

## Psychological Wasteland: a Translation of the Cetokhila Sutta (MN 16, PTS M i.101)

Thus have I heard. One time the Bhagavan was staying in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika's park outside Sāvattihī. There the Bhagavan addressed the monks.

There are five psychological wastelands<sup>1</sup> unrenounced, and five emotional bindings<sup>2</sup> uncut<sup>3</sup> that make it impossible for them to make progress, grow and attain fullness in this doctrine and discipline.

The five psychological wastelands are: doubting [*kankhati*] and hesitating [*vicikicchati*] with respect to, and lack of faith and assurance in, the teacher<sup>4</sup>; the doctrine; the spiritual community; the training [*sikkha*]; and taking offence, being angry, resentful and sulky towards one's companions in the spiritual life. In the psychological wastelands one's mind is not bent towards zeal, devotion, perseverance and making an effort.<sup>5</sup>

The five emotional bindings are uncut passion, desire, love, longing, fever, and thirst: for sensuous pleasure;<sup>6</sup> for the body; for form; for eating as much as one likes and being given to the pleasures of sleeping, lying about, and laziness;<sup>7</sup> and for living the spiritual life aspiring to heaven<sup>8</sup> thinking: 'by this morality, this austerity, this spiritual practice I will become a god or go to heaven.' With these emotional bindings left uncut one's mind is not bent towards zeal, devotion, perseverance and making an effort.

For those who renounce the five psychological wastelands, and cut the five emotional bindings, it is possible for them to make progress, grow and attain fullness in this doctrine and discipline.

This samādhi of intention [*chanda*] with the forms of effort gives rise to the basis of success.<sup>9</sup> This samādhi of vitality [*vīriya*] with the forms of effort gives rise to the basis of

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<sup>1</sup> *cetokhila*. Nānamoli and Bodhi translate: "wilderness of the heart." *Ceto* is the same as *citta* which is used in several different senses often ambiguously. It can be mind generally; mind as specifically the consciousness that arises in dependence on contact between subject and object; and it is also a synonym of heart '*hadaya*' in the sense of the seat of the emotions. The use here is mixed, but leans towards an emotional colour.

<sup>2</sup> *cetaso* = *ceto*; *vinibandha* is 'bondage', awkward in the English plural, hence 'bindings'.

<sup>3</sup> While the image of cutting bindings is an effective one, the metaphor of renouncing or 'extirpating' [*samucchinna*] "waste or fallow land" (PED sv khila) does seem to work as a metaphor. Yes, the doubts etc are best left behind, but the metaphor doesn't work. (One online translation renders it 'dispelling the arrow in the mind' which is even less comprehensible).

<sup>4</sup> *satthar* i.e. the Buddha.

<sup>5</sup> *so vatimasmim dhammavinaye*... For the benefit of future Pāli neophytes I record the hard won knowledge that *vatimasmim*, which form occurs only in this sutta, in this sentence is (*e*)*va-t-iasmim*. The 'e' is elided because *so* ends in a long vowel; the 't' is a euphonic insertion; and *iasmim* is a locative singular deictic pronoun to go with *dhammavinaye*. Compare the use of *vatimā*, *vatimaṃ*, *vatimāni*, *vatimassa*, *vatime* elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> There is a lot of repetition here: "*idha... kāme avītarāgo hoti avigatacchando avigatapemo avigatapipāso avigataparilāho avigatataṇho*" is repeated for *rāgo* 'passion', etc with some use of the ellipsis '*pe*' in the original.

<sup>7</sup> *seyyasukhaṃ, passasukhaṃ, middhasukhaṃ*. PED sv *passa* – has "side, flank; (mountain) slope". I have followed Nānamoli and Bodhi in taking it to mean 'lolling'.

<sup>8</sup> *aññataraṃ devanikāyaṃ pañidhāya* – literally 'aspiration to a certain class of gods'.

