the (Navaka) Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** [5.2.2.2].

5.3 THE 8 LIBERATIONS AND THE 7 INDIVIDUALS

5.3.1 The 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*)

5.3.1.1 Before we look at the 7 individuals, we should at least have some familiarity with the 8 liberations. Since this has to do with meditation, we also need to understand the significance of the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) [**Table 3.1.1.3**], which are also connected to the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*). The term *indriya* comes from *indra,*[137] and literally means "ruling principles" or "controlling factors." They are the mental qualities that empower our spiritual practice, especially meditation. They reduce or counter unhelpful mental conditions such as *lack of confidence, laziness, negligence, distraction and ignorance*.

Hence, **the 5 spiritual faculties** (*pañc'indriya*) are:

faith (*saddhā*), effort (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

When we practise Dharma we are likely to have and need varying degrees of these faculties, especially effort (*viriy'indriya*) and mindfulness (*sat'indriya*) to begin with. The other 3 faculties are vitally decisive factors in the spiritual realization of noble individuals (*ariya puggala*): faith (*saddh'indriya*), concentration (*samādh'indriya*) and wisdom (*pañ'indriya*).

5.3.1.2 Liberation (*vimokkha*) is the freedom from unhelpful and negative mental qualities, arising from the delight of being distracted by an object one is drawn to. This liberation, however, is dependent on the power of concentration in the state of dhyana, and exists only as long as one remains in dhyana.[138] The "freedom" here refers to transcending the sense-based and mental processes as we know them. It is not the full liberation from defilements and suffering that is synonymous with nirvana.[139]

[136] On "after leaving this world," see SD 3.3 (1.2.1.3).

[137] *Inda* (Skt *indra*) means "lord or leader" and is the title for Sakra as "lord of the devas," *sakka devānam-inda*: **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,1.1.2 + *passim*), SD 54.8 (2.1.2.2).

[138] Except for the 8th and last *vimokkha*, ie, cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha* or *nirodha,samāpatti*), attainable only by arhats and by some nonreturners.

[139] *Vimokkha* corresponds with *vimutti* (freedom) only in the term *ceto,vimutti* (liberation through samadhi).

These **8 liberations** (*aṭṭha vimokkha*)[140] may be briefly explained as follows:[141]

The 1st liberation: "**Dwelling in form, one perceives form**" (*rūpī rūpāni passati*).

The 1st liberation refers to any of the 4 form dhyanas of one who practises kasiṇa method[142] and uses an attribute of the body as meditation-object. The meditator does the preliminary exercise (*parikamma*) on an internal form (in our own body), for example, the dark (*nīla*) of the eyes for a "blue" *kasiṇa*, the lightly tan skin for a yellow kasiṇa, blood for a red kasiṇa, the teeth for a white kasiṇa. The concentration sign (*nimitta*) however arises *externally* (MA 3:258 f). The "transcending" (*abhibhāyatana*) of the forms is the attainment of dhyana together with the arising of the sign.

The 2nd liberation: "**Not perceiving internal form, one perceives external form**" (*ajjhattaṁ arūpa,-saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*).

This refers to any of the 4 formless attainments of a meditator using an external object for kasiṇa meditation. The preliminary *kasiṇa* exercise is done on an external form (a *kasiṇa* object), such as an element or a colour, for the arising of the concentration-sign.

The 3rd liberation: "**Absorbed in beauty**" (*subhan't'eva adhimutto hoti*).

This is traditionally the colour kasiṇa meditation. **The Paṭisambhidā,magga** includes the dhyana arising from cultivating the 4 divine abodes (*brahma,vihāra* or *appamaññā*): lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*), and *equanimity* (*upekkhā*); the abode pervades everywhere without limits. Meditation on the 4 divine abodes inspires one to see all beings as beautiful, "non-repulsive" (*appaṭikkūla*), thus without any feelings of dislike or disgust.[143]

The 4th liberation: "**Abiding in the base of the infinity of space**" (*ākāsānañc'āyatana*).[144]

With the end of perception of aversion[145] or sense-impingement[146] (*paṭigha,saññā*) and perception of diversity (*nānatta,saññā*), one transcends the perception of form (*rūpa,saññā*). One meditates on the infinity of space. [3.1.2.3]

The 5th liberation: "**Abiding in the base of the infinity of consciousness**" (*viññāṇañc'āyatana*).

Transcending the base of the infinity of space, one attains the base of the infinity of consciousness. One then meditates on the infinity of consciousness. [3.1.2.4]

The 6th liberation: "**Abiding in the base of nothingness**" (*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*).

Transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, one attains the base of nothingness. [3.1.2.5]

The 7th liberation: "**Abiding in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**" (*n'eva,saññā,nâ-saññ'āyatana*). [3.1.2.6]

Transcending the base of nothingness, one attains the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

The 8th liberation: "**Abiding in the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling**" (*saññā,vedayi-ta,nirodha*).

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[140] See D 3:262; A 4:306 f. Explained at Pm 2:38-40; DA 2:513; MA 3:255; AA 4:146.

[141] See SD 5.17 (10.2).

[142] In kasiṇa, the 10 meditations are on the colours blue, yellow, red, and white [D 16,3.29-31, SD 9; SD 15.1 (9.2)], and on the elements earth, water, fire, wind [air], space and consciousness (or light) [SD 49.5b (1.1-1.4)].

[143] Pm 5.20/2:39 (SD 49.5b (3.3.2)).

[144] For details on this formless liberation and the foll 3, see SD 49.5b (3.3.4-3.3.7).

[145] In the case of emerging from a divine-abode dhyana.

[146] *Paṭigha* here can also means "sense-contact"; referring to the end of all physical sense-perception.

Transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one attains the cessation of perception and feeling, also known as the "attainment of cessation" (*nirodha,samāpatti*). [3.1.3]

We can tabulate the processes of liberation in the dhyanas and attainments in this way:

liberations (*vimokkha*)	*jhāna*	**attainment** (*samāpatti*)
vimokkha 1	4 *rūpa jhāna*	8 *samāpatti*
vimokkha 2		
vimokkha 3		
vimokkha 4	4 *arūpa jhāna*	
vimokkha 5		
vimokkha 6		
vimokkha 7		
vimokkha 8	= *nirodha samāpatti*	9 *anupubba,vihāra samāpatti*

Table 5.3.1 Gradual progress of meditative attainment [Payutto 2021:723 Fig 7.1]

These 8 liberations comprise all 9 "attainments of the progressive abodes" (*anupubba,vihāra*,*samāpatti*) as depicted in **Table 5.3.1**.

5.3.2 The 5 faculties and the 8 liberations

The spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are linked to the liberations (*vimokkha*) in this way: when a person begins spiritual practice, especially meditation, he or she will have a dominant faculty of either *faith* or *wisdom*. If that person cultivates concentration to a level higher than the 3rd liberation (that is, attains formless dhyana), the faculty of concentration (*samādh'indriya*) will become the dominant faculty.

Practitioners whose dominant faculty remains faith may attain the 4 form dhyanas but they will not attain the formless attainments. Properly speaking, they do not attain "freedom" (*vimokkha*). Concentration as a dominant faculty, however, in the end must give way to and act as a basis for wisdom. Up to that point, *concentration* will facilitate the attainment of the higher liberations.

5.3.3 The 8 noble individuals: Learners and adepts

5.3.3.0 We can now go somewhat deeper into our study of how the noble individuals (*ariya puggala*) are connected to the faculties and the liberations. Ordinarily, **7 noble individuals** are listed from *the highest to the lowest*, but to conform with the presentation of the 8 noble individuals given earlier, they are listed here from the lowest to the highest:[147]

[147] **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,8/3:105), **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(11)/3:253 f); **(Sattaka) Puggala S** (A 7.14/4:10 f), SD 50.30(2.1.2); **(Sattaka) Avyakata S** (A 7.51/4:76 f), SD 40a.11; Pm 2:53 f. For varying explanations, see Payutto, *Buddhadhamma,* 2021: Ch 7, Appendix 7.

5.3.3 (A) Learners, individuals still having clinging

5.3.3.1 Faith-follower (saddhānusārī)

The traditional explanation is that "a faith-follower" or "faith-devotee" is a person striving for streamwinning and cultivating the noble path with faith as the dominant faculty. If this person attains streamwinning, he becomes one "**faith-freed**" or "one liberated by faith" (*saddhā,vimutta*) [5.3.3.3].

A faith-follower may be one who does not "bodily touch" (*kāyena phusitvā*) [directly experience] and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless (*arūpa,samāpatti*), but some of the influxes (*āsava*) are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has adequate faith in and love for the Tathāgata. Furthermore, he has the 5 faculties: those of *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom*.

5.3.3.2 Truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*)

A "truth-follower" or "dharma-devotee" is a person striving for streamwinning and cultivating the noble path with wisdom as dominant faculty. If this person attains streamwinning, he becomes "one attained to right view" or "**view-attainer**" (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*) [5.3.3.4].

The truth-follower is a person who does not "bodily touch" and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, but some of the influxes are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has adequately understood by wise reflection those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata. He has the 5 faculties: those of *faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration* and *wisdom.*

5.3.3.3 Faith-freed (***saddhā,vimutta***)

"One faith-freed" or "liberated by faith" is a person who truly understands the noble truths, has virtuous conduct, and has destroyed some of the influxes (*āsava*) [4.1.1.2] through wisdom, and has faith as the dominant faculty. This refers to all those who have attained streamwinning up to those who strive for arhathood with faith as dominant faculty.

The faith-freed is a person who does not bodily touch and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, but also some of the influxes are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. His faith is planted, rooted and established in the Tathāgata.

If one attains arhathood, one is "freed by faith" or "**faith-freed**" (*saddhā,vimutta*) [5.3.3.6].

5.3.3.4 View-attainer (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*)

"One attained to right view" is a person who truly understands the noble truths, has virtuous conduct, and has destroyed some of the influxes (āsava) through wisdom. This refers to all those who have attained streamwinning up to those who strive for arhathood with wisdom as dominant faculty.

The view-attainer does not "bodily touch" and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, but some of the influxes are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has clearly understood and correctly applied with wisdom those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata.

If one attains arhathood, one becomes "**wisdom-freed**" (*paññā,vimutta*) [5.3.3.6].

5.3.3.5 Body-witness (*kāya,sakkhī*)

A "body-witness" is one who abides in and has "touched with the body" the 8 liberations, and has destroyed some of the influxes (*āsava*) through wisdom. This refers to all those who have attained streamwinning up to those who strive for arhathood with concentration as dominant faculty.

A body-witness "bodily touches" and abides in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, and some of the influxes are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom.

If one attains arhathood, one is "**freed both ways**" (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*) [5.3.3.7].

5.3.3 (B) Adepts, individuals free from clinging

5.3.3.6 Wisdom-freed (*paññā,vimutta*)

One "wisdom-freed" or "wisdom-liberated" is a person who does not abide in and "bodily touch" any of the 8 liberations that are peaceful and formless, but whose influxes have all been destroyed by understanding the noble truths with wisdom. This refers to the arhats who have practised insight (*vipassanā*) as their principal meditation up to the moment of full awakening.

5.3.3.7 One freed both ways (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*)

Ubhato.bhāga,vimutta translates variously as "**one freed in both ways**," "twice-liberated," or "both-way freed." Such a one bodily touches and abides in the 8 liberations, and destroys all of the influxes by understanding the noble truths with wisdom. This refers to the arhats who have developed a high degree of samatha (calm concentration) and use this tranquillity as a foundation for practising insight to reach full awakening.[148]

5.3.4 Comments on Tables 5.3.4ab

5.3.4.0 There are a few noteworthy comments in relation to noble individuals as outlined in the two diagrams below [**Tables 5.3.4a** and **5.3.4b**]:

5.3.4.1 It should be noted that despite the strength of any other faculties within a person, at the moment of full awakening, wisdom always predominates (*paṭivedha,kāle paññ'indriyaṁ ādhipateyyaṁ hoti*).[149] **Paṭisambhidā,magga**, in its summary of the process of spiritual penetration by way of reflecting on impermanence, explains it as follows:

(1) In one with great resolution (*adhimokkha*) attending to **impermanence**, the faith faculty is dominant.
(2) During penetration, 4 faculties follow it, as conascent conditions, as mutuality conditions, as support conditions, as association conditions; these are a single function.
(3) Penetration is in the sense of seeing. So one who penetrates develops, one who develops penetrates. During development, 4 faculties follow it, *as conascent conditions, as mutuality conditions, as support conditions, as association conditions; these are a single function*.
(4) **At the time of spiritual penetration, the wisdom faculty is predominant**. At the time of penetration, *4 faculties follow it, as co-nascent conditions, as mutuality conditions, as support conditions, as association conditions; these are a single function.*
(5) *Development is in the sense of a single function.*
(6) *Penetration is in the sense of seeing. So one who penetrates develops, one who develops penetrates*.[150]

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[148] For refs to the *ubhato.bhāga.vimutta* pericope, see SD 49.5 Appendix.

[149] Pm 2:51,5; on the "one faculty" to be cultivated, see **Pubb'ārāma S 1** (S 48.45/5:222).

[150] (1) *Aniccato manasikaroto adhimokkha,bahulassa saddh'indriyaṁ ādhipateyyaṁ hoti*. (2) *Paṭivedhāya cattār'indriyāni tad-anvayā honti, sahajāta,paccayā honti, aññam-aññā,paccayā honti, nissaya,paccayā honti, sampayutta,paccayā honti, eka,rasā honti. Eka,ras'aṭṭhena bhāvanā.* (3) *Dassan'aṭṭhena paṭivedho. Evaṁ paṭivijjhanto'pi bhāveti, bhāvento'pi paṭivijjhati. Anattato manasikaroto veda,bahulassa paññ'indriyaṁ ādhipateyyaṁ hoti. Bhāvanāya cattār'indriyāni tad-anvayā honti, sahajāta,paccayā honti, aññam-aññā,paccayā honti, nissaya,paccayā honti, sampayutta,paccayā honti.* (4) ***Paṭivedha,kāle'pi paññ'indriyaṁ ādhipateyyaṁ hoti****. Paṭivedhāya cattār'indriyāni tad-anvayā honti, sahajāta,paccayā honti, aññam-aññā,paccayā honti, nissaya,paccayā honti, sampayutta,paccayā honti, eka,rasā honti.* (5) *Eka,ras'aṭṭhena bhāvanā.* (6) *Dassan'aṭṭhena paṭivedho. Evaṁ paṭivijjhanto'pi bhāveti, bhāvento'pi paṭivijjhati.* (Pm 2:51,1-19)

Similarly, when one with great tranquillity (*passaddhi*) attends to **suffering**, the concentration faculty is dominant in him … . When one with great knowledge (*veda*) attends to **nonself**, the wisdom faculty is dominant in him … . In all 3 cases, at the time of spiritual penetration, **wisdom** always predominates.

(Pm 2:51,1-30)

the 7 noble individuals (*satta ariya,puggala*)[151]	**dominant faculty** (*indriya*)	**liberations 4-8** (*vimokkha*)	**the 8 noble individuals** (*aṭṭha ariya,puggala*)
1. *saddhā'nusārī*	faith		1. one practising for streamwinning
2. *dhammânusārī*	wisdom		
3. *saddhā,vimutta*	faith		2. streamwinner
4. *diṭṭhi-p,patta*	wisdom		3. one practising for once-returning
5. *kāya,sakkhī*	concentration	yes	4. once-returner
			5. one practising for nonreturning
			6. nonreturner
			7. one practising for arhathood
6. *paññā,vimutta*	wisdom		8. arhat
7. *ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*	concentration	yes	

Table 5.3.4a Noble individuals, faculties and liberations [Based on Payutto, 2021:726 Fig 7.2]

This diagram shows the connection between the 7 noble individuals, 8 noble individuals, the 5 spiritual faculties and the 8 liberations.[152]

For a sequential version of what is depicted above [Table 5.3.4a], see the following flowchart:

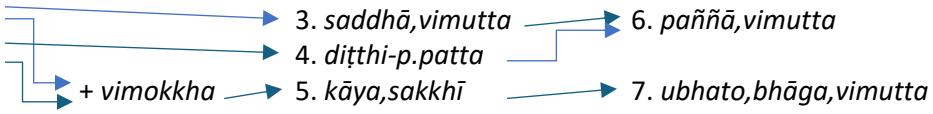

Table 5.3.4b Noble individuals, sequential progress [Payutto 2021:726 Fig 7.3]

[151] Here Payutto (2021:722 Fig 7.2) uses *dakkhineyya,puggala*. I have opted for the more familiar "noble individuals" (*ariya,puggala*). The 2 terms refer to the same thing.

[152] This diagram reflects the outline given in the Pali Canon (cf A 1:120; Pug 74), which Vism claims is a straightforward presentation. **Paṭisambhidā,magga** uses an outline it says is "indirect" or "figurative" (*pariyāya*) which differs greatly (Pm 2:53-55). Vism and later texts often use this later outline: Vism 21.74.-78/659 f; VismṬ:Be 2;455-468. Cf A 1:120; Pug. 72.

the 8 noble individuals:

①	one practising for streamwinning	
②	streamwinner	abandoned the first 3 fetters
③	one practising for once-returning	
④	once-returner	weakened greed, hatred and delusion
⑤	one practising for nonreturning	
⑥	nonreturner	abandoned the first 5 fetters
⑦	one practising for arhathood	
⑧	arhat	abandoned all the 10 fetters

	①	② ③ ④	⑤ ⑥ ⑦	⑧
the 7 individuals	1. *saddhā'nusārī*	*+ concentration* of the 4 dhyanas	3. *saddhā,vimutta*	6. *paññā,vimutta*
	2. *dhammânusārī*		4. *diṭṭhi-p,patta*	
		+ *vimokkha* (of the formless attainments)	5. *kāya,sakkhī*	7. *ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*

Table 5.3.4c The noble individuals: the 8 and the 7 [Based on Payutto 2021:728 Fig 7.4]
[The circled numbers collate the 8 noble individuals (above) with the 7 individuals below.]

5.3.4.2 A simple definition of **body-witness** (*kāya,sakkhī*) is "one who first attains dhyana and later attains nirvana" (Pm 2:52). Note also that only a body-witness who is a nonreturner is able to attain the 8th liberation (cessation) [5.3.1.2].

5.3.4.3 The Commentaries and Subcommentaries state that "**one freed both ways**" (*ubhato.bhāga,-vimutta*) is freed in two ways: freed from the corporeal body (*rūpa,kāya*) by the formless attainments, and from the mind-body (*nāma,kāya*) by the noble path. One is liberated on two occasions: when suppressing (*vikkhambhana*) the defilements by the power of concentration in dhyana, and when completely uprooting (*samuccheda*) the defilements.[153]

When one freed both ways attains the 3 knowledges, one is called "3-knowledged" (***te,vijja***). If he attains the 6 superknowledges, one is called "6-knowledged" (***cha-ḷ-abhiññā***). If one attains the 4 analytic insights (*paṭisambhidā*), one is called "accomplished in the analytic insights" (***paṭisambhida-p,patta*)**.

5.3.4.4 One wisdom-freed (*paññā,vimutta*) practises primarily insight (*vipassana*) meditation; one practise calm (*samatha*) meditation only to have an adequate foundation for insight. One therefore does not experience the exceptional fruits of calm beyond the first 4 dhyanas; one does not gain the formless attainments, the attainment of cessation (*nirodha,samāpatti*), the 2 mundane knowledges (*lokiya,vijjā*): the recollection of past lives and the knowledge of the rebirth of beings, nor does one attain the 5 mundane superknowledges (*abhiññā*): psychic powers, the divine ear, telepathy, recollection of past lives, and the divine eye.[154] In principle, however, one can be an arhat with the 4 analytic insights (*paṭisambhida-p,-patta*).[155]

[153] Eg, DA 3:514; AA 2:148; PugA 190; Vism 660.
[154] **(Arahatta) Susīma S** (S 12.70/2:121-127), SD 16.8.
[155] For a comparison of *paññā,vimutta* and *ubhato.bhāga,vimutta,* see D 15/2:68-71.

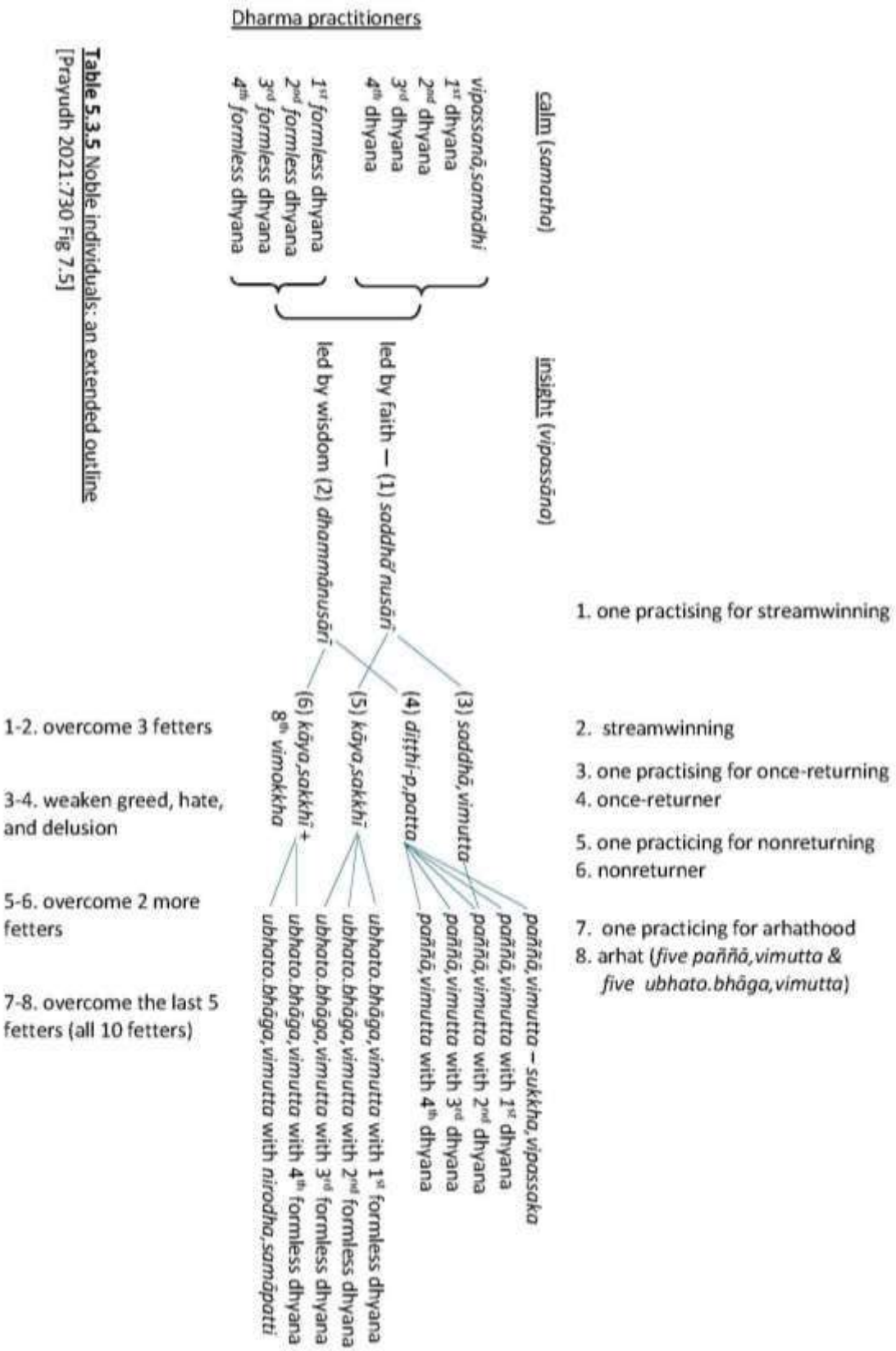

Table 5.3.5 Noble individuals: an extended outline [Prayudh 2021:730 Fig7.5]

5.3.5 Contextuality rules

5.3.5.1 A collative summary of the subjects described above can be laid out in keeping with the teachings of the Pali Canon, with support from the Commentaries, as shown in **Table 5.3.5**.

5.3.5.2 To avoid confusion, it is important here to distinguish between the 2 ways of teaching:

(a) explaining indirectly or limiting one's examination to particular aspects (*pariyāya*); and
(b) explaining directly, absolutely and comprehensively (*nippariyāya*).

This is especially relevant in the discussion on the 2 types of arhats: the wisdom-freed (*paññā,vimutta*) and the one freed both ways (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*).

The one freed both ways (*ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*) is liberated in two ways: they have attained arhathood and have also attained the formless attainments. **The wisdom-freed** (*paññā,vimutta*) has attained arhathood but if they attain dhyana, it is no higher than the 4th dhyana.

Although there are only these 2 types of arhats, it can be confusing when, for example, an arhat is described as "**one freed in mind**" or "mentally liberated" (*ceto,vimutta*). It should be noted here that *ceto,vimutta* is simply another name for *ubhato.bhāga,vimutta*. The term *ceto,vimutta* emphasizes the chosen mode of practice (in this case *samatha*) for attaining arhathood. However, it does not imply that liberation was attained solely by concentration.

5.3.5.3 In some texts, arhats who have practised calm and insight are randomly called "mind-freed" (*ceto,vimutta*) or "wisdom-freed" (*paññā,vimutta*) depending on which faculty is stronger. For example, the Commentaries call Sāriputta one "wisdom-freed" and Mahā Moggallāna one "mind-freed."[156] Sometimes these two terms are used *together* to describe the same arhat who has attained both these ways to liberation.[157]

Furthermore, in **the Paṭisambhidāmagga**, for example, we see the same terms used in different ways to describe arhats. The terms "faith-freed" (*saddhā,vimutta*), "view-attainer" (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*) and "body-witness" (*kāya,sakkhī*) are used for practitioners all the way until the moment of full awakening.[158] We need to understand that the texts and (especially) the Commentaries tend to explain arhats in rather flexible or contextual ways (*pariyāyena*); otherwise, we may think that there are a number of other kinds of arhats.

5.3.5.4 Similar confusion may arise in the explanations of other Dharma terms. Take for example the definition of **right mindfulness** (*sammā,sati*) as equivalent to the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati'paṭṭhāna*).[159] The 4 focuses of mindfulness are generally considered a comprehensive method of practice comprising all spiritual qualities, including effort (*ātapa*) and clear awareness (*sampajañña*). Doubt may then arise as to how *sati'paṭṭhāna* can be confined to merely *right mindfulness*. In this case, *sammā,sati* is the mindfulness suitable to or applied in the 4 focuses of mindfulness.

Another example is the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi,bhāvanā*), of which there are 4 kinds.[160] The description of the 4th kind of samadhi cultivation includes: *When cultivated and developed, this medita-*

[156] Eg, M 64,16/1:437; MA 3:191.
[157] A 5.71/3:84. Essentially, all those who have attained arhathood have gained these 2 kinds of liberation [below].
[158] Pm 2:53-55; cf A 9.43/4:451-453. At A 1:24, Vakkalī is listed as the foremost of monks who are *saddhā,vimutta* (or *saddhâdhimutta*). Vism explains the terms according to Paṭisambhidāmagga (Vism 21.74-78/659 f).
[159] Eg, **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22/2:313), SD 13.2.
[160] Eg, **Saṅgīti S** (D 22,1.11(5)/3:222 f).

tion leads to the destruction of the influxes. One may wonder how concentration (*samādhi*), which is equivalent to "calm" (*samatha*), can lead to the destruction of the influxes without "insight" (*vipassanā*).[161]

Here, then, concentration should be understood as the heart of a meditator's practice, like a battleground where various spiritual qualities gather to battle the defilements.[162] The cultivation of concentration in this context is not isolated; it is used in conjunction with and as a support for other meditation techniques.

5.3.5.5 Some post-canonical texts divide *vimokkha* ("freedom" or "liberation") into 3 kinds and expand them into categories, according to insight into each of the 3 universal characteristics (*ti,lakkhaṇa*), and link them to the dominant faculties. These **3 liberations** are:[163]

(1) "liberation by voidness" *suññata,vimokkha*,
(2) "liberation by the signless" *animitta,vimokkha,*
(3) "liberation by the undirected" *appaṇihita,vimokkha*.

These interesting categories and explanations are later developments; we can study them on our own time from the relevant texts.[164]

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 Neither word nor fiat, but truth and fact

5.4.1.1 In significant ways, early Buddhism is **a "reality check,"** not a word-based religion. In practice, early Buddhism was a contemplative tradition; there are many who today diligently work to keep to this "mind-freeing" enterprise, from forest monks to scholars to cognitive psychologists. They are also helping us better understand some of the more difficult concepts relating to the mind.

The Buddha speaks from his own mental training and meditative experiences, and he has set up a "path" for the cultivation of our body (moral virtue), the development of the mind (mindfulness, awareness, and concentration), both leading to the knowing and seeing of true reality that brings us spiritual awakening and freedom.

Early Buddhism rejects any kind of "word"-based dogma in the sense that the suttas are like personal diaries of the spiritual experience of the Buddha and his great saints, and manuals for us to emulate their lives and experiences so that we ourselves can taste the very same freedom that is awakening.

5.4.1.2 To use another favourite metaphor of mine: early Buddhist spirituality is like the experience of **beautiful music**. When we listen to music, we suspend all thinking; we directly feel the music and its beauty. To play beautiful music, we need to train under a great master, but we must develop our own skills in playing and interpreting the music. Above all, we must love and live music.

Mastering whole dictionaries of musical terms or the manuals of music history and critical reviews may make us good music scholars or music historians, but a true musician simply knows, loves and lives

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[161] **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44) records the nun Dhammadinnā as stating that concentration meditation includes the cultivation of those factors focused upon (*nimitta*) and of supporting spiritual qualities. (M 44,12/1:301), SD 40a.9.

[162] Cf **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18,27/2:216 f), SD 62.3; **Mahā Cattarīsaka S** (M 117,2/3:71) SD 6.10; **(Magga) Samādhi S** (S 45.28/5:21); **Niddasa S** (A 7.42/4:40).

[163] These 3 terms are also descriptions of nirvana: SD 60.1d (2.2.5.3).

[164] Pm 2:35-71; Vism 11.66-78/657-659; Abhs 9.29. Vinaya lists these 3 liberations, but comy explanation is different; see: V 3:92 f, 4:25 f; VA 2:493. Moreover, comys classify the 5 *paññā,vimutta* and the 5 *ubhato.bhāga,mutta* here according to the foundations of *samatha* meditation: eg, DA 2:512, 3:889; MA 3:188; PañcA 191.

the music. Just as the music maestro plays and interprets the music, the meditator renounces the senses to fully delve into the mind, free the mind from words and thoughts, even feelings. The maestro frees the music from the instrument and score; the meditator frees himself from the body and the mind.

5.4.2 Reading and listening

5.4.2.1 Any informed sutta student or specialist is likely to tell us that while every sutta of fair length teaches us Dharma "for the moment"—teachings that help us with better understanding of ourselves—their narratives often need to be carefully reconstructed and digested with reflection as we discover new perspectives and connections of the teachings. With a better understanding of the Dharma comes a clearer and more inspiring vision of the narrative regarding the Buddha and his great story of awakening.

On the other hand, a better understanding of the Dharma narrative—such as those behind **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** and **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta**—helps us better understand, for example, how the Buddha teaches the 5 monks, and how his teachings are to be understood and practised. The idea that every sutta is a jigsaw piece or a few fitting pieces helps us with a vision of an emerging "great story" of awakening and how it can benefit us today. Yet, it is even more vital that we fit the various jigsaw pieces of our Dharma understanding over time so that our own mind evolves with a true and whole vision of self-awakening.

5.4.2.2 Modern scholars are trained to read or interpret the word of Buddhism, even challenge the **Buddha's teachings**, in the name of academic progress.[165] However, as Dharma practitioners, we, as a rule, begin at the word level (*pada,pārama*).[166] Then we work to free the spirit from the word of Dharma, that is, where the sense "needs to be drawn out" (*neyy'attha*). We then know and see "**the sense that is drawn out**" (*nīt'attha*).[167] In short, we should let the suttas speak to us, we must learn to listen deeply to the suttas so that we become true "listeners" (*sāvaka*), and in due course truly know our own minds and is thus awakened and liberated from suffering.

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[165] In true learning spirit, this is, of course, in keeping with the spirit of **Kālāma S** (Kesa,puttiya S) (A 3.65), SD 35.4a, not to accept any view except when it is morally wholesome and spiritually liberating.

[166] At times, Dharma teachings can at once be clear "with the sense drawn out," as often with basic teachings on moral conduct. On *pada,pārama,* see **Ugghaṭitaññū S** (A 4.143), SD 3.13(3.3).

[167] See **Neyy'attha Nīt'attha S** (A 2.3.5 f/1:60), SD 2.6b.

SD 62.18a (Catukka) Kāla Sutta 1

SD 62.18b (Catukka) Kāla Sutta 2

The 1st & 2nd Discourses on Times | **A 4.146 + 147**
Be **Kāla,sutta,dvāyaṁ** The 2 Discourses on Times
Theme: The duties of Dharma practice

SD 62.18c Kāla Dāna Sutta

The Discourse on Timely Giving | **A 5.36**
or, **(Pañcaka) Kāla Sutta** The (Fives) Discourse in Time
Theme: The 5 kinds of material giving

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1 Sutta summaries

1.1 THE 2 KĀLA SUTTAS (*kāla,sutta,dvāyaṁ*)

There are 2 Kāla Suttas—**Paṭhama Kāla Sutta** (Kāla Sutta 1) and **Dutiya Kāla Sutta** (Kāla Sutta 2)—dealing with the same topic: the 4 right times for Dharma practice [1.2 f]. Hence, the Burmese Tipiṭaka calls them "**the 2 Kāla Suttas**" (*kāla,sutta,dvāyaṁ*) in its contents page. **Kāla Sutta 1** is a very short sutta that lists only the 4 times for practice [1.1.1], and **Kāla Sutta 2** lists the same tetrad followed by a parable [1.1.2].

1.2 PAṬHAMA KĀLA SUTTA (A 4.146/2:140)

The Paṭhama Kāla Sutta (Kāla Sutta 1) or the First Discourse on Times list the 4 times—that is the right times—for Dharma practice by way of:

(1) listening to the Dharma,	[2.1]
(2) discussing the Dharma,	[2.2]
(3) calm (practice), and	[3.2]
(4) insight (practice).	[3.3]

1.3 DUTIYA KĀLA SUTTA (A 4.147/2:140)

1.3.1 The Dutiya Kāla Sutta (Kāla Sutta 2) or the Second Discourse on Time lists the 4 times [§s1-2]—as in Kāla Sutta 1 [1.1.1] and then follows with a parable of water flowing from the mountains down through the land into the ocean, that is, a symbolism of life and plenty [§§3-4].

1.3.2 In terms of teachings—the 4 right times for Dharma practice—the first 2 deals with the training and mastery of Dharma theory [2], and the last 2 with practice, that is mental cultivation by way of calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) [3].

1.4 (PAÑCAKA) KĀLA SUTTA (A 5.36/4:41), SD 62.18c

There is at least a 3rd sutta of the same name in the Aṅguttara Book of Fives (*pañcaka nipāta*), that is, **the (Pañcaka) Kāla Sutta** (A 5.36) [SD 62.18c]. It lists 5 kinds of gifts to be given at the proper times, that is, to visitors, those travelling, the sick, famine victims, and the virtuous.

2 The 2 trainings in Dharma study

2.1 LISTENING TO THE DHARMA [§2(1)][1]

2.1.1 Maṅgala and Commentary

2.1.1.1 "**Hearing Dharma when it is timely**" (*kālena dhamma,savanaṁ*) or "timely Dharma hearing" is the 26th blessing (*maṅgala*) as listed in **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Khp 6 = Sn 265c).[2]

The Khuddaka,pāṭha Commentary (Param'attha,joyikā 1) explains that timely hearing the Dharma is when the mind is attended by restlessness or is overcome by thoughts of sensual desire, (ill will, or cruelty,) doing so on such an occasion in order to remove these thoughts.

[1] Throughout, such refs are parallels in **Kāla S 1** (A 4.146) and **Kāla S 2** (A 4.147).

[2] Sn 265 + Khp 5.8c/3 (SD 101.5).

Some say that "timely hearing Dharma" is hearing the teaching every 5 days (*pañcame pañcame divase* or *pañc'āhikaṁ*), according as it is said by the venerable Anuruddha (as recorded in **the Cūḷa Go,-siṅga Sutta** (M 21), **the Upakkilesa Sutta**, M 128, and the Mahā,vagga of the Vinaya):

"Every five days,[3] bhante, we sit out the whole night together in talking on Dharma."[4]

(KhpA 147,26-148,2)

2.1.1.2 Furthermore, "timely Dharma hearing" can also be understood as hearing Dharma at a time at which one approaches spiritual friends (teachers and elders) in order to be able to hear such Dharma as will remove one's doubts, according as it is said (in **the Das'uttara Sutta**, D 34), "From time to time he approaches them, and he asks and he questions,"[5] and so on. (KhpA 148,3-7)

This is the 2nd of "the 8 things of great help" in spiritual cultivation, as listed **the Das'uttara Sutta** thus:

> "**The 8 things of great help** (*aṭṭha bahu,kāra*).
>
> What are the 8 things of great help? Eight causes, eight conditions conduce to wisdom in the fundamentals of the holy life, to gaining what has not been gained and to increasing, cultivating and developing what has been gained. Here,
>
> (1) one lives close to the teacher (*upanissaya*) or to a fellow-monk with the standing of a teacher, being thus strongly established in moral shame and moral fear, in love and respect. …
>
> (2) Then, from time to time he goes to them, asks and interrogates them (*paripucchati paripañhati*): "How is this, bhante? What does this mean?" Thus his venerable teachers reveal what is hidden and clarify obscurities, in this way helping him to clear his doubts. …
>
> (3) Then, having heard Dharma from them, he gains the double withdrawal (*dvayena vūpakāsena*),[6] those of body and mind. …
>
> (4) Further, a monk is moral (*sīlavā*), he lives restrained according to the restraint of the discipline, persisting in right conduct, seeing danger in the slightest fault, and keeping to the training rules. …
>
> (5) Also, a monk, having learnt much (*bahu-s,sata*), remembers and bears in mind what he has learnt, and those things that are beautiful in the beginning, in the middle and in the ending, which in spirit and letter proclaim the fully perfected and purified holy life, he remembers and reflects on, and penetrates them with vision. …

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[3] The Buddhist **lunar week** refers to the period from one uposatha day to the next. It is different from the modern 7-day week following the "planetary system." The Pali "week" is simply "the seven" (*sattaha*), frequently used by the Buddha in the framing of Vinaya rules [V 1:138] and the regulation of his own activities [V 1:4]. For a chart the traditional Buddhist week and fortnight within the months, for one season of 4 months, see [BuddhaNet]. However, according to a tradition preserved by Buddhaghosa, an uposatha coming at the end of a 14-day period (*catud,dasī*) occurs only 6 times during a year of 12 months. According to him, they came in the 3rd and 7th fortnight (*pakkha*) of each of the 3 Indian seasons ("cold," *hemanta*: "hot," *gimha* and "spring/rains," *vassanā*) (A 4:138; SnA 317). Thus the remaining 18 are invariably "15th day," ie, *pannarasī uposatha*. What is interesting to observe is the "14th day" uposatha (coinciding with the new-moon days), occurs every other month alternating with the "15th day" new moon. Perhaps, in spite of the new-moon days of both types, the term *catuddasī* came to be exclusively used for the new-moon day, while *pannarasī* for the day of the full-moon (Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī, PṭmkA 3).

[4] *Pañc'āhikaṁ kho pana mayaṁ bhante sabba,rattiṁ dhammiyā kathāya sannisīdāmā ti* (**M 31**,9/1:207, **128**,14/-3:157, **Mv 10**.4.5 @ V 1:352,17).

[5] *Te kālena kālaṁ upasaṅkamitvā paripucchati paripañhatī ti* (D 34,2.1(1b)/3:285,5).

[6] This word—a synonym of *viveka* (DAṬ 2:61)—seems to occur only here. Comys are silent. Here, it probably means bodily is more confident in keeping the precepts, and mentally, he meditates better. Or he then goes into retreat (bodily withdrawal) and meditates (mental withdrawal). On the 3 solitudes (*viveka*)—bodily, mental and spiritual—see **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4 (4.2).

(6) Again, a monk, having stirred up energy (*āraddha,viriya*), continues to dispel unwholesome states, striving strongly and firmly, and not casting off the yoke of the wholesome. …

(7) Again, a monk is mindful (*satimā*), with the highest mindfulness and discrimination, remembering and bearing in mind what has been done or said in the past. …

(8) Also, a monk continually contemplates the rise and fall (*udaya-b,bayânupassī*) of the 5 aggregates of clinging, thinking: "Such is material *form*, its arising and passing; such are *feelings* … , such are *perceptions* … , such are the *mental formations* … , such is *consciousness*, its arising and passing.

This is the 8th condition conducive to wisdom in the fundamentals of the holy life, to gaining what has not been gained and to increasing, cultivating and developing what has been gained.

