

Samyutta Nikaya (The Connected Discourses)

Scott Foglesong Commentaries from Sutra Study

NOTE: I have studied the Theravada suttas (sutras) as part of a study group for some years now. During one year, we devoted ourselves to the Connected Discourses (Samyutta Nikaya). These documents are my notes from that study period. There isn't commentary on every single sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, to say the least, or even on every samyutta (note that IV is altogether missing), but here's what I have.

We used Bhikkhu Bodhi's magnificent translation (here's a [link](#) to it), which contains reams of commentary as well. There's also a fine set of online translations (not quite complete) by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, to be found at the [Access to Insight](#) website. This is the [link](#) to the section on the [Samyutta Nikaya](#).

http://www.scottfoglesong.com/buddhism/sn_commentary/sn_top.htm

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Samyutta nikaya suttas summary

Sagatha vagga

1 Devatasamyutta

1: **Cross the flood.** The four floods which keep us submerged in the round of existence:

- a. Flood of sensuality
- b. Flood of existence
- c. Flood of views
- d. Flood of ignorance.

45:171 on these floods: "This Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these four floods, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning."

Flood of views: D I 12-38, the Brahmajala Sutta, lists the sixty-two kinds of wrong views. I won't list them all there, but some are:

eternity of the self
eternity of the world
eternalists (there's a story about a being who is a Brahma)
corruption in mind – envy
infinite world
self after death

In short, it's a cornucopia of the various viewpoints which abounded in northern India in the B's day.

By not halting, friend, and by not straining, I crossed the flood. This would normally be the way that one crossed a flood. Thus there is a slightly ambiguous character to this answer; it is designed to elicit a question of 'how' from the devata.

When I came to a standstill, friend, then I sank; but when I struggled, then I got swept away.

The 'standstill' is halting: the defilements, the hindrances. The straining or struggling is volitional formations – views and concepts – which can sweep us away. There are seven dyads for understanding:

Sink	Swept Away
defilements	volitional formations
craving and views	other defilements
craving	views
eternalist view	annihilationist view
slackness	restlessness
sensual pleasures	asceticism
unwholesome volitional formations	mundane wholesome volitional formations

A brahmin who is fully quenched

The use of brahmin here means an arahant. (This occurs in other suttas as well.) In the Dhammapada, verse 388 we have:

‘As “one who has banished wrong” is one a brahmana’

and then a series of verses 396 – 423 that identify the brahmana. Consider 420:

Whose course
 Gods, gandhabbas, and humans do not know,
 Whose intoxicants are extinct, an arahant,
 that one I call a brahmana.

Note the use of “quenched.” It’s interesting: you quench fire and thirst. The actual word is parinibbuto – which is parinirvana in Sanskrit.

This is what the devata said. According to the commentary, he became a stream-enterer on the spot. The Pali Canon has a surprising number of sudden awakening experiences. Stream-entry as being similar to bodhicitta – see Sangharakshita’s “The Bodhisattva Ideal”, pg. 43:

“...the evidence we have suggests that from a purely spiritual perspective, as far as we can tell, what was originally meant by Stream Entry is more or less the same as what is meant by the arising of the bodhicitta.”

2: **...emancipation, release, seclusion...**

Emancipation – nimokkha. This is the path, the way.
 Release – pamokkha. This is the fruit: at the moment of the fruit beings have been released from the bondage of defilements.
 Seclusion – viveka. This is Nibbana, separating all beings from suffering.

OR we can think of all three as designations for Nibbana, for upon the attainment of Nibbana, beings are emancipated, released, separated from all suffering.

By the utter destruction of delight in existence

This seems to mean the destruction of craving for existence.

3: **The stages of life successively desert us.** Youth deserts us at middle age; middle age deserts us at old age; all three desert us at the time of death.

5: **Cut off five:** the five lower fetters – identity view, doubt, distorted grasp of rules and vows,

sensual desire, ill-will.

Abandon five: the five higher fetters – lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, ignorance.

Develop five (in order to cut off and abandon the other ten): the five spiritual faculties – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom.

A bhikkhu who has surmounted five ties: these are lust, hatred, delusion, conceit, and views.

...crosser of the flood: crossing the four floods, described in the commentary to #1.

6: When the five faculties are asleep, the five hindrances are awake. (Faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom.) There is also the inverse: when the five hindrances are awake, the five faculties are asleep. One gathers dust from the five hindrances; one is purified by the five faculties.

7: The other doctrines are spelled out quite distinctly in D I 12 – 38, the Brahma's Net sutra.

Those awakened ones:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. omniscient Buddhas | b. Paccekabuddhas |
| c. arahant disciples | d. Those awakened through learning |

9: It doesn't matter if you go forth and live in the forest alone if you are filled with conceit and/or unconcentrated. But if one is of lofty mind, everywhere released one can cross beyond the realm of death.

Dhammapada 46:

Knowing this body to be like foam,
Awakening to its mirage nature,
Cutting out Mara's flowers, one may go
Beyond the sight of the King of Death.

Mara's flowers: the whirls of the three levels of existence.
Beyond the sight...: beyond Mara's range, to Nibbana.

10: **Complexion:** the condition of the complexion is understood to indicate success in meditation.

A V:340 (Book of the Elevens, #16): eleven advantages to be looked for from the release of the heart through amity – this includes "his complexion is serene."

S 21:3 "Friend Moggallana, your faculties are serene, your facial complexion is pure and bright. Has the Venerable Mahamoggallana spent the day in peaceful dwelling?"

At S 28:1 the same is said to Sariputta by Ananda.

11: **Tavatimsa:** Realm of the Thirty-Three. 33 youths have been reborn here as a result of meritorious deeds. Nandana is the garden of delight in Tavatimsa.

This is the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of such places exemplified. The deva thought of the glory as permanent, where in reality it remains impermanent and samsaric.

12: How many people see acquisitions as the ultimate delight, truly not understanding how they so easily lead to sorrow.

13: **No affection like that for oneself:** we will always care for ourselves – feed, clothes, etc.

No wealth equal to grain: if we're starving, it's really the only thing that matters.

The rain is supreme: rain is the visible manifestation of the earthly cycle, without which we would all cease.

14: Each of the Buddha's replies is much more to the point. This is especially noticeable in the obedient woman as opposed to the maiden; taking away the sexism, the point is that a good woman who is loving and attentive and a true partner is better than someone whose primary qualification is virginity. The good son is the one that matters, and not just because he happens to be first born.

I can't ascertain whether or not primogeniture was the rule in the Buddha's day, but there seem to be some indications along these lines.

15: The forest can seem welcoming or forbidding, depending on your point of view. In and of itself it is neither; we simply add these interpretations.

16: The Buddha formulates this in a positive manner: dispel the energy of torpor, and the path is opened.

17: **The intentions** should be understood as the three wrong intentions – sensuality, ill-will, harming.

S 35:240 is the "simile of the tortoise": the tortoise pulls in its head and extremities and the jackal can't harm it as a result. We can think of our head and extremities as the sense-doors, and Mara as the jackal. In guarding our sense-doors we are protecting ourselves.

A bhikkhu would not blame anyone: the bhikkhu will always speak helpfully and compassionately.

19: The Buddha can say that he has no **little hut**—i.e., a woman's womb in which he has been born—because he will no longer have a human birth.

20: **Beings who perceive what can be expressed:** this refers to the aggregate world, the world of mental and physical perception. This easily gives rise to the concept of "I", given the self-ness nature of the aggregates.

One does not conceive 'one who expresses': if we can come to full understanding of the aggregates—i.e., use of the non-discursive mind—then we are not going to be drawn into concepts of "I".

Boy, does this sound Mahayana or what?

**That does not exist for him
by which one could describe him...**

The arahant goes beyond the range of verbal expression, beyond the discursive.

One not shaken in the three descriptions: that is, "I am better", "I am equal," "I am worse." These are the three modes of conceit.

In S 45:162 the Noble Eightfold Path is stated as the way for their understanding, abandonment, and destruction.

In S 46:41 the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are cited as the way into abandoning these modes of conceit.

Having abandoned sense pleasures...not pursue a course that is painful and harmful: the middle way. Avoid the extremes and stay within the Noble Eightfold Path.

21: As if his head were on fire: here's that most striking of metaphors again. The importance of sensual lust—surely the most powerful of the hindrances.

Note that the Buddha brings up the importance of abandoning identity-view, which seems to me would take care of the sensual lust problem as well.

22: **It does not touch...it will touch** refers to karma. One acquires harmful karma if one wrongs the innocent which then “touches”—that is, ripens.

The notion of dust against the wind shows up in a number of other places. This very verse is found as Dhammapada 125.

23: The **tangle** is craving. This verse forms the opening of the Visudhimagga and is carefully analyzed therein.

It is here this tangle is cut: name-and-form is here viewed as the breaking point for the links that make up the tangle. If we can break through our perception of form (in that we mistakenly see essence within it) then we can hack through the tangle, having gotten started on it here.

24: This one reminds me again of Hui Neng's verse about no dust on the mirror. The devata sees reining in the mind from everything as being free from all suffering, but the Buddha points out the mind under control need not rein in everything—only those sources of defilement. This makes sense: do we want to rein in metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha?

25: **Would he still say, 'I speak'?:** is it possible for arahants to speak in ways that imply a belief in a self? The devata is asking the Buddha this question.

The Buddha answers that the arahant will use the language of conventional reality. The terms are used without grasping them: pace Diamond Sutra in which all beings are enlightened, no beings are enlightened, so we can say that all beings are enlightened. In short, the arahant may use such terms as expressions, but they can be used safely given that they are seen for what they are.

26: The metaphor here is of the light—the Dharma as the source of light, the Dharma as light. Hafiz:

A poet is someone
Who can pour light into a cup
Then raise it to nourish
Your beautiful, parched, holy mouth.

And of course Jesus' saying: I am the light of the world. (John 8:12). Those who follow him do not wander in darkness, but will have the light of life.

27: Certainly the **streams** are those of lust, hatred, delusion. The **round** is the round of samsara. It is in the ceasing of name-and-form, the ending of the four elements, that is the ending of samsara, thus nirvana.

28: The **avid** here is relatively perjurious—it refers to those who are ardent in the pursuit of wealth, property, sensual pleasures. You are no longer avid at the stage of arahant—expunging the ignorance which has been at the root of the craving.

29: **Four wheels:** walking, sitting, standing, lying down.

The **foul bag** is the mother's womb from which it is produced.

Filled up and bound with greed: the body is filled with impurities, which are bound up—preventing their draining out—by greed, including greed for the very body itself.

The thong that is cut is hostility; the strap the other defilements.

...**craving with its root:** ignorance is the root of craving, just as it is often pictured as the most effective break point of the chain of causation.

30: The question of: how does the life of the wanderer release one from suffering, is a good one. It is not immediately obvious just why shaving the head, living in the forest, begging, etc., are good ways to remove suffering. On the surface, in fact, it seems as though such a lifestyle would add discomfort and inconvenience. The Buddha's answer is clear enough—you must expunge desire for just those comforts and conveniences before it is possible to achieve the end of dukkha.

31: The Satullapa host is a group of 700 sailors who took refuge and precepts and were reborn in the Tavatimsa heaven following the sinking of their ship. They arrived to see the Buddha and to praise him.

The six final lines of the verse differ for each reciter, then the Buddha adds his own. The final line of each verse is as follows:

**One becomes better, never worse.
Wisdom is gained, but not from another.
One does not sorrow in the midst of sorrow.
One shines amidst one's relations.
Beings fare on to a good destination.
Beings abide comfortably.**

Buddha: **One is released from all suffering.**

Wisdom is gained, but not from another: you can't get this true wisdom anywhere else but from the true Dharma of the good.

You have all spoken well in a way.: The Buddha is going to add the ultimate. All of the others are contained in his conclusion, which is the "point" of practice, as it were.

NOTE: there is a chapter in the Dhammapada about association with the good, the wise. Chapter VI, "The Sagacious", vs. 76 – 89. Consider 78 – 79:

Let one not associate
With low persons, bad friends.
But let one associate
With noble persons, worthy friends.

One who drinks of dhamma sleeps at ease,
With mind calmly clear.
In dhamma made known by noble ones,
The wise one constantly delights.

32: **They do not die among the dead:** the commentary points out that a miser's possessions are no different from a corpse's, since neither is given to anyone.

Of those who sacrifice a thousand: although the commentary says nothing on this, I rather wonder if this might be also some kind of dig at the Brahmanical types who do animal sacrifices.

Since they give while unsettled in righteousness: this makes me think of, of all things, “The Godfather Part III”. Michael Corleone makes a gigantic gift to the Catholic Church, in what is clearly an atonement; he wishes to “go legitimate.” A bit later he attempts to buy off a group of Mafia types who are in various ventures with him. All of these attempts backfire. The Church officials who accept the money are, if anything, even more corrupt than Michael, and the Mafiosi he is attempting to shed are embroiled in a blood feud which eventually results in the (accidental) assassination of Michael’s daughter.

33: Certainly the giving of that which is righteously gained is better than that which is unrighteously gained. (See above note on #32.)

Having passed over Yama’s Vetarani River: Yama is the god of the underworld; Vetarani is the equivalent of the River Styx.

Giving discriminately too is good: there are two discriminations here. 1) the offering – giving superior instead of inferior. 2) The person to whom one gives.

This seems critical on both counts. A wino in the gutter wants booze but it is hardly good to give it.

But the path of Dhamma surpasses giving: important advice. Here in the West we are taken with Engaged Buddhism, which is indeed a very fine thing. However, we must take care to practice, follow the path. We do as much good in our practice as we do providing sandwiches to the homeless.

34: **The state of no-more-coming-back:** I read this verse as bringing up the essential drawback to being a deva. Because here there are just desirable things, it is much more difficult to understand lust and craving, and thus more difficult to obtain release.

They are not sense pleasures...the wise remove the desire for them. It isn’t the thing, it’s our reaction to the thing. The things are as they are; with no desire for them they are not sense pleasures.

35: Devas who **stand in the air** are being disrespectful. These devas have come picking a fight.

It doesn’t take much for the Buddha to put them to right. They alight on the earth and beg pardon rather quickly. But the Buddha smiles—and they find fault with this. He then calms them down all over again.

This impresses me as one prickly group of devas.

36: **If lack of faith does not persist:** interesting wording. Essentially it means “if faith is acquired.” But this is strange—then “fame and renown come to him” which seems negative, not positive.

37: The month following Vesakha is Jetthamula.

This occasion seems to be a fine and grand one, with a political dispute having been settled, and 500 monks from the two opposing factions all having achieved arahantship on the same day.

**Having cut through barrenness, cut the crossbar,
Having uprooted Indra’s pillar...**

These are identified in the commentary as lust, hatred, and delusion.

One with vision refers specifically to the five eyes of the Buddha:

1. Knowledge of the degrees of maturity in the faculties of beings
2. Knowledge of omniscience (the universal eye)
3. Knowledge of the three lower paths (the Dhamma eye)

4. The divine eye
5. The fleshly eye

NOTE that these are also listed in the Diamond Sutra, in reverse order—that is, the fleshly eye comes first. Each is found to be without essence.

They will fill the hosts of devas: the sub-commentary assures us that even mundane going for refuge protects us from rebirth in a plane of misery. But if I were to achieve Stream Entry, then a higher birth as a deva is more possible.

38: This incident takes place late in the Buddha's life given that the stone splinter was the work of Devadatta.

...bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable..he endures them...without becoming distressed.

The Buddha could feel pain just like anybody else. But the pain is simply accepted—here it is—without distress. He remains mindful and clearly comprehending.

...not blocked and checked by forceful suppression: although this phrase is apparently very tricky to understand in Pali and the translation is far from certain, it makes sense in context. The Buddha does not suppress the pain; there is no battle here.

39: Pajjuna is a deva-king, and not necessarily a human therefore. He is said to have daughters. Question: can devas reproduce? Perhaps he had the daughters when human. A partial answer is found concerning the devaputta, or “sons of the devas” who are said to be beings who are reborn spontaneously in the laps of the devas.

Those ignorant people...pass on to the terrible Roruva hell...those who have peace...will fill a host of devas. I think it's important here to make the distinction here between honest doubt and inquiry, and the all-skeptical doubt which becomes cynicism.

