

(Upādāna) Samādhi Sutta**The Discourse on Mental Concentration (on Clinging)**

[The five aggregates and suffering over many lives]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.5/3:13-15)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

In his article, “From Brahmanism to Buddhism,”¹ Christian Lindtner hypothesizes that the Buddha

...probably knew the image of the Cosmic Tree when he introduced the five *skandhas* to identify *duḥkham*. This also suggests, if true, that in his times, the image of *duḥkham*, having to do with flowing, may already have been somewhat faded. (Lindtner 1999:19)

Lindtner as such thinks that “mostly likely *duḥkhaskandha* does not mean ‘mass of suffering’, but rather ‘the branching that is *duḥkham*.’” (1999:18). This is an interesting and useful piece of the history of Buddhist etymology, but it is another matter when it comes to Buddhist usage. It is clearly more coherent to speak of a “mass” or aggregate that contributes to suffering rather than in terms of a “branch” or “branching”.

The central teaching of this sutta is a stock meditation formula on the five aggregates found in the two **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**² and in several places in the **Saṃyutta Nikāya**.³ Here, the arising (*samudaya*) and the passing away (*atthaṅgama*) of the aggregates are explained from the standpoint of diachronic (“across time” or distal) conditionality (ie over many lives). In the **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56)⁴ and the **Satta-ṭṭhāna S** (S 22.57)⁵ the aggregates are examined from the standpoint of synchronic (“a point in time” or proximal) conditionality at (ie within a single life-time).

There are two ways of examining the five aggregates (*pañca-kkhandha*):⁶ within the same life-time (synchronic or proximal model) and over many lives (diachronic or distal model).⁷ Here, in the (Upādāna) Samādhi Sutta, we shall examine the diachronic model of the aggregates. The other model, the synchronic, is found in the **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭā Sutta** (S 22.56)⁸ and the **Satta-ṭṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57).⁹

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¹ *Asian Philosophy* 9,1 1999:5-36.

² D 22.14/ 3:301 f = M 10.38/1:61.

³ S 12.21, 12.23, 22.78, 22.89, 22.101.

⁴ S 22.56/3:58-61 = SD 3.7.

⁵ S 22.57/3:61-65.

⁶ See **Khandha S** (S 22.48) = SD 17.1.

⁷ See S:B 1049 n30.

⁸ See SD 3.7.

⁹ S 22.57/3:61-65. See SD 3.7 Intro (3).

The Discourse on Mental Concentration (and Clinging)

(S 22.5/3:13-15)

[3:13]

1 Thus have I heard.
At Sāvathī...

Meditating on the aggregates

2 There the Blessed One said this:

“Bhikshus, cultivate mental concentration.¹⁰ A monk who is mentally concentrated understands things as they really are.¹¹”

3 And **what does he understand as they really are?**¹²

The arising and passing away of form (*rūpa*).¹³

The arising and passing away of feeling (*vedanā*). [14]

The arising and passing away of perception (*saññā*).¹⁴

The arising and passing away of mental formations (*saṅkhārā*).¹⁵

The arising and passing away of consciousness (*viññāna*).¹⁶

The arising of the aggregates

4 And, bhikshus, **what is the arising** of form?

What is the arising of feeling?

What is the arising of perception?

What is the arising of mental formations?

What is the arising of consciousness?

5 Here, bhikshus, he seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping. And what is it that he seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping?

6 He seeks pleasure in **form**, approves of it, goes on grasping it. From his finding pleasure in form, approving of it, going on grasping it, delight arises.

Delight in form is clinging.

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence.

¹⁰ “Cultivate concentration,” *samādhim bhāvētha*.

¹¹ Qu at Vism 11.121/371.

¹² The following is a stock meditation formula on the 5 aggregates found in the 2 **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.14/3:301 f = M 10.38/1:61) and in the **Saṃyutta** (S 12.21, 12.23, 22.78, 22.89, 22.101). Here this sutta (S 22.5), the arising (*samudaya*) and the passing away (*atthaṅgama*) of the aggregates are explained from the standpoint of diachronic (“across time” or distal) conditionality (ie over many lives), and at **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56/3:58-61) & **Sattaṭṭhāna S** (S 22.57/3:61-65), from the standpoint of synchronic (“a point in time” or proximal) conditionality (ie within a single life-time).

