

The Saḷāyatanavagga Saṃyutta contains ten Saṃyuttas dealing mainly with internal and external sense-bases.

The Mahāvagga Saṃyutta contains twelve Saṃyuttas. The names of the various saṃyuttas, such as Magga Saṃyutta, Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta, Satipatthāna Saṃyutta, Indriya Saṃyutta, indicate the subjects covered. The Editorial Committee has decided as a preliminary step to edit a portion from each of the five major divisions, Vagga Saṃyuttas, and to publish each one of the portions as a separate book.

The translation of the present book, Khandha Saṃyutta, was done by U Tin U, a senior editor of the Myanmar Piṭaka Association, and was initially edited by U Hla Maung, another senior editor. The final editing was done by the Editorial Committee of the Association.

INTRODUCTION

The Saṃyutta Nikāya has five major divisions or groups of discourses related in subject matter or in persons involved. The five major divisions are: Sagāthāvagga Saṃyutta, Nidānavagga Saṃyutta, Khandhavagga Saṃyutta, Saḷāyatanavagga Saṃyutta and Mahāvagga Saṃyutta. Each division, Vagga Saṃyutta, contains groups called Saṃyuttas.

The Sagāthāvagga Saṃyutta contains eleven Saṃyuttas grouped according to characters appearing in them, such as the devas, the brahmās and King of Kosala. Many of the dialogues between the Buddha and these various characters are in verse and hence the name Sagāthā, meaning 'with verse'.

The Nidānavagga Saṃyutta contains ten Saṃyuttas dealing mainly with Causal Factors, i.e., the principles of conditionality and interdependence.

The Khandhavagga Saṃyutta contains thirteen Saṃyuttas. As the name implies, it deals mainly with the five aggregates of phenomena or the khandhas, viz., Corporeality, Sensation, Perception, Volitional Activities and Consciousness.

The Khandha Saṃyutta

The Khandha Saṃyutta is the first and the longest of the thirteen Saṃyuttas of the Khandhavagga Saṃyutta. The discourses in the Khandha Saṃyutta are built around the aggregates of Corporeality, Sensation, Perception, Volitional Activities and Consciousness. They are shown in all aspects, their enjoyableness, their faults and the freedom from attachment to them. There are 159 suttas arranged in fifteen sections, each containing ten to fifteen suttas. In these discourses the Buddha used various methods of approach to suit the occasion, the stage of mental development and the intelligence of his audience. Very often, he made use of metaphors and similes which are easily understood by any ordinary person, citing things like foam, bubble, mirage, dirty cloth, river, fire, ashes, etc. Again and again, the Buddha warned his disciples against the dangers of craving for and enjoyment of pleasures of the senses. He made them see the faults of the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging. The Buddha repeatedly urged his disciples not to be attached to the aggregates and to view them with right perception, as

they really are, and finally to practise the dhamma according to his Teaching and thus gain liberation from the round of rebirths.

Enjoyableness of the Aggregates which are the objects of Clinging

In many of his discourses, the Buddha warned his disciples not to take delight in and cling to the enjoyableness of the aggregates, i.e., the physical well-being and mental pleasure that arise dependent on the five-aggregates. In the three Assāda Suttas (paras 26, 27, 28) of this book, the Buddha told his disciples how as a Bodhisatta he had searched for enjoyableness of the aggregates and found it. But he also gained insight into it and found out that enjoyableness also has its faults of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and have the nature of being subject to change. Then, he searched for freedom from attachment to the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging and gained freedom from them by rooting out craving for them through insight. This complete understanding of the five aggregates which are the objects of Clinging in all these three aspects is gained only with arahattamaggāñāna.

Faults of the Aggregates which are the objects of Clinging

The aggregates which are the objects of Clinging have three characteristics which may be termed as faults. These characteristics are: their impermanence (anicca), their unsatisfactoriness (dukkha) and their insubstantial or non-Self nature (anatta). The Buddha took great pains to make his disciples see these faults. The suttas dealing with these characteristics, the conditioning factors and the cessation of the khandhas are grouped together in Anicca Vagga (paras 12-21). The same theme is also repeated in many other discourses. The well-known Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta (para 59), the second discourse delivered by the Buddha after his

Enlightenment, appears in Upaya Vagga (section 6). The suttas in Kukkuḷa Vagga (section 14, paras 136-149) also concern the same characteristics of the aggregates but the emphasis here is on getting rid of the desire for and attachment to them. The Aniccasaññā Sutta (para 102) is about the practice of the perception of impermanence, the repeated cultivation of which brings about the complete destruction of attachment to sensual pleasures (kāmarāga), attachment to corporeality (rūparāga), and attachment to existence (bhavarāga). It also destroys ignorance and uproots all 'I am' conceit (asami māna). The cultivation of this practice is said to be one of the best meditation practices. The Buddha said it is like the apex of a structure where all rafters meet.

(i) Impermanence (Anicca)

The aggregates which are the objects of Clinging are subject to constant change and decay; all sentient beings are subject to ageing, sickness and finally death. In the Khandha Saṃyutta there are some suttas given specifically to some aged and ailing disciples; for example, the suttas given to the old brahmin Nakulapitu, to the Venerable Tissa, the Buddha's paternal uncle, to the Venerable Vakkali, to the Venerable Assaji, and some others.