Sangharakshita, The Bodhisattva Ideal pg. 188, concerning the three lower fetters of the ten fetters that bind us to samsara:

The second fetter is doubt: not in the sense of objective, cool, critical enquiry—which is actually the sort of doubt that Buddhism encourages—but a soul-corroding unease that won't settle down in anything, that is full of fears and humours and whimsicalities, that won't be satisfied, that doesn't want to know and shies away from knowing, that won't try to find out and then complains that it doesn't know.

One should do no evil in all the world: this verse is found at 1:20. It reminds me of the Dalai Lama's wonderful sound-byte description of the essence of Buddhism: always help others. If you can't help them, at least don't harm them.

41: You can't take it with you. There's no point in leaving it behind, even to one's heirs.

There is a powerful metaphor: to give is to remove it from the fire (vide Fire Sermon). Having given, it will not burn in the house. That which you give is salvaged.

It may be a cliché by now, but I am reminded of Jacob Marley and the chain he forged, link by link, year after year.

Note that possessions are a worry: thieves take them away, or kings.

This is not a recommendation of a possession-free life. Note the lines:

...the wise person
 Should enjoy himself but also give.
 Having given and enjoyed as fits his means
 Blameless he goes to the heavenly state.

42: **But the one who teaches the Dhamma
 Is the giver of the Deathless.**

The teachings are priceless; they are the gift of the eternal.

43: I'm not 100% clear regarding the answer here, but it seems to me that the one who gives out of faith need not delight in food, inasmuch as the support of merit accrues to him both in this world and the next.

44: This one is rich in metaphor.

Ocean	craving
One root	ignorance
Two whirlpools	views of eternalism & annihilationism OR pleasant and painful feeling I suggest: birth and death
Three stains	lust, hatred, and delusion
Five extensions	the five cords of sensual pleasure
Twelve eddies	Six internal and six external sense faculties

45: A nice way of addressing the enlightened Buddha. I'm a bit amused by the commentary to the phrase **treading the noble path** as saying that it is present meant as past tense, for the Buddha has trod the path but, having achieved perfect enlightenment, is not treading it now.

46: The background story is required for this to make any sense. This is a monk who was reborn in Tavatimsa heaven as a deva, but didn't realize it right away. He goes to the Buddha because he sees this as a predicament: he wanted arahantship, not deva-birth.

The straight way is the Noble eightfold Path. The chariot is also the Path.

The commentary can't resist adding that the Buddha concluded with teaching the Four Noble Truths and the deva became a sotapanna.

47: Parks have cultivated flowering trees while groves have wild trees.

Another good example of the mutual dependence set up between sangha and community. They must support each other. The sangha is viewed as a critical and important part of the community, and not parasitical.

48: Anathapindika was reborn in no less than the Tusita heaven! He was especially devoted to Sariputta.

The second verse: **Action, knowledge...clan or wealth** helps to clarify even more the critical relationship between sangha and community.

49: Here is the 'simple' teaching that puts the issue in as black & white as does the most basic country parson. Remember though: it is not a permanent destination; you never give up on anyone.

Then again, neither is the positive rebirth as a deva or favored human. It isn't permanent, either.

50: During Ghatikara's life, the Buddha was a youth named Jotipala, who went forth as a bhikkhu under the Buddha Kassapa. The potter Ghatikara's earthly name was Bhaggava. Note that the Buddha reveals in verse 11 that he has known this deva all along: Ghatikara does not give the name Bhaggava, but the Buddha finally addresses him by that name.

Note: Kassapa was the Buddha immediately preceding Gotama. See Buddhavamsa, pg. 89 (#25). Jotipala was a master of the Vedas. According to the Buddhavamsa, Ghatikara was one of Kassapa's chief attendants.

51: Virtue, faith, wisdom, and merit are not to be lost, which last.

52: The same four, as not decaying and secure.

53: Although there are many companions and friends in the current life, merit is the friend of the future life, since it is merit which brings us favorable karma and a happier rebirth.

54: **Sons are the support...** because they can support us in old age.

55: Craving produces the spinning mind which is samsara; suffering is the greatest fear.

56: Same as 55, except for the last line: the person is not freed from suffering—which is the greatest fear.

57: The same as 55 – 56, but now the last line is that kamma determines the person's destiny.

58: In the line **Women are the stain of the holy life** I think we can interpret this as "sexual desire" plus the "come-thither" or invitational aspect of the opposite sex.

Austerity and the holy life: non-extreme asceticism and restraint from sexual activity.

59: Faith and wisdom as partner and teacher, respectively.

60: This one is fun: a little instruction in literary criticism in the midst of these other matters.

61: Even when something doesn't have a name, it is given a "no-name" such as "that" or sometimes even something like "thingamabob." But it always has some kind of name, some kind of label.

62: It's intriguing that it is the understanding of mind that leads to its not dragging the world around.

63: Now it is craving that drags the world around. But: craving really is mind; the understanding of craving is the understanding of mind.

64: **Thought is its means of traveling about.** The mind can take us anywhere instantaneously and often does without our volition. The true understanding of the mind is the understanding of craving, this desire of the mind to take itself elsewhere.

65: The same as #64, but uses **cut off all bondage** instead of coming to know Nibbana.

66: Death, old age, craving desire: the fuel for the fire. All is burning, all is on fire.

67: **The world is shut in by death:** even though our existence is not a lakshana, not an encapsulated essence, we tend to consider it as something which is finite and bounded—by birth and death. Thus we are mentally imprisoned within these concepts.

68: **Shut in, ensnared, enveloped, established on:** metaphors for death, suffering, craving, old age—the fetters.

69: To cut off all bondage, one must first recognize that desire is the cause of the bondage, and so one must forsake desire to cut off all bondage.

70: The six are the internal bases of eye, ear, tongue, nose, body, and mind. The harassment is the six external bases—the contact of the six internal, and the consciousness of desire that arises. We are crowded, harassed, and bullied by the desires which spring up from our perceptions.

71: **With its poisoned root and honeyed tip.** It can be momentarily enjoyable to return anger, tit for tat, or to let off steam. But then comes the poison at the root—either an escalation in which anger leads into confrontation and then even battle, or with hurt and upset and alienation. Its effects are felt for a long time: the poison is long-lasting.

72: **Token:** the standard by which something is discerned.

73: **One living by wisdom:** for a householder, this means living by the five precepts and giving alms. Could this also be interpreted as living by prajña, the true wisdom of the way things are?

74: This one's fun because the answer devata gives the ordinary, everyday answer, while the Buddha gives a more developed and lasting answer.

What happens	Devata	Buddha
Rising up	a seed	knowledge
Falling down	the rain	ignorance
Going forth	cattle	sangha
Most excellent of speakers	son	the Buddha

75: The **many bases** are the variety of meditation subjects, or kasinas. People become frightened by them and wind up embracing one of the sixty-two erroneous views as listed in the Brahmajala Sutta of the Digha Nikaya.

76: **Greed is the impediment to wholesome states:** see “Buddhism Pure and Simple”, pgs. 51 – 61, and “Being Good”, pgs. 26 – 30.

It is said that greed isn't there naturally; it is the ripening of seeds planted earlier.

Six fissures in the world: those traps, or holes we can all into—laziness, negligence, indolence, lack of self-control, drowsiness, lethargy. They're called fissures because they're dark, cramped places where there is no chance for healthier states of mind to take root and grow.

77: **They arrest a thief when he takes away,
But an ascetic who takes away is dear.**

There's removal and there's removal. The ascetic comes to take away ignorance, the rusty sword of anger, delusion. Thus his return is anticipated with pleasure.

78: This is possibly more prosaic than it seems. The **relinquish** refers to not giving oneself away as

a slave. But I suppose it could also refer to the relinquishing of oneself to the hindrances and in particular to sensual desires—becoming enslaved to that new car, better clothes, the latest food fad, etc.

79: **Faith secures provisions for a journey:** in the Avatamsaka Sutra: “The teachings of the Buddha are like a great sea. They are entered by faith and crossed by wisdom.”

Desire drags a person around: in the Sutra of Supreme Mindfulness: “...when you taste greed you are like a fish who swallows a hook.”

This sutra adds another metaphor, that of birds caught in a snare.

80: I was a bit puzzled by this one at first: at the start, it is written in metaphor with wisdom and mindfulness being called the source of light and the wakeful one, respectively. Then suddenly it shifts into much more humdrum matters—cattle and ploughing, and then the rain which nurtures. But that’s just the point: wisdom lies in the cattle, mindfulness in the ploughing.

81: **When he stands firmly established:** even the monk requires time and effort to build a foundation of virtue; it does not happen automatically.

2 Devaputtasamyutta

1: **Clear up this point yourself:** seems to be a rendering of 'work it out for yourself' or something along those lines.

Exercise of an ascetic I take to mean meditation; perhaps vipassana as compared to samatha, which would be the concluding line.

2: **If he desires the heart's attainment:** that means arhantship, enlightenment.

3: The verse here is similar to earlier ones. Slaying anger is the one good form of killing. One would assume that the slaying of ignorance would be another.

4: I've also seen this verse before, in the Anguttara Nikaya. Sun, moon, and fire are fine, but the Buddha is the unsurpassed light. Certainly I take this as the buddha-nature dwelling within, that all share, in our shared potential for awakening. The actual Theravada may not think that we're all Buddhas, but in some ways I get a bit of that here.

5: **brahmin** here means arahant. Not that the arahant need not strive any longer, for he has reached the end of birth and death.

I can see this (and what it stands for) as a sticking point in the development of Buddhism. The bodhisattva most emphatically *does* continue to strive—there is no path to follow with an end in sight.

6: According to the commentary, the deva had been an ascetic but, due to very powerful defilements, found the life very difficult. He finds the path **impassable and uneven** and the Buddha points out that it is quite passable and even for the noble ones. Meditation is neither easy nor difficult: these distinctions lie only in the mind.

7: The Book of the Nines, Pancalananda Chapter (IV 449-51) is a longer version of this. In Ananda's analysis, the confinement is the five cords of sense desire and the opening the first jhana. There remain confinements then, which are broken by each of the jhanas, then successively by the four formless realms, with the final asavas to be destroyed and thus the achievement of complete escape.

Pancalananda had achieved the first jhana in a previous existence. Here the Buddha is teaching him that this is only one step along the way (provided we are reading in the context of A 449-51) and that further effort is needed.

8: Even though Tayana was not a disciple, his practice bore fruit given that he was reborn well. Note the difference here between this attitude and that of other religions which invariably place non-adherents in hell, à la Dante. Tayana does recognize the excellence of the Buddha's teachings, and warns against the unfounded spiritual life.

9: **Candima seized by Rahu:** a lunar eclipse. Thus the metaphor of a lunar eclipse: the asuras remove the moon's brightness. The Buddha claims that the moon has taken refuge and is therefore released—the eclipse passes.

10: Here we have **Suriya**, the sun, in eclipse. In both this and #9, Rahu is a demon who stands in the path of sun or moon, and takes them into his mouth; since they keep moving on (karma) he must let them go or they will break through the back of his head.

11: Interesting about deer in a mosquito-infested marsh: would the mosquitoes be sufficient to actually kill the deer? Or had they made the connection already between mosquitoes and disease?

12: Ventu could be the prototype of Vishnu.

13: Such a simple sutra and yet so fine! A meditator is the one liberated in mind; *this* is the practice.

Having known the world's rise and fall: not only the external world, but also his world—the fathom-long body.

14: Here is an excellent description of the arahant: the **taint-destroyer bearing his final body**.

15: This sutra has strong bearing to the very first one. Also see Sutta Nipata 173-175 for the same question and reply with nuances.

12:38 – 40: intention is the support for the maintenance of consciousness.

Sensual perception: the five lower fetters

Fetter of form: the five higher fetters

Delight in existence: three kinds of karmic volitional formations (negative, positive, neutral.)

16: The metaphor/simile of one's head on fire: always striking. Here applied to sensual lust and identity view.

17: **The mind is always agitated
About unarisen problems
And about arisen ones.**

The **unarisen problems** are listed first, I daresay because they are more common. Amazing how we can get into a stew over—nothing.

The Buddha's answer is quite unequivocal: enlightenment and austerity, restraint of the sense faculties, relinquishing all: there is no way around this. The path is the path.

18: **Delight comes to one who is miserable,
Misery to one filled with delight.**

Here is something addressed in the prajnaparamita literature. We can conceive of any lakshana on in its negation: to see that lakshana 'x' appears, we must also see that lakshana 'not-x' also appears, for how can we conceive a notion without conceiving the non-existence of the same notion?

19: This is a repeat of Devatasamyutta 3 (1:3).

20: I seem to recall that Anathapindika had a special relationship with Sariputta. This verse is a repeat of 1:48 up to the end of the verse. After this, the Buddha repeats the verse to the sangha and Ananda figures the devaputta must have Anathapindika.

21: This one is essentially a repeat of 1:31, although in the earlier version various devas of the Satullapa host recite the individual quatrains.

22: Usually we talk respectfully about other religions. But there are the 62 wrong views as outlined in the Brahmajala Sutra (D 1:1). These lead us to woe—especially, as here, if we start on the Dhamma road and then move off. However, note that this isn't eternal damnation. Your rebirth may not wind up as good as hoped, but there's always another chance.

23: This begins as a repeat of 1:43. But then we get a story. The critical thing here is that there is no limit to the merit acquired through giving. The Perfection of Wisdom tradition takes this farther by stating that if one has a notion (lakshana) or merit, then there is no merit.

24: Repeat of 1:50. I have notes on Ghatikara in my notes on that.

25: **Become just like the dead:** that is, the dead don't receive teachings from the masters, the dead don't practice, the dead don't do giving as compassion, etc.

26: This is the companion sutra to my all-time favorite in the Anguttara Nikaya, Nines #38. Also see S iv, 93 (IV:116(3)). I'll be doing some kind of commentary on this group of "End of the World" sutras, in particular using the commentary by Nananada, once it arrives.

27: This is a repeat of 1:4, with the substitution of the young deva Nanda for the **certain devata** of the previous version.

28: Repeat of 1:29, again with a substitution of a young deva for a devata.

29: **...the young deva Susima, accompanied by a great assembly of young devas, approached the Blessed One.** This has the same grandiloquent sound to it as the Mahayana sutras often have.

This is all the more apparent in the following paragraphs in which the young devas intensify their colors, in a series of lovely metaphors.

30: Although other teachers may have taught other systems, they taught karma and thus their disciples may well have been reborn as devas.

This in some ways is a condensed version of the Samanaphalla Sutra--#2 in the Digha Nikaya, which covers the teachings of the other teachers of the Buddha's day.

3 Kosalasamyutta

1: **So young in years and has newly gone forth?**: This isn't quite in sunch with the given location—Jetavana. First, Jetavana wasn't built until the Buddha had been teaching for a while. Second, it's in Kosala and was partially funded by Prince Jeta—a member of the royal household. If it is true that this sutta records the first meeting between Pasenadi and the Buddha, I think probably that the given location isn't correct.

It's interesting that this one sounds just a bit like a pissing contest. It seems that the Buddha needed to communicate with Pasenadi using metaphors of force and power—which he wouldn't have needed to do with Bimbisara.

One does not gain...stumps of palymyra trees: refers to karma and reaping the fruits of questionable intentions.

2: This would appear to be an early lesson in pasenadi's Dharma education.

3: Critical lesson and yet how many don't see it? **For one who has taken birth, great king, there is nothing other [to expect] than aging and death.**

Note that Pasenadi addresses the Buddha as 'venerable sir' since taking refuge. In #1 he addresses the Buddha as 'Master Gotama.'

4: **Both the merits and the evil
That a mortal does right here:
This is what is truly one's own...**

This stanza is a memorable description of karma. It is the true possession, the one thing we carry along always, even past death.

5: Our strongest self-protection is the cultivated mind. How many verses are there in the Dhammapada to this same idea? Consider 42 – 43:

What a foe may do to a foe,
Or a hater to a hater—
Far worse than that
The mind ill held may do to him.

Not father, mother, nor even other kindsmen,
May do that [good to him-]
Far better than that
The mind well held may do to him.

6: People generally don't handle wealth well, especially not rulers who would be more inclined to use both wealth and political power—be absolutely corrupted by it.

