

# 想與念

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## 提要

正觀第 17 期刊登拙作「初期佛教之四念處」。該文指出四念處中的身、受、心相當於五蘊中的色、受、識，並主張四念處未涉及想蘊是因解脫者無想。關於解脫者無想這一論點，當時已提到學者有不同的意見。本文旨在修正此論點，提出一個不同的見解，大意如下：經文中所說解脫者應捨離的想並非泛指一切的想，而是指不善巧的想。例如《經集》中的《八篇章》與《中部》的《蜜丸喻經》所排斥的想是指會導致戲論(*papañca*)的想。本文並探討想與念(*sati*，或譯「正念」)在認知功能上的多項共通點，依《蜜丸喻經》等經典所述的認知過程，闡明念的作用即在於導正想蘊，以成就善巧的想。承蒙正觀雜誌惠予進一步探討的機會，特此致謝。由於前一篇文章以英文刊登，為顧及前文讀者中有不懂中文者，故本文仍以英文發表，造成許多讀者的不便，尚請見諒。本文之大部分節錄自筆者的博士論文。



# *Saññā and Sati*

Tse-fu Kuan

In an article published earlier in this journal (vol. 17), I argued that the first three objects of the four *satipa hānas* correspond to *rūpa*, *vedanā* and *viññā a* among the five *khandhas*, but *saññā* is not involved in the four *satipa hānas* because a liberated person has no *saññā*. While quoting two canonical passages to support that a liberated person is devoid of *saññā*, I also indicated that Sue Hamilton (1996: 60) had disagreed with me and contended that “*saññā* not only apperceives and conceives all our *sa sārīc* experiences, sensory and abstract, but is also instrumental in identifying the liberating experience” on account of a canonical passage which describes the experience of liberation as being the highest activity of *saññā*. After more investigations, I have found that my argument that a liberated person has no *saññā* was wrong. Here I would like to show that those passages that criticise *saññā* and dissociate it from liberation only disapprove of unwholesome types of *saññā*, and that the practice of *sati* consists in the

wholesome functioning of *saññā*.<sup>1</sup> Let us first examine what *saññā* and *sati* refer to.

## I *Saññā*

The earliest texts<sup>2</sup> do not seem to have given a very clear explanation of *saññā*. As Hamilton (1996: 53ff.) demonstrates, according to many passages in the *Nikāyas*, *saññā* has a function of recognition or identification. She suggests (57–58):

[P]erhaps the most satisfactory translation of *saññā* would be ‘apperception’, which implies both that its function is discriminatory, and also that it incorporates a function of assimilation or comprehension of what has been perceived so that

<sup>1</sup> This essay is mostly extracted from the first chapter of my D.Phil. thesis submitted in 2004. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor R.F. Gombrich, who was my supervisor, Mr L.S. Cousins, Dr Alexander Wynne and Dr William Pruitt for their constructive criticisms and suggestions. In 2003 in the second examination of my D.Phil. work, Dr R.M.L. Gethin and Professor Peter Harvey provided helpful advice on this chapter, for which I am also grateful. Lastly, I would like to thank the editing and reviewing committee of this journal for their helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> By ‘the earliest texts’ I mean the four main *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*, and the earliest compilations in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* as indicated by Rhys Davids (1937: 653).

identification can take place.

Gómez (1976: 141ff.), and Ruegg (1998 : 138) also opt for the rendering of *saññā* (Sanskrit *sa jñā*) as apperception.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Hamilton (1996: 58–59) points out that *saññā* can also be thought of as the faculty of conception. When its functioning is dependent on the co-temporal input of sensory data, it is apperception; otherwise, it is conception. Wayman (1976: 326–332) also shows that in many cases *saññā* has to be translated as ‘conception’, ‘notion’ or ‘idea’.

Now let us look at how the *Abhidhamma* literature interprets it. The *Atthasālinī* says that *saññā* has noting as its characteristic and recognition as its property.<sup>4</sup> This explanation conforms to the modern interpretation of *saññā* in the *Sutta-pi aka* as ‘apperception’. From another angle, the *Atthasālinī* describes the property of *saññā* as ‘making a sign as a condition for noting again’.<sup>5</sup> According to this description, as Nyanaponika Thera (1998:

<sup>3</sup> cf. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) s.v. apperception: “the mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it to the body of ideas he or she already possesses.”

<sup>4</sup> As 110: *sā sañjānanalakkha ā paccābhiññā arasā*.

<sup>5</sup> As 110: *aparo nayo ... puna-sañjānana-paccaya-nimitta-kara a-rasā*

*Paccaya* is missing in Ee, but occurs in CSCD and is quoted by Nyanaponika (1998:

121) has pointed out, ‘remembering’ is a function of *saññā*. Commenting on the ‘formal Abhidhamma definition of *saññā*’, Gethin (2001: 41) also says,

[I]n its capacity of labelling or marking (which seems to be intended here) *saññā* must be understood as playing a major role in the psychology of memory, at least as far as this is conceived of as a simple matter of recognition and recall.

