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Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta

The Discourse on the Honey-ball | M 18
Theme: Perception and mental proliferation
Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Introduction

1.1 The Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta opens on a dark note with the Buddha's meeting Daṇḍa,pāṇī,¹ whose name means "stick-in-hand." The Majjhima Commentary explains that he would walk around ostentatiously with a golden stick even during the first phase of his life, while still young and healthy. When Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, attempted to create a schism, Daṇḍapāṇī sided with Devadatta (MA 2:73). It is also possible that his nick-name suggests that he is one who believes in power and violence.² Daṇḍapāṇī's posture (leaning on his stick, speaking while standing to the seated Buddha) is discourteous and the tone of his question is arrogantly provocative [§3]. The Buddha's answer clearly hints at this [§4].

1.2 The Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta is an example of a brief teaching by the Buddha [§8] which is elaborated by another monk, in this case, Mahā Kaccāna [§§16-18]; but it is on account of Ānanda that the Sutta got its name [§22]. The heart of the Sutta, that is, Mahā Kaccāna's elaboration on the Buddha's brief teaching [§§16-18] should be studied with **the Sabb'upādāba Pariññā Sutta** (S 35.60), where the learned noble disciple becomes *disillusioned* (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness (also using the sentence, *tinnam saṅgati phasso* [§16]), and as such "becomes *dispassionate* (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is *liberated* (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, "Clinging has been fully understood by me,"" and so attains arhathood.³ In fact, the Sabb'-upādāna Pariññā Sutta should be read after §18 of the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta.

1.3 The Mahā Hatthi,paḍōpama Sutta (M 28) closes with a similar analysis of the 18 elements (the 6 sense-organs and 6 sense-objects) as the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta [§16], beginning with the statement:

If, avuso, internally, **the eye** is unimpaired [intact] but no external forms come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention] (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*), then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness.

(M 28,27-38/1:190 f), SD 6.16

1.4 Nāgita the Sakya was in the congregation when the sutta was expounded. Hearing it, he was inspired to join the Order, and soon after became an arhat (ThaA 1:193).

2 Mental proliferation (*papañca*)

2.1 At the heart of this Sutta is the overcoming of *papañca* [§§15-18], a popular Indian philosophical term that became an important Buddhist technical term.⁴ In an insightful study, *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhism* (1971), **Nāṇananda** renders *papañca* as "conceptual proliferation" which is more widely accepted today than **Nāṇamoli's** "diversification." **Bodhi** notes with caution, thus:

¹ A Sakya of Kapila,vatthu, son of Añjana and Yasodharā. His brother was Suppabuddha, and his sisters Māyā and Pajāpatī. On other words, he was the Buddha's maternal uncle. (Mahv 2.19). The Tibetan sources say that Sid-dhattha's wife was Daṇḍapāṇī's daughter (Rockhill 1884:20).

² *Daṇḍa* has two main senses: (1) stick, rod (V 3:132, 196; S 1:176; A 1:138, 206; Sn 688); (2) punishment (V 1:247, 2:290; D 2:154 *brahma,daṇḍa*; M 1:86=Nc 199; S 4:62; J 4:382, 5:442); (3) a stick used as a weapon (V 1:349; D 1:4, 63; M 1:287; A 1:211, 2:208, 4:249, 5:204; S 4:117; Dh 406=Sn 630; Sn 35, 394, 629, 935); (4) violence (as a means of causing fear) (M 1:372; Nc 293, cf Sn 35). On Bodhi's comments, see M:NB 1204 n229 & S:B 1409 n71.

³ S 35.60/4:32 f @ SD 6.17.

⁴ M 1:65; S 1:100, 4:52, 71; A 2:161 f, 3:393 f; Sn 530. Comys are full of stories connected with "mental proliferation," a good example is of story of the monk's nephew Saṅgha,rakkhita (DhA 3.4/1:299-304). A well-known secular example is Aesop's fable of the day-dreaming milk-maid ending with the moral: "Don't count the chickens before they are hatched": <http://aesopfables.com/cgi/aesop1.cgi?sel&TheMilkmaidandHerPail>.

It seems, however, that the primary problem to which the term *papañca* points is not “diversification,” which may be quite in place when the sensory field itself displays diversity, but the propensity of the worldling’s imagination to erupt into an effusion of mental commentary that obscures the bare data of cognition. (M:ÑB 1204 n229)

W S Waldron speaks of *papañca* as “language’s endless recursivity” (2002:152).⁵ *Papañca* also translates as “obstacle, hindrance, delay,”⁶ the sense used in the official Thai translations. For our purposes, we have translated *papañca* as “mental proliferation.”⁷

2.2 The phrase *papañca,saññā* appears in helpful contexts⁸ in the Saṃyutta and the Sutta Nipāta (in verse in both cases), and we shall examine both in turn. **The Saṅgayha Sutta** (S 35.94) has the adjectival or participial form *papañcita* in the following verse:

<i>Papañcita,saññā itarītarā narā papañca,yantā upayanti saññino mano,mayaṃ geha,sitañ ca sabbam panujja nekkhamma,sitaṃ iriyati</i>	People here and there of proliferated perception , when perceiving, go on to become the tools of proliferation. But all the mind-made that is house-bound, having dispelled them, one moves in renunciation. (S 35.94/4:71)
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The Saṃyutta Commentary says that *itarītarā narā* here refers to “morally inferior beings” (*lāmaka,-sattā*) “on account of being defiled perception” (*kilesa,saññāya*) (SA 2:382). In this sense, “proliferated perception,” say **Bodhi**, may be interpreted as the perverted perception (*saññā,vipallāsa*) of permanence, pleasure, self, and beauty, regarding what is really impermanent, suffering, non-self, and foul.⁹

2.3 The form *papañcita* appears with its synonyms in **the Yava,kalāpī Sutta** (S 35.248), namely, conceiving (*maññamāna*), vacillating (*iñjita*), agitation (*phandita*), proliferating (*papañcita*), and falling into conceit (*māna,gata*). Each of these five terms qualifies the following self-centred conceivings, namely,

- “I am”;
- “I am this”;
- “I shall be”;
- “I shall not be”;
- “I shall consist of form”;
- “I shall be formless”;
- “I shall percipient”;
- “I shall be non-percipient”;
- “I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient.”

⁵ See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15) in SD 5.13 (7) for a discussion on “the problem of language.”

⁶ DhA 1:8, 2:91; J 1:260, 4:145, 6:392.

⁷ “**Mental proliferation**,” *papañca*; see eg: *parinibbute chinna~e chinna,vaṭume* [Skt *vartman*], “(those) who have attained nirvana, cut off~, broken through the rut” (D 2:8, 53; S 4:52; Kvu 142); *papañca,yantā upayanti saññino*, “those who perceive become the tools of~” (S 4:71) [2.2]; *tasmā-t-īha...n’ap~ena cetasā viharissāma*, “therefore... we will dwell with a mind free of~” (S 4:203); *nip~pade rato ārādhayi so nibbānam*, “one who delights in the state of non~, has attained nirvana” (A 3:294*+295*); *~samatikkante tiṇṇa,soka,pariddave*, “those who have gone beyond ~ have crossed over sorrow and lamentation” (Dh 195); *sabbam accagamā imam ~am*, “has gone past all this ~” (Sn 8b); *nip~ pathe rato*, “who delights in the path to where there is no ~” (Tha 990); *sabba~khīno*, “(who) has destroyed all ~ (Pv 549c); *aṭṭha,sata,taṇhā ~a,satehi*, “108 varieties of~ [Vbh 392]” (Pm 1:130);

⁸ “**Proliferated perception**,” *papañca,saññā* occurs as *~ā itarītarā narā...papañca,yantā*, “people here and there of proliferated perception...tools of~” (S 4:71) [2.2]; *papañcā yeva ~ā*, “proliferated perception is itself mental proliferation” (Nm 280).

⁹ S:B 1409 n71. On *saññā,vipallāsa*, see **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/2:52), SD 16.11.

All such conceivings bring suffering upon one: they are “a disease,... a boil,... a dart,” and we should train ourselves to dwell with a mind free of them.¹⁰

2.4 The Commentaries state that the sources of mental proliferation are threefold, namely, craving (*taṇhā*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*).¹¹ It is on account of mental proliferation being rooted in craving, views and conceit that the mind colours our experiences by interpreting them in terms of “I”, “mine” and “myself.” As we have seen, *papañca* is synonymous with “conceiving” (*maññanā*), a usage also found in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1/1:1-6) and **the Brahma,nimantanika Sutta** (M 49/1:326-338). In his Majjhima translation manuscript, **Ñānamoli** makes this insightful observation:

The meeting of eye, form, and eye-consciousness is called contact. Contact, according to dependent origination [*paṭicca,samuppāda*], is the principal condition for feeling. Feeling and perception are inseparable [M 43].¹² What is perceived as “this” is thought about in its differences and is thus diversified from “that” and from “me.” This diversification—involving craving for form, wrong view about permanence of form, etc, and the conceit “I am”—leads to preoccupation with calculating the desirability of past and present forms with a view to obtaining desirable forms in the future. (M:ÑB 1205 n232)

2.5 Further insight can be found in **Ñānananda’s** *Concept and Reality*,¹³ where he proposes a **three-phase process of mental proliferation** in §16 of the **Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta**, that is, (1) the impersonal phase (ending with “feeling”), (2) the personal phase (ending with “mentally proliferates”), and (3) the objective subject (the rest):

The impersonal note is sustained only up to the point of ‘*vedanā*.’ The formula now takes a personal ending suggestive of deliberate activity....

The deliberate activity implied by the third person verb is seen to stop at ‘*papañceti*.’ Now comes the most interesting stage of the process of cognition. *Apparently*, it is no longer a mere contingent process, nor is it an activity deliberately directed, *but an inexorable subjection to an objective order of things*. At this final stage of sense-perception, he who has hitherto been the subject now becomes the hapless object. (Ñānananda, 1971:5 f)¹⁴

Later, in his book, **Ñānananda** discusses how through imagining (*maññanā*), “one [identifies] oneself with the sense-data, as suggested by the term ‘*tam,mayo*.’¹⁵ No sooner does one clutch at these data with ‘*maññanā*’ (imaginings) than they slip into unreality.” (1971:29).¹⁶

2.6 The key to understanding the sutta’s central passage [§16], as **Bodhi** points out,¹⁷ is found in Mahā Kaccāna’s explanation of his *bhadd’eka,ratta* verses in **the Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka,atta Sutta** (M 133).¹⁸ The reference to the three periods of time here [§§15-18] links up to Mahā Kaccāna’s elaboration of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta verses in reference to the prominent role played by delight in the process of cognition in causing bondage over the three periods of time.