On a lesser note, winning the lottery has often been the ticket to the graveyard for unprepared people—booze and drugs follow quickly.

7: Sometimes it's the rich who are the most vehement about acquiring more property.

8: This one seems a bit strange until you readh the last line: **Hence once who loves himself should not harm others.** That we protect ourselves—we get cut, we heal it, keep ourselves safe, try not to endagner ourselves, etc.—means that to harm another is hurting the one that person holds dear. Thus our compassion takes that into account.

9: **Sacrifice:** according to the Brahmanadhammika Sutta (SN 284-315) the brahmins did not originally sacrifice animals:

“Having begged for rice, beds, cloth, butter, oil, and collecting them by fair means, they offered such objects as these for sacrifice, and at the sacrifice they did not kill cows.” (SN 295)

They were also fairly chaste at this time—the men did not engaged in sexual relations with women until after their 48th year (SN 289) and even then only with a wife past menopause (SN 291).

Note: I gather from this that the brahmins were not hereditary at this point (they seem determined not to reproduce.)

Then they began to covet the trappings of the wealthy:

“The brahmins coveted the great enjoyment of men surrounded by herds of cows, groups of beautiful women, chariots with well-trained horses, well decorated with beautiful curtains and homes and dwelling places built to good proportion.” (SN 300-1).

So they persuaded the king to offer sacrifices (including human!) and offer wealth to the brahmins. (SN 303, 308)

Note that this seems to have created a health hazard (SN 311) although, to be sure, the description of 95 new diseases springing up could be mostly metaphor.

This sutra brings home quite forcefully just how swift and deep of a cultural current the Buddha was working against. A king like Pasenadi was accustomed to vast, bloody animal sacrifices—including human—and the Buddha needed to teach him the need to stop such practices.

Interesting that the Caanite religion of Palestine involved a considerable amount of animal sacrifice which was eventually stopped as the great scholars began to hammer Judaism into its modern form, also happening around this time.

10: **great mass of people had been put in bondage:** the commentaries appear to assume that these were criminals but the sutra doesn't say anything about this. Pasenadi was involved in a significant number of military actions so these could conceivably be prisoners.

11: **Migara's mother:** she wasn't really his mother; Migara was her father-in-law. Her name was Visakha, and she was the Buddha's chief female patron.

Niganthas: Jains

Jalilas: ascetics with matted hair.

This sutra is also Udana 64-66 (6.2 in Ireland translations), but the verse is different.

12: **Kokanada:** the red lotus.

Angirasa: the Buddha, called because light rays issue from his body. One can see here the same metaphoric imagery of the Mahayana sutras.

The verse appears at A iii, 239-240.

13: The Buddha's dietary sutra. Simple and sensible: you want to lose weight, don't eat so much. People who overeat (like Pasenadi) will age faster, die sooner.

Apparently Pasenadi reduced his intake to normal for a man, although a **pint-pot measure** doesn't sound like all that much. It's a "nalika", perhaps we could say "serving" although that's not much better.

good pertaining to the present life: slimming down the body. **[good] pertaining to the future life:** additional cultivation of a virtue—moderation in eating.

14: Pasenadi was Ajatasattu's uncle—his sister was Ajatasattu's mother.

**The peaceful one sleeps at ease,
Having abandoned victory and defeat.**

Winning is losing and losing is losing. If you carry such concepts as winning and losing, you remain enmeshed in samsara.

15: **The plunderer is plundered:** steal and the incurred karma steals from you. **The killer begets a killer:** it comes back to you, as dust blown against the wind. The karma unfolds and eventually ripens.

Dhammapada 69:

The childish one thinks it is like honey
While the bad [he has done] is not yet matured.
But when the bad is matured,
Then the childish one comes by suffering.

This is very similar to the second quatrain of the verse.

16: Clearly enough, women were not considered fit to rule, and also the Buddha had no truck with that. Note that the Buddha is definitely bucking the opinion of most civilizations when he says: **A woman...may turn out better than a man.**

17: Diligence makes it better here and now and also plants the seeds for the future—this life and for future births. Thus it stands as the foundation for everything else—what of sila, samadhi, and panna can happen without it?

18: I find this one to center around what the Mahayana would come to call as the bodhisattva ideal. The example set to you by our companions is deeply encouraging to you, and you in turn show that to others. As an opening of the barriers between sentient beings, a softening of the boundaries.

The sutra also points out that the Dhamma does not help unless you practice it.

19: It's always worth noting that the Buddha never scorned wealth. It is the *hoarding* of wealth that is the problem. That encourages an increased sense of self and selfishness, and does not allow the wealth to be used to help others.

The image of the money-grubbing financier who lives meanly is an old one. Think of Ebenezer Scrogge and that horrible old man Walter Gride in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Even those who live at least in personal comfort (Ralph Nickleby) treat those around him with selfishness (Newman Noggs.)

20: Good karma does not wipe out bad karma. They both ripen in their own good time. The financier had a number of good rebirths. But his bad karma also ripened and things got worse and worse, with him finally exhausting all of his good rebirths and being born into the Great Roruva hell.

21: This is also A ii 85-86.

candalas: lowest of the outcastes.

On the surface it seems simple enough: if you are to achieve good rebirth, it's what you do that matters, and not how wealthy you are. But consider this from the vantage point of a king, an absolute monarch in an age in which kings wielded absolute power. They would be much less inclined to think in such terms, and it appears that Pasenadi was a fairly average sort as far as kings went. So the Buddha's lessons were starting to sink in.

Or at least we hope it is: the sutra is all Buddha-to-king, never king-to-Buddha.

22: even after all these years we still have trouble accepting the possibility of death. But the Buddha states it: **All beings, great king, are subject to death, terminate in death, and cannot escape death.** The Buddha has begun to teach Pasenadi the Four Noble Truths, at least the first one. See #87 in the Majjhima Nikaya.

23: And now we're taking a very simple look at the Second Noble Truth.

24: **What is given to one who is virtuous, great king, is of great fruit, not so what is given to an immoral person.** Given money to an unrepentant wino serves no good: but what if there is hope of turning him around?

25: The great conquerors want to leave their marks on the world. But it is the nature of things to change. Alexander wanted to change the world. But the world would change anyway; he might affect some of that change but the change would happen anyway.

No matter how exalted our position, we die. No matter how lowly our position, we die.

Pasenadi is starting to understand the lesson—aging and death are rolling in on him. He cannot fight his way out of them. You can't buy your way out of them.

GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT PASENADI

1. He and the Buddha were the same age. See M ii, 125 for his mentioning that, at their last meeting, that they were both eighty years old.
2. They first met when they were fairly young: see #1 in Kosalasamyutta.
3. Pasenadi's wife was Mallika, who brought him to the Buddha. See M #87 for the story of that.

4 Marasamyutta

1: It wouldn't be the morning of the Buddha's enlightenment given that he and Mara had but just completed their legenday set-to.

You have missed the path to purity: although Mara now appears to be advocating asceticism, whereas previously he attempted to deflect the Buddha with sensual desires, we must realize that Mara would indicate ballroom dancing as the path to purity if he thought that by so doing he might deflect the Buddha.

Aimed at the immortal state: any practice, including asceticism, which has a selfish goal in mind as its motivation (such as heavenly rebirth) only accrues unfortunate karma.

Virtue, concentration, wisdom: sila, samadhi, panna: the three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path.

2: So now Mara attempts to scare off the Buddha by taking the form of a great elephant. Interesting how many years later, Devadatta would make an attempt on the Buddha's life by releasing a maddened bull elephant towards him—which the Buddha was able to tame and calm down.

3: So now Mara tries beautiful and hideous shapes. The Buddha is not to be caught.

4: This is early in the Buddha's career but not at the beginning—he has already sent out his first 60 disciples.

He discusses the role of right effort—thus this connects with “Crossing the Flood.” (Devatasamyutta #1).

5: This is the B's injunction to his first sixty disciples, also found in the Vinaya. (Thus the sutras are a bit out of order in this collection.)

Note that devas are most definitely included as those who are to benefit from the teachings.

6: Now Mara tries to be a horrifying serpent! You would think he'd catch on by now that the Buddha sees right through him.

Bhikkhu Bodhi points out that Mara is considered a real being, and not just a manifestation of a psychological state—he wouldn't be pestering an enlightened Buddha otherwise.

Note: the Kosalans were noted for the manufacture of large bronze dishes.

Death and suffering bring no fear to the enlightened—so they will not fear fiends, monsters, apparitions, or forces of nature or aggression.

7: For an enlightened one, when he sleeps he sleeps. Mara's concern over this is meaningless.

8: This is also a conversation with a devat in 1:12.

9: According to Mara, our short lifespan is of no concern. Just live like a baby unconcerned for the future. The Buddha counters that we must understand that all is on fire—do what is wholesome and good, to go on well to the next life.

10: If Bhikkhu Bodhi's point about the simile of the chariot's felly is correct, then the Buddha must be thought of as conversant with the Upanishads (those of them which existed in his dsay) and was able to use them in teaching. (Or, a later redactor knew them and inserted this reference here.)

Felly: also 'felloe': it's the exterior rim of a wheel with spokes.

11: Nor can Mara upset the Buddha by shattering nearby boulders. Perhaps this took place after Devadatta's attempt on the Buddha's life by rolling a boulder down towards him.

12: **Confound them:** frighten or disturb them enough so as to make them lose their concentration.

13: This one refers to the Devadatta incident. The metaphor of a dart stuck in the breast is interesting: we can get along with it, but how much better it is if the dart had been removed.

14: Interesting remark here: the giver of a Dharma talk may become wrapped up in notions of hurting or helping others via the talk, since all people will be sure to respond differently. This is yet another issue to let go of. One's compassion can extend to understanding this.

15: The mind can take us anywhere, in a fraction of a second, and we can get caught up in almost instantly. A mental snare moving about in the sky of the mind, governed by the five sense-desires.

16: In the "Snake" Sutra, MN 22 (i, 140) the Buddha says:

...bhikkhus, whatever is not yours, abandon it; when you have abandoned it, that will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time. What is it that is not yours? Material form is not yours... feeling... perception... formations... consciousness is not yours.

Bhikkhus, what do you think? If people carried off the grass, sticks, branches, and leaves in this Jeta Grove, or burned them, or did what they liked with them, would you think: 'People are carrying us off or burning us or doing what they like with us?'

17: [The six sense objects] are the terrible bait of the world. Great metaphor: we're like the fish who aren't aware enough to see the difference between safe food and a baited hook. Instead, we just pounce without thinking.

18: Only if the Buddha were attached to the notion of getting alms would Mara's snare have any effect. The Buddha would have returned to the village and been exposed to embarrassment. But to have no alms only meant a day of no food, nothing more—which is no big deal.

Ultimately, it is Mara who is hurt: through his poor intention he accumulates demerit, whereas the Buddha is beyond karma.

Devas of the Streaming Radiance are in the highest of the form realms.

19: The eighteen bases of consciousness are here expositied. If we are free of them, we are not cattle.

20: As the notes point out, the question of whether truly righteous governance is possible is never answered. Mara attempts to sidetrack the Buddha by bringing up using his enlightened mind in order to gain temporal power.

The ultimate message is that once we have understood the source of suffering—craving for the five cords of sensual pleasure—then we will no longer be inclined to those sensual pleasures.

21: Another reaction against the brahmanical life—young brahmins would first marry and enjoy sensual relations before going on a life of renunciation later on. But not in the Buddha's sangha.

22: Apparently this is Samiddhi's sole verse in the Theragatha.

23: **temporary liberation of mind:** the four jhanas and the four formless realms.

He did indeed want to commit suicide. There is a sutra at 35:87 which explores suicide at some length. This issue appears to be one's merit at the time of the act, rather than the act itself. Even an arahant may wish to take his own life—not from aversion but simply from a wish to be free from unbearable pain. But the truly non-blameworthy would not commit suicide out of aversion towards life. Suicide as an escape from the sufferings of life is totally ineffective.

The general idea here is that he attained arahantship in observing the process of death as his meditation subject. This does not necessarily make suicide acceptable—it appears not to be in the various Vinayas—but is not what Mara is thinking, which is that Bodhika was craving death.

24: This doesn't seem to be occurring right at the time of enlightenment. In the verse the Buddha says: **Having dug up entirely the root of sorrow** which certainly indicates that it is post-enlightenment.

25: This is really a continuation of the previous sutra.

Mara's daughters are:

Tanha (craving)
Arati (discontent)
Raga (lusting)

5 Bhikkhunisamyutta

1: This is apparently the nun Sela, who is also featured in #9.

Marah's temptation is typical—enjoy sensual pleasures now—and probably he did not recognize her as an arahant.

2: The old bias that women aren't wise enough for arahantship is here voiced by Mara, rather than by some monk.

As one sees correctly into Dhamma: Soma was an arahant.

3: Kisagotami was the woman whose son had died: the Buddha sent her from house to house seeking a mustard seed from someone who had not known death. Thus Mara is playing on that in his verse.

4: **The music of the fivefold ensemble:** although the commentary glosses this with the names of various instruments, what's important is that this is an invitation for a sexual encounter.

last verse: the first three padas refer to form realm, formless realm, and third to the eight meditative attainments—all of which would serve to dissolve emphasis on the senses.

5: Interesting that this one deals in supernormal powers, which the fully enlightened are said to possess—but which the Buddha warns against making them seem relatively important.

6: Cala's verse is a very good description of a basis for dependant origination:

**For one who is born there is death;
Once born, one encounters sufferings—
Bondage, murder, affliction—
Hence one shouldn't approve of birth.**

7: It should be noted that the Cala women: Cala, Upacala, and Sisupacala—were Sariputta's three younger sisters.

Here is an excellent description of the deva realms and why rebirth is not desirable there. Devas remain in sensual bondage.

8: Here other teachings are "creeds". Note that this fits in well with the sutra to the Kalamas, when Sisupacala says:

**Outside here the followers of creeds
Place their confidence in views.**

9: This is a fine description of dependant origination.

10: A great description of no-self, non-being. The aggregate of parts we call a 'chariot'—as the aggregate of parts we call a 'being'.

5 Brahmasamyutta

1: **adhesion:** to the five cords of sensual desire.

living at ease: not teaching. The commentary notes that this encourages the Brahma to request him to teach, therefore it cannot be said that the Buddha just got up and started blabbing out his teachings without pre-consideration.

eye of a Buddha: the highest and most penetrating of the five eyes of a Buddha, the lowest being the fleshly eye itself.

2: This sutra recognizes the Buddha's place in the histories of the Buddhas. He has realized that he must dwell in honor, respect, and reverence for this Dhamma which he has discovered (doesn't mean it didn't exist already), the same realization which came to the Buddhas of the past and which will come to the Buddhas of the future.

3: This one digs a bit at brahmanical practice: it is more worthy for the woman to give the food offering for Brahma as alms to the bhikkhu.

4: The Brahma Baka had been reborn many times into very lofty realms and had come to forget his past existences, coming to think of himself as eternal and his realm a realm of the eternal. This is the sort of thing that tankles Christians: any God there may be is subject to decay and death.

We seventy-two, Gotama, were merit-makers: nobody seems to have any idea as to what this refers.

5: There's something a little silly about this. The brahma thinks that no ascetics can come into his world; the Buddha hears that, and before you know it not only the Buddha but four of his elder disciples are there, kind of saying "nyah, nyah, nyah."

It's really quite a funny little sutra.

6: This one is also distinctly fantastical, although the actual point is simple: no matter how much power a brahma may have, it is a power associated with form. But **the wise one takes no delight in form** and hence he is infinitely more powerful.

7: I find the verse here to be very much in the spirit of the prajnaparamita. You cannot measure the immeasurable—only the obstructed worldling would attempt such a thing.

8: Same as above, except they refer to one of Devadatta's followers as an **obstructed moron** who attempts to define the immeasurable by defining it.

9: **Place confidence in Sariputta and Moggallana, Kokalika:** in 6:10 we find out that Kokalika has maligned them directly to the Buddha.

See how far you have transgressed: the brahma Tudu had done nothing wrong, but Kokalika was trying to get rid of him by being accusatory and unpleasant.

Thus the verse is all about Right Speech and the lack thereof.

10: This tells the actual story of Kokalika that has been referred to in 6:7 and 6:9.

