

## (Sāmyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta

### The Discourse to Koṭṭhita (on Fetters)

[The Buddha has sense-experiences but is not fettered by them]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 35.232/4:162-165)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2009

#### 1 Mahā Koṭṭhita's background

**1.1 HIS BIOGRAPHY.** Mahā Koṭṭhita or Mahā Koṭṭhika is a disciple of the Buddha, the foremost among monks who are masters of analytic skill (*patīsambhida-p, patta*) (A 1:24),<sup>1</sup> which he attains while still a learner (*sekha*) [4.4].<sup>2</sup> In our Buddha's time, he is born into a very wealthy brahmin family of Sāvattṭhī, his father is Assalāyana and his mother Canda, vatī. He is a master of the Vedas but, after hearing the Buddha teach the Dharma (to his father, says the Apadāna), he renounces the world, engages in meditation, and becomes an arhat.<sup>3</sup>

In the time of Padumuttara Buddha, he was a rich householder who, upon hearing the Buddha praised a monk as the foremost among those with analytic skill, wished for the same pre-eminence in the future. To this end, he visited the Buddha and his monks and hosted them for seven days, giving them three robes each at the conclusion of his almsgiving. (Ap 534/479 f)<sup>4</sup>

#### 2 Catechical teachings

Sāriputta evidently has a great regard for Koṭṭhita. The Theragāthā (Tha.1006-1008;ThaA 2:117) contains three verses in which Sāriputta proclaims Koṭṭhita's excellence. There are a number of discourses that record discussions between Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita, conducted in the *saṅgāyanā* (question-and-answer or catechical) style, namely:

<u>Discourse</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reference</u>
<b>Naḷa, kalāpī Sutta</b>	karma	S 12.67/2:112-115
<b>Paripucchita Sutta 1-2</b>	not owning the 5 aggregates	S 22.118-119/3:165 f
<b>Sīla Sutta</b>	religious discipline	S 22.122/3:167-169
<b>Samudaya, dhamma Sutta 1-3</b>	ignorance & knowledge	S 22.126-128/3:171-173
<b>Assāda Sutta 1-2</b>	knowledge & ignorance	S 22.129-130/3:173 f
<b>Samudaa Suttas 1-2</b>	arising ( <i>samudaya</i> )	S 22.131-132/3:174
<b>(Assāda) Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-2</b>	gratification	S 22.133/3:175
<b>(Samudaya) Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-2</b>	nature of ignorance	S 22.134/3:175
<b>(Koṭṭhita) Avijjā Sutta</b>	nature of ignorance	S 22.135/3:176
<b>(Sāmyojana) Koṭṭhita Sutta</b>	sense & sense-objects	S 35.232/4:162-165
<b>Sāriputta Koṭṭhita Sutta 1-4</b>	the undeclared	S 44.3-6/4:380-391
<b>(Āyatana) Koṭṭhita Sutta</b>	the senses and nirvana	A 4.174/2:161-163
<b>(Brahma, cāriya) Koṭṭhita Sutta</b>	the purpose of the holy life	A 9.13/4:382-385 <sup>5</sup>

All these suttas are discussions with Sāriputta, in which Mahā Koṭṭhita is the questioner and Sāriputta the instructor. Mrs CAF Rhys Davids suggests that these discourses were compiled rather as “lessons” to be learnt than as genuine inquiries by Koṭṭhita. The pre-eminent monks were “playing” at teacher and pupil in order to aid Koṭṭhita to win proficiency as a teacher. (S:RD 2:79 n1)

<sup>1</sup> Also MA 2:336; AA 1:2851.

<sup>2</sup> PmA 6,33 = VbhA 388,27 ≠ Vism 14.27/442,13.

<sup>3</sup> Ap 534/479 f; AA 1:285.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43) = SD 30.2 Intro (1).

<sup>5</sup> The structure of this Sutta is similar to that of **Ratha, vinita S** (M 24/1:145-151) = SD 28.3, but this is on a smaller scale. There Sāriputta questions Puṇṇa Mantāni,putta on the purpose of the holy life.

### 3 Teachings related to Mahā Koṭṭhita

The Pali Canon also preserves a number of discourses given by the Buddha to Koṭṭhita. This set of three discourses, for example, records how the Buddha admonishes Koṭṭhita to abandon desire for what is impermanent, suffering and not self:

- **(Anicca) Koṭṭhita Sutta**      abandoning the impermanent      (S 35.162/4:145)
- **(Dukkha) Koṭṭhita Sutta**      abandoning the suffering      (S 35.163/4:146)
- **(Anatta) Koṭṭhita Sutta**      abandoning the not-self      (S 35.164/4:146)

**The Kāya,sakkhi Sutta** (A 3.21) records a discussion at Jetavana between Savittha, Koṭṭhita and Sāriputta, as to who is the most excellent: the body-witness (*kāya,sakkhī*), the view-attainer (*ditṭhi-p,-patta*), or the faith-liberated (*saddhā,vimutta*). The Buddha tells them that it is no easy task to decide this, as each of them is on the way to awakening. (A 3.21/1:118 f)<sup>6</sup>