¹⁰ S 35.248/4:202 f; also in **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140,31/3:246), SD 4.17 & **Samanupassanā Sutta** (S 22.47/3:47), SD 26.12. For an analysis, see SD 19.1(5.3).

¹¹ DA 2:425; MA 4:167; SnA 431, 553 = Nm 280.

¹² **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,9/1:293), SD 35.1.

¹³ Subtitled *An essay on ‘Papañca’ and ‘Papañca-saññā-saṅkhā.’*

¹⁴ For the canonical six-phase process of mental proliferation, see following §4.

¹⁵ *Tam,mayo* = *tad* + *maya*, lit “made of that.” *Na hi tam,mayo so ti na taṇhā,vasena diṭṭhi,vasena tam,mayo hoti tap,paramo tap,parāyano*, “For he is not made of that’ means that he is not made of that which is under the sway of craving or of views; he has crossed over ‘that,’ he has gone beyond ‘that’.” (Nm 1:206). The word and its opp occur at M 3:42 ff, A 1:150; Sn 846. See *Atammayatā*, SD 19.13.

¹⁶ **Sappurisa S** (M 113) explains in detail now the “true person” (*sappurisa*), a true practitioner, does not identify even with any of the spiritual states he attains (M 113/3:37-46).

¹⁷ M:ÑB 1205 n232.

¹⁸ M 133.13-18/3:195-198.

3 *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*

3.1 TRANSLATION PROBLEM. One of the most difficult passages in the Pali Canon is found in this Sutta [§8], that is, in connection with the term *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā* [§§8, 11, 15-18],¹⁹ literally “proliferation of conception and perception,” but the exact translation of which remains conjectural. We can take it to mean “formation of countless ideas on account of much misdirected thinking.” The term appears only in a few places in the Canon,²⁰ mostly in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta.**²¹ Some attempts at translating the term are listed here:

Ñāṇananda	“concepts characterised by the mind’s prolific tendency” (1971);
John D Ireland	“concepts that proliferate through perception” (U:I 1990:104 at U 7.7/77);
Bodhi	“perceptions and notions tinged by mental proliferation” (1995);
Bodhi	“perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation” (M:ÑB 202, passim);
Analayo	“concoctions of proliferation and cognitions” (2003:222);
Waldron	“series of proliferation-apperception” (2003:199 n73);
Piya Tan	“proliferation of conception and perception,” free translations: “prolific cognizing and recognizing,” “a burst of knowing and imagining.”

3.2 EXPLANATIONS

3.2.1 Sutta explanation

3.2.1.1 **The Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18) gives us a very helpful explanation of the process involving mental proliferation: this is given in some detail in §§16+17, the Sutta’s key passages. §16 describes how mental proliferation tenaciously grips us as we unconsciously follow its dictates through our sense-experiences.

Essentially, this domination begins any of our sense-experience: when a sense-faculty, and its respective sense-object and consciousness (attention) come together, there is contact (*phassa*), that is, a sense-experience. This, in turn, generates feeling (*vedanā*), how we see pleasure in something *perceive* as being attractive, pain in what is repulsive, and boredom in the neutral. This perception (*saññā*), in turn, generates thinking (*vitakka*), and when we think in this way, we mentally proliferate (*papañceti*).

Notice that *papañceti* is a passive verb: we have no control over such an unconscious process. We simply explode into countless conceptions (*saṅkhā*) and perceptions (*saññā*) about the past, the future and the present sense-experiences. We run after the past, conjure up the future, and misconstrue the present, creating our own world of these misfits of thoughts and imaginings. We are being processed by our mental proliferation.

3.2.1.2 §17, on the other hand, offers a positive outlook, as it is a *conscious* process: that is, as long as we can or will discern (*paññāpessati*), which is the future form of *paññāpeti*, “to know, recognize, define, declare,” which is, in turn, a causative form of the verb *pañānāti*, “to understand.” The same cognitive process is described, except this time it “can be discerned,” that is, we are aware of it in some degree, especially towards the end of the process, on the thought level. The Sutta then says:

When there is the manifestation of *thinking*, a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—it is possible for this to occur. [§17(1) etc]

Being aware of the earlier aspects of our cognitive process allows us to understand “how our mind works.” Then, “it is possible” (*thānam*) for us to take charge of our thinking process, and so prevent any

¹⁹ PTC gives the full concordance of *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*: ~nidāno ~samudayo ~jātiko ~pabhavo ~āya sati vitakko (na) hoti | ~nirodha, sārūpa,gāmini,paṭipadam paṭipanno hoti, “Thinking arises (does not arise) with ~ as source, ~ as cause, ~ as birth, ~ as origin. | The proper way leading to the ending of ~ that has been undertaken” (D 21,2.2+2.3/2:277); ~pahānam, “the abandoning of ~” (U 77); tato nidānam purisam ~samudācaranti, “From that as source, ~ impacts a person” (M 1:112,3 etc) [§16 (1), etc]; yato nidānam... purisam ~ samudācaranti, “As regards the source from which ~ assails a person” (M 18,19/1:113,18) [§8].

²⁰ D 21,2.2/2:77; U 7.7/77.

²¹ M 18,8+10+11+15+19/1:109-114.

mental proliferation, or at least minimize it. Even if we fail to do so at first, we can still review the process, that is, “discern” (*paññāpeti*) it, so that we understand (*pajānāti*) how our mind works, and cut down, even end, mental proliferation [§18; 7].

3.2.1.3 **Mental proliferation** (*papañca*) works hand in glove with how our sense-experiences, how we sense things. It is rooted in our unconscious mind,²² that is, the latent tendencies [5], so that we are not aware what is going on: we are deprived of our free will (in fact, we do not have it yet).²³ The full term for mental proliferation (*papañca*) is *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, which gives us the key words for the working of mental proliferation.

Saññā, although related to the “perception” of the 5 aggregates,²⁴ here it is very much like consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It works like consciousness, basically aware of sense-objects, but it also evaluates and value-add them, “recognizing” them from our past experiences. In other words, we only allow the familiar into our lives, or perceive all our experiences as we desire them, not as they really are [3.3.2].

Saṅkhā, too, works like our consciousness but we are here attending to the perceptions we have been accumulating. Its only task is that of projecting notions and imaginings: what we desire, what we hate, what we are deluded with, what we fear.²⁵ This is, in fact, how our “creative” minds work, measuring ourselves against others, creating problems for us, and lurking insidiously behind our thinking, and at the roots of all religions, including religious Buddhism. [3.3.1]

Mental proliferation, then, comprises of perceiving (*saññā*) and notion-forming (*saṅkhā*) or conceiving (*maññanā*)—is an explosion of mental constructs created by the power of the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) [5] of craving (*taṇhā*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*).²⁶ [7.2].

3.2.2 Commentarial explanation. The Majjhima Commentary gives an unclear gloss of the phrase,²⁷ where *saṅkhā* is *koṭṭhāsa* (portion), and that *saññā* is either perception associated with *papañca* or is *papañca* itself. Bodhi treats *saññā,saṅkhā* as a dvandva (a type of copulative compound) meaning “perceptions and notions” with the note that

The sequel will make it clear that the process of cognition is itself ‘the source from which perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man.’ If nothing in the process of cognition is found to delight in, to welcome, or to hold to, the underlying tendencies of the defilements will come to an end. (M:ÑB 1205 n232)

3.3 WORD ANALYSES

3.3.1 *Papañca* and *saṅkhā/saṅkham*

3.3.1.1 An in-depth study of **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11/862-877), especially Sn 874, would help us with some very good clues for a better understanding of the term *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, thus:

<i>Na saññā,saññī na visaññā,saññī</i>	He perceives not perception, nor misperceives it, ²⁸
<i>no pi asaññī na vibhūta.saññī</i>	nor is not a non-perceiver, ²⁹ nor one without perception. ³⁰

²² See **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b.

²³ See **Free will and Buddhism**, SD 7.7.

²⁴ On *saññā* as an aggregate (*saññā-k,khandha*), see **Saññā**, SD 17.4.

²⁵ These are, of course, the 4 biases (*agati*): see **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,4+5), SD 4.1; **Agati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7.

²⁶ DA 2:425; MA 4:167; SnA 431, 553 = Nm 280. Later tradition speaks of 2 kinds of *anusaya*: *ārammaṇ’ānusaya* (latent tendencies regarding sense-objects) and *santan’ānusaya* (continuity latent tendencies) (Vbh Mūla Tīkā (BE) 212; cf YamA 91, SA 3:74, 76, SA Tīkā (Be) 2:355). *Ārammaṇ’ānusaya* refers to *kāma,rāga* (sensual lust), especially with regards to objects that one is unmindful of, even during meditation. *Santan’ānusaya*, being subtle forms of defilement, exists in all except the liberated saint, the arhat. See §8n below & Mahasi Sayadaw 1982:15 f.

²⁷ *Ettha saṅkhā ti koṭṭhaso, papañca,saññā ti taṇhā,māna,diṭṭhi,papañca,sampayuttā saññā, saññā,nāmena vā papañcayeva vuttā* (MA 2:75).

²⁸ As in madness (*ummattaka*) or when mentally unhinged (*khitta,citta*). (SnA 553)

²⁹ As in the realm of the non-conscious beings (*asaññā,sattā*), or in the state of cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*). (SnA 553)

³⁰ *Na vibhūta,saññī*, lit “not one whose perception has disappeared (*vi + bhavati*),” ie with perception suppressed, as in the formless attainments (*ārūpa*). (SnA 553)

*evaṃ, sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ
saññā, nidānā hi papañca, saṅkhā*

For one who has won such a state, form disappears:
for, the proliferation of notions has perception as its source.

(Sn 874)

Notice how often the word *saññā* is used here, showing how closely related perception is to *papañca*-related terms. Mental proliferation, then, operates with the activity of perceiving or recognizing sense-experiences. This, however, is only part of the whole sense of *papañca*.

