

Nibbānasukha Sutta

AN IX 34 Nibbāna is Happiness
Translated by Ānanda
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Once,

The venerable Sāriputta was living in the Bamboo grove,
At the squirrel feeding ground.

Then the venerable Sāriputta exclaimed to the monks:

“Nibbana is blissful friends,
Nibbāna is blissful.”¹

When this was said, the venerable Udayī said:

“What is the reason, friend Sāriputta, why it is said to be blissful
When there is nothing to be felt there?”²

“That is exactly why it is blissful friend,
because there is nothing to be felt!”³

[The Five Kinds of Sensory Gratifications]

“There are these five kinds of sensory gratifications friend.”

What five?

(1) Forms perceived by the eye which are
Desired and loved,
Seductive and enticing,
Mingled with desire and exciting.⁴

(2) Sounds perceived by the ear which are
Desired and loved,
Seductive and enticing,
Mingled with desire and exciting.

(3) Odors perceived by the nose which are

¹ “sukhamidaṃ, āvuso, nibbānaṃ. Sukhamidaṃ, āvuso, nibbānan”ti.

² “kiṃ panettha, āvuso sāriputta, sukhaṃ yadettha natthi vedayitan”ti?

³ “Etadeva khvettha, āvuso, sukhaṃ yadettha natthi vedayitaṃ.

⁴ Iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā.

*Desired and loved,
Seductive and enticing,
mingled with desire and exciting.*

(4) *Flavors perceived by the tongue which are
Desired and loved,
Seductive and enticing,
Mingled with desire and exciting.*

(5) *Tangibles perceived by the body which are
Desired and loved,
Seductive and enticing,
Mingled with desire and exciting.*

*“Friend, the happiness and enjoyment,
That arises because of these five ways of indulging into the senses,
This is called the happiness of sensory gratification.⁵*

[1. First Jhāna]

Here friend,

*Disengaging from sensory gratification,
And letting go of unwholesome mental states,
Still attended by thinking and reflection,
With the blissful happiness born of mental detachment,*

One understands and abides in the first level of meditation.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One’s awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with sensory gratification,
And one feels it as a disturbance.⁶*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.⁷*

*Similarly,
When one’s awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with sensory gratification,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, ‘disturbances’ have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.⁸

⁵ *Yaṃ kho, āvuso, ime pañca kāmagaṇe paṭicca uppajjati sukhaṃ somanassaṃ, idaṃ vuccatāvuso, kāmasukhaṃ.*

⁶ *Tassa ce, āvuso, bhikkhuno iminā vihārena viharato kāmasahagatā saññāmanasikārā samudācaranti, svassa hoti ābādho. Ābādha [ā + bādha to oppress, Vedic ābādha oppression] affliction, illness, disease*

⁷ *Seyyathāpi, āvuso, sukkhino dukkhaṃ uppajjeyya yāvadeva ābādhāya;*

⁸ *Yo kho panāvuso, ābādho dukkhametaṃ vuttaṃ bhagavatā.*

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.⁹*

[2. Second Jhāna]

Further friend,

*With the calming of thinking and reflection,
With inner tranquilization,
His mind becoming unified,
Without thinking and reflection,
With the blissful happiness born of mental stillness,*

One understands and abides in the second level of meditation.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One's awareness and perception become invaded
and filled with thinking,
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perception become invaded
and filled with thinking,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

[3. Third Jhāna]

Further friend,

*With the calming of [coarser] joy,
Abiding in mental steadiness,
Present and fully aware,
Experiencing happiness within his body
That state, which the righteous ones describe as such:
"Steady presence of mind:
This is a pleasant abiding."*

⁹ *Imināpi kho etaṃ, āvuso, pariyāyena veditabbaṃ yathā sukhaṃ nibbānaṃ. (1)*

One understands and abides in the third level of meditation.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with [coarser] joy,¹⁰
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with [coarser] joy,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
it can be understood that nibbāna is happiness.*

[4. Fourth Jhāna]

Further friend,

*Going beyond happiness and unhappiness.
With the settling of mental excitement and sluggishness,
With neither pain nor pleasure,
Purified by unmoving presence,*

One understands and abides in the fourth level of meditation.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with [immovability],¹¹
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with [immovability],*

¹⁰ *pītisahagatā*

¹¹ *Upekkhāsahagatā*: The term *immovability* is opted for here because of this interesting and seemingly quite loose play on words here from the Venerable Sāriputta. Another wonderful proof that the terms used in the suttas are quite flexible as here one would 'feel equanimity as a disturbance'. But here, a wise meditator who understands that this state is also called 'The immovable or unshakeable' is at this level, still connected with perception of body. Equanimity accompanied with perception of form. But equanimity, in many other contexts, goes far beyond this also!

One feels it as a disturbance.

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

[5. Plane of Endless Spaciousness]

Further friend,

*Having entirely gone beyond all perception of form,
With the awareness of sensory impact falling away,
Turning away from the awareness plurality,
Aware of Endless Spaciousness;*

One understands and abides in the plane of endless spaciousness.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One's awareness and perception become invaded
and filled with perception of form,¹²
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with perception of form,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

[6. Plane of Endless Consciousness]

Further friend,

*Having gone entirely beyond the plane of endless space,
Aware of Endless Consciousness*

One understands and abides in the plane of Endless Consciousness.

When one abides, meditating in this way,

¹² rūpasahagatā

*One's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with awareness of Endless Spaciousness,
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who was happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with awareness of Endless Spaciousness,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

[7. Plane of Bare Awareness]

Further friend,

*Having entirely gone beyond the plane of endless consciousness,
Aware of nothing [in particular],*

One understands and abides in the plane of Bare Awareness.

*When one abides, meditating in this way,
One's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with awareness of Endless Consciousness,¹³
And one feels it as a disturbance.*

*Just as if pain were to arise for one who is happy,
That would be known as a disturbance.*

*Similarly,
When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with awareness of Endless Consciousness,
One feels it as a disturbance.*

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

¹³ *viññāṇaṅcāyatanaśahagatā*

[8. The Limit of Awareness]

Further friend,

Having entirely gone beyond the plane of Bare Awareness,

One understands and abides in the plane between awareness and its limit.

When one abides, meditating in this way,

*One's awareness and perception become invaded
and filled with Bare Awareness,¹⁴*

And one feels it as a disturbance.

Just as if pain were to arise for one who is happy,

That would be known as a disturbance.

Similarly,

*When one's awareness and perceptions become invaded
and filled with Bare Awareness,*

One feels it as a disturbance.

Friend, 'disturbances' have been declared as unpleasant by the Awakened One.

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

[9. The Release from Experiential Awareness]

Further Friend,

Going entirely beyond the plane between awareness and its limit,

One understands and abides in the Release from experiential awareness.

And having seen with discernment,

Mental distractions are completely brought to an end.¹⁵

*By this line of reasoning, friend,
It can be understood that Nibbāna is happiness.*

¹⁴ *ākiñcaññāyatanaśahagatā*

¹⁵ *paññāya cassa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. (9)*