These are the 8 things of great help." (D 34,2.1/3:284,17-286,14)

2.1.1.3 Timely hearing of Dharma should be understood as a "blessing" (*maṅgala*) since it is a cause for acquiring the many distinctions beginning with the abandoning of hindrances,[7] the 5 benefits [2.1.1.4], and the destructions of influxes,[8] this being said,

"Bhikshus, on an occasion on which a noble disciple hears the Dharma, giving ear by heeding, attending and wholeheartedly responding, then on that occasion there is in him none of the 5 hindrances,"[9]

and this:

"Bhikshus, when ideas that have come to the ear … are well penetrated, 4 benefits can be expected,"[10]

and this,

"Bhikshus, there are these 4 states, which, when they are rightly cultivated, rightly conforming (to Dharma), eventually bring about the destruction of the influxes. What are the four? Hearing Dharma when it is timely, …. ,"[11] and so on. (KhpA 148,7-18)

2.1.1.4 The Dhamma-s,savana Sutta (A 5.202) lists the 5 benefits of listening to the Dharma:

1 Bhikshus, there are these **5 benefits from listening to the Dharma**. What are the five?

2 (1) He hears what has not been heard, *assutaṁ suṇāti*
(2) Having heard, he purifies himself, *sutaṁ pariyodāpeti*
(3) He crosses over doubt, *kaṅkhaṁ vitarati*
(4) He straightens his views, and *diṭṭhiṁ ujuṁ karoti*
(5) His mind brightens with faith. *cittamassa pasīdati*

These, bhikshus, are the 5 benefits from listening to the Dharma.[12]

(A 5.202/3:248), SD 3.2(5.1)

2.1.1.5 The Caṅkī Sutta (M 94) gives the following list known as the "12 gradual steps of training" (*anupubba,sikkhā*) for discipleship, that is, the attaining of the path as a streamwinner or higher. The

[7] The 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) are: (1) sensual desire (*kama-c,chanda*); (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*); (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*); (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*); (5) doubt (vicikicchā). See ***Nīvaraṇa,*** SD 32.1; **(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12.

[8] The 4 influxes (*āsava*) are those of: (1) sensual lust (*kām'āsava*); (2) existence (*bhav'āsava*); (3) views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), and (4) ignorance (*avijjâsava*). See SD 9 (10.4.2.2) n; SD 70.18 (2.4.1 n).

[9] **Avaraṇa Nīvaraṇa S** (S 46.38/5:95,19), SD 41.10.

[10] A 2:185,4.

[11] Cf A 2:140,11.

[12] See **Vicikicchā**, SD 32.8 (4.1).

same 12 steps are given by the Buddha in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), where the list presented as Dharma investigation (*samannesanā*) leading to the discovering of truth (*saccânubodha*).

Here is the "**gradual training**" passage from **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95):

20 To the extent of examining (*samannesamāno*)[13] him, he observes (*samanupassati*) that he is purified of states of delusion, he thus puts **faith** in him.[14]

(1)	Out of faith, he **approaches** him.	*upasaṅkamati*
(2)	Having approached, he **draws near** [attends] to him.[15]	*payirūpāsati*
(3)	Having drawn near to him, he **lends his ear**.[16]	*sotaṁ odahati*
(4)	Having lent his ear, he **listens** to the Dharma.[17]	*dhammaṁ suṇāti*
(5)	Having heard the Dharma [teachings], he **remembers** the Dharma.	*dhammaṁ dhāreti*
(6)	Having remembered the Dharma, he **examines** their meaning.	*atthaṁ upaparikkhati*
(7)	Having examined their meaning, he **reflectively accepts** them.[18]	*dhammā nijjhānaṁ khamanti*
(8)	Having reflectively accepted them, **desire**[19] **for mindfulness** arises.	*sati chando jāyati*
(9)	Having desire for mindfulness, he **exerts** himself.	*ussahati*[20]
(10)	Having exerted himself, he **weighs** [harmonizes] them.	*tulayati*[21]
(11)	Having weighed them, he **strives on**.	*padahati*[22]
(12)	With a resolute [striving] mind, he **realizes** the ultimate truth with his own body, he sees it (true reality) by penetrating it with wisdom.	*sacchikaroti*[23]

[13] See Intro (1.3.2).

[14] *Yato naṁ samannesamāno visuddhaṁ mohanīyehi dhammehi samanupassati*. These 12 stages of learning are reversed in §§21b-33, in response to Kāpaṭhika's question. On *samannesanā*, see Intro (1.3.2).

[15] See "venerate" at §14a n & (5(3) n).

[16] See SD 12.15 (5(4) n).

[17] Alt tr: "Respectfully sitting close, he listens attentively."

[18] ***Nijjhānaṁ khamanti,*** lit "insights are endured," ie "capable of bearing insights"; idiomatic meaning "he is pleased with, approves of, finds pleasure in" (M 1:133 f; 479 f, 2:173, 175; S 3:225, 228, 5:377, 379; Vv 84.17). ***Khanti*** usually means "patience" but here it means "choice, receptivity, preference, acceptance." The BHSD defines *kṣānti* as "intellectual receptivity; the being ready in advance to accept knowledge." *Khanti* is often used in the Canon in this latter sense (see SD 12.13(2a) for refs). The phrase can also be freely rendered as "receptivity in harmony with true reality." See **Kālāma S** (A 3.65.3a(8)/1:189), SD 35.4 comy 3a(8). On *khanti* as "mental receptivity," see **Aniccā S** (A 6.98), SD 12.13(3).

[19] Also *will* or *will-power* in the simple psychological sense, without any philosophical connotation.

[20] "Exerting oneself" (***ussahati***) is applying the will as a basic strategy in the practice. The term "strive" (***padahati***) below, refers to the effort in seeing insight, leading into the path itself.

[21] Comy: He investigates (*tīreti*) states by way of impermanence, etc (MA 3:426). *Tīreti* (caus of *tarati,* meaning (1) to cross over, or (2) to be in a hurry), meaning (1) to bring through, finish, execute (a business), to accomplish; (2) to measure, judge, recognize, always in formula *tuleti tīreti vibhāveti* ["Nc," says PED, but unattested] (cf J 5:48), as interpretation of *jānāti* (PED). However, if we look at the progression of the method here, what clearly follows is the balancing of the practice in terms of the faculties (*indriya*): see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50/5:225 f), SD 10.4. However, in Buddhaghosa's def of *tīraṇa,pariññā,* he says, "having known this, that is, investigating the 5 aggregates in their 42 aspects as being impermanent, suffering, a disease, etc" (*evaṁ ñataṁ katvā pañcakkhandhe **tīreti** aniccato dukkhato rogato ti dvā,cattālīsāya ākārehi*) (SA 1:45), in which case, this would be "insight contemplation."

[22] *Padahati* and *ussahati:* see (9) n here.

[23] *Pahit'attato samāno kāyena c'eva parama,saccaṁ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṁ ativijjha passati.* Comy: He realizes nirvana with the conascent mental body (*saha.jāta,nāma.kāya*) (of the streamwinning path), and having penetrated the defilements with wisdom, he sees it (nirvana) clearly and manifestly. (MA 3:426 f)

To this extent,[24] Bhāra,dvāja, there is the preserving of truth. To this extent, one preserves truth. To this extent, we declare the preserving of the truth. But there is as yet *no* attaining to the truth."[25]

21 "To this extent, master Gotama, there is the discovering of truth. To this extent, one discovers truth. To this extent, we see the discovering of the truth.[26]

(M 95,20-33), SD 21.15; also (M 70,24), SD 11.1

Note that in the conclusion (beginning, "To this extent, … "), the Buddha reminds Bhāradvāja this is only the gradual practice of preparing oneself with "the truth." However, knowing the truth alone may help preserve Dharma, but one has yet to practise for oneself so that one is transformed inwardly, and free from ignorance (including views). This right knowledge is helpful in bringing one to the right practice.

2.2 Discussing the Dharma [§2(2)]

2.2.1 Maṅgala Sutta verse and Commentary

2.2.1.1 "**Timely Dharma discussion**" (*kālena dhamma,sākacchā*) (Khp 5.9 = Sn 266) is the 30th blessing (*maṅgala*) as listed in **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Khp 6 = Sn 266c).[27]

The Khuddaka,pāṭha Commentary (Param'attha,joyikā 1) explains that timely Dharma discussion was done at dusk (*padose*) or in the early dawn (*paccūse*), when, say, two monks who are sutta-experts discuss with one another about suttas, or two Vinaya-experts about the Vinaya, or two Abhidhamma-experts about the Abhidhamma, or two Jātaka-reciters about the Jātakas, or two Commentary-masters about the Commentaries. Or else, they converse from time to time for the purpose of purifying the mind that is sluggish or restless or doubtful: this is "timely Dharma discussion."

Timely Dharma discussion is a blessing since it is a cause for such special qualities as particular distinction in the texts and so on. (KhpA 151,9-29)

2.2.1.2 The Commentary on the Kāla Suttas [2.2.1.1] explains "timely Dharma discussion" as an important on-going monastic practice amongst the experts and the specialists on Dharma, the Vinaya, the Abhidhamma, and the Jātaka verses and stories. Clearly, such discussions are to ensure that these masters in their own fields "on the same page" regarding the teachings and stories, and also to promote fellowship among themselves. Dharma discussion was a vital aspect of **the oral tradition** of early Buddhism, especially for those amongst these specialists when teaching the laity who had no printed texts on the suttas or the teachings as we do today.

With **the easy availability of Buddhist texts today**—the Pali texts, their translations and their interpretations—Dharma discussion has become a universal practice amongst the various groups of Buddhists, especially in modern Buddhism and Western Buddhism. We have almost no idea whether Buddhists in the Buddha's time or in the following centuries had their own Dharma discussions. However, from the teachings of **the 2 Kāla Suttas**—and such texts as **the Maṅgala Sutta** [2.1.1.1, 2.2.1.1]—clearly, the practices of Dharma listening and of Dharma discussion at proper times are encouraged, even necessary for Buddhist learning, practice, fellowship and propagation.

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[24] See **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70) where this 12-step training is mentioned, and rebuking the indisciplined monks, the Buddha tells them that this training is not found in them (M 70.22-24/1:479 f), SD 11.1.

[25] *Na tv-eva saccânuppatti hotî ti.* This statement—that there is *no* awakening at this stage—is obvious because the listeners (Kāpaṭhika and the brahmins) are not yet practitioners. Technically, we can say (as at M:ÑB 1301 n892) that this stage of "discovering the truth" refers streamwinning, while "the attaining of the truth" (*saccânuppatti*) [§21.2] then refers to the attainment of arhathood.

[26] "The discovering of the truth [the awakening to the truth]" here refers to streamwinning.

[27] Sn 266 + Khp 5.9c/3 (SD 101.5).

3 The 2 trainings in mental cultivation

3.1 *SAMATHA* AS "CALM" PRACTICE [§2(3)]

3.1.1 Definition of *samatha* meditation

3.1.1.1 The Pali term ***samatha*** means "calm or tranquil," that is, the concentrated state of mind arising from meditation, such as the breath meditation. In commentarial usage, the term generally refers to the actual methods of generating mental calm and of developing a deeply concentrated mind.

The word *samatha* often refers specifically to concentration (*samādhi*). Equating *samatha* with *samādhi* is in accord with both the Abhidhamma and the suttas, for no matter which special powers or attainments a person reaches, the essence of tranquillity meditation is concentration.

3.1.1.2 The purpose or benefit of *samatha* is the attainment of **dhyana** or meditative absorption (*jhāna*). In *samatha* practice, one fixes one's mind on an object (*ārammaṇa*) until the mind is one-pointed (with the appearance of the "sign," *nimitta*);[28] this is called *samādhi* ("samadhi," concentration). When samadhi is properly established, the mind enters the 1st dhyana. In the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa,jhana*), one uses aspects of form or materiality as the object of attention.

3.1.1.3 More refined than the form dhyanas are **the 4 formless attainments** (*arūpa,samāpatti*), in which one uses formless or immaterial objects as the focus of attention, that is, progressively from that of *infinite space, to infinite consciousness, to nothingness, and to neither-perception-nor-non-perception*. These 4 formless dhyanas are called "attainments" (*samāpatti*) probably because they are all rooted in the 4th dhyana, where the mind is fully free from all sense-based limitations, that is, the body comprising the 4 elements, earth, water, fire and air.

3.1.2 The 8 attainments

3.1.2.1 These dhyanas are altogether called **the 8 attainments** (*samāpatti*). They are actually 8 progressive stages of mental absorption always beginning with the 1st dhyana. Adept meditators are able to quickly attain the 1st dhyana and progress to the level he or she wishes to remain in.

While a meditator is in dhyana, the mind is happy, peaceful and bright; there is neither dullness nor disturbance; the mind is free from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) [2.1.1.3]. For the duration of dhyana, one is said to be free from the mental defilements (*kilesa*). The defilements return, however, when one exits dhyana. This kind of suppression of defilement by concentration during dhyana is termed "cessation by suppression" (*vikkhambhana,nirodha*) and "freedom by suppression" (*vikkhambhana,vimutti*).[29]

It must be added that a dhyana meditator, even yet unawakened, still enjoys benefits of the dhyanic experience in his daily life. His constant and habitual joy makes it easier for him or her to keep to a Dharma-spirited life of moral conduct. A dhyana meditator, even a lay person, is likely to exude a radiant personality in daily life.

3.1.2.2 With proper practice of dhyana, the possible fruits of dhyana are the 5 special powers (*pañc'-abhiññā*):

[28] The sign (*nimitta*) may be seen as marking the mind's full freedom from the body of the sensed and physical elements.

[29] Pm 2:221; DA 2:246; MA 4:168; SA 3:209.

(1)	psychic powers,	*iddhi,vidhā*
(2)	telepathy (the divine ear),	*dibba,sota*
(3)	mind-reading,	*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*
(4)	retrocognition (recollection of one's own past lives), and	*pubbe,nivāsânussati*
(5)	the karmic recollection of others' past lives (the divine eye),	*cutûpapāta,ñāṇa*

The 5 superpowers are not exclusive to Buddhists, but attainable by anyone who is able to attain the 4th dhyana.[30] One explanation for the efficacy of these powers is that the meditator, on reaching the 4th dhyana, fully transcends the 4 elements that is the physical body. If the meditator so wishes, he may go on to cultivate control over the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and air), and also space, that is, the 5th element.

Hence, these powers are regarded as mundane; they do not bring one to the path of awakening. Only the 6th superpower, the direct knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes [2.1.1.3] is regarded as supramundane; it is the quality of only arhats.[31]

3.2 *VIPASSANĀ* AS "INSIGHT" PRACTICE [§2(4)]

3.2.1 Definition of insight meditation

3.2.1.1 A vision of true reality—the nature of the world as it is—is the basis for the arising of insight or wisdom, sometimes known as "insight wisdom"—that leads to the path of awakening. In the suttas, the term "**insight**" (*vipassanā*) simply refers to this vision. However, the Abhidhamma and Commentaries have, for the sake of convenience, combined both the vision and its quest through contemplation and meditation. In modern times, the term Vipassana is often used even more narrowly to refer to a type of meditation.

As a living religion, Buddhism (that is, early Buddhism) often adjusts its terminology to address the needs and tendencies of the times. Hence, we may use the term **vipassana** (the anglicized term in lower case) as refers to *both* the meditation and its goal (that is, insight into true reality). In fact, as a rule, those groups that use or claim Vipassana as meditation method tacitly accept and understand that their goal is *insight* into true reality.

3.2.1.2 Practically speaking, we meditate simply to gain *both* **calm and insight** (*Samatha,vipassanā*). Mental calm helps us focus so that we have a joyful, calm and clear mind. A joyful mind means that we enjoy the meditation, which means that we are charged up to sustain and enhance our practice as is proper. A calm mind is ready to direct itself mindfully to the mind-object; and a clear mind is able to *see* the mind-object *as it really is*, that is, as impermanent, perhaps even as suffering, or nonself.

Logically then, a meditation beginner does not decide between "samatha" or "vipassana" since he or she will not be experienced enough to know their difference and how it all will turn out. It would also be unhelpful if a zealous teacher insists that one should only do Vipassana, as if there is no need for samatha or calm at all. It seems to be just a friendly war of words. The solution is the peace of mind that sees the mind-object.

[30] On Asita's 5 *abhiññā,* see SD 49.18 (1.1.4.2).

[31] **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,89-99), SD 8.10; **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5).

3.2.2 Preliminary stages of insight

3.2.2.1 Take **the breath meditation**, for example, we begin—following **the Ānâpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118)—by watching the breath just as it is—*in and out, long or short*[32]—to free the mind from distractions and hindrances [2.1.1.3], and let it settle. Once the mind settles, and stays stably settled, it focuses and gains concentration, even dhyana.

(1) Once we have had a good taste of this mental calm, we emerge from it and reflect on *that calm mind as being "**constructed**" (saṅkhata), and as such, impermanent*.

(2) If we are ready and able, we then go on to reflect thus: *What is impermanent is "**unsatisfactory**, suffering."* There is an advantage in using more than a word here; especially when we may be intellectually inclined to wonder if "suffering" is such a negative word.

(3) Then, when our meditation has improved and we have a more sustained calm mind, we can extend this "insight" practice (after emerging from the concentrated mind) to reflect thus: *What is constructed is impermanent. What is impermanent changes and becomes other: it is unsatisfactory, suffering.* What is impermanent and suffering cannot be really said to be *I, me or mine*; it is nonself.

3.2.2.2 This reflection [3.2.2.1] is famously found in the teachings of **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59).[33] During the insight practice, it is best to carefully hold that theoretical knowledge by its neck like a watersnake and cast it as far away as possible.[34]

After reflecting on the insight stages, we just let them be; we think no more of them; perhaps we go back to the meditation. Over time, when we least expect it, this insight into the true nature of the "constructed" or "impermanent" or "suffering" or "nonself" will arise in us in a eureka (*aho buddho*) moment. Then, again it may take us some time for that insight to mature.

Meantime, if we like, we should look at **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** and re-read the teachings on insight there. This is how we enrich our theoretical understanding of the teachings and advance with the practice, too.

3.3 Levels of freedom

3.3.1 Temporary freedom of mind

3.3.1.1 ***Samatha,*** as we have noted [3.1.1], gives us the mental calm with which to free ourselves from negative emotions and mental defilements while ***vipassana*** powers us with the wisdom with which to free ourselves from ignorance.

The Commentaries listed the many definitions of "(mental) freedom" (***vimutti***) into 5 groups following the same model they used for the definitions of "cessation" (*nirodha*).[35] These 5 groups are a useful summary of the freedoms, as they contain the essence of all their definitions:[36]

1. *Vikkhambhana,vimutti*, "freedom through suppression (of defilements)." The 5 hindrances [2.1.1.3] are warded off by the power of concentration. This mental freedom may occur momentarily or even for a while when one is well concentrated. As a rule, the mind must be free from at least the 5 hindrances [2.1.1.3] to attain the 1st dhyana and beyond. Thus, this freedom refers to the precondition for all the 8

[32] M 118/3:77-88 (SD 7.13).

[33] **S 22.59**/3:66-68, (SD 1.2) esp §§12-16.

[34] For the watersnake parable, see **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,10), SD 3.13.

[35] See Payutto 2021: ch 6 (Nibbāna) on *jhāna, nirodha* and *nibbāna.*

[36] See UA 32; DA 3:879; MA 4:168; SA 3:209; DhA 1:158, 434; Vism 410. Cp *viveka* (VbhA 316) and with *pahāna* (Pm 1:26 f, 2:220; Vism 693 f).

attainments (*samāpatti*): the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments, and sometimes includes "access concentration" (*upacāra,samādhi*).

2. *Tad-aṅga,vimutti*: "freedom by displacement (of defilements)." One is freed from unwholesome qualities by their substitution with wholesome opposite qualities. Technically, it is the freedom from wrong views and attachments through the application of insight or wisdom. For example, focusing on impermanence frees one from the belief in permanence. Since the mind is preoccupied with the wholesome mind-object, the mind is "to that extent" (*tad-aṅga*) free from the defilements.

3.3.1.2 "Freedom" can also be used in connection with moral virtue or any wholesome qualities. For example: practising generosity frees one from stinginess and greed; showing lovingkindness frees one from ill will and negativity; and cultivating compassion and non-violence frees one from cruelty and violence.

These first 2 kinds of freedom cover the meanings of "temporary freedom of mind" (*sāmāyika,cetovimutti*) and are of mundane (*lokiya*) nature. They are temporary and do not bring us to the path of awakening by themselves. However, such a habit has the advantage of gaining better concentration, with which we can go deeper into cultivating the mind.

3.3.2 Permanent freedom of mind

3.3.2.1 To become any of the 4 kinds of noble saints—the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat—one first gains the path (*magga*), that is, when one *has cut off or uprooted* the relevant fetters;[37] one gains fruition (*phala*), that is, becomes full-fledged saint by *the total removal* of the fetters and one becomes *mentally stilled*. Then, with *full escape* (the breaking of all 10 fetters), one becomes an arhat. The Commentaries have systematized the descriptions of these attainments and given them definitive terms, as follows:

3. *Samuccheda,vimutti*: "(mental) freedom by cutting off (of defilements)." This is freedom through final knowledge, that is, freedom as the path (*magga*) of awakening.

4. *Paṭipassaddhi,vimutti*: "(mental) freedom by utter removal and stilling (of defilements)." This is freedom as the fruit (*phala*), the full-fledged attainment of the path of awakening.

5. *Nissaraṇa,vimutti*: "(mental) freedom by full escape," that is, complete liberation leading to supreme joy and spiritual engagement with the world without being caught in it; that is to say *vimutti* as nirvana.

These final 3 kinds of *vimutti* are permanent mental freedoms (*asāmāyika,cetovimutti*) and are supramundane or transcendent (*lok'uttara*); they bring us to the path of awakening; we become streamwinners, and so on.

Essentially, these 5 kinds of freedom are equivalent to ***samatha*, *vipassanā*, *magga*, *phala***, and **nirvana**, respectively.

[37] These are the 10 fetters (*dasa saṁyojana*): 1. self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), 2. spiritual doubt (vicikicchā), 3. attachment to rituals and vow (*sīla-b, bata,parāmāsa*); 4. sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), 5. aversion (*paṭigha*); 6. lust for form existence (*rūpa,raga*), 7. lust for formless existence (*arūpa,raga*), 8. conceit (*māna*), 9. restlessness (*uddhacca*), 10. ignorance (*āvijjā*). The streamwinner has broken the first 3 fetters; the once-returner has broken the 3 fetters and weaken the 3 unwholesome roots; the nonreturner has broken all the 5 lower fetters; and the arhat all 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).

3.3.2.2 To gain the path and its fruition, one has to undergo the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*) by fulfilling one's *moral conduct, mental concentration* and gaining *wisdom*.[38] Among the various conditions that helps one's training are the "**5 ripening factors for spiritual freedom**" (*vimutti,paripācaniya dhamma*).[39] They are the key teaching of **the Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 = U 4.1) where they are called "the 5 conditions that bring about the full maturing by way of the freedom of mind" (*ceto,vimuttiyā pañca paripakāya,-dhammā*),[40] namely, **spiritual friendship, Dharma-centred talk, moral virtue, zealous exertion, and insight into impermanence**.[41] [§§7.2-12].

Of these, the first 2—*spiritual friendship and Dharma-centred talk*—are the meditator's external limbs (*bāhira aṅga*) for ripening of spiritual freedom. These are the benefits we get from an experienced teacher. The last 3—*moral virtue, exertion and insight*—are the internal limbs (*ajjhattika aṅga*); these are gained through self-cultivation. (UA 234)

3.3.2.3 The Commentaries extend the **factors leading to spiritual freedom** (*vimutti,paripācaniya dhamma*) to a set of 15 factors that purify the 5 faculties (*pañc'indriya:* faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom), that is, liberation through mental cultivation. **The 15 factors** are the following **3 factors** cultivated in connection with each of the 5 faculties:

(1) avoiding people who lack the faculty;
(2) associating with those who an endowed with the faculty; and
(3) reflecting on suttas that inspire spiritual maturation.

The Commentaries expand on this with another set of **15 qualities** with emphasis on practice, thus:

(1) the 5 faculties;
(2) the 5 perceptions partaking of penetration, namely: perception of *impermanence, suffering, nonself, abandoning and dispassion*;[42] and
(3) the 5 qualities the Buddha taught Meghiya [3.3.2.2]: *spiritual friendship, Dharma-centred talk, moral virtue, zealous exertion, and insight in impermanence.*

4 Training in calm and insight

4.0 THE 4 METHODS OF MEDITATING WITH CALM AND INSIGHT

4.0.1 Yuganaddha Paṭipadā Sutta (A 4.170)

4.0.1.1 The Yuganaddha Sutta (A 4.170) records the elder Ānanda as telling the monks thus: "Avuso, whichever monk or nun declares before me that he or she has attained arhathood, all of them have done

[38] On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; ***Sīla samādhi paññā***, SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5). On the training and sainthood, see **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 3.85), SD 3.3(2).

[39] The *vimutti,paripācaniyā dhammā* are listed in **A 9.3** = **U 4.1**/36,4 (UA 220,23-33), SD 34.2; **S 35.121**/4:105,16 (SD 93.6); **M 147**,2/3:277,25. **D 33**,2.1(26)/3:243 mentions the 5 things that bring one to successively greater levels of *vimutti* (*pañca vimutti,paripācaniyā dhammā*).

[40] More briefly, "the conditions conducing to full maturity" (*pañca dhammā paripakāya*) (UA 219).

[41] **A 9.3**,7.2-12/4:357.5-30 = **U 4.1**,7.2-12/36,3-28.

[42] On the last 2, the perceptions on *pahāna* + *virāga,* respectively, see **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60,8 f/5:110,13-20), SD 19.16.

so by 4 paths,[43] that is, by one or other amongst them."[44] **The 4 modes of meditation practice** for attaining arhathood are summarized as follows:[45]

(1)	"insight preceded by calm,"	*samatha,pubb'aṅgama vipassanā*	[4.1]
(2)	"calm preceded by insight,"	*vipassanā,pubb'aṅgama samatha*	[4.2]
(3)	"calm coupled with insight," and	*samatha,vipassanā,yuga.naddha*	[4.3]
(4)	"a mind seized by dharma-restlessness."	*dhamm'uddhacca,viggahita mānasa*	[4.4]

4.0.1.2 The sutta context should be noted. Ānanda is not saying that these are 4 meditation methods we can or should choose from. They are the various meditation methods used by meditators to attain arhathood. In other words, these are meditation methods used by advanced meditators, especially saints on the path who are working to attain arhathood.

For average meditators familiar with samatha and vipassana, they should try out the basic method of meditation mentioned above [3.2.2], which coincidentally is method (1) listed above. If that does not work, then perhaps they should go on to try method (3) and so on. Of course, all this is done more effectively with the proper guidance of an experienced meditation teacher.

4.1 INSIGHT PRECEDED BY CALM[46]

4.1.1 The Paṭisambhidā,magga defines the method of "**insight preceded by calm**" (*samatha,pubb'aṅgama vipassanā*) as follows: Initially, the mind is one-pointed, steady and concentrated.[47] This concentration can arise from any of these conditions:

the power of renunciation (*nekkhamma*); the power of a freedom from ill will (*avyāpāda*); the perception of light (*āloka,saññā*), which combats drowsiness; an absence of restlessness (*avikkhepa*); reflection on aspects of Dharma (*dhamma,vavatthāna*), which dispels doubt; knowledge (*ñāṇa*); joy (*pāmojja*);[48]

the 1st dhyana; the 2nd dhyana; the 3rd dhyana; the 4th dhyana; the base of infinity of space; the base of infinity of consciousness; the base of nothingness; the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;

the 10 *kasiṇa* meditations; meditation on the 10 reflections (*anussati*); meditation on the 10 stages of decay (*asubha*); and meditation on the 32 aspects of mindfulness of the breath.[49]

4.1.2 Concentration is followed by wisdom, which discerns all the attributes of the different stages of concentration as *impermanent*, *suffering*, and *nonself*. The Commentaries present a simpler explanation for this first way of practice: a person first develops concentration (either access concentration or

[43] Here [§3] and below [§6] A 2:157,2+26: Be Ce Se *maggehi,* but Ee *aṅgehi* (prob wr); Pm 2:92,10 also reads *maggehi;* PmA 3:584,24-25: ***catūhi maggehī** ti upari vuccamānehi catūhi paṭipadā,maggehi, na ariya,maggehi,* "**by 4 paths:** by the 4 paths of practice spoken of above, not by the noble paths."

[44] A 4.170/2:157 f, SD 41.5; MA 2:92; qu by VismṬ:Be 2:428.

[45] For explanations, see SD 41.5 (2-5).

[46] For details, see SD 41.5 (2).

[47] Pm 2:93-96; cf Pm 1:95, 175 f.

[48] Paṭisambhidā,magga describes how these 7 qualities, from renunciation to joy, are involved in the arising of access concentration (*upacāra,samādhi*) for pure or "dry" insight practitioners (*sukkha,vipassaka*): PmA 1:310; cf PmA 1:68, 103.

[49] It would be sufficient to only mention the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, since this is the highest dhyana. This long list is to show the distinction between mental states attained (from 1st dhyana to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception) and ways of practice to reach these attainments (cf PmA 1:312).

attainment concentration). He then reflects on that level of concentration, along with accompanying mental factors, as *impermanent*, and so on, until he attains the noble path (*ariya-magga*).[50]

4.2 CALM PRECEDED BY INSIGHT

4.2.1 The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains the method of "calm preceded by insight" (*vipassanā,pubb'aṅ-gama samatha*) as follows:[51] Initially, a person uses insight to see things as *impermanent*, *suffering*, and *nonself*. Then, he "lets go" of all the qualities arising during insight meditation, and this "letting go" becomes the new meditation-object. The mind then becomes one-pointed and concentrated.

4.2.2 Samatha only, vipassana only[52]

4.2.2.1 The Commentaries elaborate: A person has not yet developed calm, but he or she discerns the universal characteristics (*impermanence*, etc) in the 5 aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-k,khandha*). When insight (*vipassanā*) is complete, he or she "lets go" of all factors of insight. This "letting go" becomes the meditation-object, and the mind becomes one-pointed and concentrated. This leads to path attainment.

4.2.2.2 The Samādhi Sutta 2 (A 4.93) mentions those who have calm but no insight, and those who have insight but no calm. These attainments are respectively called "mental calm" (*ceto,samatha*) and "insight that is wisdom regarding states" (*adhipaññā.dhamma,vipassana*).[53] The Commentary explains these as:

1. attainment concentration (*appanā,samādhi*), and
2. insight contemplating conditioned phenomena. (AA 3:116)

The Samādhi Sutta 2 passage shows that gaining insight does not inevitably give rise to calm, or as the commentaries say: although one gains insight, one may not reach the desired level of concentration, that is, dhyana. One is thus advised here to go on to cultivate samatha. The same Sutta passage also encourages the cultivation of calm and insight as a pair in order to remove the influxes in due course.[54]

4.2.2.3 The Abhidhamma speaks highly of these 2 terms, equating ***ceto,samatha*** with form dhyanas and formless attainments, and ***adhipaññā.dhamma,vipassanā*** with path and fruit.[55] From this explanation, one who attains calm but not insight is an unawakened person who has reached the 8 attainments, while someone who attains insight but not calm is a noble disciple who is a pure-insight practitioner. One who has attained neither is an ordinary, unawakened person.

4.2.3 The Commentaries say that whichever of these two ways of practice one follows (calm preceded by insight or insight preceded by calm), calm and insight must always arise together at the path-moment attainment.[56] This is so because samatha and vipassana are essentially equivalent to the 8 limbs of the noble path: vipassana equals right view (*sammā,diṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā,saṅkappa*), while

[50] MA 1:108; NmA 2:313.
[51] Pm 2:96.
[52] For details, see SD 41.5 (3).
[53] A 4.93/2:92-94 (SD 95.8).
[54] Cf A 5:99; A 4:360 f = Pug 7 f, 61 f.
[55] PañcABe 94 = PugA 244.
[56] MA 1:108; Vism 682. PmA 1:281 states that calm and insight are mutually supportive both at the time of aspiring to the noble path and at the moment of attaining the path. AA 2:184 states that calm and insight act as a pair at path-attainment and at fruition-attainment. Cf Pm 1:70; PmA 1:287; UA 397; ItA 2:29.

samatha comprises all the remaining 6 limbs. These 8 limbs arise naturally together at the moment of attaining the "noble realm" (*ariya,bhūmi*).[57]

4.3 CALM COUPLED WITH INSIGHT[58]

4.3.1 The Paṭisambhidā,magga explains[59] that one develops calm and insight together (*samatha,-vipassanā,yuganaddha*[60]) in 16 ways. One of these ways is that the practice of samatha and of vipassana lead to an identical meditation-object of meditation (*ārammaṇa*). For example, when one abandons restlessness (*uddhacca*), the mind becomes concentrated and gains "cessation" (*nirodha*). (At the same time), by abandoning ignorance, insight arises and "cessation," the mind becomes the object of awareness. In this way, calm and insight work together on an equal basis.

4.3.2 Some commentarial passages claim that although there is cooperation between calm and insight, this does not mean that samatha and vipassana arise simultaneously, since it is not possible to contemplate conditioned phenomena while the mind is one-pointed in dhyana. These passages state that these 2 ways of meditation act as a pair in so far that insight follows on from a one's level of concentrative attainment, and equally the next level of concentrative attainment relies on one's previous level of insight, as described in **the Aṅguttara Commentary**:

One enters the 1st dhyana, exits it, contemplates the conditioned nature of 1st dhyana; enters the 2nd dhyana, exits it, contemplates the conditioned nature of the 2nd dhyana; enters the 3rd dhyana, and so on, enter each, then exit, and finally one enters the conditioned nature of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and then exit from it.[61]

An important example of this explanation is the account of the elder Sāriputta, who developed calm and insight together, from the 1st dhyana to the attainment of path and fruit (of arhathood).[62]

4.4 A MIND SEIZED BY DHARMA-RESTLESSNESS[63]

The 4th meditation method is "a mind seized by dharma-restlessness." (*dhamm'uddhacca,viggahita mānasa*), that is, when the mind is misled by higher states of mind.

The Paṭisambhidā,magga explains[64] that when one reflects on the 3 characteristics in reference to the 5 aggregates, the following 10 kinds of mental states may arise:[65]

radiance (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāṇa*), bliss (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), joy (*sukha*), determination (*adhimokkha*), balanced effort (*paggāha*), careful attention (*upaṭṭhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and devotion (*nikanti*).

The practitioner here believes that the radiance that he "sees" in dhyana, for example, is a higher state of mind: he thinks that he has attained path, fruit or nirvana. Thinking in this way causes restless-

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[57] The *ariyā* refer to the streamwinner, etc: Dh 236 (DhA 3:178,5 = J 4:187,4; MA 2:127,11),

[58] For details, see SD 41.5 (4).

[59] Pm 2:97-100.

[60] ***Yuga,naddha*** (*yuga,* "yoke; pair" + *naddha* or *nandha,* "tied, bound, put on"), "putting a yoke, yoke together: Pm 2:92 f; KhpA 27; (adj) congruous, harmonious: UA 153, 398; (neut) congruity, association, common cause": KhpA 27; Pm 2:98 = Vism 682.

[61] AA 3:143,12-18.

[62] MA 4:90 on M 111/3:25-29.

[63] For details, see SD 41.5 (5).

[64] Pm 2:101 f.

[65] The 10 are known as "impurities of insight" (*vipassan'upakkilesa*): Vism 633-638; AA 3:143; NmA 106; VAṬ:Be 2:236-240; VismṬ:Be 2:427-433.

ness to arise in him, since he fails to see these 10 mental states as they really are, as *impermanent, subject to change*, and *nonself*.

Wisely discerning these 10 mental states settles the restless or wavering mind to become clear and concentrated. With this wisdom, one is not carried away by any of these mental states. The mind remains pure and calm, and one's meditation will be neither distracted nor impaired. The path may arise in due course.

5 Cultivating insight while in dhyana

5.1 No thinking in dhyana?

5.1.1 Mental qualities of dhyanas

5.1.1.1 There is a well-known controversy regarding whether it is possible to develop insight or to apply wise reflection while in dhyana. Those who reject this possibility usually tend to refer to **the dhyana-factors**. In the 1st dhyana, a meditator has initial application and sustained application (*vitakka,vicāra*), while in other, higher dhyanas, one only has bliss, joy and one-pointedness. Such being the case, how can one engage in any thinking or reflection?

It should be noted that the dhyana-factors are merely used as criteria for determining whether one has attained dhyana and which level of dhyana. They are not the only mental qualities present in a dhyana. In fact, the mind in dhyana is endowed with many qualities, as verified in the suttas and the older texts of the Abhidhamma. **The Anupada Sutta** (M 111), for example, lists the mental qualities present in every level of dhyana, from the 1st dhyana to the base of nothingness, including: will (*chanda*), determination (*adhimokkha*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), attention (*manasikāra*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).[66]

5.1.1.2 Similarly, **the Dhamma,saṅgāṇī** lists numerous qualities present at each level of dhyana, especially in "transcendent" dhyana (*lok'uttara jhāna*),[67] including the 5 spiritual faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom), all the 8 limbs of the noble eightfold path, and both calm and insight.[68] Some later commentaries[69] expand upon these passages[70] and make it clear that concentration and wisdom act in unison in "the dhyanic mind" (*jhāna,citta*).

The reason that initial application and sustained application are absent in higher dhyanas is because the mind therein is firmly established and deeply stilled. It is not necessary to turn attention (*vitakka*) to mind-objects or to sustain attention (*vicāra*) on these objects. The reflection present in the mind excels these modes of attention.

5.1.2 Shifting the attention in dhyana

5.1.2.1 The Abhidhamma presents a detailed analysis, breaking the mind down into separate mind-moments, describing mental activity in relation to other factors, for example, when processing sense-impressions. The Abhidhamma claims that it is not possible to cultivate insight in dhyana because at the moment of concentrative attainment the mind is one-pointed on the mind-object (*ārammaṇa*) pertain-

[66] M 111,5-167/3:25-28 (SD 56.4).
[67] This is said to refer to momentary attainment-concentration (DhsA 117, 213).
[68] Dhs 31, 75.
[69] Dhs 60; VAṬ:Be 1:367, 375, 2:177, 242 f; VismṬ:Be 1:173 f.
[70] PmA 1:132, Vism 148 f, NmA 1:133.

ing to dhyana. The mind-objects involved in insight practice are separate and therefore one cannot cultivate insight during the same mind-moment of dhyana.[71]

One must, in dhyana, first move attention away from the mind-object to direct it to another object—which means *emerging from the dhyana*.[72] Actually, this is neither impossible nor takes much effort: it simply requires an adjustment or interruption in the awareness stream (of one-pointedness) and entering into subliminal consciousness, which is the same as exiting dhyana.[73]

The subliminal consciousness (*bhav'aṅga*)[74] is a "subconscious" stream of the mind, an idea introduced in the Commentaries as the "life-continuum,"[75] which arises to fill the "gap" when ordinary consciousness is not present, such as during sleep or unconsciousness.[76] When we do not exert mindfulness or awareness, our actions or non-action are, as a rule, taken over by the subconscious. Take, for example, we go for our regular walk from home to the bus-stop; we do a series of actions without much or any thought (leaving the house, walking down the road, waiting for the bus, taking it, and so on).

5.1.2.2 The Commentaries often mention that at the moment of realizing **arhathood** the mind must reach "attainment-concentration" (*appanā,samādhi* = *jhāna*), even for one who has never previously gained dhyana.[77] Following the model of the Abhidhamma, these passages outline the sequence of the mental process at the moment of realizing path and fruit[78] for one who uses **insight as a vehicle** (*vipassanā,yānika*).

An outline of the process can be illustrated thus (the numbers in parentheses refer to distinct mind-moments):[79]

(*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*[80] → *bhavaṅga* →) *mano,dvār'āvajjana* (mind-door impulsion)
→ (1) *parikamma* (preparation)[81] → (2) *upacāra* (approach) → (3) *anuloma* (adaptation)
→ (4) *gotra,bhū* (maturation) → (5) *magga,citta* → (6-7) *phala,citta*[82] → *bhavaṅga*.

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[71] AA 3:143.

[72] VA 1:229.

[73] MA 2:30; AA 3:409, 5:15; VbhA 463; VAṬ Tatiyapārājikaṃ Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā; [VinṬ. 4/137]; VismṬ Paññābhāvanānisaṁsaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā.

[74] In the Pali canon, the term *bhavaṅga* or *bhavaṅga,citta* occurs only but frequently in **Paṭṭhāna** (the last book of the Abhidhamma), eg, Paṭ 159, 160, 169 f 325 f. The terms often occur in Comys.

