AN 4.90 — AN 4:90 Aggregates | Khandha Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Aggregates

Khandha Sutta (AN 4:90)

“Monks, these four persons are to be found existing in the world. Which four? The unshakeable contemplative, the white-lotus contemplative, the red-lotus contemplative, the most refined contemplative among contemplatives.

“And how is a person an unshakeable contemplative? There is the case where a monk is in training, one who has not attained the heart’s goal but remains intent on the unsurpassed safety from bondage. This is how a person is an unshakeable contemplative.

“And how is a person a white-lotus contemplative? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’1 But he doesn’t remain touching the eight emancipations with his body.2 This is how a person is a white-lotus contemplative.

“And how is a person a red-lotus contemplative? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ And he remains touching the eight emancipations with his body. This is how a person is a red-lotus contemplative.

“And how is a person the most refined contemplative among contemplatives?

There is the case where a monk often uses a robe when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. He often consumes almsfood when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. He often uses a lodging when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. He often uses medicinal requisites for curing the sick when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. His fellows in the holy life with whom he lives often treat him with agreeable bodily actions, and rarely with disagreeable ones. They often treat him with agreeable verbal actions... agreeable mental actions, and rarely with disagreeable ones. They often present him with what is agreeable, and rarely with what is disagreeable. Painful feelings coming from bile, phlegm, wind, or their combination, and those produced by changes in the weather, uneven care of the body, attacks, or the result of kamma do not often arise in him. He has few diseases. He attains—whenever he wants, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here & now. Through the ending of effluents, he enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized it for himself right in the here & now. This is how a person is the most refined contemplative among contemplatives.

“And, monks, if anyone, speaking rightly, were to say, ‘He is the most refined contemplative among contemplatives,’ it’s of me that, speaking rightly, he would say it. For I often use a robe when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. I often consume almsfood when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. I often use a lodging when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. I often use medicinal requisites for curing the sick when asked to, and rarely when not asked to. My fellows in the holy life with whom I live often treat me with agreeable bodily actions, and rarely with disagreeable ones. They often treat me with agreeable verbal actions... agreeable mental actions, and rarely with disagreeable ones. They often present me with what is agreeable, and rarely with what is disagreeable. Painful feelings coming from bile, phlegm, wind, or their combination, and those produced by climate, careless behavior, assault, or the result of kamma do not often arise in me. I have few diseases. I attain—whenever I want, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here & now. Through the ending of effluents, I enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release &

discernment-release, having directly known & realized it for myself right in the here & now. If anyone, speaking rightly, were to say, 'He is the most refined contemplative among contemplatives,' it's of me that, speaking rightly, he would say it.

"These, monks, are four persons to be found existing in the world."

Notes

1. SN 22:89 describes this contemplation as the path leading to arahantship.

2. See DN 15. The Commentary states that this passage refers to a dry-insight arahant, one who hasn't attained any of the jhānas. However, the "stream" that a stream-enterer has entered contains all eight factors of the noble eightfold path. One of these factors is right concentration, which consists of the four jhānas. So if every stream-enterer has experienced at least the first jhāna, and stream-entry is a lower attainment than arahantship, every arahant must have experienced at least the first jhāna as well.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 22:5; SN 22:56–57; Iti 16–17