**The Citta Hatthi,sāriputta Sutta** (A 6.60) recounts a dispute between Koṭṭhita and Citta Hatthi,sāriputta. Citta is constantly interrupting the elder monks who are gathered at Isipatana for a discussion regarding the Dharma (*abhidhamma*), and is instructed by Koṭṭhita to abide his time and not interrupt. Citta's friends protest, claiming that Citta is well qualified to take part in the discussion, too. Koṭṭhita, however, declares that, far from being wise enough, Citta would in no long time leave the Order. And it so happens. However, later rejoins the order and in due course become an arhat. (A 6.60/3:392-399).<sup>7</sup>

### 4 The four analytic skills

**4.0 ANALYTIC SKILLS.** Owing to the teaching skill Mahā Koṭṭhita shows, as recorded in **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), the Buddha declares him as *the foremost among those with analytic skill* (*paṭisambhida-p,patta*).<sup>8</sup> The analytic skills or discrimination (*paṭisambhidā*) are fourfold, and on a simple level, can be listed as follows:

- |   |                     |                                    |
|---|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) the analytic skill in effects, that is,   | denotative meaning  | ( <i>attha,paṭisambhidā</i> );     |
| (2) the analytic skill in causes, that is,    | connotative meaning | ( <i>dhmma,paṭisambhidā</i> );     |
| (3) the analytic skill in language, that is,  | verbal expression   | ( <i>nirutti,paṭisambhidā</i> );   |
| (4) the analytic skill in ready wit, that is, | analytic insight    | ( <i>paṭibhāna,paṭisambhidā</i> ). |
- (A 2:160; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294)<sup>9</sup>

In **the Paṭisambhidā Sutta** (A 4.173), Sāriputta declares that within the fortnight (*aḍḍha,māsa*) of his ordination he is able to master the four analytic skills both “specifically and literally” (*odhiso vyañjanaso*) [4.5n]. Of the analytic skill of effects, he declares:

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it [the analytic skill in effects] in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].<sup>10</sup>  
(A 4.173/2:160)

Sāriputta then says the same for each of the other three analytic skills—that he has mastered the analytic skills in causes, language and ready wit—but, even then, the Teacher is still the best source of wisdom

<sup>6</sup> For defs of these saint-types, see **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 70) = SD 11.1(5.2(2B)).

<sup>7</sup> See also **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43) = SD 30.2 Intro (1+2).

<sup>8</sup> M 43/1:292-298; Tha 2; ThaA 1:31f; AA i.159; Ap 534/479 f; Avadāna ii.195.

<sup>9</sup> See Kvu:SR (*Points of Controversy*) 1915: 377-382; Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 311 f.

<sup>10</sup> *Tam ahaṃ aneka,pariyāyena ācikkhāmi desemi pakāsemi paññāpemi paṭṭhapemi vivarāmi vibhajāmi uttānī,karomi. Yassa kho pan'assa kaṅkhā vā vimati vā so maṃ pañhena ahaṃ veyyākaraṇena sammukhī,bhūto no satthā yo no dhammānam sukusalō.*

whenever he is around, and we should learn from him [4.5]. Let us have some basic idea of the nature and usefulness of the four analytic skills. Please note that although I have employed philosophical terms, they are used in a Buddhist sense, and without reflecting their usage in western philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.1 ATTHA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ.

**4.1.1 Meaning, sense and reference.** The word *attha* usually has the following senses, “meaning, purpose,” and also includes “senses, associations.” For example, both *the Buddha* and *the Blessed One* refer to the same person, so that the Buddha and the Blessed One are identical. As such, the statement “The Buddha is the Blessed One” is an informative statement, unlike the tautology, “The Buddha is identical with the Buddha” (which tells us nothing).

Furthermore, to say that the Buddha is the Blessed One is to discover something about Buddhism: it is not merely to discover the meaning of a word. It is different to discover that the Blessed One is identical with *bhagavā*: this is merely to discover the Pali equivalent of an English phrase.

The expressions “the Buddha” and “the Blessed One” are said, therefore, to have the same reference, but different senses. Another example are is “Vesak Day” and “first full-moon day of May”: they clearly differ in *sense* but have the same *reference*.<sup>12</sup>

**4.1.2 Denotation.** The first of the analytic skills—*attha, paṭisambhidā*—deals with meaning (that is, the *effect* of a word), which is, in fact, an important or main sense of the word *attha*, and this is found in **the Vibhaṅga**, where it quite clearly says that *attha, paṭisambhidā* means “the meaning of what is spoken,” namely, of words and sentences.<sup>13</sup>

He comprehends the meaning of whatever is spoken, such as, “This is the meaning of this sentence,” “That is the meaning of that sentence”—this is called the analysis of meaning.<sup>14</sup>

(Vbh 724/294)

As such, an important aspect of *attha, paṭisambhidā* is an examination of meaning and an act of disambiguation (the clearing of ambiguities). This is known as the *denotative* meaning, or denotation (such as, by way of referring to something).