Now, let us examine the last line, that is, **Sn 874d** [3.3.3.1], where perception (*saññā*) is said to be the source (*nidāna*) of *papañca, saṅkha*, which should be translated as “proliferation of notions,” “proliferative notions,” or simply, “an explosion of ideas.” The Sutta commentary explains that “the *saññā* of one who has practised thus, one would have given up that source of proliferation of craving and views,”³¹ in other words, one is an arhat, one fully awakened. In this case, *saññā* is no more “perception” (as experienced in the unawakened), since the arhat forms no opinions or views based on the past, but only spontaneously acts in the present “consciousness.”

The word for “notion” or “idea” here is *saṅkhā* or *saṅkham*. For a better understanding of this, we will examine a line from another ancient Sutta in the same Aṭṭhaka, vagga, that is, the Mahā Viyūha Sutta.

3.3.1.2 **The Mahā Viyūha Sutta** (Sn 51) has this line, *na brāhmaṇo kappam upeti saṅkham* (Sn 911a), which can be translated in two ways:

(1) “A (true) brahmin, knowing, does not fall for the imagined,” or

(2) “A (true) brahmin does not fall for the imagined, a notion.”

Both translations make good sense, but in (1), *saṅkham* has a good sense, while in (2), it is a negative sense, which is more commonly found in connection with the term *papañca, saññā, saṅkhā*.

Here, we will first examine the less common usage of *saṅkham*, in its positive sense of “knowing,” or even “considering” (Sn:N 911). The Mahā Niddesa, the ancient canonical Commentary on the Aṭṭhaka, vagga, explains *saṅkham* as follows: “considering, knowing, weighing, judging, clearly understanding, having made it clear” (*saṅkhāya jānitvā tulayitvā tīrayitvā vibhāvayitvā vibhūtam*³² *katvā*), (Nm 327, 24 f).³³ K R Norman notes that here “*saṅkham* is the present participle of *saṅkhati* [sic], explained as an absolute, although it is possible that *saṅkham* is an error for *saṅkhā*, which would be a truncated absolute.”

The meaning of *saṅkhā* or *saṅkham* as “knowing” is helpful, but here it refers to a special kind of sense-based reactive knowing, where we are effectively under the control of our sense-experiences, and shaped and perpetuated by them. As we sense so we think, then so we act, then so we become. This is the kind of knowing or cognition that creates and perpetuates notions and views. When these are systematized, they become dogmas, theologies, religions and cults.

3.3.1.3 If we take *saññā, saṅkhā* as a dvandva, “perception and notion(s)” (as Bodhi does) [3.2], then, we have a good clue that this refers to the mental acts of cognizing (notions of external sense-objects) (*saṅkhā*) and of perceiving (“recognizing”) (a mental reaction to these external experiences) (*saññā*). The phrase, *saṅkham gacchati*, means “to be styled, called or defined; to be put into words” (PED).³⁴ On a simple level, this is like the “naming and forming” process of *nāma, rūpa*.³⁵

3.3.1.4 The form *papañca, saṅkhā* exists and probably only occurs in the Sutta Nipāta, in its oldest section (indeed, one of the oldest Pali teachings), the Aṭṭhaka, vagga (Sn 916a, 874d), but are more com-

³¹ Comy: *evaṃ paṭipannassāpi yā saññā, taṃ nidāna taṇhā, diṭṭhi, papañcā appahīnā eva hontī ti dasseti* (SnA 553).

³² This usage (which seems to be late) recurs at A 5:325; Miln 308, 311; Vism 112. The better known (prob earlier) forms with *vibhāva-* and *vibhūta-*, with the sense of “destroyed, annihilated” (eg Tha 715; Sn 871 f, 1113) but this does not apply here.

³³ Buddhaghosa, in his Sn Comy, reflects Nm: “Therein, *saṅkhā* means “having considered, having known” (*Tattha saṅkhāti saṅkhāya, jānitvāti attho*, SnA 2:561).

³⁴ D 1:199, 201; V 2:239; M1:190, 487; A 1:68, 244 = 2:113; Pug 42; Nett 66 f; Vism 212, 225, 235, 294 (*saṅkha*); SnA 167 (*saṅkha*); DhsA 11 (*saṅkha*).

³⁵ On *nāma, rūpa*, see SD 17.2a (12).

mon in the Commentaries. In **the Tuvaṭṭaka Sutta** (Sn 52), for example, it is said that the arhat “would break up all the roots of proliferated perception” (*mūlaṃ papañca,saṅkhāya...sabbaṃ uparundhe*, Sn 916; Nm 344*).

One explanation for this is that the compound is a non-technical word in the ancient texts, but was resurrected in the commentaries, and explained or used in a more technical sense, especially in the ancient Sutta Nipāta commentary called Niddesa, comprising the Mahā Niddesa (Nm) and the Culla Niddesa (Nc).

3.3.1.5 In **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 49) of the Aṭṭhaka,vagga, we see this line: “For, the proliferation of notions has perception as its source” (*saññā,nidānā hi papañca,saṅkhā*, Sn 874d) [3.3.3.1]. The Niddesa on this line (Sn 874d) explains it as follows:

“**The proliferation of notions**” (*papañca,saṅkhā*) is “proliferation” itself, that is, the notions proliferated by craving (*taṇhā*), the notions proliferated by views (*diṭṭhi*), the notions proliferated by conceit (*māna*). They have perception as their source, perception as their cause [arising], perception as their birth, perception as their origin. Hence, (it is said,) “**For, the proliferation of notions has perception as its source.**”

Papañcā-y-eva papañca,saṅkhā taṇhā,papañca,saṅkhā diṭṭhi,papañca,saṅkhā, māna,papañca,saṅkhā, saññā,nidānā saññā,samudayā saññā,jātikā saññā,pabhavā ’ti saññā,nidānā hi papañca,saṅkhā. (Nm 280)

The series of words, “source, ...cause [arising], ...birth, ...origin” (*nidānā ...samudayā ...jātikā ...pabhavā*) in the Nm 280 quotes above is used in a question related to clinging (*upādāna*) in **the Cūḷa Sihanāda Sutta** (M 11). The Sutta goes on to explain that when teachings are badly taught, it does not lead to awakening, instead it leads mental proliferation, which it then explains by way of **dependent arising** (M 11,17, op cit).³⁶ Here, then, dependent arising explains how the mind proliferates, explodes with thoughts, ideas, imaginings and views.

3.3.2 Papañca and saññā

3.3.2.1 One of the best clues for translating *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā* is probably found in **Sn 874d** [3.3.3.1], where perception (*saññā*) is said to be the source (*nidāna*) of *papañca,saṅkhā*, which should be translated as “proliferation of notions,” “proliferative notions,” or simply, “an explosion of ideas.”³⁷ The key word here is “notions” (*saṅkhā*). [It is worthwhile to go back to (3.2.1.3) for a moment, to review how *saññā* is used there.]

3.3.2.2 Another vital clue comes from **the Adanta Agutta Sutta** (S 35.94), where it is said that “those who perceive become the tools of mental proliferation” (*papañca,yantā upayanti saññīno*).³⁸ Here, “perceive” refers to the act of reactively seeing our present experiences as a reflection of our past, and recognizing sense-experiences in terms of lusting the pleasant, disliking the unpleasant, and ignoring the neutral. We became reactive creatures, creating our tinsel world from colours and shades of our senses and memories.

This re-cognizing aspect of our mind is called “perception” (*saññā*). And here we see a close connection between *papañca* and *saññā*. How we perceive our sense-experiences spurs us to proliferates our notions: these are perception-generated proliferation of our mind. We create our own world, thinking, pondering, imagining and conjuring it all up in the most complicated ways.

3.3.2.3 As such, *papañca,saññā,saṅkhā* could be rendered as “proliferation of notions [ideas] due to perception,” or “mental proliferation arising from conception and perception,” or more technically, “pro-

³⁶ M 11,16+17/1:67), SD 49.2.

³⁷ Comy: *evaṃ paṭipannassāpi yā saññā, taṃ nidāna taṇhā,diṭṭhi,papañcā appahinā eva hontī ti dasseti* (SnA 553).

³⁸ S 35.94/4:71.

liferation of conception and apperception.³⁹ This is a powerful narcissistic soliloquy, fed by our sense-experiences, with which we construct our world of varied and endless perceptions and notions.

3.3.2.4 In simple terms, this can be said to be “prolific cognizing and recognizing” or “an explosion of knowing and recognizing,” or more colloquially, a “burst of knowing and imagining.” This is close to John D Ireland’s “concepts that proliferate through perception” (U:I 1990: 104 at U 7.7/77).

4 Theory of perception

4.1 The earliest Buddhist teaching on sense-perception (*saññā*) is found in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** [§§15-18]. This canonical version differs in some important aspects from the more developed Abhidhamma and Commentarial version, but one feature is common to both, that is, that an act of complete perception does not arise as an immediate result of the contact between the organ and the sense-object. Perception is regarded a process of thought that begins as a simple sensation and ends up with the complete apprehension of the object.

4.2 The canonical theory of the perceptual process comprises 6 stages:⁴⁰

(i) The first stage is, for example, **visual consciousness** (*cakkhu,viññāṇa*), which arises with the eye and visual object as its conditions. At this point, it is bare sensation before the object is fully apprehended (which is similarly understood in the Abhidhamma).

(ii) The second stage is the process of **sensory impression** or sense-contact (*cakkhu,samphassa* or *phassa*), defined as the conjunction of the sense-organ, the sense-object and sense-consciousness (*tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*, M 18,16/1:111).

(iii) The third stage is **feeling** (*vedanā*), which refers to the hedonic tone or emotional value of the resultant experience.

(iv) The fourth stage is **perception**, or more technically, apperception (*saññā*). The fact that *viññāṇa* (bare sensation) occurs before *saññā* [bare reaction] shows that *saññā* represents a more complex form of awareness. While *viññāṇa* refers to mere sensory awareness, *saññā* “suggests a state of awareness obtained by introducing distinctions to the earlier stage of bare awareness” (Karunadasa, 2001: 211).

(v) The fifth stage is **thinking** (*vitakka*, often translated as “initial application (of thought)”), suggesting a stage where the perceived object is *interpreted*.

