

SN 22.95

Saṃyutta Nikāya

The Connected Discourses

Khandhavagga Saṃyutta

(Group of Connected Discourses on The Aggregates)

Khandha Saṃyutta

(Connected Discourses on The Aggregates)

Puppha Vagga

(The Section on the Flowers)

Phenapiṇḍūpama Sutta

“A Bulge of Foam”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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Once, while The Blessed One was living close to Ayojjhā, on the bank of the river Ganges, He addressed the Bhikkhus and said:

I. “Bhikkhus, imagine seeing a great bulge of foam being carried down by the flow of this river Ganges.

“Then, someone with good eyesight would start paying attention to it, investigating and carefully probing, to see what might be inside of it.

“Later, having scrutinized it sufficiently, that man would soon discover that despite its large size and massive appearance, the large bulge of foam was, in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in an essence-less bulge of foam, lacking a core?

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, whatever kind of matter or form, whether related to the past, future, or present, be it internal or external, gross or subtle, of an inferior or superior quality, whether far or near, the Bhikkhu probes, investigates, and carefully scrutinizes, whereby he discovers that despite its appearance, form is in fact truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any

substance. After all, what else could be found in form that remains essence-less and lacking a core?

2. “Bhikkhus, imagine that it is the rainy season, when there are massive downpours and raindrops are themselves quite heavy and seem to ceaselessly fall. Now, as a result, water bubbles keep forming and popping, as they arise and burst on the surface of puddles.

“Then, someone with good eyesight would start paying attention to these bubbles, investigating and carefully probing, to see what might be inside of them.

“Later, having scrutinized sufficiently, that man would soon discover that despite their large size and massive appearance, the water bubbles that keep forming and popping, are in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in essence-less bubbles formed by the falling raindrops?

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, whatever kind of feeling, whether related to the past, future, or present, be it internal or external, gross or subtle, of an inferior or superior quality, whether far or near, the Bhikkhu probes, investigates, and carefully scrutinizes, whereby he discovers that despite the seemingly ‘undeniable experience’ of them, feelings are in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in feelings that remain essence-less and lacking a core?

3. “Bhikkhus, imagine that it is one of those last intense days of the hot summer season, at noon when the Sun is at its apex, and there appears in the distance a shimmering mirage.

“Then, someone with good eyesight would start paying attention to that shimmering mirage, as he starts investigating and carefully probing it, to see what might be causing it or what was inside of it.

“Later, having scrutinized sufficiently, that man would soon discover that despite its promising and inviting appearance, the mirage is in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in an essence-less mirage formed by that heat?

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, whatever kind of perception or memory, whether related to the past, future, or present, be it internal or external, gross or subtle, of an inferior or superior quality, whether far or near, the Bhikkhu probes, investigates, and carefully scrutinizes, whereby he discovers that despite the seemingly ‘undeniable experience’ of it, perception or memory is, in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in perceptions or memories that remain essence-less and lacking a core?

4. “Bhikkhus, imagine there was a man who needed some heartwood, and thus was looking for the solid heartwood of a tree, as he grabs his axe and heads to the forest to obtain some heartwood. On the way, he comes across a young plantain or banana tree that is neither crooked

nor possessing any knots or blemishes on it. So, he cuts it down at its base, and chops off its head as well, and proceeds to removing the layers on its trunk. But, in doing so, he discovers that despite removing its many coils, he could find neither a softwood nor sapwood, let alone any heartwood in it.

“Then, someone with good eyesight would start paying attention to that uncoiled plantain or banana tree, while he investigates and carefully probes it to see what is inside of it.

“Later, having scrutinized sufficiently, that man would soon discover that despite its appearance, the plantain or banana tree is, in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in an essence-less plantain or banana tree?

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, whatever kind of habitual drives one may encounter whatsoever, whether related to the past, future, or present, be they internal or external, gross or subtle, of an inferior or superior quality, whether far or near, the Bhikkhu probes, investigates, and carefully scrutinizes, as he discovers that despite their seemingly ‘undeniable experience,’ those habitual drives are, in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of substance. After all, what else could be found in habitual drives that remain essence-less and lacking a core?

