

## Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta

### The Greater Discourse on the Full-moon Night

[The 5 aggregates, clinging, identity view and not-self]

(Majjhima Nikāya 109/3:15-20 = Puṇṇama S, S 22.82/3:100-104)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

#### 1 Introduction

The Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta (M 109) gives a detailed analysis of five aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*). The sutta recurs in the Saṃyutta Nikāya as **the Puṇṇama Sutta** (S 22.82) and has a parallel in the Saṃyukta Āgama.<sup>1</sup> All three texts agree in locating the discourse in the mansion of Migara’s mother. Anesaki shows that SĀ 58 has the title 陰即受 *yīnjīshòu*, “aggregates of clinging” (*upādāna-k,khandha*).<sup>2</sup> This divergence in the title is understandable, since the Pali versions record the event as occurring on a full-moon night, but SĀ 58 says it is in the afternoon: 晡時 *būshí*.<sup>3</sup>

The two Pali versions investigate “the diversity of desire and lust” (*chanda,rāga,vemattatā*),<sup>4</sup> which they explain arises through desiring for a particular future manifestation of an aggregate. The Chinese version of the Saṃyukta Āgama, on the other hand, points out that desire directed towards the future manifestations of each aggregate is what keeps the aggregates together.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of this sutta is shown by the fact that various sections are found, sometimes verbatim, sometimes expanded, sometimes in its essence, in other suttas. For example:

§5 (Source of the aggregates)	<b>(Upādāna) Samādhi Sutta</b> (S 22.5/3:13-15) = SD 7.16; <b>(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta</b> (S 22.56/3:58-61) = SD 3.7.
§6 (Clinging)	= <b>Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta</b> (S 44.6/1:299 f); <b>Upādāniyā Dhammā Sutta</b> (S 22.121/3:167) (expanded).
§9 (Totality formula)	= <b>Khandha Sutta</b> (S 22.48/3:47) = SD 17.1.
§§10-11 (Self-identity view)	= <b>Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta</b> (S 44.7-8/1:300); cf <b>Pārileyya Sutta</b> (S 22.81/3:94-99) = SD 6.1(4).
§12 (Gratification, etc)	<b>Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta</b> (M 13.18-30) = SD 6.9; <b>Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta</b> (M 14) = SD 4.7.
§§15-18 (Catechism)	= <b>Alagaddūpama Sutta</b> (M 22.26-29/1:138 f) = SD 3.13.
§15 (Threefold grasping)	<b>Anatta,lakkhaṇa Sutta</b> (S 22.59.27) = SD 1.2.

The Majjhima Commentary says that the interlocutor, a monk who asks the Buddha the ten questions<sup>6</sup> in this sutta, is an arhat and a teacher of 60 other monks who live in the forest, practising meditation. The Commentaries explains that if he were to stand, the 60 monks (or 500 monks, according to SA) would also stand, thereby showing disrespect for the Buddha. But if they were to sit while their teacher is speaking, they would show him disrespect. However, if the teacher were to sit, too, they too would sit and so, all being calm, would be able to receive the Buddha’s teaching.<sup>7</sup> SA adds that the teacher has “500 monks as retinue” (*pañca,sata,bhikkhu,parivāro*), which may refer to his pupils or to those present in the assembly before the Buddha (SA 2:306).

<sup>1</sup> SĀ 58 = T2.14b-15b.

<sup>2</sup> Anesaki 1908:81. Cf SĀ 58 = T1.14b23, where the title is not found in the Taishō or the Fōguāng eds.

<sup>3</sup> SĀ 58 = 14b13.

<sup>4</sup> M 109.7/3:16,22 and S 22.82.7/3:101,5.

<sup>5</sup> SĀ 58 = T2.14c2 explains that the wish for a particular future manifestation of the aggregates is what “binds the aggregates together,” 陰陰相關.

<sup>6</sup> The 10 questions are found at §§4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 respectively. See summary verse at the sutta’s end.

<sup>7</sup> MA 4:75-477; SA 2:306 f.

As such, the teacher asks the Buddha these questions, not out of ignorance, but out of compassion for the sake of his students. With his guidance, his students have developed various insight knowledges but could not attain the paths and fruits. As such, he brings them to see the Buddha in the hope that he could guide them to the supramundane attainments. The teacher asks the question, so that they could dispel their doubts.

## 2 The aggregates are rooted in *chanda*

All three texts record in closely similar terms a question-and-answer exchange between the Buddha and a monk,<sup>8</sup> which clarifies that the five aggregates of clinging are rooted in desire, and points out that the clinging is neither identical with the aggregates nor something apart from them, but is desire and lust concerning them.

To the question “Venerable sir, in what are these five aggregates of clinging rooted?” the Buddha answers: “Bhikkhu, these five aggregates of clinging are rooted in desire” (*Ime kho bhikkhu pañc’upādāna-k,khandhā chanda,mūlakā ti* [5]. “Rooted” (*mūlakā*) here refers to the “cause,” that is, why the aggregates arise. The Commentaries gloss *chanda* as *taṇhā* (craving),<sup>9</sup> that is, the first of the three unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*), usually called greed (*lobha = taṇhā*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*) (D 3:275; It 45). *Chanda* also connotes “approval, consent.” Even one as much as approve of the aggregates, they continue to exist: that is their “fuel” (*upādāna*).