To Nakulapitu, the Buddha pointed out the change and decay that constantly take place in the body thus: "This body is a festering sore; it is encased in a thin layer of skin; it is fragile like an egg-shell. If anyone, while bearing the burden of this body, were to claim that, even for a moment, he is in sound health, he is nothing but a fool." The Buddha next told him to train himself so that his mind should not be sick even though his body is sick. The full meaning of the Buddha's advice was not very clear to the old brahmin at first, so the Venerable Sāriputta explained to him more fully later on. The exhortation here is not to have any illusion of Self; for then only one would not be affected by the changeableness and impermanence of the aggregates. To be

(ii) Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha)

The aggregates which are the objects of Clinging are unsatisfactory and are the cause of pain and suffering, grief, lamentation, distress and agony. In Bhāra Sutta (para 22), the Buddha refers to the five aggregates which are the objects

one with a sick body but without a sick mind is to become an ariya; one with a sick body and a sick mind is an ignorant worldling (a puthujjana) (para 1).

The Venerable Vakkali was another old disciple of the Buddha. Once, when he was seriously ill, the Buddha went to see him at his request. The Venerable Vakkali was very anxious to see the Buddha all the time and always wanted to pay homage to him. Having enquired after his health, the Buddha said to him, "What good will it be for you to see this foul body? Vakkali, he who sees the dhamma sees me.... Indeed, seeing the dhamma is seeing me" (para 87). What the Buddha meant here is that if one does not see the dhamma, one does not see the Buddha; and that only one who sees the dhamma sees the Buddha.

To the Venerable Assaji who was ailing and was finding it very difficult to concentrate, the Buddha gave advice on how to reflect on the true nature of the aggregates thus: when experiencing a sensation, whether it be pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, to do so without any attachment. By doing so, the bhikkhu eventually comes to perceive the sensation pertaining only to the body (which arises at the five sense-doors) as sensation pertaining only to the body, and sensation pertaining only to life (which arises at the mind-door) as sensation pertaining only to life. He also knows that all sensations experienced in this body would become extinguished on the dissolution of the body and the ending of the mental aggregates just as a burning oil lamp would go out when there is no more cause to burn due to the exhaustion of oil and wick (para 88).

of Clinging as the burden. The bearer of the burden is any person bearing that burden. The cause or means by which one is led to bear that burden is Craving -- craving for sense pleasures, craving for continued existence and craving for no further existence. Laying down the burden is the complete cessation of Craving through non-attachment and abandonment, which is in fact the realization of Nibbāna.

In Kukkuḷa Sutta (para 136) the Buddha likens the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging to burning ashes, and in Āditta Sutta (para 61), to burning coal. Again and again, the aggregates are identified with dukkha, and Craving (taṇhā) with the origin or cause of dukkha. The fact is, the arising of the aggregates is the arising of dukkha, the occurrence of ailments and the manifestation of ageing and death. The cessation of the aggregates is the cessation of dukkha, the extinction of ailment and the disappearance of ageing and death. It is achieved only with the attainment of arahatship.

(iii) Insubstantiality or Non-Self (Anatta)

The aggregates which are the objects of Clinging are without substance or essence and are uncontrollable. They are non-Self in nature. That the aggregates are insubstantial and are devoid of any essence is clearly illustrated in the following verse from Phenapiṇḍipama Sutta (para 95).

"Corporeality is like foam,

Sensation is like a bubble,

Perception is like a mirage,

Volitional Activities are like a plantain stem,

Consciousness is like a conjurer's trick.

"To one who sees these

Five khandhas properly,

Who looks at them carefully,
And who examines them with proper attention,
They would appear to be useless and worthless."

Then the Buddha added this with regard to the body:-- that when the faculty of vitality, internal heat and consciousness leave the body, it is discarded as food for others (such as insects and animals).

The most well-known sutta on anatta by the Buddha is the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta (para 59), the discourse given to the group of five bhikkhus (Pañcavaggi). In this Sutta the Buddha shows that the aggregates are not atta, otherwise, they would not be subject to affliction and that they would comply with one's wishes. He also shows that the aggregates are impermanent, painful and subject to change and therefore one cannot consider them as 'mine', or as 'I' or as 'my Self (atta)'. The Buddha enjoins the disciples to perceive the aggregates with insight wisdom as being 'not mine', or 'not I' or 'not my Self'.

Freedom from attachment to the Aggregates which are the objects of Clinging

When one comes to understand fully the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging -- that their enjoyableness is only temporary and transient, that they are a mass of dukkha and that craving for them gives rise to fresh rebirths -- one is no longer inclined to be attached to them. Then one feels that there is an urgent need to search for freedom, to find a way of escape. The Buddha has taught that to gain freedom from attachment to the aggregates one must have a true and full comprehension of them in their fourfold aspects, viz., insight into their unsatisfactoriness; insight into their origin; insight into their cessation, which means the freedom from attachment to them; and insight into the Path leading to their cessation. This Path to freedom is the practice of

Insight meditation (vipassanā bhāvanā), which leads to the attainment of Magga and Phala.

