

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

Classification of Elements (Dhatuvibhanga Sutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One while touring the Magadha country entered the potter Baggava's workshop in Rajagaha and told him, 'If it is not inconvenient to you, I will spend one night in your workshop.'

'Venerable sir, there is a homeless one already arrived at the workshop, if he does not mind, abide as you like.'

At that time a certain clansman named Pukkusaati who had become homeless out of faith in the Blessed One had already arrived at the workshop. The Blessed One approached venerable Pukkusaati and said 'If it is not inconvenient to the bhikkhu, I will spend one night at the workshop.'

'Venerable one, abide as you wish, in the potter's workshop, there are no problems.'

Then the Blessed One entered the potter's workshop, made a spread of dried grass in a suitable place, and sat legs crossed, mindfulness established in front of him. The Blessed One sat far into the night in the seated posture. Venerable Pukkusaati too spent most of the night in the seated posture. Then it occurred to the Blessed One, this clansman's posture is pleasing, I will question him. The Blessed One asked venerable Pukkusaati. 'Bhikkhu, in whose faith have you become homeless? Or who is your Teacher? Or whose Teaching pleases you?'

‘Venerable one, there is the recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyas, become homeless. Of that blessed Gotama, such fame has spread: That Blessed One is worthy, rightfully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well gone, knows the worlds, (*1) is the incomparable tamer of those to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed. I became homeless with faith in him. That Blessed One is my teacher. I’m pleased with that Blessed One’s teaching. ‘

‘Bhikkhu, where does that rightfully enlightened, Blessed One live now?’

‘Venerable one, in the northern states there is a township named Saavatthi, that rightfully enlightened Blessed One, lives there now.’

‘Bhikkhu, have seen that Blessed One, and seeing, could you recognize him?’

‘Venerable one, I haven’t seen the Blessed One, and seeing him would not recognize him.’

Then it occurred to the Blessed One: This clansman has become homeless on account of faith in me and the Blessed One addressed venerable Pukkusaati. ‘Bhikkhu, I will give you the Teaching, listen carefully and attentively.’

Venerable Pukkusaati replied. ‘Yes, venerable one.’

The Blessed One said. ‘Bhikkhu, man consists of six elements, six spheres of contact, eighteen mental ramblings and four resolutions. (Settled in them, should not imagine. When not imagining, it is said, the sage is appeased.) Be wise and diligent to protect the truth, to develop benevolence and train for appeasement. This is the short exposition of the classification of the six elements.

Bhikkhu, it was said man consists of six elements. Why was it said? The elements are earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness. If it was said, man consists of six elements, it was said on account of this.

Bhikkhu, it was said man consists of six spheres of contact. Why was it said? The spheres of contact are eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact. If it was said, man consists of six spheres of contact, it was said on account of this.

Bhikkhu, it was said man consists of eighteen mental ramblings. Why was it said? Seeing a form, the mind thinks discursively, settled in pleasure, settled in displeasure and settled in equanimity. Hearing a sound....re..... Cognizing a scent...re..... Enjoying a taste.....re.... Experiencing a touch on the body...re...Cognizing an idea in the mind thinks discursively, settled in pleasure, settled in displeasure and settled in equanimity. Thus there are six ramblings of the mind in pleasure, six ramblings of the mind in displeasure and six ramblings of the mind in equanimity. If it was said, man consists of eighteen mental ramblings, it was said on account of this.

Bhikkhu, it was said man is of four resolutions. Why was it said? They are the resolutions of wisdom, of truth, of giving up and appeasement. If it was said, man is of four resolutions, it was said on account of this.

Bhikkhu, it was said be wise and diligent to protect the truth, to develop benevolence and train for appeasement. Why was it said? How is the bhikkhu wise and diligent? These six are the elements. That is earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness.

Bhikkhu, what is earth element? There is internal and external earth element. What is internal earth element? It is the hard internal, personal earth such as hair, on the head, on the body, nails, teeth, outer skin, flesh, veins, bones, bone marrow, kidney, heart, liver, lungs, spleen, intestines, larger intestines, belly, excreta and any other thing that is hard, internal, personal, and fixed as one's own.

This internal and external earth is the earth element. These are not me. I'm not in them. They are not self. This should be seen with right wisdom, as it really is and the mind should be nipped and detached from the earth element.

Bhikkhu, what is the water element? There is internal and external water element. What is internal water element? That which is internal, personal, watery and fixed as one's own, such as bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, oil of the body, tears, oil of the eyes, spit, snot, oil of the joints, urine and any other thing that is internal, personal, watery and fixed as one's own. Bhikkhu, this is internal water element. This internal water element and the external water element, go as water element. These are not me. I'm not in them. They are not self. This should be seen with right wisdom, as it really is and the mind should be nipped and detached from the water element

Bhikkhu, what is the fire element? There is internal and external fire element. What is internal fire element? That which is internal, personal, fiery and fixed as one's own. By which there is heat and burning, and anything enjoyed, drunk, eaten and tasted is digested, and any other thing that is internal, personal, fiery and fixed as one's own. Bhikkhu, this is internal fire element. This internal fire element and external fire element, is fire element. These are not me. I'm not in them. They are not self. This should be seen with right wisdom, as it really is and the mind should be nipped and detached from the fire element.