While the two Pali versions<sup>10</sup> simply say that the five aggregates are “rooted in desire” (*chanda,mūlakā*), SĀ 58 = T2.14b22 gives more details, saying that they are

rooted in desire,	欲為根 yùwéigēn,
arisen in desire,	欲集 yùjí,
born from desire,	欲生 yùshéng,
originating from desire,	欲觸 yùchù.

The phrase, “rooted in desire” here, is quoted in **the Abhidharma,kośa**,<sup>11</sup> which corresponds closely to the formulation in SĀ 58, as it indicates that the five aggregates are *chanda,mūlakāś chanda,samudayāś chanda,jātīyāś chanda,prabhavā*.<sup>12</sup>

## 3 *Nibbidā*

The spiritual realization of the practitioner on the threshold of arhathood is described in the sutta as follows:

**17** “Seeing thus [having understood the true nature of the aggregates, especially not-self], monks, a well-taught noble disciple is revulsed with form, revulsed with feelings, revulsed with perception, revulsed with formations, revulsed with consciousness.

**18** Being revulsed, (lust) fades away. Through the fading away (of lust) [that is, dispassion], (the mind) is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge: ‘It is liberated.’<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Comy explains that the monk is an arhat who has asked this question, not out of ignorance, but for the sake of his fellow monks (MA 4:75 f). While in M 109/3:15,29 and S 22.82/3:100,16 the monk’s first question is whether the 5 aggregates are form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, which the Buddha confirms, SĀ 58 = T2.14b14 follows the opposite sequence, with the Buddha making the opening statement, after which the monk stands up and asks the same question. “To precede a question with its answer makes little sense, so that this part of SĀ 58 may have suffered from a transmission or translation error” (Anlayo 2005 ad M 3:16 n).

<sup>9</sup> MA 4:77; SA: *taṇhā,chanda,mūlakā* (SA 2:307).

<sup>10</sup> M 109.5/3:16,22 & S 22.82.5/3:100,26.

<sup>11</sup> Abhk 7.13 in Pradhan 1967:400,16.

<sup>12</sup> Anlayo 2005n ad loc. On how the aggregates arise from craving, see (**Upādāna**) **Samadhi S** (S 22.5 = SD 7.16), examined from a diachronic view (over many lives); the synchronic model (within the same life) is found in (**Upādāna**) **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56 = SD 3.7).

He knows: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being.’”

The leading operative term here is of course “is revulsed,” *nibbindati*, which is resolved as *nis + vindati*, “he knows; he finds.”<sup>14</sup> The root is √VID, to know (clearly and truly), as in *vijjā*, “religious knowledge, spiritual wisdom.” The noun is *nibbidā* (Skt & BHS *nirvid* or *nirveda*): “weariness, disgust with worldly life, tedium, aversion, indifference, disenchantment” (PED). It is the first of a well known series of words describing the spiritual turning-point to sainthood: *nibbidā*, *virāga*, *vimutti* and *nibbāna*, as in the formula: *etaṃ ekanta, nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Notice that it does not read “I am liberated,” but “It is liberated,” ie the mind.

<sup>14</sup> For a fuller discussion, see SD 17.15.

<sup>15</sup> D 1:189, 2:251, 285, 3:131, 132, 137; M 2:82, 83, 3:113, 115; S 5:82, 179, 255, 361, 362; A 1:30, 3:83, 4:143, 5:216, 217, 238, 239; U 36, 37; Pm 1:43, 44, 46, 47. For other connections, see PED: *nibbidā*. See *Nibbidā* = SD 20.1.

## The (Greater) Discourse on the Full-moon Night

[M 109/3:15-20] = [S 22.82/3:100-104]

⟨100⟩

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the mansion of Migāra's mother<sup>16</sup> in the Eastern Park near Sāvathī.

### Asking questions for the benefit of others

2 Now at that time—it was<sup>17</sup> the uposatha [observance] day<sup>18</sup> of the fifteenth, on the full-moon<sup>19</sup>—the Blessed One was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks.

3 Now a certain monk, having risen from his seat<sup>20</sup> and arranged his robe over one shoulder [that is, on the left], approached the Blessed One. Then, having saluted the Blessed One with palms together, said this to the Blessed One:<sup>21</sup>

“Venerable sir, I would like to ask the Blessed One about a certain point if the Blessed One would grant an answer to my question.”