The term *attha, paṭisambhidā*, on a more technical level, refers to the skill in analyzing meanings “in extension.” This means listing a “class” of things, that is, all the names or words encompassed by that word, expression, sentence or idea. Since a complete enumeration of the things to which a general term applies would be very cumbersome, inconvenient, or impossible, in many cases, it is more useful and effective to list smaller groups of things, or by giving a few examples or at least one example instead. Understandably, the most common and most primitive denotative definition in any language is that of *pointing at a single example* to which the term properly applies.

**4.1.3 Extension.** There are, however, times when the same words and ideas do not present us with definite meanings. For example, although we know the *meaning* of the phrases “my family” or “the world” or “everything,” we may not know their *sense* or usage. The definition needs *extension* (more details) or *ostension* (all the details), that is, by giving examples, or listing their components.

One of the best known examples of a denotative definition is that of “everything” (*sabba*), as found in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), thus:

And what, bhikshus, is the all?  
The eye and forms,

<sup>11</sup> This is a complicated and confusing area of philosophical terminology which various ad hoc definitions by different authorities. The explanation here is restricted only to Buddhist philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> See AW Sparks, *Talking Philosophically: A word book*, 1991: 56 f. “Sense and reference” is the usual tr for Gottlob Frege’s German phrase *Sinn und Bedeutung*: see Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 1968a: 147-155. See also **Language and Discourse** = SD 26.11 (5.4+8.5), on words and meaning.

<sup>13</sup> Shwe Zan Aung & CAF Rhys Davids (Kvu:SR 378) thinks that here it does not refer verbal meaning or dictionary (lexical) definition, which Jayatilleke disagrees with (1963: 311).

<sup>14</sup> *So tassa tass’eva bhāsītassa attham jānāti, ayam imassa bhāsītassa attho, ayam imassa bhāsītassa atthō ti. Ayam vuccati attha, paṭisambhidā.*

the ear	and	sounds,
the nose	and	smells,
the tongue	and	tastes,
the body	and	touches,
the mind	and	mind-objects. <sup>15</sup>

This, bhikshus, is called the all. (S 35.23/4:15) = SD 7.1

Here, we can say that “the all” (*sabba*) and the “sense-bases” (*āyatana*) refer to the same thing/s but they have different senses [4,1,1]. We can also say that “the all” denotes “the sense-bases and sense-objects,” or that “the all” denotes “the eye and forms, etc.”

**4.1.4 Denotation and connotation.** An understanding the nature of denotation and connotation is useful here. In logic, as opposed to ordinary use (or, “natural language”), the **denotation** of a word is all of the individual things which that word can be used to refer to. The **connotation** of a word is the set of characteristics a thing must have to be included in the denotation of that word, or more simply put, it is the abstract or dictionary definition of the word. Thus, the denotation of the word “mother” is *all* the individual existing mothers that there are, while the connotation is the abstract definition or meaning “female parent of a human or non-human.”

(In fact, the same distinction can be drawn from the use of the words “extension,” instead of denotation, and “intension,” instead of connotation.)<sup>16</sup> [4.1.5]

In certain cases, however, as for example, “unicorn,” there is no *denotation* (we cannot refer or point to a particular existing unicorn), although there is a *connotation* (a horse-like animal with a single horn on its crown).

It should be noted that this philosophical use is different from ordinary, literary, use of denotation and connotation. For example, where the *denotation* of “mother” is “female animal or human parent,” and the *connotation* refers, for most people, to associations or overtones with the word (home-maker, maternal love, security, etc).<sup>17</sup>

We see this kind of “philosophical” usage in spiritual level, especially in regard to the two levels of language used in Dharma discourse. The teaching where the meaning “has been drawn out” (*nī’tattha*) can be said to be *denotative* because it directly refers to the nature of true reality (eg, “form is impermanent”). The teaching where the meaning “needs to be drawn out” (*neyy’attha*) is regarded as *connotative*, that is, they are imageries, examples and stories, “associations and overtones,” that bring you the meaning of the passage (eg “in the past when I was still be bodhisattva...” or “once there was lion...”).

This distinction can also be taken as “Dharma language” and “worldly language.” When the Suttas state that “All conditioned things are impermanent,” the expression “conditioned things” is used on a Dharma level or denotative sense to refer to *all* things in this world. On a worldly (or conventional) level (or literary usage, or connotative sense), “the world” could refer to only human beings (such as “the tallest man in the world”) or to a physical realm (such as “the tallest building in the world”).<sup>18</sup>

**4.1.5 Extension and intension.** Now let us examine the difference between the difference between extension and intension. The same object may be described in many ways, and so have the same *extension* or denotation [4.1.4]. For example, the number “12” is the extension of the following statements: “what follows 11,” “the number of months in a year,” “the number of causal links.” But they all differ, not only in word, but also in meaning, that is, in *intension* or denotation.