[75] Also *bhav'aṅga,sota,* "subconscious stream" (MA 2:293; AA 3:28), a concept peculiar to later Pāli epistemological and psychological theory, which Comys define as the foundation of experience. The life-continuum (*bhav'aṅga*) is a "stream" (*sota*) of subconscious and unconscious mind-moments that carry with them the impressions or potentialities of past experience. Under proper conditions, these potentialities ripen as conscious moments, which, in turn, interrupt the *bhavaṅga* flow briefly before the mind lapses back into the subconscious continuum. Moments of consciousness and unconsciousness are discreet and never overlap in time, with unconsciousness (comprising the latent tendencies, *anusaya*) being the more typical of the 2 states. This continuum is, therefore, what makes possible the faculty of memory. Hence, in Abhidhamma the mind as *mano* ("mind") or *man'āyatana* ("mind-base") is the same as *bhavaṅga,citta.*

[76] SD 17.8a (6.1); SD 32.1 (3.8); SD 48.1 (9.2.1.3).

[77] UA 33; PmA 1:29; DhsA 231; Vism 669 f; Abhs 4.14.

[78] The "period of attainment impulsion" (*appanā.javana,vāra*) in the path-process (*magga,vīthi*).

[79] Further see Payutto 2021:903.

[80] This is the 8th level of insight knowledge (*vipassanā,ñāṇa*). On the 10 vipassana knowledges, see (Abhs 9.25); SD 60.1d (6.2.4.4 n).

[81] This stage is sometimes omitted.

[82] This stage has 2 mind-moments (unless *parikamma* is left out, in which case it has 3 mind moments). PmA 29 and DhsA 231 present an alternative outline which has 2 mind-moments of adaptation and a single moment of *phala,citta*, but this is refuted at Vism 675.

We see a similar intervening presence of *bhavaṅga* in the mental process of one who uses **calm as a vehicle** (*samatha,yānika*), outlined here:

bhavaṅga → *ñāṇa,vīthi* (consciousness-process of knowledge) →
bhavaṅga → *vipassana,vīthi* (consciousness-process of insight)[83] →
bhavaṅga → *magga,vīthi*[84] → *bhavaṅga*.

Whether the meditation vehicle is samatha or vipassana, we can see that at the moment of realization of arhathood, the mind's attention merges with the *bhavaṅga* and then returns to the mind-process. This model can be used to understand how the normal unawakened mental process works, too. The bhavaṅga is always present in between the moments of our thought process whenever we consciously act. In this case (of the unawakened), this is how our karmic potential influences our actions, especially when we are not mindful of our actions.

In any case, the knowledge and clear insight arising at the moment of **awakening**, which produces a profound transformation by dispelling mental defilement and altering personality, must be an experience that permeates the entire mind and body. Thus, someone who attains dhyana but does not use it as a basis for insight will only develop insight with the assistance of "access" (*upacāra*) or "momentary" (*khaṇika*) concentration. This will be similar to someone who develops insight without having ever attained dhyana.

5.1.2.3 Having emerged from dhyana, the mind immediately resumes the stability of attainment concentration (*appanā,samādhi*) with the mental dexterity developed in dhyana. (We should not misunderstand that exiting dhyana implies returning to a mundane state of mental fuss and flurry.) One then uses attainment concentration to cultivate insight by contemplating the factors present at the level of dhyana from which one has just emerged and seeing them in light of the 3 characteristics.[85] These factors become the objects of insight.

More comprehensively, a person contemplates aspects of dhyana (*jhana,dhamma*), things associated with dhyana (*jhāna.sampayutta,dhamma*), aspects of attainment (*samāpatti,dhamma*), states associated with attainment (*samāpatti.sampayutta,dhamma*), the mind and mental factors arising in dhyana, or even conditioned phenomena.

5.1.2.4 We can see from the above that
(1) the teachings on cultivating insight *while in dhyana* and
(2) those on first *exiting dhyana* before practising insight
are *not* contradictory.

The first can be called sutta teaching and is more general. In this teaching, the word "dhyana" refers to both the actual state of dhyana and to the mental stability generated by the power of dhyana. The expression "cultivating insight while in dhyana" refers to entering dhyana and then using the power of dhyana to practise insight.

The second can be called Abhidhamma teaching and is more specific.[86] Here the definition of *jhāna* is restricted to the process during which the mind is one-pointed and focused on the meditation object, say the "mental image" (*nimitta*) of the breath or of a *kasiṇa* object. The Abhidhamma explains that the

[83] This is a simplified presentation; in fact, during the insight process, there is a repeated entry of the mind into the subconscious (*bhavaṅga*).

[84] The course of the path (*magga,vīthi*) is identical (steps 1-7) to that shown above.

[85] Vism 187 f, 371.

[86] For refs to the sutta teachings (*suttanta,desanā*) as being "general" (*pariyāya*) and the Abhidhamma teachings (*abhidhamma,desanā*) as being "specific" (*nippariyāya*), see DhsA 307; VismṬ:Be 1:408.

mind in dhyana is one-pointed on the object of awareness throughout. When the mind begins to apply wisdom for contemplation, the focus of awareness must move away from that original object.

5.1.2.5 The Abhidhamma distinguishes the state of mind powered by dhyana as a separate process, one of releasing the object of calm and exiting dhyana, although they grant that the mind is still exceptionally concentrated. The practitioner uses this power of mind to cultivate insight and turns to the dhyana just exited along with its attributes, for example, initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), enthusiasm (*chanda*), and energy (*viriya*), as the objects of contemplation. This change of focus results in exiting dhyana and entering the *bhavaṅga.*

From this point on, one begins a new stage of meditation, of insight meditation (*vipassanā*). By making this distinction a new term was necessary to describe this process, since despite exiting dhyana the mind does not revert back to the state preceding dhyana. The commentators coined the expression "using jhāna as a foundation."[87] They also referred to the principle of the "subconscious mind" (*bhavaṅga,citta*) to define the exit or break from the state of dhyana.

5.1.3 The mind in dhyana

5.1.3.1 From such evidence, we can conclude that the general statement "cultivating insight in dhyana" is equivalent to the more specific statements found in the Commentaries, such as these:

"Having entered dhyana, one exits and contemplates conditioned phenomena";[88]
"Exiting the foundational dhyana, one contemplates phenomena";[89]
"Making dhyana as foundation, one establishes insight";[90]
"Having attained dhyana, one develops insight with dhyana as basis";[91] and:
"Exiting concentrative attainment, one practises insight with a firmly established mind."[92]

The essential message of the sutta teachings and the Abhidhamma teachings is the same: to apply the power of concentration generated in dhyana and thus to foster the optimum conditions for wisdom to discern reality. By entering dhyana the mind is prepared for the next stage, of insight (*vipassanā*).

5.1.3.2 Because of the reliance on dhyana, the Commentaries call this process "insight with dhyana as a basis" (*vipassana.pādaka,jhāna*) or simply "with dhyana as basis" (*pādaka-j,jhāna*). This explanation is consonant with the frequently mentioned in this passage from **the Bodhi Rāja,kumara Sutta** (M 85):

> When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to unshakable steadiness,[93] (M 85,36/2:93), SD 55.2

[87] *Vipassanā.pādaka,jhāna*, *vipassana.pāda,samāpatti*, *pādaka-j,jhāna*, etc; eg DA 3:804; MA 5:24; PmA 1:193; DhsA 228; VbhA 121; Vism 666-668; VA 1:156 = 167 = DA 1:233 = MA 1:124 = 3:265 = AA 2:100 = 263 = PañcA:Se 243; VA 1:244 = DA 3:897, 1002 = MA 2:87 = SA 1:26 = NmA 1:120 = VAṬ:Be 1:395; MA 2:146 = NmA 2:332 = VAṬ:Be 2:53; MA:Se 2/468; MA 45:160 [Se 3/571]; VbhA. 413; MA 4:200; AA 1:223; AA 2:41; MA 1:142 [Se 1/257]; MA 2:234.

[88] AA 2:100.

[89] Vism 666 f.

[90] VismṬ:Be 1:11.

[91] Vism 189 f; VismṬ:Be 1:299.

[92] MA 1:124; Vism 371.

[93] *So evaṁ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatûpakkilese mudu,bhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñja-p,patte.* M 85,36/2:93 (SD 55.2).

With dhyana a person thus prepares the mind for engagement with insight. This state of mind is called "resolute" (*abhinīhāra-k,khama*), and it leads to ever loftier attainments. Based on the sutta passage above, we have the **9 qualities** of an awakened mind, or even any mind in dhyana (albeit only temporary for an ordinary person); it is said to be:[94]

1. concentrated;	*samāhita*
2. purified;	*parisuddha*
3. bright;	*pariyodāta*
4. unblemished;	*anaṅgaṇa*
5. rid of imperfection;	*vigatûpakkilesa*
6. malleable;	*mudu,bhūta*
7. wieldy [workable];	*kammanīya*
8. steady;	*ṭhita*
9. attained to unshakable steadiness.	*āneñja-p,patta*

5.1.3.3 We have established that some kinds of subtle mental actions can and does occur in the minds of spiritually developed individuals, such as those working to attain arhathood. The question thus remains whether an ordinary person can make any such deliberations while in dhyana? It is not difficult to answer this question. Firstly, it is very difficult for an ordinary person to attain dhyana. To be able to attain dhyana, one must thus be able to free the mind from any kind of thinking. Secondly, this means that should any thought arises for such a person in dhyana, he or she would lose that dhyana.

Mental deliberations only work with those who have fully mastered dhyana. This also means that he or she has a better understanding of how the mind works. Moreover, a spiritually developed person, especially such a dhyana-attainer—we may include any path-attainer here—due to their having overcome at least some of the mental fetters, is able to mentally and wholesomely act during dhyana.

— — —

SD 62.18a

Paṭhama (Catukka) Kāla Sutta

The 1st (Fours) Discourse on Times

A 4.146/4:140

1 There are, bhikshus, these **4 times**. have I heard.
What are the four?

2 THE 4 RIGHT TIMES

(1) The time for listening to the Dharma.	*kālena dhamma,savananṁ*
(2) The time for discussing the Dharma.	*kālena dhamma,sākacchā*

[94] NmA 2:357; Vism 373.

(3) The time for calm. *kālena samatho*[95]
(4) The time for insight. *kālena vipassanā*

3 These are the 4 times.

—evaṁ—

SD 62.18b

Dutiya (Catukka) Kāla Sutta

The 2nd (Fours) Discourse on Times

A 4.147/2:140

1 Bhikshus, these 4 times, rightly developed, right engaged in, gradually bring about the destruction of the influxes.[96]

2 What are the four?

(1) The time for listening to the Dhamma,
(2) the time for discussing the Dhamma,
(3) the time, for calm, and
(4) the time for insight.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 times, *rightly developed, right engaged in, gradually bring about the destruction of the influxes.*

3 Bhikshus, just as, when it is raining and the rain pours down in large droplets on a mountain top, the water flows down along the slope and fills the clefts, gullies, and creeks;
the clefts, gullies, and creeks, becoming full, fill up the pools;
the pools, becoming full, fill up the lakes;
the lakes, becoming full, fill up the streams;
the streams, becoming full, fill up the rivers;
and the rivers, becoming full, fill up the great ocean;

4 so too, bhikshus, these 4 times, rightly developed, right engaged in, gradually bring about the destruction of the influxes.[97] **[141]**

— evaṁ —

[95] Be Ee Se *samatho*; only Be *sammsanā*. *Sammasana* (n) from *sammasati* (*saṁ* + *masati*), "to touch, seize, grasp, know thoroughly, (mentally) master." Apparently, the Buddha is recorded to have used the *sammasaṁ* (synonymous with *sammasana*) at length only in **Sammasa S** (S 12.66), SD 107.9. The Sutta Comy explains "**internal scrutiny** as the scrutiny of conditions within oneself [one's own mind]" (***antaraṁ sammasan** ti abbhantaraṁ paccaya,sammasanaṁ*, SA 2:119). In the post-canonical texts, *sammasana,jāṇa* is a technical term for the understanding of the 5 aggregates by way of the 3 characteristics (Pm 1:53 f, quoted at Vism 20.6-20/607 f). In the Sutta, however, *sammasa(na)* is used in the scholastic sense of "discernment of conditions" (*paccaya,pariggaha*) (Vism 19.1-13/598-600).

[96] *Ime kho bhikkhave cattāro kālā sammā bhāviyamānā sammā anuparivattiyamānā anupubbena āsavānaṁ khayaṁ pāpenti.*

[97] *Ime kho bhikkhave cattāro kālā sammā bhāviyamānā sammā anuparivattiyamānā anupubbena āsavānaṁ khayaṁ pāpenti.*

SD 62.18c

Kāla Dāna Sutta

The Discourse on Timely Giving

or, **(Pañcaka) Kāla Sutta** the (Fives) Discourse in Time
A 5.36/3:41

1 Bhishus, there are these 5 timely giving. What are the five?

(1)	One gives a gift to a visitor.	*āgantukassa dānaṁ deti.*
(2)	One gives a gift to one going on a journey.	*gamikassa dānaṁ deti.*
(3)	One gives to the sick.	*gilānassa dānaṁ deti.*
(4)	One gives to those suffering a famine.	*dubbhike dānaṁ deti.*
(5)	One presents the first crop and the first fruits first to the morally virtuous.	*yāni tāni nava,sassāni nava,phalāni tāni paṭhamaṁ sīlavantesu patiṭṭhāpeti*

Kāle dadanti sappaññā	At proper times, the wise,
vadaññū vīta,maccharā	charitable, generous,
kālena dinnaṁ ariyesu	gives timely gifts to the noble ones,
uju,bhūtesu tādisu.	those upright, who are such.[98]
Vippasannamanā tassa	To the giver with a clear mind,
vipulā hoti dakkhiṇā.	the offering is abundant.
Ye tattha anumodanti	Those who rejoice therein,
veyyāvaccaṁ karonti vā.	or who give service,
Na tena[99] dakkhinā ūnā	Those not wanting in the giving,
tepi puññassa bhāgino	have a share of the merit.
tasmā dade appaṭivāna,citto	Therefore, one should give with an open mind;
yattha dinnaṁ maha-p.phalaṁ	in such giving there is great fruit,
puññāni para,lokasmiṁ	merit for the hereafter,
patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinan ti	supports for the living.

— evaṁ —

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[98] *Tādisu* (loc pl of *tādi,* "such"), describing the arhat's natural and constant goodness: see SD 39.3 (1.4.3); M 47,-10.2 n (SD 35.6); SD 15.7 (2.2.2); SD 49.20 (1.21).

[99] Be so; Ee Ka *na resaṁ.*

SD 62.18d

Knowledge, Language and Reality

A brief survey of early Buddhist epistemology

Piya Tan ©2025

This essay was originally part of the introduction to SD 62.18abc. Since it grew into a self-contained essay, it is given its own SD number, SD 16.8d.

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2 Everything is teaching us

2.1 WHAT IS THE DHARMA?

2.1.1 Definitions of *dhamma*

2.1.1.1 The term **Dharma** is the anglicized form of the Sanskrit or Buddhist Sanskrit, *dharma,* which has a wide range of senses, such as follows: "that which is established; usage, custom, duty; the law, justice; virtue, religion, religious merit, good works" (SED, summarized). The Pali form, ***dhamma***, has potentially the same senses of the Sanskrit form but also has other senses unique to early Buddhism; thus, says DP, it:

> denotes (an interpretation of) the essential nature and reality of existence and experience, the way things are: it is descriptive and prescriptive; it denotes also an essential attribute of humans or animals; a quality or characteristic. (DP 2:461-476 dhamma)

In Buddhism, especially the early Buddhist texts, the term ***dhamma***[1] (and *dharma* in later Buddhisms), covers *the broadest range of senses and usages*, since it broadly refers to the reality the Buddha discovered, the truths that he teaches, their practices and their benefits, besides other usages.

2.1.1.2 The Dictionary of Pali (DP 2:461-476) has over 15 A4 (20.8 x 29.7 cm) pages of definitions, usages and references on *dhamma*. Only 3 main definitions are listed here along with canonical references:

1 experience of reality

(i) how the world of experience works, the processes by which it works and is explained (especially as formulated in *cattāri ariyasaccāni* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the possibility and way of transcending ít as understood by the Buddha and taught by him (so that knowledge and understanding of it might bring awakening, arhathood, to others);[2]

(ii) the (stages to) freedom from the world of experience, culminating in nibbāna;[3]

(iii) (sg) the behaviour, conduct, practice required to realise and understand the way the world of experience works; the way to arhathood;[4]

(iv) (pl) a quality or element of behaviour or practice according to the Buddha's dhamma; a constituent of prescribed practice; an element of the teaching; a doctrine; appropriate and beneficial practice;[5]

(v) the substance of the teaching of the Buddha; the teaching as collected in the canon; the texts;[6]

(vi) a constituent of experience; an aspect or quality of existence; physical sensation; a mental state or quality (good or bad);[7] (sometimes merely) thing, phenomenon, matter; the non-independent,

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[1] *Dhamma* derives from √DHR, "to hold"; thus, lit, "that which bears" (or supports truth, reality, good).

[2] V 1:2,3*; D 1:62,24 f, 2:55,14; M 1:37,20; S 1:23,19; A 2:20,30; Khp 6.4 = Sn 225; Sn 368.

[3] D 1:156,10; M 1:203,28; S 1:71,21*, 2:280,31*; A 3:433,16 f; Sn 1053; Thī 97.

[4] V 3:12,9, 19,35; D 3:39, 119,18, 195,6 f, 245,12; M 1:135,23; S 1:214,33*; It 98,19.

[5] D 2:119,30, 123,7* f; M 1:60,7; S 1:86,29, 5:11,25, 227,19 f; A 2:34,19 f; Dh 273; U 36,6; Pv 36.62; Tha 179; Pm 1:88,6 f, 2:166,1; Vbh 250,1.

[6] V 1:139,8, 196,34, 2:I08,22, 285,4 f, 289,37, 4:14,30, 15,9+27, 21,18 5:163,7; D 3:272,9*; S 1:156,3, 198,33, 2:269,23, 3:96,7; A 1:185,10, 249,2, 2:185,8; Dh 82; Sn 326.

[7] Khp 6.10/5,2-4 *tayas su ~ā jahitā bhavanti sakkaya,diṭṭhi vicikicchitañ ca sīla-b,bataṁ va pi yad atthi kiñci,* "He becomes one to have abandoned all these 3 things: self-view, doubt, and rituals and vows."

conditioned constituent of processes and events, progressively more and more minutely analysed into fundamental types of events or fundamental regularities;[8]

(vii) mental construct, concept, idea, what is to be cognized by the mind, that which is the object of mental activity;[9]

(viii) for the sangha: a rule; the offence against that rule; the punishment or reparation for that offence; a procedure;[10]
—especially the special requirements (*garudhamma*) imposed on bhikkhuṇīs; V 4:52,15 f.

2 sectarian ideas
an interpretation of reality in the views of other religious teachers or philosophers; their teachings; a non-Buddhist doctrine; a theory.[11]

3 the way of things: natural and social

(i) the way things are; a natural law, custom, tradition; the essential nature, the way, of [humans] or animals;[12]
—see also *diṭṭhe (va) dhamme*: in this existence; in this world of experience;[13]

(ii) the way things ought to be; the way one should act (depending on who one is); right, appropriate conduct; duty; what is right; law, justice;[14]

(iii) good practice; a good quality or characteristic or attainment;[15]

(iv) a quality or characteristic; any element of behaviour or practice or attainment;[16]
—esp *methuno dhammo*, sexual intercourse.[17]

2.1.1.3 In summary, **the key definitions** of *dhamma* as used in the texts are:

(1) <u>nature: reality and experience</u>
thing, the nature of things, norm; quality, mind-object (*āyatana*), phenomenon;
(2) <u>teachings</u>: as theory, interpretation, worldly views and sectarian ideas;
(3) <u>the world: its nature and society</u>
law (Latin, *jus*), justice, righteousness; custom, tradition, human or animal nature.

This summary closely reflects the 4 definitions of ***dhamma*** as given in the Commentary to **the Brahma,-jāla Sutta** (D 1/1:12), that is, as:

(1)	*guṇa*	quality, (moral) virtue;	
(2)	*desanā*	teaching, instruction;	
(3)	*pariyatti*	accomplishment; text(s); theory; and	
(4)	*nissattā*	non-being state; nonself.	(DA 1:99)

[8] V 8,29*, 3:4,7; D 1:70,11; M 1:91,15, 228,14, 267,4. 292,30, 296,9, 3:230,29; S 1:70,25, 4:76,25; A 1:27,9, 3:421,-20, 5:144,6; Dh 1; It 120,15*; Pm 2:150,11 f, 234,25; Dhs p1,4; Vbh 293,24 f; Kvu 339,27.
[9] V 1:34,26; D 2:281,19; M 1:112,9+13; S 1:116,4; 3:26,22 f, 4:129,21, 195,30; A 5:30,20.
[10] V 1:317,2, 3:109,21, 187,1; A 2:241,22 f.
[11] V 1:101,6; D 1:189,26, 3:119,4; M 1:64,18 f, 164,3; S 1:133,34*; U 67,24; Sn 94.
[12] S 1:18,26*; Dh 5; Tha 552.
[13] D 1:51,19, 3:97,21; M 1:47,24, 62,36; Sn 141; Tha 1263; Pm 1:161,20.
[14] D 1:51,19, 3:97,21; M 1:47,24, 62,36; Sn 141; Tha 1263; Pm 1:161,20.
[15] V 2:248,18, 251,3; S 4:337,18; A 4:140,6; Dh 384; U 5,8*.
[16] V 1:93,27, 103,9. 2:237,16 f, 3:3,15, 9,31; D 1:244,23, 2:75,27, 3:90,17, 266,27; M 1:95,19, 2:199,4, 242,23.
[17] V 1:96,17 f, 3:19,2, 21,24, 113,15+33; M 3:125,8; S 1:36,1*; Sn 291.

In this Thera,gāthā, *dhamma* means "**quality**" (*guṇa*):

na hi dhammo adhammo ca	For Dharma and non-Dharma
ubho sama,vipākino	lead not to the same results.
adhammo nirayaṁ neti	Non-dharma [Unrighteousness] leads to hell;
dhammo pāpeti suggatin ti	Dharma [Righteousness] brings one to heaven. (Tha 304)[18]

In the passage, "I will teach you Dharma, bhikshus, good in the beginning, … " and so on, it means "**the teaching**" [the Dharma]" (*desanā*).

In the passage, "Herein, a monk masters the Dharma—the suttas, geyyas, … " and so on, it means "**the texts**" (*pariyatti*).

And in the passage, "At that time, there are dharmas, there are aggregates, … " and so on (Dhs §121/25), it means the "**no-being state(s)**" (*nissatta*). (DA 1:99,3-11)

The word ***nissatta***[19] is not found in the canon, but common in the Commentaries. *Nis-satta,* "without essence; without being," means "empty" (*suññat'attho,* VbhA 55). "Emptiness" is "said to show that the conscious body of the earth elements, etc, is empty" (*pathavī,dhatu,ādayo saviññāṇaka,kāyaṁ suññato nissattato dassetuṁ vuttā*, MA 4:104).

2.1.1.4 The Buddha Dharma (*buddha,dhamma*) is a record and testimony of the Buddha's struggle for awakening and a systematization of the contents of his awakening, that is, the true reality that he discovered. Hence, we have the person (**the Buddha**) who discovered that Dharma; hence, it is **the Dharma** (*buddha,dhamma*), and the path (*magga*) leading to that very same awakening as the Buddha's; and by attaining that path of awakening, we become **the noble sangha** (*ariya,saṅgha*).

These form **the 3 refuges** (*ti,saraṇa*) or "3 jewels" (*ti,ratana*) to which we go for refuge. This means that we take the Buddha as our ideal of human awakening to emulate by learning and practising the Buddha Dharma, so that we gain *the path* of awakening that is the noble sangha.

For us as practitioners of Buddha Dharma, then, it comprises 3 vital parts that is the "good Dharma" (*saddhamma*):[20]

(1) the Dharma as **truth** or theory;	*pariyatti,dhamma*,
(2) the Dharma as **practice** or experience, and	*paṭipatti,dhamma,*
(3) the Dharma as **realization.**	*paṭivedha,dhamma.*

"**Truth**" (*pariyatti*) refers to the teachings pertaining to reality, to manifestations of truth, to true reality, and to the laws and processes of true reality. "**Practice**" (*paṭipatti*) refers to our training or conduct in striving to properly live in keeping with the Buddha Dharma so that we benefit from it, in a practical way, even here and now. "**Realization**" (*paṭivedha*) is our understanding of the laws of nature, and realization of true reality, so that we gain the path of awakening in this life itself. This is the teaching found, for example, in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1).[21]

[18] See Tha:N 179 n304.

[19] BDict has "*nijjīvatta* (soullessness)" instead of *nissattata* in its def of "dhamma" (Nyanatiloka, 4th ed, 1980:57).

[20] VA 225; AA 5:33. See SD 62.15 (3.3.2.3); **The levels of training**, SD 40a.4 (6.2.1); **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (3.4.2).

[21] See SD 25.1/3:225 (SD 16.7 (1.4.2)), or any of the other 9 suttas of **Okkanta Saṁyutta** (S 25.2-10/3:225-228).

2.1.2 This conscious body: the 6 senses and the 5 aggregates

2.1.2.0 In the rest of this introduction we will explore how the 6 senses and the 5 aggregates interact and the results of such interactions. A few interesting questions that may arise include the following, whose answers may or may not be clear from our study. However, these answers will clarify themselves over time, again and again, as we put together what we have learned here (and elsewhere).

Why are feelings of ease and dis-ease classified as feelings (*vedanā*), while the subsequent factors of liking and disliking are classified as mental formations (*saṅkhāra*)?

Why are perception (*saññā*; recollection) and mindfulness (*sati*; memory) classified into separate aggregates (*sati* is included among the mental formations, *saṅkhāra*)?

Why is wisdom (*paññā*), which, similar to perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), is a form of knowledge, classified as a mental formation (*saṅkhāra*)?

2.1.2.1 The only way to see true reality is by practising Dharma. The best way to begin with this, to lay a good strong foundation for realizing true reality, is to know ourself. The most basic thing we can and must know about ourself is that we are made up of body and mind. **Our body** is *physical* in the sense that it comprises—according to the early Buddhist texts—the 4 elements, that is:

(1) "earth" element, the solid aspects, such as skin, flesh and bones;
(2) "water" element, blood, urine, sweat and various body fluids;
(3) "fire" element, body heat, oxidation, digestion, decay; and
(4) "wind" element, the breath, bodily gases and movement.

In the Pali texts, these are collectively called "**form**" (*rūpa*); so called because we are vexed by it, by these elements reacting to the vicissitudes of the weather, by posture, and by physical impact; we are vexed because these bodily elements break down and decay.[22]

Our body cannot exist in itself, since it is made of the very same elements that are everything around us: *the earth, water, fire and air [wind]*. The 4 "great elements of form" (*mahā.bhūta,rūpa*) also exist in "space" (*ākāsa*), the 5th element. The fact that I am able to write this means that my body is also *conscious*: **consciousness** or the mind is the 6th element.[23] We are thus, *in toto*, made up of these 6 elements: *earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness.*

The 6-element model is thus helpful for our understanding of what we really are physically, that is, as a **body-based-model** of our existence; hence, it is an "existential model." Despite the universality of the elements and these elements making up what we really are *physically*, this is not the only way of knowing and seeing our being.

There is also a **mind-based model**, one that explains our being, a kind of "psychological model." I have used the word "psychological" for its convenience, since this model also covers *the ontological* and *the epistemological* aspects, that is, what we *are* and how we *know* what we are. This is what we will now briefly examine.

2.1.2.2 The body-based model [2.1.2.1] shows that we exist in very similar ways as all that *exists*, animate or inanimate, that is, made up of the very same elements as everything around us, in terms of

[22] *Ruppatī ti kho bhikkhave tasmā **rūpan** ti vuccati. Kena ruppati? Sītena,pi ruppati, uṇhena,pi ruppati, jighacchāya,pi ruppati, pipāsāya,pi ruppati, ḍaṁsa,makasa,vātātapa,sarīsapa,samphassena,pi* [Ce Ee … *siriṁsapa,samphassena,pi*] *ruppati. Ruppatī ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā **rūpan** ti vuccati.* (S 3:86 qu at Vbh 4; AA 1:21, ItA 1:19; cf SA 2:290, 3:68)

[23] **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3:61,6), SD 6.8; a person's make-up: **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,7+14-19), SD 4.17.

other people, beings and nature itself. On the other hand, **the mind-based model** for our *being*[24] shows how we experience these "elements" of reality, and how we create our own virtual world out of these experiences.

The "**mind-based**" model refers to the mind as the key factor in "sensing" the world in and around us. Here, the mind (consciousness) is dependent on the 5 physical senses (*pañc'indriya*)[25]—the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body—empowering the person with the faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.

Seeing or sight, for example, arises in this manner: *with the meeting of eye-faculty, eye-consciousness and visual object, there is contact*. In this fundamental process of our existence:

the "eye-faculty"	is the functioning organ or "the internal base" (*ajjhattika āyatana*);
the visual object	is the sense-object or "the external base" (*bahira āyatana*);
the eye-consciousness	is the mind working through the eye, that is, "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*).[26]

This perceptual process is explained in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18), thus:

EYE-BASED PROLIFERATION		**The 5 aggregates**	
Avuso, dependent on **the eye and form**,	eye-consciousness arises.	form	*rūpa*
The meeting of the 3[27] is	contact.[28]		
With contact as condition,	there is feeling.	feeling	*vedanā*
What one feels, one **[112]**	perceives.	perception	*saññā*
What one perceives,	one thinks about.[29]		
What one thinks about,	one mentally proliferates.		
With what is thus mentally proliferated as the source,[30]		formations	*saṅkhārā*
proliferation of conception and perception[31] assails a person			
regarding past, future and present ***forms*** cognizable through *the eye*.[32]		consciousness	*viññāṇa*

(M 18,16/1:111 f), SD 6.14

Table 2.1.2.2a Mental proliferation and the aggregates

[24] According to the early Buddhist teaching on nonself (*anattā*), in terms of reality, there is no "being" (*satta*)—hence *nissatta* [SD 60.1e (8.7.5)]—only "becoming" (*bhava*). I have resorted to using "being" and "becoming" as they are familiar words in common parlance (*vohāra*).

[25] Note that the term *pañc'indriya*, "the 5 faculties," also refers to the 5 spiritual faculties (faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom): **Pañc'indriya**, SD 10.4. The term's sense depends on the context.

[26] A parallel process works for each of the other 4 sense-faculties and the mind: **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,16/1:111 f), SD 6.14.

[27] On the "triangle of feeling," see SD 1.1 (App 4) diagram; **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,16) + SD 6.14 (4); **Mahā Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 28,27-38), SD 6.16; SD 56.22 (2.4.1.2 passim); SD 60.1d (1.1.1.3).

[28] *Tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso.* In **Cha Chakka S** (M 148), this phrase is part of the sequence on any sense-based reflection (**M 148**,7-9/3:281 f + 28-39/3:284 f), SD 26.6. For a discussion on this phrase and passage, see Bucknell, "Conditioned arising evolves," JIABS 22,2 1999:320 f. See prec n.

[29] "One thinks about," *vitakketi.* On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.2/2:277).

[30] *Yaṁ papañceti tato,nidānaṁ.* This shows that the mental proliferation itself acts on our minds in an unconscious manner. Cf M 18,17 (1) etc (SD 6.14).

[31] Or, "perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation," *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā.* See SD 6.14 (3).

[32] This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception: SD 6.14 (4).

A parallel process works for each of the other 4 sense-faculties and for the mind, as shown in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18).[33] The triads of (internal) eye-faculty, (external) sense-object, and their respective consciousnesses are called "**the 18 elements**" (*aṭṭhārasa dhātu*),[34] which are as follows:

sense-faculties (internal)	**sense-objects (external)**	**consciousnesses**
(1) eye-element	(6) form-element	(11) eye-consciousness-element
(2) ear-element	(7) sound-element	(12) ear-consciousness-element
(3) nose-element	(8) smell-element	(13) nose-consciousness-element
(4) tongue-element	(9) taste-element	(14) tongue-consciousness-element
(5) body-element	(10) touch-element	(15) body-consciousness-element
(16) mind-element	(17) mind-object [object-element]	(18) mind-consciousness-element

Table 2.1.2.2b The 18 elements of perception[35]

2.1.2.3 The passage on "eye-based proliferation" from **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** [2.1.2.2] gives us a very good idea on:

(1) how our conscious body (comprising the 6 senses) as **form** (*rūpa*) experiences (*paṭisaṁvedeti*) visual objects.
(2) As a result, we **feel** (*vedeti*) the emotional texture of the experience as *pleasant* or *unpleasant*, depending on our memory of a similar past experience.
(3) Reacting to the feeling, we **perceive** (*sañjānāti*) it as likeable or desirable (felt as pleasant), or unlikeable or undesirable (felt as unpleasant), or we *ignore* it (when we have no feeling for it).
(4) Once we emotionally react to that experience in this manner, we **form** "something" (*kiñcana*)—a karmic object—of it. This "something" proliferates into *many things* for us excited by our greed, hatred and delusion. Hence, this is called "volitional formations" or "karma-formations."
(5) We become **conscious** of such a vision (or it may be a sound, smell, taste, touch or thought) which "floods" (*papañceti*) our mind and lives.

Generally speaking, most people do not directly engage with any of these aggregates, which make up our lives and function without our giving it a thought. Even if we are aware of any of these as physical processes, we often do not give them much or any thought. In respect to the body, for example, the major physical organs function, as a rule, without our knowledge of them or we often do not care to know about them. We may only take an interest in these functions when there arises some abnormality or impairment. This is similarly the case regarding the mental processes mentioned.

2.1.2.4 It is useful to know how the 5 aggregates work to give us meaning and purpose in life. From our various sense-experiences, we imaginatively project and selectively "see" others and the world. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are likely to see that *our life has some kind of significance or importance*, which shapes our daily habits and how we react (or not react) to circumstances.

For most of us, life has **meaning**, which is often defined by or learned from our family, community, school, environment or religion. We are often also influenced or habituated by certain profound events in our lives. Usually, the meaning we see in our lives is based on how we see ourselves as a member or actor of some kind of group, whether we regard them as "us" or as "others." This means that we learn

[33] M 18,16/1:111 f (SD 6.14).
[34] The term *dhatu,* "element," is here a common denominator to show how these components work together.
[35] On the 18 elements, see also SD 17.13 (3.3.3). On "skills in the elements," see also **Vimutti,magga** (Vimm 11.40 f; Vimm:Ñ 609-612).

to see meaning in our lives by how we engage with others at different levels: with the family, significant others, the community, the nation, and perhaps the world.

As we see meaning at these different levels in our life, we also develop a sense of **values**. Basically, this is how we see or measure ourselves against others, such as towards parents, siblings, partners, relatives, friends, acquaintances, employers, and so on.

Ideally speaking, or simply *ideally* (unconsciously), we all value **life**, our own and those of our significant others (which often include non-humans or inanimate things). We value **having** things, acquiring them, sharing them, even just knowing them. We value especially **love** (friendship, relationship, and intimacy) as well as freedom (which includes *doing* what we like, or not doing what we don't like; or *being* in some kind of mental state, having some sense of control over it).

We value **truth,** which basically means "what we see is what we get," "I deserve rewards for my work and for what I am promised," and so on. The 5th value is rare, and this is what defines *true learners and leaders* amongst us—that is valuing **the mind**: the ability and freedom to think or feel, and to do or create with our ideas or feelings for the best in humanity.

2.1.2.4 This last value leads to our living all these values—life, property, love, truth and mind—which give our lives **purpose**, what we do with our lives.[36] Our value for **life** tends to be expressed by ways of keeping ourselves healthy and looking well. Our value of "property" or **having** is often socially defined for us as "work," "salary," "dues" and "gifts." Some of us may include "duty," but this is more likely to be from the value of **love**, which ideally is a deep sense of putting ourself in another's place or seeing ourself as a living part of a bigger "other." Often this love overlaps with self-love (even narcissism), defined by a pleasure of feeling desired by others in some way, usually because of what we are, what we have, what we say, what we do, what we want.

Our value of **truth**—how we see truth in a positive way—as a rule evolves with how we see *causes and effects* work for us and for others. How we use this view of reality often defines what we *are*. When we see only our personal advantage, we would be *selfish*; when we truly want to benefit others, we would be *altruistic*; when we act for the good of both, it would be *magnanimous*; or when we benefit neither, it would be *self-defeating*.

What defines a "good society," then, is a preponderance of those who value **the mind** even more than their bodies. Simply put, there are those who are willing and able to rise above their sensual comfort zone to engage their minds in thought and creativity that will bring life, health, joy, strength, and wonder to the many. This is when the human mind is able to extend itself beyond the mere senses, beyond our person, to be able to experience the superhuman or that which is simply pleasurable to the spirit so that **we seem to forget and to have risen above all the shortcomings of our humanity.**

2.1.3 Knowing and doing: Learning from the senses

2.1.3.1 One of the benefits of learning and understanding **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-k,khandha*)—*form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness* [2.1.2.3]—is to be able to skillfully engage with our world. In fact, the aggregates are an amazing set of mental tools that create our world, *a private, virtual world*. As our understanding of the 5 aggregates deepens and widens, we align and transform our virtual world of false realities and private views closer to the real world. The more we are able to do this, the more awakened and free we become.

[36] I don't think most of us, in our daily lives, distinguish what we see as "instrumental" purpose (like waiting at a bus-stop or a train station heading for work) or "intrinsic" (what is my life about?). However, we are more likely to be driven by our needs and desires; our purposes tend to be *instrumental*. Otherwise, we are likely to do things habitually, without any purpose.

2.1.3.2 Before we can upgrade or refine our private inner world, we must know how our mind works and how we tend to behave, so that we truly know better what we really *are* and what we are really *doing*. That is just it: we need to understand how we know and how we act. Based on what we have learned so far—regarding the 6 senses and the 5 aggregates [2.1.2]—we can see our conscious being as the engagement or relationship between 2 systems: the perceptual (experiencing) [2.1.3.3] and the behavioural [2.1.3.4]. Both these systems make use of "**sense-doors**" (*dvāra*) to engage with the world, and function as the tools or sources of knowing [2.2.3.2].

2.1.3.3 The perceptual system describes how we know and see[37] the world by way of the 6 sense-doors, that is, "**sense-contacts**" (*phassa,dvāra*) by way of *the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind*. These sense doors "cognize" or experience (*paṭisaṁvedeti*) the various properties and attributes of the world, namely, the 6 sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*): *forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches [tangible objects], and mind-objects* [Table 2.1.2.2].

In the context of active engagement in daily life, the term *dvāra* ("sense doors") in the perceptual system is most often referred to in the early texts by the term ***āyatana***, which means "perceptual sphere" or "path of experience." In this connection, we will retain the use of *āyatana*, instead of *dvāra*, in this analysis.[38]

2.1.3.4 Our personal and group **behaviours** are basically reactions to the way we see the world relying on the 3 doors of action (*kamma,dvāra*)—the body (*kāya,dvāra*), speech (*vacī,dvāra*), and mind (*mano,dvāra*)—resulting in physical actions (*kāya,kamma*), verbal actions (*vacī,kamma*), and mental actions (*mano,kamma*).

In **the behavioural system**, the entire engagement here pertains to the 4th aggregate—the aggregate of volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*). These are our formations of karma by our numerous acts rooted in greed, hatred or delusion, or their opposites, non-greed, non-hatred or non-delusion.[39] The countless volitional formations, classified as *wholesome, unwholesome, and neutral*, arise and function when we *intentionally* choose, induce or allow certain conduct by way of *body, speech and mind*, resulting in bodily deeds, speech, and thoughts.

In this context, volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*) [2.2.1] are reclassified in 3 ways:

(1) according to the intention (whether rooted wholesomely or unwholesomely);
(2) according to the door (mind, speech or body) by which the act is expressed; and
(3) according to the specific action performed (how the deed is executed).

2.1.4 Making sense of the world

2.1.4.1 In this section, we will examine how we know the world and ourselves through our **6 senses** (***saḷ-āyatana***): the 5 physical senses and the mind, that is, the 6 sense-doors: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.[40] ***Saḷ*** is a prefix here meaning "six" (from Skt *ṣad*; P *cha*). The term ***āyatana*** literally means "base" (as a sense), "sphere" (as a realm) or "link" (in a perceptual process). In this context, it refers to "perceptual link," "sphere of perception," "source of awareness," or "door of perception."[41] They are called "**doors**" (*dvāra*) because we know and see the world through them. These 6 senses are our perceptual links to the external world.

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[37] "Know" here broadly means to feed or shape our awareness regarding the world and ourselves; "see" broadly refers to what we make of the world by way of perception, feeling and formations. [2.1.4.1, 2.1.4.3]

[38] Here I have followed Payutto, *Buddhadhamma,* 2021:38.

[39] In every wholesome situation, these wholesome roots are those of *charity, love and wisdom*.

[40] On comy analysis of the sense-spheres, see Payutto 2021: Appendix 2.

[41] On the usage of "cognition," "affect," "conation" and "perception": see SD 56.22 (2.2.2.1).

Yet the world, as it were, reveals only limited parts of itself in our perception; then again, what is perceived by us is often limited[42] or distorted by natural or unnatural phenomena[43] so that we do not see the full or real situation. Such limitations are due to the way our human faculties operate or to the limited powers of our instruments of perception that, after all, depends on the 6 senses.

