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Sall’atthana Sutta¹

The Discourse on “With the Dart Drawn Out” | S 36.6/4:207-210

WT Be: Salla Sutta The Discourse on the Dart

Theme: Two kinds of pain

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

1 Early in the Buddhist texts, we find mention of two kinds of pain, the bodily and the mental. The earliest mention of such an experience is found in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36.20-25), where the Buddha describes (by way of a stock refrain after each account) how he felt when he was still a Bodhisattva practising the various austerities:

But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain. (M 36.20-25/1:242-244)

2 The Sall’atthana Sutta’s colophon (*uddāna*) gives the name *sall’atthana* (*salla* + *atthana*, from *attha*, to go out, to become extinct; see CPD 1:104e). However, the PTS text has *sall’attana*, literally, “with the self, an arrow” or better “by the self’s arrow.” Apparently, the former is preferable.

3 **LATENT TENDENCIES.** This Sutta introduces the teaching of the latent tendencies (*anusaya*)² or proclivities, of which **the three basic ones** [8bcd]—the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*), of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), and of ignorance (*āvijjānusaya*)—are especially related to feelings.

Another traditional expanded list gives seven latent tendencies, that is,³

- (1) sensual desire (*kāma,rāga*),
- (2) aversion (*paṭigha*),
- (3) views (*diṭṭhi*),
- (4) doubt (*vicikicchā*),
- (5) conceit (*māna*),
- (6) the desire for becoming (*bhava,rāga*), and
- (7) ignorance (*avijjā*).

The latent tendency of sensual desire is lust itself, which is a “latent tendency” in the sense that it has gained strength (*thāma,gat’atthana*).⁴ **The Anusaya Sutta 1** and **2** (S 35.58-59)⁵ explain how the latent tendencies are to be abandoned and to be uprooted respectively.

The Cūla Vedalla Sutta (M 44) has a passage related to latent tendencies (M 44.25-28). The Sall’atthana Sutta is also closely related to **the Nakula,pitā Sutta** (S 22.1) where the Buddha advises the aged Nakula,pitā to reflect in this manner: “My body may be sick, but my mind will not be sick.” (S 22.1/3:1-5). On a more advanced level, **the Dhātu,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140) speaks of how the arhat regards in a detached manner any “feeling ending with the body” (*kāya,pariyantika vedanā*) and any “feeling ending with life” (*jīvita,pariyantika vedanā*), ie arising in the mind (M 140.24/3:244 f).

¹ WT Be: Salla S.

² Latent tendencies (*anusayā*) are deeply embedded in one’s mind through past habitual acts and can only be uprooted on attaining the path. (3)-(4) are eliminated upon streamwinning; (1)-(2) upon non-return; (5)-(7) upon arhathood. See Abhs 7.9: “The latent dispositions (*anusaya*) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (*anusetti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions. The term ‘latent dispositions’ highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to arise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. Though all defilements are, in a sense, *anusayas*, the 7 mentioned here are the most prominent.” (Abhs:B 268). See also Abhs:SR 172; and **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18) = SD 6.14(5).

³ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.3(12)/3:254), **Anusaya S** (S 45.175/5:61) & **Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 383).

⁴ SA 3:138; Vism 22.60 /684.

⁵ S 35.58-59/4:32.

The Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta (M 38) closes with an interesting and broader explanation of how an unawakened person delights in all kinds of feelings—whether pleasant, painful or neutral—“he delights in that feeling, welcomes it, and remains clinging to it.” The Buddha, on the other hand, “[o]n seeing a form with the eyes, . . . on cognizing a mind-object with the mind, does not lust after it if it is pleasing; he does not dislike it if it is unpleasing. . . Having thus abandoned like and dislike,⁶ whatever he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neutral, he does not delight in that feeling nor welcome it nor remain clinging to it.” As a result, he rids himself of suffering.⁷ **The Parivīmaṃsana Sutta** (S 12.51) describes how the arhat responds to feelings by regarding them as “impermanent; not hankered after; not delighted in.”⁸

