

Mahā Vedalla Sutta

The Discourse on the Greater Catechism

M 43/1:292-298

Theme: The body, the mind and liberation

Translated by Piya Tan ©2009

1 Mahā Koṭṭhita

Mahā Koṭṭhita is one of the 80 great elders,¹ and who ranked foremost among the monks who are masters of the analytic skills (*patisambhida-p.patta*).² He belongs to a very wealthy brahmin family of Sāvattihī, his father being Assalāyana³ and his mother, Canda, vatī.⁴ He is a master of the Vedas and, after hearing the Buddha teaching (AA 1:285) (to his father, says the Apadāna),⁵ enters the order and, soon enough, after his meditations, becomes an arhat.

In the time of Padum'uttara Buddha he was a rich householder, and, hearing the Buddha praise a monk as foremost among those skilled in analytic knowledge, he himself aspired to the same eminence. To this end, he visited the Buddha and his monks and attended to them for seven days, giving them three robes each at the end of his almsgiving.⁶

Using his skill in analytic knowledge, he bases all his questions to the Buddha and his own colleagues. Such a dialogue with Sāriputta is recorded in the Mahā, vedalla Sutta (M 43).⁷ Owing to the skill showed by him in this Sutta, the Buddha declares him foremost among those monks skilled in analytic knowledge.⁸

Several instances are given of discussions between Koṭṭhita and other eminent elders, especially Sāriputta. All these discourses are catechical dialogues (*pucchā visajjanā*) in which usually Mahā Koṭṭhita questions Sāriputta.⁹ CAF Rhys Davids thinks (S:RD 2:79 n1) that these discourses were not so much inquiries by Koṭṭhita, but serve as catechical lessons for the monks. The pre eminent monks were “playing” at teacher and pupil in order to aid Koṭṭhita to win proficiency as a teacher.

In a set of three discourses--the **(Anicca) Koṭṭhita Sutta** (S 35.162), the **(Dukkha) Koṭṭhita Sutta** (S 35.163) and the **(Anattā) Koṭṭhita Sutta** (S 35.164)—the Buddha gives Koṭṭhita “sample lessons” on the three characteristics of the six senses, and their respective sense-objects, consciousnesses, contacts, and feelings.¹⁰

The **Kāya, sakkhī Sutta** (A 3.21) records a discussion amongst Savittha, Koṭṭhita and Sāriputta, regarding which of these is the best: the body-witness (*kāya, sakkhī*), one who has personally tasted the truth; the view-attainer (*diṭṭhi-p.patta*), one who has attained right view; or the faith-liberated (*saddhā, vimutta*), one liberated by faith.¹¹

¹ PmA 1:6; ThaA 3:205; VbhA 388: see **Aṭṭha, puggala S** (A 9.59) = SD 15.10a Intro (7).

² A 1:24; MA 2:337. For details, see **(Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita S** (S 35.232) = SD 28.4 Intro (4).

³ He is unlikely to be his namesake in **Assalāyana S** (M 93/2:147-157) who is only 16, and who is also mentioned in a list of eminent brahmin youths (*māṇava*) in SnA 1:372. As such, we know nothing else about Assalāyana, who is Mahā Koṭṭhita's father.

⁴ Ap 534.23/2:480; qu at ThaA 1:32.

⁵ Ap 534.23/2:480; qu at ThaA 1:32.

⁶ MA 2:336 f; AA 1:285; PmA 1:6.

⁷ M 43/1:292-298 = SD 30.2.

⁸ Tha 2; ThaA i.29ff.; AA i.159; Ap ii.479; also Avadś 2.195.

⁹ For a list of such discourses, see **(Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita S** (S 35.232) = SD 28.4 Intro (2).

¹⁰ S 35.162-164/4:145 f.

¹¹ A 3.21/1:118-120. On these types of saints, see **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70/1:473-481) = SD 11.1 Intro (5.2).

The Citta Hatthi, sārīputta Sutta (A 6.60) records how, once when Mahā Koṭṭhita is conversing with elder monks at Isī, patana, the monk Citta Hatthi, sārīputta constantly and rudely interrupts them. Despite Mahā Koṭṭhita's protest, Citta's friends claim that Citta is well qualified to join the discussion. Mahā Koṭṭhita, however, declares that, far from being wise enough, Citta would soon leave the order, which actually happens.¹²

Sārīputta evidently has a great regard for Mahā Koṭṭhita;. Sārīputta's Thera, gāthā contains three stanzas in which Sārīputta proclaims Mahā Koṭṭhita's excellence:

1006	<i>Upasanto uparato manta, bhāṇī¹³ anuddhato; dhunāti pāpake dhamme dumapattam va māluto.</i>	Stilled and quiet, a wise speaker, not arrogant. He shakes off evil states like the wind shakes leaves off a tree.
1007	<i>Upasanto uparato manta, bhāṇī anuddhato; appāsi¹⁴ pāpake dhamme dumapattam va māluto.</i>	Stilled and quiet, a wise speaker, not arrogant. He has plucked off evil states like the wind plucks leaves off a tree.
1008	<i>Upasanto anāyāso, vippassanno anāvilo; kalyāṇa, sīlo medhāvī dukkhass 'antakaro siyā.</i>	Stilled, trouble-free, clear-minded, undisturbed, beautiful in conduct, wise, He should be an end-maker of suffering.

(Tha 1006-1008; ThaA 3:104).

2 The Mahā Vedalla Sutta

2.1 *NAV'ANĠA SATTHU, SĀSANA*. The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) belongs to a genre or class of Buddhist literature known as *vedalla*, which is the last of the traditional ninefold teachings of the Teacher (*nav'anga satthu, sāsana*).¹⁵ The nine divisions (*anīga*) of the Buddha's Teaching, according to genre, is as follows:

<i>sutta</i>	the discourses, ie prose passages; eg Sutta Nipāta prose passages, Niddesa, Vinaya, Vibhaṅga, an dtexts with "Sutta" in their titles;
<i>geyya</i>	the mixed prose and verse, such as the Sagāthā Vagga of Samyutta (S 1), Kasi Bhāra, dvāja Sutta (Sn 1.4/12-26);
<i>veyyākaraṇa</i>	the expositions, ie elaboration of brief teachings of the Buddha; ¹⁶
<i>gāthā</i>	the verses, eg Dhammapada, Thera, gāthā, Therī, gāthā, Sutta Nipāta verses;
<i>udāna</i>	the inspired utterances, especially Udāna, also M 1:171, V 1:1 ff, etc;
<i>iti, vuttaka</i>	the sayings, ie the Iti, vuttaka;

¹² A 6.60/3:392-399.

¹³ So Be Ee Se; Ce *matta, bhāṇī* ("speaker in moderation").

¹⁴ Se *abbahi*.

¹⁵ Pār 1.3.3= V 3:8; M 22.10a/1:133; A 4.6/2:7, 4.102/2:103, 4.186/2:178, 5.73.6/3:86, 5.155/3:177, 6.51/3:361 f, 7.64.3/4:113; Pug 43; DA 1:24; PvA 22; DhsA 26; cf *vedalla, kathā* (A 5.79.4/3:107).