As humans, we have 5 notable limitations: physical, social, environmental, intellectual and psychological. Daily, moment to moment, we strive to overcome these limitations, the roots of suffering *dukkha*). Recognizing and managing these limitations are key to sustainable living. Learning about the world despite these limitations frees us from them, from space, time and consciousness.

2.1.4.2 To better understand how we experience the world, we pair each one of the 6 senses (the internal bases, *ajjhatika āyatana*) with a specific "object of awareness" in the external world (*bahiddha āyatana*). These objects of awareness are also called *āyatana*, because they too act as a perceptual link, a source of awareness, the bases for knowledge. Yet, as opposed to the 6 internal senses (internal *āyatana*), these objects exist in the external world (external *āyatana*).[44]

For convenience, these 6 external sense objects—visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches (tangible objects), and mental objects—are referred to by the Abhidhamma term ***ārammaṇa***, which literally means "support (for experience), hold (for our attention), starting-point (for consideration and meditation)." Simply, *ārammanā* are "objects of attention."

When an internal sense-base (*āyatana*; "sphere of perception") comes into contact with an (external) object of attention (*ārammaṇa*), an awareness specific to that sense-sphere arises.[45]

- When the functional **eye** comes into contact with forms, the awareness of "seeing" arises [2.1.2.2];
- when **the ear** contacts sounds, the awareness of "hearing" arises;
- when **the nose** contacts smells, the awareness of "smelling: arises;
- when **the tongue** contacts tastes, the awareness of "tasting" arises; and
- when **the body** (the skin) contacts touches, the awareness of "touching" [feeling] arises.

This pervasive awareness is called "**consciousness**" (*viññāṇa*): the awareness of sense-objects.

2.1.4.3 There are thus **6 kinds of consciousness**, corresponding to the 6 sense-faculties, the 6 sense-objects, and 6 consciousnesses, constituting **the "18 bases"** (*aṭṭhārasa āyatana*) of experience,[46] thus:

	sense-faculty		**the sphere for cognizing**		**giving rise to**	
1.	eye	*cakkhu*	form	*rūpa*	seeing	*cakkhu,viññāṇa*.
2.	ear	*sota*	sound	*sadda*	hearing	*sota,viññāṇa*.
3.	nose	*ghāna*	smells	*gandha*	smelling	*ghāna,viññāṇa*.
4.	tongue	*jivhā*	tastes	*rasa*	tasting	*jivhā,viññāṇa*.
5.	body	*kāya*	touches	*phoṭṭhabba*	tactile awareness [feeling]	*kāya,viññāṇa*.
6.	mind	*mano*	mind-objects	*dhamm'*(*ārammaṇa*)	mind-consciousness	*mano,viññāṇa.*

Table 2.1.4.3 The 18 bases of experience[47]

[42] We only see a small spectrum of light, hear a limited range of frequencies, detect a fraction of smells and tastes.

[43] Eg, a desert mirage; we see it but it is not really "there."

[44] Eg, even when I close my eyes or after I have fallen asleep, my work-desk is still there.

[45] In Abhidhamma, the term *dvāra*, "(sense-)door," is paired with the term, *ārammaṇa,* "sense-object," and the term "internal sense-base" (*ajjhatika āyatana*) is paired with "external sense-base" (*bahira āyatana*). In our study, we will refer to the internal sense-spheres as *āyatana*, and the external sense-objects as *ārammaṇa*. [2.1.3.3]

[46] **D 33**,2.2(1-3)/3:243.

[47] **D 33**,2.2(1-3)/3:243.

Although the arising of consciousness is dependent on the contact between a sense-base and its respective sense-object,[48] the fact that a sense-object arises to a sense-base does not always result in consciousness. Other accompanying factors, such as receptivity, determination, and interest must also be present.[49]

For example, while a person is asleep, agitated, absentminded, focused on an activity, or deeply concentrated, various visual forms and sounds within range of potential awareness are not "sensed." Similarly, when one is focused on writing a letter or a book, one may not be aware of the contact between one's body and the chair, or between one's fingers and the pen or keyboard. In such cases, when sense-bases and sense-objects are in contact, but without the arising of consciousness, "perception"[50] is not yet said to have occurred.

2.1.4.4 Perception arises when all 3 bases are present: a sense-base (*āyatana*), a sense-object (*ārammaṇa*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The union of these 3 factors is called "**contact**" (*phassa* or, in compounds, *samphassa*) [2.1.2.2]. In the texts, "contact," refers specifically to the "coming together" of these 3 bases, which marks the start of a perceptual process. In this context, *phassa* is of 6 kinds, according to the specific sense-sphere involved, that is, eye-contact (*cakkhu,samphassa*), ear-contact (*sota,samphassa*), nose-contact (*ghāna,samphassa*), tongue-contact (*jivhā,samphassa*), body-contact (*kāya,samphassa*), and mind-contact (*mano,samphassa*).[51]

Technically speaking, contact (*phassa*) is neither a cause nor a condition[52] for "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*), because consciousness is only one of the factors involved for the arising of contact. For this reason, the suttas do not say that *phassa* is the cause for the arising of the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-k,khandha*). Rather, they state that the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*) are the cause for the arising of contact.

In common parlance, we can still say that "sense-contact is the source of all knowledge," since the term "source" only refers to the conditions from which knowledge arises. The contact itself does not "cause" knowledge, but examining the contact in the context of other conditions can bring some level of knowledge or wisdom.

The perceptual process up to this point can be outlined as follows:

perceptual path	+ conscious object	+ consciousness	= contact	→ feeling
āyatana	+ *ārammaṇa*	+ *viññāṇa*	= *phassa*	→ *vedanā*

Table 2.1.4.5 The perceptual process (simplified)

[48] **M 38**,6/1:258 f (SD 7.10).

[49] **M 28**,27/1:190 (SD 40a.5).

[50] I have in such contexts used "perception" (*saññā*) rather than the broad term "cognition," which can broadly refer to a number of mental processes or all of them. On the usage of "cognition," "affect," "conation" and "perception": see SD 56.22 (2.2.2.1).

[51] **D 33**,2.2(4)/3:243.

[52] Philosophically, a **cause** (*hetu*) is what directly leads to or produces a result, often an action or event (ie, an initiating factor that triggers a specific outcome); a **condition** (*paccaya*) is a circumstance or background that enables a cause to have an effect. Take eg a fire: We may say that the striking of a match (the cause) produces the fire (the effect). However, the presence of flammable materials, dryness and oxygen (the conditions) are necessary for the match to ignite and cause the fire. Thus, technically, ignorance is not the cause of suffering, but *touching* a hotplate (a condition) not knowing it is hot "causes" pain. However, we know how to heal the burn (a condition), so that the pain is minimal and heals quickly. Hence, a cause as a rule brings a specific or immediate result, whereas a condition does not, and may need other supporting conditions. "Conditionality" (*paccayatā*) is a network of interdependent causes and effects.

2.1.4.5 Contact (*phassa*) or sense-contact is a vital stage in the wider perceptual process. Once contact with an object has occurred, other mental and physical dynamics follow in its wake. To begin with, there is a **feeling** (*vedanā*) in response to that object, followed by recognition, associated thinking, and various actions of body, speech, and mind.

The feelings or sensations (*vedanā*) arising immediately following contact with a sense-object are of special significance in an analysis of our interaction with the world. The term ***vedanā*** refers to sense-experience, to experiencing the "flavour" of sense impressions. These sensations are either pleasurable, painful, or neutral.

Following the pathways of perception, there are 6 kinds of feeling, corresponding to the 6 sense-bases: feelings arising from eye-contact, from ear-contact, from nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact and mind-contact.[53] Each of the sense-based feeling is a triad, classified according to the affective tone of feeling, that is, they are of **3 kinds**:

1. *sukha*	pleasurable, easeful, comfortable, agreeable;
2. *dukkha*	painful, uncomfortable;
3. *adukkham-asukha*	neither pleasant nor painful; also referred to as *upekkha*,[54] neutral.

We thus have a total of 6 kinds of feelings, that is, bodily and mental feelings that are either pleasurable, painful or neutral. However, often only **5 kinds of feelings**[55] are listed, such as in the Abhidhamma:[56]

1. *sukha*	physical pleasure;
2. *dukkha*	bodily pain;
3. *somanassa*	mental pleasure or joy;
4. *domanassa*	mental pain or sorrow;
5. *upekkhā*	neutral feeling; neither pleasure nor pain.

According to the Abhidhamma, a neutral feeling is always a mental one. All bodily feelings, that is, feelings arising through bodily sensitivity (*kāya-p,pasāda*), are either *pleasant or painful*, and there is no neutral feeling based on bodily sensitivity.[57] Thus, the Sutta Commentary explains "bodily equanimity" as arising based on any of the other 4 physical senses (eye, ear, nose and tongue) (SA 3:241).[58]

2.1.4.6 The conscious objects (*dhamma* or *ārammaṇa*) are those things in the world that we attend to through our physical senses (*indriya*). We also think about these sense-objects, often seeing them according to our own desires, biases and delusions. On the wholesome side, as we observe these natural objects with knowledge and wisdom, we are able to engage more with the world, and to do so safely, by way of the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*).

Feeling, properly understood and developed, is a vital indicator of what can be beneficial for us and should be sought after, or portend what is potentially unhelpful, even dangerous, and should be avoided.

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[53] The 6 kinds of feelings are, respectively, *cakkhu,samphassajā vedanā*, *sota,samphassajā vedanā*, *ghāna,samphassajā vedanā*, *jivhā,samphassajā vedanā*, *kāya,samphassajā vedanā*, and *mano,samphassajā vedanā* (**Aṭṭha,-sata S**, S 36.22/4:232).

[54] Note that *upekkhā* in the context of *vedanā* differs from *upekkhā* in the context of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), eg, *upekkhā,brahma.vihāra*, *upekkhā,sambojjhaṅga*, and so on. The former are simply affective tones, while the latter refers to wholesome spiritual states.

[55] **(Indriya) Vibhaṅga S** (S 48.35/3:208 f), SD 17.3(4.4); SD 56.21a.

[56] ***Vedanā***, SD 17.3 (4.4).

[57] See S:B 1934 n212.

[58] See ***Vedanā***, SD 17.3 (4.4).

Feeling thus safeguards us with a comprehensive strategic understanding of things. This safeguard only works when we stop being slaves to feelings. We do this by turning to a wholesome thought, or even a neutral one. So long as the unwholesome feeling is displaced by a wholesome or neutral one, we have a good chance of freeing ourselves from feeling's grasp.

2.1.5 Enjoying sensual pleasures

2.1.5.1 Since feelings arise from sense-experience, it is vital that we understand how our senses work, and how to restrain them. The habit of **sense-restraint** is the most effective method of pushing away unwholesome feelings that may otherwise bring on negative karmic acts. There are 2 basic things we need to know regarding how the sense-bases work in terms of personal development:

1. They are the doors through which **the world** (that is, worldliness) enter, inform and shape our lives**.** While we should keep the doors open to learning, we should keep them closed when the sense-data are unhelpful and unwholesome. The senses are also our tools of communication with others, of learning and understanding others, which in turn helps us to better understand ourselves. Thus we need to work with the senses and the mind with skill, prudence and patience, so that we live productively, creatively and above all, *joyfully*.

2. The senses are the channels for "**consuming**" the world, for enjoying it with a right mind (that knows when to *stop*). We can and may enjoy sensual pleasures—of *sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought*—without harming ourselves, others or the environment. Whether or not such enjoyment brings pain, we should always reflect what we can learn from such sense-experiences.

The above 2 characteristics of the senses are interconnected and work together to give us a bigger picture of the world. The first is the basic and necessary function of the senses. The other function is secondary, even "extra," but which should never leave us "mindless," that is, intoxicated (*mada*) with *youth, life and health* as we make the best of them.[59]

2.1.5.2 In both cases [2.1.5.1], the sense-bases operate in the same way. The difference lies in the factor of **intention** (*cetanā*), that is, whether we aim for knowledge that frees or for sensation (*vedanā*) that captivates. In the first case, there is learning; in the second, there is only "consuming." There is, of course, the possibility of learning the *wrong* things; then, the first—our perceptions—becomes the slave of the second, that is, consuming sense-pleasures: being led by the eye, led by the ear, led by the nose, led by the tongue, led by the body, led by thoughts.

Where there is **feeling**, there is craving; where there is **craving**, there is clinging; where there is **clinging**, there is **becoming**—then there is **rebirth**; with rebirth, there are **decay and death**. This is the dependent arising of suffering. What arises must fall away, but it keeps arising *again*, unless we break the cycle, which we must.

When we well understand this—having learned from the experience of sensual pleasures over many lives, and seeing it in this life, too—we should be determined not to fall over the cliff of suffering. We renounce the world for the sake of reaching the path of awakening *in this life itself*. This vision of suffering and of the ending of suffering are what separates the lives of renunciants from the lives of non-renunciants, as stated by the Buddha in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41).[60]

[59] See **Mada S** (A 3.39), SD 42.13; **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38), SD 1.11 (3.2).

[60] A 9.41/4:438-448 (SD 62.16).

For the mindful laity, there is a way of **enjoying sensual pleasures** (*kāma,bhogī*) without falling over the cliff. While such laity feel the drives of the body, they also mindfully and dexterously know *when to stop the body from overpowering the mind*. Thus, they are mindful and aware of the shortcomings of the body, as well as the potential of their minds. The path of awakening seems much longer for such laity, but, with wisdom, they eventually reach the path.[61]

2.1.5.3 How do the disciples **enjoying sensual pleasures** not fall over the cliff of the senses? We need to understand how perception works with the networking of the 5 aggregates, which in turn work the 6 senses, as demonstrated by the Buddha in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18) [2.1.2.2]. The vital tip given by the Sutta is in how to prevent the arising of **proliferative perception** (*papañca,saññā*), that is, reacting to and running after memories, mostly false, of a thousand and one promises.

Hence, **the Adanta Agutta Sutta** (S 35.94), "the discourse on the untamed and unguarded," records the Buddha as stating thus:

papañca,saññā itarîtarā[62] *narā*	When common people, proliferated with perception
papañcayantā upayanti[63] *saññino*	perceive proliferatively, they flow (with them).
mano,mayaṁ gehasitañ ca sabbaṁ	Having dispelled all the mind-made that is home life,
panujja nekkhamma,sitaṃ irīyati	one moves on the way of renunciation.

(S 35.94/4:71,17-20)

The Commentary explains the first line of the Sutta verse as meaning, "All beings become '**proliferated with perception**' due to defiled perception (*kilesa,saññāya*)" (SA 2:382,3). ***Papañca*** is explained by the suttas and Commentaries as arising from craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*) and views (*diṭṭhi*), and causing mental distortion and obsession.[64] Thus, to "**perceive proliferatively**" means to misperceive *permanence, pleasure, self and beauty* in what are really *impermanent, suffering, nonself and foul*.[65] Such perversions are caused by mental proliferation rooted in defilements.

2.1.5.4 Table 2.1.5.4 depicts **the perceptual process** as described in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18) [2.1.2.2], that is, how perception leads on to an explosion (*papañca*) of proliferative perception (*papañca,saññā*) [2.1.5.3]. This process begins with the meeting of **sense-faculty**, **sense-object** and **consciousness**, that is, the "perception triangle,"[66] technically known as **sense-contact** (*phassa*). From this sense-experience arises **feeling** (*vedanā*) (as pleasing or displeasing) comparing it with some memories of similar experiences with persons and events. We then **perceive** (as liking or disliking) the arisen feeling.

This perception then invites **thoughts** that proliferate (*papañceti*). This thinking and thought proliferation constitute the "formation" (*saṅkhāra*) of karmic thoughts, resulting in more **proliferative perceptions** (*papañca,saññā*).[67] This involves diverse and complex perceptions—recalling and revelling in memories or the past—leading to a maelstrom of elaborate and imaginative thinking, arousing latent defile-

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[61] On laity who enjoy sensual pleasures (*kāma,bhogī*), see **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4; SD 54.9 (4.2).

[62] Comy glosses *itarîtarā narā* as "inferior beings" (*lāmaka,sattā,* SA 2:382). Subcomy on SA 2:160 on **Santuṭṭha S** (S 16.1/2:194), SD 69.13, explains that there are 2 kinds of *itarîtara*: the ordinary and those perceived as knowledgeable (*pākatikaṁ ñāṇa,sañjanitañ cā ti*) (SAṬ:Be 2:154).

[63] *Upayanti,* 3 pl of *upayāti,* "1. to go to, approach, reach, enter; 2. To flow, to be in flood, increase" (CPD)

[64] **A 4.17a**,3(1) n (SD 57.36); **U 5.5**,10 n (SD 59.2b); DA 2:383; MA 2:110 x3; SA 2:270; SD 50.20, Sutta Comy 1-2 (4). As connected with ***papañca***: MA 1:25, 2:75, SA 2:308. 3:112; VbhA 508.

[65] On the "perversions of perception" (*saññā,vipallāsa*), see **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/2:52), SD 16.11; SD 16.11 (1).

[66] This is called a "perceptual triangle" for convenience; the actual "perception" actually arises following feeling.

[67] This term is rare, occurring it seems only in **Adanta,agutta S** (S 4:71).

ments, such as *lust, aversion, possessiveness, and jealously*.[68] In other words, *papañca* is rooted in self-centredness: the notions of "mine, me and self," which are intimately connected with the arising of craving, conceit and view (*taṇhā,māna,diṭṭhi*).[69]

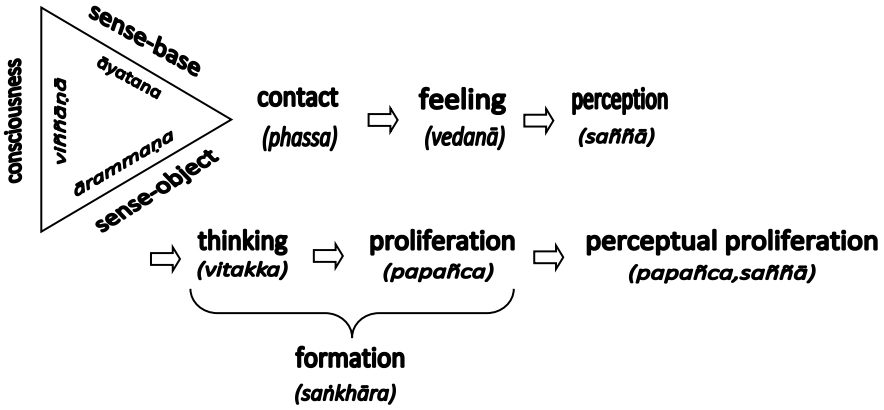

Table 2.1.5.4 The perceptual process [Payutto 2021:48]

2.1.6 Minding thoughts: Perception and *papañca*

2.1.6.1 ***Papañca*** is a key term in Buddhist psychology, and it is closely related to the perception of an unawakened being. Regarding them, the following points should be noted:

1. The term ***papañca*** refers to an engagement and entanglement with specific sense-objects; it also refers to proliferative thinking driven by the force of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), or thinking that compensates these 3 mental defilements. Here, a person conceives things in terms of "I," "me" and "mine," building a sense of self-identity or conceiving of things that are self-centred. These thoughts appear in countless and elaborate ways, leading to an explosion of various perceptions (*papañca,saññā*) associated with these mental proliferations.

2. There are **2 stages of perception** (*saññā*):
(1) initial perception, which perceives those objects that arise naturally on their own.
(2) proliferative perception (*papañca,saññā*), perception based on mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), which fabricate countless and elaborate images or ideas in relation to sense-objects (as already mentioned).

3. The entire **perceptual process** can be divided into 2 parts:

(a) The first part, from the internal sense-bases to feeling, comprises a purely perceptual process; all of the inherent factors arise according to natural causes and conditions. At this stage there is no "being," "person," or "self" involved; there are only mental states.

[68] See **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.2 f/2:277 f), SD 54.8.

[69] As arising from "**me and mine**": MA 2:111,5, 113,1-5, 225,9-13, 5:82,12, 100,24 f; SA 2:363,31-364,11, 372,1 f; AA 4:120,30 f; SnA 1:31,19 f. On *etaṁ mama eso'ham asmi eso me attā ti,* MA 1:27,1 f, 2:111,5; SA 1:190,5 f; AA 3:39,17-19; CA 276 f; NmA 1:89,22 f.

(b) The latter part, from feeling onwards, comprises the process of *consuming* the world or the round of rebirth (*saṁsāra,vaṭṭa*). In fact, feeling can also constitute the initial stage of the process of turning away (*vivaṭṭa*), but here the focus is on the round of rebirth. In this latter process, there are not only natural causes and conditions at work, but there now arises an idea of a "person" or "being." A dualistic relationship is established between a "consumer" and the "consumed," between a "thinker" and "thought," between self and other; duality leads to the notion of "**something**" (*kiñcana*)[70] and **diversity** or manyness (*nanatta*).[71] This is the kind of thinking that keeps us in the samsaric world, in the cycle of rebirth and redeaths.

4. The process of **consuming the world** illustrated above is only one of several ways to depict this cyclic process. This imagery is concise and corresponds to the conditions involved, that is, the 5 aggregates and the 6 sense-bases. Another description, that of the round of rebirth, is the detailed teaching of dependent arising, which is a comprehensive model.

5. Technically, the factors of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and perception (*saññā*) are "conascent factors" (*sahajāta,dhammā*): they arise simultaneously. Their linear depiction above [2.1.5.4] is given for the sake of simplicity.

2.1.6.2 As we have noted, the whole perceptual process can be divided into 2 parts [2.1.6.1 (3)]. The 2nd part itself—that of "proliferative perception" (*papañca,saññā*)—can be further divided into the "cyclic rounds" (*saṁsāra,vaṭṭa*) and the "turning away" (*vivaṭṭa*), as illustrated here on **Table 2.1.6.2:**

sense-faculties (*ayatana*)	+ sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*)	→ consciousness (*viññāṇa*)	⇨ feelings (*vedanā*)	→	turning away (*vivaṭṭa*)
				→	cyclic rounds (*saṁsāra,vaṭṭa*)

Table 2.1.6.2 Cyclic round and turning away [Based on Payutto 2021:50 Fig. 2.4]

The habitual tendency of "common people" (*itarītarā narā*) is to experience "something" and simply "follow their feelings." As a result, they go through an explosion of thoughts, views and reactions rooted in *lust, aversion, possessiveness, and jealously* [2.1.5.4]. And these generate more thoughts, views and reactions. Hence, they are caught in the net of defilements that is the "cyclic rounds" (*saṁsāra,vaṭṭa*). They become creatures of habits caught in an endless, painful uroboric[72] cycle.

2.1.7 Other key terms related to the senses

2.1.7.1 Another important term used to refer to the 6 internal sense-bases (*āyatana*) or sense-doors (*dvāra*) is ***indriya***, which translates as "faculty" or "governing faculty." Although we often speak of the "5 (physical) senses" (*pañc'indriya*), when we include the mind, we have the 6 faculties, that is,

the eye-faculty (*cakkhu'ndriya*), the ear-faculty (*sot'indriya*), the nose-faculty (*ghān'indriya*), the tongue-faculty (*jivh'indriya*), the body-faculty (*kā'yindriya*), and the mind-faculty (*man'indriya*).

[70] On "something" (*kiñcana*), see **Go,datta S** (S 41.7) + SD 60.4 (1.2.1.4); SD 12.4 (6.3); SD 40a.10 (1.4(2)); SD 50.2 (1.1.3.3).

[71] On "the perception of diversity" (*nānatta,saññā*), see SD 62.10i (2.0.6.5).

[72] "Uroboric," adj of uroboros, a serpent devouring its own tail: SD 23.3 (1); SD 49.2 (4.3.2.3).

Hence, *indriya* is here used as a synonym for *āyatana*; but the term *cha indriya* or *cha-ḷ-indriya* is not often found in the suttas;[73] the 6 faculties are, as a rule, referred to as ***saḷ-āyatana,*** "the 6 sense-bases" [2.1.4.1].

The term *saḷ-āyatana* or *cha indriya* (or *cha-ḷ-indriya*) refers to the predominant or principal agent in a specific action. The eye, for example, is the principal agent in cognizing forms, and the ear is the principal agent in cognizing sounds, and so on. The term ***indriya*** is generally used when referring to the active engagement of the sense-bases to their operation in everyday life, and in the context of morally virtuous conduct, for example: "restraint of the eye-faculty" (*cakkhu'ndiya saṁvara*) and so on.[74]

The term ***āyatana***, on the other hand, is generally used when referring to specific factors within a causal process (VbhA 176, 178), or each of the senses, such as "the eye," ***cakkhu***, occurs, such as:
"dependent on the eye and visual forms, eye-consciousness arises,"[75]
or when referring to characteristics of the senses, such as:
"Is the eye permanent or impermanent?" "Impermanent, bhante."[76]

2.1.7.2 (1) Another term frequently used for the sense-bases when explaining specific factors within a causal process is ***phass'āyatana***, which translates as the "base of contact" or the "source of contact." This term is found, for example, in **the Pañca-t,taya Sutta** (M 102), where the Buddha states that he has awakened to "this noble state of supreme peace," that is to say, "having understood, as they really are, *the arising, passing away, gratification, and escape* regarding **the 6 bases of contacts**,[77] he has awakened to the liberation through non-clinging."[78]

(2) Alternative terms referring to the external sense-bases (*bahiddha āyatana*)—the sense objects (***ārammaṇa***) – include "resort" (*gocara,* "place for gaining sustenance") and "range" (*visaya*). Although *ārammaṇa* is a post-canonical term, it is here a convenient substitute for "external object" (*bahiddha āyatana*), since it is a more distinct word, especially for contemporary students of Dharma.[79]

(3) Another important term, used only in reference to the first 5 sense-objects, especially in unawakened beings' "consumption" of the world or being caught in the round of rebirth, is ***kāma-guṇa***, translated as "(the 5) cords of sensual pleasure." This term refers specifically to those *forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches* that are desirable, attractive, and pleasurable.

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[73] In the suttas, *cha indriya* seems to be found only in 10 suttas of **Cha-ḷ-indriya Vagga** of Mahāvagga of Saṁyutta (S 48.21-30/5:205-207) and **Sekha S** (S 48.53/5:230, where both sets, those of the spiritual faculties and the sense-faculties are mentioned together). The term *cha indriya* also occurs in Abhidhamma, eg, Vbh 125, 405, + *passim* (about 40 occurrences). We must, of course, to take care not to confuse this term with its namesake that means the "5 spiritual faculties" [2.1.2].

[74] **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2/1:70), SD 8.10; **Subha S** (D 10/1:207), SD 40a.13.

[75] *Cakkhuñ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu,viññāṇaṁ* (**Dvaya S 2**, S 35.93/4:68).

[76] *Cakkhu niccaṁ vā aniccaṁ vā ti. aniccaṁ bhante* (**Nandak'ovāda S**, M 146,6/3:271). Cf *cakkhvāyatanaṁ … aniccaṁ (*Peṭk 80).

[77] Ie, the experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. On *āyatana,* see (3.12.2).

[78] *Channa phass'āyatanānaṁ samudayañ ca atthaṅgamañ ca assādañ ca ādīnavañ ca nissaraṇañ ca yathā,-bhūtaṁ viditvā anupādā,vimokkho ti* (**Pañcattaya S**, M 102/2:237), SD 40a.12. On the bases of contact, see SD 40a.17 (3.12.2).

[79] On *ārammaṇa* in contrast to dvāra ("door," sense-impression), see Vism 481,24, 482,16,32 f, 529,1, 608,23; DhsA 262,1, 264,10-li; VbhA 137,17. In contrast to *vatthu* and *dvāra*, *see* Vism 482,16, 484,14, 546,32, 595,20; DhsA 263,19; VbhA 404,12-13; PmA 84,1; SA 2:328,4. For a summary of ārammaṇas (also spelt *ālambana*) as concomitants of consciousness, viz the 5 sense-objects and the object of perception or "cognition," see Abhs 3.16-19, also 13,25-14,18.

2.2 KNOWING AND LIVING

2.2.1 Formation, intention, karma: The forest and the tree

2.2.1.1 We started this study of the 5 senses and the 5 aggregates by examining the conscious body [2.1.2]. We then surveyed how **the senses** work with the mind [2.1.3]. These 2 sections constitute the aggregate **form** (*rūpa*). Following that, we studied how **feeling** (*vedanā*) arises and works [2.1.4], and then how **perception** (*saññā*) [2.1.5-2.1.6] fits in. These are the first 3 aggregates in the perspective of the 6 senses. We are now ready to explore the aggregate that is **mental formations** (*saṅkhārā*).

Technically, *saṅkhāra* (a masculine noun), is used in 2 important ways, as follows:

(1) ***saṅkhārā*** (masc pl), "formations," refers to all (*sabba*)—as in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), SD 7.1—*that we are and that there is*; every existent, physical (things, something) or non-physical (non-state, nothing, ideas). Nirvana, however, is not included here since it is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), so has no attributes. Philosophically, nirvana is the real *sub specie aeternitatis* (under the aspect of eternity), without regard for time or space; the one and only real truth.[80]

(2) ***saṅkhāra*** (masc sg), "formation," refers to both the factors determining the quality of the mind (the "creators" of the mind), with intention (*cetanā*) as chief, and the actual volitional process in which these factors are selected and combined in order to mould and shape one's thoughts, words, and deeds, resulting in physical, verbal, and mental karma, that is, *abhisaṅkhāra,* the builder of samsara.

2.2.1.2 In any case, the traditional analysis of the 5 aggregates focuses on the components of reality, rather than focusing on the various *dynamics* in nature that affect human life. For this reason, the description of **mental formations** (*saṅkhāra*) in this context normally only lists these determining factors, along with their attributes. These factors reveal themselves in the conditioned processes of dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*), which demonstrate precisely and fully how these factors affect human lives.

In the teaching of **dependent arising**, mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) are defined in the context of practical application or operative function, comprising bodily intentional activity (*kāya,saṅkhāra*) or bodily volition; verbal intentional activity (*vacī,saṅkhāra*) or verbal volition; and mental intentional activity (*citta,saṅkhāra*) or mental volition.

This differs from the analysis of mental formations as part of the 5 aggregates, in which various determining factors are simply presented as a list, such as faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), wisdom (*paññā*), greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), intention (*cetanā*), and concentration (*samādhi*). If one compares these analyses to a musical piece, the analysis of the 5 aggregates is like the orchestra and conductor *themselves* playing the piece itself along with the acoustics and space; the analysis of dependent arising is like the audience listening to that same performance. They are both parts of the same creative process.

2.2.1.3 Of all the determining factors of the mind, **intention** (*cetanā*) is leader or chief. No matter how many mental formations are operative at any one time, intention always leads and shapes the process and its result. For this reason, the term ***cetanā*** is sometimes used alone to represent all of the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). *Saṅkhāra* in this context can thus be seen as "intention (*cetanā*), along with associated factors" (*sampayutta,dhamma*, "connected factors"), which shape the mind as good, bad, or neutral, which in turn determines thoughts, speech, and physical actions, arising as mental, verbal, and physical karma, respectively.

[80] SD 26.8 (1.1.3, 2.2.5); SD 50.13 (2.3.2.1).

These 3 terms—*saṅkhāra*, *cetanā*, and *kamma*—all overlap each other. Payutto gives the analogy of Venerable Mani, the abbot of Majjhima Monastery, who is receiving an offering of the printed Tipiṭaka. At the presentation gathering, the honoured guest may mention the recipient as "Venerable Mani," or "the abbot of Majjhima Monastery," or simply "Majjhima Monastery"—all three terms express the same desired meaning (2021:16).

2.2.1.4 Further, we should also reflect on **the intention** behind *the words* of the Buddha's teaching. Take this famous Dhammapada verse as an example:

vanaṁ chindatha mā rukkhaṁ		Cut down the forest, not the tree.
vanato jayatī bhayaṁ		From the forest springs fear.
chetvā vanaṁ ca vanathaṁ ca		Having cut the forest and undergrowth,
nibbana hotha bhikkhavo	(**Dh 283**)	O monks, be forest-free!

The Buddha spoke this verse to some newly ordained elderly monks. Their first impression was that the Buddha *literally* meant that they should clear the forest with an axe (perhaps to set up forest lodgings). Reading their minds, the Buddha then explained that he meant the "**forest**" (*vana*) of defilements of sensual lust and so on, and "**undergrowth**" (*vana,tha,* "standing in the forest") are the attending lesser defilements or faults. Literally, the former are the large trees that had started growing first; then, the smaller trees, creepers and underbrush followed.[81]

Monastics should train to cut down their own "mental forests" that are their defilements. Cleared of these forest and undergrowth, they will gain arhathood by attaining **nirvana** (*nibbāna*), the "forest-free" (*ni-vana*), as highlighted in these lines from **the Nāga Sutta** (A 6.43):

sabba,saṁyojan'ātītaṁ	One has crossed over all fetters [the fetters of the all],
vanā nibbanam[82] *āgataṁ*	and emerged from the forest to the clearing.
	(A 6.43/3:346,16)

Clearly, both Dh 283 and the A 6.43 pada (2 lines) should be read for their **intentional sense** (*attha*) for the Dharma teaching. The *word* of the text has to be read in the spirit; the sense has to be "teased out" (*neyy'attha*).[83] This "rule of intention" or intentional reading rule applies to all Pali texts for their proper and beneficial study.

To extend the metaphor, **the forest** (*vana*) refers to a secluded dwelling conducive for meditation: "a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw."[84] We can see **the tree** (*rukkha*) as the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha sat for his awakening. The tree that a monastic sits under and awakens is *his* or *her* bodhi tree.

2.2.1.5 Besides the central role that intention plays in all our conscious actions, it also reveals the special and distinctive properties of **mental formations** (*saṅkhārā*) or simply formations, which set this aggregate apart from the others. As an aggregate, *saṅkhārā* is in the plural since it encompasses the senses of *formation, intention, and karma* [2.2.1.3]. Again, here we must be aware of the context of our

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[81] DhA 20.8/3:421-425. For tr comy, see Carter & Palihawadana (tr) *The Dhammapada,* Oxford, 1987:314-316.

[82] Be Se so; Ce Ee *nibbana*. Be Se are supported by Chin tr T26.1.608c2: 於林離林去 *yú lín lí lín qù* "from the woods he has left the woods."

[83] See **Neyy'attha Nīt'attha S** (A 2.3.5 f), SD 2.6b.

[84] Oldest refs: **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26,17), SD 1.11; **(Deva) Saṅgārava S** (M 100,13), SD 10.9; **Pacalā S** (A 7.58,-10.6), SD 4.11. For lists of suitable places & refs: **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39,12) n, SD 10.13; **Sāmañña,phala S (**D 2,67), SD 8.10.

usage of *saṅkhāra,* whether we are referring to our conception/s of existents (things in the universe), that is, "formations." Or, we are referring to the motive behind an action, that is, "intention." Or we are referring to the moral significance of an action (that is, as karma).

Cetanā may be translated as "intention," "volition," "purpose," or "deliberation." The special attribute differentiating mental formation (*saṅkhāra*) from the other mental aggregates is that they can arise spontaneously. The other mental aggregates—those of *feeling, perception,* and *consciousness*—on the other hand, operate with sense-impressions (*phassa*) that are immediately present in the mind. Intentions are associated with and attend to these sense-impressions, and they rely on the reception of them in order to function. Mental formations, however, both deliberate over sense-impressions and act in response to them.[85]

2.2.2 How we know and act

2.2.2.1 According to suttas, "**contact**" (*phassa*) is the source of knowledge: all forms of understanding arise at the point of contact or beginning with sense-contact [2.1.3].[86] That is, knowledge is dependent on perception, whereby data passes through the 6 bases (*āyatana*) or doorways (*dvāra*) of perception: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. If we consider the 6 sense-spheres as the starting points of perception, we can classify knowledge into 2 kinds: sense-based knowledge [2.2.2.2] and mind-based knowledge [2.2.2.3].

2.2.2.2 Sense-based knowledge arises by way of the 5 sense-doors (*pañca,dvāra*): *the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body*. This refers to basic forms of knowledge, that is, knowing visual forms (including colours and shapes), sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. Knowledge here is what we perceive of the states of the 4 primary elements, that is, earth (*paṭhavī*) (solidity, including hardness, softness, roughness, smoothness), water (*āpo*) (fluidity, wetness, cohesiveness), fire (heat, combustion, digestion, respiration, oxidation, decay), and wind (gaseousness, movement).

Sense-based knowledge—centering on **the sense-faculties**, *the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body*—is, as a rule, the focus for certain professions. The medical profession in modern medicine has specialists in practically every faculty and special parts of each faculty. Specialists are also found in mental health.

The subject of **the eye**, that is, the seen or visual imagination, include artists, sculptors, graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, curators, art historians, and art therapists. We may also include architects, animators, commercial artists, set designers, and art editors.

The ear here refers to *sounds*, especially the voice, which needs to be specially trained for singing and the opera and stage performers. Beautiful and expressive *sounds and voice* are the specialty of actors, singers, composers, musicians and poets. Professions in speech and sounds include those of the linguists, speech therapists and artistic animators.

Sweet **smells** are central to the profession of perfumers, fragrance evaluators, food scientists, aromachologists, and sensory analysts. We may also include dog-trainers of canine sniffers.

Specialists in **tastes** include food tasters, flavourists, sommeliers, chefs, even food critics. In modern times, we also have food technologists, pharmacists, medical industrialists and health food scientists.

Knowledge of **the body**, especially in its strength and movement, are necessary for dancers (such as in traditional dances and ballet) and acting (performers and actors). Where the body involves physical

[85] In the 3 life-cycle (*ti,vaṭṭa*) teaching in relation to dependent arising, *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *viññāṇa* are classified as "karmic fruits" (*vipāka*), whereas *saṅkhāra* is classified as *kamma* itself. This classification of *saṅkhāra* as *kamma* refers exclusively to those times when intention (*cetanā*) is operative. The various mental determinants (within the round of rebirth, *saṁsāra,vaṭṭa*) are classified as mental impurities (*kilesa*).

[86] See, eg, S 3:59 f, 63 f; S 4:68 f; A 3:413; A 4:385; Pm 1:57.

interaction or a heightened or healing sense of touch, we have massage therapists, textile designers, and those in health care (such as physiotherapists).

2.2.2.3 Mind-based knowledge arises by way of the mind-door (*mano,dvāra*),[87] that is, knowing mind-objects (*dhamm'ārammaṇa*, or *dhamma*, for short). Within a century of the Buddha's passing Buddhist philosophers had already come up with an impressive classification of knowledge into mind (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*), material form (*rūpa*) and nirvana (*nibbāna*).[88] This is the foundation of **Abhidhamma** or scholastic Buddhism.

Although some learned scholars proclaim the necessity of Abhidhamma for a perfect understanding of the Dharma, only a handful of specialists are able to master these late teachings, which only very few common people can understand, and which seem to have little use for them. However, it is possible that with the rise of modern psychologists' interest in Buddhist mind teachings, they may be able to promote a more practical understanding of and uses for Abhidhamma.

Then, there is **philosophical knowledge** which attempts to encompass or investigate all of those things known and thought about by the mind. In academic circles and for certain individuals, philosophical speculation is an important part of our learning process. While academic philosophy tends to seek problems in thinking and to create further problems to their solutions, Buddhist **spiritual philosophy** teaches us to think and meditate (be free of those thoughts) so that we end suffering and live happily: *we examine life so that it is worth living and living well*.

Mind-based knowledge is especially advancing today through **the psychological profession** and mental health specialists and carers. Buddhist meditation and Buddhist psychology are special areas of interest especially for the psychology researchers. Beginning in the 20th century, various aspects of Buddhist meditation have been freely incorporated into psychology as part of the mental health diagnosis and healing. This development alone may have profoundly significant effects on how Buddhism is viewed and practised in modern times; perhaps this may open traditional teachers and practitioners to modern avenues and perspectives of seeing and presenting Buddhism and its practices.

2.2.2.4 There is a very special and pervasive kind of knowledge that combines both the sense-based and the mind-based, that is, **aesthetic knowledge** or simply aesthetics. Apparently, this is a topic that has not been covered in detail by anyone. The idea of the beautiful (*sobhana*) in the wholesome sense is found throughout the early Buddhist texts. The suttas famously declare that the Dharma is "beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end" (*ādi,kalyāṇa majjhe kalyāṇa pariyosāna,kalyāna*).[89]

The Dharma is "beautiful in the beginning" since **moral virtue** is the basis of the spiritual life. The Buddhist moral life should be expressed in the joy of life, that is, respecting life because it can be joyful despite the pains; indeed, because of the pains. There is the joy of respect and love in the lives of others and other beings. A beautiful body is one well restrained in the physical senses, and expresses oneself in a beautiful voice of truth, unity, pleasantness and beneficence.

Beauty is joy, and joy beauty. For the truly happy lay person, there are **the 4 joys** (*sukha*): the joy of work (or having), of using wealth, of being debt-free, and of blamelessness.[90] As qualities of right livelihood, the 4 joys form part of the features of practical Buddhist moral conduct and virtue for the laity.

Meditation practice and experiences are greatly helped and enhanced by the beauty of moral conduct by freeing us from guilt, fear and concern over moral issues, thus allowing the body to easily feel

[87] Knowledge obtained by "mind-contact" (*mano,samphassa*).