The Visuddhi,magga states that “these things are called latent tendencies because they lie dormant (*anusenti*), and by gaining strength (*thāma,gatattā*), they again and again become the conditions for the arising of ever new sensual lust, etc.”⁹ **The Yamaka** first determines the types of beings in which particular latent tendencies exist, the types of latent tendencies, and with regard to what, and in which realm. Then it explains how they are overcome, etc. (Yam 7).¹⁰ **The Kathā,vatthu Commentary** mentions that several ancient Buddhist schools held the wrong view that the latent tendencies, since they lie latent, are as such karmically neutral, which contradict the Theravāda notion.¹¹

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S 36.6/4:207-210

The Buddha as the teaching’s root

[207]

3 “Bhikshus, the uninstructed ordinary person feels pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling.¹²

4 But, bhikshus, the instructed noble disciple, too, feels pleasant feeling, [208] painful feeling, neutral feeling.

5 Bhikshus, what then is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed ordinary person?”

⁶ “Having abandoned like and dislike,” *anurodha,virodha,vippahīno*.

⁷ M 38.30-41/ 1:266-271.

⁸ S 12.51/14-18/2:82 f. The nature of pleasure in the awakened mind is discussed in **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15) = SD 10.11 (2005).

⁹ Vism 22.60/684.

¹⁰ See Nyanatiloka, *Guide Through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, Kandy: BPS, 1971:VII.VII/104-107.

¹¹ Kvu 9.4, 10.11, 13.8, 14.4; see Nyanatiloka, 1971:V.88, 108, 139.

¹² Comy to Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S says that it is not easy to be mindful of neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other four sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2). The suttas however speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:171). See §8e n.

6 “Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning. Having heard the Blessed One, the bhikshus would remember it.”¹³

“Then listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the bhikshus replied in assent to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

Two darts of pain for the unawakened

7 “Bhikshus, when the uninstructed ordinary person is touched by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, becomes confused. So he feels two feelings: the bodily and the mental.

8a Bhikshus, it is just as if they were to wound a person with a dart [arrow],¹⁴ and then they were to wound him with a second dart. As such, bhikshus, that person would feel the sensation of two darts.

Even so, bhikshus, when the uninstructed ordinary person is touched by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, becomes confused. So he feels two feelings: the bodily and the mental.

8b And being touched by that painful feeling, he shows aversion towards it. When he shows aversion towards the painful feeling, **the latent tendency of aversion** (*paṭighānusaya*) towards painful feeling lies latent in him.

8c When touched by a painful feeling, he delights in sensual pleasure.

Why is that so?

Because, bhikshus, the uninstructed ordinary person knows no other escape than through sensual pleasure.¹⁵

8d And when he delights in sensual pleasure, **the latent tendency of lust** (*rāgānusaya*) towards pleasant feeling lies latent in him.

8e He does not understand according to reality the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings.¹⁶

Not understanding these things according to reality, **the latent tendency of ignorance** (*avijjā'nusaya*) towards neutral feeling lies latent in him.¹⁷

8f If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him. [209] If he feels a neutral feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him.

¹³ *Bhagavaṃ mūlakā no bhante dhammā Bhagavaṃ nettikā Bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante Bhagavan-taṃ yeva paṭbhātu etaṃ bhāsitassa attho. Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressaṃti ti*, at **Mahā Dhamma, samādāna S** (M 46.2/1:309 f), **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 47.3/1:317), **Naḷakapāna S** (M 68.8/1:465), **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122.19/3:115) = SD 11.4; **Bālena Paṇḍita S** (S 2:24) = SD 21.1, **Parivīmaṃsanā S** (S 12.51/2:81) = SD 11.5, **Candūpama S** (S 16.3/2:199), **Sammāsambuddha S** (S 22.58/3:66), **Sall'atthana S** (S 36.6/4:208) = SD 5.5, **Ānanda S 2** (S 36.16/4:221); A 3.68/1:199, A 8.6/4:158, A 8.83/4:338, A 9.1/4:351, A 10.58/5:106, A 11.20/5:355.

¹⁴ Comy: The second wound (*anugata, vedham*) would be just a finger's breadth or two-fingers' breadth away from the first one. For the one wounded, as such, would feel; the subsequent worse than the first. (SA 3:76).