¹⁶ Eg the discourses of the Vibhaṅga Vagga (M 131-142) of the Majjhima Nikāya, namely, *Bhadd'eka, ratta S* (M 131/3:187-189), *Ānanda Bhadd'eka, ratta S* (M 132/3:189-191), *Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd'eka, ratta S* (M 133/3:192-199), *Lomasak'āṅgiya Bhadd'eka, ratta S* (M 134/3:199-203, taught by the Buddha himself), *Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga S* (M 135/3:202-206), *Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga S* (M 136/3:207-215), *Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga S* (M 137/3:215-222), *Uddesa Vibhaṅga S* (M 138/3:223-229), *Arāṇa, vibhaṅga S* (M 139/3:230-237), *Dhātu Vibhaṅga S* (M 140/3:237-247), *Sacca Vibhaṅga S* (M 141/3:248-252), *Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S* (M 142/3:253-257).

<i>jātaka</i>	the birth stories, such as those in Kūṭa,danta Sutta (D 5.10-20/1:134-143), Mahā Sudassana Sutta (D 17/2:169-199), Mahā,govinda Sutta (D 19.29-61/2:230-251), and the Jātaka verses;
<i>abbhuta,dhamma</i>	the marvels, special qualities of disciples (eg D 16.5.15-16/2:144 f; VA 1:28); ¹⁷ and
<i>vedalla</i>	the answers to questions (catechical suttas): see below. ¹⁸

As evident from this explanation, these names are not so much titles of discourse, as they are *genres* or classes of texts. This ancient list of genres was apparently already forgotten by the time of Buddhaghosa, who interpreted them in terms of the Buddhist canon of his time,¹⁹ that is, the Tipiṭaka as accepted by the Mahāvihāra, the dominant Buddhist sect or “church” then.²⁰

2.2 VEDALLA. The term *vedalla* is obscure, probably dialectical. Buddhaghosa says that it refers to teachings delivered “in answer to questions asked through knowledge and joy” (*sabbe pi vedañ ca tutthiñ ca laddhā pucchita,suttantā*, DA 1:24). Hence, he relates *vedalla* to *veda* in the sense of knowledge or inspired religious feeling.²¹

The Sanskrit form of *vedalla* is probably *vaipulya*, which means “abundant, flourishing” (or “development,” BHS).²² The fact is that both the Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) and the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44), and the other examples given below [2.2] are catechical in style. In other case of these two discourses, Mahā Koṭṭhita acts as the questioner and Sāriputta is the answerer.

The catechical method between living performers is known as *pucchā,visajjanā* (“questioning and answering”) or *saṅgāyanā* (recital). In cultures where the oral tradition is popular, this teaching method acts as a kind of radio talk show. It was still used teaching method in Thailand when I was a monk there in the 1970s.

2.2 THE MAHĀ VEDALLA SUTTA AND RELATED DISCOURSES. The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) belongs to the Vedalla class of early Buddhist literature. Examples of discourses of the Vedalla class often quoted are the following:²³

Mahā Vedalla Sutta	(M 43/1:292-298),
Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta	(M 44/1:299-305),
Sammā,ditthi Sutta	(M 9/1:46-55),
Sakka,pañha Sutta	(D 21/2:263-289),
Saṅkhāra,bhājanīya Sutta	[unidentified], ²⁴
Mahā,punnama Sutta	(M 109/1:15-20).

These discourses, as already noted, are delivered “in answer to questions asked through knowledge and joy” (DA 1:24).

¹⁷ Here the example refers to the Buddha’s referring to Ānanda’s charisma as a “marvel” (*abbhuta,dhamma*). Very likely it is such passages (as D 16.5.15-16/2:144) that constitutes “marvels” (*abbhuta,dhamma*), rather than miraculous stories: see eg *Abbhuta,dhamma Ss* (eg *Acchariya,abbhūta S*, M 123) mentioned in the text there. It is possible to include lion-roars (*sīha,nāda*) here, too: see SD 36.10 Intro (3). See also Ency Bsm: Aṅga (under *abbhuta,dhamma*).

¹⁸ On these 9 factors (*aṅga*), see **Language and Discourse** = SD 26.11 (3.2.1).

¹⁹ VA 1:28, where Buddhaghosa only briefly mentions the list, and often wrongly defines their components, eg, he says that the *veyyākaraṇa* was the “whole” of the *Abhidhamma* (which was non-existent in the Buddha’s time)! See Ency Bsm: Aṅga (1:616-619).

²⁰ See eg EW Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism In Ceylon*, 1946: 105 f; Ency Bsm: Mahāvihāra (6:508-511).

²¹ On *veda* as religious joy, see (*Agata,phala*) *Mahānāma S* (A 6.10) = SD 15.3 Intro (4).

²² *Dharmasaṅgraha* (Muller 1885) 62; *Mahāvīyutpatti* 1276.

²³ V 3:8; M 1:133; Pug 4.9; Miln 263; Gandhv 27.

²⁴ DhsA:PR (Expositor) 1:33 n4 identifies this as *Saṅkhār’upapatti S* (M 120/3:99-103). However, the similarity is only in the titles. The discourse is not catechical.

The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) is a catechical dialogue between Mahā Koṭṭhita and Sāriputta. Mahā Koṭṭhita asks series of questions on psychological topics, namely, knowledge, consciousness, feeling, perception, mind-consciousness (*mano, viññāna*), the five physical faculties, wisdom, right view, the first dhyana, and the various liberations.²⁵

3 *Ceto, vimutti* and related terms

3.1 *CETO, VIMUTTI PAÑÑĀ, VIMUTTI*. The term “liberation” (*vimutti*) appears almost 50 times in the Mahā, vedalla Sutta, especially in the compounds, “liberation of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*) and “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*) [S14]. In the highest sense, *ceto, vimutti* refers to the perfect freedom of mind attained by following the noble eightfold path or living the holy life (*brahma, cariya*). In this context, the term is almost always coupled with *paññā, vimutti*, to read as the stock phrase *ceto, vimutti paññā, vimutti*.²⁶ The Commentary says that this stock phrase refers to the fruit of arhathood (MA 2:346).²⁷

Concentration is called “liberation of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*) because it is free or liberated from *lust; wisdom* is called “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*) because it is free from *ignorance* (MA 1:164 f). Concentration is usually the result of meditative calm (*samatha*), while wisdom, the result of meditative insight (*vipassanā*). But when they are coupled and described as “influx-free” (*anāsava*), they jointly result from the destruction of the influxes²⁸ by the supramundane path of arhathood. When the five factors of right view—moral virtue, learning, discussion, meditative calm, and meditative insight [S14]—are fulfilled, then the path of arhathood arises and fruits. Such a person is said to be mentally liberated (*vimutta citta*, M 1:140), and his mind is like a diamond (*vajirūpama citta*, A 1:124).

3.2 OTHER KINDS OF *CETO, VIMUTTI*. The term *ceto, vimutti* is also used in different contexts referring to different degrees or levels of liberation, below that of arhathood, and these terms are found in the Mahā, vedalla Sutta, which defines and differentiate them [§§27-37].

The first of such terms related to liberation mentioned in the Mahā, vedalla Sutta is “the signless liberation of mind” (*animitta ceto, vimutti*), which is attained by “the non-attention to all signs,” (that is, disregarding all mental objects) and “the attention to the signless element” (that is, nirvana) [S27]. This liberation is then contextualized as the last of a set of four liberations, namely,

the immeasurable liberation of mind,	(<i>appamāṇā ceto, vimutti</i>),	
the liberation of mind through nothingness,	(<i>ākhiṇcaññā ceto, vimutti</i>),	
the liberation of mind through emptiness,	(<i>suññatā ceto, vimutti</i>), and	
the signless liberation of mind	(<i>animitta ceto, vimutti</i>).	[§30, 34].