<sup>16</sup> “The mansion of Migāra's mother,” *Migāra,mātu pasāde*. It is said that once when Visākhā (Migāra,mātā), after attending on sick monks and novices, leaves her “great-creeper parure” (*mahā,latā,pasādhana*) [after Burlin-game], her servant-girl forgets to collect it. Later when the servant-girl, having returned again from the monastery, says that Ānanda has put it away, Visākhā decides not to wear it again. As its value is too high (the parure itself, 90 million, & workmanship, 100,000 pieces of money) for anyone in Sāvathī to buy it, she buys it back herself, and use the money to build the mansion for the monks, hence its name. The building, completed in 9 months, has two floors and 500 cells on each (DA 3:859 f; MA 2:296 f; SA 1:148; AA 2:124; DhA 1:410 ff; SnA 1:336, 2:502; UA 158). During the last 20 years of his life, the Buddha, when living in Sāvathī, would divide his time between Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's park, and the mansion of Migāra's mother, spending the day in one place and the night in the other (VA 1:187). The lady **Visākhā** is married to Puṇṇa,vaddhana, son of Migāra, a seth of Sāvathī and a Jain follower (but not as rich as Visākhā's father, Dhanañjaya). One day, when a monk comes for alms, Migāra ignores him, and Visākhā apologizes to the monk, saying Migāra is eating “stale food.” When asked by Migāra, she explains that his present wealth is the result of his past good karma, but he is not making any new ones. In due course, on seeing Visākhā's wisdom, he submits to her as his mother by sucking her breast. Henceforth, she is called “Migāra's mother” (*Migāra,mātā*) (DA 3:859; MA 2:165; SA 1:148; AA 2:124; DhA 1:387 ff).

<sup>17</sup> *ahu* has 2 meanings: (1) aor 3 sg, 2 sg of *bhavati*; (2) loc of *aha*, “a day” = “on that (very) day.”

<sup>18</sup> Uposatha. **The Indian year**, according to the ancient Indian system, is divided into three seasons (*utu*)—the hot season (*gimha*), the cold season (*hemanta*), and the rains (*vassa*) (A 4:138, SnA 317)—each lasting for four lunar months or “moons” (*cātu,māsa*). Each of these seasons are subdivided into eight fortnights (*pakkha*), the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> containing 14 days and the others 15. Each month has two fortnights. Within each fortnight, the nights of the full moon (of the “bright half” or waxing moon, *sukka,pakkha*) and the new moon (either the 14th or the 15th) (of the “dark half” or waning moon, *kaṇha,pakkha*) and night of the half-moon (the 8th) are regarded as especially auspicious, called *uposatha*, Sabbath or observance day. On king Bimbisāra's proposal, the Buddha adopted these observance days (V: 101 f), on which occasion the monks would assemble to recite the Monastic Code (*pāṭimokkha*) (V 1:101-104) and the laity would visit the monasteries to observe the uposatha precepts (the 8 Precepts). For the Indian seasons, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9(9d).

<sup>19</sup> Ie the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the lunar month; see V 1:104. See prec n.

<sup>20</sup> The monk rises from his seat clearly out of respect for the Buddha. See Intro (1).

<sup>21</sup> While M 109.3/3:15,29 and S 22.82.3/3:100,16 record that the first question the monk asks is whether the 5 aggregates are form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, which the Buddha confirms, SĀ 58/T2.14b-14 follows the opposite sequence, with the Buddha at first making this statement on his own, after which only the monk stands up and asks the same as a question. “To precede a question with an answer makes little sense, so that this part of SĀ 58 may have suffered from a transmission or translation error” (Analayo 2005n ad loc).

“In that case, bhikshu,<sup>22</sup> do sit down on your own seat and ask what you wish.”

Then the monk sat down on his own seat and said this to the Blessed One:

4 (1) “Venerable sir, are these not the five aggregates of clinging,<sup>23</sup> [16] that is to say:

the form aggregate	affected by clinging,
the feelings aggregate	affected by clinging,
the perception aggregate	affected by clinging,
the formations aggregate	affected by clinging, and
the consciousness aggregate	affected by clinging?”

“These, bhikshu, are indeed the five aggregates of clinging, that is to say:

the form aggregate	affected by clinging,
the feelings aggregate	affected by clinging,
the perception aggregate	affected by clinging,
the formations aggregate	affected by clinging, and
the consciousness aggregate	affected by clinging.”

“Sadhu [excellent], venerable sir,” the monk said to the Blessed One, rejoicing and approving of the Blessed One’s word. Then he asked the Blessed One another question:

### Source of the aggregates

5 (2) “Venerable sir, in what are these five aggregates of clinging rooted?”

“Bhikshu, these five aggregates of clinging are rooted in desire.”<sup>24</sup>

6 (3) “Venerable sir, is that clinging the same as the five aggregates of clinging, or is it different from the five aggregates of clinging?”<sup>25</sup>

“Bhikshu, that clinging is neither the same as these five aggregates of clinging, (101) nor is it different from the five aggregates of clinging. It is the desire and lust<sup>26</sup> for the five aggregates of clinging that is the clinging there.”<sup>27</sup>

7 (4) “But, venerable sir, can there be a diversity of desire and lust<sup>28</sup> for the five aggregates of clinging?”

“There can be, bhikshu,” the Blessed One said: “Here, bhikshu, someone thinks thus:

<sup>22</sup> “Bhikshu” (*bhikkhu*). As vocative, I have used this anglicized word which is found in English reference dictionaries such as Webster’s 3<sup>rd</sup> New International. “Bhikshu” sounds more dignified as vocative than “monk.”

<sup>23</sup> Note that the questioner is an arhat [1], but he refers to his own “aggregates of clinging.” The arhat has the five aggregates, but although they are *capable of invoking craving or produces craving*, this only occurs in the unawakened. In fact, the unawakened might even view an arhat’s form aggregate, for example, with lust. The arhat, however, has no clinging whatsoever towards the aggregates whether internal or external.

