

Assutava Sutta 2

The Discourse on the Uninstructed 2

[Understanding feelings leads to *nibbidā*]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 12.62/2:95-97)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2006

Introduction

There are two Assutava Suttas¹ (S 12.61+62), and both deal with revulsion towards the body and dependence arising. The two Suttas are identical up to §7, that is, just before the similes of the monkey and of night and day of the Assutava Sutta 1 (S 12.61). While the Assutava Sutta 1 treats dependent arising by way of *the traditional formula*, the Assutava Sutta 2 presents the dependent arising and dependent ending of feelings.

The Assutava Sutta 2 has its own simile of the fire-sticks (*kaṭṭha*) [§12]. The same passage (with its variant readings) are found in **the Phassa,mūlaka Sutta** (S 36.10)² and **the Araṇi Suta** (S 48.39).³ The Sāmyutta Commentary says that *the sense-base* is like the lower fire-stick; the object, the upper fire-stick; contact, the friction of the two; and feeling, the heat element (SA 2:101).

— — —

The Discourse on the Uninstructed 2

(S 12.62/2:95-97)

1 ...he was residing near Sāvathhī.

We tend to “own” our minds

2 “Bhikshus, the uninstructed worldling⁴ might be revulsed towards this body made of the four great elements, or he might be dispassionate towards it, or he might be freed from it.

3 What is the reason for this?

Because, bhikshus, growth or decay [increase or decrease]⁵ is seen in this body made of the four great elements,⁶ as it is seen being taken up or [96] being cast aside.

Therefore, the uninstructed worldling might be revulsed towards this body made of the four great elements, or he might be dispassionate towards it, or he might be freed from it.

4 But, bhikshus, as regards to what is called ‘mentation [thought],⁷ or ‘mind,⁸ or ‘consciousness,⁹—the uninstructed worldling is unable to be revulsed towards it, unable to be dispassionate towards it, unable to be freed from it.

¹ S 12.61/2:94 f & 12.62/95-97 = SD 20.2+3.

² S 36.10/4:215,22-25.

³ S 48.39/5:212,21-24.

⁴ *Assutavā puthujjana*. The uninstructed worldling is one who lacks learning, questioning and discerning of the aggregates of existence. He may either be a crowd-follower or a highly opinionated individual guided by self-identity. On *puthujjana*, etc, see “**P**”: **The Nature of Identity** = SD 19.1(7.1).

⁵ *Ācayo pi apacayo pi*, lit “building up [accumulating] and lessening.”

⁶ The four great elements (*mahā,bhūta*): see *Rūpa* = SD 17.2a.

⁷ *Citta*, and the foll 2, *mano* and *viññāṇa* are all synonyms here. See SD 20.2 Intro (2).

⁸ *Mano*, see prec n.

⁹ On these 3 terms, see *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8(12).

5 What is the reason for this?

Because, bhikkhus, for a long time, it has been held, cherished, and grasped by him, thus:

‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self.’¹⁰

Therefore, the uninstructed worldling is unable to be revulsed towards it, unable to be dispassionate towards it, unable to be freed from it.

The nature of the mind

6 It would be better, bhikkhus, for the uninstructed worldling to take this body, made of the four great elements—rather than the mind—as the self.

7 What is the reason for this?

Because this body, made of the four great elements, is seen standing for one year, two years, three years, for four, five, or ten years, for twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years, for a hundred years, or is seen standing for even longer.¹¹

But that which is called ‘mentation,’ or ‘mind,’ or ‘consciousness,’ arises as one thing and ceases as another, like night and day.¹²

Revulsion through dependent arising

8 As such, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple closely and wisely attends to dependent arising itself, thus:

Imasmim sati, idam hoti;

imass’uppādā, idam uppajjati.

Imasmim asati idam na hoti;

imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati.

‘When this is, that is;

with the arising of this, that arises.