The “immeasurable liberation of mind” or “liberation of mind through the immeasurables” (*appamāṇā ceto, vimutti*) [§§30-31] is attained through the proper practice of the four immeasurables or boundless states (*appamāṇā* or *appamaññā*), that is, the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), cultivated to the point of “breaking the barriers” between self and other, that is, not seeing any selfhood.

²⁵ M 43/1:292-298 = SD 30.2.

²⁶ D 1:156, 3:78; S 1:120; A 1:123; Vbh 344.

²⁷ See *Ākaṅkheyya S* (M 6.19/1:35 f) = SD 59.1, for a related passage, where Comy says that “mind” and “wisdom” refers respectively to the concentration and wisdom associated with the fruit of arhathood.

²⁸ The oldest list is perhaps the set of 3 influxes (*āsava*)—of sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), of existence (*bhav’-āsava*), and of ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63)—which are essentially the same as the 3 graspings (*tī, gaha*) of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*) and views (*dīṭṭhī*), on account of which arise, resp, the notions “this is mine,” “this I am,” and “this is my self”: see *Vatthūpama S* (M 7.18/1:38) = SD 28.12. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards or inwards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The *Abhidhamma* lists 4 *āsavas*, which is also found in the *Nikāyas*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*dīṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 16.1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). See *BDict*: āsava.

The immeasurables comprise the four “abodes” (*vihāra*), namely, lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), and the full attainment of each abode is named after itself, that is to say:

the liberation by lovingkindness	(<i>mettā ceto, vimutti</i>),	
the liberation by compassion	(<i>karuṇā ceto, vimutti</i>),	
the liberation by appreciative joy	(<i>muditā ceto, vimutti</i>), and	
the liberation by compassion	(<i>upekkhā ceto, vimutti</i>).	(D 33.2.3(16)/3:248 f)

Initially, these states are cultivated to full absorption, that is, as dhyanas. Then, having mastered such a dhyana, we emerge from it and reflect on it as being impermanent, unsatisfactory and not self, which leads to the arising of meditative insight, and to liberation in due course.²⁹ As such a liberation of mind is basically *mind-made*, it is still liable to cease (A 5:344). However, its proper cultivation can lead to the attainment of non-return, but not arhathood, as the subtler defilements still need to be transcended (A 5:300).

The Mahā,vedalla Sutta ends by mentioning three kinds of liberation. The “liberation of mind through nothingness” (*ākiñcaññā ceto, vimutti*) is attained by attaining full concentration on “the base of nothingness” (*ākiñcaññā āyatana*), one of the formless states [§32]. The “liberation of mind through emptiness” (*suññatā ceto, vimutti*) is attained by reflecting on existence to be empty (*suñña*) of self (*attā*), or what is owned by the self (*attaniya*) [§33]. The “signless liberation of mind” (*animittā ceto, vimutti*), as we have mentioned above, is attained by “the non-attention to all signs,” (that is, disregarding all mental objects) and “the attention to the signless element” (that is, nirvana) [§27].

These three liberations are identical, differing only in name. They differ only by *the way* that we are liberated from the unwholesome roots (lust, hate, delusion), as follows:

<u>if we are liberated from <i>the unwholesome roots</i></u>	<u>it is called</u>
as a measuring tendency	the immeasurable liberation of mind [§35]
as a something ³⁰	the liberation of mind through nothingness [§36]
as a sign ³¹	the signless liberation of mind [§37]

All the three liberations have a common name: “the unshakable liberation of mind” (*akuppa ceto, vimutti*).³²

4 Cessation of perception and feeling

Detailed canonical discussions on the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*), that is, the attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*),³³ are found in the **Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43.25) and the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44.16-21), especially the latter.³⁴ According to the **Kathā, vatthu Commentary**, the attainment of cessation is of two kinds:³⁵

the merely mundane (*lokiya*), practised by the worldling, and the supramundane (*lok’uttara*), practised by the saints. While mundane cessation conduces to rebirth in the sphere of non-conscious beings (*asañña, satta*), the supramundane does not. (KvuA 155; see Kvu:AR 300)

²⁹ The 4 immeasurables make up meditations nos 33-36 in the list of 40 traditional methods: see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1 (8.1) & diag.

³⁰ That is, the craving that reifies.

³¹ That is, as an external object.

³² M 1:298; S 4:297.

³³ S 14.11/2:151.

³⁴ Respectively, M 43.25/1:296 = SD 30.2 & M 44.16-21/1:301 f = SD 40a.9.

³⁵ *Iti dve saññā, vedayita, nirodha, samāpattiyo lokiyā ca lok’uttarā ca. Tattha lokiyā puthujjanassa asañña, sattupikā hoti, loku’ttarā ariyānaṃ, sā na nāsañña, sattupikā.*

The absolute necessary preconditions to this attainment are the perfect mastery of all the eight attainments (that is, the four dhyanas and the four formless attainments). And in the case of the supramundane cessation, the meditator should have already attained the paths of non-return or of arhathood.³⁶

On emerging from cessation, they experience the fruit of their respective attainment (Vism 708), that is, there arises the fruition of non-return (*anāgāmi, phala*) in the non-returner, and the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala*) in the arhat (PmA 1:41, 321). “It is thus one possible route to experiencing Nibbāna.” (Harvey 1993).³⁷

According to **the Cūḷa, vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the heart-beat and breathing stop,³⁸ but a residual metabolism keeps the body alive for up to seven days (Vism 23.42/707). The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) explains the difference between death and cessation, thus:

In the case of one who is dead, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, life is exhausted, the vital heat extinguished, the faculties destroyed. In the case of one who has entered the cessation of perception and feeling his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, but his life is not exhausted, the vital heat is not extinguished, the faculties become exceedingly clear.
(M 43.25/1:296 abridged) See M 44.16-21 & also M 43.42 & cf SD 1.11 Intro 4.1.

While a dead person has neither vitality nor heat, and their sense-organs “broken up,” a person in cessation still has vitality and heat, and his sense-organs are “purified.”³⁹

This anomalous state, fully described in the Visuddhi, magga,⁴⁰ is a combination of deep meditative calm and insight where all mental states temporarily shut down,⁴¹ “devoid of even subtle feeling and cognition, due to turning away from even the very refined peace of the fourth formless level” (Harvey 1993).⁴² Here the heart-beat and breathing stop (M 1:301 f), but a residual metabolism keeps the body alive for up to seven days (Vism 23.42/707). The Commentaries say that this state may last for seven days or even longer.⁴³ While a dead person has neither vitality nor heat, and their sense-organs “broken up,” a person in cessation still has vitality and heat, and his sense-organs are “purified.”⁴⁴

According to Buddhaghosa, cessation is “the non-occurrence of the mind (*citta*) and mental states as a result of their progressive cessation” (Vism 23.18/702). Such a person is “without mind” (*acitta*, Vism 23.43/707). Even the sub-conscious (*bhavaṅga*), present in dreamless sleep, is absent; such a person is *effectively only body without any mental states whatsoever*. In modern terms, “deep hibernation” or “suspended animation” might give some idea of this state of cessation.⁴⁵

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³⁶ A 5.166/3:193 f; Vism 23.18/702, 23.49/708.