Kokalika appears to have died of some plague-like disease.

The length of stay in Paduma hell is horrific: the base measure is bad enough, but it is then multiplied by 20⁹! Here are the hells:

Abbuda
Nirabudda
Ababa
Atata
Ahaha
Kumuda
Sogandhika
Uppala
Pundarika
Paduma

Each of these is a particular location within Avici hell.

11: This one (and several following) seem to be just like the Devatasamyutta, except that it is brahmas addressing the Buddha rather than devatas.

12: Brahma Sahampati seems to appear to the Buddha at important times, times of crisis—here, immediately following Devadatta's schism. In fact he seems to act in a reassuring role—helping the Buddha with emotional support in times of crisis.

13: Sahampati speaks of living alone, practicing for release—but if that's too difficult, remain in the Sangha. But he emphasizes that it *can* be done:

**Within a single holy life
A thousand have left Death beyond.**

14: **Sikhi** was the fifth Buddha of antiquity. Note that this sutra refers to the deity Brahma, who has a retinue and an assembly. He was the supreme deity of early Brahmanism, conceived as the creator of the universe. In the Buddhist canon, he becomes a target of satire and criticism. Brahma (Mahabrahma) is viewed as the ruler of the brahma realm—another deva-like realm. The brahmas seem to differ from devas in that they are even longer-lived and more apt to forget their mortality.

Many brahmas are highly deluded, but Sahampati stands out as a non-deluded brahma who is a supporter of the Buddha and in some ways a friend and confidant.

It seems that the various brahmas of this sutra required what amounted to parlor tricks in order to benefit from the message of this sutra, which is stated in the verse.

15: Interesting that the Buddha moved up through the four jhanas and the four formless realms, then back through them again in reverse order, and then up through the four jhanas—and reached parinibbana emerging from the fourth jhana.

Nidnavagga

12 Nidanasamyutta

1: The links are:

ignorance
volitional formations
consciousness
name-and-form
six sense-bases
contact
feeling
craving
clinging
existence
birth
ageing-and-death (and the rest of the mass of suffering)

It is with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance that breaks the cycle.

2: The links are listed the same as in #1. However, in the *analysis* the Buddha proceeds backwards, beginning with ageing-and-death.

Notes: the Buddha's analysis of existence places it within the three realms of kamaloka, rupaloka, and arupaloka.

Analysis of clinging: we cling to:

- 1) sensual pleasures
- 2) views
- 3) rules and vows
- 4) a doctrine of self

Analysis of craving: we crave the objects of the six senses

Analysis of feeling: feeling born of contact with the six senses

Analysis of contact: contact with the six senses

Analysis of consciousness: one kind of consciousness for each sense-base.

3: Lists the same set of links, first with ignorance leading inexorably to suffering, and again in the same order but with the cessation of ignorance leading to the cessation of suffering.

4: Examines the links backwards, as the Buddha Vipassi (#6)

5 – 9: The same but concerns other Buddhas: Sikhi, Bessabhu, Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa

10: Concerning Shakyamuni. First it moves backwards (ageing-and-death is first), and then quickly forwards from ignorance as a kind of review.

The second part repeats this but from the standpoint of cessation.

11: The four nutriments are conditioned by craving. Bhikkhu Bodhi helps to cut through some of the

complexity of the Abhidhamma analyses by saying:

“...it is craving which impels beings into the perpetual struggle to obtain physical and mental nutriment, both in the present life and in future lives.”

12: This sutta emphasizes the wrong view of an essential self, as Phagguna keeps asking *who* is doing this. The Buddha continually responds with answers that reveal the *process* nature of each link and how the links do not imply the existence of a self. The links are all marked by emptiness; they are not essential things marked by a separate existence, and therefore they do not point to anything other than that which is also marked by emptiness, and not to things which are marked by a separate existence.

13: This begins with the reverse formulation, but does not specify ignorance as the last in the set. This makes sense given the opening line: “Bhikkhus, those ascetics or brahmins who do not understand...” and then on into the listed links.

Interesting in the second paragraph, the cessation of each link in turn is described, in reference to those who *do* understand.

So: ignorance of the twelve links starts the whole chain rolling—and a lack of ignorance keeps it from rolling at all.

14: Also stated in reverse order, this sutta also defines ignorance as being ignorance of the twelve links, for with the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of all the rest.

15: In describing the non-right view of the “notion of existence” and the “notion of non-existence” the Buddha is not rejecting ontology. Rather, he is warning against mystical notions concerning existence, whether they be of an eternalist or annihilationist character.

The critical phrases are that one with right view recognizes that which arises—through perception and cognition—is suffering, and that it is therefore suffering that ceases. The Middle Way between the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism is the knowledge of the twelve links: that the arising of ignorance is the arising of suffering, and that when ignorance ceases, suffering ceases.

16: This sutta ties in well with my thoughts concerning the Buddhavacana. If one teaches for the purpose of helping the listener reach the cessation of ignorance-through-old-age-and-death, then this is proper practice and has a right to be called Buddhavacana.

17: The ascetic Kassapa begins with a question in the form of the tetralemma:

Is suffering created by oneself?
Is suffering created by another?
Is it created by both?
Is it created by neither?

The Buddha’s answers are difficult. As to them:

1) It seems that the first question has pre-supposed an eternalist view in “the one who acts is the same as the one who experiences the result” from the point that in order to experience the result of an act, the act must either precede or be concurrent with that result. And because every result must be in and or itself an act—i.e., there is nothing that stands apart from cause and condition, then the cycle of cause and effect, of act and result, is eternal. If the self is both subject and object, this implies an eternal self and thus is an eternalist view.

2) In the second view, we must keep the all-or-nothing nature of the argument in mind. By saying that Agent A acts and Agent B experiences the result is taken to mean that Agent A does *not* experience the

result, nor does Agent B act. In karmic terms, this implies that upon the completion of the act, Agent A steps outside or away from karmic influence, given that the act does not result in Agent A's experiencing the result—even as shared with Agent B. This implies the annihilation of the agent, for as long as the agent exists that agent *must* be subject to karma—i.e., the resultant of the act of the agent.

3) Thus given that *both* self and other imply the adopting of *both* eternalism *and* annihilationism, the third possibility is not valid.

4) The fourth possibility—*neither* self *nor* other—implies that suffering arises without cause, and that is likewise untenable given that *all* arises due to causes and conditions.

So the Buddha teaches that suffering arises in ignorance, followed by the remaining links. The effect is shown to occur through the causes and to cease with the cessation of the cause, but neither agent nor experiencer is described.

18: This sutta is the same as #17, with “pleasure and pain” taking the place of “suffering” and with slightly more telegraphic answers by the Buddha.

19: The difference between the wise man and the fool. They are both hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, but for the wise man, there will be no faring on to another body after this one, unlike the fool.

20: The links are followed backwards, but we begin with birth as the condition for aging-and-death.

One critical aspect of this sutta rests in the statement that whether or not there are Tathagatas to teach dependent origination, this still persists: that is, dependent origination is not something taught, but discovered: something that is always there, a law of nature—Dhamma.

Another important point is that both *will* condition aging-and-death. There is no “possibly” here. Conditionality produces phenomena; the same set of conditions produce the same phenomena.

21: Here we have several important issues. The first is the impermanence of the five skandhas. The second is the General Theory of Dependent Origination, clearly stated.

22: This is a ‘rousing’ sutta, to encourage diligence on the part of the bhikkhus.

23: The sutta shows links of liberation as well as links of suffering.

Liberation:

knowledge of destruction –

liberation – dispassion – revulsion – knowledge and vision of things as they really are – concentration – happiness – tranquillity – rapture – gladness – faith – suffering (which then leads into the links of suffering.)

These are probably best stated in the reverse order, as we see how they can arise out of suffering:

suffering – faith – gladness – rapture – tranquillity – happiness – concentration – knowledge and vision of things as they really are – revulsion – dispassion – liberation – knowledge of destruction

24: The links here go from the six sense bases through suffering (i.e., old-age-and-death)

25: In addition to recaptulating the careful arguments of #17 and identifying contact (of the six sense bases) as the dependence for suffering, this sutra expands volitions to be not only those of mind, but also of body and of speech.

These three volitional formations arise with ignorance as the cause. It does not matter whether the rising is intentional or unintentional, deliberate or undeliberate, or whether on one's own initiative or on the

prompting of another. Ignorance is comprised within these three states.

With the fading away of ignorance comes the fading away of these volitions—and hence the whole chain of suffering.

26: The questions of #17 arise once more, in the tetralemma form. This one appears to be the ‘basic’ version, which gives contact as the condition for suffering. (Contact with the remaining links, of course, and contact is of course conditioned.)

27: Three types of volitional action, as in #25: body, speech, and mind.

The sutta also shows that it is the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to the cessation of volitional formations—for it leads to the cessation of ignorance, after all.

28: This is essentially a repeat of #27, although it speaks of a ‘bhikkhu’ who understands dependent origination, rather than a ‘noble disciple.’

29: This is another sutta which defines ‘ignorance’ as a lack of knowledge of dependent origination. He who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; he who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha.

30: Now here’s a *very* interesting statement. The one who is ignorant:

“...it is impossible that they will abide having transcended aging-and-death.”

But for those who are *not* ignorant:

“...it is possible that they will abide having transcended aging-and-death.”

In short: it isn’t a *guarantee*, which is all the better. The Buddha taught the way to liberation but there is no cocksure guarantee that you’ll get there by following the teachings. There are just too many causes and conditions for that. *You* have to do it. However, if you remain in ignorance, you *cannot* do it.

Without wisdom there can be no true compassion: the brahma-viharas do not arise without wisdom.

31: This one isn’t really about the twelve links, but it states the aggregates as arising with some condition or another as nutriment.

Wonderful line: “...one is liberated by nonclinging.”

32: This long sutta is mostly about Sariputta’s claim to arahantship, due to his examination of the internal formations and his subsequent breaking of ignorance.

The line he speaks is important:

“Friends, through an internal deliverance, through the destruction of all clinging, I dwell mindfully in such a way that the taints do not flow within me and I do not despise myself.”

33: Here we have eleven of the twelve links, each presented as having four cases of knowledge:

aging-and-death: origin: cessation: way leading to cessation:

The origin is the next link down, and the cessation of that link leads to the cessation of the current link. The Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to its cessation.

The actual definitions are at #2.

Taken all together, this one makes for a very powerful chanting sutta.

34: Also a chanting sutta. It would expand out shorter, although there are 77 cases—each one is short.

35: I am especially intrigued here by the section:

“If there is the view, ‘the soul and the body are the same,’ then there is no living of the holy life; and if there is the view, ‘The soul is one thing, the body is another,’ there is no living of the holy life.

The Buddha says that these assertions are identical in meaning, differing only in the phrasing. They are both extremes, and are views of a body and views of a soul, no matter what we add to the mix by thinking of them as the same or as separate.

The commentary Spk goes on. One who holds the view that soul and body are the same hold that both soul and body are annihilated at death. Thus follows an annihilationist view, given that one holds that “a being is annihilated.” But if one holds that the soul is one thing, and the body another, then the body alone is annihilated at death, while the soul goes about freely like a bird released from a cage. This view is eternalism.

In the annihilationist view, the round of existence ceases without the development of the path—so the development of the path becomes purposeless.

In the eternalist view, if there were even one formation that is permanent, stable, and eternal, the noble path would not be able to bring the round of existence to an end—so again the development of the path become purposeless.

This is an area in which Buddhist thought is in sharp distinction with Greek and monotheistic thinking. Consider the passage in the *Phaedo*, in which the separation of soul and body (and the view of a being) is very clearly expressed:

‘Do we believe there is such a thing as death?’

‘Undoubtedly’, replied Simmias.

‘And by death do we not mean simply the departure of soul from body? Being dead consists, does it not, in the body having been parted from the soul and come to be by itself, and in the soul having been parted from the body, and being by itself. Can death possibly be anything other than that?’

‘No, it can be only that.’ (Phaedo 64C. Hackforth translation, page 44.)

It should be mentioned that soul (mind-soul) and body are viewed more as a cohesive whole in earlier dialogues such as the *Meno*, but the view of a being—animated by an immortal soul—is definitely a legacy of Pythagorean thinking and survived quite solidly in Socrates and Plato.

Grube (Plato’s Thought) pages 125-6: “...the soul is thought by Socrates to be that part of man by which he knows or apprehends those eternal objects of knowledge, the Forms or Ideas, and only that part. The soul is here a unity and it does not include anything beyond the reason or intellect. Pitted against it at every turn is the body as the seat of sense-perception, of passions and desires, of pleasure.”

37: Solid formulation of the General Theory of Dependent Origination:

When this exists, that comes to be;
With the arising of this, that arises.
When this does not exist, that does not come to be;
With the cessation of this, that ceases.

*Imasmim sati, idam hoti;
Imass' uppada, idam uppajati.
Imasmin asati, idam na hoti;
Imassa nirodha, idam nirujjati.*

38: This is the first of three suttas that discuss how consciousness gives rise to a new existence.

Overall it seems to stress that the production of volitional activities are what establish the new consciousness—which in turn produces name-and-form and the rest of the entire cycle.

39: More or less a repeat of #38.

40: Sort of a shorthand of the previous two: the maintenance of consciousness supports the establishing of consciousness, which supports “inclination”—which means craving and clinging. We can understand clinging to stand in for the others such as name-and-form and all the rest.

41: This is an interesting sutta in that it lays out elements that go into the stream-enterer:

- a) Is pure in regards to the five precepts
- b) Has four factors of stream-entry: confidence in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha plus the arahant virtues—also the five precepts.
- c) Has clearly seen and penetrated dependent origination.

42: Same as #41 except addressed to a group of bhikkhus instead of Anathapindika.

43: Clear definition of suffering: the six sense bases each produce contact, which produces feeling, then craving. The full set of links accounts for the origin of the sense bases, of course.

44: Here is a very clear definition of “the world” as being the six sense bases and the contact that arises from them.

Thus the passing away—or the end—of the world: it is not the end of the six sense bases, or the contact that arises, or the feeling that arises. Rather, it is the cessation of craving that leads to the end of suffering.

45: Similar to the preceding. It brings up another thought. There are six forms of sense-base consciousness: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. The meeting of the sense organ + object + sense-base-consciousness is contact. From this I assume that there is a difference between one kind of contact and another, dependent on the origin of its arising: eye-based contact, ear-based contact, and so forth.

If I am correct in interpreting “feeling” as emotions, desires, moods, etc., that arise from the contact, then “feeling” refers to a wide range of responses but is not limited to just one sense base. So while the sixfold sense bases form a sixfold split which also effects contact (sixfold) but feeling and the rest are singlefold.

46: This is #17 again, stated a bit differently.

47: This again addresses the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism.

48: They're worded differently, but this is again a response to eternalist and annihilationist views.

49-50: Both of these sutras identify the instructed noble disciple as one who fully understands dependent origination and the twelve links—either the links that lead to suffering or their cessation.

51: The sutta begins with reverse traversal through the links, paying special attention to understanding the link, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation.

If a person still immersed in ignorance generates meritorious volitional formation, that gives rise to meritorious consciousness—and thus on through the links. If the formations are demeritorious, then so is consciousness and so on.

But if ignorance itself is abandoned in favor of true knowledge, there are no volitional formations at all—the chain never arises.

The following passage is a clear description of vipassana, mindfulness.

52: Starts the chain at clinging and works up from there—a.k.a. the Second Noble Truth.

The metaphor that is given here is of a fire that is not fed—eventually it dies out. The practice helps us to stop feeding the craving.

53: This is similar to #52, except that the metaphor is an oil lamp—by not giving it oil, by not trimming the wick, eventually it goes out.

54: Same as #53.

55: Also the same except here the metaphor is that of a tree with an extensive root system. The roots must be destroyed or else the tree will grow back, even if we chop it down.

56: Same as #55.

57: This is again similar but this time the tree is a sapling.

58: "...a descent of name-and-form" seems to refer to that which sustains rebirth—i.e., clinging, things that fetter (ignorance.) The metaphor is that of #55.

59: Same as #58, but a descent of consciousness instead of name-and-form.

60: Here Ananda talks about how clear dependent origination seems to him, despite its being so deep and so deep in inclinations. The Buddha is quick to point out that dependent origination is much deeper than Ananda thinks.