<sup>24</sup> *Ime kho bhikkhu pañc’upādāna-k,khandhā chanda,mūlakā ti*. MA glosses **chanda** as *tañhā* (craving) (MA 4:77); SA: *tañhā,chanda,mūlakā*, “rooted in desire that is craving” (SA 2:307). See Intro (2).

<sup>25</sup> As at **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.6/1:299 f). Comy there says that because clinging is only one part of the aggregate of formations [def here as greed], it is not the same as the 5 aggregates, and because clinging cannot be altogether disconnected from the aggregates, there is no clinging apart from the aggregates. (MA 2:359)

<sup>26</sup> “Desire and lust,” **chanda,rāga**, a dvandva, “desire” (*chanda*) is weak lust (*dubbala rāga*), and “lust” (*rāga*) is strong lust (*balava rāga*): see DA 1:115-117 = SD 25.3.63-64. However, it can be taken as karmadharaya (quailfier + noun): “lustful desire,” ie a negative desire. **Chanda** is itself a neutral term, meaning simply “desire,” and often has a wholesome connotation, as the first of the 4 paths of accomplishment (*iddhi,pāda*) (D 3:213 = M 1:103 = 2:111; D 3:221; Vbh 216).

<sup>27</sup> *Yo kho bhikkhu pañc’upādāna-k,khandhesu chanda,rāgo, tam tattha upādānan ti*, lit “Whatever, monk, is lustful desire in the five aggregates affected by clinging, that is the clinging there.” This is stated in full in **Upādānīyā Dhammā S** (S 22.121): “Form, bhikshus, is a thing that can be clung to. The lustful desire for it is the clinging there. Feelings... Perception ... Formations... Consciousness is a thing (are things) that can be clung to. The lustful desire for it is (for them are) the clinging there” (S 22.121/3:167). In other words, the aggregates too themselves act as their own fuel (*upādāna*). As such, clinging (*upādāna*) is neither the same nor different from the aggregates. The aggregates are self-sustaining.

<sup>28</sup> “A diversity of lustful desire,” *chanda,rāga,vemattatā* (M 109.7 = S 22.82.7/3:101,5).

‘May my	physical form	be thus in the future!
May my	feelings	be thus in the future!
May my	perception	be thus in the future!
May my	formations	be thus in the future!
May my	consciousness	be thus in the future!’

Thus, bhikshu, there can be a diversity of desire and lust for the five aggregates of clinging.”<sup>29</sup>

### Scope of the aggregates

**8** (5) “Venerable sir, in what way does the term ‘aggregate’ (*khandha*) apply to the aggregates?”

<sup>30</sup>“Bhikshu, whatever kind of **form** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near<sup>31</sup>—this is called the form aggregate. [17]

Whatever kind of **feelings** there are, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—this is called the feelings aggregate.

Whatever kind of **perception** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—this is called the perception aggregate.

Whatever kind of **formations** there are, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—this is called the formations aggregate.

Whatever kind of **consciousness** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—this is called the consciousness aggregate.<sup>32</sup>

In this way, bhikshu, does the term ‘aggregate’ apply to the aggregates.”

### How the aggregates arise

**9** (6) “Venerable sir, what is the cause, what is the condition, for the appearance<sup>33</sup> of the form aggregate?”

<sup>29</sup> SĀ 58 = T2.14c2 however explains that the wish for a particular future manifestation of the aggregates is what “binds the aggregates together,” 陰陰相關 yīnyīnxiāngguān (Analayo 2005n ad loc).

<sup>30</sup> Except for the last line, this whole section (8) forms **Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:47) = SD 17.1, and which also has the phrase, “with mental influxes, subject to clinging” following “far or near.”

<sup>31</sup> See **Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:47) = SD 17.1. This “totality formula” classification of the aggregates (see prec n) is explained in detail in **Vibhaṅga** and briefly in **Visuddhimagga**: “internal” = physical sense-organs; “external” = physical sense-objects; “gross” = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); “subtle” = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); “far” = subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”); “near” = gross objects (“easy to penetrate”) (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38f; Boisvert 1995:43-48. As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhata*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have two applications: (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them and anything else is “external”; (2) the sense-organs are “internal” and their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.” Boisvert (1995: 43, 47), however overlooks these applications.

<sup>32</sup> Clearly, *viññāṇam anidassanaṃ* (the unmanifested consciousness, or consciousness without feature) is not included in this category of consciousness. The **Brahma, nimantanika S** (M 49) specifically states that this consciousness does not partake of the “allness of the all,” the “all” here includes the 5 aggregates (M 49.23-25/1:329 f); see SD 11.7(8). The “totality formula” for the aggregates states that they are “past, future...far or near.” Since *viññāṇam anidassanaṃ* is beyond space and time, none of these terms apply to it. Similarly, where **Nakha, sikha S** (S 22.97/3:148 f) says that no consciousness (or any aggregate) is eternal, here “eternal” is a concept connected with time, and as such would not apply to this consciousness. See Thanissaro (tr), Puṇṇama S (M 109) tr n1 at <http://www.accesstoinight.org/canon/sutta/majjhima/mn109.html>.

