

## Sūda Sutta

### The Discourse on the Cook

[Satipatthana practice is like good cooking]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 47.8/5:149-152)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2009

#### 1 Sutta summary

**The Sūda Sutta** (S 47.8) is a short discourse on the proper practice of the focusses of mindfulness (*satipatthāna*), and the Buddha insightfully uses the parable of the bad and good cooks to show this. The discourse is divided into two equal sections: the first on *the parable of the bad cook* [§§3-7], and the second, on *the parable of the good cook* [§§8-11].

In both sections, a list of *eight kinds of tastes* are given [2]. **The bad cook** neither takes note of his master's meal preference nor prepares the meals according to his master's preference [§§3-4], and so goes unrewarded [§5]. Similarly, the unskilled meditator does not know how to grasp the meditation sign in his practice of the four focusses of mindfulness [§§6-7].

**The good cook**, on the other hand, notes his master's meal preference, and prepares the meals according to his master's preference [§8], and is rewarded [§9]. The skilled meditator similarly knows how to grasp the meditation sign in his practice of the four focusses of mindfulness, and so lives happily even here and now [§§10-11].

#### 2 Taste

**2.1 THE 8 KINDS OF TASTES.** **The Sūda Sutta** (S 47.8) mentions these eight kinds of tastes [§§3, 8a] and their examples:

		<u>tastes like</u>
(1) <i>ambila</i>	sour, astringent	buttermilk ( <i>takkambali</i> , DhsA 320)
(2) <i>tittaka</i>	bitter	neem leaves ( <i>nimbi,paṇṇa</i> , DhsA 320)
(3) <i>kaṭuka</i>	spicy hot	ginger, black pepper ( <i>siṅgivera,marica</i> , DhsA 320)
(4) <i>madhura</i> <sup>1</sup>	sweet	honey taste (ThaA 3:22)
(5) <i>khārika</i>	sharp, acrid	egg-plant sprout ( <i>vātiṅgaṇa,kaḷīra</i> , DhsA 320)
(6) <i>akhārika</i>	mild, not sharp	[Commentary probably has "acrid" ( <i>lambila</i> ) here] <sup>2</sup>
(7) <i>loṇika</i>	salty	sea-salt ( <i>sammudika,loṇa</i> , DhsA 320)
(8) <i>aloṇaka</i>	bland, unsalted	[Commentary probably has "astringent" ( <i>kasāva</i> ) here] <sup>3</sup>

(S 47.8/5:149-152) = SD 28.15

This list of eight tastes is also given in **the Khajjanīya Sutta** (S 22.79) and elsewhere, especially the Commentaries.<sup>4</sup> Often these other lists give a different sequence of tastes, and include a number of others.

**The Sūda Sutta** list however is unique in that the first four tastes are each listed as a compound with the modifier *agga* ("predominant, foremost"),<sup>5</sup> which the Commentary glosses as "a part of" (*koṭṭhāsa*,

<sup>1</sup> Given as *madhuka* at **Khajjanīya S** (S 22.79/3:87).

<sup>2</sup> In place of this and the last, *aloṇika*, Comy has "acrid" (*lambila*), such as jujube (*Zizyphus jujuba*), emblic myrobalan (*Phyllanthus emblica*), wood-apple (*Feronia elephantum*), *sālava* [?] (*badarāmalaka,kapiṭṭha,sālavādi*), and "astringent" (*kasāva*), such as yellow myrobalan (*harīṭaka*) (DhsA 320). For botanical names, see DPL (Childrens).

<sup>3</sup> See n for *akhārika* above.

<sup>4</sup> S 22.79/3:87; also at Nm 1:240 (with other tastes); Nc 236 (with other tastes); Dhs 629-631/142 f; Vbh 72; SA 2:292; Vism 4.122/150 f (qu **Sūda S**, S 47.8); NmA 2:343; DhA 320 (with other tastes); DhsA 320; Abh 148 (Abhi-dhāna-p, padīpikā).

<sup>5</sup> That is, as *smbil'aggehi pi, tittak'aggehi pi, kaṭuk'aggehi pi, madhur'aggehi pi, khārikehi pi, akhārikehi pi, loṇikehi pi, aloṇikehi pi* [§3].

SA 2:301). So far, both FL Woodward (Pali Text Society) (S:W) and Bhikkhu Bodhi (S:B) have left *agga* untranslated, while Bhikkhu Thanissaro renders it as “mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet.”<sup>6</sup>

**2.2 TASTE AND CONSCIOUSNESS. The Khajjanīya Sutta** (S 22.79) uses the eight kinds of tastes in an interesting way in connection with defining the five aggregates. While it defines perception (*saññā*) in terms of *smell*, it defines consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in terms of *taste*, as follows:

And what, bhikshus, is called **perception** (*saññā*)?