5. “Bhikkhus, imagine there was a magician or his best apprentice, performing some magical trick in broad daylight, in the middle of the road for all to see.

“Then, someone with good eyesight would start paying attention to that magical trick, as he investigates and carefully probes it to see what the magician is truly doing, without being mesmerized by his deceptive movements or gestures.

“Later, having scrutinized it sufficiently, that man would soon discover that despite its appearance, the magic trick is in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in an essence-less and deceptive magic trick?

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, whatever kind of consciousness one may experience whatsoever, whether related to the past, future, or present, be they internal or external, gross or subtle, of an inferior or superior quality, whether far or near, the Bhikkhu probes, investigates, and carefully scrutinizes, as he discovers how despite its seemingly ‘undeniable experience,’ that consciousness is in fact, truly empty, hollow, and utterly void of any substance. After all, what else could be found in consciousness that remains essence-less and lacking a core?

“Now, having thus seen and witnessed the truth of this, the Noble Disciple becomes disenchanted with and towards form; he becomes disenchanted with and towards feelings; similarly, he becomes disenchanted with and towards perceptions and memories of all kinds; similarly, he becomes disenchanted with and towards habitual drives; and he becomes disenchanted with and towards consciousness, as he loses any interest in all of them, while desiring to be free from them entirely.

“And becoming thus disenchanted, he experiences their fading away as he becomes dispassionate towards them. And as his dispassion grows and intensifies, he experiences Release.

“Now, when it is thus released and liberated, there dawns in him, and for the first time ever, the very knowing: *‘It is indeed Released!’*”

“At that instant, the Noble Disciple knows for himself, with certainty unparalleled, and through his higher and direct understanding:

*‘Birth is finally destroyed.
The Holy Life has now been fully lived
And its True Goal... finally achieved.
Now, there is no more coming back for me
To any state of becoming.’”*

This is what The Blessed One said.

Then, having uttered these words, The Sugata, The Great Teacher, continued by adding these verses:

*“Looking upon form as if it were a bulge of foam,
While witnessing feeling, as none other than water bubbles, appearing here and bursting there,
Meanwhile, perception is seen as no more than shimmering mirage,
Whereas habitual drives are discovered to be as hollow, as a plantain trunk,
And consciousness, as the trick produced by the magician’s sleight of hand,
Now, all this has been explained by the Kinsman of the Sun.*

*“In this manner, again and again, one goes on to ponder these,
Carefully investigating them one by one,
As each of them reveals itself to be
Completely hollow and void of any substance,
Despite their seemingly convincing appearance,
As one continues to look... closely, at their point of origin.*

*“Starting with this physical body
The Possessor of Boundless Wisdom has taught
How, the moment three things are no longer present within it,
This form itself then gets to be discarded and thrown aside.*

*“Thus, when strength, inner heat, and consciousness
Have all left and are no more found within this physical body,
Then, no matter its past, this body is unavoidably cast aside and left behind,
Becoming sustenance for all those beings that see it as nothing more than food.*

*“But, such is this aimlessly continuous cycle,
This illusion that keeps on rolling, while captivating the drooling fools.
And for this reason, it should be seen as one’s own secret assassin,
Because here, there is no essence, no substance at all, to be found.*

*“In just this manner, the Bhikkhu with strong resolution and energy must strive on,
Relentlessly probing and looking closely at each of these aggregates,
Whether by day or by night, and every moment in between,
Staying ever-present with his full awareness and pervasive mindfulness.*

*“And by discarding all manner of identifications, he will slip off from all his shackles,
Turning himself into the ultimate refuge of true safety, indeed;
But this can only take place, when he lives with urgency as if his head were ablaze,
By constantly motivating himself and endeavoring against all odds,
Unwavering in his determination, as he continues
Unafraid towards the Unshakable.”*

Sādhu

Sādhu

Sādhu