<sup>33</sup> “For the appearance,” *paññāpanāya*, lit, “for making discernible.” *Paññāpana*, lit “making known” (from *paññāpeti*, “he makes known,” caus of *pajānāti*, “he knows”) might also be rendered here as “describing” or “description.” The aggregates as such may arise in an unwise worlding through their own manifestation or by one

What is the cause, what is the condition, for the appearance of the feelings aggregate?

What is the cause, what is the condition, for the appearance of the perception aggregate?

What is the cause, what is the condition, for the appearance of the formations aggregate?

What is the cause, what is the condition, for the appearance of the consciousness aggregate?"

“**The four great elements**<sup>34</sup> are the cause, bhikshu, the four great elements are the condition, for the appearance of the form aggregate.

**Contact**<sup>35</sup> is the cause, contact is the condition, for the appearance of the feelings aggregate.

**Contact** is the cause, contact is the condition, for the appearance of the perception aggregate. (102)

**Contact** is the cause, contact is the condition, for the appearance of the formations aggregate.

**Name-and-form** is the cause, name-and-form is the condition, for the appearance of the consciousness aggregate.”<sup>36</sup>

### Self-identity view

10 (7) “Venerable sir, how does self-identity view arise?”<sup>37</sup>

“Here, bhikshu, the uninstructed ordinary person who is not a seer of the noble ones, and is unskilled in the Dharma of the aryas [noble ones], undisciplined in the Dharma of the aryas, who is not a seer of the true persons,<sup>38</sup> and is unskilled in the Dharma of the true persons and undisciplined in the Dharma of the true persons, considers<sup>39</sup> [**the 20 kinds of self-identity views (sakkāya, diṭṭhī), namely:**]<sup>40</sup>

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merely defining or describing (ie looking for) them. As such, this apparently refers to the intentional aspect of perception, which takes the objective side of experience and fabricates it into discernible objects. In the case of the aggregates, the four great elements, contact, and name-and-form provide the objective basis for discerning them, while the process of formation takes the raw material provided by the objective basis and turns it into discernible instances of the aggregates. This process is described in slightly different terms in **Abhinandana S**: “One who seeks delight in form, ...feelings, ...perception, ...formations, ...consciousness, seeks delight in suffering. One who seeks delight in suffering, I say, is not freed from suffering. One who does not seek delight in form, etc, does not seek delight in suffering. One who does not seek delight in suffering, I say, is freed from suffering” (S 22.79/3:31). See Thanissaro (tr), Puṇṇama S (M 109) tr n2 at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/sutta/majjhima/mn109.html>.

<sup>34</sup> In the form aggregate, each of the 4 great elements is a condition for the other 3 and for derived forms (*upādā, rūpa*) [on the derived forms, see **Mahā Hatthi, padopamā S**, SD 6.16 Intro (12)]. Contact (*phassa*) is a condition for each of the 3 middle aggregates (feelings, perception, formations), as it is said: “Bhikshus, when there is contact, one feels; when there is contact, one perceives; when there is contact, one wills” (S 35.93/4:68). Comy explains that at the moment of conception, form and the 3 mental aggregates that arise are the name-and-form that is a condition for the rebirth consciousness. During the course of life, the physical sense-faculties (*indriya*) and the sense objects together with the 3 mental aggregates are the name-and-form that is a condition for sense-consciousness. (MA 4:77 f)

<sup>35</sup> “Contact” (*phassa*) here refers to sense-stimulation or sensing, ie the “switching on” of the sense-faculty.

<sup>36</sup> The better known formula in dependent arising is “with consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form” (*viññāna, paccayā nāma, rūpam*): see (**Paṭicca, samuppāda**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2) = SD 5.15. We find both these formulas—incl “with name-and-form as condition, there is consciousness (*nāma, rūpa, paccayā viññānam*)—in **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15) = SD 5.17. In the former case, when consciousness descends into the womb, name-and-form takes shape there. In the latter, when consciousness finds a footing in name-and-form, then birth, decay, death and suffering continue to grow. So we have a cyclic situation here: the uroborus biting its own tail.

<sup>37</sup> Also called “identity view,” or simply “self-view.” §§10-11 as at **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7-8/1:300). “Self-identity view,” *sakkāya, diṭṭhī* (M 109/3:17,23 = S 22.82/3:102,5), but SĀ 58 = T14c29 has “I conceit,” 我慢 *wómán*. See **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81) = SD 6.1(4).

<sup>38</sup> “True person,” *sappurisa*, also “virtuous person,” “ideal person.” The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at D 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 113; A 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f & at M 110.14-24/3:23 f.

<sup>39</sup> “Considers,” *samanupassati* = *sam* (completeness) + *anu* (after) + *passati* (he sees), ie, to look at intuitively (with wisdom).

<sup>40</sup> **The Paṭisambhidā, magga** illustrates **the 4 basic modes of self-identity view** in connection with form in this manner. One might wrongly regard form as self in the way that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame. Or one might wrongly regard self as possessing form just as a tree possesses a shadow. Or one

1. form as the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form;
2. feelings as the self, or the self as possessing feelings, or feelings as in the self, or the self as in feelings;
3. perception as the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception;
4. formations as the self, or the self as possessing formations, or formations as in the self, or the self as in formations;
5. consciousness as the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, [18] or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.<sup>41</sup>

This, bhikshu, is how self-identity view arises.”