Apart from the *Abhidhamma*, *saññā* is also found to suggest memory in the *Sutta-pi aka*. For example, in the *Theragāthā* Sandhita says, “Being mindful, I obtained one *saññā* concerning the Buddha (*buddhagatā saññā*). Due to the *saññā* that I obtained thirty-one eons ago, I have achieved the destruction of the *āsavas*.”<sup>6</sup> The commentary suggests that *saññā* here refers to *saññā* connected with recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).<sup>7</sup> This explanation is plausible for the expression *buddhagatā saññā* is analogous to *buddhagatā sati*, which is a synonym for *buddhānussati* as implied in the *Dhammapada*. *Buddhānussati* is among the threefold *anussati* that involves reminding oneself of the inspiring subjects: the

Buddha, Dharma, and Sa gha. These three are also referred to as *buddhagatā sati*, *dhammagatā sati* and *sa ghagatā sati* in the *Dhammapada* (296–298). The word ‘one’ (*eka*) qualifying *saññā* in the verse may indicate that it is related to one among the three *anussatis*.<sup>8</sup> The term *anussati* (Skt *anusm ti*) means ‘remembrance, recollection, calling to mind’ (DOP s.v. *anussati*). Harrison (1992: 228) contends: “[I]f we look at the traditional subjects of *anusm ti*, we can see quite clearly that personal recollection of past experience is not involved.... we are dealing with a ‘calling to mind’ rather than recollection in the strict sense.” When one practises thus for some time, however, one may recollect one’s previous experience of the practice, such as a strong religious sentiment that arose in one’s mind before.<sup>9</sup> *Anussati* involves the practice of reminding oneself of such inspiring memories. In our verse *buddhagatā saññā*, which apparently denotes *buddhānussati*, could also be related to memory.

Following up the above Abhidhammic explanation of *saññā*,

121).

<sup>6</sup> Th 217: ... *eka buddhagata sañña alabhittha patissato*. 218: *ekati se ito kappe ya sañña alabhin tadā, tassā saññāya vāhasā patto me āsavakkhaya ti*.

<sup>7</sup> Th-a II 82: *ya sañña ya buddhānussati-sahagata sañña*

<sup>8</sup> This verse apparently means that Sandhita’s liberation in that very life was effected by the *saññā* concerning the Buddha that he obtained in his remote past life. This, however, should not be taken too literally. It probably implies that he practised this *saññā* connected with recollection of the Buddha for thirty-one eons, and this practice aroused his aspirations for fulfilling all the practices that are required for liberation.

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication with Mr L.S. Cousins.



Gethin (2001: 41–42) says,

From the point of view of Abhidhamma analysis it is apparent that many of one's so called 'memories' are simply conceptions or ideas based on a particular perspective of what occurred in the past. In short, they are misconceptions, the product of *saññā* associated with unskilful consciousness. The point is that as far as Abhidhamma is concerned our 'remembering' fails to reflect properly the way things truly are.

I would like to add one more point. While *saññā* associated with unskilful/ unwholesome (*akusala*) consciousness produces 'memories' as misconceptions, the misconceptions will in turn bring about 'recognition' or 'apperception' of incoming sensory data in a misleading way. This is a vicious cycle. A similar point is made by Nyanaponika Thera (1962: 32–33):

For instance, the normal visual perception if it is of any interest to the observer will rarely present the visual object pure and simple, but the object will appear in the light of added subjective judgements. ... [T]he perception will sink into the store house of memory. When recalled, by associative thinking, it will exert its distorting influence also on future perceptions of similar objects.

## II *Sati*

In contrast, as Gethin (2001: 42) indicates, *sati* is seen as a 'particular kind of "remembering"—when developed it "remembers", as it were, properly'. The Sanskrit root of the word *sati*, *sm*, can mean 'to remember', 'be mindful of' (MW 1271). Rhys Davids (1936: 255) suggests that *sati* is a Pali equivalent for *smara* in Sanskrit as found in the *Chāndogya Upani ad*. Neither word is wholly covered by 'memory'. This *Upani ad* states (tr. Olivelle, 1996: 163): "When they do remember (*smareyu*), then they would be able to hear, consider, and recognize. Clearly, it is through memory (*smara*) that one recognizes one's children and cattle."<sup>10</sup> Here we find that *smara* is related to recognition.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the *Indriya Sa yutta* gives the following definition of the faculty of *sati*:

And monks, what is the faculty of *sati*? Here, monks, a noble disciple is possessed of *sati*, endowed with supreme

<sup>10</sup> CU 7.13.1: *yadā vāva te smareyur, atha ś uyyur, atha manvīram, atha vijānīran. smare a vai putrān vijānāti, smare a paśūn.*

<sup>11</sup> Konrad Klaus (1992: 82), who translates *smara* as 'attention', argues that *smara* in this case does not mean 'memory', but refers to some disposition on which sensory perception depends, i.e. attention, awareness, or mindfulness.