On the other hand, many meaningful expressions lack *extension*. For example, the expression, “a cat with nine lives,” and the definite statement, “the largest number,” have this property: they refer to *something*, but nothing definite. We know its *meaning*, but we do not know the real *intention* behind it. The intention of the expression or idea would depend on the speaker or writer. Hence, it is vital to know the

<sup>15</sup> “Mind-objects,” *dhammā*, alt tr “mental phenomena.”

<sup>16</sup> See AW Sparks, *Talking Philosophically: A word book*, 1991: 56 f.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Flew (ed), *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1984: sv denotation.

<sup>18</sup> For further reading on denotation and connotation, see Ermanno Bencivenga, *Logic, Bivalence, and Denotation*, Ridgeview, 1991.

original intention of the expression or idea, before we are likely to be able to give any useful response to it.

Moreover, the extension of an expression can vary over time without the expression itself changing in meaning. The extension of “flower” changes as it *blossoms, wilts and dies, and new ones bloom*, but the word does not change in meaning. In terms of extension, therefore, a word, expression or idea can have a range of *senses*, which are part of a set of qualities or states that refer to it.

Take this famous simile, for example: a lamp (or candle) burns in the three watches of the night. Is the flame the same or different during each watch? “It is not the same, and it is not another.” (Miln 40).<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.2 DHAMMA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ.

**4.2.1 Difference between *attha, paṭisambhidā* and *dhamma, paṭisambhidā*.** The second analytic skill is that of causes and causal relations (or conditionality and relativity) (*dhamma, paṭisambhidā*). According to **the Vibhaṅga**, while *attha, paṭisambhidā* deals with the resultant situation, *dhamma, paṭisambhidā* is a skillful analysis of the antecedent states or causes. In other words, while *dhamma, paṭisambhidā* is the knowledge of causes, *attha, paṭisambhidā* is the knowledge of effects (Vbh 718/293).<sup>20</sup>

As such, these two analytic skills deal with two interlinked aspects of a statement or idea. ***Dhamma, paṭisambhidā*** deals with the understanding of the nature of *intension* (the connotation or sense of the word) and *intention* (the moral motivation behind the action), while ***attha, paṭisambhidā*** deals with the understanding of the nature of its *extension* (the meaning) and *connotation* (effect or implication).

Words, expressions, sentences or ideas do not arise or exist in themselves but always in *relation* to other things; they are all *conditioned* by other things (A), and in turn *condition* other things (C). This set of conditionality is the *context* of the words, expressions or ideas. When words, expressions, sentences, or ideas have no useful meaning, except in their *context*.

However, if we understand the context, we only have an idea of *antecedents* (or causes) of the situation or the *intention* of the act, but we still need to know their *effect* or implication. The analytic skill of determining the former is *dhamma, paṭisambhidā*, while the analytic skill of determining the latter is *attha, paṭisambhidā*.

**The Mahosadha (or Mahā Ummaga) Jātaka** (J 546) provides many remarkable episodes of how the Bodhisattva is able to skillfully analyze the antecedents of a problem situation, and understanding its effect, puts them to his benefit and of others. The episode of “the piece of meat” is an excellent example.

One day a hawk carries off a piece of meat. Some boys saw it flying and were determined to make it drop the meat. The hawk flew in different directions, and they, looking up at the bird, followed it, throwing sticks, stones and other objects, and falling over one another.

Then Mahodadha (the young Bodhisattva) told them that he would make the hawk drop the piece of meat. He ran like the wind, looking down and following its shadow. When the shadow was largest, he stepped on it and gave a loud shout. The frightened bird dropped the meat and Mahosadha caught just before it touched the ground. (J 546/6:334 f). Now discuss how he did this in terms *attha, paṭisambhidā* and *dhamma, paṭisambhidā*.

#### 4.3 NIRUTTI, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ.

**4.3.1 Nirutti as spoken language.** Not much can be culled from the Pali Canon on the nature of the third analytic skill, that concerning language, that is, *nirutti, paṭisambhidā*. Only **the Vibhaṅga** gives any clue at all, even then just barely: it says that *nirutti, paṭisambhidā* deals with “the designation of states” (*dhammānam paññatti*) and “the knowledge regarding utterance” (*abhiḷāpe ñāṇam*) (Vbh 295).

Let us look at *nirutti, paṭisambhidā* as “the knowledge regarding utterance” first, as this definition is more general and easier. One of the first things that comes to mind would be the Buddha’s advice on language and communicability. In **the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139), for example, the Buddha admonishes us, “You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject common usage.” That is to say, when teaching Dharma or communicating, we should use the local dialect or the language of the audience so that they can better understand us.

<sup>19</sup> See Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998: 138-146; also Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, 2007: 32-35.

