

# *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*

DN 2 *The Purpose of the Truth-Seeking Life* (Excerpt)

Translated by Ānanda

May 2020 – Revised Oct. 2020

[On this auspicious full-moon night of the uposatha,<sup>1</sup> the King Ajātasattu of Magadha feels inspired and his mind inclines to seek out spiritual guidance. His ministers recommend to visit a number of famous spiritual teachers of the time, which he declines one after the other. But one of his ministers remains silent; Ajita Kesakambali.

After being asked about his silence, he replies that the Blessed One, the Truth-finder, the Buddha, is living in his mango grove right now. And that if it suits the king, he may pay him visit tonight. The king then accepts and resolves to seek guidance from the Buddha.

Once arrived at the mango grove, the king alights from his elephant and is directed to where the Buddha and the monks are sitting very quietly. Amazed by the calm and poise of the assembly of monks, he approached the Buddha and pays homage to him.

The king then asks a question, which he admits having asked to various other teachers. He then explains how their answers made poor impression on him and left him dissatisfied, and his hopes that perhaps the Buddha could provide a better explanation.]

[Here, the king formulates his question...]

[King Ajātasattu]

 ear Bhante,

There are various professions and crafts such as:

Chefs, barbers and soap-makers,  
Cooks, gardeners and dyers,  
Weavers, reed workers and potters,  
Translators and accountants,  
And all those with similar professions and skills;

They live by the visible fruits of their professions.

They themselves happily enjoy this.  
Their mothers and fathers happily enjoy this.  
Their children and wives happily enjoy this.

---

<sup>1</sup> Observance day.

*Their friends and relatives happily enjoy this.*

*They can thereby support the spiritual life,  
And offer to wandering seekers and brahmins.*

*They stand      In what is divine,  
                    In what has a happy result,  
                    In what is conducive to the celestial abodes.*

*“Bhante, is it possible to reveal,  
Any visible fruit of the truth-seeking life?”*

**[The Buddha]**

*“It is possible, Great King.”  
“Listen carefully and apply your mind to what I say.”*

**[King Ajātasattu]**

*“Yes Bhante” replied the King.*

**[The Buddha]**

*The Awakened One said this:*

*“Great King,*

*A Truth-Finder<sup>2</sup> arises in the world,  
An Arahant,<sup>3</sup> Perfectly All-Awakened  
Endowed with righteous knowledge  
                    and righteous behavior,*

*A Blissful One, Knower of the worlds,  
Unsurpassed guide for those who seek peace,  
Teacher of Devas and humans,  
Awakened and Exalted.*

*[...]*

*He teaches the Dhamma which is*

---

<sup>2</sup> *Tathāgato.*

<sup>3</sup> *Araha: Truly worthy. This term is very often used to describe a fully awakened person, who has made an end of selfishness.*

*Beautiful in the beginning,  
Beautiful in the middle,  
Beautiful in the ending.*

*In the meaning and the phrasing.*

*He embodies and shines forth,  
The completely perfected and utterly pure Spiritual life.*

[...]

*Then, this Dhamma is heard by someone,  
Reborn in any family or country.*

[...]

*Having heard this Dhamma  
That person acquires faith in the Buddha.*

### *[The Gradual Training]*

*[...And one takes on the training...]*

*One lives,  
Self-mastered and protected by the pātimokkha  
Continually living in righteous behavior,  
Seeing danger in the smallest lapse of attention  
Undertaking the training in the virtues,  
Skillfully conducted in physical and verbal actions,  
Completely pure in living and good in nature,  
Watchful over the doors of one's sense faculties  
Possessed of presence and full awareness,*

*Happy and content.*

## [I. The Training in Virtue]

### [1. Wise Action]

#### [Good in Nature]

*How is a seeker<sup>4</sup> good in nature?*

*One abandons hurting living beings,  
One turns away from hurting living beings,  
With neither stick nor sword.  
One lives, considerate and kind,  
Friendly and compassionate towards all living beings.*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

*One abandons the taking of what is not given,  
One turns away from taking what is not given.  
Taking only what is offered,  
Expecting only what is offered.  
One lives without stealing, with inner purity,*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

*One abandons [sexual misbehavior,]  
[One lives content and at peace,]  
[Not obsessed by physical attraction.]*

*This constitutes his good nature.*

### [2. Wise Speech]

*One abandons speaking lies,  
One turns away from speaking lies,  
One is known to speak the truth,  
Filled with truth, firm and trustworthy,  
Not a deceiver of the world.*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

*One abandons hurtful speech,*

---

<sup>4</sup> In this translation, the word "bhikkhu" which is the Pāli word for a "monk" is purposefully changed for the word "seeker" for the sake of universality. The teaching is usually addressed to monks, but anyone can undertake this practice.

