

Dutiya (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta

(Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2

The Second Discourse to Ānanda (on the Altering State)

S 22.38/3:38-40

Theme: The aspects of impermanence

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010

1 The 2 (Aññathatta) Ānanda Suttas

There are two Saṃyutta discourses entitled (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta: **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1** (S 22.37) and the **(Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2** (S 22.38).¹ Both treat the subject of impermanence, or more specifically, “rising, falling and alteration of what persists” (*uppāda vaya thitassa aññathatta*), also rendered as “rising, falling and alteration of presence.”

The difference between the two discourses is simply that while **the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1** (S 22.37)² is about the rising and falling of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) in the present moment,³ the **(Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2** (S 22.38) affirms this reality of the aggregates throughout the three periods of time (the past, the present and the future).⁴

2 The totality formula

Both the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 1 (S 22.37), the (Aññathatta) Ānanda Sutta 2 (S 22.38) refer to the five aggregates (*pañca khandha*)—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—as exhibiting the nature of rising and falling. The word *khandha* (Skt *skandha*) means, amongst other things, a heap or mass (*rāsi*). The five aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) are so called because “they each unite under one label a multiplicity of phenomena that share the same defining characteristic” (S:B 840).

This defining characteristic is called “the totality formula,” mentioned, for example, here in the (Dve) Khandha Sutta (S 22.48), and encompassing all the aggregates—“whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near.”⁵ The full formula is stated in this famous stock passage from **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59), thus:

Tasmā-tiḥa, bhikkhave, ⟨yam kiñci rūpaṃ | yā kāci vedanā | yā kāci saññā | ye keci saṅkhārā | yam kiñci viññānam⟩ atītānāgata, paccuppannam ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikam vā sukhamaṃ vā hīnam vā paṇītam vā yam dūre santike vā, ⟨sabbam rūpaṃ | sabbā vedanā | sabbā saññā | sabbe saṅkhārā | sabbam viññānam⟩—“n’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmī, na meso attā ti evam etaṃ yathā, bhūtam samma-p, paññāya daṭṭhabbam.

Therefore, bhikkhus, any kind of ⟨form | feeling | perception | formations | consciousness⟩ whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all ⟨forms | feelings | perceptions | formations | consciousness⟩ should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’⁶ (S 22.59.19-21/3:68) = SD 1.2

¹ Respectively S 22.37/3:37 f = SD 33.11 & S 22.38/3:38-40 = SD 33.12.

² S 22.37/3:37 f = SD 33.11.

³ On the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), see SD 17.

⁴ S 22.38/3:38-40 = SD 33.12.

⁵ S 22.48/3:47 f. Also Anatta, lakkhaṇa S (S 22.59/3:66-68) = SD 1.2.

⁶ *N’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmī, na meso attā ti*. A brief version, “There can be no considering that (element) as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’” (*ahan ti vā mamaṃ ti vā asmī ti vā*) is found in Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S (M 28/1:184-191 §§6b-7, 11b-12, 16b-17, 21b-22). This is opp of “the 3 graspings” (*ti, vidha gāha*) formula: *etaṃ mama, eso ’ham asmī, eso me attā ti* [§§12-16]. In Anatta, lakkhaṇa S (S 22.59.12-16/3:68), these formulas is applied to the 5

The formula is explained in detail in the Vibhaṅga⁷ and briefly in the Visuddhi, magga. Briefly, besides “past, future or present” (which are self-explanatory), they are as follows:⁸

“internal”	(<i>ajjhata</i>)	=	physical sense-organs, or our person;
“external”	(<i>bahiddhā</i>)	=	physical sense-objects, or another person; ⁹
“gross”	(<i>oḷārika</i>)	=	that which impinges (the physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire);
“subtle”	(<i>sukhuma</i>)	=	that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water);
“inferior”	(<i>hīna</i>)	=	undesirable physical sense-objects (form, sound, smell, taste, and touch), or the sense-world;
“superior”	(<i>paṇīta</i>)	=	desirable physical sense-objects (form etc), or the form and the formless worlds;
“far”	(<i>dūre</i>)	=	subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”), or distant objects, other universes;
“near”	(<i>santike</i>)	=	gross objects (“easy to penetrate,” or things close by, or anywhere in this universe). ¹⁰

“Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41).

As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhata*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have two applications:¹¹

- (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them, and anything else is “external”;
- (2) the sense-organs (*āyatana*) are “internal,” but their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.”¹²

Just as the body or the sense-organs cannot exist or function in themselves, so too the aggregates do not exist in themselves. They are aspects of our being, all functioning together. These aspects are identified merely as a conventional means for us to understand the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self of the whole process of what we regard as our “self.” It is like a stick: it has size, weight, hardness, length and colour. One cannot take only one of these aspects to be the stick. They all function together giving one the conception of a “stick.” In other words, when there is one aspect, the others are also present.