**11** (8) “Venerable sir, how does self-identity view not arise?”

“Here, bhikshu, the learned noble disciple person who is a seer of the noble ones, and is skilled in the Dharma of the aryas [noble ones], disciplined in the Dharma of the aryas, who is a seer of the true persons, and is skilled in the Dharma of the true persons and disciplined in the Dharma of the true persons, does *not* consider [the 20 kinds of self-identity views, namely:]

1. form as the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form;
2. feelings as the self, or the self as possessing feelings, or feelings as in the self, or the self as in feelings;
3. perception as the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception;
4. formations as the self, or the self as possessing formations, or formations as in the self, or the self as in formations;
5. consciousness as the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

This, bhikshu, is how self-identity view does not arise.”

### Gratification, danger and escape

**12** (9) “What, venerable sir, is the gratification, what is the danger, what is the escape, in regard to form?<sup>42</sup>

What is the gratification, what is the danger, what is the escape, in the case of feelings?

What is the gratification, what is the danger, what is the escape, in the case of perception?

might wrongly regard form as in self as the scent is in the flower. Or one might wrongly regard self as in form, as a jewel is in a casket.

<sup>40</sup> **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7 f/1:300), too, lists these 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the 5 aggregates. The Cūḷa Vedalla S Comy (MA 2:360) here qu **Paṭisambhidā, magga** to illustrate the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in regard to form. In regarding form as self, it is just as the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical with the flames’s colour; or, in regarding self as possessing form, as a tree has a shadow, or, in regarding form as in self, as the scent in a flower; or in regarding self as in form, as a jewel in a casket (Pm 1:143 f).

<sup>41</sup> The Chinese version refers to this four self-identity views as 見我 *jiànwǒ*, 異我 *yìwǒ*, 相我 *xiāngwǒ*, “seeing as I, as other than I, as mutually present” (SĀ 58 = T2.14c29). Choong 2000:59 draws attention to two Saṃyukta Āgama sutras that are helpful here. The first, SĀ 45 = T2.11b5, describes the viewing of self in regard to the aggregate of form as 見色是我 *jiànsèshìwǒ*, 色異我 *sèyìwǒ*, 我在色 *wǒzài sè*, 色在我 *sèzài wǒ*; and SĀ 109 = T2.34b13, giving a similar list but slightly shorter, 見色是我, 異我, 我在色, 色在我. “Thus,” notes Analayo, “見我 and 異我 refer to identifying the aggregate of self and to taking the aggregate to be owned by the self, corresponding to *rūpam attato samanupassati* and *rūpavantam vā attānam* in M 109/3:17,27.” The Madhyama Āgama version of this formula such as that in MĀ 210 = T1.788a28 (parallel to M 44/1:300,7) is more intelligible: 見色是神 *jiànsèshìshēn*, 見神有色 *jiànshēnyǒusè*, 見神中有色 *jiànshēnzōngyǒushēn*, 見神中有色也 *jiànshēnzōngshìyǒuyě*. (See Analayo 2005n ad loc for detailed n).

<sup>42</sup> In **Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 13) = SD 6.9, & **Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha S** (14) = SD 4.7, these 3 aspects are applied to sense-pleasures (*kāma*). The gratification, danger and escape regarding form is discussed in some detail and by way of similes in **Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 13.18-30) = SD 6.9.

What is the gratification, what is the danger, what is the escape, in the case of formations?

What is the gratification, what is the danger, what is the escape, in the case of consciousness?”

FORM. “Bhikshu, physical pleasure and mental pleasure that arise in dependence on form—this is the gratification in regard to form.

Form is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change—this is the danger in regard to form.

The removal of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust for form—this is the escape in regard to form.

FEELINGS. “Physical pleasure and mental pleasure that arise in dependence on feelings—this is the gratification in regard to feelings.

Feelings are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change—this is the danger in regard to feelings.

The removal of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust for feelings—this is the escape in regard to feelings.

PERCEPTION. “Physical pleasure and mental pleasure that arise (103) in dependence on perception—this is the gratification in regard to perception.

Perception is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change—this is the danger in regard to perception.

The removal of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust for perception—this is the escape in regard to perception.

FORMATIONS. “Physical pleasure and mental pleasure that arise in dependence on formations—this is the gratification in regard to formations.

Formations are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change—this is the danger in regard to formations.

The removal of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust for formations—this is the escape in regard to formations.

CONSCIOUSNESS. “Physical pleasure and mental pleasure that arise in dependence on consciousness—this is the gratification in regard to consciousness.

Consciousness is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change—this is the danger in regard to consciousness.

The removal of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust for consciousness—this is the escape in regard to consciousness.”