<sup>20</sup> *Hetumhi ñāṇam dhamma, paṭisambhidā, hetu, phale ñāṇam attha, paṭisambhidā.*

The Sutta deals with various other aspects of language and communication, such as, talking in terms of *situations* rather than *persons* (that is, people with problems, not problem people), speaking ethically and beneficially, and not speaking hurriedly. Indeed, the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta is a discourse that deals with the more common aspects of *nirutti, paṭibhāna*.<sup>21</sup>

The Buddha's amazing and compassionate capacity for "going native" is attested in his manner of appearing before the "eight assemblies" to effectively admonish them, so that he appears before any class of society (whether kshatriya, brahmin, householder or recluse) or amongst other beings, looking and sounding just like them, so that "Whatever their colour was then, so was my colour, too. Whatever was their voice then, so was my voice, too. I instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk."<sup>22</sup>

Although the Buddha has discovered the ultimate truth and is fully liberated from suffering and the world, he does not impose his awakening and teachings onto others. The point is simply that awakening is not a *thing* that could be transferred like cash from one to another. We must first find a conducive environment for mental cultivation; we then go on to cultivate inner stillness and clarity; this then helps us to straighten our views and free our minds.

To this end, the Buddha stresses on presenting the Teaching in a wholesome manner so that the listener is moved to spiritual action. In **the Abhaya Rāja, kumāra Sutta** (M 58), for example, the Buddha teaches us to identify and deal with trick questions, and how and when to present to the liberating truth to others so that they readily benefit from our teachings.<sup>23</sup>

**4.3.2 Nirutti as discourse.** Language, speech and writing are the most common ways we try to communicate religion and truth, but these media often hide as much as they convey the truth. Or, these media could be used to communicate false teachings or harmful information. Or, the recipient or audience could misconstrue or misuse such teachings or information on account of their own ignorance and craving.

Human language is based on a naming process (*nāma*) in relation to a form (*rūpa*), so that such an idea is communicable to other humans or beings (such as animals). However, instead of understanding language as merely sounds and references to which we *attribute* meanings, we tend to *reify* those sounds and references. *We tend to regard the name as the thing named.* But the name is *not* the thing named.<sup>24</sup>

**Discourse** is how we present our ideas and feelings through language to communicate with others—it is how we use language to record our thoughts, and to inform or influence others in a wholesome manner. Dharma discourse then is about *how* the Buddha teaches the Dharma, and about how *we* should teach the Dharma.<sup>25</sup>

Language is differently understood and used in religions, depending on whether it is *word-based* or *truth-based*. Word-based religions are also book-centred (*bibliocentric*), such as the Abrahmic religions (especially the more evangelical sects of Christianity). They tend to use or take both *literal* language and *figurative* language—truths and parables—are taken as literally true. Indeed, it is common to hear such believers claim that *every word* in their holy book is correct and true.<sup>26</sup>

Here, "correct" refers to the claim that their scripture has been handed down without any error, and "true" in the sense that what is stated therein actually happened or will happen. This is a clearly and highly problematic claim, since it is the basis for **sectarianism**. This is highly problematic because a lot of "inspired" or religiously powerful people make the same claim, but each of them say that only *they* are right and everyone else wrong! Such self-righteous and quarrelsome God-believers are like the blind men

<sup>21</sup> M 139/3:230-236 = SD 7.8.

<sup>22</sup> D 16.3.21-23/2:109 f) = SD 9; see also **Wanderers of Today** = SD 24.6b (3).

<sup>23</sup> M 58/1:392-396 = SD 7.12.

<sup>24</sup> See eg **Saṅkhāra (Formations)** = SD 17.6 (2).

<sup>25</sup> See **Language and Discourse** = SD 26.11; on **discourse**, see **The Gradual Way** = SD 56.1 (1).

<sup>26</sup> On "open language" and "private language": **Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95) = SD 21.15 Intro (3.2); **Mahā Nidāna Sutta** (D 15) = SD 5.17 Intro (7); **Aggi Vaccha, gotta Sutta** (M 72) = SD 6.15 Intro (6); **Two Levels of Religious Language** = SD 10.6, on the nature of religious language and ultimate meaning.

and the elephant.<sup>27</sup> On a more extreme level, this is often a basis for sociopathy (antisocial personality disorder).

Such believers swear by their God, and swear at each other by the same God! I'm sure no right thinking person would want to join such quarrels or dysfunctional family! God-belief is essentially tribalism: if you are not with us, you are against us. However, if you are not part of such a quarrel, it is easier to show true agapē, true lovingkindness, to all of them and everyone else. There is an important discussion on how the truth is better learned and preserved when we do not claim that “only this is true, anything else is false.”<sup>28</sup>

**4.4 PAṬIBHĀṆA, PAṬISAMBHIDĀ** is defined in the **Vibhaṅga** as “knowledge about knowledge,” or better, “knowledge about knowing” (*ñāṇesu ñāṇam*) (Vbh 293-296). As such, notes **Jayatilleke**, “all analyses of knowledge from a psycho-ethical or epistemological standpoint, as for instance in the Nāṇa-vibhaṅga of the Vibhaṅga (pp 306-334) or in the Nāṇa-kathā of the Paṭisambhidāmagga (pp 4-134) would fall under it.” (1963: 312)