(vi) The sixth and last stage is called **mental proliferation** (*papañca*) that “hints at the tendency of the individual’s imagination to break loose” (Ñāṇananda 1971:4). This is a very complex level of experience that is coloured by one’s desires and prejudices.⁴¹ The last stage of this process is clearly detailed in the short **Cetanā Sutta 1** (S 12.38):

Monks, what one intends, and what one plans, and what lies latent [has latent tendencies]—this is a support⁴² for the continuation of consciousness. When there is a support, there is a basis for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and increases, there occurs further rebirth. When there is further rebirth, there arise further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, anxiety and despair. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

³⁹ *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (1976) defines ‘apperception’ as ‘perception with recognition or identification by association with previous ideas,’ with the verb ‘to apperceive’ meaning ‘unite and assimilate (a perception) to ideas already possessed, and so comprehend and interpret.’ This is exactly what *saññā* is.

⁴⁰ Discussed in greater detail in **Ṣaṇṇā**, SD 17.4. See also Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:222-226.

⁴¹ Karunadasa argues that in this sixfold process, the final stage of perception is not “mental proliferation” (as proposed by Sarathchandra, 1958 and Ñāṇananda 1971:5 ff), but actually “perception” (stage 4) since “what follows *saññā* could be understood not as a process of sense-perception but as a purely ideational process set up by a process of perception. In point of fact, both Sarathchandra and Ñāṇananda (1971:5 ff, 41 ff) explain the stages subsequent to *saññā* as a process of interpretation and judgement.” (2001:212).

⁴² “Support,” *ārammaṇa*, also tr “object,” ie, one of the six sense-objects, forming the external support for sense-perception, and without them there is no sense-perception.

Yañ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti yañ ca pakappeti yañ ca anuseti. Ārammaṇam eta hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati paṭiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmim paṭiṭṭhite viññāṇe viruḷhe āyatim puna-b,bhavābhiniḅbatti hoti. Āyatim puna-b,bhavābhiniḅbattiyā sati āyatim jarā,marañam soka,parideva,dukkha,domanass ’upāyāsā sambhavanti. Evam etass kevalassa dukkha-k,khandhassa samudayo hoti. (S 12.38/2:65 f)⁴³

4.3 The Sutta’s detailed analysis of the perceptual process is also an example of the application of the dependent arising formula in the present moment, without reference to the other lives. As **Analayo** notes:

This discourse depicts the “arising” (*uppāda*) of consciousness “in dependence” (*paṭicca*) on sense organ and sense object, with contact being the coming “together” (*sam*) of the three. This passage [§16] reveals a deeper significance of each part of the term *paṭicca sam-uppāda*, “dependent” “co-” “arising,” without any need for different lifetimes or for the whole set of twelve links. Thus realization of dependent co-arising can take place simply by witnessing the operation of conditionality in the present moment, within one’s own subjective experience. (Analayo 2003:109 f)

5 Latent tendencies

5.1 The Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta [§8] gives a full list of the latent tendencies (*anusayā*),⁴⁴ also translated as “underlying tendencies” and “latent dispositions.” There are 7 latent tendencies, namely:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) sensual desire | <i>kāma,rāga;</i> |
| (2) aversion | <i>paṭigha;</i> |
| (3) wrong view | <i>diṭṭhi;</i> |
| (4) spiritual doubt | <i>vicikicchā;</i> |
| (5) conceit | <i>māna;</i> |
| (6) desire for existence | <i>bhava,rāga;</i> and |
| (7) ignorance | <i>avijjā.</i> |

5.2 They are also listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta**,⁴⁵ **the Cha,chakka Sutta**,⁴⁶ **the Anusaya Sutta**,⁴⁷ **the Paṭisambhidā,magga**,⁴⁸ and **the Vibhaṅga**.⁴⁹ The Paṭisambhidā,magga and the Vibhaṅga define the latent tendencies is practically the same way:

And what is **the latent tendency of beings**?

There are the seven latent tendencies:

- the latent tendency of sensual lust;
- the latent tendency of aversion;
- the latent tendency of conceit;
- the latent tendency of wrong view;
- the latent tendency of doubt;
- the latent tendency of lust for existence;
- the latent tendency of ignorance.

That which in the world is pleasant and likable, there the tendency of sensual lust of beings lies latent.

That which in the world is unpleasant and unlikable, there the tendency of aversion of beings lies latent.

⁴³ See S:B 757 n112.

⁴⁴ See also **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.3), SD 5.5 Intro.

⁴⁵ D 33.2.3(12)/3:254, 282.

⁴⁶ M 148.28/3:285.

⁴⁷ A 7.11-12/4:8 f.

⁴⁸ Pm §587/123.

⁴⁹ Vbh §816/341, §949/383.

Thus in these two states, ignorance continuously occurs, and so too conceit, wrong view and doubt.

This is the latent tendency of beings.⁵⁰

(Pm §587/123; Vbh §816/341)

5.3 The latent tendencies are deeply embedded in one's mind through past habitual deeds and can only be uprooted on attaining the path. Wrong view and spiritual doubt are eliminated at streamwinning; sensual desire and aversion, at non-return; conceit, attachment to existence and ignorance, only at arhat-hood. **The Abhidhammattha,saṅgaha** says: “The latent dispositions (*anusayā*) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (*amuseti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions” (Abhs 7.9). 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.

5.4 Although all defilements are, in a sense, *anusayā*, the seven mentioned here are the most prominent (Abhs:BRS 268).⁵¹ The first three latent tendencies are mentioned in **the Sall’atthana Sutta** (S 36.-6)⁵² and **the Cūḷa,vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the latter of which says: “The latent tendency of sensual desire underlies pleasant feeling. The latent tendency of aversion underlies painful feeling. The latent tendency of ignorance underlies neutral feeling” (M 44,25/1:303).

5.5 The Majjhima Tīkā on this passage says that these three defilements are called “latent tendencies” in the sense that they have not been destroyed in the life-continuum (*bhav’āṅga*) to which they belong and because they are capable of arising when the conditions are right (MAṬ:Be 2:286).

5.6 The Visuddhi,magga distinguishes 3 levels of defilements, that is, as follows:

- (1) The transgression level (*vītikamma*), a gross level of defilements, where they instigate unwholesome bodily and verbal action.
- (2) The obsession level (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), an obsessive level of defilements, where they arise to obsess and enslave the mind.⁵³
- (3) The latent level (*anusaya*), a subtle level of defilements, where they remain as latent disposition in the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*). (Vism 1.13/5)

The gross level of transgressive defilement is prevented by the observance of moral precepts (*sīla*). The habitual level of obsessive defilement is surmounted through mental cultivation (*samādhi*). And the subtle level of latent defilement is overcome by insight wisdom (*paññā*) (Vism 1.13/5). These 3 levels of defilements are often referred to throughout the Commentaries.⁵⁴

5.7 The term *anusaya* is found in the compound *adhiṭṭhānābhinivesānusaya*,⁵⁵ translated as “the mental standpoints, adherences and latent tendencies.” They are “mental standpoints” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because

⁵⁰ *Katamo ca sattānaṃ anusayo? Sattānusayā: kāmarāgānusayo, paṭighānusayo, mānānusayo, diṭṭhānusayo, vicikicchā’nusayo, bhavarāgānusayo, avijjā’nusayo. Yaṃ loke piyarūpaṃ sātārūpaṃ, ettha sattānaṃ kāmarāgānusayo [rāgānusayo, Vbh] anuseti. Yaṃ loke appiyarūpaṃ asātārūpaṃ ettha sattānaṃ paṭighānusayo anuseti. Iti imesu dvīsu dhammesu avijjā’nupatitā, tadekaṭṭho māno ca diṭṭhi ca vicikicchā ca daṭṭhabbā. Ayam sattānaṃ anusayo.*

⁵¹ See also Abhs:BRS 172.

⁵² See S 36.6/4:207-210 @ SD 5.5.

⁵³ This is referred to in **Mahā Māluṅkyā S** (M 64) in connection with the lower mental fetters (*orāma, bhāgiya saṃyojanā*): self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata, parā-māsa*), sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), and ill will (*paṭigha*), “and he does not understand it as it really is the escape from the arisen <fetter>, and when that <fetter> has become habitual and is not eliminated in him, it is a lower fetter” (M 64.5/1:434 f).

⁵⁴ See also **Cāgānussati**, SD 15.11(2) Levels of practice.

⁵⁵ S 2:17, 3:10, 135, 161; A 5:3.

they adhere to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:259; NmA 2:310). Evidently, this compound embodies the canonical roots for the commentarial conception of the three levels of defilements.

The “mental standpoint” or “mindset” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) here refers to the motivation behind the gross level of transgressive defilement. The “adherence or habituation” (*abhinivesa*) or inclination refers to the motivation behind the habitual level of addictive or obsessive defilement. And the “latent tendencies” (*anusayā*) lie dormant at the *bhavaṅga* (life-continuum) level ready to rear their ugly heads and wreak havoc at the slightest instigation.

6 *Prapañca*: Dan Lusthaus’s clarifications

[The following section is an edited version of Dan Lusthaus’ response to an argumentation thread on Buddha-L chat site, 14 Feb 2008. Used with permission & thanks to Dan.]

6.1 Of the 7868 occurrences of the term *prapañca* (Chin *xiilun*) in the Taisho or Zokuzokyo editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon, I haven’t been able to find a single one where it is being applied to “someone else” in any manner whatsoever. It comes up in contexts that list or describe mental problems, used as a synonym or a term related to *kalpanā* [projective conceptual construction], *vikalpa* [false conceptual construction], and *parikalpa* [ubiquitous imaginary construction].⁵⁶

6.2 Nagarjuna calls the telos (purpose) of his own method the “putting to rest of *prapañca*” (*prapañcōpasama*). It occurs over 1000 times in the Prajñāpāramitā corpus translated by Xuanzang; and occurs frequently in Asaṅga’s writings, and elsewhere.

In the Chinese equivalent, *xilun*, where *xi* means a play, a drama put on. For modern sensibilities, we might suggest being “dramatic,” making a drama out of something, understanding something by reducing it to a narrative, a fictitious construction that engages one’s mind and emotions.

Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player | That struts and frets his hour upon the stage | And then is heard no more. It is a tale | Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, | Signifying nothing.
(Shakespeare. *Macbeth*, Act 5 Scene 5, 1603-1606)

6.3 Etymologically, *prapañca* implies verbal proliferation. Indian thinkers, taking language seriously, treated the verbal as the conceptual (they used the term *saṃjñā* to express that). So *prapañca* implies conceptual proliferation. For a simple (and too simplistic for Indian usage) example, Frege,⁵⁷ the father of the modern Analytic Philosophy, claimed that the referent (German, *Bedeutung*) of every proposition is “true/false,” by which he meant not only that any statement might be determined to be either true or false, but that “true or false” was the actual referent. For example, “Roger Clemens took steroids” is “true or false.” So the single statement immediately implies not one, but two possible states of affairs.