Bhikkhu, what is air element? There is internal and external air element. What is internal air element? The internal air that goes up and down the body, air in the belly, in the lower portion of the abdomen, air going up and down the limbs, in breaths and out breaths or any other internal, personal, airy thing is internal air element. Bhikkhu, this internal and external air element, is the air element. It is not me. I'm not in it. It is not self. This should be seen with right wisdom, as it really is and the mind should be nipped and detached from the air element.

Bhikkhu, what is the element of space? There is internal and external space element. What is internal space element? The internal spaces in the form of space in the ear lobes, nostrils, open space from the mouth, where anything enjoyed, drunk, eaten and tasted is stored, and the space through which it is turned out or any other internal, space that is one's own. Bhikkhu, this is internal space element. The internal and external space, is the space element. This is not me. I'm not in it. It's not self. This should be seen with right wisdom, as it really is and the mind should be nipped and detached from the space element.

Then there remains consciousness purified and clean, by which something is known, as pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant. Bhikkhu, on account of a pleasant contact, arises pleasant feeling and he knows, I feel pleasant. With the cessation of that pleasant contact, the respective pleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased. Bhikkhu, on account of an unpleasant contact, arises unpleasant feeling and he knows, I feel unpleasant. With the cessation of that unpleasant contact, the respective unpleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased. Bhikkhu, on account of a neither unpleasant nor pleasant contact, arises neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling, and he knows, I feel neither unpleasant nor pleasant. With the cessation of that neither unpleasant nor pleasant contact, the respective neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased

Bhikkhu, with the contact of two logs of wood there arise heat and fire and when they are put apart, the respective heat and the fire ceases and appeases. In the same manner on account of a pleasant contact, arises pleasant feeling and he knows, I feel pleasant. With the cessation of that pleasant contact, the respective pleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased. On account of an unpleasant contact, arises unpleasant feeling and he knows, I feel unpleasant. With the cessation of that unpleasant contact, the respective unpleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased. On account of a neither unpleasant nor pleasant contact, arises a neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling, and he knows, I feel neither unpleasant nor pleasant. With the cessation of that neither unpleasant nor pleasant contact, the respective neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling too ceases and he knows that it has appeased

Then purified equanimity only remains, tender, workable and bright. A clever goldsmith or his apprentice building a furnace would light it. Taking the pair of spincers, would place the gold in the lighted furnace and from time to time he would heat it, sprinkle water on it and look at it. Then that gold becomes purified, with the impurities turned out. Then the gold becomes tender, workable and bright, and suitable to make any ornament such as anklets, earrings or a gold chain. In the same manner only purified equanimity remains tender, workable and bright. Then he knows, this equanimity that is purified and bright I will direct to the sphere of space. He develops the mind and the suitable thoughts, and knows my equanimity will be settled in it for a long time. This equanimity that is purified and bright I will direct to the sphere of consciousness. He develops the mind and the suitable thoughts and knows, my equanimity will be settled in it for a long. time. This equanimity that is purified and bright I will direct to the sphere of nothingness. He develops the mind and the suitable ideas, and knows my equanimity will be settled in it for a long time. This equanimity that is purified and bright I will direct to the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. He develops the mind and the suitable thoughts and knows, my equanimity will be settled in it for a long time. Then he knows this equanimity that is purified and bright I directed to the sphere of space developing the mind and the suitable thoughts is compounded. This equanimity that is purified and bright I directed to the sphere of consciousness, developing the mind and the suitable thoughts is compounded. This equanimity that is purified and bright I directed to the sphere of nothingness developing the mind and the suitable thoughts is compounded. This equanimity that is purified and bright I directed to the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception developing the mind and the suitable thoughts, is compounded So he does not intend or think 'to be' or 'not to be' and does not seize anything and does not worry about it and is extinguished. He knows, birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. Feeling pleasant feelings knows, it is impermanent, is not bent to it and knows that he does not delight in it. Feeling unpleasant feelings knows, it is impermanent, is not bent to it and knows that he does not delight in it. Feeling neither unpleasant nor pleasant feelings knows, it is impermanent, is not bent to it and knows that he does not delight in it. Feeling pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant feelings feels them unyoked. Experiencing feelings that end the body he knows, I experience feelings that end the body. Experiencing feelings that end life he knows, I experience feelings that

end life. He knows, at the break up of the body, before the end of life that all feelings and enjoyments will be cooled.