When this is not, that is not;

with the ending of this, that ends.’¹³

9 Bhikkhus, dependent on pleasant contact, a pleasant feeling arises.

With the ending of the pleasant contact, the pleasant feeling that arose in dependent on that pleasant contact, ceases, is stilled.¹⁴

10 Bhikkhus, dependent on painful contact, a painful feeling arises.

With the ending of the painful contact, the painful feeling that arose in dependent on that painful contact, ceases, is stilled.

11 Bhikkhus, dependent on neutral contact, a neutral feeling arises.

With the ending of the neutral contact, [97] the neutral feeling that arose in dependent on that neutral contact, ceases, is stilled.

¹⁰ These are the 3 graspings (*gāha*): see SD 20.2 Intro (4).

¹¹ *Dissatāyaṃ bhikkhave cātummahā, bhūtiko kāyaṃ ekam pi vassam tiṭṭhamāno, dve pi vassani tiṭṭhamāno, tīṇi pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno ...* (the text repeats a full sentence for each number, but is here abridged in the scribal tradition). Comy (on S 12.61) here introduces the post-Buddha theory of moments (*khaṇika, vāda*)—that formations right there even as they arise—and so asks why the Buddha says that the body “stands [endures].” In autoanswer, it says that the body endures just like the light of a lamp burns through the night “by way of a connected continuity” (*paveṇi, sambandha, vasena*), even though the flame ceases right where it burns without crossing over to the next part of the wick. (SA 2:99)

¹² *Rattiyā ca divasassa ca*. This simile points to the fact that the untrained mind tends to grasp at one different thought after another, and so mentally proliferates with countless thoughts. Comy however explains it as that the mind tends to think a different thing every moment (SA 2:99): see **Assutava S 1** (S 12.61) = SD 20.2 Intro (3).

¹³ This is the well known “specific conditionality” (*idap, paccayatā*) formula, ie, the dependent arising formula in brief. The full formula follows. See **Dependent arising** = SD 5.16(2).

¹⁴ Bodhi renders it more technically accurate, thus: “Bhikkhus, in dependence on a contact to be experienced as pleasant, a pleasant feeling arises. With the cessation of that contact to be experienced as pleasant, the corresponding feeling—the pleasant feeling that arose in dependence on that contact to be experienced as pleasant—ceases and subsides.” The same applies mutatis mutandis to the foll 2 passages.

12 SIMILE OF THE FIRE-STICKS. Bhikshus, just as heat is generated and fire is produced from the meeting and friction of two sticks, but when the two sticks are separated and put aside,¹⁵ that heat ceases, dies down,

13 even so, dependent on pleasant contact, a pleasant feeling arises;
with the ending of the pleasant contact, the pleasant feeling that arose in dependent on that pleasant contact, ceases, is stilled.

14 Dependent on painful contact, a painful feeling arises;
with the ending of the painful contact, the painful feeling that arose in dependent on that painful contact, ceases, is stilled.

15 Dependent on neutral contact, a neutral feeling arises;
with the ending of the neutral contact, the neutral feeling that arose in dependent on that neutral contact, ceases, is stilled.

Liberation

16 Seeing thus, bhikshus, the instructed noble disciple
is revulsed towards contact;¹⁶
he is revulsed towards feeling, too;
he is revulsed towards perception, too;
he is revulsed towards formations, too;
he is revulsed towards consciousness, too.

Feeling revulsed, he becomes dispassionate.

Through dispassion, (his mind) is liberated.

When it is liberated, there arises the knowledge: ‘Liberated!’

He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is no more of this state of being.’”

— evaṃ —

070908; 080828

¹⁵ Ce Ee: *nānā, bhāvā, vinikkhepā*; Be Se *nānā, kata, vinibbhoga* [“made bereft of various...”]. Following Bodhi (S:B 771 n159), the former is preferred. See Intro.

¹⁶ The usual subject here would be “form” (*rūpa*), but here the impact of the sense-object on the sense-faculties (ie the *contact* btw the internal senses and the external world) is mentioned.