[88] For further classification of the known according to Abhidhamma, see Vbh 71 f; Dhs 169; Vism 483 f.

[89] **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,40.2), SD 8.10.

[90] **Anaṇa S** (A 4.62), SD 2.2.

inner joy and peace which helps in attaining concentration, leading to dhyana. In fact, one of the key developments in the bodhisattva Siddhattha's struggle for awakening is the realization that dhyana is a joy worth cultivating, a joy not to be feared.[91]

Finally, **the greatest beauty** is clearly that found in being free from ignorance, craving and suffering. Nirvana is the highest joy and mental beauty since nirvana is free "from all feeling" and beyond time and space. Being free from all feeling, nirvana is suffering-free; being beyond time and space, nirvana is the death-free. In any case, nirvana is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), which makes it naturally and truly *sub specie aeternitatis* [2.2.1.1].

2.2.2.5 The suttas and canonical texts, however, prefer a simple **fourfold typology of knowledge** gained through the sense-doors, that is:[92]

1. **the seen** (*diṭṭha*), that is, all visible objects (*rūp'ārammaṇa*) and knowledge obtained by way of seeing and observing;
2. **the heard** (*suta*), sounds and knowledge gained by way of hearing;
3. **the sensed** (*muta*), "the experienced," that is, smells, tastes, and touches, or what is perceived by way of the nose, tongue, and body.
4. **the known** (*viññāta*), that is, mind objects (*dhamm'ārammaṇa*): whatever is known by way of the mind.

The first 3 are knowledges[93] by way of the 5 senses. This threefold division is made because seeing and hearing are critical sources of knowledge and involve an extensive range of activity; these two factors are thus distinguished from the rest. The 3 remaining factors, pertaining to *the nose, tongue, and body*, share a common attribute, that is, perception is accomplished when the sense-objects—smells, tastes, and touches—literally make *contact* with the respective sense-bases. This differs from the eye and the ear, which perceive objects that do not "touch" the sense-base (visual objects rely on light and sounds rely on energy waves as the means of conveying information.[94]

2.2.2.6 Technically, the knowledge obtained by way of the 5 senses is very limited. However, they serve as the main modes of informing and communicating amongst most ordinary people. In this context, however, this knowledge is defined in a broad, general sense:

Diṭṭha refers both to that which is seen and to all knowledge dependent on the eye and on seeing, including the mind's interpretation of visual data. Yet this interpretation of data still remains on a direct and basic level, without any embellishment.

Suta refers to that which is heard and to all knowledge derived from hearing. This includes speech, language, and sounds (such as music, animal sounds, vibrations) which the mind "reads" or interprets on a basic level, but which has not yet undergone additional conceptualization.

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[91] **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31-32/1:246 f) + SD 49.4; SD 41.4 (2.2.3).

[92] The set *diṭṭha suta muta viññāta* is found frequently in the suttas and texts, eg, S 4:73,4-11; Vbh 429 f; Nm 55,-22-24. See also D 3:135,9 = A 2:23,30, 2:25,2 + *passim* = It 121 f; M 1:135 f, 3:261; S 3:202,13, 204,17; A 5:318, 321 f, 353-358. As compounds: M 2:231 f; Sn 209 f; Nm 9, 50 f, 53 f, 133 f, 189 f, 203 f, 227, 245, 247, 333 f; Nc 16. As a threefold classification of *diṭṭhi*, *suta* and *muta*: S 1:202 f; Sn 155, 175 f; Nm 95 f, 106, 110 f, 315; Nc 28.

[93] Early Buddhism often speaks of different kinds of knowledge, It facilitates understanding their special functions when we see them as actually separate form of "knowledges." This is living English in the study of Buddhism.

[94] The eye (*cakkhu*) and the ear (*sota*) perceive objects that have "not reached (the sense-bases)": *appatta,visaya-g,gāhika/appatta,gāhika*. The nose (*ghāna*), tongue (*jivhā*), and body (*kāya*) perceive objects that "reach (the sense-bases)," *sampatta,visaya-g,gāhika/sampatta,gāhika*. See Abhs 6.6-8; VismṬ:Be 2:86-112.

Muta, too, should be understood in this way. The smelt covers whatever is experienced by way of smell or aroma. Those skilled in this include wine tasters, perfumers, food critics, and even certain animals like dogs. Those who know through taste include individuals with a heightened sensitivity to taste, particularly bitterness. They have a more intense perception of flavours, including bitter tastes, and may have more taste buds or more sensitive taste buds.

Of the various ways we know things or experience the world, the most common must be that of touch or sensitivity to bodily feeling. Between people and significant others, physical touch often enhances emotional closeness and comfort, even joy. That's because physical touch often induces the release of oxytocin, the love hormone, which can help reduce stress and promote feelings of happiness and relaxation.

Technically, this knowledge pertaining to the 5 senses—*diṭṭha*, *suta*, and *muta*—depends on "perception by way of the 5 senses" (*pañca,dvārika,saññā*). All knowledge beyond that is included in the term *viññāta*: knowledge arising through the mind-door.

2.2.3 Perception and knowledge

2.2.3.1 The knowledge that brings wisdom or that which is needed for developing wisdom is referred to as "dharma **to be cultivated**" (*bhāvetabba,dhamma*). Since consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a form of knowledge simply "to be understood" (*pariññeyya,dhamma*), it is not included as a factor for promoting wisdom. In other words, when we are conscious of any of the sense-objects or even a mind-object (a thought), we merely "know" it, and perhaps do things with it, without learning anything new from it.

Only when we learn something from it, or that learning makes us a more wholesome person, who brings goodness to others, too, then, that knowing is **wisdom**. We have *cultivated* that knowledge and that knowledge has cultivated *us*. We not only know what has arisen through our sense-doors, but that knowledge makes us **see** *impermanence, suffering or nonself* as the true nature of that experience.

2.2.3.2 Psychologically, **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-k,khandha*) [2.1.3.3] are the tools or means of knowledge. The most basic kinds of knowledge occur at almost every conscious moment in **2 ways**: as body (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*). **Body** is the form aggregate (that is, the primary elements, earth, water, fire and wind) which refers to whatever external material form that we perceive through our sense-faculties.

These senses are only the "doors" through which data enters **the mind** which then processes it into "objects" (*dhamma*) or "something" (*kiñcana*). Our most common form of knowledge, then, is "**name-and-form**" (*nāma,rūpa*) by which we know the world and ourselves. This knowledge is thus that of *mentality projected onto materiality*: we have minded the world.

Based on this understanding, we can now ramify knowledge into **5 kinds**, corresponding to each of the 5 aggregates. In this classification, knowledge is a mental state (*nāma,dhamma*), with aspects of knowledge found in 3 of the "mental aggregates" (*nāma-k,khandha*), namely, the perception aggregate (*saññā-k,khandha*), the formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*), and the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-k,khandha*). Technically, these are perceptual knowledge, conative knowledge and cognitive knowledge.

2.2.3.3 Early Buddhism does not directly regard **feeling** (*vedanā*) as knowledge in the conventional sense. It is however seen as a crucial aspect of experience and a component of knowledge. We see what we know as being pleasant or unpleasant, and thus as desirable or undesirable. Thus, for most of us, feeling or hedonic tone only colours our knowledge with emotion, but adds nothing new (nothing useful anyway) to our store of knowledge.

Thus, in Buddhist psychology, we do *not* properly speak of "affective knowledge" but of **affective experience**. The following passage on the Buddha's teaching on feelings from **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15) is instructive:

> Ānanda, when one feels [experiences] **a pleasant feeling**,
> one does not, at the same moment, feel a painful feeling or a neutral feeling.
> At that moment, one feels *only* a pleasant feeling.
> Ānanda, when one feels **a painful feeling**,
> one does not, at the same moment, feel a pleasant feeling or a neutral feeling.
> At that moment, one experiences *only* a painful feeling.
> Ānanda, when one experiences **a neutral feeling**,
> one does not, at the same moment, experience a pleasant feeling or a painful feeling.
> At that moment, one experiences *only* a neutral feeling. (D 15,28/2:66), SD 5.17

The Buddha then states that each of these feelings—the pleasant, the painful and the neutral—is "*impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to passing away, subject to ending*." Hence, none of these feelings—no feeling—can be regarded as "(my) self." Thus, we have no knowledge of "feeling" (as a noun) except "feeling pleasurable," "feeling painful," or "feeling neither (neutral)"—all these feelings are really *verbs* (that is, actions or conditions).

Provisionally, we may speak of "the pleasant or beautiful" (*sobhana*); we may even compare feelings. But strictly speaking, we are comparing only our memories (perceptions) of feelings. In other words, we are speaking of **beauty**, that is, our conception and philosophy of beauty or **aesthetics**, which brings us to a totally new field of Buddhist studies in its own right.[95]

2.2.3.4 On the positive side, we thus have **3 kinds of knowledge** for cultivating wisdom: *the perceptual, the conative and the cognitive*. In the order of their cultivation, or of their potency of making us know and see reality, they create the following: perception, view and direct knowledge.

1. **Perception** (*saññā*). This is knowledge derived from perceiving, remembering, and identifying the attributes and significance of that experience. This knowledge is basically our experience of things as "name-and-form" (*nāma,rūpa*); this is what is stored in our minds. On the positive side, it acts as the tool for thinking and reasoning, as a model for comparing of what we know, and for further understanding of new situations.

Perception as knowledge can be divided into 2 kinds—knowledge of the physical (*rūpa*) and of the mental (*nāma*)—as mentioned above [2.2.3.2]. The perception arising in the normal cognitive process—both basic perception and the perception attending to the growth of understanding and wisdom—is simply a matter of either knowing or not knowing. This is true even at the various levels of perception, say, from indistinct to lucid perception, from partial to complete perception, or from false to correct perception. This matter thus pertains directly to knowledge and the cultivation of knowledge. This is in direct contrast to the "wild" perception known as "proliferative perception" (*papañca,saññā*) or "defiled perception" (*kilesa,saññā*), which invariably obstructs and distorts wholesome or true knowledge [2.1.5.4].

2. **View** (*diṭṭhi*). This is any kind of reasoned understanding of worldly knowledge, reality on the level of conceptualization; truth mixed with cherished thoughts and opinions. Here, we draw conclusions of some kind which we hold as our own viewpoints. This knowledge may arise from an external

[95] On Buddhist aesthetics, see SD 46.5 (2.4.2), SD 59.14ab (1.2.3); on Early Buddhist aesthetics of feeling, SD 60.12 (4). See also SD 50.16 (1.1); SD 60.1c (9.8.2 (6)).

source, but it has passed through our mind's screening process so that we see it as our own ("I, me, mine"), regardless of how illogical or unreasonable this knowledge may be.

The most serious cases of wrong views include eternalism (*sassata,diṭṭhi*; the view of some kind of imaginable eternal being or state); annihilationism (*uccheda,diṭṭhi*; that this is our only life and our life ends with it); and the view of non-causality (*ahetuka,diṭṭhi*; a fatalistic view that things happen on account of luck or predetermination).[96]

3. **Direct knowledge** (*ñāṇa*):[97] gnosis (Skt, *jñāna*), direct insight into reality; it refers to a pure and lucid knowledge that arises spontaneously in the mind and discerns a particular quality as it really is. It is called "direct" because one experiences the true reality for oneself, and one is able to understand the whole picture of existence.

The term ***ñāṇa*** is a synonym of *paññā* (wisdom), but the sense of *ñāṇa* here tends to be more restricted; that is, it refers to specific functions and fruits of wisdom, for example:[98] *kammassa.katā,-ñāṇa* (the insight into how beings are the owners of their karma);[99] *atītaṁsa,ñāṇa* (psychic knowledge of the past)[100] (D 3:273); *saccânulomika,ñāṇa* (knowledge conforming with the truth); *ṭhānâṭhāna,ñāṇa* (knowledge of the possible and the impossible);[101] and *adhimuttika,ñāṇa* (knowledge of the disposition, traits, and beliefs of various beings).[102]

Although there are many levels of *ñāṇa*, including mistaken knowledge or incomplete knowledge, they can all be referred to as "pure" or "genuine"' forms of knowledge, because they are not adulterated by self-identity or self-notion. Occasionally, *ñāṇa* arises as a consequence of reasoned thought, but this knowledge exists independent of such thought, because it connects with some aspect of reality that truly exists. This is one distinction between *ñāṇa* and *diṭṭhi* (view). "View-knowledge" or simply "a view" is that which relies on personal beliefs and logical reasoning, whereas *ñāṇa* evinces external aspects of true reality. The point is clear: knowledge needs to be sought or cultivated.

2.2.3.5 We will here examine a few related quotes from the suttas and Commentaries related to perception (*saññā*) and knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

The Cūḷa Viyūha Sutta (Sn 4.12) records the Buddha as stating how views arise from perception:

na h'eva saccāni bahūni nānā *aññatra saññāya niccāni loke*	There are surely not many or diverse truths, except by way of perceiving permanence in the world.
takkañ ca diṭṭhīsu pakappayitvā *saccaṁ musā ti dvaya,dhammaṁ āhu*	Having devised reasoning, they have views, they speak two things: the true and the false. (Sn 886/173)

The Poṭṭhapāda Sutta (D 9) records the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda's question on which arises first: consciousness (*saññā*) or knowledge (*ñāṇa*)? In this context, *saññā* overlaps with the broader sense of consciousness, especially functioning in thinking and meditation. Thus the Buddha answers:

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[96] For such views, see eg **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,3), SD 1.1; **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,19), SD 8.10

[97] On *ñāṇa* as "direct knowledge," see SD 60.1e (11.4).

[98] For a list of best known direct knowledges with refs, see SD 60.1e (11.4.2).

[99] *Kammassa.katā,ñāṇa* and *kammassa.katā,ñāṇa* are said to be mundane right view (MA 1:196).

[100] One of the 3 knowledges in time; the other 2 being those of the future (*anāgat'aṁsa ñāṇa*), and the present (*paccupann'aṁsa ñāṇa*): **D 34**,1.4(8)/3:275.-

[101] *Ṭhānâṭhāna,ñāṇa* is said to be the 1st of the Buddha's 10 powers (Nett 94).

[102] *Adhimuttika,ñāṇa* is one of the Buddha's powers (DA 1:49).

> Consciousness (*saññā*)[103] arises first, Poṭṭhapāda, then knowledge (*ñāṇa*); from the arising of consciousness comes the arising of knowledge.[104] (D 9,20/1:185), SD 7.14

This is one of those interesting passages which reminds us of the rules of contextuality and of polysemy in the Pali texts. We simply need to "think Pali" here: *saññā* is a form of "consciousness" (such as in the term *n'eva,saññā,nâsaññ'āyatana,* "the base of neither perception nor non-perception").[105]

2.2.3.6 In an everyday situation, **perception** (*saññā*) is the basis (or "raw material") for all thinking and subsequent knowledge. For this reason, both view (*diṭṭhi*) and direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) rely on perception. It is fairly obvious how view arises from perception. The very perception or discernment of something leads one on to have an opinion about it. The main thing wrong with having such views is that we are stuck with them; we have stopped learning; we grow old without growing up.

Dh 152 A person of little learning [who hears little] ages like a yoked ox;
His flesh grows, his wisdom grows not.

Although perceiving the state or features of things is useful in everyday life, perception is selective and often acts to conceal or eclipse other features of these objects. If people fail to examine these dynamics, they may be deceived by perception or allow it to obstruct wisdom. This is, in fact, the case for most people. The causes for wrong views include false perceptions and a wrong application of perception.

The Param'aṭṭhaka Sutta (Sn 4.5) describes the arhat who is a silent sage (*muni*) as follows:

Sn 802

tass'idha diṭṭhe va sute n'atthi	There is for him not even a tiny notion	*b*
pakappitā n'atthi aṇū pi saññā	formed regarding the seen, heard or sensed here.	*a*
taṁ brāhmaṇaṁ diṭṭhim anādiyānaṁ	How could anyone here in this world categorize him,	*d*
ken'idha lokasmiṁ vikappayeyya	that brahmin who clings not to any view?	*c*

Commenting on **Sn 802**, the canonical commentary, **Mahā Niddesa**, says:

> For an arhat whose influxes are destroyed, there is no view arising from perception, with perception as forerunner, with perception as dominant (*saññā'dhipateyyatā*), by way of perception, what is thought up, imagined, fashioned, established by perception—[a view] about the seen or purity through the seen, about the heard or purity through the heard, about the sensed or purity through the sensed. These do not exist … they have been burnt up by the fire of knowledge.[106] (Nm 110,30-111,7 on Sn 802/157)

From the following **Magandiya Sutta** verse (Sn 841) and its **Maha,niddesa** commentary we are told that from perception arises both views as well as wisdom:

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[103] In the Sutta, the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda apparently takes *saññā* as broadly referring to "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*). As I have stated, *saññā* overlaps with the broader sense of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), esp functioning in thinking and meditation. See D 9,20.2 n (SD 7.14)

[104] *Sañ'uppadā ca pana ñāṇ'uppādo hoti.*

[105] In Abhidhamma, *citta* is the usual term for "consciousness" and "the mind." See eg Abhs.

[106] Cf UA 373, which states: "*Saññā* is the *nimitta* ("sign," "point of arising") of proliferative view (*diṭṭhi,papañca*).

Sn 841 *diṭṭhiñ ca nissāya anupucchamāno*
māgandiyā ti bhagavā
samuggahītesu pamoham āgā
ito ca nâdakkhi aṇum pi saññaṁ
tasmā tuvaṁ momuhato dahāsi

Dependent upon view[107] you are inquiring,
Māgandiya, said the Blessed One.
you are infatuated in what has been tightly grasped;
but you've not an iota of perception (of inner peace).[108]
Hence you regard it as simply confusing [silly].

The Mahā,niddesa explains the verse thus:

> Then, rejecting his questions based on that view, the Blessed One spoke on the verse:
>
> "Magandiya, **asking** again and again, **dependent upon a view—you are infatuated**—over these speculative views that you have **tightly grasped**. **But** from this inner peace spoken of by me, of the Dharma teaching, **you've not the slightest notion**, a correct perception. For that reason, you regard this Dharma **as simply confusing**."
>
> **You are infatuated in what has been tightly grasped**: "You are deluded, confused by that same view that you grasp, seize, adhere to, cling to, resolve on. … .
>
> **But you've not the slightest notion**: From this inner peace, or from this practice, or from this teaching of the Dharma, you have not gained a correct perception, an accurate perception, a perception of the characteristics, a perception of causes, a perception of possibilities. How then comes knowledge?[109] Thus from this, **you've not an iota of perception**."
>
> Alternatively:[110] "You've not gained even an iota
> of impermanence or conformity with the perception of impermanence,
> or of suffering or conformity with the perception of suffering,
> or of nonself or conformity with the perception of nonself,
> or of even as much as just the arising of perception or a perception-sign.[111]
> How then comes knowledge? Thus from this, **you've not an iota of perception**."
>
> **Hence you regard it as simply confusing**. For that reason you consider it an utterly confused teaching, a foolish teaching, a deluded teaching, an ignorant teaching, an evasive teaching … ."
>
> (Nm 1:193,6-194,8 on Sn 841)

2.2.4 Useful knowledge

2.2.4.1 The Buddhist texts speak of the nun Paṭācārā,[112] who, by mindfully observing how, while washing her feet, the water ran off into the ground. She cultivated **insight knowledge** (*vipassanā*), and

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[107] **Sn 841a** reads *diṭṭhiñ ca* (sg) while **Nm** lemma has *diṭṭhīsu* (pl); both senses are applicable, ie, with *diṭṭhiṁ* as a collective n, "view."

[108] Based on *ito ajjhatta,santito paṭipattito vā dhamma,desanato vā* (Nm 1:193,21 f). Though the sentence is ablative, a genitive reading "of this" fits English idiom better, as Jayawickrama has done: "of this (inward tranquillity) you have not gained the minutest perception" (Sn:J 841, p330).

[109] "[Y]ou have not gained … " (*saññā* terms): *yutta,saññaṁ vā patta,saññaṁ vā lakkhaṇa,saññaṁ vā karaṇa,saññaṁ vā ṭhāna,saññā vā na paṭilabhasi. kuto ñāṇaṁ. evam pi ito nâdakkhi aṇuṁ pi saññaṁ.* (Nm 1:193,22-25)

[110] From here + the whole quote: "Alternatively, 'You have not gained … ' etc (*saññā* terms): *athavā aniccaṁ vā anicca,saññā'nulomaṁ vā dukkhaṁ vā dukkhaṁ vā dukkha,saññā'nulomaṁ vā anattaṁ vā anatta,saññā'nulomaṁ vā saññ'uppāda,mattaṁ vā saññā,nimittaṁ vā na paṭilbhāsi. kuto ñāṇaṁ. evam pi ito nâdakkhi aṇuṁ pi saññaṁ.* (Nm 1:193,26-194,2)

[111] Apparently, this key line—*saññ'uppāda,mattaṁ vā saññā,nimittaṁ vā* (Nm 1:193,29)—is not tr in Sn:B 1112.

[112] See **Sikkha-t,taya S 2** (A 3.89) and Tha 396 (SD 47.17 (2.3.3)). The pair of terms is used in death reflection, but can also be applied cosmologically to mean "as on earth so in heaven"; since impermanence is true in all the world, it is so in heaven, too. Whatever exists must cease; impermanence is universal.

later in her dwelling, putting out her oil-lamp, she gained arhathood.[113] One could well be watching falling leaves and develop insight knowledge and discern impermanence. Such knowledge arises as a result of numerous perceptions, for example: perceptions of life in general and how things exist; perceptions of aging and decay; perceptions of bodily and mental deterioration, death, and the break-up of things; and perceptions of "above" (*uddhaṁ*) and "below" (*adho*).[114]

The ability to see the relationship between these various perceptions can give rise to wholesome knowledge, that is, wisdom. We may also take an example of worldly knowledge (*lokiya,ñāṇa*): although no apple actually fell on **Isaac Newton**'s head, it was said that in 1665 or 1666 Newton, while having tea in his garden on a warm day, *saw an apple drop from a tree* and wondered why that apple should always descend perpendicularly to the ground.[115]

Understandably, Newton then developed insight into gravity. His insight relied on numerous perceptions, such as perceptions of "falling," of convergence, of space and force; and perceptions of attraction, mobility, release, suspension, linearity, trajectory, etc. The ability to relate these various perceptions gave rise to his insight into gravity.

2.2.4.2 Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) may also give rise to wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), but better views tend to arise on account of previous knowledge and present mindfulness. The suttas illustrate this with the story of the brahma **Baka**, who was able to recall the birth of beings apparently infinitely into the past. He observed the countless births and deaths of other beings, while he himself seemed to have remained the same. He thus developed the view that the brahma heaven is permanent and eternal, and that he (Brahma) is the creator of all things.[116]

Similarly, Newton, after his discovery of gravity, used this insight to further observe natural phenomena, but his vision and understanding was not only not comprehensive but he was bent on proving that a God existed behind all the science and numbers in the universe. Since gravitation was a theory, it could and must be disproved (falsifiability, ironically, is mark of good science).

Then came **Albert Einstein** and his general theory of relativity, which simply states that *gravity bends light*. To bend light and actually see it bend, an object would have to be more massive than earth and light sources with known relative positions opposite to where the observers are. In fact, Einstein used general relativity to predict those conditions would be met in the 6-minute-51-second eclipse on 29 May 1919.[117] If Einstein were right, a star known to be blocked by the sun would be visible during the eclipse because its light would bend in the sun's gravitational field.[118]

Not only did this confirm general relativity, but it also upset Newton's applecart. Well, actually, Einstein did not take away Newton's apples; rather, Einstein provided a more comprehensive framework for explaining gravity. But since science must always measure the universe, in every generation we are likely to get those who will make better calculations based on the genius of the past.

While science *measures* the universe, Buddhism sees the universe as being immeasurable. **Suffering** is real but immeasurable; what is immeasurable is unfalsifiable. We would not say that Buddhism is "bad science," but rather Buddhism is *not* science. But like science, Buddhism uses the senses to see the true nature of the world, but unlike science, Buddhism wants us to examine our tools and go beyond numbers

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[113] On the nun Paṭācārā, see Thī 115 f; DhA 8.12/2:269 (SD 43.3).

[114] "As above, so below" (*uddhaṁ adho*) is part of reflection on perception in meditation; see **(Iddih,pāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20,17/5:277 f), SD 28.14.

[115] Isaac Newton: Who He Was, Why Apples Are Falling (nationalgeographic.org).

[116] See **Brahmā Baka S** (S 6.4/1:142 f), SD 11.6; **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49/1:326-329), SD 11.7; SD 57.10 (1.4.2.5) n.

[117] https://eclipsewise.com/solar/SEprime/1901-2000/SE1919May29Tprime.html. 3 May 2025.

[118] John J **Dvorak**, *Mask of the Sun: the science, history, and forgotten lore of eclipses*. New York (N.Y.): Pegasus Books, 2017. Ron **Cowen**, *Gravity's Century*, Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard Univ Press. 2019:2 f.

(*saṅkhyā*). Perhaps we may say that science is taking a very long journey in seeing the universe as it is; the Buddha has already seen it for himself. However, since I'm no scientist, surely, I would be proven *scientifically* wrong. I have no reason to disagree.

2.2.5 Types of knowledge

2.2.5.1 The most significant difference between knowledge and insight, between truth and reality, is that we are susceptible to attachment to knowledge; they then become "views" (*diṭṭhi*). Insight and reality, on the other hand, simply inspire us to "let go" of the world, to let go of that almighty "some thing" we want or want to prove. Insight into reality brings us inner peace, seeing harmony in all things, even in suffering. More than just sight and vision, this awakening brings us insight and wisdom.

Hence, *views are always troubling*, and the fact is that we rarely know this until it is very late or too late. The most common reason for this oversight is that we are "viewing" reality like the blind men and the elephant in the famous parable of **the Nanā Titthiyā Sutta** (U 6.4):[119] *we tend to see a part we favour as the whole that we are blind to*. A good and kind teacher would perhaps tell us that the blind men went on to bring one another to "see" one another's elephant parts. Then they discover or imagine what an amazing animal is an elephant. Views, then, should invite us to find out more about where they came from and what the bigger picture is. Examining views in that way leads to the arising of knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

In fact, many views arise from investigation and contemplation, and can be highly logical and deeply reasonable. Then they become established as beliefs in the minds of intelligent persons and thinkers. On the other hand, if one is not attached to these views for some reason, but is willing and able to listen to others and to apply wise reflection, there is a good chance that a deeper, even higher, knowledge will arise, removing obstacles in the path of wisdom and paving the way to spiritual progress and awakening.

2.2.5.2 Whether there is a view (*diṭṭhi*) or there is direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*), **perceptions** (*saññā*) arise, and they can act as the basis for further contemplation and understanding. The difference here is that views tend to create *wrong conclusions* or *wrong perceptions*, whereas direct knowledge helps to give correct and accurate perceptions and to dispel misperceptions. This is when it benefits us to know how perception changes or evolves into knowledge.

We have already studied at length the nature of perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*) and knowledge (*ñāṇa*) [2.2.3.3]. Now each of them can in turn be cultivated into their own kind of wisdom (*paññā*). They grow into **the 3 kinds of wisdom** in this manner:[120]

		arising from
1. philosophical wisdom	*cintā.maya,paññā*	one's own reflection and reasoning;
2. intellectual wisdom	*suta.maya,paññā*	learning or knowledge transmission from others;
3. spiritual wisdom	*bhāvanā.maya,paññā*	spiritual cultivation or personal realization.

Besides these 3 main methods of gaining wisdom, there are numerous other ways for cultivating wisdom. To gain the 3rd kind of wisdom, the spiritual, the numerous methods include:

listening (*savana*); inquiry and review (*paripucchā*); conversation, discussion, and debate (*sākacchā*); observing and watching (*passana*); scrutiny (*nijjhāna*); wise reflection (*yoniso,manasikāra*; *yoniso,upa-parikkhā*); evaluation (*tulanā*); examination, investigation, and analysis (*vīmaṁsā*); experimentation and selection (*vijaya*); repetition (*āsevana*); cultivation (*bhāvanā*); and sustained practice (*bahulī,karaṇa*).

[119] **Nānā Titthiyā S** (U 6.4,10-19) + SD 40a.14 (1.1).

[120] **D 33**,1.10(43)/3:219 f; Vbh 324 f.

Reflecting or thinking (*cintā*), learning (*suta*), and training (*bhāvanā*) help to generate, improve, and refine perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and knowledge (*ñāṇa*).[121]

2.2.5.3 Wherever we may be, we often notice that people gather information or knowledge by **hearing** (*suta*) from others. In modern times, we can add that knowledge also often comes from **the seen** (*diṭṭha*), that is, through *reading* the printed word or illustrations whether on paper (eg books), the screen (computers) or the mass media (the radio, TV, the phone and so on).

Modern knowledge, as in ancient times, still arises familiarly by way of **thinking** (*vitakka*) and **reflections** (*cintā*). Even after being informed by the various sources mentioned above, we still generate our own views regarding them.

Wisdom (*paññā*)—good or useful knowledge—arises from personal cultivation or practical application (*bhāvanā*); it arises through self-learning or is inherent in certain individuals. The distinct and concrete forms of knowledge arising in a person's mind, however, are the 3 kinds of knowledge, that is to say, perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and knowledge (*ñāṇa*). These 3 are the end-results of learning, thinking, and personal cultivation (practical training).

Perception, view, and direct knowledge, when developed and expressed, can have a powerful impact on the lives of others. **Perception** is highly influential in the cognitive process, in discerning and comprehending the world, and in generating other forms of knowledge. **View**, especially from religious beliefs and various ideologies, including personal values, acts as the guideline for much of people's thinking, conduct and lifestyle.

Knowledge, especially direct knowledge, is the most pristine and profound form of knowledge; it is the fruit of the highest wisdom attainable by us. It is able to calm our minds, purify and stabilize our emotions, strengthen our character, and create or change our worldview (*loka,dassana*) and outlook on life (*jīva,dassana*). Its effects on our views and conduct are more definite and lasting than the effects of views (*diṭṭhi*).

Let us now briefly examine how these 3 kinds of knowledge socialize us as humans.

2.2.6 Knowledge as a socializing factor

2.2.6.1 Individuals may know things by and for themselves—just as you are reading this paper. Further, with what we know we often communicate with others, and others do the same with us. Thus knowledge not only builds us intellectually, skillfully and in other ways, but also socializes us. It brings us together or it keeps us apart from others by influencing the way we think, act or live.

Knowledge, in short, plays an important role in human **social affairs**, such as in communication, sharing information, research, symbolism, social rituals, gestures of respect, social affiliations, and the transmission of social heritage. It keeps people together or lets them live, work and enjoy leisure together creatively, and to advance as a community, a culture or a nation.

The knowledge that promotes socializing is of **3 kinds**, based on its source; that is, by the seen, the heard and the known. By "**the seen**" is meant whatever we learn from reading and the social media (such as the Internet, the news, and advertisements); by "**the heard**," we learn through hearsay, schooling, religion, public information and mass media; and by "**the known**" is meant what we learn from our own experiences, education, researches and understanding. All these 3 forms of knowledge work together, influencing one another, so that our views often change or are modified by circumstances.

The suttas mention these 3 forms of knowledge, for example, in **the Magandiya Sutta** (Sn 4.9) and **the Nanda Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.8) from the Sutta,nipāta, perhaps the oldest text of the Pali canon:

[121] These supplementary factors are found *passim* throughout the texts. In **Caṅkī S** (M 95), they form part of the "12-step training" leading to realizing the truth (M 95,20-33/2:174-176), SD 21.15.

Sn 840 *no ce kira **diṭṭhiyā** na **sutiyā** na **ñāṇena***
iti magandiyo
silab-b,batenā,pi visuddhim āha
adiṭṭhiyā assutiyā aññāṇā
asīlatā abbatā no pi tena
maññe-m-ahaṁ momuham eva dhammaṁ
diṭṭhiyā eke paccenti suddhiṁ

If one says that purity is not by view, by hearing [learning], by knowledge, (said Magandiya,)
nor by moral conduct and vows;
nor by lack of view, of learning, of knowledge,
of moral conduct and vows; not by that, too;
I think this doctrine is utterly confused.
Some fall back on purity by means of view.

Sn 1078 *na **diṭṭhiyā** na **sutiyā** na **ñāṇena***
mun'idha nanda kusalā vadanti
viseni,katvā anighā nirāsā
caranti ye te munayo ti brūmi

Not by view, nor by hearing, nor by knowledge,[122]
Nanda, do the skilled speak of a muni here.
They are munis, I say, who live remote, *d*
untroubled, without wishes. *c*

2.2.6.2 These 3 kinds of **social types of knowledge**—the kinds of knowledge that the public are often subject to—can be described as follows as *suta, diṭṭhi* and *ñāṇa*:[123]

1. *Suta* (or ***suti***): knowledge that is heard, learned, or transmitted from others. This is the most common way in which the history, traditions, teachings, information, beliefs and mythology of a community or society are handed down over time.

It can be subdivided further into 2 kinds:

A. Knowledge communicated among humans. Buddhism considers this knowledge and learning to be of vital importance. In the context of wisdom cultivation, it is called "instruction by others" (*parato,ghosa*; literally, the "voice of others").[124] Ideally, this is an active part of spiritual friendship, a fellowship of learning and positive emotions.[125]

Wholesome instruction is given "great emphasis in the teachings, as a basis and condition for right view (*sammā,diṭṭhi*)."[126] This knowledge (*suta*) includes formal schooling, information from the media, printed texts, and recorded history. Even the texts of the suttas in the Tipiṭaka are regarded as *suta*; for example, most of the suttas open with phrase, "Thus have I heard" (*evam me sutaṁ*).

B. The knowledge that some religions proclaim to have been revealed and disclosed by a supreme deity (used by a religion as a means of social control). The brahmins, for example, taught that the Vedas were directly transmitted by their supreme God, Brahmā. Interestingly, when Brahmā was converted by the Buddha, the brahmins seemed to turn to new Supreme deities, such as Viṣṇū and Śiva.

In Pali, this form of knowledge is usually referred to as *suti* ("the heard") corresponding to the Sanskrit *śruti*. In Buddhism, however, this knowledge is not considered to have any unique distinction

[122] Comy: "Knowledge" (*ñāṇa*), ie, of the 8 attainments (*aṭṭha samāpatti*) or the 5 superknowledges (*pañcâbhiñ-ñā*) or wrong knowledge (*micchā,ñāṇa*). "The skilled" (*kusala*) are those well versed in various Dharma teachings, esp the path, fruits and nirvana (Nc:Be 113).

[123] This classification is based on reading **Sn 840**/164 f, **1078**/207 f; and explained at Nm 187 f and Nc 26. These refs are in verse, and the 3 kinds of knowledge are listed in the order of *diṭṭhi*, *suti* and *ñāṇa*. They have been rearranged according to the sequence we have used earlier [eg 2.2.5.2].

[124] **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,13), SD 35.1; **Āsā Vagga,** A 2.11.7; **Yoniso Manasikāra Sampadā S (**S 45.55) + SD 34.12 (2); ***Vicikicchā***, SD 12.8 (2.1.2)

[125] **Upaḍḍha S** (S 45.2) & SD 34.9 (2.1.3).

[126] See Payutto 2021: ch 13, on the preliminary stage of spiritual training (1st factor: spiritual friendship).

and is thus included in the term *suta*. In the light of wisdom, it is not attributed to any special value; the difference lies purely in its content.

2. *Diṭṭhi*: views, opinions; doctrines, beliefs; theories. They refer to conclusions that one draws about an event, situation or state, real or imagined. This understanding is associated with personal bias, conditioning, affinities and attachments. When systematically propagated, it has the potential of projecting a meme[127] or sense of "being apart" from others. Socially, such knowledge tends to create exclusive or elitist groups, even the idea of a superior race allegedly favoured by some Deity or deity. When personal beliefs extend outwards, and people declare, proclaim or impose their views on others, others may adopt these beliefs, giving rise to factionalism and the creation of classes, institutions, religious sects and, with that, the alienated and the marginalized.

There are many Pali synonyms for the word ***diṭṭhi*** (Sanskrit: *dṛṣṭi*). The most important ones are: *khanti* ("preference," "preferred view"); *ruci* ("liking," "pleasing principle"); and *laddhi* ("acquired idea," "dogma," "tenet," "religious belief").[128]

3. *Ñāṇa*: gnosis; direct knowledge; insight; pure knowledge; knowledge in accord with truth; wisdom resulting in a specific truth; comprehensive knowledge of a particular matter. *Ñāṇa* is the highest form of human knowledge that is of vital importance, personally, socially and spiritually. Both in its mundane and transcendent forms, *ñāṇa* is the driving force for the cultivation and development of "noble qualities" (*ariya,dhamma*). The highest *ñāṇa* is referred to as *bodhi* or *bodhi,ñāṇa*, "awakening knowledge." The Buddha realized "supreme self-awakening" (*sammā,sambodhi,ñāṇa*), giving rise to Buddha-Dhamma as the knowledge of spiritual liberation.

2.2.6.3 The early Buddhist texts also give other, miscellaneous terms for various forms of knowledge which are regarded as a set or as related. For example, there is this group of 5 kinds of knowledge that are often used as means of social control or attributing charisma to a leader or a teacher:[129]

1. oral communication (*anussava itiha iti,kirā paramparā*): knowledge handed down as traditional oral information, hearsay, lineage; including news reports, listening, schooling, and oral transmission.[130]
2. textual authority (*piṭaka,sampadā*): textual knowledge or scriptural authority, especially when taught as school curricula, a teaching syllabus, religious catechism or scripture.
3. rationalization (*takka naya ākāra,parivitakka*): knowledge derived through reasoning, including applied logic (*takka*), deductive thinking (*anumāna*), and reasoned reflection (*ākāra,parivitakka*).[131]

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[127] A "meme" is "an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp-[ecially] imitation" (OED). See **Memes**, SD 26.3.

[128] Eg: Nm 64 f, 105, 162, 169 f, 310 f. The most frequent grouping of these terms is that of *diṭṭhi*, *khanti* and *ruci*, eg: V 1:69 f; it occurs often in Nm. These 3 terms are sometimes accompanied by the terms *ajjhāsaya* ("preference') and *adhippāya* ("purpose, opinion"), eg: Nm 64 f; Nc 43, 50. The largest collection of these synonyms incl: *diṭṭhi*, *khanti*, *ruci*, *ādāya* ("accepted belief"), *dhamma,vinaya* ("doctrine and discipline"), *pāvacana* ("fundamental teaching"), *brahma,cariya* ("the holy life"), and *satthu,sāsana* ("the teacher's teaching"), eg: Nm 40, 156; Nc 9, 20; Vbh 245 f (in these cases ref is to Buddhism).

[129] This set of 5 knowledges is listed in foll suttas (not necessarily in the same order): **Sandaka S** (M 76/1:520), SD 35.7.

[130] M 1:520. Rejected by the Buddha: **S** (A 1:189,8) *mā anussavena mā paramparāya mā iti,kirāya*. Nm 360,21 *mā itih'itihaṁ na iti,kirāya na paramparāya*; UA 356.

[131] *Ākāra,parivitakka* ("consideration of causes") is the 4th of the 5 ways some recluses and brahmins make their claims over some absolute views about self and the world (**M 102**,15/2:234,8, 234,30), SD 40a.12 ≈ S 2:115,24-117,-

4. persuasive communication (*diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*): knowledge considered compatible with one's views or which one endorses as part of one's personal beliefs or as the tenets of a group or sectarian confession.[132]
5. personal authority (*sayam abhiññā* or *sakkhi,dhamma*): knowledge arising from personal realization (*atta,paccakkha*); knowledge derived from discerning the truth, from insight formulated into truth. This is knowledge that has been reflected upon with wise judgement, clarified and presented as public teaching.[133]

The following kinds of knowledge and their usage occurs in every human communication. They should be properly used to communicate facts and information for the deliberation of listener or audience, so that they test them for themselves by their own experience and verification.

2.2.6.4 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (popularly known as the Kālāma Sutta) (A 3.65) gives the following as sources of knowledge that are, at least in themselves, unreliable, that is to say:

"Come, Kālāmas:[134]

4 PROPOSITIONS BASED ON TRADITION:

(1)	Do not go[135] by **tradition** [aural revelation].[136]	*mā anussavena*
(2)	Do not go by **lineage** [received wisdom].	*mā paramparāya*
(3)	Do not go by **hearsay**.	*mā iti,kirāya*
(4)	Do not go by **scriptural authority**.	*mā piṭaka,sampadānena*

4 TYPES OF REASONING:

(5)	Do not go by **pure reason** [by logic].	*mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]*
(6)	Do not go by **inference** (and deduction).	*mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]*
(7)	Do not go by **reasoned thought** [by specious reasoning].	*mā ākāra,parivitakkena*
(8)	Do not go by acceptance of [being **convinced** of] a view after pondering on it.	*mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā*

2 TYPES OF PERSONAL AUTHORITY:

(9)	Do not go by (another's) **seeming ability** [charisma].	*mā bhavya,rūpatāya*
(10)	Do not go by the thought, 'This recluse [holy man] is **our teacher**.' ['This recluse is respected by us.'].	*mā samaṇo garū ti*

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

'These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.'