Insight Meditation Practice

The Buddha delivered several discourses on Insight Meditation Practice. The following are a few examples from Khandha Saṃyutta.

In Faṭṭipadā Sutta (para 44) the Buddha compares the practice that leads to the arising of the five aggregates with the practice that leads to their cessation. The Buddha also points out that it is wrong to view the aggregates constituting mind and body (sakkāya) as an individual entity or as atta. This illusion of Self (sakkāya diṭṭhi) causes the five aggregates to arise again and again, which means endless dukkha. Only when one abandons this illusion of Self and views one's body in the light of its being not one's Self, by means of insight and Path knowledge, does one escape from the recurrent arising of the five aggregates and only then is dukkha ended.

The four Anudhamma Suttas (paras 39, 40, 41, 42) also deal with Insight Meditation Practice. They are concerned mainly with contemplation of the anicca, dukkha and anatta nature of the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging. The Buddha also points out, in these discourses, that a person practising meditation would first have the feeling of disgust with the aggregates; next would be a full comprehension of the aggregates, followed by liberation from them, which also means liberation from ageing and death, from grief, lamentation, pain, distress and despair.

In Abhijāna Sutta (para 24) the stages in the development of understanding of the aggregates in the course of insight meditation are traced. The understanding or knowledge comes in three stages. The first is nāta pariññā, knowledge arising from the differentiation of mind and matter; next comes the tīraṇā pariññā or knowledge of the

three characteristics of nāma and rūpa; and finally, pahāna pariññā, comprising both detachment and abandonment of craving which means complete eradication or uprooting of craving and defilements. This, in fact, is the stage when Magga ñāṇa is attained.

An Arahāt

An arahāt is one who has gained, with arahattamagga ñāṇa, complete understanding and full comprehension of the five aggregates which are the objects of Clinging, in all aspects. He has fulfilled the Noble Practice of Purity.

The Sattatthāna Sutta (para 57) defines one who is perfectly proficient in seven aspects, which is one way of describing an arahāt. He is perfectly proficient as he has skilfully gained insight into the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging in these seven aspects, viz., their unsatisfactoriness, their origin, their cessation, the practice leading to their cessation, and also, their enjoyableness, their faults and freedom from them. He also reflects on them with insight by rightly perceiving them only as elements, only as sense-bases and as being causally produced.

Many disciples of the Buddha who closely followed his instructions gained insight into the true nature of the aggregates and finally attained arahatship. The following passage occurs in many suttas: "Bhikkhus, on perceiving thus, the well-informed ariya disciple becomes disgusted with Corporeality, etc. -- on being disgusted thus, he is freed from attachment, he is liberated. On being liberated, knowledge of liberation arises. He knows clearly: 'Rebirth is no more, fulfilled is the Noble Practice of Purity; done is all there is to be done (to realize Magga); there is nothing more to do for such realization.'"

one who first knows the Path clearly, who is wise and skilled in the Path. His disciples follow him and they attain the Path knowledge after him. Thus, the Buddha is the Path-finder, the Discoverer, and the Proclaimer of the Ariya Path; the others are only the followers. He is incomparable in taming those who deserve to be tamed; he is the Teacher of devas and men and is the Most Exalted One, the Bhagavā.

Sammāsambuddha

In Upādāna Paripavatta Sutta (para 56) the Buddha made a declaration of his attainment of the most Supreme Enlightenment (anuttaram sammāsambodhi) in the following terms: "Bhikkhus, so long as I had not gained insight into the true nature of these five aggregates which are the objects of Clinging in their fourfold aspects, so long did I not admit to the universe with its devas, māras and brahmās and to the world of human beings with its samaṇas, brāhmaṇas, kings and people, that I had attained, and rightly realized by myself the incomparable, the most Supreme Enlightenment. But, when, bhikkhus, I had gained insight into the true nature of these five aggregates which are the objects of Clinging in their fourfold aspects, I declared to the universe with its devas, māras and brahmās and to the world of human beings with its samaṇas, brāhmaṇas, kings and people that I had attained and rightly realized by myself the incomparable, the most Supreme Enlightenment." "In their fourfold aspects' here means insight into the true nature, the origin, the cessation and the Path that leads to the cessation of the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging.

A similar declaration is also found in the first and the second Assāda Suttas (para 26, 27), the discourses concerning enjoyment and faults of the aggregates which are the objects of Clinging and freedom from attachment to them. Thus, there arises in this world the most supremely Enlightened One, the Sammāsambuddha, the Tathāgata.

In the Sammāsambuddha Sutta (para 58) the distinction is made between an arahāt, who has gained liberation through Arahattamagga ñāṇa (Paññāvimutti), and a Sammāsambuddha, the Perfectly Self-enlightened One. According to the Buddha, the distinction is that the Tathāgata is one who is homage-worthy and perfectly self-enlightened, who has discovered the Path of Eight Constituents and has proclaimed it. He is the

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May the Buddha's Teaching shine forth

like the radiant sun.

The Editorial Committee
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The Eighth Day of May, 1990.

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