*One turns away from hurtful speech,*

*One does not repeat elsewhere  
What one has heard here,  
In order to divide the people here.*

*One does not repeat here,  
What one has heard elsewhere,  
In order to divide the people elsewhere.*

*One is a unifier of those who are divided,  
A promoter of those who are united.*

*One enjoys harmony,  
Delights in harmony,  
Rejoices in harmony.*

*One speaks praise of making peace and harmony.*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

*One abandons coarse speech  
One turns away from coarse speech.  
Speaking with words that are polished,  
Pleasant to the ear, loving,  
Going to the heart and civilized,  
Beloved and dear to many.  
Such are the words that one speaks.*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

*One abandons meaningless talk,  
One turns away from meaningless talk.  
One is a speaker of words that are timely,  
Factual and meaningful.*

*A speaker of Dhamma,  
A speaker of Vinaya.*

*One speaks for the purpose of Laying Down the Burden.*

*Words that are appropriate,  
Reasoned, well defined,  
In connection with the meaning.*

*This constitutes one's good nature.*

### [3. Wise Living]

*One turns away from injuring  
The seed kingdom and  
The plant kingdom.*

*One is a one-meal eater,  
Not eating in the evening,  
One turns away from eating at improper times.*

[...] <sup>5</sup>

#### [The Blameless Bliss of Virtue]

*In this way, Great King,  
For a seeker of a good nature,  
There is no fear arising from anywhere,  
Since one is protected by his virtue.*

*Just as,  
For a highly celebrated king of the ruling caste,  
Who has conquered his enemies [in the four directions],  
There is no fear arising from anywhere,  
And he lives, protected by his conquest.*

*In the same way,  
For the good-natured seeker,  
There is no fear arising from anywhere,  
Because one is protected by one's own virtue.*

*Following this entire body of Ariyan<sup>6</sup> virtuous behavior,  
One experiences within himself  
a completely blameless happiness.*

*In this way Great King, a seeker is of good nature.*

---

<sup>5</sup> The long list describing virtuous behavior is here abridged since most of the list concerns monks.

<sup>6</sup> Ariya

## *[II. The Training in Meditation]*

### *[4. Wise Practice & 5. Awareness]*

#### *[Mastery of the Sense Faculties]*

*How is a seeker, a gatekeeper of one's sense faculties?*

##### *[The Eye]*

*Seeing a shape with the eye,  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind],  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the visual faculty unprotected,  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states  
Would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.  
One protects the visual faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the visual faculty.*

##### *[The Ear]*

*Hearing a sound with the ear,  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind]  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the auditive faculty unprotected,  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.  
One protects the auditive faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the auditive faculty.*

##### *[The Nose]*

*Smelling an odor with the nose,  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind]  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the olfactive faculty unprotected,  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states  
Would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.  
One protects the olfactive faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the olfactive faculty.*

*[The Tongue]*

*Tasting a flavor with the tongue,  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind]  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the gustative faculty unprotected  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.  
One protects the gustative faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the gustative faculty.*

*[The Body]*

*Touching a tangible with the body,  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind]  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the body faculty unprotected,  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.  
One protects the body faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the body faculty.*

*[The Mind]*

*Aware of a mental object with the mind,<sup>7</sup>  
One does not dwell on it [with one's mind]  
Nor does one dwell on any of its features.*

*If one were to live with the mind faculty unprotected,  
Longing, impatience and unskillful, unwholesome states would take over [one's mind].*

*Thus, one practices for its mastery.*

---

<sup>7</sup> "Thinking" or "mind" is but another sense faculty which, like the others, we learn to calm down and not become so involved with it through meditation and letting go.