³⁷ “The mind body relationship in Pali Buddhism: A philosophical investigation.” [1992] *Asian Philosophy* 3,1 1993: 29-41; p10 digital ed.

³⁸ M 44.16-17/1:301 f.

³⁹ M 1:296; D 2:334; Vism 23.51/709,

⁴⁰ Vism 23.16-52/702-709; for a brief note, see M:ÑB 41.

⁴¹ Vism 23.43/707 f.

⁴² “The mind body relationship in Pali Buddhism: A philosophical investigation.” [1992] *Asian Philosophy* 3,1 1993:29-41; digital ed p10.

⁴³ MA 1:125, 152; AA 1:152; DhA 1:109; BA 163.

⁴⁴ M 1:296; D 2:334; Vism 23.51/709.

⁴⁵ On “the progressive cessation of formations” (*anupubba, saikhārānaṃ nirodha*), see S 36.11/4:217. On the philosophical problems related to how the meditator emerges from cessation, see P Griffiths, *On Being Mindless*, 1986. On Peter Harvey’s response to Griffiths, see “The mind-body relationship in Pāli Buddhism: A philosophical investigation” in Summary Report, International Association of Buddhist Studies 10th International Conference (ed AWP Guruge), Paris, 1992:30. Also GA Somaratne, “The sutta pericope of ‘the cessation’ and its interpretation” in *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Kelaniya, 2003: 207-228. See Sappurisa S (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (2).

The Discourse on the Greater Catechism

M 43/1:292-298

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was residing in Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's forest near Sāvattḥī.

Then, in the evening, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita,⁴⁶ having emerged from his solitary retreat, approached the venerable Sāriputta and exchanged greetings with him.

When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita sat down at one side. Sitting thus as one side, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita said this to the venerable Sāriputta,

Wisdom

2 “‘The unwise, the unwise (*duppañña*),’ avuso, so it is said. In reference to what is it said, ‘The unwise’?”

“‘One understands not, one understands not, (*na-p,pajānāti*),’ avuso, therefore one is said to be unwise.”

And what does one not understand?⁴⁷

One does not understand, ‘This is suffering.’

One does not understand, ‘This is the arising of suffering.’

One does not understand, ‘This is the ending of suffering.’

One does not understand, ‘This is the way to the ending of suffering.’

‘One understands not, one understands not’ avuso, therefore one is said to be unwise.”

“Sadhu, avuso!” said the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita. Having approved and delighted in the venerable Sāriputta's word, he asked the venerable Sāriputta another question:

3 “‘The wise, the wise (*paññavā*),’ avuso, it is said. In reference to what is it is, ‘The wise’?”

“‘One understands, one understands (*pajānāti*),’ avuso, therefore one is said to be wise.”

And what does he understand?

One understands, ‘This is suffering.’

One understands, ‘This is the arising of suffering.’

One understands, ‘This is the ending of suffering.’

One understands, ‘This is the way to the ending of suffering.’

‘One understands, one understands avuso, therefore one is said to be wise.’⁴⁸

Consciousness

4 “‘Consciousness, consciousness (*viññāṇa*),’ avuso, so it is said. In reference to what is it said, ‘Consciousness, consciousness’?”

“‘It cognizes, it cognizes (*vijānāti*),’ avuso, therefore it is said to be consciousness.”

And what does it cognize?

It cognizes pleasure; it cognizes pain, too; it cognizes what is neither pleasure nor pain, too.⁴⁹

‘It cognizes, it cognizes,’ avuso, therefore it is said to be consciousness.’⁵⁰

⁴⁶ See Intro (1).

⁴⁷ Comy points out that the first 2 noble truths refer to the samsaric rounds (*vaṭṭa*), while the last two with what is not the round (*vivaṭṭa*). (MA 2:338)

⁴⁸ Comy discusses *paññavā* and related terms in some detail. The 4 noble truths discussed here is the attainment of the supramundane path. Thus, the simplest level of person described as “the wise” (*paññavā*) is the one on the path of streamwinning. (MA 2:337-339).

⁴⁹ *Sukhan 'ti pi vijānāti, dukkhan 'ti pi vijānāti, adukkham-asukhan 'ti pi vijānāti*. I have used reported speech; alt tr in direct speech: “He cognizes, ‘Pleasure’; he cognizes, ‘Pain’; he cognizes, ‘Neither pain nor pleasure.’”

⁵⁰ Comy: The question concerns the consciousness with which the person described as “wise” examines formations, ie, the consciousness of insight by which the person gains his attainment, ie, the mind which meditates (MA

5 “And, regarding wisdom and consciousness, avuso—are these states conjoined or separate? And is it possible to separate these states to describe their various differences?”

“And as regards wisdom and consciousness, avuso—these states are conjoined, not separate. And it is impossible to separate these states to describe their various differences.

For, what one understands, that one cognizes; what one cognizes, that one understands. [293]

Therefore, these states are conjoined, not separate. And it is impossible to separate these states to describe their various differences.⁵¹

6 “And what, avuso, is the difference between wisdom and consciousness—these states that are conjoined, not separate?”

“And, avuso, regarding wisdom and consciousness—these states that are conjoined, not separate—is that wisdom is to be cultivated; consciousness is to be fully understood.⁵² This is their difference.”⁵³

Feeling

7 “‘Feeling, feeling (*vedanā*),’ avuso, so it is said. In reference to what is it said, ‘Feeling, feeling?’

“‘It feels, it feels (*vedeti*),’ avuso, therefore it is said to be feeling.”

And what does it feel?

It feels pleasure; it feels pain, too; it feels what is neither pleasure nor pain, too.

‘It feels, it feels,’ avuso, therefore it is said to be feeling.”⁵⁴

Perception

8 “‘Perception, perception (*saññā*),’ avuso, so it is said. In reference to what is it said, ‘Perception, perception?’

“‘It perceives, it perceives (*sañjānāti*),’ avuso, therefore it is said to be perception.”

And what does it perceive?

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

‘It perceives, it perceives,’ avuso, therefore it is said to be perception.”⁵⁵

9 “And, regarding feeling, perception and consciousness, avuso—are these states conjoined or separate?

And is it possible to separate these states to describe their various differences?”

“And as regards feeling, perception and consciousness, avuso—these states are conjoined, not separate.

And it is impossible to separate these states to describe their various differences.

For, what one feels, one perceives; and what one perceives, that one cognizes.

Therefore, these states are conjoined, not separate. And it is impossible to separate these states to describe their various differences.⁵⁶

2:339). Here Sāriputta explains feeling in connection with meditation as taught in **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32/1:59) = SD 13.3.

⁵¹ Comy: This refers to the wisdom and consciousness at the arising of both insight and the supramundane path. The two are “conjoined” in that they arise and cease simultaneously, and share a single sense-base and sense object. However, they are not always conjoined because, while wisdom always need consciousness, consciousness can arise without wisdom. (MA 2:341 f)

⁵² Cf Aññatara Bhikkhu S 2 (S 22.36/3:36) = SD 31.14.