It perceives, bhikshus, therefore it is called perception

(*Saññānāti ti kho bhikkhave tasmā saññā ti vuccati*).<sup>7</sup>

And what does it perceive?

It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white.

It perceives, bhikshus, therefore it is called perception.

And what, bhikshus, is called **consciousness** (*viññāṇa*)?

It cognizes (*vijānāti*), bhikshus, therefore it is called consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

And what does it cognize?

It cognizes sour, it cognizes bitter, it cognizes spicy hot, it cognizes sweet, it cognizes sharp, it cognizes mild [not sharp], it cognizes salty, it cognizes bland [unsalted].

It cognizes, bhikshus, therefore it is called consciousness. (S 22.79.7+9/3:87) = SD 17.9

We can see here that the explanation of *consciousness* is very similar to that of *perception*, the difference being only in the type of sense-objects they cognize. The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that this difference in sense-object highlights a difference in their cognitive functions. Perception is analysed by way of the eye-door because it is evident in apprehending the appearance (*ākāra*) and shape (*saṅḥāna*) of the object. Consciousness, on the other hand, is analysed by way of the tongue-door because it can apprehend an object's distinct qualities (*paccatta, bheda*) even when there is neither appearance nor shape (SA 2:293).

Here we see both *saññā* and *viññāṇa* defined in discriminative terms. **Sue Hamilton** helpfully points out that although the definition of *viññāṇa* here encroaches on that of *saññā*, we should understand that *saññā* does the actual discrimination of the five sensory objects, identifying, say, a taste, more precisely (that is, what sort of taste),<sup>9</sup> while *viññāṇa* “is the awareness by which we experience every stage of the cognitive process, including the process of discriminating” (*Identity and Experience*, 1996a: 92, 55). The two, in other words, perform different functions. *Viññāṇa* is a bare or fundamental “conscious of” (or awareness of) sense-objects, while *saññā* apprehends the distinctive qualities of sense-objects. Consciousness cognizes, perception recognizes.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn47/sn47.008.than.html>. Thanissaro's tr, although rather free, missing out on some of the finer points of Pali, is nevertheless a useful read for those new to the Suttas.

<sup>7</sup> On *saññā*, see SD 17.5. See S:B 1072 n114.

<sup>8</sup> *Vijānāti ti kho bhikkhave tasmā viññāṇan ti vuccanti*. On consciousness, see *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a.

<sup>9</sup> The following 13 tastes are mentioned in the texts: astringent (*kasāva*) and sweet (*madhura*), salty (*lavana, loṇika*) and bland (*aloṇika*), sour (*lambila, ambila*), acrid or pungent (*kaṭuka*), sharp or alkaline (*khārika*) and mild (*akhārika*), tasty or pleasant (*sādu*), and tasteless or unpleasant (*asādu*), bitter (*tittaka, tittika*, also in *~ālābu*, M 1:80, 315), cold (*sīta*) and hot (*uṇha*): 12 of them (excl *aloṇika*) are mentioned at Nm 240; Nc 236. The rest occur separately or in pairs at S 3:87, 5:140 f, J 3:145, DhA 1:344, Dhs 629, DhsA 320, Miln 56, 63.

## The Discourse on the Cook

(S 47.8/5:149-152)

- 1 At Sāvathī.
- 2 There the Blessed One said this:

### THE BAD COOK

3 “Bhikshus, suppose a foolish, incapable, and unskillful cook were to present a rajah or a royal minister with various kinds of curries [dishes]<sup>10</sup>—

predominantly sour	( <i>ambīl’agga</i> ),
predominantly bitter	( <i>tittak’agga</i> ),
predominantly spicy hot	( <i>kaṭuk’agga</i> ),
predominantly sweet	( <i>madhur’agga</i> ),
sharp	( <i>khārika</i> ),
mild [not sharp]	( <i>akhārika</i> ),
salty	( <i>loṇika</i> ), and
bland [unsalted]	( <i>aloṇika</i> ). <sup>11</sup> [149]

That foolish, incapable, and unskillful cook does not grasp [note] any sign of his own master’s preference, thus,<sup>12</sup>

4 ‘Today, this curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for that one; or, he took much of this one; or, he spoke in praise of that one.

Or, today, the *predominantly sour* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly sour one; or, he took much of the predominantly sour one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly sour one.

Or, today, the *predominantly bitter* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly bitter one; or, he took much of the predominantly bitter one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly bitter one.

Or, today, the *predominantly spicy hot* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly spicy hot one; or, he took much of the one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly spicy hot one.