¹³ *Rūpa*, Defined as ‘the four great elements and form derived from them’ (S 22.56). In the term *rūpa, kāya*, both components can be translated as “body”, but while *rūpa* is material, especially visible, form, *kāya* is body as an aggregate, as in “a body of form, a body of men”. Often contrasted with *nāma, kāya*, that is, the mental component of the term *nāma, rūpa*, “mind and body”. See BDic: kāya.

¹⁴ *Saññā*, defined as “distinguishing a thing by its marks” (S 22.79).

¹⁵ *Saṅkhāra*, one of the difficult Buddhist terms to translate as it is polysemous. Here it applies to the group of mental formations. The Abhidhamma traditionally lists 50 of them, embracing various factors, the most important of which is volition (*cetanā*), that is, karma itself. Formations include what we call emotions (ie expressed feelings). See D:W n293.

¹⁶ *Viññāna*, “consciousness”, divided into six, namely, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.

Conditioned by existence, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death: sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [dis-pleasure] and despair comes to be.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

7 He seeks pleasure in **feeling**...

8 He seeks pleasure in **perception**...

9 He seeks pleasure in **mental formations**...

10 He seeks pleasure in **consciousness**, approves of it, goes on grasping it. From his finding pleasure in consciousness, approving of it, going on grasping it, delight arises.

Delight in consciousness is clinging.

Conditioned by clinging, there is existence.

Conditioned by becoming, there is birth.

Conditioned by birth, there is decay and death: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair comes to be.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

11 This, bhikshus, is the arising of form.

This is the arising of feeling.

This is the arising of perception.

This is the arising of mental formations.

This is the arising of consciousness.¹⁷

The ending of the aggregates

12 And what, bhikshus, is **the ending** of form?

What is the ending of feeling?

What is the ending of perception?

What is the ending of mental formations?

What is the ending of consciousness?

Here, bhikshus, he does not find pleasure in, does not approve of, does not go on grasping. And what is it that he does not find pleasure in, does not approve of, does not go on grasping?

13 He does not find pleasure in **form**, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it. From his not finding pleasure in form, not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in form ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.

With the ending of clinging, becoming ends.

With the ending of becoming, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death ends: sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [dis-pleasure] and despair does not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

14 He does not find pleasure in **feeling**, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it. From his not finding pleasure in feeling, not approving of it, [15] not going on grasping it, delight in feeling ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.

With the ending of clinging, becoming ends.

With the ending of becoming, birth ends.

¹⁷ The closing section [10] is a summary of dependent arising. The phrase “he seeks pleasure in, approves of, goes on grasping” (*abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati*) refers to craving (*taṇhā*). The pleasure (*nandi*) gained is clinging (*upādāna*), from which the remaining links of the series continue. The passage thus shows how craving for the present 5 aggregates (internal and external) is the efficient cause for the arising another round of 5 aggregates in the next life. The following section on “the ending” should be understood in the converse manner: when craving for the present aggregates ends, one has destroyed the efficient cause for the further arising of the 5 aggregates. See S:B 1049 n30.

With the ending of birth, decay and death ends: sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair does not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

15 He does not find pleasure in **perception**,...

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

16 He does not find pleasure in **mental formations**,...

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

17 He does not find pleasure in **consciousness**, does not approve of it, does not go on grasping it.

From his not finding pleasure in consciousness, not approving of it, not going on grasping it, delight in consciousness ends.

With the ending of delight, clinging ends.

With the ending of clinging, becoming ends.

With the ending of becoming, birth ends.

With the ending of birth, decay and death ends: sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure] and despair does not come to be.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

18 This, bhikshus, is the ending of form.

This is the ending of feeling.

This is the ending of perception.

This is the ending of mental formations.

This is the ending of consciousness.”

— evaṃ —

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