‘mindfulness and discrimination’ (*satinepakka*), is one who remembers, who recollects what was done and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body as a body ... feelings ... mind ... He dwells contemplating *dhammas* as *dhammas*, ardent, fully aware, possessed of mindfulness, in order to remove covetousness and dejection concerning the world.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that in this definition the passage “He dwells contemplating the body as a body ... concerning the world” is a standard description of the four *satipa hānas*, or ‘the basic *satipa hāna* formula’ as Gethin (2001: 45) dubs it.<sup>13</sup> This definition involves not only memory or recollection, but also discrimination or identification. Here the term ‘mindfulness and discrimination’ (*sati-nepakka*) is related to awareness or recognition rather than just remembering. A *sutta* in the *A guttara Nikāya* says, “Monks, five knowledges arise personally in those who, being wise

<sup>12</sup> SN V 198: *katamañca, bhikkhave, satindriyam? idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako, satimā hoti paramena satinepakkena samannāgato cirakata pi cirabhāsita pi saritā anussaritā. so kāye kāyānupassī viharati. pe. vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassa . cf. MN I 356.*

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, another *sutta* in the *Indriya Sa yutta* says that the faculty of *sati* should be seen in the four *satipa hānas*. SN V 196: *catusu satipa hānesu ettha satindriya da habba .*

(*nipaka*) and mindful (*patissata*), develop immeasurable concentration.”<sup>14</sup> The two words *nipaka* and *patissata* may correspond respectively to *nepakka*, which is derived from *nipaka* (PED s.v. *nepakka*), and to *sati* in the above compound *satinepakka* in the definition of the *sati* faculty. In support of this, the commentary glosses *nipaka* and *patissata* as ‘possessing *nepakka* (discrimination) and *sati* (mindfulness)’.<sup>15</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to associate *satinepakka* in the definition of the *sati* faculty with the two words in the foregoing *sutta* of the *A guttara Nikāya*. According to this *sutta*, those who are wise (*nipaka*) and mindful (*patissata*) are able to obtain the five knowledges, which refer to the identification or recognition of the characteristics of immeasurable concentration.<sup>16</sup> From this it can be inferred that in

<sup>14</sup> AN III 24: *samādhi bhikkhave bhāvayata appamā a nipakāna patissatāna pañca nā āni paccatta yeva uppajjanti.*

<sup>15</sup> Mp III 231: ***nipakā patissatā*** *ti nepakkena ca satiyā ca samannāgatā hutvā.*

<sup>16</sup> AN III 24: ‘*ayaū samādhi paccuppanasukho c’ eva àyatiñ ca sukhavipāko’ ti paccatta yeva ñāḍaū uppajjati, ‘ayaū samādhi ariyo nirāmisso’ ti paccatta yeva ñāḍaū uppajjati, ‘ayaū samādhi akāpurisasevito’ ti paccatta yeva ñāḍaū uppajjati, ‘ayaū samādhi santo paḍāto pañippassaddhiladdho ekodibhāvadhigato, na ca sasāikhāraniggayhavāritavato’ ti paccatta yeva ñāḍaū uppajjati, ‘so kho panāhaū imāū samādhiū sato ‘va samāpajjāmi, sato ‘va vuññahamā’ ti paccatta yeva ñāḍaū uppajjati.*

the definition of the *sati* faculty *satinepakka* is related to the function of identification or recognition. It is also conceivable that proper remembering requires properly identifying or recognising incoming sensory data or experiences. This must be implied in the definition of the faculty of *sati*.

Included in this definition, the four *satipa hānas* also involve both recognition and memory. The basic *satipa hāna* formula says ‘contemplating the body as a body’, ‘contemplating feelings as feelings’, etc. (e.g. SN V 141: *kāye kāyānupassī*; the same applies to *vedanās*, *citta* and *dhammas*). A formula which recurs in the *Satipa hāna Sutta* and the *Satipa hāna Sa yutta* runs as follows: “He dwells contemplating the nature of arising (*samudaya-dhamma*) in the body; he dwells contemplating the nature of vanishing (*vaya-dhamma*)<sup>17</sup> in the body; he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and vanishing in the body.” (The

same is said of *vedanās*, *citta* and *dhammas*).<sup>18</sup> The *Satipa hāna Sutta* describes many practices as: ‘he understands’ (*pajānāti*) the experiences or objects in the way they are.<sup>19</sup> These statements imply that the *satipa hāna* practice is to develop accurate identification of the true nature of experiences or objects observed. On the other hand, this practice can counteract unwholesome memories. In the *Dantabhūmi Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the four *satipa hānas* are said to be the bindings for the mind of the noble disciple in order to subdue his memories (*sara*)<sup>20</sup> and thoughts (*sa kappa*)<sup>21</sup> based on household life.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly,



<sup>18</sup> e.g. MN I 56, 59, 60 ; SN V 183: *samudayadhamm nupass (v ) k yasmi viharati, vayadhamm nupass (v ) k yasmi viharati, samudayavayadhamm nupass (v ) k yasmi viharati ...*

<sup>19</sup> e.g. MN I 56: *dīgha vā assasanto: dīgha assasāmī ti pajānāti*.

<sup>20</sup> *Sara*, memory, is missing in Ee, but occurs in both CSCD and BJT. Since many words in this sentence also occur in an earlier paragraph of the same *sutta* (MN III 132), where we have *sarasa kappa na* rather than just *sa kappa na* (thoughts), it is more coherent to also have *sarasa kappa na* in this paragraph. This reading is supported by Ñā amoli and Bodhi (1995: 995), who translate ‘memories and intentions’ (*sa kappa* can also mean ‘intention’).

<sup>21</sup> Cousins (1992: 140) points out that *sa kappa* arises dependent on *saññā* according to SN II 143ff. and MN II 27f.