Or, today, the *predominantly sweet* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly sweet one; or, he took much of the predominantly sweet one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly sweet one.

Or, today, the *sharp* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the sharp one; or, he took much of the sharp one; or, he spoke in praise of the sharp one.

Or, today, the *mild* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the mild one; or, he took much of the mild one; or, he spoke in praise of the mild one.

Or, today, the *salty* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the salty one; or, he took much of the salty one; or, he spoke in praise of the salty one.

Or, today, the *bland [unsalted]* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the bland one; or, he took much of the bland one; or, he spoke in praise of the bland one.’

<sup>10</sup> *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave bālo avyatto akusalo sūdo rājānaṃ vā rāja, mahāmattaṃ vā nāna-c, cayehi sūpehi paccupatṭhito assa.* Comy glosses *nānaccayehi* as “various portions, in various manner (diverse)” (*nānā, cayehi nānā, vidhehi*), resolving it as *nānā+cayehi*, not as *accayehi* (SA 3:201): *caya* means “heap, pile, accumulation.”

<sup>11</sup> *Ambil’aggehi pi, tittak’aggehi pi, kaṭuk’aggehi pi, madhur’aggehi pi, khārikehi pi, akhārikehi pi, loṇikehi pi, aloṇikehi pi.* On the 8 kinds of taste, see Intro (1).

<sup>12</sup> *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, bālo avyatto akusalo sūdo sakassa bhattu nimittam na uggaṇhāti.* *Se bhattā;* Be Ee *bhattassa* (“f the husband”), but *bhattu* is gen of *bhattar*, “supporter, master.” Of course, it is possible here, too, that the cook might be the wife of a *bhattā*.

5 Bhikshus, that foolish, incapable, and unskillful cook gets no any clothing [shelter], nor wage, nor gift [bonus].<sup>13</sup>

What is the reason for this?

Because that foolish, incapable, and unskillful cook does *not* grasp [note] any sign of his own master's preference.

6a THE UNSKILLFUL MONK. Even so, bhikshus, here some foolish, incapable, and unskillful monk, dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] the body in the body,<sup>14</sup> removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>15</sup>

While he dwells observing the body in the body; his mind does not concentrate; his mental corruptions<sup>16</sup> are not abandoned; he does not grasp the sign.<sup>17</sup>

6b He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] feelings in the feelings, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>18</sup>

While he dwells observing the feelings in the feelings, his mind does not concentrate; his mental corruptions are not abandoned; he does *not* grasp the sign.

6c He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] the mind in the mind, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>19</sup>

While he dwells observing the mind in the mind, his mind does not concentrate; his mental corruptions are not abandoned; he does *not* grasp the sign.

6d He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] dharmas in the dharmas [phenomena in the phenomena], removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>20</sup>

While he dwells observing dharmas in the dharmas, his mind does not concentrate; his mental corruptions are not abandoned; he does *not* grasp the sign.

7 Bhikshus, that foolish, incapable, and unskillful monk does not obtain any pleasant abiding in this life itself; he attains [151] neither mindfulness nor full awareness.<sup>21</sup>

What is the reason for this?

Because, bhikshus, that foolish, incapable, and unskillful monk *does not grasp the sign of his own mind*.

<sup>13</sup> *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, bālo avyatto akusalo sūdo na c'eva lābhī hoti acchādanassa, na lābhī vetanassa, na lābhī abhīhārānaṃ.*

<sup>14</sup> "Observing the body in the body" (*kāye kāyānupassī*). He properly and mindfully does any of the body-based meditations: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.3-33/1:56-59) & SD 13.3 Intro (3.4).

<sup>15</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.3-31/1:56-59) = SD 13.3.

<sup>16</sup> *ie the 5 hindrances (pañca, nīvaraṇa)* (SA 3:210), viz: (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca, kukkucca*), (4) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): see **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); **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one's meditation; **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.68/1:71) = SD 8.10.

<sup>17</sup> *Tathā hi so, bhikkhave, bālo avyatto akusalo bhikkhu sakassa cittassa nimittam na uggaṇhāti.* Comy: He does now know whether his meditation-subject has attained to conformity (*anuloma*) or change-of-lineage (*gotra, bhū*). He is not able to grasp his own mental sign (SA 2:301). The 3 tts refers to the final moments of sense-sphere consciousness before one attains either dhyana or the supramundane path and fruit. Here, prob the former is meant. (S:B 1919 n135). Similar to the phrase *cittassa nimittam (na) uggaṇhāti* here is *cittassa nimittam gahessati* (S 35.-241/4:179; A 6.68/3:423), where Comy glosses "mental sign" as "a mental sign of samadhi or insight, the mode of concentration of insight" (*cittassa nimittan ti samādhi, vipassanā, cittassa nimittam, samādhi, vipassan'ākāram*, AA 3:410).