The monk poet **Vaṅgīsa** is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who are of ready wit (*paṭibhāṇavanta*) (A 1:24).<sup>29</sup> Vaṅgīsa, a gifted poet, has a penchant for ready expression, especially expressing in beautiful verse what the Buddha has taught, such as **the (Vaṅgīsa) Subhāsita Sutta** (S 8.5).<sup>30</sup> Many of his poems are preserved in **the Vaṅgīsa Sāmyutta** (S 8/1:185-196) and his own **Thara, gāthā** (Tha 1209-1279), the last poem of the book.

Clearly, *paṭibhāṇa* as ready expression refers to beautiful words (*subhāsita*), that is, literally, well spoken words, which bring joy to the listener. The Buddha and his disciples are often reported as having “instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened <the audience> those monks with a Dharma talk,”<sup>31</sup> and then goes on to give deeper teachings or instructions.

Of the laymen, the one foremost in ready wit would surely be **Citta Gaha, pati** [the householder], who is, in fact, declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of the laymen who teach the Dharma (A 1:26). Many of Citta's teachings (some to monks) are preserved in **the Citta Sāmyutta** (S 41/4:281-304), especially **the Nigaṇṭha Nāta, putta Sutta** (S 41.8), where Citta declares that he “does not go by faith” in the Buddha's teaching. Nāta, putta mistakes this as his meaning that he has no faith in the Buddha. Nāta, putta is badly embarrassed only to discover that Citta means that he has understood the Buddha's teaching by his own wisdom!<sup>32</sup>

Besides the householder Citta, other disciples, namely, Ānanda, the layman Upāli (the erstwhile Jain) the layman Dhammika, and they laywoman Khuji'uttarā, have also gained the analytic skills (*paṭisambhidā*) while still on the level of a learner (*sekha, bhūmi*),<sup>33</sup> that is, as a saint but not yet an arhat.

**4.5 THOSE FOREMOST IN THE ANALYTIC SKILLS.** The importance of the analytic skills is attested by the fact that a whole chapter in **the Vibhaṅga** of the Abhidhamma, which analyses them, that is, the

<sup>27</sup> See **Nānā Titthiyā S 1** (U 6.4/66-99) = SD 40a.14.

<sup>28</sup> This are the 12 steps of spiritual learning: see **Caṅkī S** (M 95.15-33/2:171-176) = SD 21.15, also Intro (4) on **belief and knowledge**.

<sup>29</sup> See **(Vaṅgīsa) Ānanda S** (S 8.4) = SD Intro.

<sup>30</sup> S 8.5/1:188 f.

<sup>31</sup> “The Blessed One then **instructed** (*sandassetvā*), **inspired** (*samādapetvā*), **roused** (*samuttejetvā*) and **gladdened** (*sampahaṃsetvā*)... with a Dharma talk.” This action sequence reflects the basic structure of the Buddha's teaching method: (1) the Dharma is shown; (2) the listener/s are filled with enthusiasm; (3) they are fired with commitment; and (4) filled with joy. Comys (eg DA 1:293; UA 242; cf VA 1:65; MA 2:35) explain that by **instructing**, the Buddha dispels the listener's **delusion**; by **inspiring him**, **heedlessness** is dispelled; by **rousing him**, **indolence** is dispelled; and by **gladdening**, brings the practice to a **conclusion**. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to **bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy** to the listener. These 4 qualities are, in fact, the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker. See SD 11.4 Intro (4) & also LS Cousins, in his review of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (tr. Nāṇamoli) in JBE 4 1997:272, where gives a slightly different listing of the above. See also Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, 1992:65-67. On *ācikkhanti deseti*, etc, see also A 4.92.5(4a) n = SD 14.11b.

<sup>32</sup> See S 41.8/4:297-300 = SD 40a.7; see also **Caṅkī S** (M 95) Intro (4.3) Supremacy of knowledge over belief.

<sup>33</sup> PmA 6,33 = VbhA 388,27 ≠ Vism 14.27/442,13.

Paṭisambhidā, magga Vibhaṅga. Furthermore, there is a whole book in the Khuddaka Nikāya, **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**, dedicated to them, and the work is attributed to none other than **Sāriputta**, whose wisdom is second only to the Buddha's. Sāriputta is well accomplished in analytic skills, too:

## (Sāriputta) Paṭisambhidā Sutta The Discourse on (Sāriputta's) Analytic Skills [Sāriputta's attainment of the four analytic skills]

Then the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks,

“Avuso, bhikkhus.”

“Avuso,” the monks replied in assent.