⁵³ Comy: Wisdom, being the path factor of right view, needs to be cultivated as a path factor. Consciousness, included in the 5 aggregates that pertains to the noble truth of suffering, is to be fully understood (as being impermanent, suffering and not self). (MA 2:342)

⁵⁴ Comy: The question and answer here refer to mundane feelings that are the objective range of insight. Feeling feels itself; there is no other who feels (MA 2:343). “The Pali construction here, *sukham pi vedeti*, etc. shows feeling as simultaneously a quality of the object and an affective tone of the experience by which it is apprehended” (M:ÑB 1237 n434)

⁵⁵ Comy: The question and answer here refer to mundane perceptions that are the objective range of insight. (MA 2:343)

Knowable only by the mind

10 “What, avuso, would be known by the purified mind-consciousness released from the five faculties?”

“Avuso, by the purified mind-consciousness⁵⁷ released from the five faculties,
the base of infinite space would be known, thus: ‘Space is infinite’;
the base of infinite consciousness would be known thus, ‘Consciousness is infinite’; and
the base of nothingness would be known thus, ‘There is nothing.’”

11 “Avuso, with what does one understand a state that should be known?”

“Avuso, one understands a state that should be known with the wisdom eye.”⁵⁸

12 “But, avuso, what is the purpose of wisdom?”

“Wisdom, avuso, is for the sake of direct knowledge, for the sake of full understanding, for the sake of abandoning.”⁵⁹ [294]

The 5 factors for right view

13 “Avuso, how many conditions are there for the arising of right view?”

“There are two conditions, avuso, for the arising of right view, namely, another’s voice and wise consideration.⁶⁰ These, avuso, are the conditions for the arising of right view.”

14 “Avuso, by how many factors is right view assisted when it has
the fruition of liberation of mind,
the benefit of the fruition of the liberation of mind,
the fruition of liberation by wisdom, and
the benefit of the fruition of liberation by wisdom?”⁶¹

“Avuso, right view is assisted by *five factors* when it has the fruition of liberation of mind, the benefit of the fruition of liberation of mind, the fruition of liberation by wisdom, and the benefit of the fruition of liberation by wisdom. Here, avuso, right view is
assisted by moral virtue (*sīlānuggaha*), and

⁵⁶ Comy: Wisdom is excluded here because the aim here is to show only the states that are conjoined on every occasion of consciousness. (MA 2:344)

⁵⁷ Comy: Purified mind-consciousness (*parisuddha mano, viññāṇa*) is the consciousness of the 4th dhyana. By it, one who has gained the fourth dhyana progresses on to the formless attainments. The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is excluded here because, due to its subtlety, it comes not within the range of meditation for the attaining of insight. (MA 2:345). Cf **Mahāli S** (S 22.60/3:68-71).

⁵⁸ Comy: The wisdom eye (*paññā, cakkhu*) is wisdom itself; it is called an eye because it is what leads us to true seeing (*dassana, pariñāyaka*). (MA 2:345), ie, it is an organ of wisdom.

⁵⁹ *Paññā kho, āvuso, abhiññ’atthā pariññ’atthā pahān’atthā ti.* Cf **Na Kuhana S 2** (It 2.1.9): “For the sake of direct knowledge, for the sake of full understanding, | the Blessed One taught | the holy life, not handed down through tradition, | that leads to a firm footing in nirvana” (*abhiññ’attham pariññ; attham | brahma, cariyam anītiham | adesayi so bhagavā | nibbān’ogadha, gāminam*, It 2.1.9/29). The learner on the path (*sekha*) still needs to refrain from conceiving (*maññanā*) and delighting (*nandī*) so as to gain a full understanding (*pariññā*) of the noble truths: see **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 127.7/1:4) = SD 11.8 n. **On becoming a stream-winner**, we eradicates the fetter of identity-view (*sakkāya dīṭṭhī*) and thus no longer conceive in terms of wrong view (esp greed and hate). However, the subtler defilements of craving and conceit are only uprooted when we attain arhathood. As such, the learner might still fall into mental conceiving. Like the arhat, the learner has direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), but only the arhat has full understanding (*pariññā*), which entails the total abandonment of all defilements (greed, hate and delusion). See MA 1:42.

⁶⁰ Comy: “Another’s voice” (*parato ghosa*) is the teaching of the helpful Dharma (*sappāya, dhamma, sdavana*); “wise consideration” (*yoniso manasikāra*) is one’s own attention as skillful means (*attano upāya, manasikāro*). These two conditions are necessary for disciples to attain the right view of *insight* and the right view of the supra-mundane *path*. Sāriputta, having a verse (V 1:40) from Assaji, and becoming a streamwinner, is an example of hearing “another’s voice.” Pratyeka Buddhas, however, awaken and fully self-awakened Buddhas gain their all-knowing without “another’s voice.” (MA 346)

⁶¹ Cf Sn 256.

assisted by learning [listening]	(<i>sutānuggaha</i>), and
assisted by discussion	(<i>sākacchā'nuggaha</i>), and
assisted by meditative calm	(<i>samathānuggaha</i>), and
assisted by meditative insight	(<i>vipassanā'nuggaha</i>).

Here, avuso, right view is assisted by these five factors when it has the fruition of liberation of mind, the benefit of the fruition of liberation of mind, the fruition of liberation by wisdom, and the benefit of the fruition of liberation by wisdom.”⁶²

Existence

15 “Avuso, how many kinds of existence (*bhava*) are there?”

“Avuso, there are these three kinds of existence, namely,⁶³

the sense-existence	(<i>kāma,bhava</i>),
the form-existence	(<i>rūpa,bhava</i>), and
the formless existence	(<i>arūpa,bhava</i>).

16 “How, avuso, is rebirth occur in the future?”

“Avuso, on account of their being blinded by ignorance and fettered by craving, beings delight in this and that—this is how rebirth occurs in the future.”⁶⁴

17 “Avuso, how does rebirth not occur in the future?”

“Avuso, on account of the fading away of ignorance and the ending of craving, there is the arising of true knowledge⁶⁵—this is how rebirth occurs not in the future.”

The first dhyana

18 “What, avuso, is the first dhyana (*paṭhama jhāna*)?”

“Here, avuso, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first dhyana that is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, zest and joy born of seclusion—this, avuso, is called the first dhyana.

19 “How many factors, avuso, does the first dhyana have?”

“Avuso, the first dhyana is five-factored. Here, avuso, when a monk has attained to the first dhyana, there occur

(1) initial application	(<i>vitakka</i>),
(2) sustained application	(<i>vicāra</i>),
(3) zest	(<i>pīti</i>),
(4) joy [happiness]	(<i>sukha</i>), and
(5) mental oneness	(<i>citt'ek'aggatā</i>).

Thus, friend, is the first dhyana five-factored.”

20 “As regards the first dhyana, avuso, how many factors are abandoned, how many factors are accomplished?”

⁶² Comy: Right view here is that pertaining to the path of arhathood. “Liberation of mind” and “liberation by wisdom” refer to the fruit of arhathood (MA 2:2346). See *Ākañkheyya S* (M 6.19/1:35 f) = SD 59.1, for a related passage, where Comy says that “mind” and “wisdom” refers respectively to the concentration and wisdom associated with the fruit of arhathood. Concentration is called “liberation of mind” (*ceto,vimutti*) because it is liberated from *lust*; wisdom is called “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā,vimutti*) because it is liberated from *ignorance* (MA 1:164 f). The former is usu the result of meditative calm (*samatha*), while the latter, the result of meditative insight (*vipassanā*). But when they are coupled and described as “influx-free” (*anāsava*), they jointly result from the destruction of the influxes by the supramundane path of arhathood. When these 5 factors are fulfilled, the path of arhathood arises and fruits.