To explore that statement further elicits (for some, with passion and commitment) additional statements, which point to additional doubling of possible states of affairs. Since everything can be reduced to a proposition (even the proposition that “Everything cannot be reduced to a proposition”), the entire universe of possible statements, by this doubling, has doubled the actual universe. Since fictional lines of thought can further proliferate, in actuality the proliferation is exponentially greater than mere doubling.

6.4 Richard [Hayes] is right to complain that there is a certain ambiguity to the term *prapañca*, in that it is often dropped into Buddhist texts without additional explanation of what exactly the term itself refers to—as if the reader is expected to already know what it precisely means.

⁵⁶ The senses within parentheses are based on Lusthaus’ paper, “The core of the Yogācāra project,” <http://www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/bios/Lusthaus/yogacara%20crux.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Analytic philosophers regard the German philosopher [Gottlob Frege](http://www.philosopher.org.uk/anal.htm) (1848-1925) as the most important thinker since Kant. Frege wanted to put a rigorous logic at the heart of philosophy. He was influential in the philosophy of mathematics, logic and language. He thought that the basis for mathematics could be securely derived from logic and that a rigorous analysis of the underlying logic of sentences would enable us to judge their truth-value. Analytic philosophy attempts to clarify, by analysis (breaking something down into its constituent parts), the meaning of statements and concepts. <http://www.philosopher.org.uk/anal.htm>.

6.5 Take a single example: a reader may or may not find the following passage from Asaṅga’s Abhidharma, samuccaya elucidating. This is Sara Boin-Webb’s English translation of Rahula’s French version (from a back-translated Sanskrit).⁵⁸ Here, *prapañca* is translated as “idle speculation” which is not helpful at all):

[After a list of 10 types of *vikalpa*, Asanga writes:] What is the absence of discrimination (*nirvikalpatā*)? In brief, it is threefold: (1) non-discrimination in contentment (*samtuṣṭi, nirvikalpatā*), (2) non-discrimination in the absence of perverse views (*aviparyāsa, nirvikalpatā*), and (3) non-discrimination in the absence of idle speculation (*niṣprapañca, nirvikalpatā*).

One should consider these three kinds as pertaining respectively to the ordinary man (*prtagjana*), the disciple (*śrāvaka*) and the bodhisattva. Non-discrimination in the absence of idle speculation should not be understood as non-thought (*amanasikāra*), or as going beyond thought (*manasikāra, samatikrama*) or as appeasement (*vyupaśama*), or as own-nature (*svabhāva*), or as a mental construction concerning an object (*ālambane abhisamkāra*), but as a mental non-construction concerning an object (*ālambane anabhisamkāra*).

(Sara Boin-Webb’s tr of Abhidharma, samuccaya, vyakhya)

6.6 Though defining the negative case (*niṣprapañca*) rather than the positive, we can infer the inverse implications (it is Asaṅga’s propensity for using negative definitions of the most crucial terms that was one of the major inspirations for Dignaga’s *apoha* theory, I believe). *Prapañca* here is a type of *vikalpa* that is *abhisamkāra*, ie, conceptualized, ideational, mentally constructed, implying conceptualization that is conditioned, habitual (*samkāra*). It is evaluative in the sense that neither ordinary people nor śravakas are considered capable of doing away with it completely. Only Bodhisattvas (in the Mahāyāna viewpoint) can do that.

As for its use in the *hetu, vidyā* [logic/dialectic]... Debate is not solely about logical coherence, but about articulation, hesitation, verbal proficiency, etc. I’ve tended to see the fault of *prapañca* in this context as someone who, finding himself in trouble, begins to rant, to overtalk, to say too much, which may or may not make sense, but, in short, to display his discomfort and nervousness by verbally overcompensating, going on tangents, etc. That’s the giveaway that he’s lost it, and such a display renders him a loser of the debate.⁵⁹

7 Breaking the cycle of mental proliferation

7.1 The roots of the latent tendencies have three long and deep unwholesome roots, namely, greed, hate and delusion. These roots cause one to habitually react to pleasant feelings with lust, painful feelings with aversion and neutral feelings with ignorance.⁶⁰ In other words, the three unwholesome respectively underlie each of these three latent tendencies, causing craving, views and conceit to arise.

7.2 Mental proliferation (*papañca*)—comprising of perceiving (*saññā*) and notion-forming (*saṅkhā*) or conceiving (*maññanā*)—is an explosion of mental constructs created by the power of the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) of craving (*taṇhā*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*).⁶¹ These constructs, in turn, lead to stronger and more tenacious defilements that motivate unwholesome thoughts, speech and actions, all of which in turn reinforce our negative attitudes and habits in a vicious cycle.

⁵⁸ It corresponds to Pradhan’s 102.8-13; the Chin Taisho version T31.692c28-693a4; Tib D 117a2-5; P 138a3-6; Tatia’s ed of Abhidharma, samuccaya, vyakhya [Sthiramati’s comy, to attest the Skt] 139.4-26.

⁵⁹ Further reading: Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, London & NY: Routledge Curzon, 2002, esp ch 4 (Pratītya-samutpāda).

⁶⁰ Amongst the 7 latent tendencies [§8], these 3 are specifically correlated with feelings; see **Cūla Vedalla S** (M 44.25-28/1:303 f) & **Pahānena S** (S 36.3/4:205 f).

⁶¹ DA 2:425; MA 4:167; SnA 431, 553 = Nm 280. Later tradition speaks of 2 kinds of *anusaya*: *ārammaṇ’ānusaya* (latent tendencies regarding sense-objects) and *santan’ānusaya* (continuity latent tendencies) (Vbh Mūla Ṭīkā (BE) 212; cf YamA 91, SA 3:74, 76, SA Ṭīkā (Be) 2:355). *Ārammaṇ’ānusaya* refers to *kāma, rāga* (sensual lust), especially with regards to objects that one is unmindful of, even during meditation. *Santan’ānusaya*, being subtle forms of defilement, exists in all except the liberated saint, the arhat. See §8n below & Mahasi Sayadaw 1982:15 f.

7.3 The first step towards breaking this cycle is to restrain the senses which involves stopping at the bare sense-experience without plastering it over with layers of colourful meanings whose origins are purely subjective. A classic example of the instruction in sense-restraint (*indriya, samvara*) is the one the Buddha gives to the monk Māluṅkyāputta as recorded in **the Māluṅkyāputta Sutta** (S 35.95):⁶²

“...Māluṅkyāputta, in what is to be seen, heard, sensed and cognized by you,

in the seen	there will be only the seen;
in the heard	there will only be the heard;
in the sensed	there will only be the sensed;
in the cognized	there will only be the cognized.” ⁶³ (S 35.95,13/4:73), SD 5.9

The Sutta also contains a beautiful poem composed by Maluṅkyāputta himself reflecting his understanding of this teaching he has received (S 35.95.14/4:73-75 = Tha 794-817).

7.4 The last two sections (*vaggā*) of **the Saḷāyatana Vagga** of the Saṃyutta Nikāya contains a number of suttas relating to sense-restraint and that are replete with startling imagery and extended similes, and which should be studied in this connection:

Samudda Sutta 1 (S 35.228)⁶⁴ the sense-faculties are compared to an ocean, the sense-objects to their currents, and the spiritual path as a voyage.

Balisika Sutta (S 35.230)⁶⁵ agreeable sense-objects are like baited hooks cast out by Māra, and swallowing them, we fall under Māra’s power.

Ādittena Pariyāya Sutta (S 35.235)⁶⁶ it is better that our sense-faculties be lacerated by sharp, hot and glowing instruments than to be infatuated with attractive sense-objects; for such infatuations lead us to be reborn in lower realms.

Āsīvisôpama Sutta (S 35.238)⁶⁷ where worldly life is like a person pursued by 4 vipers, 5 murderous foes, and an assassin, and his only means to safety is a handmade raft.

⁶² This teaching is also given to the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya (**Bāhiya S**, U 1.10/8), SD 33.7. According to SA, in the form base, i.e. in what is seen by eye-consciousness, “there is only consciousness”, that is, as eye-consciousness is not affected by lust, hatred or delusion in relation to form that has come into range, so the *javana* will be just a mere eye-consciousness by being empty of lust, etc. So, too, for the heard and the sensed. The “cognized” is the object cognized by the mind-door adverting (*mano, dvārāvajjana*). In the cognized, “only the cognized” is the adverting (consciousness) as the limit. As one does not become lustful, etc, by adverting, so I will set my mind with adverting as the limit, not allowing it to arise by way of lust, etc. *You will not be by “that” (na tena)*: you will not be aroused by *by that* lust, or irritated *by that* hatred, or deluded *by that* delusion. *Then you will not be “therein” (na tattha)*: the seen.” For eye-consciousness sees only form in form, not some essence that is permanent, etc. So too for the remaining types of consciousness (ie the *javana* series, SĀPT), there will be merely the seen. Or, alternatively, the meaning is “My mind will be mere eye-consciousness, which means the cognizing of form in form. When you are not aroused by that lust, etc, then “you will not be therein”—not bound, not attached, not established in what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized. (See Bodhi S:B 1410 n75)

⁶³ This verse is the crux of the **Maluṅkyāputta S** and *satipaṭṭhāna*. In sutta terms, such experiences are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso ’ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhi*) (**Anatta Lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See P Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. In simple Abhidhamma terms, such process should be left at the sense-doors, and not allowed to reach the mind-door. As long as the experience of sensing is mindfully left at its sense-door and taken for what it really is, that is an experience of reality (*param ’attha*); after it has reached the mind-door and evaluated it becomes conventional (*pañ-ñatti*) reality, that brings one suffering due to greed, hate or delusion. When such sense-experiences are mindfully left on the reality level, one would in due course see the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. See Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Malukyaputta Sutta*, tr U Htin Fatt, Rangoon, 1981.

⁶⁴ S 35.228/4:157; PTS ed ref is S 35.187.

⁶⁵ S 35.230/4:158 f; PTS ed ref is S 35.189.

⁶⁶ S 35.235/4:168-171; PTS ed ref is S 35.194.

