Snp 4.4 — Sn 4:4 The Pure Octet

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/KN/StNp/StNp4_4.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

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

4:4 The Pure Octet

“I see the pure, the supreme,

free from disease.

It’s in connection

with what’s seen

that a person’s purity

is.”1

Understanding thus,

having known the “supreme,”
& remaining focused
on purity,
one falls back on that knowledge.
If it’s in connection
with what is seen
that a person’s purity is,
or if stress is abandoned
in connection with knowledge,
then a person with acquisitions
is purified
in connection with something else,2
for his view betrays that
in the way he asserts it.

No brahman3
says purity
comes in connection
with anything else.
Unsmeared with regard
to what’s seen, heard, sensed,
habits or practices,
merit or evil,
not creating
anything here,
he’s let go
of what he’d embraced.4

Abandoning what’s first,
they depend on what’s next.5
Following perturbation,6

they don’t cross over the bond.
They embrace & reject
—like a monkey releasing a branch
to seize at another7—
a person undertaking practices on his own,
goes high & low,
latched onto perception.
But having clearly known
through vedas,8 having encountered
the Dhamma,
one deeply discerning
doesn’t go
high & low.

He’s enemy-free9
with regard to all things
seen, heard, or sensed.
By whom, with what,10
should he
be pigeonholed
here in the world?
—one who has seen in this way,
who goes around
open.11

They don’t theorize, don’t yearn,
don’t proclaim “utter purity.”
Untying the tied-up knot of grasping,
they don’t form a desire
anywhere in the world.

The brahman

gone beyond territories,12

has nothing that

—on knowing or seeing—

he's grasped.

Unimpassionate for passion,

not impassioned for dis-,13

he has nothing here

that he's grasped as supreme.

vv. 788–795

Notes

1. An ancient Indian belief, dating back to the Vedas, was that the sight of certain things or beings was believed to purify. Thus "in connection with what's seen" here means both that purity is brought about by means of seeing such a sight, and that one's purity is measured in terms of having such a sight. This belief survives today in the practice of darshan. See DN 16, note 44.

2. In other words, if purity were simply a matter of seeing or knowing something, a person could be pure in this sense and yet still have acquisitions (= defilements), which would not be true purity. On the use of the phrase, "in connection with," here, see Sn 4:9, note 4.

3. "Brahman" in the Buddhist sense, i.e., a person born in any caste who has become an arahant.

4. Lines such as this may have been the source of the confusion in the different recensions of the Canon—and in Nd I—as to whether the poems in this vagga are concerned with letting go of views that have been embraced (atta) or of self (attā). The compound here, attañjaho, read on its own, could be read either as "he's let go of what has been embraced" or "he's let go of self." However, the following image of a monkey seizing and releasing branches as it moves from tree to tree reinforces the conclusion that the first interpretation is the correct one.

5. Nd I: Leaving one teacher and going to another; leaving one teaching and going to another. This phrase may also refer to the mind's tendency to leave one craving to go to another.

6. For a discussion of unperturbed states of concentration, see MN 106.

7. "Like a monkey releasing a branch to seize at another"—an interesting example of a whole phrase that functions as a lamp, i.e., modifying both the phrase before it and the

phrase after it.

8. "Vedas"—Just as the word "brahman" is used in a Buddhist sense above, here the word veda is given a Buddhist sense. According to SnA, in this context it means the knowledge accompanying four transcendent paths: the paths to stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship.

9. Nd I: The enemies here are the armies of Māra—all unskillful mental qualities. For a detailed inventory of Māra's armies, see Sn 3:2.

10. "By whom, with what"—two meanings of the one Pali word, kena.

11. Nd I: "Open" means having a mind not covered or concealed by craving, defilement, or ignorance. This relates to the many references in Sn to the idea of having one's roof opened up (see Sn 2:13, note 3). This is in contrast to the image discussed Sn 4:2, note 1.

12. Nd I: "Territories" = the ten fetters (saṁyojana) and seven obsessions (anusaya).

13. Nd I: "Passion" = sensuality; "dispassion" = the jhāna states that bring about dispassion for sensuality. However, this may also be a reference to the fact that dispassion is the highest dhamma, whether fabricated or unfabricated (Iti 90), and yet the arahant is described in Sn 5:6 as having transcended all phenomena. See AN 3:137, note 1 and Sn 4:6, note 2.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 61; AN 5:170