<sup>22</sup> MN III 136: *ime catt ro satipa h n cetaso upanibandhan honti gehasit nañ*

<sup>17</sup> *Dhamma* here has been interpreted in two different ways. As discussed by Gethin (2001: 55, note 111) and von Rospatt (1995: 203f., note 433), *dhamma* here is taken by the commentaries to indicate the conditions for the arising and vanishing of the body, while the subcommentaries allow that it can mean ‘nature’ (*jāti-dhamma*) here. (I am grateful to Dr R.M.L. Gethin for the above references) Ven. Bodhi (2000: 1927, note 178) holds that it is more consistent with the use of the suffix *-dhamma* elsewhere to take it as meaning ‘subject to’ or ‘having the nature of’ here. Von Rospatt also shares the same opinion. I agree with them.

both proper recollection and proper identification are included in the faculty of *sati* and also in the practice of the four *satipa hānas*. The two functions support each other reciprocally, and provide the cure for the foregoing vicious cycle caused by *saññā* associated with unskilful consciousness.

### III *Saññā* and *Sati*

From the above discussion we can conclude that *sati* plays a role similar to *saññā* in cognition, including memory (or recollection) and recognition (or identification).<sup>23</sup> In the following cases, *saññā* and *sati* seem to refer to the same thing. A *sutta* of the *A guttara Nikāya* (V 108–112) gives an exposition of ten *saññās*, among which *asubhasaññā* is the same as one of the practices in the *Satipa hāna Sutta*, namely seeing the body as full of many kinds of impurity.<sup>24</sup> Following the description of *asubhasaññā* is the

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*c'eva s l na abhinimmanan ya gehasit na c'eva sarasa kapp na* (BJT CSCD; *sara* is missing in Ee) *abhinimmanan ya ...*

<sup>23</sup> Hayes (2000: 13) states: “‘Cognition’ is the general term which we give to mental activities, such as remembering, forming concepts, using language or attending to things.”

<sup>24</sup> AN V 109 = MN I 57: *imam eva kāya uddha pādatalā adho kesamattakā*

sentence: *iti imasmi kāye asubhānupassī viharati* (AN V 109, ‘Thus one dwells contemplating this body as ugly’), which is very similar to *kāye kāyānupassī viharati* (‘One dwells contemplating the body as a body’) in the basic *satipa hāna* formula. In this formula the word *anupassin* is used to describe how to practise the four *satipa hānas*, while in several instances *anupassin* is virtually synonymous with *saññin*, the adjective form of *saññā*; for example, *ekacco puggalo sabbasa khāresu aniccānupassī viharati anicca<sup>saññī</sup> aniccapa isa vedī*<sup>25</sup> at AN IV 13.<sup>26</sup> The practice of *ānāpānasati* is one of the foregoing ten *saññās*.<sup>27</sup> Ven. Bodhi (2000: 1914) says that the *mara asaññā* at SN V 132 is usually called ‘mindfulness of death’ (*mara asati*) as found at AN III 304–308.

In these cases, the notions of *sati* and *saññā* seem to be interchangeable. The implication is that *sati* is a decisive factor in the proper functioning of *saññā*, and the practice of *sati* consists in correct and wholesome cognition, a perfect and undistorted form of

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*tacapariyanta pūra nānappakārassa asucino paccavekkhati ...*

<sup>25</sup> Norman (1997: 43) points out that the way in which group of synonyms were used to explain or elaborate concepts suggests that texts of this type were composed and then transmitted orally.

<sup>26</sup> Similarly at AN IV 145ff., AN II 150. I am grateful to Dr Alexander Wynne for the reference.

<sup>27</sup> AN V 111.

*saññā*. *Sati* has to be developed so as to steer *saññā* and rectify the defects in cognition. This point will be elucidated according to the earliest texts. Before we return to this point, it would be helpful to look at the relationship between *sati* and *saññā* according to the *Abhidhamma*. Gethin (2001: 40) says,

According to the system of Abhidhamma embodied in the Pāli *Abhidhamma-pi aka* and commentaries, *sati* is only ever present as a mental factor (*cetasika*) in skilful states of mind (*kusala-citta*): if there is *sati*, there is skilful consciousness; and since *sati* is in fact always present in skilful states of mind, if there is skilful consciousness, there is *sati*.<sup>28</sup>

*Saññā*, however, exists in wholesome, unwholesome and indeterminate states of mind.<sup>29</sup> The *Atthasālinī* says that *sati* has

firm *saññā* as its immediate cause.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, only when *saññā* exists can *sati* function. *Sati* has to work together with *saññā*. As long as *sati* is present, *saññā* must be associated with a wholesome mental state, and the manner in which *saññā* recognises or memorises must be wholesome.<sup>31</sup>

### 1. Unwholesome *saññā*

The penultimate chapter of the *Sutta-nipāta*, the *A hakavagga*, emphatically advocates the practice of *sati*<sup>32</sup> and dissociation from *saññā*<sup>33</sup>. I will argue that *saññā* here refers to unwholesome *saññā* rather than *saññā* in general. The *A hakavagga* is closely related to the *Madhupi ika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* in respect of wording and topics. This *sutta* starts with Da ap i's question about what the Buddha preaches and proclaims. The Buddha answers as follows:

common to every consciousness (*sabbacittasādhāra a*) (Bodhi 1993: 77).