The venerable Sāriputta said this:

“(1) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic skill in effects (*attha, -paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.<sup>34</sup>

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(2) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic skill in causes (*dhamma, paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(3) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic skill in language (*nirutti, paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

(4) Within a fortnight of my ordination, avuso, I attained the analytic skill in ready wit (*paṭibhāna, paṭisambhidā*), both specifically and literally.

I say, teach, state, declare, establish, reveal, analyse and clarify it in various ways. But if anyone has a doubt or perplexity, why question me, what is my point in explaining, when the Teacher is right before us, he who is well-skilled in the dharmas [states].

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Sāriputta is especially adept in at least two ways in his teachings. He is able to present the Dharma in novel ways, approved by the Buddha himself, and secondly, he is able to present the Dharma in a comprehensive and encyclopaedic manner. In terms of *methodology*, these discourses are the outstanding works of Sāriputta, or are attributed to him as reflective of his genius.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Odhiso vyañjanaso*, which Comy explains as “in meaning” (*kāranaso*) and “in the letter” (*akkharaso*) (AA 3:149). CPD (sv *odhiso*) however says that this is “hardly correct.” CPD (id) tr it as “piece by piece and expression by expression.” See BHSD (sv *vyañjana*) which says that **Sūtrāṅkāra 18.32** glosses *vyañjanasya* with *yathā, rut-ārthasya*. “according to the meaning of the sound” (sv *ruta* 2). As such, it can be said that Sāriputta has mastered *each* of the 4 analytic skills in (one by one) as well as in practice, using them in his *talks*.

<sup>35</sup> See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997: 39-42.

<b>Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta</b>	M 9/1:46-55	the four noble truths explained in terms of the courses of action, the four foods, and dependent arising;
<b>Mahā Hatthi,padopama Sutta</b>	M 28/1:184-191	analyses of the four noble truths and suffering, the five aggregates and form, and the four primary elements;
<b>Sama,citta Sutta</b>	A 2.4.6/1:64 f	on the rebirth of the learners.

Sāriputta is also said to have composed the following encyclopaedic works:<sup>36</sup>

<b>Saṅgīti Sutta</b>	D 33/3:207-271	doctrinal terms arranged in sets of one to ten;
<b>Das'uttara Sutta</b>	D 34/3:272-292	groups of ten single doctrines, then ten twofold doctrines, and so on up to ten tenfold;

and the following works are also ascribed to Sāriputta:

<b>Niddesa (Nm &amp; Nc)</b>	—	The Niddesa (composed between 200 BC and 200 CE) is a collection of two ancient canonical commentaries, <b>the Mahā Niddesa (Nm)</b> and <b>the Cūḷa Niddesa (Nc)</b> , in the Khuddaka Nikāya. Nm is a commentary on the Aṭṭhaka,vagga (Sn 766-975), and Nc on the Pārāyana,vagga (Sn 976-1149) and the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta (Sn35-75): all these texts are part of the Sutta Nipāta. (PmA 1:1,18*) <sup>37</sup>
<b>Paṭisambhidā,magga (Pm)</b>	—	Pm is the only Abhidhamma text found in the Khuddaka Nikāya (probably composed 2 <sup>nd</sup> century). It lists 73 aspects of knowledge ( <i>ñāṇa</i> ) which are then detailed. It is not as systematic as the seven books of the Abhidhamma, and is probably a forerunner to the more organized Vimutti,magga and Visuddhi,-magga. (PmA 1:1,18*) <sup>38</sup>

The Sangha fathers who compiled the Abhidhamma piously attributed it to Sāriputta.<sup>39</sup> Buddhist legend has it that the Buddha was said to have taught the whole Abhidhamma in the Tāvātimsa heaven, to his mother, the devaputra Mahā,māyā (who had come down from Tusita). The Buddha then recounted the teachings to Sāriputta, who formulated it into the form we have it today.<sup>40</sup> Those choice of Sāriputta as the Abhidhamma author is understandable, as he is the wisest of the monks after the Buddha, and also endowed with the four analytic skills.

Those who have mastered the four analytic skills are said “to be held in great esteem” (*garu ca bhāvanāyo ca*, A 3:113) by their colleagues, and “to attain the imperturbable state in no long time” (*na cirass'eva akuppaṃ paṭivijjhati*, A 3:119), The great disciple, **Sāriputta**, the wisest of the monks after the Buddha,<sup>41</sup> is said to have mastered these four analytic skills in a relatively short time (A 2:160). However, the monk declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of those monks with the four analytic skills is **Mahā Koṭṭhita** (A 1:24). The monk poet **Vaṅgīsa**, as already noted [4.4], is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who are of ready wit (*paṭibhānavanta*) (A 1:24).

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<sup>36</sup> See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997: 42-44.

<sup>37</sup> See Otto von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:58 f (§II.2.5.11).

<sup>38</sup> See Otto von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:59 f (§II.2.5.12); also Noa Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics*, 2005: 87-95.

<sup>39</sup> See Nyanaponika & H Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997: 45f.