⁶⁷ S 35.238/4:172-175 @ SD 28.1; PTS ed ref is S 35.197.

- Kummôpama Sutta** (S 35.240)⁶⁸ we are exhorted to draw our senses inward as a tortoise draws its limbs into its shell, for Māra is like a hungry jackal ever ready to seize us.
- Cha,pāṇa Sutta** (S 35.247)⁶⁹ the 6 senses are like 6 animals each drawn to their natural habitat, and which should be tied by the rope of sense-restraint and bound to the strong post of body-directed mindfulness.
- Yava,kalāpi Sutta** (S 35.248)⁷⁰ parable of the magical bonds of asura-king Vepa,citti, and the exhortation to cut off all modes of conceiving rooted in craving and view.

8 No doer, only deeds

8.1 Although in our daily language, it is common to speak of “knowing,” “feeling,” “cognizing,” or “perceiving” sense-objects, in the syntax of dependent arising, one does not really experience anything—it simply *is* the experience that arises when the requisite conditions are present [16]. This point is clearly shown in **the Visuddhi,magga**:

*Kammasa kārako n’atthi
vipākassa ca vedako
suddha,dhammā pavattanti
ev’etaṃ samma,dassanaṃ*

There is neither doer of the deed
Nor one who reaps its result:
Mere events roll on—
Just this is right seeing.

*Na h’ettha devo Brahmā vā
saṃsārass’atthi kārako
suddha,dhammā pavattanti
hetu,sambhāra,paccayā*

Here there is neither God nor Brahmā,
Nor is there creator of the rounds of life and death;
Mere events roll on
With cause and component as their condition.

(Vism 19.20/603 on an untraced quote by “the Ancients” (*porāṇā*); cf Miln 78)

8.2 Vasubandhu (late 4th-5th cent CE), in his **Abhidharma,koṣa**, makes the same point with exceptional clarity, quoting the Sautrāntikas:

The Sūtra teaches: “By reason of the organ of sight and of visible matter there arises the visual consciousness”: there is not there either an organ that sees, or visible matter that is seen; there is not there any action of seeing, nor any agent that sees; this is only a play of cause and effect. In the light of [common] practice, one speaks, metaphorically, of this process: “The eye sees, and the consciousness discerns.” But one should not cling to these metaphors. The Blessed One said that one should not take them in the manner of popular speech, that one should not seriously grasp an expression in use in the world.⁷¹ [One should not reject expressions in worldly use for the reason that they do not correspond to realities. (Mā T1.703a2, Sā13.12)]

(Abhk Bhāṣya 42d.7, Pruden’s tr 1988:118; see also Waldron 2002:143-145)

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⁶⁸ S 35.240/4:177-179 @ SD 19.17; PTS ed ref is S 35.199.

⁶⁹ S 35.247/4:198-200 @ SD 19.15; PTS ed ref is S 35.206.

⁷⁰ S 35.248/4:201-203 @ SD 40a.3; PTS ed ref is S 35.207.

⁷¹ Cf M 3:230, S 4:230, It 49.

The Discourse on the Honey-ball

M 18

1 Thus have I heard.

Daṇḍa,paṇī

1.2 At one time the Blessed One was staying in Nigrodha's Park near Kapila,vatthu in the Sakya country.

2 Then in the morning, the Blessed One, having dressed himself and taking robe and bowl, entered Kapila,vatthu for alms.

Then the Blessed One, having gone into Kapila,vatthu for alms, having returned from the almsround and finished his meal, went into Mahā,vana [the Great Forest]⁷² and sat down under a bilva tree⁷³ for his noonday rest.

3 Then Daṇḍa,paṇī the Sakya⁷⁴ who was walking about on a stroll,⁷⁵ also went into Mahā,vana and went up to the bilva tree where the Blessed One was.

Then Daṇḍa,paṇī the Sakya went up to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, *he stood at one side and leaned on his stick.*⁷⁶ Leaning thus on his stick, he asked the Blessed One:

What does the recluse say; what does the recluse teach?⁷⁷

4 ⁷⁸“Avuso [Friend], I say and teach in such a way so as not to quarrel with anyone in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers⁷⁹ and people;

⁷² Mahā,vana. This was virgin forest stretching up to the Himalayas. The Mahāvana outside Vesālī was partly natural, partly cultivated (MA 2:73).

⁷³ “Bilva tree,” *beluva,laṭṭhikā*, lit “bilva or vilva sapling” (KhA 118); cf *sāla,laṭṭhi*, sal tree (A 2:200). The word *laṭṭhi* or *laṭṭhikā* evidently refers to a young tree. As such, the tr “sprout” cannot apply here. PED identifies the *beluva* or *beluva* (M 1:108, 2:6; J 4:363, 368, 6:525, 560) as the Aegle marmelos. The wood of the bilva tree is also mentioned in the suttas (D 2:264; S 1:22). In Sanskrit it is called bilva; in Bengali and Hindi, bel; and in Gujarati, bili. The Hindus regard the bilva as the embodiment of Lord Shiva himself and is one of the sacred tree symbols of Hinduism.

⁷⁴ On Daṇḍa,paṇī, see Intro (1).

⁷⁵ “Walking about on a stroll,” *jaṅghā,viḥāraṇṇu anucaṅkamāno anuvicaramāno*, lit “wandering to and fro on foot and walking up and down,” to stretch his legs, as in the case of Daṇḍa,paṇī here (MA 2:72). Comy on **Meghiya S** (A 9.3 = U 31) explains *jaṅghā,viḥāra* as the stretching of one's legs after a long sitting in meditation (UA 217); but here generally, it refers to walking about for the sake of easing up the legs' tightness (*jaṅghā,kilamatha,vinodan'attham jaṅghā,cāraṇṇu*: MA 2:151), as in the Buddha's case; or for sight-seeing, “For the sake of seeing parks, woods, mountains” (MA 2:73). This is stock: D 1:235; M 1:108, 2:118, 2:118; Sn p105. Cf Miln 22; J 2:240, 272. See **Tevijja S** (D 13.3/1:234) = D:RD 1:301n. See MA 2:270 (Assaji, Sāriputta's teacher); PvA 73. For a detailed treatment on the phrase, see SnA 447 f.

⁷⁶ Daṇḍapāṇī's posture (leaning on his stick, speaking while standing to the seated Buddha) is discourteous and the tone of his question is arrogantly provocative. See Intro (1).

⁷⁷ *Kim,vādī samaṇo kim-akkhāyī ti*, lit “What does the recluse say, what does the recluse show?” Comy glosses *kim,vādī* as *kim,dīṭṭhiko*, “what is your view?” and *kim-akkhāyī* as *kim katheti*, “what do you teach?” (MA 2:73). The wanderer Sāriputta similarly asks Assaji, *kim,vādī paṇ'āyasmato satthā kim-akkhāyī ti* (V 1:40).

⁷⁸ The first part of the Buddha's reply here clearly reflects Daṇḍapāṇī's aggressive attitude. Comy alludes to **Puppha S** (S 22.94) where the Buddha declares, “Monk, I do not quarrel with the world; rather it is the world that quarrels with me. A Dharma speaker does not quarrel with the world.” (S 22.94/3:138). In the second part of the Buddha's reply, the word *brahmin* is used as a self-reference, while the use of the verb *anusenti* (lie latent) refers to the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), elaborated in §8. The arhat has overcome his latent tendencies.

⁷⁹ *deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati,deva*), i.e. kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti,deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi,deva*), i.e. the Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas and Arhants. (CNid 307 KhA 123).

and in such a way that perceptions no more lie latent in that brahmin⁸⁰ who abides detached from sensual pleasures, free from doubt, having cut off worry,⁸¹ free from craving for any kind of existence.⁸²

This is what I say, avuso, this is what I teach.”

5 When this was spoken, Daṇḍa,pāṇī the Sakya shook his head,⁸³ [109] wagged his tongue, and raised his eyebrows until there were three furrows in his brow,⁸⁴ and then leaning on his stick, left.

Brief teaching: *papañca & anusaya*

6 Then when it was evening, Blessed One arose from his retreat, went to Nigrodha’s Park and sat down on the prepared seat. Thus seated, the Blessed One addressed the monks:

“Now, bhikshus, in the morning, I, having dressed myself and taking robe and bowl, entered Kapila-vatthu for alms. Then, having gone into Kapilavatthu for alms, having returned from the almsround and finished my meal, I went into Mahā,vana [the Great Forest] and sat down under a bilva tree for my noon-day rest.

Then Daṇḍa,pāṇī the Sakya who was walking about on a stroll, also went into Mahā,vana and went up to the bilva tree where I was.

Then Daṇḍapāṇī the Sakya came up to me and exchanged greetings with me. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, he stood at one side and leaned on his stick. Leaning thus on his stick, he asked me:

‘What does the recluse say; what does the recluse teach?’

When he had said this, bhikshus, I said this to Daṇḍa,pāṇī the Sakya:

‘Avuso, I say and teach in such a way so as not to quarrel with anyone in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people; and in such a way that perceptions no more lie latent in that brahmin who abides detached from sensual pleasures, free from doubt, having cut off worry, free from craving for any kind of existence.

This is what I say, avuso, this is what I teach.’

When this was said, Daṇḍa,pāṇī the Sakya shook his head, wagged his tongue, and raised his eyebrows until there were three furrows in his brow, and then leaning on his stick, left.”

7 When this was spoken, a certain monk said this to the Blessed One,

“But how, bhante, do you say and teach in such a way so as not to quarrel with anyone in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people;

and how, bhante, do perceptions no more lie latent in the Blessed One, the brahmin who abides detached from sensual pleasures, free from doubt, having cut off worry, free from craving for any kind of existence?”

8 THE 7 LATENT TENDENCIES. “Bhikshu, as regards the source from which proliferation of conception and perception⁸⁵ assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to—this is the end of

⁸⁰ “Brahmin,” ie one who has destroyed the mental influxes (MA 2:74), ie an arhat. Here a self-reference by the Buddha.

⁸¹ “Having cut off worry,” *chinna,kukkucca*. Comy gives two meanings of *kukkucca*: (1) *vippaṭisārī* (remorseful) and (2) *hattha,pāda* (hands and feet) (MA 2:74). Clearly here the former is meant.