<sup>9</sup> This paragraph is very difficult to translate and seems to go off at a tangent by introducing the topic of the four bases for success (*iddhipāda*). It contains a series of related long compounds that are not easy to understand on their own terms, e.g. *chandasaṃmādhippadhānasaṅkhārasaṃnāgato*, i.e. *chanda-samādhi-ppadhāna-saṅkhāra-saṃnāgato*. The Pāli commentary (MA 2.67) explains: *Iddhipādesu chandaṃ nissāya pavatto samādhi chandasamādhi. Padhānabhūtā saṅkhārā padhānasaṅkhārā. Saṃnāgatanti tehi dhammehi*

success. This samādhi of mind [*cittā*] with the forms of effort gives rise to the basis of success. This samādhi of investigation [*vīmaṃsā*] with the forms of effort gives rise to the basis of success. Enthusiasm [*ussoḷhi*] is the fifth basis for success.

With these 15 factors<sup>10</sup> including enthusiasm they are capable of a breakthrough [*abhinibbida*], capable of fully understanding [*sambodha*], capable of the unsurpassed attainment of the peace of union [*anuttarassa yogakkhemassa adhigama*].<sup>11</sup>

Just as a bird with eight or ten or twelve eggs perfectly sitting on them, incubating them, and brooding them need not wish: “may my chicks, with beak and claw, safely break through their eggshell”. Because the chicks are well-equipped with beak and claw to pierce their eggshell and break through. So with these 15 factors including enthusiasm they are capable of a breakthrough, capable of fully understanding, capable of the unsurpassed attainment of the peace of union.

This is what the Bhagavan said. The monks were pleased and rejoiced in his words.

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*upetaṃ. Iddhiyā pādaṃ, iddhibhūtaṃ vā pādanti iddhipādaṃ*, “The samādhi resulting from having relied on intention [*chanda*] is ‘intention-samādhi’. *Saṅkhārā* as a result of the effort are ‘forms of effort’ [*padhānasāṅkhārā*]. Various contemporary commentators render *saṅkhārā* here in different ways – volitions, will, formations etc, but see below. *Samannāgata* means ‘endowed with this thing’. *Iddhipāda* is a basis for success, or base which is success. The text then directs the reader to the *Visuddhimagga* for a full account. Buddhaghosa gives his explanation of the four bases of success in the *Vism* xii.50-53.

Bhikkhu Bodhi (The Connected Discourses, p.1939, n.246) points out that SN 51.13 ‘*Chandasamādhi Sutta*’ provides the key to understanding the long compounds: firstly “*Chandaṃ ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhu nissāya labhati samādhiṃ, labhati cittassa ekaggataṃ – ayaṃ vuccati chandasamādhi.*” ‘The *samādhi* and integration obtained on the basis of intention is called ‘the *samādhi* of intention’.’ (note the similarity to MA) The text then links, at some length, the word *padhāna* with the four right efforts (*catu-sammāpadhāna*): suppressing unarisen unwholesome mental states, cultivating unarisen wholesome states, eliminating arisen unwholesome states, maintaining arisen wholesome states. These four together are the *padhāna-sāṅkhāra*. This makes it clear that *saṅkhārā* is being used here to label the types of effort, as set out in the doctrine of right-effort, hence my translation ‘the forms of effort’. Then the text explains: “*Iti ayaṅca chando, ayaṅca chandasamādhi, ime ca padhānasāṅkhārā – ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ‘chandasamādhi-ppadhānasāṅkhāra-samannāgato iddhipādo’.*” Thus this intention, this *samādhi* of intention, and these forms of striving [all] this is called “this *samādhi* of intention with the forms of effort is basis of success”.

<sup>10</sup> The fifteen factors are the renunciation of the five psychological wastelands; plus the cutting of the five emotional bindings; plus the four *samādhi* of intention, vitality, mind, and investigation, together with enthusiasm.

<sup>11</sup> *yogakkhema* is literally the “peace of union” which might be a reference to Vedic ideals in the same way that *brahmavihāra* (literally ‘dwelling with God’) was given a Buddhist spin. However PED notes that the Vedic equivalent (*yogaśema*) means “exertion and rest”. Monier-Williams’ definition emphasises safety and security, especially with reference to property and possession. If we translate this into spiritual terms then it may well convey the security of the stream-entrant who knows their liberation is assured in a fixed period. PED further notes that a ‘scholastic interpretation’ is ‘peace from bondage’ and that the word is a frequent synonym for *nibbāna*.