SN 14.11 — Sattadhatu Sutta: Seven Properties

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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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

At Savatthi. "Monks, there are these seven properties. Which seven? The property of light, the property of beauty,[1] the property of the dimension of the infinitude of space, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the property of the dimension of nothingness, the property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, the property of the cessation of feeling & perception. These are the seven properties."

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One: "Lord, with regard to the property of light... the property of the cessation of feeling & perception: In dependence on what are these properties discerned?"

"Monk, the property of light is discerned in dependence on darkness. The property of beauty is discerned in dependence on the unattractive. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of space is discerned in dependence on form. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of space. The property of the dimension of nothingness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. The property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is discerned in dependence on the

dimension of nothingness. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is discerned in dependence on cessation."

"But, lord, with regard to the property of light... the property of the cessation of feeling & perception: How is the attainment of these properties to be reached?"

"Monk, the property of light, the property of beauty, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of space, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the property of the dimension of nothingness: These properties are to be reached as perception attainments.[2] The property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is to be reached as a remnant-of-fabrications attainment. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is to be reached as a cessation attainment."[3]

Notes

1.

The property of beauty refers to a meditative attainment. Here it is described as a second stage in concentration practice that does not map clearly onto the four jhanas, although it may be roughly equivalent to the fourth jhana. In DN 15 and MN 137 it is described as a third stage in concentration practice. In the words of DN 15: “Possessed of form, one sees forms. This is the first emancipation. Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally. This is the second emancipation. One is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third emancipation.”

2.

This means that these levels of concentration depend on holding a particular perception (mental label) in mind. On this point, see MN 121.

3.

AN 9.36 comments on the stages beginning with the dimension of nothingness as follows: “Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two dimensions — the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of feeling & perception — I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled in attaining, skilled in attaining & emerging, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them.”