The next pair, gross and subtle, refers to our sense-experiences: “gross” = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); “subtle” = that which does not

aggregates & in Pāṛileyya S (S 22.81/ 3:94-99 = SD 6.1) to the 4 primary elements. See also (Dhātu) Rāhula S (A 4.177/2:164 f). See Pāṛileyya S, SD 6.16 Intro (5). See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

⁷ “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (R Gethin, “The five khandhas: their treatment in the *Nikāyas* and early *Abhidhamma*,” 1986:41).

⁸ Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7. See Gethin 1986:40 f.

⁹ As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhata*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have two applications: (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them and anything else is “external”; (2) the sense-organs are “internal” and their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.” Boisvert (1995:43, 47), however, overlooks these applications: see Harvey 1996:93.

¹⁰ This last pair is by way of distance: see Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7.

¹¹ On “internal” and “external” as referring to “oneself” and “others” respectively, see SD 13.1 Intro (3.7a-g). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38f; Boisvert 1995:43-48.

¹² Boisvert, however overlooks these applications (1995:43, 47).

impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water). The pair, “inferior” and “superior” can also refer to the sense-world (*kāma,loka*), and the form and formless worlds, respectively. In fact, I think this interpretation makes more practical sense in terms of understanding the aggregates. The pair, “far” and “near” can be taken in a literal sense of space, that is, nearby (within clear sight) or distant (difficult to see or beyond normal vision), which could also be said as referring to this universe and any other universe.¹³

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¹³ See **Abhibhū S** (A 3.80.3/1:227 f) = SD 53.1 & **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29.2/5:59) = SD 16.15, where the Buddha refers to parallel universes. For a Sutta interpretation of the other characteristics, see SD 17.13(4.2).

The Second Discourse to Ānanda (on the Altering State)

S 22.38/3:38-40

1 Originating in Sāvattṭhī.

2 Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him.

When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the venerable Ānanda sat down at one side.

3 Sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to the venerable Ānanda:

“If, Ānanda, you were asked thus:

‘What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising was discerned, a passing away was discerned, an alteration in what persists was discerned?’¹⁴

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned?’¹⁵

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned?’¹⁶

When you were asked thus, Ānanda, how would your answer?”

4 “If, bhante, I were asked thus:

‘What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising was discerned, a passing away was discerned, an alteration in what persists was discerned?’

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising will be discerned, [39] a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned?’

What, avuso Ānanda, are those things of which an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned?’

When were asked thus, bhante, I would answer thus:

5 PAST AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it is of whatever form that has passed, ceased, changed,¹⁷ that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever feeling that has passed, ceased, changed, that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever perception that has passed, ceased, changed, that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever formations that has passed, ceased, changed, that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness that has passed, ceased, changed, that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

Of these things, avuso, is an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

6 FUTURE AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it is of whatever form that has not arisen, not become,¹⁸

¹⁴ Past tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyittha, vayo paññāyittha, ʔhitassa aññathattam paññāyitthā ti?*

¹⁵ Future tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyissati, vayo paññāyati, ʔhitassa aññathattam paññāyissatī ’ti?*

¹⁶ Present tense: *Katam’esaṃ, āvuso ānanda, dhammānaṃ uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ʔhitassa aññathattam paññāyatī ’ti?*

¹⁷ *Yam kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ atītaṃ niruddhaṃ vipariṇataṃ...*

¹⁸ *Yam kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ ajātaṃ apātubhūtaṃ...*

that an arising is discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever feeling that has not arisen, not become, that has not arisen, not become, that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever perception that has not arisen, not become, that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever formations that has not arisen, not become, that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness that has not arisen, not become, that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

Of these things, avuso, an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

7 PRESENT AGGREGATES. ‘It is of whatever form

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever feeling

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever perception

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever formations

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

Of these things, avuso, is an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.’

When asked thus, bhante, I would answer thus.”

8a “Excellent! Excellent, Ānanda!

8b PAST AGGREGATES. Ānanda, it is of whatever form that has passed, ceased, changed,¹⁹

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever [40] feeling that has passed, ceased, changed,

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever perception that has passed, ceased, changed,

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever formations that has passed, ceased, changed,

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness that has passed, ceased, changed,

that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

Of these things, avuso, is an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

9 FUTURE AGGREGATES. ‘Avuso, it is of whatever form that has not arisen, not become,²⁰

that an arising is discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever feeling that has not arisen, not become, that has not arisen, not become,

¹⁹ *Yam kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ atītaṃ niruddhaṃ vipariṇataṃ...*

²⁰ *Yam kho, āvuso, rūpaṃ ajātaṃ apātubhūtaṃ...*

that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever perception that has not arisen, not become,
that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever formations that has not arisen, not become,
that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness that has not arisen, not become,
that an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

Of these things, avuso, an arising will be discerned, a passing away will be discerned, an alteration in what persists will be discerned.

10 PRESENT AGGREGATES. 'It is of whatever form
that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever feeling
that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever perception
that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever formations
that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

It is of whatever consciousness
that an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.

Of these things, avuso, is an arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned, an alteration in what persists is discerned.'

11 When asked thus, bhante, you should answer thus."

— evaṃ —

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