## Overcoming selfish tendencies

13 (10) “Venerable sir, how does one know, how does one see, so that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs, there is no latent tendency to I-making, to mine-making and to conceit?”<sup>43</sup>

“Bhikshu, whatever kind of **form** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, [19] far or near<sup>44</sup>—one sees all forms as they really are with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

<sup>43</sup> *Imasmīñ ca sa,viññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabba,nimittesu ahaṃ,kāra,mamaṃ,kāra,mānānusayā na honti.* I treat the cpd *ahaṃkāra,mamaṃkāra,mānānusayā* as all referring to latent tendencies, ie, “the latent tendency to I-making, to mine-making and to conceit,” rather than as “I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit” (S:B 927). “Conceit” (*māna*) here refers to measuring oneself against others (as better than, inferior to, or equal with) (Nm 80; Nc 226; Vbh 389). The **Sall’atthēna S** (S 36.6) mentions 3 latent tendencies (*anusaya*): the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*), of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), and of ignorance (*āviññānusaya*) (S 36.6.8bcd = SD 5.5). It is clear here that the latent tendency of lust refers to “mine-making,” of aversion to “conceit,” and of ignorance to “I-making.” While the Pali version speaks of overcoming selfish tendencies, the Chinese version inquires how to practise so that “the complete destruction of the influxes is attained,” 盡得漏盡 jīndélóujīn (SĀ 58 = T2.15a6).

<sup>44</sup> On this “totality formula,” see §8 above.

Whatever kind of **feelings** there are, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all feelings as they really are with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

Whatever kind of **perception** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all perceptions as it really are with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

Whatever kind of **formations** there are, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all formations as they really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

Whatever kind of **consciousness** there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all consciousnesses as they really is with right wisdom, thus: ‘This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.’

It is when one knows thus, when one sees thus, that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs, there is no latent tendency to I-making, to mine-making and to conceit.”

### A monk’s wrong view

14 Then this thought arose in the mind of a certain monk:

“So it seems, sir,<sup>45</sup> that form is not self, feelings are not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, consciousness is not self. (104) What self, then, will deeds done by the not-self touch [affect]?”<sup>46</sup>

Then the Blessed One, knowing with his own mind, the reflection in the mind of that monk, addressed the monks:

“Bhikshus, it is possible that some empty person here, unknowing, ignorant, with a mind dominated by craving,<sup>47</sup> thinks that he might go beyond<sup>48</sup> the 22.82.14-15/3:104) Teacher’s Teaching thus:<sup>49</sup>

‘So it seems, sir, that form is not self, feelings are not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, consciousness is not self. What self, then, will deeds done by what is not self touch [affect]?’

Now, bhikshus, you have been trained by me through questioning here and there concerning various things.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> “So it seems, sir,” *iti kira bho*. IB Horner: “This looks like a case where a monk, in thought, applied *bho* to himself. Or else he is thinking (as translated in *Kindred Sayings* [S:W] 3:88) “so then you say.” (M:H 3:68 n2)

<sup>46</sup> The last sentence: *anatta, katāni kammāni kam attānaṃ phusissanti ti* (M 109) which is preferred. VII: *katam attānaṃ phusissanti* (S 22.82/3:103,27); Be Ce *kathaṃ attānaṃ*; which Bodhi thinks “perhaps should be amended to *kam attānaṃ*” (S:B 1077 n142). Comys are silent. Apparently, the monk has difficulty in understanding how karma can produce results without a self to receive them. MA explains: “In what self do these results appear? Speaking thus, he fell into an eternalist view (*sassata, diṭṭhi*)” (MA 4:79). The Chinese version says: “If deeds are done by not-self, then who will experience the retribution in the future?” 作無我業 *zuò wú wǒ yè*, 於未來世 *yú wèi lái shì*, 誰富受報 *shéi fù shòu bào*. SĀ 58 further differs from the Pali in saying that the monk here is one “with dull faculties,” 鈍根 *dùn gēn*, and “ignorant,” 無知 *wú zhī*, one with “evil wrong view,” 惡耶見 *è yē jiàn*.

<sup>47</sup> “Dominated by craving,” *taṇhā’adhipateyyena*. Three kinds of dominance or supremacy (*adhipateyya*), ie, what controls or leads one’s mind, are mentioned in the Canon: self-supremacy or self-dependence (*attādhīpateyya*), world-supremacy or popular opinion (*lokādhīpateyya*), and supremacy of the truth (*dhammādhīpateyya*) (D 3:220; A 1:147; AA 2:243; UA 406; DhsA 125). One mainly guided by one’s personal opinion (negative) or by one’s conscience (wholesome) is said to be *attādhīpaka*; one easily moved by popular opinion (negative or wholesome) is said to be *lokādhīpa(ka)*; and one led only by the truth (wholesome) is said to be *dhammādhīpa(ka)* (A 1:150,8\*).

<sup>48</sup> “He might go beyond,” *atidhāvītabbāṃ* (M 3:19,17 = S 3:103,32), grd of *atidhāvati* (*ati*, beyond, + *dhāvati*, he runs), “he runs past, transgresses, deviates, goes too far” (M 3:230; S 3:103, 4:230; It 43; U 64; expl ay UA 352).

<sup>49</sup> *Thānaṃ kho paṇ’etaṃ, bhikkhave, vijjati yam idh’ekacco mogha, puriso avidvā avijjā, gato taṇhā’adhipateyyena cetasā satthu sāsanaṃ atidhāvītabbāṃ maññeyya*. This statement and the rest of this passage [14] are not found in SĀ 58.