—Then, Kālāmas, you should abandon them." (A 3.65,3/1:189, *passim*), SD 35.4a (2)

The Buddha then lays down the criteria for the choice of wholesome knowledge thus:

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas, thus:

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12 (SA 2:122,25) ≈ 4:138,32 (SA 2:403,21), cf 3:208,23; M 2:170,28 = 218,17; A 1:189,10 (AA 2:305,25) = 2:191,3, 192,1, 193,7; Nm 360,22, 400,14, 482,13; Nc 108,21 (NmA 1:388,7); CA 31,23.

[132] On *diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti,* see M 2:170,28, 171,19+10, 218,21; S 2:115,16+23+27, 4:139,23+30. For similar refs, see prec n.

[133] On *sayaṁ abhiññā:* **D 1**:12,21, **2**:71,23, 92,13 f, 153,7, 251 f, **3**:55,27, 56,7, 57,10, 76,12, 77,2, 78,25, 102,16, 107,27, 108,17. Numerous occurrences in the 5 Nikāyas: CSCD, using search tag: "saya* abhiññā".

[134] For comy details on the foll points and keywords, see SD 35.4a (3).

[135] Comy interprets as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha,* "Do not take hold of (a notion)" throughout (AA 2:305,20-30).

[136] Here, "tradition" includes revelations, prophecies and so on.

"'These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.'

—Then, Kālāmas, you should abandon them.

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas, thus:

'These things are wholesome.

These things are not blamable.

These things are praised by the wise.

These things, fully undertaken, **bring good and happiness**.'

—Then, Kālāmas, you should live cultivating them." (A 3.65,9.2/1:19), SD 35.4a (2)

The Buddha then teaches that we should cultivate **the 4 divine abodes**, that is, the 4 social emotions.

- By cultivating **lovingkindness** (*mettā*), we accept ourselves positively just as we are and, in the same spirit, we accept others.
- By cultivating **compassion** (*karuṇa*), we express lovingkindness in our kind actions and wholesome speech, even when the listeners seem not to deserve it. They are in pain (even if they seem not to show it).
- By cultivating **gladness** (*muditā*), we rejoice in the goodness and success of others, especially since they deserve happiness and friendship.
- By cultivating **equanimity** (*upekkhā*), we look on with a calm and clear heart even when others do not seem to appreciate our efforts; or our efforts in lovingkindness, compassion and gladness still leave so much to be done. Karma works in its own way and we should be at peace that we have done our best. (A 3.65,15/1:192), SD 35,4a (2)]

The Kesa,puttiya Sutta closes with the Buddha's guarantee that *whether we believe in rebirth and karma or not*, so long as our "mind is without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus," we would enjoy **4 self-assurances** or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*), as follows:

(1) if karma and rebirth are true	we will have a good rebirth;
(2) if karma and rebirth are false	we will still be happy right here;
(3) if good and bad exist	we face no bad karmic result;
(4) if there is neither good nor bad	we remain pure and unaffected anyway.

Table 2.2.6.4 The 4 self-assurances [A 3.65,16, SD 35.4a (7)]

With or without any God-idea, good is still good.
With the God-idea, believers righteously harm others;
they do the worst evils in God's name and seek his forgiveness.
Good demands neither faith nor belief, but that we act wisely with love.
No greater love have we than this that we give up the self for the love of all.
Even when good is not returned with good, we already have good in our hearts.

2.3 KNOWLEDGE THAT FREES

2.3.1 Truth, good and reality

2.3.1.1 What we have explored thus far may be regarded as **Buddhist epistemology** or theory of knowledge. This is a very extensive subject, but we seek to see the practical aspects of knowledge and action. We will close by briefly examining true knowledge and false or unhelpful knowledge, and how knowledge frees us from ignorance and suffering.

2.3.1.2 Anyone who seeks to know **truth** (*sacca*) should begin with knowing what is *not* truth. Philosophically, truth is neither good nor bad; it simply refers to whether what we think accords with the "facts." It depends on who defines these facts or what the facts are really about. A robber chief, for example, may tell his minions that they are robbing the rich and powerful because they have a lot of things. So when they have robbed the rich and powerful, the robber chief praises his minions, "You have done the right thing!"

However, if we consider that everyone has the right *to earn a living, to work or to run a business, to make and save money, and to enjoy it,* then we must also accept that robbing others is wrong. We also know and accept that such an act is **bad or unwholesome** (*akusala*) because the intention is rooted in *greed, hatred or delusion*. Any one of these 3 unwholesome roots is bad for the simple reason that when someone else robs us (for example), he or she will also do so with a mind of *greed, hatred or delusion*.[137]

2.3.1.3 A simple and natural way of arguing why we need **good** (*kusala*) is to begin with understanding that the word *kusala* also means "skillful" (such as being good as a student or at a craft, or being kind to another). The idea of "**skill**" is vital for each of us individually so that we, with our skill or ability, contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of our family, community, even society and nation.

The idea of **wholesomeness** goes a little deeper: the qualities of *non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion*—or positively, *charity, love and wisdom*—are vital in motivating us to have some skill or live skillfully. To live "**skillfully**" also means that we should *at least* not *harm others, nor take what is not ours, nor commit sexual misconduct, nor lie, nor mess up our mind.* The reason for this is simple too: we do not want to be killed or harmed by anyone, or lose what we have, or have someone take liberties with our body, or lie to us, or we would rather not mess up our own minds.

What I have outlined here is the nature of **Buddhist morality** (*sīla*) which is the basis for a good society, and the foundation for true individuality by way of mental development that brings concentration and wisdom. Thus, we need a wholesome society so that we can evolve as wholesome individuals; and we need to be wholesome individuals so that we can have a wholesome society. Society, after all, is made up of individuals.

2.3.1.4 From our discussion on good and wholesomeness [2.3.1.2], we may conclude that being good or wholesome (skillful in body, speech and mind) benefits everyone in a society, and we cannot live without society. The fact that I am writing this and you are reading it reflects a very basic characteristic of good society: we communicate with one another, and we learn in the process of communicating.

And what we learn is **true**, which means that we are talking about what **really** is happening, what is making the good society and the true individual possible. We have come quite a long way to understand

[137] For the sake of argument, we may ask what if someone robs or kills *without* greed or hatred. This is not an easy question to answer. Just for this essay, let us settle this by saying that it would be delusional to do something *bad* either way.

the nature of truth and reality, and it is all worth our effort. For, this will bring us happiness and creativity, both of which are good for a wholesome society—and for ourselves individually.

2.3.2 Two levels of truth

2.3.2.1 It seems that I have given an oversimplistic explanation of what is *good*, what is *true*, what is *real*. This is just to start us thinking about those important ideas and what early Buddhism has to teach us about them. Good, truth and reality are no easy topics to think about, much less discuss. This is a good place to begin, and in this essay we have gone quite some way in doing so.

The question we may ask now is: How **true** are those explanations we have given? Let us think about this question and perhaps some clear answers will come to us. I will provide what I think are germane clues and hints from the sutta teachings and their relevant commentaries. We will begin by looking at a very short sutta that gives a profoundly significant teaching.

This is what **the Neyy'attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5)[138] says

5 Bhikshus, there are these 2 who *misrepresent* the Tathagata. What are the two?

(1) Those who explain a sutta **whose sense is drawn out** (*nīt'attha*) as *to be drawn out* [whose sense is direct as indirect].

(2) Those who explain a sutta whose **sense is to be drawn out** (*neyy'attha*) as *drawn out* [whose sense is indirect as direct].

These, bhikshus, are the 2 who misrepresent the Tathagata.

The Nīt'attha Sutta (A 2.3.6) (using a parallel sutta structure) defines the proper way of reading or explaining the suttas, that is,

"a sutta whose sense **is drawn out**	as drawn out	[whose sense is direct];
a sutta whose sense **is to be drawn out**	as to be drawn out	[whose sense is indirect]."

(A 2.3.5 f/1:60), SD 2.6b

The Suttas' commentaries explain the key terms—*neyy'attha* and *nīt'attha*—as follows (paraphrased):

"**Whose sense is to be drawn out**" (***neyy'attha***) is spoken of as a "person" (*puggala*) or as "persons" (*puggalā*), since "in the ultimate sense" (*param'atthato*) there are *no* "persons," the sense of "persons" is to be drawn out. The terms used are *implicit* and need to be explained explicitly. (AA 2:118,7-21)

"**Whose sense is drawn out**" (***nīt'attha***) speaks of the sense (*attha*) as impermanence, suffering, non-self, and so on. In other words, the teachings are explained in terms of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness), and so on. Here the terms used are explicit, directly referring to true reality, that is, the impermanent, and so on. (AA 2:118,22-27)

2.3.2.2 The Neyy'attha Nīt'attha Suttas (A 2.3.5 f) [2.3.2.1] refers to the 2 levels of truth—the implicit (whose sense needs to be drawn out) and the explicit (whose sense has been drawn out—which are better known as "conventional truth" (implicit Dharma terms) and "ultimate or absolute truth" (explicit Dharma terms). Apparently, the teachings of the 2 truths only go as far as **the Neyy'attha Nīt'attha Suttas**, without going into technical details.

The concept of **the 2 levels of truth** began to take definite shape in **the Kathā,vatthu** (Kvu) (the 3rd book of the canonical Abhidhamma) but this text still does not yet give a clear distinction of the 2 terms.

[138] They are actually 2 suttas—**Neyy'attha S** (A 2.3.5) and **Nīt'attha S** (A 2.3.6)—which I have combined since the teachings go together.

The term ***sammuti,sacca***[139] is mentioned at Kvu 311,2, whereas the terms *sacchik'attha,param'attha* ("real and ultimate") and *param'attha* ("the ultimate sense") occur often (Kvu 1-69). The term *sammuti,-sacca,* "conventional truth," is explained in its Commentary,[140] and also in other Commentaries.[141]

Let us look a bit more closely at **conventional truth** [2.3.3]. In other words, we will examine how we know and convey what we know; that is, what are "**concepts**," "**name**" and "**meaning**." Then, we will close this essay with a summary on ultimate truth [2.3.4].

2.3.3 Name and meaning

2.3.3.1 Conventional truth (*sammuti,sacca*)

Another word for *sammuti,sacca* ("conventional truth") is ***vohāra,sacca,*** "vernacular truth," that is, consensual truth: truths that have been formulated by common designations or mutually agreed upon. These designations are used as means of communication, for the sake of convenience and general benefit in everyday life. Examples include the designations: "person," "human," "animal," "good person," "bad person," "house," and "book," and the common words like "tree," "water" and "salt." In Abhidhamma, these are called "**concepts**" (*paññatti*).

Of concepts, **the Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha** (Abhs)[142] says:

> Therein, the material states (*rūpa*) are just **the form aggregate**. Consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*), which comprise the 4 immaterial aggregates and nirvana are the immaterial 5 also called "**name**" (*nāma*). What remains are **concepts**, which are twofold: concept as *that which is made known*, and concept as *that which makes known*.
>
> (Abhs 8.29)[143]

Although concepts are about conventional reality, not about ultimate reality, **the Puggala,paññatti** (the 4th book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka) still includes them in the Abhidhamma. In order to understand ultimate reality, we must begin with an understanding of conventional reality.

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[139] While Payutto (*Dict of Buddhism,* 1972-75, 1978, Thai ed) prefers *sammati-sacca*, *sammati-desanā,* etc*,* I have here foll **PED** which uses *sammuti,sacca,* but lists *sammata* as past part, without mentioning *sammati.* **SED** 1116c only gives "1. *saṁvṛit*" foll by *saṁvṛita,* "covered, shut up … " (a sense common in Mahāyāna texts); also *sam-mata,* "thinking together … agreed," which is cognate with P *sammata* (SED 1180a). **BHSD** 541b gives both *saṁvṛta* and *saṁvṛti* (cognate with P *saṁvuta,* "restrained, controlled") = *saṁvara*). See Payutto 2021:72 n41, translator's n.

[140] Kvu 310,32-311,31 *sammuti.ñāṇa,kathā*; explained in its Comys: KvuA 84,5-16; PañcA: Be 187,5-14 *sammuti,-ñāṇa,katha vaṇṇanā*, Se 241,11-242,2 *sammati,ñāṇa,katha vaṇṇanā*.

[141] Eg, MA 1:217 = SA 2:13; DhA 3:403; DhsMūlṬ 165, 280; DhsAnuṬ 328]; VismṬ:Be 9.5/1:377; UA 396; ItA 1:162. For details, see Abhs 8.29-32 (tr Abhs:BRS 325-328).

[142] **Abhs** was compiled by Anuruddha, a monk from Kañcīpura (S India), around the turn of the 11th cent. Its Comys are: ***Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha Ṭīkā*** or Porāṇa Ṭīkā, "the Old (Sub)Commentary" (Navavimalabuddhi of Sri Lanka. 12th cent); ***Abhidhamm'attha Vibhāvinī Ṭīkā*** (Sumangalasami, 12th cent), the most widely used comy; **Saṅkhepa Vaṇ-ṇanā** by Saddhamma Jotipāla (Chapada) of Burma (15th cent); Ledi Sayadaw's ***Paramattha,dipani Ṭīkā*** (1897), which criticizes the *Vibhāvinī Ṭīkā* on 325 points. ***Aṅkura Ṭīkā*** (Vimala Sayadaw) defends Vibhāvinī against Ledi's criticisms. ***Navanīta Ṭīkā*** by Indian scholar Dhammananda Kosambi, 1933 (called "The Butter Commentary" because it explains Abhs in a smooth and simple manner, without philosophical controversy. Modern Abhs trs incl: ***"A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma"*** (Abhs:BRS) (Narada [*Manual of Abhidhamma,* 1956]; Bodhi and U Rewata Dhamma, with tables by U Silananda; 1993, 2nd ed 1999), "guides" based on both *Vibhavini Ṭīkā* and *Paramattha,dīpanī Ṭīkā,* on their convergences and complementary points; and on Visuddhi,magga; R P Wijeratne & R Gethin, ***Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma*** + Vibhāvinī tr (Abhs:WG), PTS 2002. See Abhs:BRS 17 f. The Abhs **Pali** text is found in *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1884:16-48. 5 May 2025.

[143] Abhs:BRS 325 f; Abhs:WG 319 f.

2.3.3.2 Guide to Abhs 8.29

[They] are also called "name." The 4 immaterial aggregates are called "name" (*nāma*), in the sense of "bending" (*namana*), that is, "habitual or inducing," because they bend towards the object in the act of cognizing it. They are also called *nāma* in the sense of causing to bend (*nāmana*) since they cause one another to bend on to the object. Nirvana is called *nāma* only in the sense of causing to bend. For the idea of nirvana inspires faultless states—that is, the supramundane cittas and cetasikas—to bend on to themselves by acting as an objective predominance condition.[144]

What remains are concepts, of which there are 2 kinds:

concepts-as-meanings,	*attha paññatti*;	that which is made known;	"reference"[145]
concepts-as-names,	*nāma paññatti*;	that which makes known.	"referent"

The former are the meanings conveyed by the concepts, the latter the names, designations or symbols which convey that meaning. For example, the notion of a "fixed twinkling light in the night sky" with certain physical features and traits is **the concept-as-meaning** of the term "star"; the designation and idea "star" is the corresponding **concept-as-name**. The meaning-concept is what is *made known* (reference); the name-concept is that which *makes known* (referent).

2.3.3.3 Concept as what is made known (*paññāpiyattā paññatti*)

The Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha continues:

> There are such terms as "land," "hill," and the like, so designated on account of the mode of transformation of the respective elements;
>
> such terms as "house," "chariot," "cart," and the like, so named on account of the mode of assembly of matter (and materials);
>
> such terms as "person," "individual," and the like, so named on account of the 5 aggregates;
>
> such terms as "direction," "time," and the like, named according to the revolution of the sun, the moon and so forth;
>
> such terms as "well," "cave," and the like, so named on account of the mode of not being touched by the various groups of materiality and so forth;
>
> such terms as kasiṇa signs and the like, so named on account of respective elements and different modes of mental development.
>
> All such different things, though they do not exist in *the ultimate sense*, become objects of consciousness in the form of "shadows" or reflections (*chāyā*) of (ultimate) things.
>
> They are called **concepts** because they are thought of, reckoned, understood, expressed, and made known on account of, in consideration of, with respect to, this or that mode. This kind of concept is so called because **it is made known**. (Abhs 8.30)[146]

2.3.3.4 Comments on Abhs 8.30

"**Concept as what is made known**" is the same as meaning-concept (*attha,paññatti*). Some examples of meaning-concept follow. The examples named are described: they have "references."

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[144] DhsA 392; DhsA:M 501. There is a word-play here on *nāma*, "name" or "mind," derived from √*NAM,* "to bend." We need to bear in mind this flexibility and versatility to cultivate our "Pali sense," ie, to understand and appreciate the Pali idiom, which is difficult to convey in a translation.

[145] The terms in this column are not equivalents to any linguistic terms, but are merely convenient terms for a better understanding of the Pali concepts.

[146] See Abhs:BRS 326; Abhs:WG 320 f.

"Land, hill," etc, are "formal concepts" (*saṇṭhāna,paññatti*) since they correspond to the form or configuration of things; or they are "continuity concepts" (*santāna,paññatti*), since they are cases of things that exist in continuity.

"House, chariot, village," etc, are "collective concepts" (*samūha,paññatti*), since they correspond to an assembly or group of things.

East, west, etc, are "local concepts" (*disā,paññatti*), since they correspond to a locality, quarter or direction.

Morning, noon, week, month, etc, are "temporal concepts" (*kāla,paññatti*), since they correspond to periods or units of time.

Well, cave, etc, are "spatial concepts" (*ākāsa,paññatti*), since they correspond to spaces void of perceptible matter.

The kasina signs are "sign concepts" (*nimitta,paññatti*), since they correspond to mental signs gained by meditative cultivation.

2.3.3.5 Concept as what makes known (*paññāpanato paññatti*)

Then, since it makes known, it is called **concept**. It is described as name, nomenclature, etc.

There are 6 kinds of concepts:

(1) a (direct) concept of the real;	*vijjamāna,paññatti*
(2) a (direct) concept of the unreal;	*avijjamāna,paññatti*
(3) a concept of the unreal by means of the real;	*vijjamānena avijjamāna,paññatti*
(4) a concept of the real by means of the unreal;	*avijjamānena vijjamānena,paññatti*
(5) a concept of the real by means of the real; and	*vijjamānena vijjamānena,paññatti*
(6) a concept of the unreal by means of the unreal.	*avijjamānena avijjamānena,paññatti*

> As, for instance, when it makes known what really exists in the ultimate sense by a term such as "matter," "feeling," and so forth, it is called a (direct) concept of the real.
>
> When it makes known what does not really exist in the ultimate sense by a term, such as "land," "mountain," and so forth, it is called a (direct) concept of the unreal.
>
> The rest should be respectively understood by combining both as, for instance, "possessor of sixfold direct knowledge," "woman's voice," "eye-consciousness," and "king's son." (Abhs 8.31)

2.3.3.6 Comments on Abhs 8.31

"**Concept as what makes known**" is the same as name-concept (*nāma,paññatti*). The examples given above [2.3.3.4] are cases of names (*nāma*) or referents given to various concepts.

A (direct) concept of the real. Matter, feeling, etc, are ultimate realities; therefore, the concepts that designate them are *direct* concepts of the real.

A (direct) concept of the unreal. "Land" and "mountain," etc, are not ultimate realities but conventional entities established conceptually through mental construction. Though these concepts are based on ultimate entities, the meanings they convey are not things that are themselves ultimate entities since they do not correspond to things that really exist by way of their own intrinsic nature (*sabhāvato*), for example, by one of the 4 elements or the 5 aggregates.

The rest should be respectively understood. Here, "possessor of sixfold direct knowledge" is a concept of the unreal by means of the real, since the direct knowledges are ultimately real but the "possessor" is a mental construction.

"Woman's voice" is a concept of the real by means of the unreal, since the sound of the voice ultimately exists (as "sound") but not the woman.

"Eye-consciousness" is a concept of the real by means of the real, since both eye-sensitivity and the consciousness dependent on it exist in an ultimate sense.

"King's son" is a concept of the unreal by way of the unreal, since neither the king nor the son ultimately exists.[147]

2.3.3.7 Summary of the study on concepts (Abhs 8.32)

vacī,ghosânusārena sota,viññāṇa,vīthiyā
pavattânantar'uppannā mano,dvārassa gocarā
atthā yassânusārena viññāyanti tato paraṁ
sāyaṁ paññatti viññeyyā loka,saṅketa,nimmitā ti

(Abhs:8.32)

By following the sound of speech through the path of the conscious ear,
a concept at once arises at the mind-door process.
Following this, meanings are then understood.
Such a concept should be understood as created by worldly convention.

2.3.4 Ultimate truth (*param'attha,sacca*)

2.3.4.1 Examples of **ultimate truths** include: mental states (*nāma,dhamma*), corporeality (*rūpa,-dhamma*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the mind (*citta*), mental concomitants (*cetasika*), material form (*rūpa*), nirvana (*nibbāna*), contact (*phassa*), intention (*cetanā*), one-pointed attention (*ekaggatā*), the life-faculty (*jīvit'indriya*), etc. These are words that connect the wise directly to the Dharma, that is, true reality.

2.3.4.2 A comparison to modern science is the analysis of water or salt. For scientists, the terms "water" and "salt" may be deemed inadequate, ambiguous, even misleading. For greater accuracy, they thus define water as dihydrogen oxide (H^2O) and common salt as sodium chloride (NaCl). This is not to say that scientific language is about ultimate reality. A research scientist would probably tell us that the accuracy of scientific language facilitates scientific study, research, discovery of important scientific principles, and facilitates communication of such learning amongst scientists.

2.3.4.3 Similarly, conventional language helps propagate Buddhism amongst the masses, but as practitioners deepen their Dharma practice and experiential understanding, they will naturally apply and better understand the nature of the language of ultimate truth. However, when it comes to the actual awakening experience, one may not find the right words for it, since it is beyond the realm of language. Those who see words and language as **a raft** for crossing troubled waterswill by personal effort free the Dharma from the words. They will taste the true freedom from words and thought.

2.3.4.4 The wholesome truth can still be expressed in words and ideas with the intention of fully comprehending things as they really are. The true purpose in communicating Dharma then is to give rise to the highest benefit of penetrating **ultimate reality** (*sacca,dhamma*), a wisdom which removes all attachments, delusions, and defilements, so that we are free from suffering, and gain true purity, peace and awakening. With that, we will be able to relate to people, beings and the world—with our words, deeds and mind—in a naturally happy and realistic manner for the benefit of the many.

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[147] Further on the developed theory of concepts in Abhidhamma, see Nyanamoli's note at Vism:Ñ 256: n11.

SD 62.19 Saññā Sutta 1

Paṭhama Saññā Sutta The First Discourse on Perceptions | **A 5.61**
Theme: The 5 perceptions for awakening to the path
Translated by Piya Tan ©2017, 2025

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 The 5 perceptions

1.1.1.1 Paṭhama Saññā Sutta or the First Discourse on the Perceptions lists 5 perceptions—those *on the foul, on death, on danger, on the repulsiveness of food,* and *on non-delight in all the world*—that is, meditative perceptions recommended for monastics, but which the laity may do when they feel right and ready.

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

1.1.2 These 5 perceptions are also efficacious in overcoming strong lust, especially for lay practitioners, in which case they should be guided by an experienced meditation teacher, that is, a spiritual friend.

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

The Paṭhama Saññā Sutta or the First Discourse on the Perceptions (A 5.61) is the first of 2 suttas on 5 perceptions listed consecutively as the first 2 suttas of **the Saññā Vagga**, "the chapter on meditative perception," of the Saṁyutta Nikāya. The Burmese Tipiṭaka calls this pair of suttas **the Saññā,sutta,dvaya** (the 2 suttas on perceptions), since structurally they are very similar, that is:

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

2 *Saññā* as meditative perception

2.1 *SAÑÑĀ* MEANING "MEDITATIVE PERCEPTION"

2.1.1 Saññā as meditation practice

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

[1] Nyanaponika & Bodhi 1999:303 VII n1.
[2] BDict: *saññā* (3).

Perception exercises may be used as preliminary work for calm (*samatha*) or for access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*).[3] One of the most common and effective perception practices is **the perception of impermanence** (*anicca,saññā*). Properly done, it is even guaranteed by the Buddha to bring us to the attainment of streamwinning.[4]

2.1.2 Verbs for perception practice

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

	Perception in	**the foul**	**death**	**danger**	**repulsiveness of food**	**non-delight in the world**
paṭisañcikkhati	"reflects"		√	√		(perception only)
anupassati	"contemplates"			√		
paccavekkhati	"reviews"	√			√	

[For a **Table** on the remaining perceptions found in **the Saññā Sutta 2** (A 5.62), see SD 62.20 (2.1.2). For a longer list, see **SD 19.16** (Table 3.3).]

2.2 LISTS OF *SAÑÑĀ* AS MEDITATIVE PERCEPTIONS

Here is a list of other meditative perceptions given in a number of Aṅguttara suttas. Please compare the lists to see which perceptions are the most common, and the different kinds of perceptions introduced into the list for a broad view of insight experiences.

2.2.1 Vijjā,bhāgiya Dhamma Sutta (A 6.35)[5]

The 6 conditions that pertain to true knowledge (*cha dhammā vijjā,bhāgiyā*):

(1) the perception of impermanence;	*anicca,saññā* [2.1.1]
(2) the perception of suffering in the impermanent;	*anicce dukkha,saññā*
(3) the perception of the nonself in suffering;	*dukkhe anatta,saññā*
(4) the perception of abandoning;	*pahāna,saññā*
(5) the perception of dispassion;	*virāga,saññā*
(6) the perception of cessation.	*nirodha,saññā*

2.2.2 (Saṅkhitta) Satta Saññā Sutta (A 7.45)[6]

The 7 perceptions cultivated and developed are of great fruit, of great benefit, culminating in the death-free, with the death-free as their goal (*satta saññā bhāvitā bahulīkatā maha-p,phalā honti mahânisaṁsā amat'ogadhā amata'pariyosānā*)

(1) the perception of the foul;	*asubha,saññā*
(2) the perception of death;	*maraṇa,saññā*

[3] SA 2:292
[4] See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) & SD 16.7 (5).
[5] A 6.35/3:334 (SD 23.16(1.2)): see also (1) for details.
[6] A 7.45/4:46.

(3) the perception of the repulsiveness of food; *āhāre paṭikūla,saññā*
(4) the perception of non-delight in all the world; *sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*
(5) the perception of impermanence; *anicca,saññā* [2.1.1]
(6) the perception of suffering in the impermanent; *anicce dukkha,saññā*
(7) the perception of nonself in suffering. *dukkhe anatta,saññā*

[A longer version of the same sutta follows.]

2.2.3 Paṭhama (Dasama) Saññā Sutta (A 10.56)[7]

These 10 perceptions, when cultivated and developed, are of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the death-free, having the death-free as their goal.

(1) the perception of the foul; *asubha,saññā*
(2) the perception of death; *maraṇa,saññā*
(3) the perception of the repulsiveness of food; *āhāre paṭikūla,saññā*
(4) the perception of non-delight in all the world *sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*
(5) the perception of impermanence; *anicca,saññā* [2.1.1]
(6) the perception of suffering in the impermanent; *anicce dukkha,saññā*
(7) the perception of nonself in suffering; *dukkhe anatta,saññā*
(8) the perception of abandoning; *pahāna,saññā*
(9) the perception of dispassion; *virāga,saññā*
(10) the perception of cessation. *nirodha,saññā*

2.2.4 Dutiya (Dasama) Saññā Sutta (A 10.57)[8]

These 10 perceptions, when cultivated and developed, are of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the death-free, having the death-free as their goal.

(1) the perception of impermanence; *anicca,saññā* [2.1.1]
(2) the perception of nonself; *anatta,saññā*
(3) the perception of death; *maraṇa,saññā*
(4) the perception of the repulsiveness of food; *āhāre paṭikūla,saññā*
(5) the perception of non-delight in all the world; *sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*
(6) the perception of a skeleton;[9] *aṭṭhika,saññā*
(7) the perception of a worm-infested corpse; *puḷavaka,saññā*
(8) the perception of a livid corpse; *vinīlaka,saññā*
(9) the perception of a fissured corpse; *vicchiddaka,saññā*
(10) the perception of a bloated corpse. *uddhumātaka,saññā*

— — —

[7] A 10.56/5:105.
[8] A 10.57/5:105 f.
[9] These last 5 kinds of perceptions are those of corpses from the 10 foulness meditation-subjects listed in **Kāya,-gata,sati S** (M 119,9-17/3:91 f), SD 12.21, and described in detail in **Vism** ch 6.

Saññā Sutta 1

The First Discourse on Perceptions

A 5.61

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

What are the five?

(1) The perception of the foul,	*asubha,saññā*
(2) the perception of death,	*maraṇa,saññā*
(3) the perception of danger,	*ādīnava,saññā*
(4) the perception of the repulsiveness of food, and	*āhāre paṭikkūla,saññā*
(5) the perception of non-delight in all the world.[10]	*sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*

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

— evaṁ —

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[10] The perception of the foul (*asubha,saññā*) is explained at A 10.60,6 (SD 19.16 (3.2.4)); the perception of death (*maraṇa,saññā*) or mindfulness of death (*maraṇa,sati*) at A 6.19+20 SD 48.11+12) and 8.73+74 (SD 48.5+6); the perception of danger (*ādīnava,saññā*) at A 10.60,4-7 (SD 19.16); the perception of the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla,saññā*) at Vism 11.1-26/341-347; and the perception of non-delight in all the world (*sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*) at A 10.60 (8) (SD 19.16.

SD 62.20 Saññā Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on Perceptions | **A 5.62**
Dutiya Saññā Sutta The Second Discourse on Perceptions
Theme: Another 5 perceptions for awakening to the path
Translated by Piya Tan ©2017, 2025

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 Recommended practice for the laity

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

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

1.1.2 Practising for streamwinning

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

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

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

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

2 *Saññā* as meditative perception

2.1 *SAÑÑĀ* MEANING "MEDITATIVE PERCEPTION"

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

[1] Nyanaponika & Bodhi 1999:303 VII n1.
[2] BDict: *saññā* (3).

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

	Perception on	**impermanence**	**nonself**
paṭisañcikkhati	"reflects"	√	√
anupassati	"contemplates"	√	√
paccavekkhati	"reviews"		

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

— — —

Saññā Sutta 2

The Second Discourse on Perceptions

A 5.62

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

What are the five?

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

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

— evaṁ —

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

SD 62.21 (Ānâpāna,sati) Vesālī Sutta

The (Ānâpāna,sati) Discourse at Vesālī | **S 54.9**
Ce **Asubha Sutta** The Discourse on the Foul, or (Vesālī) Asubha Sutta
Theme: (1) Tell the truth to stop it. (2) The wholesomeness of breath meditation.
Translated by Piya Tan ©2018; 2025

[For bibliographical details, see SD Guide]

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(Ānâpāna,sati) Vesālī Sutta

1 Sutta summary, sources and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

At Vesālī, the Buddha teaches some 500 monks on the benefits of meditating on **foulness** (*asubha*), that is, the impurity of the body, and then goes into a fortnight's solitary retreat. The monks, not fully understanding the practice, felt loathing for their bodies and committed suicide in droves. On emerging from his retreat, the Buddha learned of the terrible predicament, and Ānanda invites him to teach a suitable meditation to remedy the situation. The Buddha teaches **the breath meditation**.

1.2 SUTTA SOURCES

1.2.1 The 2 suttas, 6 Vinayas

This remarkable story [1.1] has been preserved in 2 suttas and 6 extant Vinayas, as follows:

(1)	**Vesālī Sutta**	**S 54.9**/5:320,7-322,13 (SD 62.21)	the Pali version;
(2)	**Saṁyukta Āgama**	**SĀ 809** (T99.2.207b21-208a8)[1]	Chinese parallel to **Vesālī Sutta;**
(3)	**Vinaya (Pali)**	**Pār 3.1** (V 3:68-71)	cf VA 3:393 f *asubha,kathā*;
(4)	**Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya**	T1425 (T22.254b21-255a7)	with detailed *ānâpāna,sati*;
(5)	**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya**	T1442 (T23.659c21-660a25)	Vinayavibhaṅga for monks;
		T1443 (T22.923b10-923c4)	Vinayavibhaṅga for nuns.
		(Tib) D 3 *ca* 134a or Q 1032 *che* 120a7	
(6)	**Sarvāstivāda Vinaya**	T1435 (T23.7b21-8b9)	
(7)	**Dharmaguptaka Vinaya**	T1428 (T22.575c11-576b19)	
(8)	**Mahīśasaka Vinaya**	T1421 (T22.7a-7c7)	

1.2.2 Buddhist records of the Vesālī story

While the 2 suttas and the 6 Vinaya versions of the Vesālī monk suicide story have their own narrative twists trying to reconcile the story with a belief in the Buddha's omniscience, along with some variant dramatic elements, their narrative flows all closely agree. The set-up of the story is as follows: The Buddha recommends that the monks practise cultivation of the foul (*asubha*).

All versions record that the Buddha only gives a broad recommendation for the practice of foulness perception without giving any detailed instructions. The monks then each practises on their own, presumably, without the proper balance that would have come with full instructions. As a result, they are so disgusted with their own bodies that they commit suicide, on their own or with assistance. As soon as the Buddha learns of this, he intervenes. He then teaches them the breath meditation which is a very genial meditation.[2]

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[1] For a ref to this sutra in Skt **Vyākhyā,yukti**, see P Skilling, "Vasubandhu and the Vyākhyāyukti Literature," *J of the International Assoc of Buddhist Studies* 23,2 2000:297-350 (344).

[2] Comys (SA 3:265,22; VA 2:393,22) relate the Buddha's teaching of cultivating *asubha* by way of contemplating body parts. In **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:57,20, SD 13.3) and its parallel MĀ 98 (T1.583b9) such contemplation of one's own body parts comes with a simile of looking at a sack filled with grains; cf Śikṣāsamuccaya (Bendall 1902:210,8), and Arthaviniścayasūtra (Samtani 1971:24,4). This simile is meant to convey an idea of balance and detachment, not of aversion (for details: Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: the direct path,* 2003:149, & *Perspectives in Satipaṭṭhāna,* 2013b:68. In early Buddhist meditation, contemplating the body as *asubha* comes, as a rule, with other practices that relate to seeing the body objectively, such as keeping focus on body postures, and leading on to the experience of the calm and clarity of dhyana; cf details in Anālayo, "Perspectives on the body in early Buddhism" (in *Buddhist Meditative*

1.2.3 Sutta significance

1.2.3.1 This Sutta seems to be a shocking departure from the usual edifying nature of the Buddha's teaching. For that very reason, it is worthy of special study. The Sutta opens by saying only that the Buddha "gave the monks **a talk on bodily foulness** in many ways; he spoke in praise of the foul (and) spoke in praise of the cultivation of foulness" in reported speech without any direct speech [§2]. There is no mention of the Buddha giving any detailed instructions, or any kind of caveat for such a difficult meditation practice.

1.2.3.2 The Sutta Commentary gives a traditional explanation of the Vesālī monks' suicide/murder story, mostly by way of past karma of the monks involved. Most modern Buddhists and scholars are unlikely to easily accept such an explanation, if they accept it at all. The point remains that such an explanation or rationalization reflected their views of religious asceticism, including religious suicide (*sallekhana*).[3]

> **The Saṁyutta Commentary** to the Sutta explains why the Buddha gave such a teaching. In the past, it is said, 500 men earned their living together all their lives as game hunters (*miga,-luddhaka*),[4] happily going into the forest to encircle and trap animals and birds using clods of earth, sticks, nets and so on. They were reborn in hell, but later, through some past good karma ripening, they were reborn as humans and went forth as monks under the Blessed One. However, a part of their original bad karma found the conditions to ripen during this fortnight and to result in their deaths both by suicide and homicide (*att'upakkamena ca par'upakkamena ca jīvit'upacchedāya*).
>
> The Blessed One foresaw this and realized he could do nothing about it. The Buddha spoke of the foul to remove their attachment to the body so that they would lose their fear of death and could thus be reborn in heaven. Therefore, he spoke on the foul in order to help them, without any intention of extolling death. Realizing that such massive karmic fruiting could not be stopped, he went into seclusion. Among those monks, some were worldlings, some streamwinners, some once-returners, some nonreturners, some arhats. The arhats would not take rebirth, the other noble disciples were bound for a happy rebirth, but the worldlings were of uncertain destiny. (SA 3:266,31-267,39)

As a whole, this commentarial explanation will raise more questions with modern Buddhists and scholars. Bh Bodhi, in his Saṁyutta translation (2000), for example, expresses his doubts; "but the idea of a karmically predetermined suicide seems difficult to reconcile with the conception of a suicide as a volitionally induced act" (S:B 1952 n301).

1.2.4 On *sattha,hāraka*

1.2.4.1 The Pali compound, ***sattha,hāraka*** [§4] is an important term that is not clearly understood and is often mistranslated. For reasons stated here I have rendered it as "a killing tool [a life-taker]" with an amplified translation (here, an idiomatic rendition, followed by a literal translation). Let us examine

---

Traditions, ed K-p Chuang, Taipei, 2014d:21-49. In fact, **S 54.9** is itself a teaching in harmonizing one's meditation, where body loathing is remedied by mindfulness of the breath; for details on breath meditation: Anālayo 2003:125-136 & 2013b:227-240.

[3] *Sallekhana* is used broadly here. It is a Jain term referring to ritual suicide by starvation: SD 27.1 (2.1.2).

[4] Also spelt *luddaka. Ludda* means "fierce, cruel, terrible; cruel, gruesome." *Luddha* (past part of *lubbhati*) means "greedy, covetous"; n *lobha.*

what we can learn from the texts and the scholars on what they have learned regarding this fascinating term in its proper context.

The Vinaya's **Old Word Commentary** (*pada,bhajana*, "word analysis") glosses *sattha,hārakaṁ* as "a knife, a dagger, an arrow, a cudgel, a stone, a sword, poison, or a rope" (*asiṁ vā sattiṁ vā bheṇḍiṁ vā laguḷaṁ vā pāsāṇaṁ vā satthaṁ vā visaṁ vā rajjuṁ vā,* V 3:73,26-28). Thus, we know, for a start, that this is the prescribed meaning of the term in the Vinaya version of the monk murder/suicide story that opens the 3rd "defeat" (*pārājika*) chapter (V 3:68-71).

1.2.4.2 The Punn'ovāda Sutta (M 145) records an interview the elder Punna had with the Buddha before the elder left for his home country, Sunāparanta (today North Mumbai). In a series of questions, the Buddha asked if Punna was ready to face the challenges of this since the people there were known to be very fierce. In the 7th and last question, the Buddha asked Punna what he would do if the people there took his life with knives. Punna calmly replied:

"There have been disciples of the Blessed One, who being repelled and disgusted by the body and by life, have resorted to a killing tool, the knife.[5] But I have not sought the knife: **it is the knife that sought me!**' (*taṁ me idaṁ apariyiṭṭhaṁ yeva sattha,hārakaṁ laddhaṁ*).[6] Apparently, Punna was familiar with the Vesālī monk murder/suicide story, and he uses the same term, *sattha,hāraka.*

1.2.4.3 The Pali-English Dictionary (PED, 1922), however, defines ***sattha,hāraka*** as "an assassin." Bh Bodhi, in his translations—of both **M 145** and **S 54.9**—too, rendered *sattha,hāraka* as "an assailant."[7] Ṭhānissaro, in his *The Buddhist Monastic Code 1* (2001, 2013: 87), says: "the word *sattha,hāraka* clearly means 'assassin' in other parts of the Canon (see, eg, M 145)."

Analayo however disagrees ("The mass suicide of monks in discourse and Vinaya literature, Oxford, 2014:16 n17): "Yet the significance of the expression in M 145/3:269,12 is not as self-evident as Ṭhānissaro seems to think." Analayo then refers to Richard Gombrich's addendum to Analayo 2014 for further arguments against rendering *sattha,hāraka* as "assailant," "murderer" and so on, but rather literally as a "life-taker" or a "thing that takes away life." [1.2.4.1]

Analayo adds that **T108** (T2.503a6), a Chinese parallel to M 145, seems to follow a similar Indic expression, reading 求刀為食 *qiú dāo wéi shí,*[8] where the use of 刀 *dāo* shows that the translator understood the phrase to refer to a killing tool, not a killer. See Analayo, *Comparative Study of Majjhima Nikāya*,[9] where he notes this expression in T108, without going into details of the significance.

Gombrich, in his Addendum to Analayo 2014, gives perhaps a most helpful suggestion and is the most likely reading of ***sattha,hāraka***, thus:

"The word occurs in several places, as Anālayo [2014] reports, and it would be tedious to list all the wrong translations of it which have been published. They seem to have been influenced by the fact that there is a word *sattha* (< Sanskrit *śastra*) meaning a cutting weapon, eg, a knife or dagger. This however is not that word, but a homonym of it. Though it is not in the PED, *sattha* can mean, if we interpret it as the p.p.p.[10] of Sanskrit *vśvas*, "[the breath of] life," a synonym of *pāṇa*. *Hāraka* means 'taking away.'" [1.2.5.2]

---

[5] *Santi kho bhagavato sāvakā kāyena ca jīvitena ca aṭṭiyamānā jigucchamānā yeva sattha,hārakaṁ pariyesanti.*

[6] **M 145**,5(7)/3:268 (SD 20.15).