<sup>30</sup> As I 122: *sati ... thira-saññā-pada hānā*.

<sup>31</sup> I am grateful to Dr R.M.L. Gethin for his advice on this point. I have assimilated it in my discussion above.

<sup>32</sup> Verses 768, 771, 855, 916, 933, 962, 964, 973, 974, 975.

<sup>33</sup> Verses 792, 802, 841, 847, 874, 886.



<sup>28</sup> This argument could agree with the *Dhammasa ga i*. Dhs §§1–364 shows that *sati* exists in various wholesome states of mind (*kusala-citta*). In the *Abhidhammattha-sa gaha*, *sati* is one of the nineteen mental factors (*cetasika*) common to beauty (*sobhanasādhāra a*). Ven. Bodhi (1993: 85) explains that these nineteen mental factors are invariably present in all beautiful consciousness.

<sup>29</sup> e.g. Dhs §§1–364 shows that *saññā* exists in various wholesome states of mind. Dhs §§365–427 shows that *saññā* exists in various unwholesome states of mind. Dhs §§ 431ff. shows that *saññā* exists in various indeterminate states of mind. In the *Abhidhammattha-sa gaha*, *saññā* is among the seven mental factors (*cetasika*)



Friend, I preach and proclaim such [a doctrine] that one does not dispute with anyone in the world with its gods, *māras* and *brahmās*, in this generation with its ascetics and Brahmins, with its gods and human beings, and so that *saññās* do not lie latent in that Brahmin who dwells detached from sensual desires, without doubt, with worry cut off, free from craving for existence and non-existence.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, a great deal of the *A hakavagga* consists of exhortations not to engage in disputes. The *Du ha haka Sutta*, *Pasūra Sutta* and *Kalahavivāda Sutta* are good examples. Even the very wording used in the *Madhupi ika Sutta*, i.e. *viggayha* (dispute), also occurs in verses 844, 878 and 883 of the *A hakavagga*. The term *bhavābhavē vītata ha* (‘free from craving for existence and non-existence’) in the *Madhupi ika Sutta* is strikingly similar to *avītata hāse bhavābhavesu* (‘not free from craving for existence and non-existence’) found in verses 776

and 901.<sup>35</sup> The most significant is the statement ‘*Saññās* do not lie

<sup>35</sup> Norman (1992:133–134, 242) takes *bhavābhava* as a rhythmical lengthening for *bhavabhava* and translates it as ‘various existences’. But this fails to explain why rhythmical lengthening should occur in prose here. He (p. 242) also indicates that as an alternative the commentary *Saddhammapajjotikā* takes this compound as *bhava+abhava*. The counterpart of the *Madhupi ika Sutta* in the Chinese *Madhyama Āgama* also translates it as ‘existence, non-existence’ (T 1, 603b: 有, 非有). It seems plausible to understand it as ‘existence, non-existence’, in that craving is often said to be of three kinds (e.g. DN III 216, 275): craving for sensual pleasure (*kāmata hā*), craving for existence (*bhavata hā*) and craving for non-existence (*vibhavata hā*). Moreover, Sn 778 says, “Having removed desire for both extremes ...” (*ubhosu antesu vineyya chanda ...*). This is apparently in contrast with *avītata hāse bhavābhavesu* in Sn 776 since both extremes (*ubho ante*) refers to ‘All exists’ (*sabbam atthī ti*) and ‘All does not exist’ (*sabba n’ atthī ti*) at SN II 17. In addition, parallel to the phrase ‘*bhavadi hi ca vibhavadi hi ca*’ found at DN III 212 and AN I 83, Sn 786 should be rendered as: “The purified one does not form a view (*dī hi*) anywhere in the world in regard to existence and non-existence (*bhavābhavesu*)” rather than “... in regard to various existences”.

However, the *Mahāniddeśa* glosses *bhavābhavesu* as various existences or repeated existence (p. 48 for Sn 776, p. 315 for Sn 901: ***bhavābhavesā ti bhavābhavē kammabhavē punabbhavē kāmabhavē, kammabhavē kāmabhavē punabbhavē rāpabhavē, kammabhavē rāpabhavē punabbhavē arāpabhavē, kammabhavē arāpabhavē punabbhavē punappunabbhavē, punappunagatiyā***

<sup>34</sup> MN I 108: *yathāv d kho vuso sadevake loke sam rake sabrahmake sassama abr hma iy paj ya sadevamanuss ya na kenaci loke viggayha ti hati, yath ca pana k mehi visa yutta viharanta ta br hma a akatha kathi chinnakukkucca bhav bhavē vītata ha sa n nusenti, eva v d kho aha vuso evamakkh y ti.* cf. T 1, 603b.



latent in that Brahmin who dwells detached from sensual desires, without doubt, with worry cut off, free from craving for existence and non-existence'. This agrees with the purport of the *A hakavagga* regarding *saññā*. For example, verse 847 contrasts a liberated person with ordinary people by comparing their connections with *saññā*:

One who is detached from *saññā* has no ties. One who is liberated through wisdom has no illusions. Those who have grasped *saññā* and view wander clashing in the world.<sup>36</sup>