⁸² “For any kind of existence,” *bhavābhava*. Comy: Repeated existence, or existence that is low or that is excellent. For an excellent existence is called *abhava* (non-becoming, come to growth) (MA 2:74). The term can also be rendered as “existence and non-existence,” the former rooted in the eternalist view (*sassata,dīṭṭhi*), esp the Creator-God-believers, and the latter in the annihilationist view (*uccheda,dīṭṭhi*), esp the materialists.

⁸³ When the naked ascetic Upaka first meets the Buddha and hears his proclamation, Upaka similarly “shaking his head, took a byway and left” (V 1:7; M 26,25/1:171). This body language clearly reflects bewilderment or disbelief.

⁸⁴ In **Sambhula S** (S 4.21/1:118), this demenour describes Māra the evil one in disguise to confound the monks.

⁸⁵ *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, or simply, “formation of myriad ideas on account of much misdirected thinking” [3].

the latent tendency ⁸⁶ of	lust,
the latent tendency of	aversion, [110]
the latent tendency of	views,
the latent tendency of	doubt,
the latent tendency of	conceit,
the latent tendency of	desire for existence, and
the latent tendency of	ignorance.

This is the ending of the taking up of the rod and the sword, quarrels, disputes, mayhem [strife], slandering and lying⁸⁷—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.⁸⁸

9 This is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sugata rose from his seat and entered his dwelling.

Mahā Kaccāna

10 Then, not long after the Buddha had left, the monks thought:

“Now, avusos, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief—saying,

‘Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of

the latent tendency of	lust,
the latent tendency of	aversion,
the latent tendency of	views,
the latent tendency of	doubt,
the latent tendency of	conceit,
the latent tendency of	desire for existence, and
the latent tendency of	ignorance.

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,⁹

—without giving its meaning in detail. Now, who will expound the detailed meaning of this teaching given in brief by the Blessed One?”

Then the monks thought:

“The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and held in high esteem by wise companions in the holy life.⁸⁹ He would be capable of giving the detailed meaning of this teaching given in brief, whose meaning is not given in detail by the Blessed One. Let us approach the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and question Mahā Kaccāna over and again⁹⁰ regarding this matter.”

11 Then the monks approached the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, they sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, they said this to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna:

⁸⁶ Latent tendencies (*anusayā*), see [5] above.

⁸⁷ “The taking up of the rod... and lying” (*daṇḍ’ādāna, sath’ādāna, viggaha, vivāda, tuvantuva, pesuñña, musāvādānam*): D 34.2.2(4)/3:289,6; M 18.8/1:110,3, 19.113,24 (id), 60.31/1:410,29 (id); A 9.23.2/4:400,28; DA 500; MA 2:75; SA 3:64,5; AA 4:190; Vism 10.1/326. This phrase refers to general violence and disorder. The phrase, “the taking up of the rod” (*daṇḍ’ādāna*), ie, the use of corporal punishment, only in Aggañña S (D 27,19.2/3:92,26, 22/93,26), SD 2.19.

⁸⁸ On “the taking up of rod and sword,... and false speech,” cf Apanṇaka S (M 60), where these are said to occur “based on material form, but this does not occur at all in the formless realms” (M 60,31/1:410).

⁸⁹ Mahā Kaccāna is the foremost amongst monks who are able to expound in detail what has been taught in brief (A 1:23). The Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka,ratta S (M 133) and Uddesa,vibhaṅga S (M 138) are also spoken by him under similar circumstances.

⁹⁰ “Question... over and again,” *paṭipuccheyyāma*, lit “we will counter-question (him).”

“Avuso Kaccāna, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief—saying,

‘Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of

the latent tendency of	lust,
the latent tendency of	aversion,
the latent tendency of	views,
the latent tendency of	doubt,
the latent tendency of	conceit,
the latent tendency of	desire for existence, and
the latent tendency of	ignorance.

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,’
—without giving its meaning in detail.

11.2 “Avuso Kaccāna, soon after the Blessed One had gone away it occurred to us:

‘Now, avusos, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief—saying,

‘Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of

the latent tendency of lust,...here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.’

11.3 ‘Now, who will expound the detailed meaning of this teaching given in brief, without giving the meaning in detail, by the Blessed One?’

Then, avuso Kaccāna, it occurred to us:

‘The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and held in high esteem by wise companions in the holy life. [111] He is capable of giving the meaning in detail of this teaching given in brief, without giving the meaning in detail, by the Blessed One. Let us approach the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and question Mahā Kaccāna over and again regarding this matter.

May the venerable Mahā Kaccāna give us a detailed analysis [of this matter]!’”

The heartwood parable

12 “Avuso, just as a person needing heartwood,⁹¹ seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, after passing over the root and trunk of a great tree that stands full of heartwood,

were to think that heartwood would be found amongst its branches and leaves; even so it has come to this, venerable sirs,

even so it is with you, that you think I should be asked about the meaning of this matter when you were right before the Teacher himself.⁹²

For, avuso, the Blessed One knows the known, sees the seen; he is the eye, he is knowledge, he is Dharma, he is Brahmā; he is the instructor of spiritual duties,⁹³ the shower of meanings, the giver of the deathless, the lord of truth, the Tathāgata [thus come].⁹⁴

⁹¹ “Heartwood,” *sāra*, ie, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a simile for spiritual strength and attainment. See **Udumbarikā Sīhanāda S** (D 25), where the Buddha’s humour is evident in such a simile given in the latter (D 25.15-19/3:47-53) = 1.4. In (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha S** (A 4.190.1b/2:182), SD 15.10b, *sāra* means “essence,” in the sense of accomplished in moral virtue, etc (AA 3:168).

⁹² A slightly different version of this simile is found in **Mahā Sārōpama S** (M 29.3/1:193).

⁹³ “Instructor of spiritual duties,” *vattā pavattā*, lit “the turner of duties.” My tr is conjectural. This is a cryptic expression which can also be tr as “he is the propounder, the expounder” (M:H 1:144). The **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Mūla Tīkā** explains *vattā* as *catu,sacca,dhamme*, “the 4 noble truth.”

That was indeed the time when you should have asked the Blessed One over and again regarding the meaning [of the Blessed One’s statement]. As he explained to you, so you should have remembered it.”

13 “Truly, avuso Kaccāna, the Blessed One knows the known, sees the seen; he has become the eye, become the knowledge, become the Dharma, become Brahmā; he is the instructor of spiritual duties, the shower of meanings,⁹⁵ the giver of the deathless, the lord of truth, the Tathāgata [thus come].

That was indeed the time when we should have asked the Blessed One over and again regarding the meaning [of the Blessed One’s statement]. As he explained to us, so we should have remembered it.

But the venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and held in high esteem by wise companions in the holy life. He is capable of giving the meaning in detail of this teaching given in brief by the Blessed One. Let the venerable Mahā Kaccāna give us a detailed analysis [of this matter], if it is no trouble!”

Mahā Kaccāna’s response

14 “In that case, listen, avuso, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the monks replied the venerable Mahā Kaccāna.

The venerable Mahā Kaccāna said this:

15 “Avuso, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief, without giving its meaning in detail—saying,

‘Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of

the latent tendency of	lust,
the latent tendency of	aversion,
the latent tendency of	views,
the latent tendency of	doubt,
the latent tendency of	conceit,
the latent tendency of	desire for existence, and
the latent tendency of	ignorance.

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,’

Avuso, in regards to the meaning in detail of this teaching given in brief by the Blessed One, I understand its meaning in detail to be as follows:

Mental proliferation as an unconscious process

16 ⁹⁶(1) EYE-BASED PROLIFERATION

⁹⁴ “[K]nows the known...the Tathāgata,” *jānaṃ janāti passam passati cakkhu, bhūto nāṇa, bhūto dhamma, bhūto vattā pavattā atthassa ninnetā amatassa dātā dhamma-s, sāmī tathāgato*. Comy simply says that he knows and sees what is to be known and seen; knowing, he knows; seeing, he sees (MA 2:76).

⁹⁵ “The shower of meanings,” *atthassa ninnetā*, alt tr “the bringer of the goal” (M:H 1:144). I have rendered it to reflect the mood of the sutta (that of the full meaning of the Buddha’s brief statement).

⁹⁶ *Cakkhuñ ca āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu, viññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa, paccaṃ vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tato, nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañca, saññā, saṅkhā samudācaranti atītānagata, paccuppannesu cakkhu, viññeyyesu rūpesu*. A passage similar to this section is found in **Pariññā S** (S 35.60) where, however, the learned noble disciple becomes disillusioned (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness (also using the sentence, *tinnaṃ saṅgati phasso* [16]), and as such “becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is liberated (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, ‘Clinging has been fully understood by me.’” (S 35.60/4:32 f). **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28) closes in a similar manner, beginning with the statement: “If, avuso, internally the eye is unimpaired [intact] but no external forms come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention] (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*), then there is no appearance of that class of con-

Avuso, dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.⁹⁷

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one [112] perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.⁹⁸

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.⁹⁹

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception¹⁰⁰

assails a person regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through *the eye*.¹⁰¹

(2) EAR-BASED PROLIFERATION

Avuso, dependent on the ear and sound, ear-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception

assails a person regarding past, future and present sounds cognizable through *the ear*.

(3) NOSE-BASED PROLIFERATION

Avuso, dependent on the nose and smell, nose-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception

assails a person regarding past, future and present smells cognizable through *the nose*.

(4) TONGUE-BASED PROLIFERATION

Avuso, dependent on the tongue and taste, tongue-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception

assails a person regarding past, future and present tastes cognizable through *the tongue*.

(5) BODY-BASED PROLIFERATION

Avuso, dependent on the body and touch, body-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives.

sciousness” (M 28,27-38/1:190 f). On Ñāṇananda’s notion of the 3 phases of mental proliferation, see Intro (2). See foll n.

⁹⁷ *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*. In **Cha Chakka S** (M 148), this phrase is part of the sequences on sense-based reflections (M 148,7-9/3:281 f & 148,28-39/3:284 f), SD 26.6. For a discussion on this phrase and passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 ff. See prec n.

⁹⁸ “One thinks about,” *vitakketi*. On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2,2/-2:277).

⁹⁹ This verse up to here is also found in (**Samuday’atthaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 @ SD 7.5) and (**Sabb’upādāna**) **Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f @ SD 6.17) in different contexts.

¹⁰⁰ *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, see (3).

¹⁰¹ This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See (4).