*One protects the mental faculty.  
One becomes skilled regarding the mental faculty.*

*[The Blameless Bliss of Self-Mastery]*

*Possessing this awakened self-mastery,  
One experiences within oneself  
A happiness that is completely blameless.*

*This is how a seeker  
is a gatekeeper of one's own sense faculties.*

*[Presence & Full Awareness]*

*How is a seeker present and fully aware?*

*One is fully conscious,  
While going forward and coming back;*

*One is fully conscious,  
Looking ahead and looking down;*

*One is fully conscious,  
Moving and extending [one's body];*

*One is fully conscious,  
Wearing the saṅghāṭi,<sup>8</sup>  
One's bowl and one's robes;*

*One is fully conscious,  
While eating, drinking,  
Chewing and swallowing;*

*One is fully conscious,  
While evacuating and urinating;*

*One is fully conscious,  
While walking, standing, sitting,  
Sleeping and waking up,  
Talking and keeping silent.*

*This is how a seeker is present and fully aware.*

---

<sup>8</sup> *The outer robe of a monk.*

## [Contentment]

*How is a seeker content?*

*One is happy with robes to cover one's body,  
With alms food to satisfy one's stomach.*

*Wherever one goes,  
One sets out, taking only these things.*

*Just as birds, wherever they fly,  
Take nothing but their wings,  
And fly with themselves as only burden.*

*In the same way,  
One is happy with robes to cover one's body,  
With alms food to satisfy one's stomach.*

*Wherever one goes,  
One sets out, taking only these things.*

*This is how Great King, a seeker is content.*

## [Seclusion]

*Following the entire body of Ariyan good conduct,  
Possessing this Ariyan mastery of the sense faculties,  
Endowed with Ariyan presence and full awareness,  
Attained to this Ariyan contentment,*

*One resorts to a secluded dwelling,  
To the forest,  
At the root of a tree,  
On a hillside,  
In some cave,  
A refuge in the mountain,  
A forest hut,  
In the open air  
Or on a pile of straw.*

*After having eaten, returning from alms round  
One sits down with legs folded and one's body upright.  
Settling down, one attends with presence about oneself.*

*[Letting go of the Hindrances]*

*Abandoning longing for the world,  
Dwelling with a mind void of longing,  
One's mind is cleansed from longing.*

*Abandoning hostility and hatred,  
One dwells with a mind rid of hostility,  
With heart-felt compassion towards all beings that live.  
One's mind is cleansed from hostility and hatred.*

*Leaving behind laziness and dullness of mind,  
Dwelling with a mind void of laziness and dullness,  
Perceiving clearly,  
Present and fully aware,  
One's mind is cleansed from dull laziness.*

*Leaving behind agitation and worry,  
One dwells, uplifted,  
With an inwardly relieved mind,  
One's mind is cleansed from agitation and worry.*

*Leaving behind perplexity,  
One dwells unperplexed,  
Rid of uncertainty towards what is good,  
One's mind is cleansed of perplexity.*

*[...]*

*Just as if someone was in debt, sick,  
imprisoned, in servitude,  
on a wild desert journey;*

*This is how a seeker perceives  
Carrying around the five hindrances within oneself.*

*\*\*\**

*Just as if one were freed from debt,  
Freed from illness,  
Freed from jail,  
Freed from slavery,*

*Having come upon a haven on this earth;*

*This is how, a seeker perceives  
the letting go of the five hindrances within oneself.*

## *[6. Wise Samādhi]*

### *[The Samādhi born of Happiness]*

*Realizing<sup>9</sup> these five hindrances have been abandoned, Gladness arises;*

*From that gladness, bliss arises in the mind;*

*With a blissful mind, the body becomes calm;*

*With a calm body, one experiences happiness;*

*And the happy mind becomes unified.*



### *[First Stage of Meditation]*

*(First Jhāna)*

*Letting go of all outward desires,  
And letting go of unwholesome mental states,  
Still attended by thinking and imagining,  
With blissful happiness born of letting go.*