It should be noted that *saññā* in these two texts does not refer to the aggregate of *saññā* in general, but rather to some particular type of *saññā*. In the sentence 'Saññās do not lie latent (*saññā nānuseti*) in that Brahmin ...' the verb *anuseti* often goes with underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) in the *Nikāyas*.<sup>37</sup> This *sutta* also

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*punappunaupapattiyā punappunapañisandhiyā punappunaattabhāvābhiniḅbattiyā*). *Bhavābhava* undoubtedly means 'various existences' in some later texts, e.g. *Apadāna* 457 and *Buddhava sa* 35. (I am grateful to Mr Cousins for the references.) Nevertheless, for the doctrinal reasons discussed above, *bhavābhava* in our case must mean 'existence and non-existence'.

<sup>36</sup> Sn 847: *sa virattassa na santi ganth , pa vimuttassa na santi moh . sa a ca di hi ca ye aggahesu te gha ayant vicaranti loka ti.*

<sup>37</sup> e.g. SN IV 208: *tam enam dukkhāya vedanāya pa ighavanta yo dukkhāya*

mentions several underlying tendencies in the passage that I cite below. Therefore *anuseti* may indicate that *saññās* here refer to those connected with underlying tendencies, probably underlying tendencies to views (*di hānusaya*) mentioned in this *sutta* (see the quotation below).

In the *Madhupi ika Sutta*, after the Buddha answered Da ap i's question, a certain monk requested the Buddha to explain his answer. The Buddha replied:

Monk, if there is nothing to be delighted in, to be welcomed, [or] to be clung to in that source from which apperception and naming [associated with] conceptual proliferation assail a person, then this is the end of the underlying tendencies to passion, this is the end of the underlying tendencies to aversion, this is the end of the underlying tendencies to views, ... this is the end of taking up cudgels, of taking up swords, of quarrels, disputes, argument, strife, slander and false speech.<sup>38</sup>

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*vedanāya pa ighānusayo so anuseti. MN I 433: anuseti tv ev' assa sakkāyadi hānusayo.*

<sup>38</sup> MN I 109–110: *yatonidāna bhikkhu purisa papañca-saññā-sa khā samudācaranti, ettha ce n' atthi ahinanditabba abhivaditabba ajjhositabba es' ev' anto rāgānusayāna es' ev' anto pa ighānusayāna es' ev' anto di hānusayāna ... es' ev' anto da ādāna-satthādāna-kalaha-*

Here again we find that many words are the same as or similar to those in the *A hakavagga*: ‘taking up cudgels’ (*da ādāna = attada a* in verse 935, where *atta* is the past passive participle of *ā-dā*), ‘quarrel’ (*kalaha*, verses 862, 863), ‘argument’ (*vivāda*, verses 862, 863), and ‘slander’ (*pesuñña = pesu a* in verse 863). Unfortunately, the Buddha’s answer was too brief to be intelligible, so after he left, the monks went to Mahā Kaccāna and asked him to expound in detail. Then he explained:

Friends, depending on the eye<sup>39</sup> and visible forms, eye-consciousness arises. The combination of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [arises]. What one feels, one apperceives. What one apperceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one conceptually proliferates. With what one conceptually proliferates as the source, apperception and naming [associated with] conceptual proliferation assail a person with regard to past, future and present visible forms cognised by the eye. [The same is said of the other five

*viggaha-vivāda-tuvantuva-pesuñña-musāvādāna* .

<sup>39</sup> Hamilton (1996: 18) says, “[O]ne might suggest that what is referred to by the terms *cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghāna* and so on is not primarily the sense organs eye, ear, nose, etc., but that the terms are to be interpreted figuratively as the faculties of vision, hearing, smell and so on.” The *Kathāvatthu* (p. 573f) also criticises the view that one sees with the physical organ eye.

senses.]<sup>40</sup>

This passage represents a formula of the cognitive process in unskilful consciousness. Here the term ‘apperception and naming [associated with] conceptual proliferation’ (*papañca-saññā-sa khā*) is similar to *papañca-sa khā* in verses 874 and 916 of the *A hakavagga*. Both terms denote a harmful factor that causes suffering in *sa sāra*. In the *Madhupi ika Sutta*, the origin of *papañca-saññā-sa khā* can be traced back to *saññā*. Likewise, verse 874 of the *A hakavagga* says that *papañca-sa khā* has its source (*nidāna*) in *saññā*.<sup>41</sup> *Saññā* is the critical point in the cognitive process given in the *Madhupi ika* formula, which can be summarised graphically as follows:

*cakkhu+rūpa*→  
*cakkhuvīññā a*

→*phassa*→*vedanā*→*sañjānāti(saññā)*→*vitakketi*→*papañceti*→*papa*

<sup>40</sup> MN I 111–112: *cakkhuñ c’ āvuso pa icca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññā a , ti a sa gati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, ya vedeti ta sañjānāti, ya sañjānāti ta vitakketi, ya vitakketi ta papañceti, ya papañceti tatonidāna purisa papañca-saññā-sa khā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu.*

<sup>41</sup> *sa ānidānā hi papa casa khā.*

*ñcasaññāsa khā*

The sequence of the formula remains ethically neutral until the link of feeling (*vedanā*). The sequence from *sañjānāti* (*saññā*) onwards is liable to criticism. As Ven. Ñā ananda (1971: 5–6) points out, the *Madhupi ika* formula of cognition begins on an impersonal note, which is sustained only up to the point of *vedanā*. Then the mode of description changes to a personal tone presented by the third-person verbs, which imply deliberate activity:

*ya vedeti ta sañjānāti, ya sañjānāti ta vitakketi, ya vitakketi ta papañceti*

Kalupahana (1975: 122) further argues:

[I]mmediately after feeling (*vedanā*), the process of perception becomes one between subject and object ... This marks the intrusion of the ego-consciousness, which thereafter shapes the entire process of perception.