¹⁵ Comy: The escape is mental concentration, the path and the fruit, but he does not know this, knowing only sensual pleasure. (SA 3:77)

¹⁶ Cf **Cūḷa Sīhanāda S** (M 11.7/1:65), where the Comy says the arising (*samudaya*) the views of being (*bhava, diṭṭhi*) and non-being (*vibhava, diṭṭhi*) are due to any of these eight conditions (*attha-ṭ, thāna*): the five aggregates, ignorance, contact, perception, thought, unskillful consideration, evil friends and the voice of another [Pm 1:138]. Their disappearance (*atthaṅgama*) is the path of stream-entry which eradicates all wrong views. Their gratification (*assāda*) may be understood as the satisfaction of psychological need that they provide; their danger (*ādīnava*) is the continual bondage that they entail; the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them is Nirvana (MA 2:11). See also **Chachakka S** (M 148) where the latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses (M 148.28-33/3:285).

¹⁷ The most important characteristic of neutral feelings to note is their impermanent nature (It 47). This is because a neutral feeling appears to be the most stable of the three types of feeling. When they are noted as impermanent, it will lead to the arising of wisdom, thereby countering the latent tendency of ignorance. See §3n. See Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, 2003:171.

This, bhikshus, is called an uninstructed ordinary person who is yoked to birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair—he is one who is yoked to suffering, I say!¹⁸

Only one dart for the awakened

9 Bhikshus, when the instructed noble disciple is touched by a painful feeling, he does not sorrow, or grieve, or lament, or beat his breast, or become confused. So he feels (only) one feeling: the bodily, not the mental.

10a Bhikshus, it is just as if they were to wound a person with a dart, but they were not to wound him with a second dart. As such, bhikshus, that person would feel the sensation of (only) one dart.

Even so, bhikshus, when the instructed noble disciple is touched by a painful feeling, he does not sorrow, or grieve, or lament, or beat his breast, or become confused. So he feels (only) one feeling: the bodily, not the mental.¹⁹

10b And being touched by that painful feeling, he shows no aversion towards it. When he shows no aversion towards the painful feeling, the latent tendency²⁰ of aversion towards painful feeling does not lie latent (in him).

10c When touched by a painful feeling, he delights not in sensual pleasure.

Why is that so?

Because, bhikshus, the instructed noble disciple knows escape other than through sensual pleasure.

10d And when he does not seek delight in sensual pleasure, the latent tendency of lust towards pleasant feeling does not lie latent (in him).

10e He understands according to reality the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings.

Understanding these things according to reality, the latent tendency of ignorance towards neutral feeling does not lie latent (in him).

10f If he feels a pleasant feeling, he does not feel that it is yoked to him. If he feels a painful feeling, **[210]** he does not feel that it is yoked to him. If he feels a neutral feeling, he does not feel that it is yoked to him.

This, bhikshus, is called an instructed noble disciple who is not yoked to birth, or death, or sorrow, or lamentation, or physical pain, or mental pain, or despair—he is one who is not yoked to suffering, I say!

11 Bhikshus, this then is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed ordinary person.

12 The wise one, deeply learned, feels not a feeling (in his mind)
That is pleasurable or painful—
This is the great difference
Between the wise and the uninstructed ordinary person.

13 For the deeply wise who has mastered the Dharma,
Who truly sees this world and the next.
Desirable things do not agitate his mind
Nor does the undesirable bring him aversion.

¹⁸ **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38) concludes with an interesting, broader explanation of how an unawakened person delights all kinds of feelings—whether pleasant, painful or neutral—“he delights in that feeling, welcomes it, and remains clinging to it.” It also describes a Buddha responds to these feelings (M 38.30-41/ 1:266-271). See Intro above & also **Cūḷa,vedalla S** (M 44.25-28/1:303 f).

¹⁹ SA 3:77: Of the noble disciples, the stress here is on the arhat, although it would also apply to the Non-returner. The Commentaries say that both have abandoned aversion (*paṭigha*) or ill will (*dosa*), and thus are no longer subject to mental pain or displeasure (*domanassa*). However, anyone with a body, including the Buddhas, is subject to bodily painful feeling.

²⁰ Latent tendencies (*anusayā*): see Intro n above.

- 14 For him, there is neither attraction nor repulsion,
 They have been dispersed, come to an end,
 And having known that dustless sorrowless state [nirvana],
 He rightly knows that he has crossed over existence.

— evaṃ —

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