The metaphors: this generation being like tangled strings, matted reeds, a knotted ball of thread. Then comes the tree, which must have its roots completely cut out and destroyed in order to ensure that it does not grow again.

61: One may be able to become dispassionate towards the body, but it is much less likely in regards to the mind-sphere (consciousness, intellection, feeling, and emotion) given that we tend to think of ourselves as being our minds. "I think, therefore I am."

It is the instruction which is able to change this. The action of the mind is likened to a monkey swinging from branch to branch, letting go of one thing and grabbing another, then yet another, and so forth.

It is the understanding of dependent origination—both the General Theory and the twelve links—that brings us to training, to the slow dawning of understanding.

62: Continues the preceding sutta, but adds that “feeling” can be pleasant, painful, or neutral, depending on the contact:

contact	pleasant	feeling
	painful	feeling
	neutral	feeling

It is the cessation of contact which leads to the cessation of feeling. From the standpoint of the cessation of suffering, it doesn't matter whether the feeling is pleasant, painful, or neutral—it's all feeling which gives rise to craving, clinging, existence, birth, old-age-and-death.

63: This sutta is very vivid in its wording and imagery and likely would not play well with a Western audience. The four requisites of food, contact, mental volition, and consciousness are each presented in a sharply negative light.

The first two—food and contact—impress me as concerning the generation of karma through the wanting of and clinging to sensual pleasures.

The second two—mental volition and consciousness—are more like the actions of karma, being thrown into the fiery pit (mental volition) or being stabbed repeatedly by spears (consciousness.)

64: The metaphor of a painter creating a figure is that of karma. If the painter creates an ugly or deformed figure, then when we view it we have the reactions that would be associated with such a figure. If the figure is attractive, then we have those reactions.

Another metaphor is that of a house that has no windows on one wall. If light enters the house, it becomes established on that one wall. If the wall weren't there, then the light would be established on the earth.

I will admit to finding this sutta very difficult; I don't quite 'get' this idea of consciousness being 'established.'

65: This begins with a reverse listing, but it stops at name-and-form and consciousness, which are viewed as being mutually dependent.

Thus it is the breaking of either consciousness or name-and-form that breaks all of the links of suffering.

The parable of the ancient city helps to understand that the Buddha did not invent the Path; he merely (!) rediscovered it, and helped it to become successful and prosperous.

66: Here the links are somewhat different:

aging-and-death
acquisition
craving
what is pleasant: determined by the six sense bases.

So by regarding that which is pleasurable as happiness, craving arises, then acquisition and suffering.

The metaphor given is simple and powerful. A highly appealing drink is offered, but also the knowledge that it is poison. Many would drink anyway. (Consider booze, drugs, cigarettes in physical terms. There remain many mental pollutions—how about greed?) But the knowledge of the path teaches us that there are alternatives that are not poison. We may need to wait a bit to find them, do without immediate pleasure. Avoid rationalizing.

67: Here the links are described as a sheath of reeds leaning against each other and being mutually supported. Remove the first supporting reed and all the rest follow.

68: The statements about “apart from faith...etc” resonate back to the Kalama Sutta.

I love the ‘well’ metaphor: you may have the knowledge that there is water down there, you still need a rope and bucket in order to make contact with the water.

69: Another nice metaphor: the surging of the ocean causing other bodies to surge. Thus the twelve links causing each other to surge.

14 Dhatusamyutta

Elements

- I. 18 Elements
eye – sight object – eye consciousness
ear, nose, tongue, body, mind
- II. Other collections of “elements”, many of which are mostly in the way of personal affinities.
- III. Four elements: earth, wind, fire air.

1: Introduces the 18 elements. By “element” is meant the intrinsic nature of all elements, in the sense that they have an intrinsic nature consisting in their emptiness and absence of a being.

2: This ties the 18 elements into dependent origination. Each of the six sense bases gives rise to a particular contact: the eye gives rise to eye-contact, and so forth. (One would see “feeling” – the next link – as being independent of any particular contact—pleasant, unpleasant, neutral but not specific to a sense. [NOTE: I later came to realize that this was an erroneous idea: the feeling is that born of eye-contact, and so on. So there are definitely different kinds of feeling.]

3: Points out that contact arises from the element, and not element from the contact. (The note points out that this is an apparent conflict with the Abhidhamma, which postulates that element and contact arise mutually.)

4: Having said that feeling is not diversified (in my comment to #2) I find this sutta telling me that I’m wrong. There is a feeling born of contact which is born of element—thus feeling is diversified.

5: This states that feelings do not arise mutually with contact, which does not arise mutually with element.

eye -> eye contact -> feeling born of eye contact etc.

6: Simple statement of the six sense bases.

7: A chain of causation based on element:

element -> perception -> intention -> desire -> passion -> quest

8: The above chain (#7) but clearly identified as being one-way; quest arises from passion, and not passion from quest.

9: Another chain:

element -> perception -> intention -> contact -> feeling -> desire -> passion -> quest -> gain

Each is a “civersion”—that is, the “gain” arises conditioned by the “element”

10: Identifies #9 as a one-way chain

11: Of this odd set of seven elements, one part is a chain of dependence:

(form) -> base of the infinity of space -> base of the infinity of consciousness -> base of nothingness -> base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception

12: Each of these six elements (3 elements with their opposites) give rise to a chain:

perception of x -> intention to do x -> desire to do x -> passion to do x -> quest to do x

Desire (Sensuality)	Renunciation
Ill-Will	Non-ill-will
Harmfulness	Harmlessness

Of course following the right hand column means to conduct oneself rightly in body, speech, and mind.

13: Ignorance is identified as an element, which gives rise to any number of inferior phenomena: those of perception, view, thought, volition, longing, wish, person, speech. A higher level (less ignorance) gives rise to middling phenomena; the highest level gives rise to superior phenomena.

14: This one seems to take an “elemental” view of karma. Beings come together and unite by way of elements: inferior to inferior, good to good.

This one sounds a bit as though it could be perverted into a doctrine of class-freezing, keeping people in their same caste, although that cannot be the meaning.

15: Bit of history here: Devaputta after the attempted schism, with his apostate monks.

16: Similar to #15, this seems to emphasize the need for sangha. The mixing together of those of like disposition, and the avoiding of those who are lethargic, devoid of energy.

17: Another exposition on like associating with like. It also states that this is the way it *is* and not just the way it ought to be.

18: Even more of the same, elucidating the many types that come together—expressed in pairs of opposites.

19 – 24: More types

25: The types here are those following the precepts and those who are not.

26: Like #25, but a longer list: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle chatter.

27: The list from #26, adding: covetousness, ill will, wrong view.

28: Now the list is the Noble Eightfold Path. (view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration.)

29: Eightfold Path + knowledge and liberation.

30 – 31: Understanding the impermanence of each element (impermanent, suffering, subject to change) is here applied to air, water, earth, fire.

32: Liberation expressed as understanding the gratification in, danger in, and escape from, each of the four elements.

33: An expansion of #32, this one contains something very important. That is:

“If there were no gratification in the [earth, water, heat, air] element, beings would not become enamoured

of it.

“If there were no danger...beings would not experience revulsion in it...

“If there were no escape...beings would not escape from it...”

This sutta reminds me of those wonderful moments when the Buddha says: ‘If this were not possible, I would not ask this of you.’

34: The four elements are neither exclusively suffering nor exclusively pleasure; they contain elements of both.

35: This makes an excellent continuation to #34: because each element contains suffering (although it is not exclusively so), then to pursue delight in this element is to pursue suffering (in addition to the pleasure.) As the Buddha puts it, “One who seeks delight in suffering, I say, is not freed from suffering.”

36: This connects the elements into the twelve links, in that the elements are seen to arise, continue, produce, and manifest, giving rise to suffering, disease, aging-and-death. The cessation of the elements brings the cessation of suffering, disease, aging-and-death.

37: Understanding gratification, danger, and escape of the elements is the mark of the true practitioner.

38: Adds origin & passing away of the elements to #37.

39: Summation of sorts.

15 Anamataggasamyutta

1: There is no first cause, never a time when there wasn't samsara. This contrasts with Genesis, which postulates a time before sin. (Granted that the comparison between sin and samsara is very weak; they certainly aren't the same thing.)

Thus the beginning of samsara isn't knowable.

3: This makes the endless suffering of samsara all the more vivid.

5: I love these descriptions of incredibly long times.

10: The number of rebirths: you leave a pile of bones as high as a mountain, and even then it's a small amount in comparison to the reality.

12: We have experienced every happiness which every being has suffered.

14 – 19: All have been your mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter.

16 Kassapasamyutta

Much of this samyutta focuses on being happy with very little—or with nothing.

A handful of rice to eat each day: this can be viewed as a hardship, or as a reason to be grateful.

Later on (8) there appears to be some nostalgia for the good old days before the Buddha and Sangha had the big monasteries, and the bhikkhus lived in the forest. But these young ones are "impatient and do not accept instruction respectfully."

10: I hate to admit it, but I found this one very funny.

13: "It is the senseless people who arise right here who cause the true Dhamma to disappear."

17 Labhasakkarasamyutta

3: Gain, honor, and praise: the metaphor here reminds me of a movie in which Maggie Smith, playing the part of a tourist who is very insecure but trying to be elegant, leaves a restroom walking very haughtily and elegantly, while trailing a line of toilet paper behind her.

10: Being obsessed with things—or being obsessed *not* with things (i.e., rigid and highly conscious asceticism) are both non-conductive, since both are obsessions.

31 – 36: These point out how Devadatta was turned by gain, honor, and praise and thus brought about schism in the Sangha.

Well worth thinking of this state as a kind of sickness; never envy the person who has been afflicted with it.

18 Rahulasamyutta

1 – 8: Takes us through the six sense and their realms, understanding them as impermanent and therefore the cause of suffering:

eye forms eye-consciousness eye-contact feeling-born-of-eye-contact
perception of forms volition regarding forms craving for forms

Each of these is applied to one of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.

9: The same applied to earth, water, heat, air

10: The same applied to the five skandhas.

19 Lakkhanasamyutta

1: Although Theravada Buddhism may not be officially vegetarian, this sutta showing the torment of a being who was formerly a cattle butcher, certain points in that direction. The occupation of butcher was considered “wrong livelihood” and thus the profession was not at all conducive to the path. One could opine that the being would come to liberation many lifetimes later, once the karma had eventually played out. It does seem a bit sophistic, however.

Other professions besides butcher are mentioned:

Torturer
Horse-trainer
Slanderer
Corrupt magistrate
Adulterer
Hostile Brahmin
Adulteress
Fortune-teller
Jealous spouse
Executioner
Evil bhikkhu
Evil bhikkhuni
Novice evil monk
Novice evil nun

[NOTE: some of these aren't necessarily professions, but just characteristics of individual human beings.]

20 Opammasamyutta

4: A mind of metta, only for a moment, is worth more than vast amounts of material charity without such a mind.

This samyutta contains numerous valuable similes.

21 Bhikkhusamyutta

8: Men used makeup in the Buddha's day—this sutta mentions it.

Khandavagga

Introduction

I. Five Aggregates

- A. Primary scheme of categories the Buddha draws upon to analyze sentient existence.
- B. Thus aggregates teaching concentrates on birth-death continuum rather than the larger cycle of life -> life.
- C. Four reasons for their critical role
 - 1. Khandhas are ultimate referent of the First Noble Truth, and all four truths revolve around suffering—so understanding the aggregates is essential to understanding the truths.
 - 2. Khandhas are the objective domain of clinging and contribute to the causes of future suffering.
 - 3. Removal of clinging is necessary—and clinging must be removed from its objects.
 - 4. Removal of clinging is achieved through wisdom—clear insight into the real nature of the aggregates.
- D. Analysis of the khandhas is not psychological; comparisons between buddhist analysis and that of modern science can easily lead to spurious conclusions.
- E. For the Buddha, investigation into the nature of personal existence always remains subordinate to the liberative thrust of the Dhamma.

II. About the Khandhas

- A. Called 'heap' or 'aggregate' because each unites under one label a multiplicity of phenomena that share the same defining characteristic.
- B. Suttas of this vagga spell out the constituents of each khandha.
- C. The explanations are generally phrased in terms of functions rather than fixed essences.

III. The Khandhas are Dukkha

- A. 22:59 they tend to affliction and cannot be made to conform with our desires
- B. 22:1 attachment to khandhas leads to sorrow and despair
- C. 22:7 their change induces fear, distress, anxiety
- D. 22:15 they are already suffering simply because they are impermanent
- E. 22:26 while they give pleasure and joy—that's the gratification in them—eventually they must change and pass away, and this instability is the danger perpetually concealed within them.
- F. 22:79 we assume that we control them, while in reality they are consuming us.

IV. The Khandhas are Objective Domain of Defilements

- A. Asavas (taints) and upadana (clinging) in particular
- B. One clings to only the khandhas
- C. Clinging as a link in the 'suffering' chain of paticcasamuppada
 - 1. 22:5 splices aggregates into the chain
 - 2. 22:54 consciousness grows and thrives from life to life due to lust
- D. Two modes of clinging to the khandhas
 - 1. Appropriation: one grasps with desire and assumes possession of them
 - 2. Identification: one identifies with them, taking them as basis for views on self
- E. "This is mine, this I am, this is my self."
 - 1. 'This is mine': appropriation
 - 2. 'This I am': identification expressive of conceit
 - 3. 'This is my self': identification expressive of views

V. Identity View (Sakkayaditthi)

- A. Basis of all affirmation of selfhood
- B. All views of self are in reference to khandhas, individually or collectively
- C. Twenty types of identity view—four for each of the five khandhas

1. Identical with it
 2. Possessing it
 3. Containing it
 4. Contained within it
- D. The aggregates are selfless nature, not bound up with self
- VI. Ignorance and the Khandhas
- A. Ignorance tends to sustain clinging to the khandhas
 - B. Three delusions that nurture this clinging
 1. The khandhas are permanent
 2. The khandhas are a true source of happiness
 3. The khandhas are a self, or the accessories of a self
 - C. Wisdom reveals that
 1. They are impermanent
 2. They are suffering
 3. They are non-self
 - D. These are of course the Dharma Seals
 - E. “This is not mind, this I am not, this is not my self”: no point in appropriating or identifying with anything, because the subject of this appropriation and identification “self”, is merely a fabrication of conceptual thought woven in the darkness of ignorance.

22 Khandhasamyutta

1: The twenty types of identity view are explained more fully in the commentary Spk:

- a. form as self: considering them as indistinguishable, just as the flame of an oil lamp and its color are indistinguishable.
- b. self as possessing form: the formless (mind or mental factors) as a self that possesses form, as a tree possesses a shadow.
- c. form as in self: taking the formless (mind) as a self in which form is situated, as the scent is in a flower.
- d. self as in form: taking the formless (mind) as a self situated in form, as a jewel is in a casket.

2: A critical section begins in the last two long paragraphs. If the path to a higher rebirth were possible amidst unwholesome states, then the Buddha would not praise (and we assume urge) the abandoning of such states. And if wholesome states were likely to lead to a lower rebirth, nor then would the Buddha praise nor urge their abandonment.

In wholesome states one dwells happily in this very life and a favorable rebirth can be expected.

3: Postulates the first four khandhas as the ‘home’ of consciousness.

There is a good list of attachments and identity views in regards to each khandha: “The desire, lust, and craving, the engagement and clinging, the mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding the ____ element.”

5: Brings in “the origin and passing away of” each khandha, as “understanding things as they really are.”

After that it staples the khandhas into the 12 links, as taking delight in a khandha is clinging—thus then existence, birth, aging-and-death.

The origin of the khandha is this delight in the khandha—while not seeking that delight is the passing away of the khandha.

9: Each of the khandhas is impermanent in past, present, and future.

10: Each of the khandhas is suffering in past, present, and future.

12: Revulsion follows the seeing of the khandhas as impermanent. This is a profound inward turning away from conditioned existence that comes with the higher stages of insight.

13-14: The same template as #12, but suffering 'suffering' and 'non-self' for 'impermanent'.

15: This brings up the Three Marks as being the same: what is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering is nonself.