<sup>18</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32-33/1:59) = SD 13.3.

<sup>19</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.34-35/1:59 f) = SD 13.3.

<sup>20</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36-37/1:60) = SD 13.3.

<sup>21</sup> *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, bālo avyatto akusalo bhikkhu na ceva lābhī hoti diṭṭh'eva dhamme sukha, vihārānaṃ, na lābhī sati, sampajañña.*

THE GOOD COOK<sup>22</sup>

**8a** Bhikshus, suppose a wise, capable, and skillful cook were to present a rajah or a royal minister with various kinds of curries [dishes]—predominantly sour, predominantly bitter, predominantly spicy hot, predominantly sweet, sharp, mild, salty, and bland [unsalted].

That wise, capable, and skillful cook grasps [notes] the signs of his own master's preference, thus,<sup>23</sup>

**8b** 'Today, this curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for that one; or, he took much of this one; or, he spoke in praise of that one.

Or, today, the *predominantly sour* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly sour one; or, he took much of the predominantly sour one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly sour one.

Or, today, the *predominantly bitter* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly bitter one; or, he took much of the predominantly bitter one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly bitter one.

Or, today, the *predominantly spicy hot* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly spicy hot one; or, he took much of the predominantly spicy hot one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly spicy hot one.

Or, today, the *predominantly sweet* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the predominantly sweet one; or, he took much of the predominantly sweet one; or, he spoke in praise of the predominantly sweet one.

Or, today, the *sharp* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the sharp one; or, he took much of the sharp one; or, he spoke in praise of the sharp one.

Or, today, the *mild* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the mild one; or, he took much of the mild one; or, he spoke in praise of the mild one.

Or, today, the *salty* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the salty one; or, he took much of the salty one; or, he spoke in praise of the salty one.

Or, today, the *bland [unsalted]* curry pleased my master; or, he reached out for the bland one; or, he took much of the bland one; or, he spoke in praise of the bland one.'

**9** Bhikshus, that wise, capable, and skillful cook gets clothing [shelter], wages, gifts [bonuses].

What is the reason for this?

Because that wise, capable, and skillful cook *grasps* [notes] the signs of his own master's preference.

**10a** THE SKILLFUL MONK. Even so, bhikshus, here some wise, capable, and skillful monk, dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] the body in the body,<sup>24</sup> removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>25</sup>

While he dwells observing the body in the body; his mind concentrates, his mental corruptions are abandoned, [152] and he *grasps* the sign.

**10b** He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] feelings in the feelings, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>26</sup>

While he dwells observing the feelings in the feelings, his mind concentrates, his mental corruptions are abandoned, and he *grasps* the sign.

**10c** He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] the mind in the mind, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> This whole section qu at Vism 4.122/150 f.

<sup>23</sup> *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, paṇḍito vyatto kusalo sūdo sakassa bhattu nimittam uggaṇhāti.*

<sup>24</sup> "Observing the body in the body" (*kāye kāyānupassī*). He properly and mindfully does any of the body-based meditations: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.3-33/1:56-59) & SD 13.3 Intro (3.4).

<sup>25</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.3-31/1:56-59) = SD 13.3.

<sup>26</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32-33/1:59) = SD 13.3.

<sup>27</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.34-35/1:59 f) = SD 13.3.

While he dwells observing the mind in the mind, his mind concentrates, his mental corruptions are abandoned, and he *grasps* the sign.

**10d** He dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] dharmas in the dharmas [phenomena in the phenomena], removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>28</sup>

While he dwells observing dharmas in the dharmas, his mind concentrates, his mental corruptions are abandoned, and he *grasps* the sign.

**11** Bhikshus, that wise, capable, and skillful monk obtains a pleasant abiding in this very life itself, and he gains mindfulness and clear awareness.<sup>29</sup>

What is the reason for this?

Because, bhikshus, that wise, capable, and skillful monk *grasps the sign of his own mind*.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For details of this passage, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36-37/1:60) = SD 13.3.

<sup>29</sup> *Sa kho so, bhikkhave, paṇḍito vyatto kusalo bhikkhu lābhī c'eva hoti diṭṭh'eva dhamme sukha, vihārānam, lābhī hoti sati, sampajañña.*

<sup>30</sup> Comy says that in this Sutta, *satipaṭṭhāna* is treated as insight of the preliminary stage (*pubba, bhāga, vipassanā*) (SA 3:201).