

Sattadhātu Sutta

SN II 14.11 Seven Elements
Translated by Ānanda
Nov. 2020

Staying at Sāvatti.

“Monks, there are these seven elements.”

What seven?

- (1) *The Light element,¹*
- (2) *The Beautiful element,²*
- (3) *The plane of Endless Spaciousness element,³*
- (4) *The plane of Endless Consciousness element,⁴*
- (5) *The plane of Bare Awareness element,⁵*
- (6) *The plane between awareness and its end element,⁶*
- (7) *The complete Release from Experiential Awareness element.⁷*

These are the seven elements.”

This being said, a certain monk asked:

“Bhante, how can each of these elements can be discerned?”⁸

Monks,

- (1) *The Light element is discerned
because of the Darkness⁹ element.¹⁰*
- (2) *The Beautiful element can be discerned
because of the disagreeable element.*

¹ *Ābhādhātu. Or Clarity.*

² *Subhadhātu. State equivalent to the 3rd and 4th jhāna. The pleasant abiding of the Ariyas, the awakened people where the bliss of steady awareness prevails over scattered mental grossness.*

³ *Ākāśānañcāyatanadhātu*

⁴ *Viññānañcāyatanadhātu*

⁵ *Ākiñcaññāyatanadhātu*

⁶ *Nevasaññānāsaññāyatanadhātu*

⁷ *Saññāvedayitanirodhadhātu*

⁸ *imā nu kho, bhante, dhātuyo kiṃ paṭicca paññāyanti”ti?*

⁹ *Light here is meant more as ‘clarity’, like ‘mental clarity’. A mind that sees. Darkness here is probably meant as ‘mental darkness’ ie. Ignorance. Not seeing, not discerning between wholesome states and unwholesome states. ‘Darkness’ is what blinds the mind: the hindrances of the mind.*

¹⁰ *“Yāyaṃ, bhikkhu, ābhādhātu—ayaṃ dhātu andhakāraṃ paṭicca paññāyati.*

- (3) *The plane of Endless Spaciousness element can be discerned because of the materiality element.*¹¹
- (4) *The plane of Endless Consciousness element can be discerned because of the plane of Endless Spaciousness element.*
- (5) *The plane of Bare Awareness element can be discerned because of the plane of Endless Consciousness element.*
- (6) *The plane between perceptual awareness and its release element can be discerned because of the plane of Bare Awareness element.*
- (7) *The complete Release from Experiential Awareness can be discerned because of complete mental release.*¹²

[The Monk]

“Bhante, how can each of these elements be experienced?”

[The Buddha]

“Monks, as for

- (1) *The Light element,*
- (2) *The Beautiful element,*
- (3) *The plane of endless spaciousness element,*
- (4) *The plane of endless consciousness element,*
- (5) *And The plane of objectlessness element;*

*These elements are experienced via perceptive awareness.*¹³

As for

- (6) *The plane between awareness and its end element;*

*This element can be attained by the experience of traces*¹⁴ *of mental activity.*¹⁵

- (7) *The complete release from experiential awareness;*

*This element can be attained by experiencing complete mental release.*¹⁶

¹¹ *Rūpadhātu. Physicality.*

¹² *Nirodha: Cessation.*

¹³ *imā dhātuyo saññāsamāpatti pattabbā.*

¹⁴ *Avasesa1 [Sk. avaśeṣa, fr. ava + śiṣ, cp. avasissati] remainder, remaining part; only in cpds. an° (adj.) without any remainder, i. e. fully, completely*

¹⁵ *ayaṃ dhātu sañkhārāvasesasamāpatti pattabbā”ti.*

¹⁶ *ayaṃ dhātu nirodhasamāpatti pattabbā”ti.*