20: Brings up the question of that which arises from non-self must therefore be non-self. Monotheism has addressed this by postulating an eternal deity—for only from that which is atman can that possessing atman arise. Thus it seems that the presence of a soul (or some other such essence) implies the necessary presence of an infinite or eternal creator, which did not arise out of anything. If there creator were to arise from something, then it is arising from something which is atman and is not itself atman, but contains it.

So to see all conditioned things as nonself removes any essential-aspect deity; there could be no arising of atman anywhere at any time.

22: The 'person' as 'carrier of the burden' is the Pudgalavadin School—there is the pudgala. However, the 'person' is no more an essence than each of the khandhas are essences. 'Person' is a mental construct, not an essential entity.

37: Each of the khandhas is identified with arising, vanishing, and persisting (with change.) Thus the khandhas are kept firmly in the realm of interdependent transformation.

38: Adds the three times (past, present, future) to the three conditions (as in #37). Thus each khandha is understood in nine aspects.

39: Another clarification on 'revulsion': usually taken to refer to an advanced level of insight. It seems to me that *nibbida* doesn't have a suitable English equivalent that is not fraught with potential objections. Other renderings from a Pali-English dictionary are "aversion", "disgust", or "weariness."

43: This one emphasizes that it is possible to be quenched in regards to one or another of the khandhas—it doesn't have to be all of them.

44: Nice pithy exposition about the wrong view of identity view, which arises in the twenty manifestations, four for each of the khandhas:

x as self
self as possessing x
x as in self
self as in x

By not taking on these twenty views, one leads to the cessation of identity view.

45: Each khandha is seen in six ways:

x is impermanent
x is suffering
x is nonself
x is not mine

x I am not
x is not my self.

46: The six ways of #45 are added to the three times (past, future, present.)

47: First the twenty identity views are enumerated.

This appears to then effect the rebirth—the five faculties which are the regular physical senses (no mind). The mind is one of ignorance.

The vacuous “I” gives rise to “I am this”—the first differentiation of self from other. (Psychologists say this happens at around six months.) Then come the views: “I will/will not be”, “I will be eternal/annihilated” and so forth.

But with the abandonment of the vacuous “I”—the rest ceases then.

50: This sutta employs the 4-statement inquiry that is used for the Four Noble Truths:

Form -> its origina -> its cessation -> the way leading to its cessation

51 – 52: With the destruction of delight comes the destruction of lust; with the destruction of lust comes the destruction of delight...this seems to imply no only mutual dependence but also a co-nascence.

53: Consciousness is here seen as being dependent on the previous four aggregates. Each of the aggregates acts almost as a nutriment; consciousness stands “engaged with” one or another of the aggregates.

It then goes on to say that the arising, persistence, passing away, and rebirth of consciousness cannot be known apart from the other four aggregates.

If the lust for any of the four elemental aggregates is cut off, then there is no basis for consciousness and thus no basis for rebirth. Nongenerative consciousness does not generate kamma and, hence, no rebirth.

54: The first four aggregates are identified as “the four stations of consciousness.”

56: The 4-statement inquiry is called the “four phrases” or, literally, the “four turnings.”

Then the four phrases are applied to each aggregate.

“Contact” gives rise to feeling, perception, and volitional formations, each of which has the sixfold division of the senses.

“Nutriment” gives rise to form.

But it is “name and form” that gives rise to consciousness—which seems to tie in well with the assigning of consciousness as being an aggregate of the other four aggregates.

57: Adds to the four phases three more stages: gratification, danger, escape.

gratification: the pleasure and joy that arise from dependence on x.

danger: that x is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change.

escape: the removal and abandonment of desire and lust for x.

Essentially the sutta is the same template as #56, but with the extra three stages inserted after the identification of the Noble Eightfold Path as the way leading to cessation.

58: The distinction between Tathagata and arahant. The Tathagata is the re-discoverer of the path, the knower and teacher of the path. The arahant follows this path and possesses it at liberation.

59: The Buddha's second sermon, spoken to the group of five ascetics. The khandhas are explained as anatta:

1. If something is self (atta) then you must have some control over it—but you don't, and it isn't self.
2. That which is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering is not fit to be regarded as self.

These formulae are applied to each of the five khandhas in turn. another important teaching here is the list of aspects of each khandha:

past, future, present
internal or external
gross or subtle
inferior of superior
far or near

Regarding that which is suffering as self:

If self (atman) is seen as suffering or containing suffering or contained by suffering, then we have something eternal and separate (atman) which is suffering. Thus full liberation, liberation from suffering, is *not possible*.

If we have taken refuge, we have stated our explicit trust that full cessation, liberation, *is possible*—and thus have explicitly rejected any notion that that which is suffering could be in any way self.

60: Each of the khandhas brings pleasure, but each also brings suffering. The pleasure causes us to be captivated and this causes defilement. The suffering causes revulsion and this purifies us of defilement.

61: Mini-Fire Sermon with only the khandhas.

62: Important but subtle point: there is no mixing of the three tenses of was, will be, or is.

63: Mara is here the personification of clinging—it binds us to Mara, while non-clinging frees us.

64: Here *conceiving* a khandha binds us to Mara (conceiving = as a self.)

65: Seeking delight—as binding (template from #63 on.)

76: There's a good line in here which makes clear that deities are not the be-all and end-all, but that the arahants have it best of all.

Then the final verse: "The enlightened are supreme in the world."

78: More on devas and their misunderstandings—that they are not eternal. Top of 914 to the end of the paragraph. The following verse helps make this even clearer.

This can go into the Oghataranasutta commentary.

79: We are 'devoured' by the khandhas—either past, future, or present.

Dismantles, abandons, scatters, extinguish: all references to karma.

Once liberation has happened, all of the khandhas have been dismantled, abandoned, etc: no more accumulation of karma.

80: There is here some big stuff!

1. A visit by Brahma Sahampati, who acts in his accustomed role as the Buddha's advisor and encourager.
2. "...performed such a feat of spiritual power..." here we have another of those moments in which the radiant sambhogakaya makes an appearance. It doesn't say what the feat is—but obviously it's a whopper given the way in which the monks arrive timidly.
3. Two types of meditation are brought up. The first is vipassana—that is, the four foundations of mindfulness, and "signless concentration" which appears to be samatha. But in "signless" I detect a whiff of zazen.

81: This takes place during the time of the quarrel at Kosambi that threatened to cause schism. See Nanamoli Life of the Buddha pgs. 109-119 for a full description.

The monk who has the question: The Buddha knows he has a question because he has read the bhikkhu's mind!

37 aids to enlightenment: seven sets of training factors

- 4 establishments of mindfulness
- 4 right strivings
- 4 bases for spiritual power
- 5 spiritual faculties
- 5 powers
- 7 factors of enlightenment
- 8 Noble Eightfold Path

These are explored in depth in the Mahavagga section in Volume II.

Both eternalism and annihilationism are defined quite nicely.

If this sutta's ellipses were all fleshed out, this would approach book length.

82: This one reads rather like a grand summary of the khandha samyutta.

83: This neatly addresses the tendency we have to cling to our 'self' notions—such as our own creations, or our own opinions.

84: The "forked road" simile is here very useful. We need the teacher to show us the right way, to encourage us to find it and stay on it.

85: Yamaka has become stuck in an annihilationist view. However, it's a bit different: unenlightened beings have a lasting self which transmigrates; arahants have no such lasting self and thus utterly perish at death.

I am touched here by the precision, care, and thoroughness of Sariputta's teaching. Surely the Buddha himself could not have taught Yamaka more beautifully.

86: A great danger is to view the Tathagata as possessing self.

There's an important extra phrase here: "Do you regard the Tathagata as *apart from x*?" So we can also ask:

x is not self
self does not possess x

x is not in self
self is not in x
The Tathagata is not apart from x
Nor is the Tathagata all five khandhas taken together.

I'm not sure if I agree with Bhikkhu Bodhi's notes regarding that the Tathagata is not apprehended in this very life: that is, that the term 'Tathagata' refers to a compound of impermanent formations. I see it as having much more of a transcendental impact. Cf Sangharakshita Three Jewels, Survey, and The Ideal of Human Enlightenment. It seems to me that the Mahayana really has a better handle on this entire issue.

87: The "Dhamma-Body" doctrine is here revealed: although the Theravada may distinguish only two bodies rather than three, nonetheless the connection is clear. The phrase "Dhammakaya" appears in the commentary.

This sutta is discussed by Sangharakshita in "Survey", pg. 279.

Sangharakshita makes exactly the point that I had discussed under #86: how we interpret such a phrase as Dhammakaya rather depends on taking a more literalist or liberalist point of view.

90: I think that the venerable Channa is an archetype of many practitioners when he says: "OK, so the aggregates are impermanent and nonself. But this knowledge doesn't seem to change me—my mind is every bit as much of a mess as it has always been. The mind keeps turning back on itself saying 'but who is my self?'"

92: Rahula learns the 15-step meditation.

94: "A proponent of the Dhamma does not dispute with anyone in the world"—that is to say, the Dhamma is not a philosophical system which is argued and proven by disputation.

Dialectic, however, is a different matter—there is discussion and mutual learning.

The wise agree that the khandhas are not permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change. The wise agree that they are impermanent, subject to change.

"world-phenomenon"—the khandhas. This ties in well with the notion of 'world' as our conditioned existence.

The commentary points to three usages here of "world":

1. World of beings—I do not dispute with the world.
2. World-phenomenon—the world of formations.
3. Geographic world—"The Tathagata was born in the world."

95: In this "simile" sutta the Buddha approaches the prajnaparamita. Bhikkhu Bodhi refers to "Madhyamika" which is probably about the furthest a Theravadin is willing to go in regards to the prajnaparamita.

Metaphor of the mirage in perception—and the bubble—this is the Diamon sutra.

The banana (plaintain) tree makes a great metaphor for insubstantiality.

96: Here the metaphor is that of the richest, most luxurious life possible—but it all passes, changes, no matter what. We cannot make them eternal.

97: Another metaphoric treatment.

98: Now no metaphor. The bhikkhu says is there is any permanent khandha. The Buddha's reply: no.

99 – 100: A strong metaphor here. We are tied to our conceptions of a 'self' in the khandhas, as a dog is tied to a leash tied to a post.

101: All the wishes in the world will not bring us liberation. We must practise—as the hen must sit on her eggs.

If the hen doesn't sit on her eggs, they won't hatch whether or not she wants them to. If the hen sits properly on her eggs, they'll hatch—whether or not she wants them to.

As we work on something, we may not notice its growth and development on a day-by-day basis, but at some point or another indeed we will see that it has developed.

As we continue to work on our defilements, they weaken and rot. Then they will finally collapse when they are sufficiently weakened.

102: Impermanence as the root perception—the knowledge of impermanence eliminates the conceit of the separate self.

103: "Identify" is here identified as lodging in the khandhas. They are placed in a context that identifies them with the Four Noble Truths—they are the truth of suffering.

104: This makes the connection all the clearer.

109: The "stream-enterer" is one who understands the origin, passing away, gratification, danger, and escape in the case of the khandhas.

110: The arahant has the same characteristics as #109, but uses that knowledge to eradicate all defilements.

111-112: The abandonment of desire in regards to the khandhas is made abundantly clear:

abandon: lust, engagement and clinging, underlying tendencies, desire, mental standpoints, craving, and adherences.

These are abandoned in regard to each khandha.

113: Ignorance is lack of knowledge of the four stages of each khandha (i.e., the Four Noble Truths pattern.)

114: "True knowledge" is understanding them. (This is the Theravada view of prajña.)

117: Powerful metaphors here:

bound by bondage to x
bound by inner and outer bondage
does not see the near shore and the far shore
grows old in bondage
dies in bondage
in bondage goes from this world to the other world

118 – 119: The 15-step meditation on the khandhas.

122: Sariputta gives a meditation subject on the five khandhas:

impermanent
suffering
disease
tumor
dart
misery
affliction
alien
distintegrating
empty
nonself

126: The Buddha gives a meditation subject:

x is subject to arising
x is subject to vanishing
x is subject to arising and vanishing

(This would combine well with the 15-step meditation, making it into a 30-step meditation. This one comes first, then the other.)

127 – 135: each of these contrasts ignorance with “true knowledge” in regards to the khandhas.

136: The khandhas as hot embers—don’t hold them.

137 – 145: These are various meditation formulate, abandoning:

desire		impermanent
lust	for whatever is	suffering
desire and lust		non-self

146 – 149: Another set of formulae:

dwelt engrossed in revulsion towards x
contemplate impermanence of x
contemplate suffering in x
contemplate nonself in x

151: Without clinging to x, we can’t think: x is mine, I am x, x is myself.

150 – 158: the many non-conducive views that can arise when we cling to the khandhas and invest them with the notion of self:

150: pleasure and pain arise internally
151: x is mine, I am x, x is my self
152: eternalism
153: annihilationism
154: wrong view
155: identity view
156: view of self
157: fetters, adherences, shackles arise
158: fetters, adherences, shackles, holding arise

159: a fine summation of the entire samyutta.

23 Radhasamyutta

1: Where there is form, there might be death, either the one who kills or the one who is killed. The investiture of self in any of the khandhas produces the concept of death, the ending of that concrete self with the ending of that particular khandha.

The list of steps:

revulsion (turning away)
dispassion
liberation
Nibbana

At Nibbana “one has gone beyond the range of questioning.” That is, Nibbana is the state beyond discursive thought, beyond even questions of “what is” (which invariably seem to set up a “what is not” sense of duality.)

2: The metaphor of children playing with sand castles: as we grow up, we are less and less attached to them and eventually they don't mean anything at all to us. So it is to put aside our investment of self in the khandhas...the practice is a growth process away from this investment.

3: “conduit to existence” is a synonym for bhavatanha, or craving for existence.

Note that the various forms of craving to the khandhas includes ‘mental standpoints’, as well as ‘underlying tendencies’—it's important to recognize subtle as well as gross forms.

11: Mara is here equated with the khandhas. This makes sense: our desires, lusts, temptations and all revolve around our ‘self’—which has been invested in one or all of the khandhas.

12: “Subject to Mara”: our functional self is subject to our investment of self in the khandhas. The maturation of practice dissolves this subject-object duality, as we slowly realize the emptiness of the functional self.

11 – 22: each sutta assigns the khandhas various attributes. They are as follows:

Mara
Subject to Mara
impermanent
of an impermanent nature
suffering
of a painful nature
nonself
of a selfless nature
subject to destruction
subject to vanishing
subject to arising
subject to cessation

All the “subject to” could possibly be rendered as “nature of”. That is, it is the khandhas's nature to be destroyed, to vanish, to arise, to cease.

23: Abandoning the khandhas is dhamma in brief.

24 – 34: Repeats the formulas of 11 – 22, but with “you should abandon lust, you should abandon desire and lust, for whatever is [x]” with [x] standing for the attribute. Then with each khandha—[y] is subject to [x] (or whatever is the attribute.)

24 Ditthisamyutta

1: The oddly-phrased statement: “The winds do not blow, the rivers do not flow, pregnant women do not give birth, the moon and sun do not rise and set but stand as steady as a pillar.”

This implies permanence, which would imply some kind of soul or atman—by its unchangeability it acquires a doctrine of self.

Bhikkhu Bodhi brings up a late Ajivaka doctrine that states change to be illusory, whereas all is really permanent. Definitely a wrong view from the Dharma standpoint.

2: The 15-line meditation.

3: Introduces a (false) eternalist view, said to be caused by investing the aggregates with self.

4: Introduces a (false) annihilationist view, using the same template as #3.

5: The absolute nihilist point of view of Kessambali. What’s interesting is that taken out of context it sounds almost like prajnaparamita in that there are negations of everything including negation—but it is not stated as a transcendental truth, but a mundane one.

6: Purana Kassapa’s doctrine on the inefficacy of action. No merit accrued by giving, no outcome of evil. Seems to be a kind of predestination.

7: Doctrine of non-causality (Makkhali Gosala): there is no cause or condition for defilement or purity. This is even more strongly pre-destination.

8: This collection of views—the seven bodies, modes of generation, different kinds of karma, and on and on into an increasingly absurd set of lists—appears to be taken at least in part from the Ajivakas.