<sup>40</sup> See **Dhamma and Abhidhamma** = SD 26.1 (6+7).

<sup>41</sup> Sāriputta and Moggallāna are declared by the Buddha to be the standard and ideal (*esā tulā etaṃ pamāṇaṃ*) of his disciples (A 2:164).

## The Discourse to Koṭṭhita (on Fetters)

(S 35.232/4:162-165)

### Mahā Koṭṭhita meets Sāriputta

1 At one time the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were dwelling in the deer park in Isipatana, near Benares

2 Then in the evening, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, having emerged from solitary retreat, approached the venerable Sāriputta. Having approached, he exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, Mahā Koṭṭhita sat down at one side.

### Are the senses fetters?

3 Seated thus as one side, Mahā Koṭṭhita said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“How is it, avuso Sāriputta:

Is the eye the fetter of forms or

are forms the fetter of the eye?

Is the ear the fetter of sounds or

are sounds the fetter of the ear?

Is the nose the fetter of smells or

are smells the fetter of the nose?

Is the tongue the fetter of tastes or

are tastes the fetter of the tongue?

Is the body the fetter of touches or

are touches the fetter of the body? [163]

Is the mind the fetter of mind-objects or

are mind-objects the fetter of the mind?”

### Desire and lust are the fetter

4 “Avuso Koṭṭhita:

The eye is not the fetter of forms

nor are forms the fetter of the eye.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

The ear is not the fetter of sounds

nor are sounds the fetter of the ear.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

The nose is not the fetter of smells

nor are smells the fetter of the nose.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

The tongue is not the fetter of tastes

nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

The body is not the fetter of touches

nor are touches the fetter of the body.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

The mind is not the fetter of mind-objects

nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind.

The fetter here is the desire and lust

that arises therein dependent on both.

5 PARABLE OF THE TWIN OXEN. Suppose, avuso, a black ox and a white ox were tied together by a single harness or yoke. Would one be speaking rightly if one were to say,

‘The black ox is the fetter of the white ox; the white ox is the fetter of the black ox?’”

“No, avuso. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox; the white ox is not the fetter of the black ox. The fetter here is *the single harness or yoke that binds them together.*”

“Even so, avuso:

The eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The nose is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The tongue is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The body is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

The mind is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

### The possibility of the holy life

6 If, avuso, the eye were the fetter of forms, or if forms were the fetter of the eye, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.<sup>42</sup>

But since the eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye [164] —the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the ear were the fetter of sounds, or if sounds were the fetter of the ear, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear—the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the nose were the fetter of smells, or if smells were the fetter of the nose, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the nose is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose—the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the tongue were the fetter of tastes, or if tastes were the fetter of the tongue, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the tongue is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue—the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the body were the fetter of touches, or if touches were the fetter of the body, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the body is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body—the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

If, avuso, the mind were the fetter of mind-objects, or if mind-objects were the fetter of the mind, this living of the holy life could not be declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

But since the mind is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind—the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both—this living of the holy life has been declared for the complete destruction of suffering.

### In a manner of speaking

7 In this way, too, avuso, in a manner of speaking (*pariyāyena*),<sup>43</sup> it should be understood how the eye is not the fetter of forms, and how forms are not the fetter of the eye. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the ear is not the fetter of sounds, and how sounds are not the fetter of the ear. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the nose is not the fetter of smells, and smells are not the fetter of the nose. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

<sup>42</sup> As long as we have the sense-bases, we would always be fettered to their objects, and so liberation would be impossible. (S:B 1422 n168)

<sup>43</sup> See *Pariyāya Nippariyāya* = SD 68.2.

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the tongue is not the fetter of tastes, and tastes are not the fetter of the tongue. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the body is not the fetter of touches, and touches are not the fetter of the body. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, too, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the mind is not the fetter of mind-objects, and mind-objects are not the fetter of the mind. For, the fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

### The Blessed One's senses

**8** Now, avuso, the Blessed One has eyes. The Blessed One sees a form with his eyes. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

The Blessed One has ears. The Blessed One hears a sound with his ears. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

The Blessed One has a nose. The Blessed One smells a smell with his nose. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

The Blessed One has a tongue. The Blessed One tastes a taste with his tongue. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

The Blessed One has a body. The Blessed One feels a touch with his body. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

The Blessed One has a mind. The Blessed One cognizes **[165]** a mind-object with his mind. There are no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

### In a manner of speaking (reprise)

**9** In this way, indeed, avuso, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the ear is not the fetter of sounds nor are sounds the fetter of the ear. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the nose is not the fetter of smells nor are smells the fetter of the nose. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the tongue is not the fetter of tastes nor are tastes the fetter of the tongue. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the body is not the fetter of touches nor are touches the fetter of the body. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

In this way, indeed, in a manner of speaking, it should be understood how the mind is not the fetter of mind-objects nor are mind-objects the fetter of the mind. The fetter here is the desire and lust that arises therein dependent on both.

— evaṃ —

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