[7] M:B (1995, 2001, 2008, 4th ed 2009) 1119; S:B (2001) 1773; that is, as "they sought an assailant," and so on.

[8] Analayo 2011a renders Chin 求刀為食 *qiú dāo wéi shí* as lit, "searching a knife for food," where 食is *sì* (4th tone), "to feed." It is probable that the Chin translator had difficulty with the term *sattha,hāraka*¸as we do even today.

[9] Analayo, 2011a:830 n50 on M 145.

[10] In Skt, p.p.p. means "past passive participle," a verb form that functions as an adjective, describing something that has undergone an action in the past. PPPs are frequently used in Sanskrit to modify nouns, indicating that the noun has been acted upon or is the result of a past action.

1.2.5 Learned studies on the Vesālī monk suicide/murder story

1.2.5.1 At the time of writing, at least 2 learned papers on the problem of the monk suicide "mystery" of Vesālī have been published:

Mills, Laurence C R [Khantipālo] (1932-2021)
1992 "The case of the murdered monks," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 16, 1992:71-75. [Archive] [*JPTS*1992] 18 May 2025.
Analayo, Bhikkhu (Theodor P Steffens, 1962-)
2014 "The mass suicide of monks in discourse and Vinaya literature." *Journal of the Oxford Centre of Buddhist Studies* 7, 2014:11-55. [Hamburg] [JOCBS] 18 May 2025.

Both these writers are devoted and learned practising Buddhists. **Mills** (better known as Khantipālo), in his short 4-page paper summarized the monk suicide story, admits that "as a Buddhist I am naturally reluctant to accept this … piece of improbable fiction," and hopes that "some later investigator … may be able to 'solve' this mystery." (1992:74 f)

Indeed, just over 2 decades later, **Analayo** (2014) has responded with an admirable comprehensive comparative study of the monk murder suicide mystery from both the Pali and Āgamas, and the 6 extant Vinayas, giving his own solution to this troubling mystery. This is the solution that I will discuss and present in this study.

1.2.5.2 Gombrich, in addition to his proposed Sanskrit etymology of *sattha,hāraka*, closes with the following conclusion to his *Addendum* to Analayo 2014, thus (paragraphed):

> This is not the place to take my own analysis of the story much further, but I shall indicate the direction of my thoughts. I have always admired the dictum of Dr Samuel Johnson, who said, "Sir, I get the Latin from the meaning, not the meaning from the Latin." In the present case, this means that I start from the observation that the whole story which introduces the third *pārājika* offense with the story of the mass suicide of monks is totally absurd and must owe its form to some misunderstanding—a misunderstanding which I think we can dimly discern.
>
> Why is it absurd? I can easily suggest four reasons.
>
> (1) We know that Roman warriors sometimes committed suicide by getting someone to hold a sword onto which they threw themselves; Japanese warriors (*samurai*) had almost the same custom; but is there any other trace of this custom, or any similar form of assisted suicide, in India?
>
> (2) If that is not enough, does this story not conflict with other major features of what we know of early Buddhism? How come that so spectacular an event is never mentioned outside this immediate context, either in the Buddhist texts or in the polemics of non-Buddhist religious literature? It is as if even the Buddhists themselves did not believe this story.
>
> (3) And well might they not so believe! Buddhists knew that if one killed oneself, one would not escape from corporeal existence but be reborn in another body—but probably in worse circumstances, because one had died by self-inflicted violence.
>
> (4) Finally, as Anālayo points out in his article, the story reflects amazingly badly on the Buddha: not only does it impugn his omniscience, but something far worse: it shows him guilty of the most shocking misjudgment, failing to foresee the effect of his own preaching. Anālayo mentions this, most pointedly in note 118 and the related text in this article, but goes no further than calling it "remarkable". Yet is any comparable episode to this recorded elsewhere?

None of this is in disagreement with Anālayo's analysis of the function that this story was intended to have. It survives in several versions, and this alone shows that it did serve a purpose in training monastics and setting a limit to permissible asceticism. My intention is merely to dig deeper and suggest how so grotesque and unrealistic a fable came about.

2 Understanding the Vesālī incident (S 54.9)

2.1 THE BODY IN EARLY BUDDHISM AND INDIAN ASCETIC TRADITION

2.1.1 Disgust towards the physical body

2.1.1.1 Any modern Buddhist or scholar would be troubled, or at least perplexed, with the very idea of monks committing suicide or feeling that suicide was appropriate simply because they were disgusted with their bodies on account of meditation on *asubha* (foulness). What is the context that needs to be considered for such an extreme depiction of *asubha* meditation?

Such a context is found amongst the Jains, who regard **religious suicide** (*sallekhana*) by starvation[11] as actually conferring sainthood upon those who rid themselves of their bodies in this manner.[12] However, the Jain context is unbuddhist since, according to Buddhism, neither karma nor defilements can be removed in this way; one simply must see true reality and awaken to be free.

Hence, two other possible contexts may be considered here:

(1) Suicide makes sense in the local cultural context. That would explain why a monk who hadn't understood the teachings would react in that way, resorting to suicide. But this does not explain why the teachings were so badly understood.

(2) The story is **a parable** for the local cultural context: there was no really no such incident, but such a narrative would be believable, setting them up for the conclusion of the story which is that suicide is actually inappropriate.

2.1.1.2 Then, there is the ancient Indian ascetic belief that the body is impure and we are to be rid of it; the evidence of this is clear in the common disgust towards a dead decomposing body. In fact, a well known metaphor for youthful vanity is the disgust and fear that young men and women show towards any dirt on their well-groomed body, as observed in **the Vitakka Saṇṭhāna Sutta** (M 20), that is, "just as a woman or a man, a youth or a maiden, well-dressed and fond of ornaments, would feel

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[11] Eg, P V **Kane**, *History of Dharmaśāstra,* Poona, 1941 (vol 2,2):924-928 & 1953 (vol 4):604-614; U **Thakur**, *The History of Suicide in India,* N Delhi, 1963; J **Filliozat**, "L'abandon de la vie par le sage et les suicides du criminal et du héros dans la tradition Indienne," *Arts Asiatiques* 15 1967:65-88; D C **Sircar**, "Religious suicide" (ed Sircar, *Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India*), Delhi, 1971:206-220; P **Olivelle**, "Ritual suicide and the rite of renunciation," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 22 1978:19-44; and T **Oberlies**, "Das Sterben 'lebender Toter'… ," *Acta Orientalia* 67 2006:203-228.

[12] See N **Tatia**, "On Saṁlekhanā or suspension of aliment," in (ed) A N Upadhye et al, *Sri Mahavir Jaina Vaidyalaya Golden Jubilee Vol,* Bombay, 1968:63-67, 139-142; T K **Tukol**, *Sallekhanā is not suicide,* Ahmedabad, 1976; C **Caillat**, "Fasting unto death according to the Jaina tradition," *Acta Orientalia* 38 1977:43-66; P **Bilimoria**, "The Jaina ethic of voluntary death," *Bioethics* 6,4 1992:331-355; J **Bronkhorst**, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India,* Delhi, 1993:31-36; S **Settar**, *Pursuing Death,* Dharwad: Karnatak Univ, 1990; K **Skoog**, "The morality of Sallekhanā," in (ed) O Quarnstrom, *Janism and Early Buddhism: Essays i h o of Padmanabh S Jaini, 1* 2003:293-304; and J **Laidlaw**, "A life worth leaving," *Economy and* Society 34,2 2005:178-199. On suicide by Ājīvikas: A L **Basham**, *History and Doctrine of the Ājīvikas,* London, 1951:63 f, 84-90, 127-131. On the generally negative attitude towards the body in ancient Indian ascetic circles: P **Olivelle**, "Deconstruction of the body in Indian asceticism," in (edd) Wimbush & Valantasis, *Asceticism,* NY: OUP, 2002:188-210.

troubled, ashamed, disgusted by a snake carcase, a dog carcase, or a human carcase hung around the neck."[13]

But then the foulness imagery in the Sutta is projected onto bad deeds: we should be deeply troubled by the negative effects of bad karma to reject them at once. Just as we avoid a dead body, we should simply reject bad, unwholesome deeds. While it is true that we are disgusted with dead bodies, we do not reject our living body in this way, simply because we are alive and capable of doing good and seeing true reality, bringing us spiritual freedom.

2.1.1.3 The way arhats see their own bodies are best illustrated by **the Vuṭṭha Vass'āvāsa Sutta** (A 9.11) and its parallels. The Sutta relates that Sāriputta is accused by a certain monk, who says that Sāriputta "has offended me, and without asking my forgiveness, has departed on a peregrination."[14] On his return, when summoned by the Buddha before an assembly, Sāriputta gives his "lion-roar" regarding his attitude towards his own body.

Sāriputta declares that he sees his body as simply comprised of the 4 elements—*of earth, of water, of fire, of wind*. Just as any of these elements is "not troubled, ashamed, or disgusted" coming into contact with "anything clean or foul," so too does Sāriputta dwell like an element, "bountiful, grown great, boundless, hate-free, without ill will."

Hence, declares Sāriputta, he "would never depart on a journey without seeking the pardon of a certain fellow brahmachari whom he had offended." So, too, he dwells with a mind, "bountiful, grown great, boundless, hate-free, without ill will"—like a whisk-broom [cleaning rag], like an outcaste [chandala] boy or girl; like a hornless bull (harmless and genial to others).

And he dwells "disgusted with this body of mine"—like a young man or woman, well-cleaned, would be troubled by a carcase hanging around the neck; just as a man might carry around a pot of fat that is full of holes and cracks, oozing and trickling, "even so, I carry around this foul body, full of holes and cracks, oozing and trickling."[15]

The point Sāriputta is making is that he is mindfully detached from his own body, but *filled with positive emotions for it and for others*. Thus, he would never even think of insulting another brother monk in any way. This is also a beautiful account of the spiritual basis for Sāriputta's great **humility**.[16]

The greater purpose of this brief survey is to show that the "**disgust**" (*nibbidā*) for the body is the basis for the practice of bodily foulness (*asubha*). "Disgust" is here an experiential term which emphasizes the lacks and risks we will surely face in our attachment to the body. We should thus be like children burnt by fire and dread it; as adults, we put out that fire for the cool fireless light of nirvana.

2.1.1.4 We have another reference to "this putrid body" in **the Vijayā Sutta** (S 5.4),[17] this time made by a young and beautiful nun, Vijayā, who, from her Sutta verses, is clearly an arhat. Māra appears to

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[13] **M 20**,4.3/1:119 f (SD 1.6). However, monks are depicted as feeling disgusted towards their bodies for this very reason in the Pali Vinaya (V 3:68,16) (the simile is not found in S 54.9); and in Vinayas of Dharmaguptaka, T1428 (T22.575c16); of Mahīśāsaka, T1421 (T22.7a29); and of Sarvāstivāda, T1435 (T23.7b25).

[14] The key Comys gloss *āsajja* with *ghaṭṭetvā* ("having struck") (DA 1:276; MA 2:281; SA 1:133; AA 4:171). Native Comy adds that a monk, seeing Sāriputta departing with a large retinue, became angry, and thought, "I will stop this departure!" It is said that as Sāriputta was leaving, the corner of his robe brushed the elder (they say the wind blew it aside). On such a trifle the monk trumped up a deliberate offence (AA 4:170). Retold with this detail at **(Sīha,nāda) Sāriputta Thera Vatthu** (DhA 7.6/2:178-181), SD 28.2b.

[15] Similar statements are mentioned in 2 Chin parallels. **MĀ 24** (T26.1.453c13-14): "I frequently contemplate the foul and impure parts of this body with a mental attitude of being embarrassed and ashamed and filled with utter disgust," 常觀此身臭處不淨, 心懷羞慙, 極惡穢之 *cháng guān cǐ shēn chòu chù bù jìng, xīn huái xiū cán, jí è huì zhī* and **EĀ 37.6** (T125.2.713b1-2): "I am disgusted with this body," 厭患此身 *yàn huàn cǐ shēn*.

[16] **A 9.11**/4:377,2 (SD 28.2a).

[17] Chin parallels, SĀ 1204 and SĀ2 220, record no such reference. See foll n.

her and tries to tempt her with sensuality.[18] Recognizing Māra, she declares herself "repelled and revolted by this putrid body."[19]

There are 2 Chinese parallels to her reply to Māra, but they do not have any expression equivalent to "the putrid body."[20] In these parallels, Vijayā expresses her lack of interest in sensual pleasure without bringing up loathing for her own body and without qualifying her body as foul.[21]

This Sutta is significant in highlighting that there are arhats who are detached from the physical body simply because they have overcome sense-desires; thus, they have no need for sensuality (**S 529***).

iminā pūti,kāyena		I'm repelled and humiliated
bhindanena pabhaṅgunā		by this putrid body,
aṭṭīyāmi harāyāmi		subject to break up, brittle—
kāma,taṇhā samūhatā	(**S 530**)	sensual craving has been uprooted.

2.1.2 Ascetic practices in the canon

2.1.2.1 How does the Buddha himself see his own body? There are a number of important suttas that give us clear descriptions or indications of this. We will look at some of these suttas.

Various ascetic practices and a life of total seclusion from human contact, described in **the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 12), apparently reflect past-life experiences as an ascetic.[22] The Buddha's personal

[18] **S 5.4**/1:131,12 (SD 102.7) indicates that the nun has transcended sensual desire and desire for the form and formless realms, which would imply that she is an arhat. **SĀ 1204** (T99.2.328a11) 寂滅以作證, 安住諸漏盡, *jì miè yǐ zuòzhèng, ānzhù zhū lòu jìn,* "having witnessed nirvana, I peacefully abide in the end of all influxes," and **SĀ2 220** (T100.2.455b21) 我斷一切愛 *wǒ duàn yīqiè ài,* "I cut off all craving"; on **SĀ 1204** see Anālayo, "Defying Māra—Bhikkhunīs in the Saṁyukta-āgama," in (ed) A Collett, *Women in Early Indian Buddhism*, NY: OUP, 2014c: 116-139.

[19] **S 5.4**/1:131,11: *iminā pūtikāyena … aṭṭiyāmi* (Be Ce *aṭṭīyāmi*) *harāyāmi*. For a similar remark by nun Khemā, see **Thī 140**.

[20] **SĀ 1204** (T2.328a6-a12) and **SĀ2 220** (T100.2.455b17-b23).

[21] The "foul body" theme recurs in **S 22.87**/3:120,27, here used by the Buddha to refer to his own body, but this is not found in the parallels, which also do not have a counterpart to the entire statement that in S 22.87 leads up to the expression. **SĀ 1265** (T99.2.346c1) records a different development in the Buddha's instruction, and **EĀ 26.10** (T125.2.642c20) does not report any instruction at all. For details, see Anālayo, "Vakkali's suicide in the Chinese Āgamas," *Buddhist Studies Review* 28,2 2011d:155-170.

[22] **M 12**/1:77,28 and its parallel T757 (T17.597a13). The Buddha's past life ascetic practices are mentioned in the Jātaka Comy (**J 94**/1:390,16), noted by H Hecker, *Wegweiser zu den Lehrreden des Buddha,* Herrnschrot, 1972:54. **M 12**/1:77,23 describes these practices simply as the Buddha's past experience, even from some past life, and **M 12**/1:81,36 then turns to his other past-life experiences. As already pointed out by J Dutoit, *Die duṣkaracaryā des Bodhisattva in der buddhistischen Tradition*, Strassburg, 1905:50, and O Freiberger, "Early Buddhism, asceticism, and the politics of the middle way," in (ed) *Asceticism and its Critics,* 2006:235-258 (238), several of the austerities listed in **M 12** would in fact not fit into the Buddha's pre-awakening life: his solitary dwelling was such that he fled from any human approach—which would not fit into the traditional account of his keeping company with the 5 monks. His undertaking of ritual bathing thrice daily contradicts the description of years of layers of dust and dirt on his body flaking off. His practice of ritual nakedness contrasts against his donning different ascetic garments. Such a variety of ascetic practices could only occur within long-term asceticism, as reported in the Jātakas, not into the Buddha-to-be's few years of austerities. Although Bronkhorst notes that "it is hard to see in what other context this part could originally have existed" (*The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1993:22), **J 94** suggests that it could have arisen as an account of the Bodhisattva's asceticism in some past life, based on which he thus rejected such practices finding them unconducive to liberation.

acquaintance with asceticism is also reflected in iconography, vividly depicting his emaciated body after prolonged fasting during the last part of his struggle for awakening.[23] [Figure 2.1.2.1]

After some 6 years of intense asceticism, the Bodhisattva realizes it would bring him only pain, death and rebirth, but not freedom or awakening. Earlier on, as a youth destined for power in the ruling class, Siddhattha found that sensual pleasures only distracted him from the realities of *decay, disease and death*. Both extremes—those of attachment to sensual pleasures and of self-mortification—he realized, are to be avoided. The way to deathfree salvation (nirvana) is by taming the body, freeing the mind from the body of senses, so that the mind is freed to gain spiritual awakening beyond time and space.

Figure 2.1.2.1 Fasting Buddha (Emaciated Buddha), Kushan Dynasty, Gandhara (Pakistan), 2nd-3rd century, schist. Lahore Museum, Punjab, Pakistan.

2.1.2.2 The official "first discourse," **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), recording teachings given to the group of 5 monks by the Buddha a month after the great awakening, records his declaring the urgency of avoiding the excesses of sensual pleasure and of self-mortification (asceticism): the body is neither to be indulged in for its physical pleasures nor to be mortified by making it undergo deprivation or pain. The proper practice for true freedom is the "**middle way**," that is, the body of 5 senses should be tamed as a preamble to the taming of the 6th sense, the mind, which is then freed with wisdom that is insight into true reality.

The historical first teachings given to the 5 monks are recorded in the closing of **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (the discourse on the noble quest) (M 26),[24] known separately as the Pāsa,rāsi Sutta, (the pile of snares discourse).[25] **The Pāsa,rāsi Sutta** theme is that the "5 cords of sensual pleasures" (*pañca kāma,-*

[23] See also P V Bapat, "The austerities of Gautama Buddha before his enlightenment," *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 4.2 1923:139-143 (142), and J Rhi, "Some textual parallels for Gandhāran art: Fasting Buddhas, Lalitavistara, and Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka," *J of the International Assoc of Buddhist Studies* 29,1 2006:125-153 (127-131), as well as a discussion in K A Behrendt, "Fasting Buddhas, ascetic forest monks, and the rise of the esoteric tradition," Vienna, 2010:299-327 (301 f).

[24] **M 26**/1:160-175 (SD 1.11).

[25] **M 26**,31-44/1:173-175 (SD 1.11).

guṇa)—pleasures based on the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—are renounced so that the mind is free like "a forest deer that is unbound lies down on a pile of snares," free and safe from the hunters.

Significantly, the Pāsa,rāsi Sutta's key teaching is that of the 9 progressive abodes: the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments and the cessation of perception and feeling. This set of 9 is also the theme of **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41) where it is presented as what defines "true renunciation."[26] Hence, even though the meditation on "foulness" (*asubha*) is one of the meditation methods, there are other methods that are not based on foulness. Ultimately, the purpose of renunciation is to experience "true letting go" of the body (by way of the form dhyanas), of form (by the formless attainments), and of the mind itself (by cessation).[27]

2.1.2.3 The Mahā Sakul'udāyi Sutta (M 77) and its Chinese parallel report that, on being praised for his ascetic qualities, the Buddha clarifies that some of his disciples are considerably more ascetic than he is.[28] Having spent 6 pre-awakening years of asceticism—such as breathingless meditation and severe fasting—the Buddha not only fully experienced its effects but, more importantly, its limitations. However, he does not forbid any of his disciples who are bent on certain suitable ascetic practices, difficult as they might be, from practising them.[29]

2.1.2.4 In the Pali canon, we see acceptable ascetic practices formalized into a set of **13 *dhut'aṅga*s**. **The Bakkula Sutta** (M 124) records the Buddha as having authorized the following ascetic practices to be taken up on a *voluntary* basis:[30]

A. Connected with robes
(1) wearing dust-heap robes (*paṁsukūlik'aṅga*), rejecting the householder's robes;
(2) wearing (only) the 3 robes (*te,cīvarik'aṅga*);

B. Connected with almsfood
(3) taking (only) almsfood (*piṇḍapātik'aṅga*);
(4) faring house-to-house (collecting almsfood from predetermined houses) (*sapadāna,cārik'aṅga*);
(5) eating at one sitting (*ek'āsanik'aṅga*);
(6) eating almsfood from a bowl (*patta,piṇḍik'aṅga*);
(7) refusing further food (*khalu,pacchā,bhattik'aṅga*);

C. Connected with dwelling
(8) dwelling in the forest (*araññik'aṅga*);
(9) dwelling at the foot of a tree (*rukkha,mūlik'aṅga*);
(10) dwelling in the open (*abbhokāsik'aṅga*);
(11) dwelling in a cemetery (*sosānik'aṅga*);
(12) being satisfied with whatever dwelling (*yathā,santhatik'aṅga*);

D. Connected with effort
(13) sleeping (only) in the sitting posture (*nesajjik'aṅga*) (ie, in a reclining posture at best).

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[26] **A 9.41**/4:438-448 (SD 62.16).

[27] See SD 62.16 (1.2.2).

[28] **M 77**/2:6,31 (SD 49.5a) and MĀ 207 (T26.1.782c21).

[29] **M 36**/1:243,4 and a Skt fragment parallel in Liu Zhen, *Dhyānāni tapaś ca,* 禅定与苦修 *chándìng yǔ kǔ xiū* ("Dhyanas and asceticism"), 上海古籍出版社 (Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House), 2010:71; on the significance of fasting in ancient Indian ascetic traditions, see P Olivelle, "From feast to fast: Food and the Indian ascetic," in (ed) J Leslie, *Rules and Remedies in Classical Indian Law,* Leiden, 1991:17-36 (23-35).

[30] **Bakkula S** (M 124) & SD 3.15 (2).

Note that these ascetic practices may be described as being simply "austere" but in no way "foul." We may see the Buddha allows such ascetic practices as meaning that he is willing to tolerate ancient Indian asceticism to some extent. In other words, a monk observes one or more of them *voluntarily,* which means that he may, say, on account of ill health, give up or relax the practice.

Apparently, we do not seem to have on record any monk, any of the elders anyway, who gave up his ascetic practice or even relaxed it. We have, in fact, **the Jiṇṇa Sutta** (S 16.5), which relates a moving story about the aged **Mahā Kassapa** who visits the Buddha, with this ensuing conversation:

> "Kassapa, you are old now, and those worn-out hempen rag-robes must be burdensome for you. Therefore, you, Kassapa, should wear robes offered by householders; accept meals given on invitation; and dwell close by to me."[31]
>
> "For a long time, bhante,
>
> I have been a forest dweller and have spoken in praise of forest dwelling;
> I have been an almsfood eater and have spoken in praise of eating almsfood;
> I have been a rag-robe wearer and have spoken in praise of wearing rag robes;
> I have been a triple-robe user and have spoken in praise of using the triple robe;
> I have been of few wishes and have spoken in praise of fewness of wishes;
> I have been contented and have spoken in praise of contentment;
> I have been secluded and have spoken in praise of solitude;
> I have been aloof from society and have spoken in praise of aloofness from society;
> I have been assertive and have spoken in praise of assertion."[32]
>
> "Considering what benefit, Kassapa, have you long been a forest dweller ... " *and so on*?
>
> "Considering **2 benefits**, bhante. (1) For myself I see a pleasant dwelling in this very life, and (2) I have compassion for later generations, thinking, 'May posterity follow my example!'[33]
>
> For when they hear, 'The Buddha's awakened disciples were for a long time forest dwellers and spoke in praise of forest dwelling ... were assertive and spoke in praise of assertion,' then they will practise accordingly, and that will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time.[34]
>
> (**S 16.5**/2:202 f), SD 96.10

[31] Comy: Kassapa's robes are said to be worn-out (*nibbasana*) because the Blessed One, having worn them, had discarded them [S 16.11/2:221,15-25, SD 77.5]. Clearly, the Buddha is requesting Mahā Kassapa to give up 3 of the ascetic practices: *wearing rag-robes, eating only almsfood, and dwelling in the forest*. The Buddha himself wore robes offered by householders, accepted invitation meals, and sometimes dwelled in pinnacled halls (M 77/2:7 f). Comy says that the Buddha did not really intend to make Kassapa give up his ascetic practices; rather "just as an unbeaten drum does not make a sound unless struck, so such persons do not make their lion-roar unless they are 'struck.' Thus he spoke to him in this way intending to make him roar his lion's roar." (SA 2:170,26-171,2)

[32] This is Mahā Kassapa's **lion-roar** (*sīha,nāda*). **Mahā Go,siṅga S** (M 32,7/1:214,1-17) records a similar lion-roar by Kassapa on the ideal monk. The first 4 items are ascetic practices; the second 4, virtues cultivated on account of these practices. At **A 1.191**/1:23,20 the Buddha declares Mahā Kassapa the foremost of monks who expound the ascetic practices, as also in **Caṅkamana S** (**S 14.15**/2:155 f), SD 34.6.

[33] Reading with Ce Ke Se: *App' eva nama pacchimā janatā ditthânugatiṁ āpajjeyya*; Be Ee have the plural *āpajjeyyuṁ*. Although *diṭṭhânugati* may be resolved as *diṭṭhi,* "view," + *anugati* (as at S:FW 2:136: "For surely they [posterity] may fall into error.") Comys are silent. We may better read *diṭṭhânugati* as past part *diṭṭha*, "the seen," ie, by Kassapa's example: cf **A 3.27**/1:126,19 f, 127,22 f; **5.79**/3:108,5 f; **5.209**/3:251,8; **6.67**/3:422,10+19. (S:B 1:800 n280; M:B 1174 n57).

[34] The list of leading elders at **A 1.14**/1:23,18 and EĀ 4.2 (T125.2.557b8-9) regards Mahā Kassapa as foremost of those monks who observe ascetic practices; see also Divyāvadāna (Cowell & Neil, 1886:395,23), and Mahāvastu (Senart, 1882:64,14).

2.1.2.5 While the arhat Mahā Kassapa wants to inspire posterity by his example of living the ascetic life, the unawakened and ambitious zealot, **Deva,datta**, was determined to impose such a strict lifestyle on monastics. It is said that when the Buddha was old, Devadatta (who joined the order during the Buddha's first visit to Kapilavatthu) planned to take over leadership of the sangha.[35]

When the Buddha rejected his plans, the disappointed Devadatta made a number of attempts to kill the Buddha.[36] Having failed in all his attempts to kill the Buddha, Devadatta resorted to subterfuge in an attempt to undermine the Buddha's reputation. Devadatta proposed **5 strict rules** to the Buddha:

"In many ways, bhante, you praise fewness of wishes, contentment, self-effacement, ascetic practices, being inspiring, the fewness of things, and being energetic.

And there are these **5 things** that lead to just that:

It would be good, bhante,

(1) that the monks dwell all their lives in **the forest**,
and whoever dwelled near an inhabited area would commit an offence;
(2) that they ate **alms-food** (*piṇḍapāta*) for life,
and whoever accepted an invitation meal would commit an offence;
(3) that they wore **rag-robes** for life,
and whoever accepted robe-cloth from a householder would commit an offence;
(4) that they should dwell at **the foot of a tree** for life,
and whoever took shelter would commit an offence; and
(5) that they **should not eat fish and meat** (that is, be meatless or vegetarian) for life,
and whoever did take fish or meat would commit an offence." (Cv 7.3.14)

Just as Devadatta had predicted, the Buddha rejected the idea of imposing these practices as rules, but that people had the option of practising any of them or not at all. Accusing the Buddha of being lax, Devadatta managed to win over some 500 monks. Breaking away from the sangha, he formed his own order, but Sāriputta and Moggallāna managed to convince those misled by Devadatta to return to the Buddha's teaching and sangha.[37]

This narrative is further evidence that the Buddha would not impose any kind of ascetic rules or strict rituals that would not really help sangha members progress spiritually. Spiritual progress depends on proper moral and mental training that will free the mind from greed, hatred and delusion, or weaken these defilements so that wholesome qualities can be developed. If the Buddha is not keen to introduce these 5 strict rules proposed by Devadatta, surely the Buddha would not impose on monastics a very difficult practice, such as the cultivation of the foul.

2.1.3 The 3rd *pārājika* rule (against taking life)

2.1.3.1 Devadatta had proposed the 5 strict rules to the Buddha for 2 very devious reasons:

(1) Devadatta was appealing to the ancient and popular Indian notion of the seeming value of ascetic practices, and
(2) Devadatta knew that the Buddha was against such an idea and would reject his proposal, giving the public impression that the Buddha was a lax and luxurious teacher.

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[35] **Devadatta: A study from the Pali texts**, SD 61.5a (3).

[36] SD 61.5a (4).

[37] For detailed comparative studies of the Devadatta narrative, see B Mukherjee, *Die Überlieferung von Devadatta dem Widersacher des Buddha in den kanonischen Schriften*, München, 1966, and A Bareau, "Les agissements de Devadatta selon les chapitres relatifs au schisme dans les divers Vinayapiṭaka," *B de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* 78, 1991:87-132. See **Devadatta: A study from the Pali texts**, SD 61.5a; SD 71.4; SD 34.6 (2).

It is against this background of ancient Indian ascetic values that we will now examine the significance of the Vinaya story of the mass suicide/murder of monks and the introduction of the *pārājika* rule against killing. The story helps us appreciate the early Buddhist position in the ancient Indian context of ascetic practices and ideology.

2.1.3.2 The 3rd *pārājika* rule proscribes intentional depriving a human being of life or assisting others in committing suicide, or inciting them to kill themselves or praising suicide. The actual rule and its background story in the Vinaya have an important function in inculcating Buddhist monastic values. This is especially so for a *pārājika* rule, breaking which entails losing one's status of being fully ordained.[38] Therefore, *pārājika* rules and their attending stories, as a rule, receive special attention in the training of a monastic.[39]

Since Buddhism arose from the Indian milieu, Buddhism has to demarcate its monastic identity against ancient Indian asceticism. The story is deliberately given a dramatic presentation since the rule can only be told or heard in the oral tradition of early Buddhism. The dramatized background story is to ensure that newly ordained monks learning the ropes clearly understand when the *pārājika* rule against killing is breached. The vivid details of the story highlight the importance of a harmonious attitude that leads one beyond sensuality without inviting self-destructive tendencies.

2.1.3.3 Aside from the Jain notion of "religious suicide," we may say that most people would agree in the universal **value of life**, especially human life. The rule against taking any life was thus commonly accepted as part of the universal value of **non-violence** (*ahiṁsā*). This respect for life thus extends to neither assisting suicide nor encouraging it nor condoning it—these qualities are all reflected in the early Buddhist Dharma and Vinaya. We must thus appreciate the story of the mass suicide/murder of monks in the light of these values and conditions from a Vinaya context.

2.1.4 The 1st *pārājika* rule (against sexuality)

2.1.4.1 The narrative behind the 3rd *pārājika* rule (against killing a human being) warns against excesses in ascetic values, resulting in a loathing of one's own body to the extent of wishing to commit suicide. In essence, the rule narrative is intended to remove desire for the body, *not* the body itself.[40] On the other hand, the very **1st *pārajika*** warns us against propagating the body in the worldly way, that is, a monastic has nothing whatsoever to do with sexual expression and propagation.

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[38] As **Analayo** has pointed out (2014:25 n55), the 3rd *pārājika* rule applies to all fully ordained monks, independent of their particular living situation, *pace* M **Kovan**, "Thresholds of transcendence: Buddhist self-immolation and Mahāyānist absolute altruism," *J of Buddhist Ethics* 20 2013:774-812 (794), who holds that "*pārājika* rules (initiated in and) structured around a communal body are attenuated in solitude." Kovan 2013:794 n27 bases this suggestion on contrasting individual suicides (like those of Channa and of Vakkali) to the mass suicide of monks. On these 2 monk suicides, see M **Delhey**, "Views on suicide in Buddhism, some remarks," Lumbini, 2006:25-63 & "Vakkali, A new interpretation of his suicide," *J of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies* 13 2009: 67-107, and **Anālayo**, "Channa's suicide in the Saṁyukta-āgama," *Buddhist Studies Review* 27,2 2010b:332-400, & "Vakkali's suicide in the Chinese Āgamas," *Buddhist Studies Review* 28,2 2011i:155-170.

[39] This is reflected, eg, in V 1:96,22, which reports that the 4 *pārājika*s should be taught right after full ordination has been received, to ensure that the new monk knows what must be avoided and so preserves his status as a fully ordained *monk*.

[40] T-f Kuan, *Mindfulness in Early Buddhism, New approaches through psychology and textual analysis of Pali, Chinese and Sanskrit sources*, London, 2008:54 helpfully summarizes the story's lesson, in that the monks "did not realize that such practices are intended to remove desire for the body, not the body itself."

The background narrative of the 1st *pārājika* (against sexuality), like the narrative behind the 3rd *pārajika* (against murder), is also instructive to our proper appreciation of the mass monk suicide/murder story. This *pārājika* narrative concerns the monk **Sudinna**, who had renounced without giving his ex-wife an heir.

2.1.4.2 Analayo, in his study of **the 1st *pārājika***, concludes that this narration sets early Buddhist monasticism in contrast with the brahminical notion of a man's duty to procreate, and at the same time warns against excessive intimacy with one's own family. Sudinna's family kept insisting that he at least leave them with an heir to the family legacy.[41] Since there was yet no rule against monastics engaging in sexuality, Sudinna rationalized that it was all right for him to "merely" have sex with his ex-wife just for the sake of giving her and the family an heir.

In a way, these two background stories—those of the 1st and the 3rd *pārājika*s—can be seen as stressing the need of the early Buddhist monastic community to clearly define itself against worldly brahmins on the one hand and ascetically inclined recluses on the other. The two narratives highlight that these 2 extremes are to be avoided: sensuality and excessive concern with family on the one hand and self-destructive asceticism on the other. They thus reiterate the warning against the two extremes to be avoided, a theme of the Buddha's first discourse. These two Vinaya narratives serve as danger warning signs against the 2 extremes for monastics so that they do not stray from the middle path.

Unlike the depiction of Sudinna's breach of celibacy, the story about the mass suicide/murder of monks is also found in 2 sutras and the 6 Vinaya versions [1.2.1]. Understanding this difference is crucial to the next part of our study, since it gives us significant guidelines for the proper reading of Vinaya literature compared to reading suttas.

2.2 SUTTA AND VINAYA AS LITERATURE

2.2.1 Vinaya materials in the suttas

2.2.1.1 Although the Pali canon is said to be made up of **the Tipiṭaka**—the 3 baskets of teachings—*the baskets of Vinaya, of suttas and of Abhidhamma* are not really discrete collections. In this study we will discover that many materials, and significant ones, too, of Vinaya are found among the suttas, and vice versa. Thus in the Saṁyutta Nikāya, we have the Vinaya story of the mass suicide/murder of monks. We also find Vinaya materials in all of the other 3 Nikāyas.[42]

The best known example of Vinaya material preserved as a sutta is **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), which is an account of *the Buddha's final journey* during the last few months of his life, *his death and the distribution of his relics after the cremation*. The Sutta is apparently the result of a wholesale importation of what originally was Vinaya narrative.[43]

The prefix *mahā* in its name suggests that there might have been at one time a *Cūla,parinibbāna Sutta* which lacked many of the later additions. In fact, from the narratives of **the Cullavagga** of the Vinaya, of

[41] Anālayo, "The case of Sudinna: On the function of Vinaya narrative, based on a comparative study of the background narration to the first *pārājika* rule," *J of Buddhist Ethics* 19 2012a:396-438 (421 f).

[42] See eg R Gethin, "Keeping the Buddha's rules, the view from the Sūtra Piṭaka," in (edd) French & Nathan, *Buddhism and Law, An Introduction*, NY: CUP, 2014:63-77 (64). In discussing early Buddhism, scholars as a rule take the suttas as their starting point and basis since the suttas comprise the only complete set of 4 Nikāyas and Āgamas extant.

[43] See, eg, E Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, Rome, 1956:46; A Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1993:264.

the 1st council held 3 months after the Parinirvana, it seems clear that both narratives (D 16 and Cv) are based upon what was originally one connected narrative.[44]

The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta in fact records the promulgation of a new type of Vinaya rule—that of *brahma,daṇḍa* ("divine rod," ie, supreme penalty) or public boycott—against an obstinate monk, Channa (Siddhattha's charioteer), and the application of this rule is then reported in the Pali Vinaya.[45] The promulgation of this rule is also found in the sutta parallels to **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta**.[46]

2.2.1.2 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta is not the only example of Vinaya text preserved as a sutta [2.2.1.1]. A similar pattern can be seen in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), which records the Buddha censuring another obstinate monk, Ariṭṭha, which acts as a complement in the Pali Vinaya's report of how he should be dealt with.[47] His obstinate conduct is also discussed in the Madhyama Āgama parallel to the Alagaddûpama Sutta,[48] as well as in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Sarvāstivāda **Vinayas**.[49] In this way the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta and the Alagaddûpama Sutta, together with their parallels, point to a close interrelation between sutta and Vinaya literature as a feature common to various schools.

The Alagaddûpama Sutta is not the only case of Vinaya material in the Majjhima. **The Sāma,gāma Sutta** (M 104) offers detailed explanations on how to implement 7 ways of settling litigation (*adhikaraṇa,samatha*) in the monastic community; tradition reckons these 7 to be part of the Pātimokkha.[50] The 7 ways of settling litigation recur in the parallels to the Sāmagāma Sutta as well as in the *prātimokṣa*s of other schools.[51]

The Bhaddāli Sutta (M 65) and **the Kīṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70), too, relate accounts of monks who openly refuse to follow a rule set by the Buddha.[52] In both cases, similar indications can be found in their respective sutta parallels,[53] and the story of Bhaddāli's recalcitrance is also reported in Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya.[54]

2.2.1.3 Besides the Sāma,gāma Sutta (M 104) [2.2.1.2], **the 7 ways of settling litigation** are also listed in **the Adhikaraṇa Samatha Sutta** (A 7.84) in the Aṅguttara.[55] Further, the Aṅguttara also contains a

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[44] K R Norman, *Pali Literature,* Wiesbaden, 1983:37.

[45] **D 16**/2:154,17 (SD 9); V 2:290,9. On Channa's *brahma,daṇḍa,* see **(Dvi,lakkhaṇa) Channa S** (S 22.90), SD 56.5.

[46] E Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra,* vol 2, Berlin, 1951:284,17 + 285,24 (§29.15); DĀ 2 (T1.1.26a19-20a), T5 (T1.168c10-c15), T6 (T1.184b12), T7 (T1.204c4-c6), and EĀ 42.3 (T125.2.751c7-c17).

[47] **M 22**/1:130,2 (SD 3.13), reprised at V 2:25,11 + 4:133,33 as the background narration for legal actions to be taken. In his detailed study of the Pali *pātimokkha*, O Hinüber, *Das Patimokhasutta der Theravadin*, 1999a:70 considers the present case as one of several instances where material originated as part of a sutta and then came to be integrated into the Vinaya, noting that there is also evidence for a movement of texts in the opposite direction; see Hinüber's comments at "Pali Vinaya" [2.2.1.3].

[48] MĀ 200 (T26.1.763b1).

[49] Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T1428 @ T22.682a9), Mahāsānghika Vinaya (T1425 @ T22.367a3), Mahīśāsaka Vinaya (T1421 @ T22.56c12), Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1442 @ T23.840b21), cf also N Yamagiwa, *Das Pāṇḍulohitakavastu,* Marburg, 2001:86,7 + 87,8 (§6.1); and Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1435 @ T23.106a3).

[50] **M 104**/2:247,6; Norman & Pruitt, *The Pātimokkha*, Oxford: PTS, 2001:108,5; cf also V 4:207,1.

[51] MĀ 196 (T1.754a21) and T85 (T1.905c4); for a comparative survey of the 7 *adhikaranaśamatha* in the different *prātimokṣa*s cf Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Pratimokṣa*, Santiniketan, 1955:211-213.

[52] **M 65**/1:437,24 (SD 56.2); **M 70**/1:474,1 (SD 11.1).

[53] Parallels to M 65: MĀ 194 (T26.1.746b27), EĀ 49.7 (T125.2.800c2). Parallel to M 70: MĀ 195 (T26.1.749c27-750a2).

[54] T1425 (T22.359b14-15).