*One understands and abides in the first level of meditation.*



### *[Instructions]*

*One immerses, permeates,  
Suffuses and pervades one's body  
With this blissful happiness born of letting go.*

---

<sup>9</sup> This is called *Dhamma Samādhi*. “Natural collectedness” of the mind, as opposed to “forceful one-pointedness”. This sequence is perhaps one of the most important teachings of the Buddha on the nature of the mind and meditation. It illustrates very clearly how the Buddha taught meditation and how to enter the proper kind of *Samādhi*. It is discussed in many suttas throughout the Pāli Canon. This is the *Dhamma*. This is “How it works”. It is the nature of the mind. When the mind is rid of the hindrances, it becomes happy. When the mind is happy, it becomes collected and clear. When craving is abandoned, happiness is bound to take its place, naturally.

*And nowhere, in one's entire body is left untouched  
By this blissful happiness born of letting go.*



*[Simile of the Soap]*

*Imagine a skilled soap-maker  
who would throw some soap powder into a copper bowl.  
He would sprinkle it with water  
and knead it thoroughly.*

*Then after some time,  
The lump of soap would be filled  
And suffused by moisture, through and through,  
Everywhere, touched by the moisture,  
Yet it would not leak.*

\*\*\*

*In the same way,  
One immerses, permeates,  
Suffuses and pervades one's body,  
With this blissful happiness born of letting go,  
And nowhere in one's entire body is left untouched  
By this blissful happiness born of letting go.*

\*\*\*

*This is a visible fruit of the truth-seeking life,  
Beyond and more exalted than the previous ones.*

*[Second Stage of Meditation]*

*(Second Jhāna)*

*With the calming of thinking and reflection,  
With inner tranquilization,  
One's mind becoming unified,  
Without thinking and reflection,  
With the blissful happiness born of mental harmony,*

*One understands and dwells in the second level of meditation.*



[Instructions]

*One immerses, permeates,  
Suffuses and pervades one's body,  
With this blissful happiness born of mental harmony,*

*And nowhere in one's entire body is left untouched  
By this blissful happiness born of mental harmony.*



[Simile of the Lake]

*Imagine, a deep lake,  
With water, only welling up from within,  
With no other source flowing in,  
from the East or from the West,  
from the North or from the South.  
With no proper rain at any time.*

*From that cool water spring gushing up from within,  
That lake would become immersed, permeated,  
Suffused and pervaded by this fresh and cool water.*

*And nowhere in this entire lake  
Would be left untouched by this cool spring water.*

\*\*\*

*In the same way,  
One immerses, permeates,  
Suffuses and pervades one's body,  
With this blissful happiness born of mental harmony,*

*So that nowhere in one's entire body is left untouched  
by this blissful happiness born of mental harmony.*

*This is a visible fruit of the truth-seeking life,  
Beyond and more exalted than the previous ones.*

### *[Third Stage of Meditation]*

*(Third Jhāna)*

*With the calming of bliss,  
One abides in mental steadiness,  
Present and fully aware,  
Experiencing happiness within his body,  
A state which the awakened ones describe as:  
“Steady presence of mind:  
This is a pleasant abiding.”*

*One understands and abides in the third level of meditation.*



### *[Instructions]*

*One immerses, permeates,  
suffuses and pervades one’s body,  
with that happiness beyond bliss.*

*And nowhere in one’s entire body is left untouched  
by the happiness beyond bliss.*



### *[Simile of the Lotuses]*

*Imagine water lilies,  
Indian lotuses and white lotuses...*

*Some of these water lilies,  
Indian lotuses and white lotuses are born in the water,  
grown in the water, not risen above the water,  
nourished while completely immersed.*

*From their very tip down to their roots,  
submerged, permeated,  
suffused and pervaded by this cool water,  
so that no part of those Water Lilies,  
Indian Lotuses and White Lotuses is left untouched  
by cool water.*

*\*\*\**

*In the same way,  
one immerses, permeates,  
suffuses and pervades one's body,  
with that happiness beyond bliss.*

*And nowhere in one's entire body is left untouched  
by this happiness beyond bliss.*

*This is a visible fruit of the truth-seeking life,  
beyond and more exalted than the previous ones.*