9 – 18: Various false views set to the same template:

The world is eternal
The world is not eternal
The world is finite
The world is infinite
Soul and body are the same
Soul and body are different
Tathagata exists
Tathagata does not exist
Tathagata both exists and does not exist
Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist

19: The same odd eternalist/substantive view of #1.

20 – 44: Mostly repeats. 37 – 44 discuss various false views of the nature of self:

consisting of form/formless/both/neither
happy/miserable/both/neither

45 – 70: repeat 19 – 44 using a slightly different template.

71 – 96: repeat 19 – 44 as well, with again a slightly different template.

25 – 27 Okkantisamyutta / Uppadasamyutta / Kilesasamyutta

These three are pretty much the same—they discuss the sense bases, together with their consciousness, contact, and object, then the khandhas, then the four elements, in different ways.

Okkantisamyutta: the impermanence of all these, and the recognition of their importance as being stream-entry.

Uppadasamyutta: the arising and cessation of all these.

Kilesasamyutta: desire and lust for them, the mental corruption they produce, and the mind including towards renunciation of them.

41 Cittasamyutta

Citta the Householder

A iii: 451

Monks, by having followed six things, the goodman Citta Macchikasandika, because of the Tathāgata, has gone to the end, seen the deathless and has his being in the realization of the deathless. What six?

Unwavering faith in the Buddha, in Dhamma and in the Order, Ariyan virtue, Ariyan knowledge and Ariyan release.

Verily, monks, by having followed these six, the goodman Citta Macchikasandika, because of the Tathāgata, has gone to the end, seen the deathless and has his being in the realization of the deathless.

A i:25

Monks, chief among my disciples, lay-followers, of Dhamma-teachers, is Citta, the housefather of Macchikasanda.

1: The elder bhikkhus discuss whether ‘the fetter’ and ‘the things that fetter’ point to a real difference, or if this is merely a difference in wording. In #7 of this same series, there is a similar discussion about various forms of liberation.

Citta comes along and says that they are different both in meaning and in phrasing. (In #7, he says that they can be understood as being both different and the same, depending on how you view them.

Simile: black & white oxen are yoked together. Is one ox the fetter of the other? No: it is the yoke that is the fetter, and not the one ox to another.

Thus: it isn't the eye...mind (six senses) that are the fetter, but the desire & lust that arise in dependence on their object.

eye = forms | ear = sounds | nose = smells |
tongue = tastes | body = sensations | mind = thoughts

These two may be yoked together, but the fetter is the desire and lust that arise in dependence on both.

It is said of Citta that he has the ‘eye of wisdom that ranges over the deep Word of the Buddha’ (here and in #5).

2: Citta has invited a group of elder bhikkhus to a meal. (Citta was a patron of the Sangha and had donated the Wild Mango Grove to the Sangha.)

The question Citta poses is: “How does the Buddha speak about ‘diversity of elements?’

Isidatta finally answered. (It would appear that Citta had encouraged Isidatta to become a monk.)

Isidatta’s answer is the eighteen sense bases:

eye = form = eye-consciousness

ear = etc..

It’s interesting to note that chief elders don’t always have the factual answers. But why should they? There are many different teaching techniques used—many different enumerations, emphases, etc. The use of one list over another is a choice of the teacher, as skillful means.

Thus it is no disgrace for the chief elder not to know. The question is about a very specific terminology: “diversity of elements.” The elder didn’t know it—but this implies nothing about the elder’s actual state of realization.

It’s not about knowledge per se.

the elder’s scrupulous honesty is the most revealing thing here. And his complete generosity to Isidatta—the junior member—is just as notable.

3: The setting is the same—a dinner at Citta’s. Then Citta approaches the elders with a question.

Citta’s question is about the sixty-two wrong views of the Brahmajala Sutta. “When what exists do these views come to be? When what is nonexistent to these views not come to be?”

Once again it’s Isidatta who answers: the answer is *identity view* that causes the problems. And how does identity view arise? But investing any or all of the six sense bases with an essence of self.

At this point Citta asks several questions which would seem to indicate that Isidatta was the “unseen friend of ours”—perhaps meaning the very monk he had urged to go forth.

It appears that Isidatta might have left preferring anonymity, since now the householder Citta knows who he was and would wish to support him. However, the commentary does not give any of these motives, and thus we must remain in speculation.

4: Mahaka’s Miracle. Again Citta has asked the monks to dinner, but this time to his cowshed instead of his house. One cannot help but wonder why, but perhaps it’s because of the very hot weather. The cowshed would presumably be better ventilated than being indoors. Maybe there were too many monks to fit inside his residence.

The junior monk Mahaka creates a light rain in order to cool them down, and then performs another miracle at Citta’s request later on. Probably fear of fame led to his leaving the area, or perhaps fear of censure given that he really isn’t supposed to show off like that.

5: Kamabhu

The discussion, centering around the gatha, gives the symbolism of the gatha thus:

1) faultless: without ethical blemish

- 2) white awning: the white covering (ethical) of the arahant
- 3) one spoke: presumably mindfulness, i.e., one-pointed attention
- 4) chariot: not just the body, but the entire sensory perception, the 'world'
- 5) the chariot (coming): the arahant, without the three poisons.
- 6) the stream cut: the stream of craving
- 7) bondage: the bondage of the three poisons

Metta sutta:

*By not holding to fixed views
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.*

Like the first sutta, here it is said that Citta has the 'eye of wisdom that ranges over the deep Word of the Buddha.'

6. Kamabhu (2)

Question regarding the three formations: bodily, verbal, mental. The attainment of cessation of perception and feeling is described in Vism. 702-9.

Vism 702-9: covers the same ground as this sutta but in more detail. There are eleven questions: what, who, who not, where, why; how is it attained, how is it made to last, how does emergence from it come about, how does the mind tend, difference between one with this state and one who is dead, is it mundane or transcendental?

Among the answers:

Who: very advanced practitioners.

When: in the five-constituent becoming (formations subject to destruction, vanishing, fading away, cessation, and change.)

How: by striving for the base of neither perception nor non-perception.

How such a person differs from one dead is discussed in this sutta.

It is not classifiable as either mundane or transcendental; it has no essence that can be classified.

This sutta is very much devoted to a discussion of a highly advanced state of meditation. Since it is Citta in the discussion, we may take heart in the understanding that such states are indeed possible for the lay practitioner.

7: Godatta

Citta explains how certain terms can be thought of as different in meaning *and* in their words, or different only in their words.

Measureless liberation of mind
Liberation of mind by nothingness
Liberation of mind by emptiness
Signless liberation of mind

First: they are different only in words in that all of them are liberation from the three poisons.

But they are different in meaning because each one points to a different practice:

Measureless liberation: the practice of the Brahma-viharas

Liberation of mind by nothingness: transcending the base of infinity of consciousness (i.e., super-jhana!)
Liberation of mind by emptiness: emptiness of self (non-identity-view) practice. The fifteen-step meditation could be highly useful here.
Signless liberation of mind: signless concentration.

So: what we have here is a teaching on upaya within a Pali context. All true practices are the same in that they all lead to liberation from suffering. But they are different in being different practices.

8: Nigantha Nataputta (Mahavira)

Citta takes on the Jains!

First he lays a trap by a little legal sophistry. When Mahavira asks him if he 'has faith' in a specific Buddhist teaching (jhanas), he says no. Any Dharma student immediately recognizes that we Buddhists do not practice on faith. So Citta can say he does not have faith and be telling the absolute truth (while pulling Mahavira's chain just a little bit.)

Instead, Citta has experienced the jhanas himself and can speak from experience.

Citta makes a bit of a fool out of Mahavira, in fact. This seems to be a bit of tit-for-tat given the tendency of the Jain suttas to disparage Buddhism.

9: The ascetic Kassapa.

Kassapa has been a hardcore ascetic for 30 years. In that time, he concludes, he has attained nothing save nakedness, bald head, and a brush for cleaning his seat.

Citta's response strikes me as being both compassionate and ironic: well then, all this practice, and you're really not anywhere.

But Citta has been practicing for 30 years and he has a great deal to show for it. Meditatively he has mastered the four jhanas and has become a non-returner. He will not be born again into this world.

So Kassapa went to it and became an arahant!!

10: Citta's death

He is visited by devas and such who encourage him to become a wheel-turning monarch. But that's actually a poor goal for such a practitioner—Citta knows that even such an exalted level of rebirth remains impermanent and suffering.

In parting from his family and friends, Citta teaches the importance of Going for Refuge. This is utterly fitting for the ending of such a noble disciple. Thus this ties in beautifully to me with Sangharakshita's eloquent description of Refuge and its meaning within a Buddhist context.

Maha vagga

45 Maggasamyutta

1: This presents the eightfold division as being of a chain, or causative nature. Probably at the supramundane level it can be thought that they all arise together.

2: The Buddha as the ultimate kalyanamittata.

3: In #2 Ananda wasn't aware that the good friend is the whole of the holy life, but here it's Sariputta and he is thus aware.

4: Sangharakshita has pointed out numerous instances of martial imagery in the Buddha's teachings—here's another. Both Ananda and the Buddha were from the khattiya caste, thus warrior imagery would be quite natural for them both to use.

5: Note that here we say the full understanding of suffering—which can then lead to its cessation.

8: A solid basic teaching on the Eightfold Path. Some observations:

- a. Right View is solidly equated with the Four Noble Truths.
- b. Right mindfulness is vipassana.
- c. Right concentration is jhana practice.

10: Unambiguous: the final goal of the Eightfold Path is nirvana.

11: I noticed here that feeling is seen to arise from views—i.e., wrong view, right view...concentration, as well as desire, thought, and feeling.

This is interesting given that in the nidanas it is said that feeling arises with contact as condition.

So is this a contradiction? Only if you think of the nidanas as being all of dependent origination, rather than only one elucidation of the general theory. In other words, it isn't "simple" in the arising.

The Vism (519) uses this sutra to argue that dependent origination isn't simple, but a structure of conditions:

"Anyone who asserts that dependent origination is of that kind [simple] involves himself in conflict with the Padesavihara Sutta. How? The Newly Enlightened One's abiding (vihara) is the bringing of the dependent origination to mind, because of these words of the Blessed One's: 'Then in the first watch of the night the Blessed One brought to mind the dependent origination in direct and reverse order [as origination and cessation] (Vin. i, 1; Ud. 2). Now 'padesavihara' is the abiding (vihara) in one part (desa) of that, according as it is said, 'Bhikkhus, I abode in a part of the abiding in which I abode when I was newly enlightened.' (S. v, 12; Ps. i, 107) And there he abode in the vision of the structure of conditions, not in the vision of simple arising, according as it is said, 'So I understood feeling with wrong view as its condition, and feeling with right view as its condition...' (S. v, 12) all of which should be quoted in full."

So what I'm gathering here is that single (simple) conditionality is not the teaching: feelings arise from a multiplicity of conditions. Furthermore, the absence of some conditions can be in and of itself a condition—"When desire...thought...perception has not subsided, there is feeling with that as condition...when desire...thought...perception has subsided, there is feeling with that as condition."

12: Carries this onward. The 'subsiding of wrong view' is just as much a condition as is the 'subsiding of wrong view.'

This seems to be slamming every door that leads to annihilationism—you just can't wind up with nil conditionality. You also can't wind up with anything that isn't conditionality. You also can't wind up with some kind of eternalist view.

The difficulties of the Kaccana Sutta are ameliorated through this. "This world, Kaccana, for the most part depends upon a duality—upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world..."

"...the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: 'With ignorance as condition, volition formations...'"

Bhikkhu Bodhi's commentary: 'For in seeing the dependency of the world, when one sees the nontermination of the conditionally arisen phenomena owing to the nontermination of their conditions, the annihilationist view, which might otherwise arise, does not occur. And in seeing the cessation of conditions, when one sees the cessation of the conditionally arisen phenomena owing to the cessation of their conditions, the eternalist view, which might otherwise arise, does not occur.'

14 – 17: Each of these says something critical: the Path does not arise apart from the appearance of a Tathagata and his Vinaya (Sangha). Maybe 'dispensation' is the best word here.

18 – 19: Especially important: destruction of the three poisons is the final goal. Thus this would equate these as nibbana—the 'quenching' or 'cooling'.

20: The Path is the holy life. One who possesses it lives the holy life. Destruction of the poisons, nibbana, is the final goal.

21 – 30: Numerous comparisons between 'bad' and 'good' types—one corresponding to wrong view...concentration and the other to right view...concentration.

31 – 33: More contrasts between 'good' and 'bad' practice.

34: Includes gathas which are found at 85 – 89 of the Dhammapada.

35 – 39: Asceticism...brahminhood...the holy life and the goals (or fruits) of the same as the Noble Eightfold Path.

41 – 48: Chanting set of the various purposes of the life of the Sangha.

49 – 62: Chanting set on cultivation of the Path.

63 – 69: Seclusion

70 – 76: Removal of Lust

77 – 83: Arising of the path

84 – 90: Removal of Lust

139 – 160: A group of suttas all elaborate as: Based on seclusion, removal of lust, deathless as its ground, slants towards Nibbana.

There are some very nice similes and metaphors in here:

Rain dispersing & washing away dusty heat

Ship rigging (fettors) being broken eventually once they've rotted.

161 – 170: Chanting style, quasi-book of threes.

171 – 180: Mostly sets of four, sometimes more.

173: 4 kinds of clinging

174: 4 knots: the fourth is particularly important in terms of dogmatic religions like Christianity, with adherence to dogmatic views and concepts.

175: 7 underlying tendencies:

Sensual lust

aversion

views

doubt

conceit

lust for existence

ignorance

These are almost like seven shadows which dog and pursue us through life.

177: 5 hindrances

178: 5 aggregates

179 & 180: 5 lower and 5 upper fetters

46. Bojjhangasamyutta

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are:

Mindfulness
Discrimination of States
Energy
Rapture
Tranquillity
Concentration
Equanimity

Mindfulness stands on it's own.

Discrimination of States – Rapture: activating, to be cultivated when the mind is sluggish.

Tranquillity – Equanimity: restraining, to be cultivated when the mind is excited.

Relation of brahma-viharas to bojjhanghas. The b-v's are used to cultivate concentrations, then one develops the bjs based on this concentration.

1 – 10: General descriptions of the bjs. Of especially importance are #s 9 – 10: the bjs do not arise apart from a Tathagata, or from the Dispensation.

11 – 20: More general listings, including settings in which the Buddha visits a sick monk or a monk visits the sick Buddha. #18 equates the bjs with the Noble Eightfold Path.

23 – 24: Places the five hindrances together with the bjs.

26: Places the bjs as leading to the destruction of craving, which leads to the avandoning of kamma—hence straight into enlightenment.

28: States that the bjs lead to the penetrating and sundering of greed, hatred, and delusion.

30: This one seems to explore the issue of faith (trust) rather nicely. Udayi says that he has obtained the various factors of enlightenment which, when he has developed and cultivated them, will lead him on...

35: Again the bjs as remedy for the hindrances.

37 – 40: Likewise.

53: Exposit those bjs which arouse the sluggish mind or which calm the excited mind. Mindfulness, the first of the bjs, is always useful—it isn't either restraining or activating.

54: Brings in the brahma-viharas. From this sutta it would seem that the b-v's are not unique to Buddhism.

Each of the bjs is dwelt upon, accompanied by one of the b-v's.

57 – 75: A group of meditation subjects. They range from cemetery contemplations (bloated corpses) through the brahma-viharas and anapanasati through pre-perfection of wisdom. Ties in with Citta's sutta about being different in phasing but ultimately same in meaning.

47 Satipatthanasamyutta

Note: the longer version of the Satipatthanasutta can be consulted. Also Nyanaponika "Heart of Buddhist Meditation" is a good resource.

Soma Thera: The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipatthana Sutta and its Commentary (BPS 1975)

Gethin, R.M.L.: The Buddhist Path to Awakening: A Study of the Bodh-Pakkhiya Dhamma (Leiden: Brill 1992)

I already have the Thera (on Access to Insight) and the Gethin is on order.

1: "one-way Path" is Bhikkhu Bodhi's rendering of a phrase that is sometimes rendered as "only"—which doesn't make much sense. (This is not the only way, but a single way, a one-way Path that leads towards, and not away from.)