[55] **A 7.84**/4:144,1. It is found in a chapter of 10 suttas appropriately named **Vinaya Vagga**. Preceding it are 9 suttas (A 7.75-83) on various commendable qualities of a Vinaya expert.

series of 30 suttas, grouped as **the Vinaya Peyyāla** (the Vinaya repetition) elaborating on the reasons for the promulgation of *pātimokkha* rules in general.[56]

In addition, this collection has a whole section on questions and answers on various legal technicalities ranging from the 10 reasons for the promulgation of rules to the topic of schism. This section closely corresponds to a section in the Pali Vinaya.[57] The exposition on the 10 reasons for the promulgation of rules has a counterpart in a sutra in the Ekottarika Āgama, as well as in the different Vinayas.[58]

Much of these materials reflect problematic issues concerning the monastic community, yet they are nevertheless found in suttas. Clearly, the story of mass suicide/murder of monks is not unique in this respect and there seems to have been no definite or fixed dividing line between Vinaya material and the suttas. The key idea seems to be that we are informed the one by reading it in the light of the other; that the laity is informed of Vinaya matters, and that monastics is familiar with sutta teachings (alongside the Vinaya).

2.2.1.4 In the Pāli **Vinaya** itself, according to the *aniyata* ("undetermined") rules, a trustworthy female lay-follower can charge a monk with a breach of the rules and such evidence require the sangha to take action.[59] The *prātimokṣa*s of other schools agree in this respect.[60]

Analayo concludes: "This confirms that, in regard to knowledge about breaches of rules and related Vinaya matters, the Buddhist monastic legislators did not operate from the perspective of a clear-cut divide between laity and monastics, nor were their concerns solely dominated by the wish to maintain a good reputation among the laity." (2014:29)

As regards the story of the mass suicide/murder of monks, the fact that we only have 2 sutta versions may well be due to the vicissitudes of transmission (we have lost other versions), as a result of which we do not have access to sutta collections of those schools of which we have records of only their Vinaya.

2.2.1.5 The (Aṭṭhaka) Gotamī Sutta (A 8.51) is another Aṅguttara sutta with a Vinaya narrative, one regarding the foundation of the nun order.[61] We have not only 2 sutta parallels preserved in Chinese translation,[62] but also a reference to yet another such sutra version in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya.[63] This clearly shows that the Mahāsāṅghika sutra collection has record of this event. This further confirms that the textual collections were not based on keeping Vinaya related material separate from suttas meant for public consumption. Instead, these two types of literature are closely interrelated and the story of the mass suicide/murder of monks is a case of a recurrent textual tradition.

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[56] The 30 suttas are Vinaya Peyyāla are **A 2.280-309**/1:98,9-100,7. Be calls it *vinaya peyyāla*, as part 4 of Vagga 15 of Duka Nipāta. Ee counts this as Vagga 17 and names it *Atthavāsa* ("reasons"). Ce takes it as part 2 of Vagga 7. Se does not group it.

[57] A 10.31-43/5:70,3-79,3. As already noted by Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 1983a:28, this corresponds to V 5:180,1-206,25. In relation to Aṅguttara in general, Hinüber 1996:40 comments that this collection "contains sometimes rather old Vinaya passages … sometimes old material may be preserved from which the Vinayapiṭaka has been built. In other cases the source of an Aṅguttara paragraph may have been the Vinaya."

[58] EĀ 46.1 (T125.2.775c7); the 10 reasons for the promulgation of rules can be found in Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T1428 @ T22.570c3), Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya (T1425 @ T22.228c22), Mahīśāsaka Vinaya (T1421 @ T22.3b29), Mūla-sarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1442 @ T23.629b21), Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1435 @ T23.1c15), and Pali Vinaya (V 3:21,17).

[59] V 3:187,1.

[60] For a comparative survey of *aniyata* rules in the different *prātimokṣa*s: Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, 1955:95-97.

[61] **A 8.51**/4:274,1 (SD 102.1).

[62] MĀ 116 (T26.1.605a8) + T60 (T1.856a5); for details: Anālayo, "Mahāpajapati's going forth in the Madhyama-āgama," *J of Buddhist Ethics* 18 2011d:268-317.

[63] T1425 (T22.471a26) shows that the full story should be supplemented from the sutta version; for another ref to the same sutta see T22.514b4.

2.2.2 Family relations and renunciation

2.2.2.1 While it is true that Vinaya stories, as a rule, are rooted in sutta teachings, not all Vinaya stories can be found in the suttas. Such a well-known example is **the Sudinna narrative** that forms the background to the 1st *pārājika,* the rule against sexual intercourse. Unlike the case of the mass suicide/ murder of monks, Sudinna's breach of celibacy to ensure the continuity of his family line is not recorded among the early suttas, but only in different Vinayas.

While it is possible that there were sutta versions (or at least one sutta version) of the Sudinna story, none of them survived. Despite such loss or hiatus, we have enough sutta teachings in the 4 Nikāyas on **family matters and sexuality**. It is not really a matter of giving "priority or privilege" to the suttas, but rather the understanding that both sutta and Vinaya are rooted in the Dharma. Generally speaking, the Vinaya tends to deal with disciplinary and social matters, while the suttas with individual and spiritual matters.

2.2.2.2 We should also understand that **the Vinaya** concerns the renunciant monastics much more exclusively than **the suttas** presenting and preserving Dharma, which is meant for both renunciant and the laity. Even when the sutta teachings are addressed to monastics, they still apply to the laity at least by way of showing how a life rooted in Dharma-Vinaya expedites path-training and enjoying happiness here and now.

It is also true that suttas have considerably less narrative material compared to Vinaya, but it is impossible to find a similar wealth of stories and records in both types of literature as those found only in the Commentaries. Nevertheless, such commentarial narratives must always promote or at least reflect the spirit of the suttas which includes keeping to the spirit of the Vinaya, too.

2.2.2.3 Broadly speaking, the Vinaya concerns monastics specifically and that the laity is to help monastic life a life of renunciation; the suttas, on the other hand, often reach out to the laity. A common ground that links both Vinaya and sutta is **the family**. The Dharma thus reaches out and touches the lives of both monastic and laity. This is ideally done when renunciant and family relate with one another wholesomely. While the renunciant relates with the family with compassion and wisdom; the laity attends to the renunciant with *moral virtue, faith and joy*, that is, in a spiritual manner.

Hence, on a higher level—that of spiritual renunciation, especially on the attaining of the path—it must be said that the renunciant's connection with their erstwhile family is always and only as an individual, *neither* as part of a *group nor* as a statistic amongst the worldly.

The Buddhist path is always about singularity: **moral virtue** is seeing oneself *singularly* apart from others by respecting the otherness; **mental training** is about the *singularity* of mind, free from the manyness of the senses; and **wisdom** is the *singularity* of being free as a true individual liberated by self-awakening. Hence, the path is called the "one-going way" (*ek'āyana*).[64]

2.2.2.4 Let us look at a few suttas that highlight the family and how the renunciant, the saint and the Buddha relate to it. **The Mahāpadāna Sutta** (D 14) presents the importance of family relations in its description of past buddhas. Besides listing the names of the mother and father of each buddha,[65] it also shows the newly awakened buddha Vipassī as teaching first of all his half-brother, prince Khaṇḍa, who then becomes one of his two chief disciples.[66]

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[64] SD 3.1 (3.4); SD 13.1 (3.2).

[65] D 14/2:6,31 (SD 49.8).

[66] D 19/2:249,24 (SD 63.4); on Gotama's family at the time of his renunciation, see J Strong, "A Family Quest: The Buddha, Yaśodharā and Rāhula in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya," in (ed) J Schober, *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, 1997:113-128.

The Mahā,Govinda Sutta (D 19) shows the importance of family relations in a past life of our Buddha, who at that time renounced together with all of his 40 wives.[67] The Sutta concludes with an evaluation of the practice undertaken by the Bodhisattva at that time. This conclusion is not in any way critical of his going forth together with all of his wives.[68] Furthermore, in his last life, the Buddha is shown visiting his son Rāhula.[69] The Buddha is also recorded as going on almsround with his son and meditating together with him.[70]

In **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), the monks are implicitly declared to be the offspring of the Buddha, born from his mouth (that is, from the Dharma-teaching). As his spiritual heirs, the monks and nuns are inheritors and propagators of the "foremost knowledge" (*aggañña*).[71] The foremost knowledge is what frees the individual from the samsaric bonds of the biological family to be nurtured by the wider spiritual family that inherits the legacy of freedom.

Although **the Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (D 30) presents the Buddha as a unique being with the 32 bodily marks and so on, there is further the imagery of the monks as being sons of the Buddha.[72] Indeed, we can see how the Buddha, through his awakening and teaching, nurtures spiritually born heirs to Dharma.

The Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (M 82) depicts the monk Raṭṭhapāla wishing to visit his family. The Buddha, knowing that it will be impossible for Raṭṭhapāla, as an arhat, free from worldly desires, to return to lay life, gives his explicit permission.[73]

2.2.2.5 From this brief but broad overview of sutta passages, we can see that family connections breathe a warm and real connection with **Buddhist renunciants**. Renunciation is not about giving up family or people as humans, but *letting go of negative emotions and evil*, so that good will arise, fruiting in freedom. There is also no compromising any essential aspect of monastic life, especially celibacy. All this love and warmth are understandably the result of having fully completed the gradual training on the path of overcoming lust, hatred and delusion.[74]

Such warm family and human connections are just as well seen in other disciples of the Buddha, too. The Commentaries give us a rich record of affable Dharma-based connections between disciples and their family members.[75] Such accounts show that such connections do not reflect a rare or uncharacteristic feature of monastic life, but rather a natural warmth of humanity in the awakened, overflowing with love and wisdom. Understandably, this is the natural attitude of those living the true life of renunciation, having tasted the freedom of awakening, at least at some level.[76]

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[67] D 19/2:249,24; on Gotama's family at the time of his renunciation, see Strong 1997 [above].

[68] D 19/2:251,12; the only criticism raised is that due to engaging solely in the practice of the *brahma,vihāra*s and not practising the noble eightfold path, his going forth did not lead to full awakening.

[69] M 61/1:414,3 (SD 3.10).

[70] M 62/1:421,1 (SD 3.11) and M 147/3:278,1 (SD 70.7).

[71] D 27/3:84,21 (SD 2.19).

[72] D 30/3:162,5 (SD 36.9); for monks and nuns referring to themselves or being referred to as sons and daughters of the Buddha, see, eg, Tha 174, 348, 1237, 1279; Thī 46, 63, 336 (also Tha 295, where the ref is attr to the Buddha's actual son Rāhula).

[73] M 82/2:61,16 (SD 92.5).

[74] On the traditional description of renunciation as a gradual path, see, eg, **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2/1:63,9), SD 8.10. One leaves behind a large or small group of relatives; cuts off hair and beard; dons the yellow robes; and goes forth from the household into homelessness.

[75] Sutta comys do not always refer to layers of texts later than Vinaya, which contains material that are originally commentarial in nature, thus can be considerably later than the rules themselves. For a survey of historical layers in Pāli Vinaya, see Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:20.

[76] **Hāliddakāni S** (S 22.3/3:10,8), SD 10.12, uses the term *oka* (stressing the mental aspect) instead of *agāra*. For a discussion of different nuances of the notion of leaving the home, see Collins, *Selfless Persons,* Cambridge, 1982: 167-176; see also K K Ashraf, *The Hermit's Hut*, Honolulu, 2013.

The Cūla Vedalla Sutta (M 44) records of a long discussion between the nun Dhamma,dinnā and the layman Visākha, who according to the Commentary was her former husband.[77] The discussion is then reported to the Buddha, who praises Dhamma,dinnā for her wisdom, without any censure of her having such a long exchange with her ex-husband.[78]

2.2.2.6 The Nandak'ovāda Sutta (M 146) records an interesting development in the case of the monk Nandaka, who is initially unwilling to take his turn teaching the nuns. The Commentary tells us that the nuns had been his wives in former times.[79] When informed of this, the Buddha summons Nandaka and simply, warmly, instructs him to teach Dharma to the nuns, which Nandaka promptly does.[80]

Nandaka, as a renunciant, feels no inclination to teach the nuns, especially since they had been intimate in previous lives. The Buddha however had confidence in Nandaka that that was the past, and that Dharma should take priority in the lives of renunciants however they may have been related before. Surely, one should share Dharma with loved ones, especially now that the love has evolved spiritually and promises freedom from suffering.[81]

2.2.2.7 The familial and human feeling of a common bond that are even deeper than the biological is the spiritual, one not only shared by renunciants with their erstwhile families, but also with **the Buddha** as the first arhat and their spiritual "father" through whom disciples are free from rebirth. As noted by Erich Frauwallner (1956:71), most Vinayas preserve an explicit stipulation according to which a new monk who joins the monastic community should look on his preceptor as "father," who in turn looks on him as a "son."[82]

The most beautiful statement made in this connection must surely have come from the nun **Mahā,-pajāpatī**, the Buddha's own foster-mother, who, in **the Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī Apadāna** sings:

31 O well-farer, I am your mother; and you, O wise hero, are my father:
O giver of happiness of the true teaching, O refuge, I was given birth by you, O Gotama!

32 O well-farer, your physical body was nurtured by me;
My Dharma-body, flawless, was nurtured by you.

33 To satisfy a moment's craving, you had milk suckled by me.
But I, drinking the milk of Dharma from you, had peace without end.

(ApThī 2.17/31-33/2:531)[83]

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[77] M 44/1:299-305 (SD 40a.9); MA 2:355,30-32.

[78] M 44/1:304,33 (SD 40a.9).

[79] MA 5:93,8; for details, see Anālayo, "Attitudes towards nuns—A case study of the Nandakovāda in the light of its parallels," *J of Buddhist Ethic*, 17 2010a:332-400 (373).

[80] M 146/3:271,4 (SD 66.12).

[81] Clearly Nandaka's case arose before the rule was made forbidding monks teaching nuns (V 4:56,13).

[82] Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T1428 @ T22.799c4-5), Mahīśāsaka V (T1421 @ T22.110c26-27), Sarvāstivāda V (T1435 @ T23.148b23-24), Pali Vinaya (V 1:45,26); and also a stipulation to this effect in Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣu,karma.-vākya* ("words of monastic act"). See A C **Banerjee**, *Two Buddhist Vinaya Texts in Sanskrit, Prātimokṣa Sūtra and Bhikṣukarmavākya*, Calcutta, 1977:72,16, a passage highlighted by R S **Cohen**, "Kinsmen of the Sun," *History of Religions* 40,1 2000:1-31 (15). **Cole** (2004:281) adds that the "very effort to leave domesticity was itself domesticized and remade into a Buddhist family." **Cole**, "Buddhism," in (ed) Browning et al, *Sex, Marriage, & Family in World Religions*, NY, 2006:301, points out that "the monastic space was regularly organized as something like a patriarchal family that employed the language of fathers and sons to structure discipline, identity, and authority in a way that rendered monastic identity not all that different from those templates constructed within the sphere of the lay family." This last remark reflects, however, the later and modern development, esp in a secularized Sangha.

[83] See SD 46.15 (1.2); SD 10.6 (3.4).

2.3 HOW TO READ VINAYA STORIES

2.3.1 Telling the truth to prevent it

2.3.1.1 The relevance of reading sutta alongside Vinaya for exploring topics like family matters can be seen in another sutta in the Aṅguttara. **The Mātā Putta Sutta** (A 5.55) reports that a mother and her son had both gone forth and were spending the rains retreat together, visiting each other often. Eventually, they engaged in sexual intercourse with each other.[84] This story not only shows that it was possible for mother and son to go forth together, but also for them to meet regularly and this evidently in rather private circumstances. A problem arises when this leads to sex, aggravated in this case by it being incest.

The incest story clearly shows that sutta literature can contain material that can be compromising. The same holds for the mass suicide/murder story of monks, where a narrative with a considerable potential to be damaging to the Buddha's reputation as a teacher is not confined to the Vinaya.[85] Here the sutta is as revealing as the Vinaya texts, both reporting that a recommendation given by the Buddha on a meditation topic led to a mass suicide among his disciples.[86] A case of incest among monastics is similarly problematic.

2.3.1.2 Both stories—of suicide/murder and of incest—could have been restricted to only "in-house" literature or "secret teachings"; that is, if there were a need for a clear dividing line between bowdlerized texts for public adulation and "sensitive" in-house records for religious intelligence. This is clearly not the case in the formation of the Buddhist textual collections, whose priority and purpose are those of identifying evil and good, and of avoiding evil and promoting good.

The clearly complementary nature of sutta and Vinaya materials makes it indispensable that a proper appreciation of individual stories (like the mass suicide/murder of monks) or Indian Buddhist monasticism in general is based on reading Vinaya stories in conjunction with early sutta material just as they are.

In contrast, relying only on Vinaya texts would be like trying to reconstruct the history of a particular country or time-period solely based on criminal records! It does not need much imagination to see the kind of distorted picture that would emerge as a result. Vinaya stories, as a rule, come from what went wrong. Using only such Vinaya texts to reconstruct the history of Indian monasticism would be even

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[84] **A 5.55**/3:67,24; see discussion in J Silk, *Riven by Lust, Incest and Schism in Indian Buddhist Legend and Hagiography,* Delhi, 2009:126-128.

[85] It is just remarkable that such a story is recorded in a sutta or the Vinaya. Mills (1992:74) concludes that "it is strange that a story like this, which does no credit to the Buddha, but quite the opposite, was permitted to remain in the Vinaya … if the story is partly true, it would hardly reflect well on the Buddha, while if the whole story is true he appears in a worse light still."

[86] The story of the mass/murder suicide is interesting in relation to Clarke's proposition (2014:17) that "whereas *sūtra*s go into lengthy discourses on the value of meditation, for instance, Schopen has shown that Buddhist monastic law codes warn against rigorous engagement in contemplative exercises" [G Schopen, "Art, Beauty, and the Business of Running a Buddhist Monastery in Early Northwest India," in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*, Honolulu, 2004:19-44 (26)]. In the present case the dangers of improper meditation practice are indeed highlighted, but this occurs together with drawing attention to the advantages of proper practice of mindfulness of breathing. Here the dangers and advantages of meditation practice are taken up both in sutta and Vinaya literature. In the case of Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, just to give another example, Hu & Hinüber, "Quotations from Earlier Buddhist Texts in the Poṣadhavastu of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School," *ARIRIAB* 17, 2014:89-94 notes that instructions on examining body-parts occur as part of "a long passage about different matters concerning the meditation" on *aśubha*, in what she considers an attempt "to impart all of the basic knowledge [of] what a monk needs to practice in his daily life in the Saṁgha" (89). Here the purpose is clearly to encourage meditation—precisely the meditation that the mass suicide/murder story shows to be problematic—not to warn against it.

worse than relying only on criminal records, when such records are expected *to be based on actual events*.

Vinaya stories should thus be contextualized. In other words, the Vinaya is neither merely to punish nor to rehabilitate perpetrators. More importantly, it is to prevent wrong-doings. The truth of evil-doing should thus be presented just as it is so that it is unlikely to happen again. Only the truth will prevent the reality that is worse than a lie; only the truth will free us.

We need to tell the truth to prevent the truth.

2.3.1.3 On the other hand, Vinaya narratives about misbehaving monastics side by side with celestial beings, demons, and animals who are able to speak do not invalidate a wrong-doing of human monastics. Such extra-human features only tell us about the views and beliefs held by those responsible for their coming into being. Circumspection surely is needed when such stories are used as a basis for reconstructing the actual situation on the ground.

So, too, Vinaya passages referring to nuns running brothels, for example, need not invariably reflect actual conditions. In view of the general Indian perception of renunciant women as being on a par with prostitutes,[87] it is thus possible that *the idea* of nuns running brothels could have arisen in an environment antagonistic to Buddhist monastics.[88] Once having become a popular perception, this could then have motivated the introduction of rules to safeguard reputation, even without it needing to have actually happened.[89]

2.3.1.4 This is of course not to say that it is, in principle, impossible for something badly wrong to have actually happened, but the origin and purpose of such a rule requires evaluation. A vital criterion when evaluating such stories is a principle proposed by Shayne Clarke, according to which *all of the extant Vinayas* need to be consulted. Clarke, however, thinks that "any *vinaya* cannot be accepted as representative of Indian Buddhist monasticisms without first fully examining the other five monastic law codes; we must marshal all available evidence in rereading Indian Buddhist monasticisms."[90]

Given that references to nuns running brothels do not seem to appear in all Vinayas,[91] the possibility that these references have come into being as the product of imagination has to be seriously taken into consideration. Had this been a real problem during the early stages of Indian Buddhist monasticism, we would expect all of the Vinayas to try to deal with it.

On the other hand, Clarke's proposal that all Vinayas be consulted to evaluate or validate a wrong-doing is based on the assumption that these Vinayas are rooted in the very same legal cases, legal his-

[87] Olivelle 2004:499 notes that in Manusmṛti "there are women of certain groups … who are stereotyped as being sexually promiscuous," one of them being "female wandering ascetics." Similarly, a comy on the Manusmṛti, quoted in M Jyväsjärvi, "Parivrājikā and pravrajitā, categories of ascetic women in Dharmaśāstra and Vinaya Commentaries," *Indologica Taurinensia* 33 2007:73-92 (80), defines females who have become homeless as "women without protectors … [who,] being lustful women, are disguised in the dress (of ascetics)."

[88] Clarke's (2014:35) "suggestion that the occurrence of certain narrative motifs in Sanskrit drama and other Indian literature antagonistic to Buddhism can serve to corroborate that descriptions of misbehaviour in Vinaya narratives are based on historical facts is therefore to my mind not conclusive" (Analayo 2014:40 n121).

[89] I B Horner, *The Book of Discipline,* 1938, notes that Vinaya narratives "at the time of the final recension, each rule was minutely scrutinised and analysed, and all the deviations from it, of which the recensionists had heard or which they could imagine, were formulated and added … that these are the outcome, not of events, so much as of lengthy and anxious deliberations. The recensionists had a responsible task. They were legislating for the future." (V:H 1:xxi)

[90] S Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms*, Honolulu, 2014:166.

[91] Judging from a survey in Clarke 2014:228 n63, the brothel motif is only found in some Vinayas, not all of them.

tories and legal interpretations. Things become more complicated when these different schools do not see their roots in the same way, which after all is often a key condition for their separate existence.

2.3.2 Conclusion

2.3.2.1 Furthermore, each school—especially when it is still extant—needs to examine and evaluate **the social conditions and contributing realities** behind the "crime." Understanding the story of the mass suicide/murder of monks requires taking into account the ascetic environment within which early Buddhism evolved. The story itself depicts the Buddha's recommendation being put into action *without* proper instructions. The resultant mass suicide and murder reflect the influence of a prevalent negative attitude towards the body and the tolerance of suicide in ancient Indian ascetic circles.

In the Vinaya teaching context, this story would have evolved in line with its function to demarcate Buddhist monastic identity against wider contemporary ascetic values by showing how things can go wrong without proper instructions and caveats. The presence of the mass suicide/murder story in the suttas shows that problematic narratives were not allocated only to Vinaya texts, making it improbable that Vinaya records offer us the only window available for in-house information on what may have taken place on the ground.

2.3.2.2 Instead, there is a vital need for Vinaya narratives to be read with a clear recognition of their **teaching purposes** and of the fact that they are naturally concerned with what went wrong, instead of merely giving us some "complete" picture of Indian Buddhist monasticism as a whole. They reflect views and opinions held by the story tellers themselves, and how story retellers are responsible for the story's final shape. The various influences that shape the telling and retelling of such stories, and historical events, are only a part of the story.

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(Ānâpāna,sati) Vesālī Sutta

The (Breath Meditation) Discourse at Vesālī

S 54.9

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in the pinnacled hall[92] in the great wood at **Vesali**.[93]

The talk on the cultivation of the foul

2 Now at that time, the Blessed One gave the monks **a talk on bodily foulness** in many ways; he spoke in praise of the foul (and) spoke in praise of the cultivation of foulness.[94]

3 Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

"Bhikshus, I wish to go into seclusion for a fortnight. I should not be approached by anyone except the one who brings me almsfood."[95]

"Yes, bhante," those monks replied, and no one approached the Blessed One except the one who brought him almsfood.

4 Then those monks, thinking:

"The Blessed One gave a talk on the foul in many ways, spoke in praise of the foul, spoke in praise of the cultivation of foulness,"

dwelt devoted to the cultivation of foulness in its many aspects and factors.

4.2 Being repelled, humiliated, and disgusted with their bodies, they sought for a killing tool ["a life-taker"].[96]

Then, in one day 10 monks used the knife, or in one day 20 monks used the knife,
or in one day 30 monks used the knife.[97]

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[92] *Kuṭâgāra,sālā*. See SD 45.2 (2)**;** M 35,1 n; SD 26.5.

[93] A more elaborate version of the strange background story to this Sutta is at V 3:68-70. For a summary of Comy version: [S:B 1951 n301]. For a discussion on the story, see L **Mills**, "The Case of the Murdered Monks," JPTS 1992: 71-75; **Analayo**, "The mass suicide of monks in discourse and Vinaya literature*," J of the Oxford Centre of Buddhist Studies* 7, 2014:11-55.

[94] *Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā bhikkhūnaṁ aneka,pariyāyena asubha,kathaṁ katheti, asubhāya vaṇṇaṁ bhāsati, asubha,bhāvanāya vaṇṇaṁ bhāsati*; ie, he was explaining the meditation on the 31 body-parts (increased to 32 in Comys) and the 9 (or 10) stages of decomposition of a corpse. Chin tr (SĀ 809) follows this with the Buddha speaking in direct speech (T799.2.207b22-24). 爾時, 世尊爲諸比丘説不淨觀, 讃歎不淨觀言: "諸比丘修不淨觀、多修習者, 得大果大福利" "At that time, the World Honored One spoke to the bhikshus on the perception of foulness, praised the perception of foulness, saying: 'Those who practise the perception of foulness, and practise it much, will attain great fruit and great benefit." On the 31 body-parts, see **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60,6), SD 19.16; on the 32 body-parts: **Dva-t,tiṁs'ākāra**, Khp 3; see **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,7), SD 12.21.

[95] For a summary of Comy's account on this [1.2.3.2].

[96] *Sattha,hārakaṁ pariyesanti.* On *sattha,hāraka,* see [1.2.4].

[97] In Vinaya account (Pār 3.1/V 3:68-71) (repeated at SA 3:265-270) they take their own lives, and deprive one another of life, and request the "sham ascetic" Migal'aṇḍika to kill them (VA 393-400). SA adds that the noble ones neither killed anyone nor enjoined others to kill, nor consented to killing; it was only the worldlings who did so (SA 3:268,20-22).

The diminished monk sangha

5 Then, when that fortnight had passed, the Blessed One emerged from seclusion and addressed the venerable Ānanda:

"Why, Ānanda, does the community of monks seem diminished?"[98]

6 "Bhante, that is because the Blessed One had given a talk on the foul in many ways, had spoken in praise of the foul, [**321**] had spoken in praise of the cultivation of foulness, and those monks,[99] thinking:

6.2 'The Blessed One gave a talk on the foul in many ways, spoke in praise of the foul, spoke in praise of the cultivation of foulness in its many aspects and factors.'

They dwelt devoted to the cultivation of foulness in its many aspects and factors.

6.3 Being repelled, humiliated, and disgusted with their bodies, they sought for knife to be brought) to them).[100] In one day, 10 monks used the knife, or, in one day, 20 monks used the knife, or, in one day, 30 monks used the knife.

6.4 It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One would explain another method so that this community of monks may be established in final knowledge."

The monks assemble

7 "Well then, Ānanda, assemble in the attendance hall all the monks who are living in dependence on Vesālī."

7.2 "Yes, bhante," the venerable Ānanda replied, and he assembled in the attendance hall all the monks, as many as there were, who were living in dependence on Vesālī.

7.3 Then he approached the Blessed One and said to him:

"The community of monks has assembled, bhante. Let the Blessed One come at his own convenience."

8 Then the Blessed One went to the attendance hall, sat down in the appointed seat, and addressed the monks thus:

9 "Bhikshus, this samadhi by mindfulness of breathing, when cultivated and developed,
is peaceful, subtle, delectable,[101] and pleasant dwelling.[102]
It disperses and stills right there evil unwholesome states even as they arise.[103]

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[98] Comy reports the Buddha making a moving comment: "Earlier, Ānanda, many monks gathered together, teaching, questioning, learning, and the park seemed ablaze like a single torch. But now, after only a fortnight, the sangha is diminished, reduced, thin, scanty, sparse. What is the reason? Where have the monks gone?" (SA 3:268,26-32)

[99] Be Se omits mentioning the Buddha's earlier teaching of the cultivation of foulness. Mentioned only in Be Ce.

[100] "They sought a knife to be brought (to them)," *satthaṁ āharanti*.

[101] ***Asecanako.*** Comy on S 10.9, ***asecanakaṁ ojavaṁ*** (S 843b/1:212,30), seems to derive *asecana* from *siñcati*, "to sprinkle"; viz, *nâssa secanan ti,* "(due to) its unadulterated or unmixed state; nourishing"; *anāsittakaṁ*, "needing no condiment"; *ojavantaṁ*, "ambrosial, of divine taste" (SA 1:316,10; ThīA 61,7). Further as *abbokiṇṇo* ("a constant mix"), *pāṭekko* [*pāṭiyekko*] ("singular"), *āveṇiko* ("unmixed, unique"); another interpretation: *asittako, ojavanto, sabhāven'eva madhuro ti,* "filled full, ambrosia-like, just like honey by nature" (SA 3:270,6-10). "Ambrosial" echoes Skt def; also an attribute of mindfulness of breathing at **S 54.9**/5:321,22 + 322,11. However, Brough thinks that it is derived from the root √SEK, "to satiate," and renders it as "never causing surfeit" (Gāndhārī Dharmapada, 1962:193 n72). So, too, CPD, sv *asecanaka*, quotes the traditional Skt gloss from Amarakośa: *tṛpter nāsty anto yasya darśanāt*; "that the sight of which gives endless satisfaction." In Pali the word is used more in connection with the senses of smell and taste (**M 18**,22/1:114,11; **S 843***/10.9/1:212,30* = **Thī** 55; **A 5.194**/3:237,22 + 238,1).

[102] This and the foll line: *ayam pi kho bhikkhave ānâpāna-s,sati,samādhi bhāvito bahulī,kato santo ceva paṇīto ca asecanako ca sukho ca vihāro, uppann'uppanne ca pāpake akusale dhamme ṭhānaso antaradhāpeti vūpasameti*.

[103] Commented on at Vism 8.146-150/267 f.

Parable: The last month of the hot season

10 Just as, bhikshus, in the last month of the hot season,
when a cloud of dust and dirt has swirled up,
a great rain cloud out-of-season disperses and stills it right there even as it arises,[104]
so too *samadhi by mindfulness of breathing, when cultivated and developed, is peaceful and subtle*;
[**322**] *a delectable, pleasant dwelling;*
it disperses and stills right there evil unwholesome states even as they arise.

The breath meditation

11 And how, bhikshus, does *the samadhi by mindfulness of breathing,*
which when cultivated and developed, is peaceful and subtle; *a delectable, pleasant dwelling;*
how does it disperse and still right there evil unwholesome states even as they arise?

12 Here, bhikshus, a monk,[105]
who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode,[106]
sits down,[107] and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright,
establishes mindfulness before him.[108]
13 Mindfully[109] indeed he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.[110]

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[104] The simile is also at **S 45.156**/5:50 f.

[105] DA on **Mahā Sati'paṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that "monk" (bhikkhu) indicates "whoever undertakes that practice … is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*." See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf **Bhikkhu Vagga** (ch 25) and **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

[106] This stock of 3 places (a forest, *araññā*; the foot of a tree, *rukkha,mūla*; an empty abode, *suññ'āgāra*) conducive to meditation are at **D** 2:291; **M** 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; **S** 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; **A** 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; **Pm** 1:175, 2:36. **Pavevika S** (A 3.92) mentions 7 places: a forest, the foot of a tree, a cemetery, a forest path [a remote forest], the open air, a heap of straw, a thatched shelter (*araññaṁ rukkha,mūlaṁ susānaṁ vana,panthaṁ* [vl *vana,patthaṁ*] *abbhokāsaṁ palāla,puñjaṁ bhusāgāraṁ*, A 3.92/1:241, SD 44.2). **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), an ancient account, gives 9 places suitable for meditation, and the spiritual preparation for living in such places, thus: "Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and full awareness, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gorge, a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw" (*so iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,saṁvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittaṁ senâsanaṁ bhajati, araññaṁ rukkha,mūlaṁ pabbataṁ kandaraṁ giri,guhaṁ susānaṁ vana,patthaṁ abbhokāsaṁ palāla,puñjaṁ*, D 2,67/1:71 = SD 8.10; V 2:146; M 3:3; A 2:210. These are def at DA 209-210, VbhA 366 f. The oldest ref to an ideal meditation spot is in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26) and **Saṅgārava S** (M 100): "still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I saw an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I sat down there thinking: 'This is conducive for spiritual striving.'" (M 26,17/1:167 = 100,13/2:212).

[107] On this breath meditation passage, see **Anâpāna,sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

[108] ***Parimukhaṁ*,** lit "around the mouth," here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning "in front": so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001: 527). On *parimukha*, see SD 7.13 (2.3.3.3). On the 8 supports of meditation, see SD 60.1b (5.7.2).

[109] Ce Se Ke PTS *sato*.

[110] *So sato'va assasati sato passasati*. Cf the sentence for the Buddha's own breath meditation, where *va* or *eva* is omitted, in **Icchā,naṅgala S** (S 54.11,4), SD 44.9.

(A) Contemplating the body[111]

14 (1) Breathing *in* **long**, he understands, 'I breathe in **long** [Long in-breath]';
or, breathing *out* long, he understands, 'I breathe out long [Long out-breath]'.
(2) Or, breathing *in* **short**, he understands, 'I breathe in **short** [Short in-breath]';
or, breathing *out* short, he understands, 'I breathe out short [Short out-breath]'.
(3) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing **the whole body** (of breath), I will breathe *in'*;
he trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe *out'*.
(4) He trains himself thus: '**Calming the bodily formation**[112] (of breath), I will breathe *in'*;
he trains himself thus: 'Calming the bodily formation, I will breathe *out'*.

(B) Contemplating feelings[113]

15 (5) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe in';[114]
he trains himself thus: 'Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe out'.
(6) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing happiness, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Experiencing happiness, I will breathe out'.
(7) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the mental formations, I will breathe in';[115]
he trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the mental formations, I will breathe out'.
(8) He trains himself thus: 'Calming the mental formations, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Calming the mental formations, I will breathe out'.

(C) Contemplating the mind[116]

16 (9) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the mind, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the mind, I will breathe out'.
(10) He trains himself thus: 'Gladdening the mind, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Gladdening the mind, I will breathe out'.
(11) He trains himself thus: 'Concentrating the mind, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Concentrating the mind, I will breathe out'.
(12) He trains himself thus: 'Freeing the mind, I will breathe in';
he trains himself thus: 'Freeing the mind, I will breathe out'.

(D) Contemplating dharmas[117]

17 (13) He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating **impermanence**, I will breathe *in'*;[118]
He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe *out'*;[119]

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[111] On contemplation of the body, see SD 60.1b (5.8.1).
[112] Or "activity."
[113] On contemplation of the mind, see SD 60.1b (5.8.3).
[114] "Zest," *pīti*, see **M 118**,19(5) n (SD 7.13).
[115] Or, "mental functions," *citta,saṅkhāra*, see **M 118**,19(7) n (SD 7.13).
[116] On contemplation of the mind, see SD 60.1b (5.8.3).
[117] "Dharmas" (*dhammā*) are realities that arise in one's mind. These last 4 aspects relate to the meditator who has just emerged from dhyana. On how to review these realities, see **Ānâpāna,sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13 (4.4.4.0).
[118] *Aniccânupassī assasissāmī ti sikkhati*. "Contemplating impermanence," *aniccânupassī*, ie, contemplating the 5 aggregates as impermanent since they undergo rise, fall and change, or momentary dissolution. See SD 7.13 (4.4.4.1).
[119] *Aniccânupassī passasissāmī ti sikkhati*. See SD 7.13 (4.4.4.1 f).

(14) He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating **fading away** (of lust), I will breathe *in*'[120]
He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating fading away (of lust), I will breathe *out*';[121]
(15) He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating **cessation** (of suffering), I will breathe *in*';[122]
He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating cessation (of suffering), I will breathe *out*';[123]
(16) He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating **letting go**[124] (of defilements), I will breathe *in*';[125]
He trains himself thus: 'Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe *out*.'[126]

18 It is in this way, bhikshus,
that the samadhi by mindfulness of breathing is cultivated and developed
so that it is peaceful and subtle; *a delectable, pleasant dwelling;*
it disperses and stills right there evil unwholesome states even as they arise."[127]

— evaṁ —

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[120] *Virāgânupassī assasissāmī ti sikkhati*. "Contemplating fading away," *virāgânupassī*. See SD 7.13 (4.4.4.3).
[121] *Virāgânupassī passasissāmī ti sikkhati*. See SD 7.13 (4.4.4.3)
[122] *Nirodhânupassī assasissāmī ti sikkhati*. SD 7.13 (4.4.4.4).
[123] *Nirodhânupassī passasissāmī ti sikkhati*. SD 7.13 (4.4.4.4).
[124] "Letting go," alt tr: "relinquishment." SĀ 809 (T99.2.208a3) omits the breath-meditation passage: the Buddha is recorded as only saying 謂安那般那念住 *wèi ān nà bān nà niàn zhù,* "that is to say, dwell in *ānâpānasati* [mindfulness of the breath.]" But in SĀ 808 (T99.2.207a20-21), these last 2 steps have "cessation" (滅 *miè*). For tr and comparative study of the corresponding exposition in Mahāsaṅghika and Mūlasarvāstivāda texts, see Analayo, "Mindfulness of breathing in the Saṁyukta-āgama," *Buddhist Studies Review* 24,2 **2007**:137-150, and *Perspectives on Satipaṭṭhāna,* Cambridge, **2013b**:227-237. At T1425 (T22.254c7-255a5), *ānâpānasati* [mindfulness of the breath]" is mentioned in detail.
[125] *Paṭinissaggânupassī assasissāmī ti sikkhati*. "Contemplating letting go [relinquishment]," *paṭinissagânupassī*, ie, the giving up (*pariccāga*) or abandoning (*pahāna*) of defilements through insight and the entering into (*pakkhandana*) nirvana by attaining the path. SD 7.13 (4.4.4.5).
[126] *Paṭinissaggânupassī passasissāmī ti sikkhati*. SD 7.13 (4.4.4.5 f).
[127] Chin tr SĀ 809 closes by stating 尊者阿難聞佛所說。歡喜奉行 *zūn zhě ānán wén fó suǒshuō. huānxǐ fèngxíng* "the venerable Ānanda, having heard the Buddha, was delighted and joyfully practised (Dharma)." (T99.2.208a7-8).

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1. It is a global resource for Buddhism scholars, Buddhist teachers, students, monastic and lay.
2. The SD series is based on themes to sustain an interesting and connected reading. (For example, SD 37 is on Right Livelihood.)
3. A modern commentarial approach with detailed notes on difficult words, names, and doctrines; and bibliographies.
4. The Sutta's *peyyāla* (repetitive cycles) (especially those on Dharma training) are translated in full, for reflection by monastics and lay practitioners.
5. The works are paragraphed, subtitled and numbered in a reader-friendly way for easy reading in a scribal tradition (opposite of oral tradition).
6. A high standard of referencing and cross-references to other Suttas, essays, journal articles, etc, that are helpful to specialists and students, for discussion or self-study.
7. A broad-based translation that uses alternative translations, amplified translations, and comparative studies with Sanskrit, Chinese and other texts where necessary.
8. It includes a digest of the related and latest scholarly researches and writings, summarized, explained and discussed.
9. They serve as comprehensive sources and resources for study and teaching notes for Dharma teachers, researchers and students.
10. Easy-to-use handbook for monastics (especially forest monks) and practitioners for Sutta readings (for recording on MP3 etc) and for meditation.
11. Socially-engaged studies and essays to inspire social workers: it addresses various social and historical issues affecting Buddhism and religion.
12. The SD texts are freely available online at our website, http://dharmafarer.org, and also separately on Micro SD cards and USB drives. They can be freely used as is.
13. The SD texts form the basis of an online Buddhist studies course.
14. The SD notes and studies are the materials for other reference projects such as *Dictionary of the Buddha's Words, A Sutta Dictionary, A Dharma Dictionary*, *Numerical Dictionary of Dharma* and *Sutta Index*.
15. The translated Suttas will be published separately according to Nikaya, that is, *The Long Texts, The Middle-length Texts, The Connected Texts* and *the Numerical Texts*.
16. The SD series is inspired by the Mere Buddhist vision, simple Dharma-spirited living that brings awakening in this life itself.
17. The SD series is the basis for Dharma-based reforms in Buddhism today.
18. It is a historical and practical guide to early Buddhist meditation.
19. A helpful introduction to the study of key Pali terms and passages.
20. An excellent and enduring gift of the Dharma to others.

(2) Brief history of the Sutta Discovery

The Sutta Discovery series started with the NUS Buddhist Society weekly Sutta Study Group (SSG) classes in February 2002 and the Buddhist Fellowship in February 2003. A new volume of translations and essays (A4 size, averaging 180 pages) was released every 3 months. These new books were studied at Poh Ming Tse (every 2nd & 4th Sundays), Singapore Buddhist Mission (every 3rd Sunday) and The Minding Centre (every Wednesday, since 2006). By 2025—22 years later—Piya had completed over 80 SD volumes.

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