<sup>50</sup> *Paṭipucchā vinīta kho me tumhe bhikkhave tatra tatra tesu tesu dhammesu*. The reading here is highly varied in M and in S. However, the reading *paṭipucchā vinīta* at **Puṇṇama S** (S 22.82/3:104) seems preferable to either PTS *paṭicca vinīta* or Be (Buddhasāsana Samiti) *paṭivīnīta*. Comys are silent. Bodhi: “[I]t is clear enough that the ‘training through interrogation’ [*paṭipucchā vinīta*] is the catechistic method to be applied in the following para-

Catechism: Characteristics of the aggregates

**15** <sup>51</sup>FORM. What do you think, bhikshus? Is form permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent painful or pleasurable?"

"Painful, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'<sup>52</sup>?"

"No, venerable sir."

FEELINGS. "What do you think, bhikshus? Are feelings permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent painful or pleasurable?"

"Painful, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'?"

"No, venerable sir."

PERCEPTION. "What do you think, bhikshus? Is perception permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent painful or pleasurable?"

"Painful, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'?"

"No, venerable sir."

FORMATIONS. "What do you think, bhikshus? Are formations permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent painful or pleasurable?"

"Painful, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'?"

"No, venerable sir."

CONSCIOUSNESS. "What do you think, bhikshus? Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir." [19]

"Is what is impermanent painful or pleasurable?"

"Painful, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'?"

"No, venerable sir."<sup>53</sup>

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graph" (S:B 1077 n143). Of course, this term could also cover the importance of questioning the teacher that underpin Buddhist training, and that is the theme of the two Puṇṇama Suttas.

<sup>51</sup> §§15-18 as at **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22.26-29/1:138 f) = SD 3.13.

<sup>52</sup> These are the threefold grasping (*ti, vidha gāha*). See, eg, **Anatta, Jakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-16/3:68) applied to the 5 aggregates & **Mahā Hatthi, padôpama S** (M 28/1:184-191 §§6b, 7, 11b, 12, 16b, 17, 21b, 22) applied to the 4 primary elements. See SD 6.1 Intro (3).

<sup>53</sup> Norman on this and the following section: "It is important to note that this answer can only be given by those who know, in advance, that the term *attā* is by definition *nicca* [permanent] and *sukha* [pleasant], and therefore anything which is *anicca* and *dukkha* cannot be *attā*. This gives us a clear indication of the type of *attā* that is being discussed. It is the Upanishadic idea of an *ātman* which is *nitya* and *sukha*, and this is in complete agreement with the fact... that some of the phraseology of the non-Buddhist view which is being rejected has Upanishadic echoes." (Norman 1981c:22)

16 Therefore, monks, any kind of form whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near<sup>54</sup>—all forms should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’<sup>55</sup>

Any kind of feeling whatsoever... ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Any kind of perception whatsoever... ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Any kind of formations whatsoever... ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Any kind of consciousness whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all forms should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

17 Seeing thus, monks, a well-taught noble disciple is revulsed<sup>56</sup> with form, revulsed with feelings, revulsed with perception, revulsed with formations, revulsed with consciousness.

18 Being revulsed, (lust) fades away. Through the fading away (of lust) [that is, dispassion], (the mind) is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge: ‘It is liberated.’<sup>57</sup>

He knows: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being.’”

## Conclusion

The Blessed One said this. The monks, joyful at heart, approved of the Blessed One’s word.

Now while this discourse was being spoken, the minds of sixty monks, through not clinging, were liberated from the influxes.<sup>58</sup>

⟨Two about the aggregates,  
Whether they can be the same,  
About designation and cause,  
Two about identity,<sup>59</sup>  
[One each on] gratification  
And the one with consciousness:  
These are the ten questions<sup>60</sup>  
That the monks came to ask.⟩<sup>61</sup>

— evaṃ —

<sup>54</sup> On this totality formula, see §8n above.

<sup>55</sup> See **Anatta, Jakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.27) = SD 1.2.

<sup>56</sup> “(He) is revulsed” (*nibbindati*). Comy: He is dissatisfied, disgusted. This revulsion marks the culmination of insight, just before the attainment of the supramundane path (Vism 722 f). “His lust fades away” marks the attainment of the supramundane path (*magga*), when the fetters are finally eliminated. “He is liberated” refers to the attainment of the supramundane fruition (*phala*). The arhat’s subsequent reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa, -ñāṇa*) is shown by the phrase “there comes the knowledge” and “he understands: ‘Birth is destroyed...’,” in the following paragraph. See Intro (3).

<sup>57</sup> Notice that it does not read “I am liberated,” but “It is liberated,” ie the mind.

<sup>58</sup> MA says that the 60 monks abandoned their original meditation subject and turned to a new one [based on the Buddha’s discourse, MAṬ]. Without breaking their posture, right there in their seats they attained arhathood (MA 4:79). SA however says that at end of each sutta in this vagga 500 monks attained arhathood (SA 2:308). Apparently, besides the 60 monks mentioned, a further 500 too attained arhathood.

<sup>59</sup> Reading *sakkāyena duve vuttā* following Se instead of PTS *sattā yena duve vuttā*; see also S:B 1077 n144.

<sup>60</sup> The 10 questions are found at §§4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 respectively.

<sup>61</sup> This verse is in S:Be, S:Ee (PTS) & S:Se, but not in S:Ce or M. It is clearly the reciters’ interpolation by way of a mnemonic summary.

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