The stock formula is interesting, in its coverage:

purification of beings: "purification" approach to practice

overcoming of sorrow and lamentation: something the individual does in response to stimuli—i.e., acts of volition.

passing away of pain and displeasure: that which arises resultant of karma; here I take "displeasure" to mean "unpleasure" and not in the sense of an attitude or opinion.

achievement of the method: the "raft"—how we go about it, what we do. How to get there.

realization of Nibbana: now into awakening.

Are these five phrases a mini-look at the stages of practice? We begin with purification and end with Nibbana. It does not make sense as a description of procedure, although I'm not certain it was meant that way.

The four foundations of mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, phenomena.

Each is contemplated each in itself, to be seen as constant arising, persisting, decay, dissolution.

2: "mindful and clearly comprehending"

Clearly comprehending: the foundations expressed as being fully mindful of all activities, thoughts, etc.

Mindfulness as taught in Zen and Vipassana.

Mindful: satipatthana; the four foundations.

3: Great moment: the bhikkhu asks the Buddha for advice. He says: "It is in just such a way that some foolish persons here make requests of me, but when the Dhamma has been spoken to them, they think only of following me around."

The Dhamma is practice and not words alone.

Unambiguously the Buddha gives the first instruction: virtue that is well-purified and view that is straight. See to sila first, before samadhi and before pañña.

The instructions are to be internal first, then external, then both internal and external.

4: Adds fuel to a recent discussion about continuing the practice even after arahantship. The upward spiral continues, no matter what. Even arahants continue to practice—you don't stop.

5: Here the Satipatthana is the antidote to the hindrances, the “heap of the wholesome” that cures the wholesome.

6: In metaphorical terms—a little fable about a hawk and a quail—the Satipatthana is the antidote to the five cords of sensual pleasure.

7: This metaphor of the monkey appears in some of Thich Nhat Hanh’s writings. Five points (feet, hands, and muzzle) are what it takes to catch a monkey. Those five points are the five cords of sensual pleasure.

9: The Buddha’s illness in this sutta is during the last year of his life.

The body is subject to old age and decay—even the Buddha’s.

This contains the critical exhortation: “...dwell with yourselves as your own island, with yourselves as your own refuge, with no other refuge; dwell with the Dhamma as your island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge.” The technique? Satipatthana.

More on the great exhortation:

“Those who dwell with themselves as their own refuge...will be for me the topmost of those keen on the training.”

When we strive on with diligence, following our hearts and our consciences, not relying in the outside teacher, it is then that we truly go for refuge in the Buddha.

“Kill the Buddha” in the Zen tradition: looking to the outside, seeking a guidance from that which is without, seeking to “merge” ourselves with something—whether that be Christ or God or just some all-pervasive Everywherewhen. All of this is seeking the Buddha. If we seek, we will not find.

It is only when we can abandon the search in our hearts, truly let go—then we go for refuge.

10: If we become torpid or distracted in meditation, we are instructed to direct the mind towards some inspiring sign—such as an image of the Buddha. Reminds me of stages in metta practice, turning back to dear friend or benefactor if we grow dull with other targets.

If I understand an aspect of this instructions, this is a style of Vipassana which uses a secondary object of concentration—something inspiring—to use if we are unable to stay with the original object for some reason.

“These are the feet of trees, these are empty huts. Meditate, do not be negligent, lest you regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

Memorize this: repeat it. Believe it. Trust it. Follow it.

12: Here Sariputta claims knowledge he didn’t have (not intentionally) and is corrected. How can he know how knowledgeable the Buddha is or others—he cannot know that the Buddha is the most knowledgeable.

Sariputta fields it pretty well, though. He explains how this can be known through inference—and the Buddha accepts his explanation.

13: Sariputta attains final Nibbana. Although Ananda is saddened by the news, it is true that we must all be separated.

14: Mogallana died not too long after Sariputta.

The Buddhas who arise have a supreme pair of disciples—see the Buddhavamsa for names.

15: Bahiya follows the instructions for Satipatthana and becomes one of the arahants.

16: Uttiya does the same.

18: The Satipatthana is presented as occurring to the Buddha shortly after the Enlightenment, and begin confirmed by the Brahma Sahampati.

19: This sutta provides an interesting reply to Mahayana criticisms of the arahant path as being too singular. In our practice for ourselves, we provide protection for others.

Metta practice is very much other-directed but it is also a practice for the self: we must do it for and by ourselves. The same is true of the remaining brahma-viharas.

21: Virtue (sila) is necessary for the development of Satipatthana.

22 – 25: The Dharma does not last if not practiced!

29 – 30: The non-returner has broken the five lower fetters.

33: This would appear to make the Satipatthana yet another factoring of the Path.

34: Also like #33.

36: Perhaps a slight qualification to 33 – 34: we will either become arahants or nonreturners.

40: Gives the Eightfold Path as the way leading to Satipatthana.

44: This is a “flood-crossing” sutra. The Buddha re-discovered the crossing. Brahma Sahampati tells us:

The seer of the destruction of birth,
Compassionate, knows the one-way path
By which in the past they crossed the flood,
By which they will cross and cross over now.

47 – 48: Strengthens the need of sila as preparation for Satipatthana.

48: This comes as close as I’ve heard the Buddha advocate any kind of proselytizing. “Those for whom you have compassion and who think you should be heeded—whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen...”

But at least they aren’t utter strangers. Furthermore, the Buddha did send out the first sixty disciples to teach—but is this any kind of proselytizing?

48 Indriyasamyutta

Another factoring set: the five spiritual faculties of

faith (saddha)
energy (viriya)
mindfulness (sati)
concentration (samadhi)
wisdom (pañña)

1: Simple listing of the faculties

2 – 3: Describes a stream-enterer in terms of the five faculties: one who understands the gratification, the danger, and the escape.

4-5: Describes an arahant as one who has understood (as in #s 2 – 3) and has, as a result, been liberated by nonclinging. Thus the cultivation of the five faculties leads to arahantship—this is a description of the path.

6: Elaborates a bit, by saying “realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge.” The reassurance is given that “in this very life” they enter the goal.

7: Uses the Four Noble Truths formula, placing the faculties in the place of dukkha.

Faculty	Origination
Faith	Resolution + desire to act + attention
Energy	Application + “”
Mindfulness	Establishing + “”
Concentration	Nondistracted + “”
Wisdom	Way of Seeing + “

But this understanding leads to liberation.

8: How the faculties are to be seen.

Faith: in the four factors of stream-entry (confidence in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and virtues.)

Energy: in the four right strivings

- 1) Non-arising of non-wholesome states
- 2) Abandoning of arisen non-wholesome states
- 3) Arising of wholesome states
- 4) Maintenance of arisen wholesome states

Mindfulness: in the four establishments of mindfulness
(body, feelings, mind, phenomena)

Concentration: in the four jhanas

Wisdom: in the four noble truths

9: Further analysis of the faculties

Faith: in the Tathagata's enlightenment
Energy: abandoning the non-wholesome; cultivating the wholesome
Mindfulness: includes memory
Concentration: one-pointedness of mind
Wisdom: seeing dependent origination very clearly

This placing of faith is one of my favorite passages so far:

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathagata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.’”

There's an essay here on the subject of faith.

10: A full expansion of #8 (the notes already do the expansion so they aren't needed here.)

11: Repeat of #9.

12: Analyses the stages of the path—from faith-follower to Dhamma-follower up through stream-entry...arahant in terms of the level of “completion and fulfillment” in the five faculties.

The difference between “faith-follower” and “Dhamma-follower” (both pre-stream-entry), appears to be that the faith-follower removes the defilements much more slowly, with much more effort.

14: Simplifies the issue of completion. One who activates them fully succeeds fully; one who activates them partly succeeds partly.

This ties in well with my previous observations that the various factors of the Path are marked gradations and not absolutes: like the scale from Wrong View to Right View. All sits on a gradation, a scale.

This would help us to realize that sincere practice always bears fruit. “The five faculties, bhikkhus, are not barren, so I say.”

18: Adds one more category to the stages of the path: one in whom these factors are completely and totally absent, and that is an outsider, one who stands in the faction of worldlings.

So here the faculties are separated out into the transcendental. Gethin's Path to Awakening (pgs. 126 – 138) can address this issue.

Gethin has a great deal to say about the connection of the faculties and the various degrees of awakening. There is a table which shows how the various suttas here in the Indriyasamyutta combine the stages of the Path with these faculties.

20: Three faculties: femininity, masculinity, life. Their actual meaning isn't all that clear.

Vism 447:

Femininity: sign, mark, work, ways of the female

Masculinity: sign, mark, work, ways of the male

Life: maintains conascent kinds of matter. It's function is to make them occur. (Impresses me as heat-energy, biological energy.)

(Part of a system of 24 elementals pertaining to the form aggregate.)

AN IV 57 – 59 on the feminine and masculine:

“...a woman marks femininity in herself, the feminine occupation, attire, prejudices, impulses, voice, charm...so a man marks masculinity in himself...”

The discourse explains how the feminine is excited by the masculine and desires a bond with it (and vice-versa.) Thus bondage instead of freedom.

25: Presents the six senses as faculties.

31: Five different faculties:
Pleasure Pain Joy Displeasure Equanimity

36: Helps to analyze the five faculties above:
Pleasure/Pain pertain to the body
Joy/Displeasure pertain to the mind
Equanimity pertains to both

Thus these faculties are really an expansion of three feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral.

39: Always keep these descriptions of feelings (for that’s really what these are) as descriptions of the workings of dependent origination.

40: This sutta is quoted extensively in Vism 165-166. This connects these faculties (feelings) to the jhanas, as such:

Faculty	Subsides Upon Entering	Jhana
Pain		First
Displeasure		Second
Pleasure		Third
Joy		Fourth
Equanimity		Neither perception nor non-perception

41: The Buddha’s remarks on aging are an excellent way of bringing up impermanence.

42: The mind can experience the five senses; they cannot experience each other.

44: Makes the point again that we do not have to take anything on faith; we can practice and find out for ourselves. In this sutta the Buddha asks Sariputta:

“Sariputta, do you have faith that the faculty of faith, when developed and cultivated, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?...That the faculty of wisdom, when developed and cultivated, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination the Deathless as its final goal?”

Sariputta answers that he does not ‘go by faith in the Blessed One about this’. That’s because those who have not known, seen, understood, realized, and contacted with wisdom these faculties would require faith (confidence; trust) that they were so. But those who have known, seen, understood, realized, and contacted with wisdom these faculties know it for their own experience, and don’t require trust or confidence. Since Sariputta is one such person, he doesn’t require that trust or confidence.

However, we will need the saddha if we aren’t arahants like Sariputta. And, presumably, at some point, so

did Sariputta. It probably wouldn't be possible to come to the level of knowing, seeing, understanding, realizing, and contacting with wisdom unless we had originally started with that faith, trust, confidence.

45: Of the spiritual faculties it is wisdom which powers the arising of the other four.

50: A marvelous resource of the reasons for taking refuge in the Buddha: the expression of trust in Enlightenment.

The Buddha asks Sariputta:

Sariputta, does the noble disciple who is completely dedicated to the Tathagata and has full confidence in him entertain any perplexity or doubt about the Tathagata or the Tathagata's teaching?

Sariputta answers:

Venerable sir, the noble disciple who is completely dedicated to the Tathagata and has full confidence in him does not entertain any perplexity or doubt about the Tathagata or the Tathagata's teaching. It is indeed to be expected, venerable sir, that a noble disciple who has faith will dwell with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; that he will be strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. That energy of his, venerable sir, is the faculty of energy...is the faculty of mindfulness...is the faculty of concentration...is the faculty of wisdom...

And, venerable sir, when he has again and again strived in such a way, again and again recollected in such a way, again and again concentrated his mind in such a way, again and again understood with wisdom in such a way, that a noble disciple gains complete faith thus: 'As to these things that previous I had only heard about, now I dwell having contacted them with the body and, having perceived through through with wisdom, I see.' That faith of his, venerable sir, is his faculty of faith.

51: Wisdom again at the head of the five spiritual faculties.

53: "There is no ascetic or brahmin outside here who teaches a Dhamm so real, true, actual as the Blessed One does."

The spiritual paths are not the same. This statement is pretty blunt in giving the BuddhaDhamma the nod as the most true and upright.

54: Primacy of wisdom among the five spiritual faculties. Elephant's footprint is the simile.

55: Same as #54, but with red sandalwood as the most fragrant of woods.

56: Diligence is the key—the one thing needed for the growth of the five spiritual faculties.

57: Here the five spiritual faculties have arisen in the Buddha's mind shortly after his enlightenment and are confirmed by the Brahma Sahampati. This is similar in many ways—like a template—with #18 of the Satipatthanasamyutta (47).

But this one gives a little bit of Brahma Sahampati's past—he practiced the five faculties and was reborn in the Brahma world in his exalted state as a result!

58: Bhikkhu Bodhi considers this sutta confusing in that it clearly indicates continued practice after the attainment of arahantship—as if there were no further practice.

But: the Buddha himself continued to meditate! I don't see why arahantship—or even anuttara samyak sambodhi—need be considered as an end. Maybe you don't have to practice, but at this point you are truly

practicing for all sentient beings, just as you always have been, now with 100% effectiveness.

66: I like this “seven benefits” and fruits of practicing the five faculties:

Final knowledge in this very life

Final knowledge at the time of death

Destruction of the five lower fetters (Nibbana-with-remainder)

Nibbana upon landing

Nibbana without exertion

Nibbana with exertion

One is bound upstream, heading towards the Akanittha realm

Note that the first possibility is the most desirable and the last the least desirable, but all are marvelous fruits of the practice.

49 Sammappadhanasamyutta

The 'four right strivings' are:

Non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states
Abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states
Arising of unarisen wholesome states
Maintenance of arisen wholesome states

Some of the repetition series (the whole of the samyutta) include the three searches:

Search for sensual pleasure
Search for existence
Search for a holy life

50 Balasamyutta

Again the five spiritual powers—same as the five faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

These are placed into repetition series, sometimes together with the five higher fetters:

Lust for form
Lust for the formless
Conceit
Ignorance
Restlessness

The five powers are cultivated for direct knowledge of them, full understanding, their utter destruction, their abandoning.

51 Iddhipadasamyutta

1: Bases for spiritual power:

- 1) Concentration due to desire and volitional formations of striving
- 2) Concentration due to energy and volitional formations of striving
- 3) Concentration due to mind and volitional formations of striving
- 4) Concentration due to investigation and volitional formations or striving

2: Repeat of #1, but makes clear that neglecting these is neglecting the noble path itself.

3: Makes unambiguous that the development and cultivation of these bases leads to the complete destruction of suffering.

4: These powers lead to revulsion, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvana.

5 – 9: Lists the advantages of these bases as leading to liberation, including that of the Buddha.

10: Repeats the story of the Buddha at the Capala Shrine, being urged by Mara to pack it in now—but the Buddha says his parinirvana will occur in three months.

11: See notes on #20 for the various terms here used for energy in meditation. Then this becomes an exposition of the miraculous powers that can result.

13: Here “desire” is a very positive force, the energy to move forward, to gain mental strength.

Volitional formations of striving:

- 1) Nonarising of unarisen evil unwholesome states
- 2) Abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states
- 3) Arising of unarisen wholesome states
- 4) Maintenance of arisen wholesome states

14: This one’s kind of fun: Moggallana makes the Mansion of Migara’s Mother tremble, in order to stir up a group of slacker monks.

15: The Brahmin’s logic is a bit weird here: you cannot abandon desire by means of desire itself. I suppose that the desire to end desire is itself a desire.

Ananda seems to be indicating that there is a subsidence of the wish to do something once that something has been done. Thus, we can desire not to be so enmeshed in desire, and as the desires lessen—they all lessen. We no longer need the desire to end desire, so it lessens and eventually vanishes.

20: The meditational energies:

- 1) too slack: a bit of torpor
- 2) too tense: a bit of restlessness
- 3) constricted internally: sloth
- 4) constricted externally: distraction
- 5) So before, so after: being consistent throughout a sitting
- 6) So above, so below: maintaining mindfulness of the body
- 7) By day, by night: being consistent all the time

These each apply to the four bases.

22: This “mind-made body” appears to be a creation of the fourth jhana.

86: Cultivation of these, five higher fetters are broken.