⁶³ Cf V 3:3; S 2:3, 65, 101; A 1:223.

⁶⁴ *Āyatim punabbhavābhiniḅbatti*, lit “arise again in a future existence,” ie the continuation of the samsaric round. “This question and the next may be regarded as synoptic approaches to the entire twelvefold formula of dependent origination laid out in M 38.17 and 20.” (M:NB 1238 n442). Cf A 1:223.

⁶⁵ Cf *Cūḷa Sīha.nāda S* (M 68.178/1:67); *Parivīmaṃsana S* (S 12.51.13/2:82).

“In the first dhyana, avuso, five factors are abandoned, five factors are accomplished.

Here, avuso, when a monk has attained to the first dhyana,

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) sensual desire | (<i>kāma-c, chands</i>) | is abandoned; |
| (2) ill will | (<i>avyāpāda</i>) | is abandoned; |
| (3) sloth and torpor | (<i>thīna, middha</i>) | is abandoned; |
| (4) restlessness and remorse | (<i>uddhacca, kukkucca</i>) | is abandoned; [295] |
| (5) doubt | (<i>vicikicchā</i>) | is abandoned; |

and there occur

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) initial application | (<i>vitakka</i>), |
| (2) sustained application | (<i>vicāra</i>), |
| (3) zest | (<i>pīti</i>), |
| (4) joy [happiness] | (<i>sukha</i>), and |
| (5) mental oneness | (<i>citt'ek'aggatā</i>). |

Thus, avuso, in the first dhyana, five factors are abandoned, five factors are accomplished.”⁶⁶

The five faculties

21 “Avuso, these five faculties (*pañc'indriya*) have separate fields, separate ranges; they do not experience each other's field and range;⁶⁷ that is to say,

- the eye faculty,
- the ear faculty,
- the nose faculty,
- the tongue faculty, and
- the body faculty.

Now, of these five faculties, with separate fields, separate ranges, not experiencing each other's field and range—what is their resort,⁶⁸ what experiences their field and resort?”⁶⁹

“Avuso, these five faculties have separate fields, separate ranges; they do not experience each other's fields and ranges; that is to say,

- the eye faculty,
- the ear faculty,
- the nose faculty,
- the tongue faculty, and
- the body faculty.

Now, these five faculties, with separate fields, separate ranges, not experiencing each other's field and range—they have the mind as their resort, the mind experiences their fields and ranges.”

⁶⁶ For details, see Dhyana = SD 8.4.

⁶⁷ *Pañc'imāni, āvuso, indriyāni nānā, visayāni nānā, gocarāni, na aññam-aññassa gocara, visayaṃ paccanubhonti.* Here, clearly the *physical* faculties are meant; for, its full section (“On what do these five faculties stand dependent on?” *Imāni āvuso pañc'indriyāni kiṃ paṭucca tiṭṭhanti*) [S22], the answer is that they stand mutually dependent on vitality (*āyu*) and heat (*usmā*) (M 43.22/1:295). The same dialogue is found in **Uṇṇābha Brāhmaṇa S** (M 48.42.3a/5:217), but there they seem to correspond to the 5 *sense-consciousnesses*, “for the physical sense faculties cannot properly be said to experience (*paccanubhoti*) an objective domain (*visaya*) or resort (*gocara*) [“range or field”]. Their function is only to serve as the media through which consciousness cognizes objects.” (S:B 1936 n225).

⁶⁸ *Paṭisarāṇa*; here used in a psychological sense; see M 46.2/1:311 & 108.7/1:310, where it simply means “refuge.”

⁶⁹ While the five physical sense-faculties have each their own object—forms for the eye, sounds for the ear, smells for the nose, tastes for the tongue, touches for the body—the mind-faculty is able to experience the object of all these five sense-faculties as well as its very own mental objects. Hence, the other five faculties have the mind as their resort (*mano, paṭisarāṇa*), which Comy says is the “impulsion” (*javana*) stage of the five-door mental process. (MA 2:349): see *Nimitta & Anuvyañjana* = SD 19.14(3). See also **Uṇṇābha Brāhmaṇa S** (S 48.42/5:217-219) = SD 29.3.

22 “Avuso, as to these faculties, that is to say,
the eye faculty,
the ear faculty,
the nose faculty,
the tongue faculty, and
the body faculty—

on what do these five faculties stand dependent?”

“Avuso, these faculties, that is to say,
the eye faculty,
the ear faculty,
the nose faculty,
the tongue faculty, and
the body faculty—

the five faculties stand dependent on vitality (*āyu*).”⁷⁰

“Avuso, what does vitality stand dependent on?”

“Vitality stands dependent on heat (*usmā*).”⁷¹

“Avuso, what does heat stand dependent on?”

“Heat stands dependent on vitality.”

“Only just now, avuso, we understand the venerable Sāriputta to have spoken thus:

‘Vitality stands dependent on heat,’ and now we understand him to have said,

‘Heat stands dependent on vitality.’”

How should the meaning of these words we see?”

“In that case, avuso, I will give you a parable; for some wise persons here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a parable.”⁷²

Avuso, just as in an oil-lamp that is burning, its light is described as being dependent on its flame, and its flame is described as being dependent on its light; even so, vitality stands dependent on heat, and heat stands dependent on vitality.”

Vital formations

23 “Avuso, are vital formations (*āyu, sāṅkhāra*) states that can be felt; or, are vital formations one thing, and states that can be felt another?” [296]

“Avuso, vital formations are not states that can be felt.”⁷³ If vital formations are states that can be felt, then a monk who has attained to the cessation of perception and feeling would not be seen to emerge from it.

Because vital formations are one thing, and states that can be felt another, a monk who has attained to the cessation of perception and feeling would be seen to emerge from it.”

24 “Avuso, how many states is this body deprived of, before it is discarded, cast aside, and lies like a senseless log?”⁷⁴

“Avuso, when this body is deprived of three states—namely, vitality, heat and consciousness—it is then discarded, cast aside, and lies like a senseless log.”

⁷⁰ Comy: Vitality (*āyu*) is the life-faculty itself (*āyum eva*, MA 2:350), which maintains and vitalizes the other material phenomena of the living body. Cf D 2:106; S 2:266; A 4:311; U 64.

⁷¹ Heat (*usmā*, also *usumā*; Skt *uṣman*) is the life-faculty itself, karma-born heat (of the living body) (MA 2:-350); D 2:335,15; M 1:295,24≠ S 2:97,10 = 4:215,23 = 5:212,22; S 2:83,9, 3:143,4*, 4:294,21.

⁷² *Tena h'āvuso, upamaṃ te karissāmi; upamāya p'idhekacce viññū purisā bhāsitaṃ atthaṃ ājānanti*, stock, as at M 24.14/1:148.

