

in connection with past, future and present time, their SA counterparts do not do so.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. Meditative attainments

SN 14. 11 and its counterpart SA 456 speak of the following seven dhātus:<sup>34</sup>

1. the dhātu of light (ābhā-dhātu 光界)
2. the dhātu of purity (subha-dhātu 淨界)
3. the dhātu of the realm of infinite space (ākāsānañcāyatana-dhātu 無量空入處界)
4. the dhātu of the realm of infinite consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana-dhātu 無量識入處界)
5. the dhātu of the realm of nothingness (ākīñcaññāyatana-dhātu 無所有入處界)
6. the dhātu of the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-dhātu 非想非非想入處界)
7. the dhātu of the cessation of perception-and-feeling (saññāvedayitanirodha-dhātu) or the dhātu of cessation (有滅界)

The two versions differ regarding the *causal condition* (paṭicca 緣) by which these seven dhātus can be known, and the *attainment* (samāpatti 正受 = stage of meditation) by which each of them can be reached. These are as follows.

SN 14. 11 states that: dhātu 1 (light) is known through darkness (andhakara); dhātu 2 (purity) is known through impurity (asubha); dhātu 3 (infinity of space) is known through material form (rūpa); each of the dhātus 4 to 6 is known through the dhātu named previously (dhātu 4 is known through dhātu 3, etc.); and finally dhātu 7 (cessation of perception-and-feeling) is known through cessation. SA 456 states that dhātus 1 to 3 are known as above; dhātu 4 (infinity of consciousness) is known through space;<sup>35</sup> dhātu 5 (nothingness 無所有) is known through *everything-ness* (所有); dhātu 6 (neither-perception-nor-non-perception) is known through *the*

33 The term for time is addhāna, referring to a long period of time, i.e. a lifetime (PED, p. 26). SN 14. 14-22, 29; SN ii, pp. 154-165, 169. SA 445-448, 450 (counterparts of SN 14. 14-16, 24); T 2, p. 115a-c (CSA ii, pp. 160-163).

34 SN ii, pp. 150-151; T 2, pp. 116c-117a (CSA ii, p. 169).

35 See CSA ii, p. 171, note 3.

supreme existence (有第一);<sup>36</sup> and finally dhātu 7 (cessation) is known through the body of existence or individuality (有身).<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the attainment by which each of these dhātus is to be reached, SN 14. 11 says that dhātus 1 to 5 are to be reached by attainment of perception (saññāsamāpatti); dhātu 6 by attainment of remaining activities (saṅkhārāvasesasamāpatti); and dhātu 7 by attainment of cessation (nirodhasamāpatti). By contrast, SA 456 states that dhātus 1 to 5 are to be attained by attainment of self-activity (自行正受); dhātu 6 by attainment of the supreme existence (第一有正受); and dhātu 7 by attainment of the cessation of the body of existence (or individuality) (有身滅正受). Neither version offers any explanation of these attainments.

This set of seven dhātus is common to the two versions as are also the causal conditions by which the first four of the seven are to be known. The two source texts differ, however, regarding the causal conditions by which dhātus 5-7 are to be known, and regarding the attainment by which each of the seven dhātus is to be reached. It is therefore possible that the details regarding attainment of the higher dhātus represent a relatively late addition in the two traditions. Here, the term *dhātu* is being used to mean meditative state.

A few discourses in SA, all of which lack SN counterparts, report other sets of dhātus, apparently pertaining to meditation, as follows.

SA 461 names three dhātus:<sup>38</sup> the dhātu of sensuality (欲界), the dhātu of materiality (色界), and the dhātu of non-materiality (無色界).<sup>39</sup>

SA 462 names a different three:<sup>40</sup> the dhātu of materiality, the dhātu of non-materiality, and the dhātu of cessation (滅界).<sup>41</sup>

SA 463 has this statement:<sup>42</sup>

That is to say, emergence from the dhātu of sensuality into the dhātu of materiality, emergence from the dhātu of materiality into the dhātu of non-materiality, and the dhātu of the cessation (滅) of all activities (一切諸行) and all thoughts (一切思想). These are called the *three emergence-dhātus* (三出界).

36 P. bhavagga? (= neither-perception-nor-non-perception).

37 Skt. satkāya, P. sakkāya.

38 T 2, p. 118a (CSA ii, p. 180).

39 Skt. P. kāma-dhātu, rūpa-dhātu, arūpa-dhātu.

40 T 2, p. 118a (CSA ii, p. 180).

41 Skt. P. nirodha-dhātu.

42 T 2, p. 118b (CSA ii, p. 181).

Finally, SA 464 speaks of “all liberation dhātus” (諸解脫界),<sup>43</sup> explaining them as the dhātu of elimination (斷界),<sup>44</sup> the dhātu of fading away (of sensual desire) (無欲界),<sup>45</sup> and the dhātu of cessation (滅界), attained by practising both calm and insight (止觀).<sup>46</sup> The sutra explains that the dhātu of elimination is the elimination of all activities (一切行); the dhātu of fading away (of sensual desire) is the elimination of craving and sensuality (愛欲); and the dhātu of cessation is the cessation of all activities.<sup>47</sup>

Of the above four sutras (SA 461-464), only SA 463 has a Pāli counterpart, and it is located not in SN but in Itivuttaka 51 of Khuddakani-kāya.<sup>48</sup> This Pāli version mentions just three dhātus – the dhātu of materiality, the dhātu of non-materiality, and the dhātu of cessation; unlike its SA counterpart, it mentions neither the dhātu of sensuality, nor the step-by-step progression from each dhātu to the next.

This section has shown that the term *dhātu* is used in the two versions to refer to various meditative states; however, the details regarding attainment of these states are not entirely shared by both versions, and some of the sets of dhātus are found only in SA sutras that lack SN counterparts.

### 5. The “dhātu of self-acting”

SA 459 has its Pāli counterpart not in SN but in Aṅguttara Nikāya, namely AN 6. 38. This discourse reports the Buddha as saying that there is a dhātu of self-acting (*atta-kāra* 自作), and there is a dhātu of other-acting (*para-kāra* 他作). The following first presents the content of AN 6. 38, and then compares with SA 459.

AN 6. 38 has a certain brahmin say to the Buddha:<sup>49</sup>

This, Master Gotama, is my doctrine; this is my view: There is no self-acting (*attakāro*); there is no other-acting (*parakāro*).

The Buddha replies:

43 Skt. *sarva-vimukti-dhātu*.

44 Skt. *prahāṇa-dhātu*.

45 Skt. *virāga-dhātu*.

46 Skt. *śamatha-vipaśyanā*.

47 T 2, p. 118b-c (CSA ii, pp. 182-183).

48 Iti. pp. 45-46.

49 AN iii, pp. 337-338.