### *[Fourth Stage of Meditation]*

*(Fourth Jhāna)*

*Leaving behind happiness and unhappiness.  
With the settling of mental gladness and affliction,  
With neither pain nor pleasure,  
Purified by unmoving presence,*

*One understands and abides in the fourth level of meditation.*



### *[Instructions]*

*One sits, with one's body suffused  
With the bright purity of one's own spotless mind.*

*And nowhere in one's body is left untouched  
By this bright purity of one's own spotless mind.*



### *[Simile of the Cloth]*

*Imagine a man was sitting  
Wrapped up to the head  
With a sparkling white cloth*

*So that nowhere on his entire body*

*Would be left untouched  
By this sparkling white cloth.*

\*\*\*

*In the same way,  
One sits, with one's body suffused  
With that bright purity  
Of one's own spotless mind,*

*And nowhere in one's entire body is left untouched  
By this bright purity of one's own spotless mind.*

*This is another visible fruit of the truth-seeking life,  
Beyond this and more exalted than the previous ones.*

### *[III. The Training in Discernment]*

#### *[7. Wise Understanding & 8. Wise Thoughts]*

##### *[Calming the Mental Movements]*

*With this composed and collected mind,  
Wholly cleansed and purified,  
Clear and open, rid of imperfections,  
Having become soft and malleable,  
Straight and unwavering,*

*One directs and inclines one's mind  
To the complete calming of the mental movements.<sup>10</sup>*

*[One understands [mental movements] as they really are:*

---

<sup>10</sup> *Āsavakkhaya*. Conditioned tendencies are profoundly rooted in human psyche through the chain of causality (*Paṭiccasamupāda*). Conditioned, unconscious behavior in the form of likes, dislikes and negligence (*Lobha, dosa, moha*) take root in the deepest corners of the mind. Those unconscious seeds (*Saṅkhāra*) germinate into mental movements, inclinations and habitual tendencies. These are seen and understood at this level and, most importantly, relaxed, let go of, abandoned and released. These tendencies and movements are oppressing the mind, most often without us even knowing. The mind, when it is this pure, experiences nothing but the bliss of relief. It is very close to *Nibbāna*.

*“This is tension.”  
“This is the increase of tension.”  
“This is the release from tension.”  
“This is how to relax tension.”*

*One understands [mental movements] as they really are:*

*“These are the mental movements.”  
“This is the increase of the mental movements.”  
“This is the release from the mental movement.”  
“This is how to release the mental movements.”<sup>11</sup>*

## *[IV. Liberation]*

### *[Release]*

*Continually observing and understanding in this way;*

*One’s mind is released,  
From the inclination for clinging outwardly,  
From the inclination to projecting in the future,  
And from the inclination to negligence.*

*In that release, one knows:*

*“This is Release.”*

*One directly knows:*

*[Unwholesome states] have been overcome,  
Lived is the spiritual life,  
Done, is what should be done,  
There is no more conceit here.*

*This is yet another visible fruit of the truth-seeking life.*

---

<sup>11</sup> *Dhp 372 No meditation Without Discernment:*

*“There is no meditation without discernment, And no discernment for one who meditates not. But the meditative and discerning ones, Are in the presence of Nibbāna.”*

*And in regards to the fruits of the truth-seeking life,  
There are none beyond or more exalted than this.*

[Refuge]

Once this was spoken,  
The king Ajātasattu of Magadha exclaimed:

Excellent Bhante!  
Excellent Bhante!

Just as if what had fallen over had been set upright,  
or as what had been hidden was uncovered,  
or as if the way was shown to someone who was lost,  
or as if a light was shone in the darkness, thinking:

“Let those with vision see!”

In the same way Bhante,  
The Awakened One Has brought forth  
And elucidated the Dhamma in countless ways.

Bhante,  
I go to the Awakened One as a refuge  
to the Dhamma and to the bhikkhu saṅgha.

May the Awakened One count me as a lay follower from now on,  
who has gone for refuge for life.



More at: [www.heartdhamma.com/](http://www.heartdhamma.com/)

The Dhamma is for everyone, at all time. For free distribution only.

All books & translations by Ananda are shared under:  
[Creative Commons License non-commercial share-a-like](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)