⁷³ Comy: “Vital formations” (*āyu, saṅkhāra*) is vitality (*āyu*) itself. They cannot be states of feeling because they are required to keep the meditator’s body alive when he has attained to the cessation of perception and feeling (MA 2:350). See Intro (4).

⁷⁴ Here a dead body is meant. The lack of consciousness in a body is necessary, but not sufficient, to constitute death; vitality (*āyu*) and vital heat (*usmā*) must also disintegrate. Quoted at MA 2:351; cf S 3:143; Dh 41; Tha 468.

25 “Avuso, what is the difference between one who has died, whose time is up, and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception and feeling?”

“Friend, as regards one who has died, whose time is up,

his bodily formations (<i>kāya, saṅkhāra</i>) ⁷⁵	has ceased, subsided;
his verbal formations (<i>vacī, saṅkhāra</i>)	has ceased, subsided; ⁷⁶
his mental formations (<i>citta, saṅkhāra</i>)	has ceased, subsided;
his vitality (<i>āyu</i>)	is exhausted;
his vital heat (<i>usmā</i>)	has dissipated; and
his faculties (<i>indriya</i>)	are all disintegrated.

As regards the monk who has attained the cessation of perception and feeling,

his bodily formations	has ceased, subsided;
his verbal formations	has ceased, subsided;
his mental formations	has ceased, subsided;
but his vitality	is <i>not</i> exhausted;
his vital heat	has <i>not</i> dissipated; and
his faculties	are lucid. ⁷⁷

This, avuso, is the difference between one who has died, whose time is up, and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception and feeling.”

The neutral liberation of mind

26 “How many conditions are there for the attainment of the neutral [neither-painful-nor-pleasant] liberation of mind (*adukkham-asukha ceto, vimutti*)?”⁷⁸

“Avuso, there are four conditions for the attainment of the neutral [neither-painful-nor-pleasant] liberation of mind. Here,

with the abandoning of pleasure, with the abandoning of pain,
and with the earlier disappearance of happiness and displeasure,

a monk attains and dwells in the fourth dhyana, that is free from pain and pleasure and has the purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

These, avuso, are the four conditions for the attainment of the neutral liberation of mind.”

The signless liberation of mind

27 “Avuso, how many conditions are there for the attainment of the signless liberation of mind (*animitta ceto, vimutti*)?”

“Avuso, there are two conditions for the signless liberation of mind, namely,

- (1) the non-attention to all signs, and
- (2) the attention to the signless element.⁷⁹

These, avuso, are the two conditions for the signless liberation of mind.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Def in Cūḷa Vedalla S (M 44.13/1:301); said to be the in-and-out-breath at MA 2:351; cf Kāma, bhū S (S 41.6/ 4:294-297).

⁷⁶ The verbal formations (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), comprising initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*) (S 4:293), stop in the 2nd dhyana, which is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṅhī, bhāva*). When initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, speech cannot occur (S 2:273).

⁷⁷ Comy: In life, the faculties, stimulated by sense-objects, are afflicted and grimed like a mirror standing at a crossroads (MA 2:351). The bodily formations (*kāya, saṅkhāra*) is the breath, the verbal formations (*vacī, saṅkhāra*) are initial application and sustained application, and the mental formations (*citta, saṅkhāra*) are perception and feeling—see Cūḷa Vedalla S (M 44.14+15/1:301).

⁷⁸ On *ceto, vimutti*, See Intro (3.1).

⁷⁹ The signless element is nirvana (MA 2:352), which is said to be “signless” (*animitta*) because nirvana has nothing to do with signs (*nimitta*), here referring to mental grasping of phenomena. See also Go, datta S (S 41.7/-4:296).

28 “Avuso, how many conditions are there for the persistence [stability] (*thiti*) of the signless liberation of mind?”

“Avuso, there are three conditions for the persistence of the signless liberation of mind, namely, [297]

- (1) the non-attention to all signs,
- (2) the attention to the signless element, and
- (3) the prior determination.⁸¹

These, avuso, are the three conditions for the signless liberation of mind.”

29 “Avuso, how many conditions are there for the emergence (*vuṭṭhāna*) from the signless liberation of mind?”

“Avuso, there are two conditions for the emergence from the signless liberation of mind, namely,

- (1) the attention to all signs, and
- (2) the non-attention to the signless element.

These, avuso, are the two conditions for the emergence from the signless liberation of mind.”

Mental liberations: Different in meaning and in name

30 “Avuso,

- | | |
|---|--|
| the immeasurable liberation of mind, | (<i>appamāṇā ceto, vimutti</i>) and |
| the liberation of mind through nothingness, | (<i>ākiñcaññā ceto, vimutti</i>) and |
| the liberation of mind through emptiness, | (<i>suññatā ceto, vimutti</i>) and |
| the signless liberation of mind | (<i>animittā ceto, vimutti</i>) |

—are these states different in meaning and in name, or are they the same in meaning, different only in name?”⁸²

“Avuso,

- the immeasurable liberation of mind, and
the liberation of mind through nothingness,⁸³ and
the liberation of mind emptiness, and
the signless liberation of mind—

there is a way, relative speaking, in which these states different in meaning and in name, and there is a way in which they are the same in meaning, different only in name.”

31 THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES. “And, avuso, in what way, relative speaking, are these states different in meaning and different in name, too?”⁸⁴

- (1) “Here, avuso, a monk dwells pervading one quarter with a mind filled with lovingkindness (*mettā*); likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, grown great,⁸⁵ immeasurable, without enmity, without ill-will.

- (2) He dwells pervading

⁸⁰ Comy: The signless liberation of mind (*animitta ceto, vimutti*) is the attainment of fruition. The signs (*nimitta*) are objects such as forms, etc. The “signless element” (*animitta, dhātu*) is nirvana in which all signs of conditioned things are absent. (MA 2:352)

⁸¹ Ie, the prior determination of the duration of the meditation (MA 353).

⁸² Cf Anuruddha S (M 127), where this is asked in connection with the immeasurable liberation of mind and the liberation of mind grown great. (M 127.4/3:145 f)

⁸³ Comy: So called because of the non-existence of any meditation-object (*ārammaṇa, kiñcanassa abhāvato*, MA 2:353). Cf Sn 1113-1115.

⁸⁴ *Katamo c’āvuso, pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā nānāthā c’eva nānā, vyañjanā ca?*

⁸⁵ The mind “grown great” (*maha-g, gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See *Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S* (S 40.4) = SD 24.14 Intro (4).

one quarter with a mind filled with compassion (*karuṇā*);
likewise the second quarter,
likewise the third quarter,
likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with compassion that is vast, grown great, immeasurable, without enmity, without ill-will.

(3) He dwells pervading
one quarter with a mind filled with appreciative joy (*muditā*);
likewise the second quarter,
likewise the third quarter,
likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with appreciative joy that is vast, grown great, immeasurable, without enmity, without ill will.

This, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

(4) He dwells pervading
one quarter with a mind filled with equanimity (*upekkhā*),
likewise the second quarter,
likewise the third quarter,
likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with equanimity that is vast, grown great, immeasurable, without enmity, without ill-will.⁸⁶

This, avuso, is called the immeasurable liberation of mind.

32 THE LIBERATION OF MIND THROUGH NOTHINGNESS. And what, avuso, is the liberation of mind through nothingness (*ākiñcaññā ceto, vimutti*)?