What one perceives, one thinks about.

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception
assails a person regarding past, future and present touch cognizable through *the body*.

(6) MIND-BASED PROLIFERATION

Avuso, dependent on the mind¹⁰² and mind-object, mind-consciousness¹⁰³ arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling.

What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about.

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.

From that as source, proliferation of conception and perception
assails a person regarding past, future and present mind-objects cognizable through *the mind*.¹⁰⁴

Discerning mental proliferation (a conscious process)¹⁰⁵

17 (1) EYE-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the eye, form and eye-consciousness**,
a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹⁰⁶—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

When there is the manifestation of *contact*, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of *feeling*, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of *perception*, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of *thinking*,

a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception¹⁰⁷ can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.

17.2 (2) EAR-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the ear, sound, and ear-consciousness**,
a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹⁰⁸—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

*When there is the manifestation of contact, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

When there is the manifestation of feeling, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—

¹⁰² “The mind,” *mana*. Here Comy glosses as *bhavaṅga, citta* (MA 2:79), the life-continuum, sometimes called the unconscious or sub-conscious.

¹⁰³ “Mind-consciousness,” *mano, viññāṇa*. Here Comy glosses as “advertence” (*āvajjana*) and impulsion (*javana*) (MA 2:77).

¹⁰⁴ *Yam papañceti tato, nidānam purisam papañca, saññā, saṅkhā samudācaranti atītānagata, paccuppannesu mano, viññeyyesu dhammesu.*

¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ *So vat’āvuso cakkhusmim sati rūpe sati cakkhu, viññāṇe sati phassa, paññattim paññāpessatīti thānam.* Comy says that this passage shows the entire round of existence (*vaṭṭā*) by way of the 12 sense-bases. The next section [§18] shows the cessation of the round (*vivaṭṭa*) by the negation of the 12 sense-bases. (MA 2:78). The structure *paññattim paññāpessati* (lit “he describes the description,” “he defines the definition”) is idiomatic, meaning simply “he describes; he defines.” Paraphrased, this sentence may also read “It is possible to define contact as the meeting of sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness.”

¹⁰⁷ *Vitakka, paññattiyā sati papañca, saññā, saṅkhā samudācarāṇa, paññattim paññāpessatī ti thānam etaṃ vijjati.* On *papañca, saññā, saṅkhā*: see (3).

¹⁰⁸ *So vat’āvuso sotasmim sati rūpe sati cakkhu, viññāṇe sati phassa, paññattim paññāpessatī ti thānam.* See n above at §17.1.

it is possible for this to occur.

*When there is the manifestation of perception, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

When there is the manifestation of thinking,

*a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

17.3 (3) NOSE-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the nose, smell, and nose-consciousness**,

a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹⁰⁹—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

*When there is the manifestation of contact, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of feeling, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of perception, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

When there is the manifestation of thinking,

*a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

17.4 (4) TONGUE-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the tongue, taste, and tongue-consciousness**,

a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹¹⁰—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

*When there is the manifestation of contact, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of feeling, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of perception, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

When there is the manifestation of thinking,

*a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

17.5 (5) BODY-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the body, touch, and body-consciousness**,

a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹¹¹—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

*When there is the manifestation of contact, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of feeling, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

*When there is the manifestation of perception, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—
it is possible for this to occur.*

When there is the manifestation of thinking,

a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—

¹⁰⁹ So vat'āvuso ghānasmim sati rūpe sati cakkhu,viññāṇe sati phassa,paññattim paññāpessatī ti ṭhānaṃ. See n above at §17.1.

¹¹⁰ So vat'āvuso jivhāya sati rūpe sati cakkhu,viññāṇe sati phassa,paññattim paññāpessatī ti ṭhānaṃ. See n above at §17.1.

¹¹¹ So vat'āvuso kāyasmim sati rūpe sati cakkhu,viññāṇe sati phassa,paññattim paññāpessatī ti ṭhānaṃ. See n above at §17.1.

it is possible for this to occur.

17.6 (6) MIND-BASED PROLIFERATION

Indeed, avuso, when there is **the mind, mind-object, and mind-consciousness**,
a manifestation of contact can be discerned¹¹²—

it is possible for this to occur [possible to know this].

When there is the manifestation of contact, a manifestation of feeling can be discerned—

it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of feeling, a manifestation of perception can be discerned—

it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of perception, manifestation of thinking can be discerned—

it is possible for this to occur.

When there is the manifestation of thinking,

a manifestation of an assault by a proliferation of conception and perception can be discerned—

it is possible for this to occur.

The ending of the round of existence

18 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no eye, no form and no eye-consciousness**,
it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact.

When there is no manifestation of contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no manifestation of feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no manifestation of perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no manifestation of thinking,

*it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault
by a proliferation of conception and perception.*

18.2 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no ear, no sound and no ear-consciousness**,
it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact.

When there is no manifestation of contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no manifestation of feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no manifestation of perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no manifestation of thinking,

*it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault
by a proliferation of conception and perception.*

18.3 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no nose, no smell and no nose-consciousness**,
it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact.

When there is no manifestation of contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no manifestation of feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no manifestation of perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no manifestation of thinking,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault

¹¹² So *vat'āvuso manasmiṃ sati rūpe sati cakkhu,viññāṇe sati phassa,paññattim paññāpessatī ti thānaṃ*. See n above at §17.1.

by a proliferation of conception and perception.

18.4 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no tongue, no taste and no tongue-consciousness**, it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact...

When there is no manifestation of contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no manifestation of feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no manifestation of perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no manifestation of thinking,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault

by a proliferation of conception and perception.

18.5 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no body, no touch and no body-consciousness**, it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact.

When there is no manifestation of contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no manifestation of feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no manifestation of perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no manifestation of thinking,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault

by a proliferation of conception and perception.

18.6 Indeed, avuso, when there is **no mind, no mind-object and no mind-consciousness**, it is not possible to discern the manifestation of contact.

When there is no contact,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of feeling.

When there is no feeling,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of perception.

When there is no perception,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of thinking.

When there is no thinking,

it is not possible to discern the manifestation of an assault

by a proliferation of conception and perception.¹¹³

19 Avuso, when the Blessed One [113] rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief—saying,

‘Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of

the latent tendency of	lust,
the latent tendency of	aversion,
the latent tendency of	views,
the latent tendency of	doubt,
the latent tendency of	conceit,
the latent tendency of	desire for existence, and
the latent tendency of	ignorance.

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,’

—without giving its meaning in detail, I understand its meaning in detail to be as such.

¹¹³ At this point, **Sabb’upādāna Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f), SD 6.17, should be read.

Now, if you wish, venerable sirs, go to the Blessed One and ask him over and again about the meaning of this. As the Blessed One explains it to you, so should you remember it.”

The Buddha’s approval

20 Then the bhikshus, having joyfully approved of the venerable Mahā Kaccāna’s word, rose from their seats and approached the Blessed One. Having paid homage to the Blessed One, they sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, they said this to the Blessed One.

20.2 “Bhante, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief, without giving its meaning in detail—saying,

‘*Bhikshu, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to, this is the end of*

<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>lust,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>aversion,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>views,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>doubt,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>conceit,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>desire for existence, and</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>ignorance.</i>

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.’

20.3 Then, bhante, not long after the Blessed One had left, we thought:

‘Now, avusos, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling after giving only a teaching in brief—saying,

‘*Bhikshus, as regards the source from which a proliferation of conception and perception assails a person: if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to—this is the end of*

<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>lust,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>aversion,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>views,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>doubt,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>conceit,</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>desire for existence, and</i>
<i>the latent tendency of</i>	<i>ignorance.</i>

This is the ending of the taking up of rod and sword, quarrels, conflicts, disputes, strife, malicious words, and false speech—here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.’

20.4 Now, who will expound the detailed meaning of this teaching given in brief by the Blessed One?

Then, we thought:

‘The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and held in high esteem by wise companions in the holy life.¹¹⁴ He would be capable of giving the detailed meaning of this teaching given in brief. Let us approach the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and question the venerable Mahā Kaccāna over and again¹¹⁵ regarding this matter.’

¹¹⁴ Mahā Kaccāna is the foremost amongst monks who are able to expound in detail what has been taught in brief (A 1:23). **Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka,ratta S** (M 133) and **Uddesa,vibhaṅga S** (M 138) are also spoken by him under similar circumstances.

¹¹⁵ “Question...over and again,” *paṭipuccheyyāma*, lit “we will counter-question (him).”

20.5 Then, bhante, we approached the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and asked him about the meaning (of the Blessed One’s statement). [114] Then the venerable Mahā Kaccāna explained the meaning to us in these ways, these sentences, these words.”¹¹⁶

21 “Mahā Kaccāna, bhikshus, is wise! Mahā Kaccāna, bhikshus, has great wisdom! If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it in the same way that Mahā Kaccāna had explained it. Such is its meaning and so should you remember it.”

Ānanda’s simile

22 When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, just as a person exhausted by hunger and weakness were to come upon a honey-ball,¹¹⁷ wherever he were to taste it, he would get a sweet agreeable taste,¹¹⁸

even so, bhante, any able-minded¹¹⁹ bhikshu, wherever he might examine with wisdom the meaning of this Dharma discourse, he would find satisfaction and confidence of mind.

Bhante, what is the name of this Dharma discourse?”

“In this connection, Ānanda, you may remember this Dharma discourse as ‘the Honey-ball Discourse.’”

The Blessed One said this. The venerable Ānanda joyfully approved¹²⁰ of the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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¹¹⁶ “In these ways, these sentences, these words,” *imehi ākarehi imehi padehi imehi vyañjanehi*. This is stock, as at **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 47,16/1:320), SD 35.6.

¹¹⁷ “Honey-ball,” *madhu,piṇḍika*. A large sweetmeat made from flour, ghee, molasses, honey, sugar, etc. The honey-ball parable is used in another context in **Piṅgiyānī S** (A 5.194/3:237), SD 45.11.

¹¹⁸ “A sweet agreeable taste,” *sāduṃ rasam asecanakam*.

¹¹⁹ “Able-minded,” *cetaso...dabba,jātiko*, alt tr “with a mind worthy of the monk.” Comy glosses *dabba,jātika* as *paṇḍita,sabhāvo*, “the state of a wise person.” (MA 2:78).

¹²⁰ “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā...abhinandunī*.

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