This seems plausible. In an ordinary state of mind, *sañjānāti* (or its nominal form, *saññā*) involves the duality of subject and object, and hence ego-consciousness, or the thought ‘I am’ in the *A hakavagga*’s terminology. In verse 916 of the *A hakavagga*, the Buddha said, “The sage should completely stop the root of

*papañca-sa khā*, [which is the thought] ‘I am’.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, *papañca-sa khā* is attributed to the thought ‘I am’. This is in accordance with the foregoing that *papañca-sa khā* has its source in *saññā* (Sn 874), where lies the sense of ego. The *Madhupi ika* formula represents the unskilful cognitive process, in which *saññā* develops into *papañca-saññā-sa khā* (or *papañca-sa khā* in the *A hakavagga*). In the skilful cognitive process, however, *saññā* will not lead to *papañca-saññā-sa khā*. It is the former kind of *saññā* that is denounced in the *Madhupi ika Sutta* and *A hakavagga*.

An example of this kind of *saññā* can be found in verse 802 of the *A hakavagga*, which describes a liberated person thus: “By him, not even a minute *saññā* is conceptualised here with regard to what is seen, heard, or thought of.”<sup>43</sup> Jayatilleke (1963: 60–61) points out that seeing, hearing, thinking, etc. are already regarded as ways of knowing the *ātman* in the early *Upani ads*, and the same terminology is employed by Buddhist texts in contexts which criticise the Upani adic doctrines of the *ātman*. He refers to as examples MN I 135 and verses 793, 798, 802, 813, 901 in the *Sutta-nipāta*. Gombrich (1990: 15) also says that *di ha*, *suta*, *muta*, *viññāta* in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (MN I 135f.) is

<sup>42</sup> Sn 916: *mūla papañcasa khāyā ti bhagavā mantā asmī ti sabbam uparundhe*.

<sup>43</sup> *tassīdha di he va sute mute vā pakappitā n’ atthi a ū pi saññā*.



alluding to a passage in the *B hadāra yaka Upani ad* 4.5.6: “When the Self (*ātman*) is seen, heard, thought of and cognised, the whole is known.” (*ātmani khalv are d e śrute mate vijñāta ida sarva viditam*). In our verse ‘what is seen, heard, or thought of’ (*di he, sute, mute vā*) may also be an allusion to the same passage, although *viññāta* is missing, which could be due to the restriction of metre. Therefore, our verse may mean that a liberated person does not form the *saññā* (conception) of the ‘Self’ rather than that he has no *saññā* at all.

## 2. *Sati* counteracts unwholesome *saññā*

To sum up, the foregoing texts do not mean that *saññā* should be totally eradicated, but only expound that one should abandon the unwholesome functioning of *saññā* because it can lead to conceptual proliferation and the ensuing metaphysical speculations (e.g. the view of ‘Self’), which are obstacles to the insight that leads one to liberation. In the *A hakavagga* the frequent occurrence of recommending *sati* and of criticising unwholesome *saññā*<sup>44</sup> may suggest a close relationship between them.

Some other texts imply that mistakes in *saññā* should be rectified by *sati* and that one’s *saññā* will go wrong when one has

no *sati*. *Sutta* 4 in the *Va gīsathera Sa yutta* reads: “Your mind is on fire due to the perversion of *saññā*. You should avoid the beautiful sign (*subha nimitta*) which is provocative of lust ... You should have *kāyagatā sati*<sup>45</sup> ...”<sup>46</sup> Here *subha nimitta* is related to the perversion of *saññā*, and *kāyagatā sati* is apparently prescribed as a remedy for the perversion of *saññā*. Another example is found in *sutta* 95 of the *Sa āyatana Sa yutta*, which has the following verses:

(Verse 1) Mindfulness is neglected by one who *pays attention to the agreeable sign* on seeing a visible form. One feels it with infatuated mind and clings to it. Many feelings arising from the visible form grow in one. One’s mind is impaired by covetousness and annoyance. For one who accumulates suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be far away ... [The same is said of the other five senses in the next five verses respectively.]

(Verse 7) On seeing a visible form, being *mindful*, one is not

<sup>45</sup> *Kāyagatā sati* is usually rendered as ‘mindfulness of the body’ or ‘mindfulness concerning the body’, but *kāya* here has a much broader sense than the physical body. I hope to devote an article or a chapter of a book to this topic.