Here, avuso, a monk, by completely transcending the sphere of infinite consciousness, aware that ‘There is nothing,’ attains and dwells in the sphere of nothingness.

This, avuso, is called the liberation of mind through nothingness.

33 THE LIBERATION OF MIND THROUGH EMPTINESS. And what, avuso, is the liberation of mind through emptiness (*suññatā ceto, vimutti*)?

Here, avuso, a monk, a monk, having gone into a forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, reflects thus:

‘This is empty of a self, or of what belongs to a self.’⁸⁷ [298]

This, avuso, is called the liberation of mind through emptiness.⁸⁸

34 THE SIGNLESS LIBERATION OF MIND. And what, avuso, is the signless liberation of mind (*animit-tā ceto, vimutti*)?

⁸⁶ Similarly at Anuruddha S (M 127.4-7/3:146 f) & Go,datta S (S 41.7S 4:295). **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), Anuruddha S (M 127) & Go,datta S (S 41.7) call it “the immeasurable liberation of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto, vimutti*) (M 43.31/1:297; M 127.7/3:146; S 41.7/4:295); **Cakkavatti Sihanāda S** (D 26) calls it “a monk’s wealth” (*bhikkhu bhoga*) (D 26.28/3:78); **Saṅgīti S** (D 33) calls it “the immeasurables” (*appamañña*) (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223); **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara S** (M 52; A 11.17) says that if one stabilizes these states, reflecting on its impermanence, etc, one attains arhathood; if not, one attains non-return (M 52.9/1:351; A 11.17/5:344); **Dhanañjāni S** (M 97) & **Subha S** (M 99) call it the path to companionship with Brahmā (communion with God) (M 97.32-35/2:195; M 99.24-27/-2:207 f); **Paṭisambhidā, magga** calls it “liberation that is focussed on only the beautiful” (*subhan t’eva adhimutto hoti ti vimokkho*, Pm 5.20/2:39); **Vibhaṅga** gives details (Vbh 272-282).

⁸⁷ *Suññam idam attena vā attaniyena vā ’ti*. Comy explains *attena* as referring to the self regarded as personality, person, or individual, and *attaniyena* as referring to such things as the monk’s requisites, such as robes, etc (MA 2:353): on a psychological level, this means there really no abiding entity (such as “self,” “soul,” “person,” “thing”) nor real ownership of things or states. See also M 2:26,27; S 35.85/4:54,6. Cf Kvu 67, 579.

⁸⁸ Comy says that this liberation of mind through emptiness is insight into the emptiness of selfhood in persons and things (MA 2:353).

Here, avuso, by non-attention to all signs, he enters and dwells in the signless concentration of mind.⁸⁹

This, avuso, is called the signless liberation of mind.⁹⁰

In this way, avuso, relative speaking, are these states different in meaning and different in name,⁹¹ too.”

Mental liberations: Same in meaning, different in name

35 “In what way, avuso, relative speaking, are these states the same in meaning, different only in name?”

(1) “Lust, avuso, is a measuring; hate is a measuring; delusion is a measuring.⁹²

In a monk whose influxes are destroyed, they are abandoned, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Avuso, in terms of *the immeasurable liberations of mind*, the unshakable liberation of mind is said to be foremost.⁹³ This unshakable liberation of mind is empty of lust, empty of hate, empty of delusion.⁹⁴

36 (2) Lust, avuso, is a something; hate is a something; delusion is a something.⁹⁵

In a monk whose influxes are destroyed, they are abandoned, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Avuso, in terms of *the liberations of mind through nothingness*, the unshakable liberation of mind is said to be foremost.⁹⁶ This unshakable liberation of mind is empty of lust, empty of hate, empty of delusion.

37 (3) Lust, avuso, is a sign-maker; hate is a sign-maker; delusion is a sign-maker.⁹⁷

In a monk whose influxes are destroyed, they are abandoned, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

Avuso, in terms of *the signless liberation of mind*, the unshakable liberation of mind is said to be foremost.⁹⁸ This unshakable liberation of mind is empty of lust, empty of hate, empty of delusion.

⁸⁹ *Idha bhikkhu sabba,nimittānaṃ amanasikārā animittaṃ ceto,samādhiṃ upasampajja viharati*. See Animitta **Ceto,samādhi Pañha S** (S 40.9/4:268 f) = SD 24.19.

⁹⁰ Comy: This (as above) is the attainment of fruition (MA 2:354). Of the 4 liberations of mind [§30], only this is supramundane. The first three—the divine abodes, the third formless attainment, and insight into the emptiness of formations—are all mundane.

⁹¹ Ie, in the spirit and in the letter, different in connotation and in denotation.

⁹² Comy: Defilements are what makes us measure a person as a worldly, a streamwinner, a once-returner, or a non-returner (MA 2:354). However, more broadly, lust, hate and delusion are called “measuring” (*pamāṇa,karaṇa*) because they limit the openness of our minds and prevent liberation itself. On “measuring,” cf *anumiyati* in Aññata-ra Bhikkhu S 2 (S 22.36/3:36) = SD 31.14.

⁹³ Comy: There are 12 immeasurable liberations of mind: the 4 divine abodes, the 4 paths and 4 fruits. The unshakable liberation of mind (*akuppa ceto,vimutti*) is the fruit of arhathood. (MA 2:354)

⁹⁴ This sentence, repeated at §§36+37, also shows that they are the supramundane liberation of mind through emptiness.

⁹⁵ “Something” (*kiñcana*), which Comy explains that when a defilement has arisen, it “crushes, tramples, impedes” (*kiñcati maddati palibujjhati*) us. (MA 2:354). Cf the 3 “somethings” (*taṃ kiñcanā*), ie, lust as something, hate as something, delusion as something (*rāga kiñcana, dosa kiñcana, moha kiñvana*) (D 3:217). *Kiñcana* refers to a defilement that arises through the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*) of greed, hate, and delusion, inducing us to reify (make “something: of) persons and states, and so to try to *own* them, thus allowing suffering to arise.

⁹⁶ Comy: There are 9 liberations of mind through nothingness: the base of nothingness, and the 4 paths and 4 fruits. (MA 2:354)

⁹⁷ Comy: The expression “sign-maker” (*nimitta,karaṇa*) means that it is lust, hate and delusion that label a person as a worldly or a noble one, as lustful, hating, or deluded or not (MA 2:354). It also means that these defilements cause the mind to falsely regard things as being permanent, pleasurable, self or beautiful.

⁹⁸ Comy: There are 13 signless liberations of mind: insight, because it removes the signs of permanence, pleasure and self; the 4 formless attainments, because they lack the sign of form; and the 4 paths and 4 fruits, because of the absence of the sign of defilements. (MA 2:355)

In this way, avuso, relative speaking, are these states the same in meaning, different only in name.”⁹⁹

The venerable Sāriputta said this. The venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita with a joyful heart, approved of the venerable Sāriputta’s word.

— evaṃ —

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⁹⁹ Ie, same in the spirit, different only in the letter; same in connotation, different only in denotation. All the 4 liberations of mind are one in meaning in that they all refer to the fruition attainment of arhathood. Comy points out that the 4 liberations are one in meaning because the terms—immeasurable, nothingness, emptiness, and the signless—are all names for nirvana, which is the object of the fruition attainment of arhathood (MA 2:355).