Bhikkhu, on account of oil and a shred, the oily flame burns, when the oil and shred ends and no more fuel is fed, it extinguishes. In the same manner experiencing feelings that end the body he knows, I experience feelings that end the body. Experiencing feelings that end life he knows, I experience feelings that end life. He knows, at the break up of the body, before the end of life that all feelings and enjoyments will be cooled. The bhikkhu endowed thus has made the highest wise resolution. This is the highest noble wisdom, that is knowledge for the destruction of all unpleasantness. The release, established in truth is immovable. Bhikkhu, thoughts that deviate from the truth are not the truth. (*2) Thoughts that do not deviate from the truth, are the truth, it's extinction. (*3) Therefore the bhikkhu endowed thus, has made the highest resolution in truth. This is the highest noble truth. They are thoughts on the truth, extinction. Owing to ignorance, earlier he may have made resolutions. Now they are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps not to arise again.

Therefore the bhikkhu endowed thus has made the highest resolution in giving up. This is the highest noble giving up. That is giving up all earlier resolutions. Owing to ignorance, earlier he may have had covetousness and greedy interest. Now they are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps not to arise again. Owing to ignorance, earlier he may have had the evil aversion and anger. Now they are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps not to arise again. Owing to ignorance, earlier he may have had the evil ignorance and delusion. Now they are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps not to arise again. Therefore the bhikkhu endowed thus has made the highest resolution in appeasement. The highest and most noble appeasement is the appeasement of greed, hate and delusion.

If it was said, do not be negligent to be wise, protect the truth and develop giving up and train for appeasement, it was said on account of this.

Established anywhere should not imagine, when not imagining it is said the sage is appeased. Why was it said? Bhikkhu, 'I be' is imagining, here I am, is imagining, I will be, is imagining, I will not be, is imagining, I will be material, is imagining, I will be immaterial, is imagining, I will be perceptive or non-perceptive, are imaginings. I will be neither perceptive nor non-perceptive, is imagining. Bhikkhu, imagining is an ailment, a blister, an arrow. When all imaginings end, it is said the sage is appeased. Bhikkhu, the appeased sage is not born, does not decay, does not change, does not desire. Bhikkhu, one who has nothing to be born has nothing to decay. When there is no decay there's no death. When there is no death, there is no change. When there is no change there are no desires. If it was said, established anywhere should not imagine, when not imagining it is said the sage is appeased, it was said on account of this.

Bhikkhu, remember this as my short classification of the six elements.

Then venerable Pukkusaati knowing I have met the Teacher, the well gone one, the rightfully enlightened one, got up from his seat, arranging the robe on one shoulder, put his head at the feet of the Blessed and said thus. 'Venerable sir pardon me owing to foolishness, delusion and demerit I have addressed the Blessed One as friend, pardon me, it will be for future restraint.'

Bhikkhu, owing to foolishness, delusion and demerit, you have transgressed, addressing me as friend, I would not reckon it. As you ask for pardon seeing your mistake, I pardon you, it is increase in the Teaching to see one's mistake and ask for pardon, for future restraint.'

'Venerable sir, may I gain the higher ordination in your presence.'

'Bhikkhu, are your bowl and robes complete?'

'Venerable sir my bowl and robes are incomplete.'

‘Bhikkhu, the Thus Gone One does not confer the higher ordination, when bowl and robes are incomplete.’

Then venerable Pukkusaati delighted in the words of the Blessed One got up from his seat, worshipped the Blessed One and turning his right side towards him, went round the Blessed One and went away in search of bowl and robes. When he was going in search of bowl and robes, a rough cow killed him.

Then many bhikkhus approached the Blessed One, worshipped, sat on a side and said. ‘Venerable sir, the clansman Pukkusaati who was advised in short by the Blessed One has died. Where is he born after death?’

‘Bhikkhus, the clansman Pukkusaati is wise, he realized the Teaching, I did not explain much. The clansman Pukkusaati destroyed the five lower bonds binding to the sensual world and is born spontaneously, not to proceed from that world.

The Blessed One said thus and those bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

Notes.

1. Knows the worlds.’lokaviduu.’ The world to anyone is the data that come through the six doors of mental contact. The Blessed One knows this and knows that each ones data is different from another’s and so he is known as one who knows the worlds.

2. Thoughts that deviate from the truth are not the truth. ‘ta.m hi, bhikkhu, musaa ya.m mosadhamma.m’ The truth is unpleasantness. That is all data from the six doors of mental contact

such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas are impermanent, therefore unpleasant and so without an abiding self. If someone thinks that this data is permanent, pleasant and mine, he is deviating from the truth. The highest resolution in truth is not to deviate from this truth.

3. Thoughts that do not deviate from the truth are the truth. It is extinction. ‘ta.m sacca.m ya.m amosadhamma.m nibbaana.m’ This is to come to the view that all data from the six doors of mental contact in the form of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas are impermanent, therefore they are unpleasant and so there is no abiding self. This is the truth and it is extinction.

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