<sup>46</sup> SN I 188: *saññāya vipariyesā cittaṃ te pari ayhati. nimitta parivajjehi subha rāgūpasa hita ... sati kāyagatā ty atthu ...*

<sup>44</sup> See notes 32, 33.



attached to visible forms. One feels it with a detached mind and does not cling to it. One lives *mindfully* in such a way that when one sees a visible form and even experiences a feeling, [suffering] is exhausted, not accumulated.<sup>47</sup> For one who diminishes suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be near ... [The same is said of the other five senses in the next five verses respectively.]<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> This phrase *khīyati no pacīyati* has no subject. The commentary suggests suffering and defilement (Spk II 384: *khīyatī ti khaya gacchati. ki ? ta dukkham pi kilesa-jātam pi.*). Ven. Bodhi (2000: 1177) chooses ‘suffering’, which I think is plausible because the next line has ‘for one who diminishes suffering’ (*apacinato dukkha*). In addition, the first six verses have ‘for one who accumulates suffering’ (*ācinato dukkha*), which appears to be in contrast with this phrase in the last six verses.

<sup>48</sup> SN IV 73–75:

*rāpaü disvā sati muññhā, piyanimittāü manasi karoto.*  
*sàrattacitto vedeti, taṃ ca ajjhosa tiññhati.*  
*tassa vaóhanti vedanā anekā rāpasambhavā.*  
*abhijjhā ca vihesā ca cittam ass’ āpahaññati* (Ee *assu pahaññati*; emendation according to Bodhi, 2000: 1411; CSCD BJT *assāpahaññati*).  
*evam ācinato dukkhāü, àrà nibbāna vuccati* (1) ...  
*na so rajjati rāpesu, rāpaü disvā patissato.*

Skilling (1997: 480) points out that *sa jñā* (Pali *saññā*) is connected with *nimitta* (‘sign’) in most definitions. We have also seen that *subha nimitta* is related to the perversion of *saññā*. Likewise, in the first six verses ‘paying attention to the agreeable sign (*nimitta*)’ is probably also meant to criticise *saññā* operating in an unwholesome way when one perceives through the six senses. In contrast, the last six verses recommend being mindful with regard to incoming sensory data. These verses also show that the sequence of the *Madhupi ika* formula remains ethically neutral until the link of feeling (*vedanā*), but one’s cognition may go wrong from the link of *sañjānāti* (*saññā*) when one’s *sati* is neglected. On the other hand, if one has *sati* while perceiving through the six senses, one can feel without the unwholesome functioning of *saññā*, and will therefore diminish suffering. In other words, *sati* ensures the proper functioning of *saññā* and thereby prevents it from developing into conceptual proliferation as stated in the *Madhupi ika Sutta*.

*virattacitto vedeti, tañ ca nàjjhosa tiññhati.*  
*yathàssa passato rāpaü, sevato càpi vedanaü.*  
*khāyati no pacīyati, evaü so carati sato.*  
*evam apacinato dukkhāü, santike nibbāna vuccati* (7) ...



## IV Conclusion

In several passages of the earliest texts, *sati* plays a role similar to *saññā* in cognition and the notions of these two seem to be interchangeable, but they are actually two different mental factors. What is implied in the texts is that *sati* consists in the wholesome functioning of *saññā*, and so *sati* cannot exist without *saññā*. *Sati* directs *saññā* in a proper way and rectifies the cognitive process, and is therefore crucial to the development of liberating insight.

## Abbreviations

- AN *A guttara Nikāya*  
 As *Atthasālinī*  
 BJT *Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series* (electronic version).  
 CSCD *Cha ha Sa gāyana* CD-ROM version 3, Igatpuri:  
 Vipassana Research Institute.  
 CU *Chāndogya Upani ad*  
 Dhs *Dhammasa ga i*  
 DN *Dīgha Nikāya*  
 DOP *A Dictionary of Pāli*, ed. Margaret Cone, Oxford: Pali Text

Society, 2001.

- Ee European edition (i.e. Pali Text Society edition)  
 MN *Majjhima Nikāya*  
 Mp *Manorathapūra ī*  
 MW *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, ed. Monier Monier-Williams, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899.  
 PED *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, London: Pali Text Society, reprinted 1986. (First published 1921–1925)  
 SN *Sa yutta Nikāya*  
 Sn *Sutta-nipāta* (by verse)  
 Spk *Sāratthappakāsinī*  
 T *Taishō Shinshu Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (Taishō Edition of the Chinese Tripi aka), Tokyo, reprinted: 1978. (referred to by volume number and page number)  
 Th *Theragāthā* (by verse)  
 Th-a *Theragāthā-a hakathā*

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*A guttara Nikāya*



*Apadāna*  
*Atthasālinī*  
*B hadāra yaka Upani ad*  
*Buddhava sa*  
*Chāndogya Upani ad*  
*Dhammasa ga i*  
*Dīgha Nikāya*  
*Kathāvatthu*  
*Madhyama Āgama* 中阿含經 (T 1, 421–809)  
*Mahāniddeśa*  
*Majjhima Nikāya*  
*Manorathapūra ī* (Commentary on the *A guttara Nikāya*)  
*Sutta-nipāṭa*  
*Sāratthappakāsinī* (Commentary on the *Sa yutta Nikāya*)  
*Theragāthā*  
*Theragāthā-a hakathā* (included in the *Paramatthadīpanī*)

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