

Nirvāṇa Sūtra.

Madhyāgama 55¹ Corresponding Preconditions Section. Taisho Vol. 1 no.26.

Chinese Translation by Gautama Saṅghadeva between 397-398 CE.²

English Translation by Jayarava Aug 2012³

English Translation

Thus have I heard, one time the Buddha was staying in Śravāsti (舍衛國 shěwèiguó), at the Jeta Grove 勝林 of Anāthapiṇḍika's park 孤獨園. Then the Bhagavan addressed the monks:

“*nirvāṇa* (涅槃 nièpán) has a precondition (習 xí;⁴ Skt. *upaniṣad*) and does not lack a precondition. The precondition for *nirvāṇa* is liberation (解脫 jiětuō Skt. *vimokṣa*).

Liberation also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of liberation?

Cessation of desire (無欲; Skt. *virāga*) is the precondition of liberation. Cessation of desire also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of cessation of desire?

Disillusionment (厭 yàn; Skt. *nirveda*) is the precondition. Disillusionment also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of disillusionment?

To see reality, and know things as they are (見如實 知如真. jiànrúshí zhīrúzhēn; Skt *yathābhūta-jñānadarśana*⁵) is the precondition. To see reality, and know things as they are has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of seeing reality, and knowing things as they are?

Samādhi (定 dìng) is the precondition. *Samādhi* also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of *samādhi*?

Bliss (樂 lè; Skt. *sukha*) is the precondition. Bliss also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of bliss?

Calming down (止 zhǐ; Skt. *praśrabdha*) is the precondition. Calming down also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of calming down?

¹ T01n0026_p0490c01(00)- T01n0026_p0491a13(00). “*Nirvāṇa Sūtra, the 55th sutra of T.99 中阿含經 / *Madhyāgamasūtra” Note from Maitiu O’Ceileachair, henceforth [MO’C]

² This *sūtra* is the counterpart of the Pāli *Upanisā Sutta* (S 12.23). “Most of the other Suttas in this section deal with the same topic but they don’t all give the the same chain. Suttas 42, 43, 47, and 50 give the chain from observing the precepts to *nirvāṇa*. Suttas 45 and 46 give a similar chain that starts with *hrī* and *apatrāpya*. Sutta 44 gives a chain starting with **samyagjñāna, samyaksamkalpa*. Most of them are very short and give little more than lists of the links in the chain. Sutta 55 is probably the most detailed.” [MO’C]

³ I don’t know Chinese but produced this translation using a variety of dictionaries, Google Translator, pattern recognition, and a knowledge of the Pāli equivalent.

⁴ 習 xí “usually means ‘to practice or become accustomed to’ and the only place I’ve seen it used to mean ‘cause or condition’ is in this sutra and the other sutras in this section of T.99.” [MO’C] Here it stands for *upaniṣad* (Pāli *upanisā*) in the sense of underlying condition, or precondition. Bodhi uses the phrase ‘proximate condition’ in his translation of the *Upanisā Sutta*.

⁵ Cf. 見 ‘see; *darśana*’; 如實 ‘reality, truth’, *yathābhūta*; 知 *jñāna*; 如真 *yathābhūta, tathatā*; hence “to see reality, and know things as they are”.

Rapture (喜 xǐ; Skt. *pīti*) is the precondition. Rapture also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of calming down?

Joy (歡悅 huānyuè; Skt. *prāmodya*) is the precondition. Joy also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of joy?

Non-regret (不悔 bù huǐ; Skt. *avipratisāra*) is the precondition. Non-regret also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of non-regret?

Morality (護戒 Hù jiè; Skt. *śīla*) is the precondition. Morality also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of morality?

Guarding the sense faculties (護諸根 Hù zhūgēn; Skt. *gupta indriya*?⁶) is the precondition. Guarding the sense faculties also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition?

Right mindfulness (正念 zhèng niàn; Skt. *samyak-smṛti*), attentiveness (正智 zhèngzhì; Skt. *samprajāna*) [i.e. the eightfold path] is the precondition. Mindfulness and attentiveness also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition?

Wise attention (正思惟 zhèng sīwéi; Skt. *yoniso manasikāra*)⁷ is the precondition. Wise attention also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition?

Faith (信 xìn; Skt. *śraddhā*) is the precondition. Faith also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition?

Suffering (苦 kǔ; Skt. *duḥkha*) is the precondition. Suffering also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of *duḥkha*?

Old age and Death (老死 lǎosǐ; Skt. *jarāmaraṇa*) are the precondition. Old age and death also have a precondition and do not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of old age and death?

Birth (生 shēng; Skt. *jāti*) is the precondition. Birth also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of birth?

Becoming (有 yǒu; Skt. *bhava*) is the precondition. Becoming also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of birth?

Sensation (受 shòu; Skt. *vedanā*) is the precondition. Sensation also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of sensation?⁸

Desire (愛 ài; Skt. *kānti*; cf 貪欲 tānyù; Skt. *trṣṇā*) is the precondition. Desire also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of desire?

Contact (覺 jué; Skt. *sprśati*) is the precondition. Contact also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of Contact?

Contact food⁹ (更樂 gènglè; Skt. *sparśo āhāra*) is the precondition. Contact food also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of contact food.

⁶ 諸根 zhūgēn = *indriya*; 護 = ‘protect, guard’ and used to translate Skt. *gupta* as well as *rakṣita*, *pāla* and *pālita*. Perhaps Skt. *indriyagupta*? Cf. 守護根門 Shǒu hùgēn mén ‘guarding the sense gates’.

⁷ This combination of characters is also used for *samyak-samkalpa* right-intention.

⁸ Note that sensation and desire are given in reverse order in the Chinese text. This would seem to be a scribal error.

⁹ I can’t find 更樂 per se, but *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* has “更樂食 (simplified 更乐食) [gènglè shí] ‘sensory food’”. In *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra (Translated Chapters)* By Maitreya Bodhisattva. Buddha Education Foundation, 2012. <http://buddhavacana.net/yogacarabhumi-sastra/> “Sensory food 觸食 / 樂食 Chù

The six sense faculties (六處 liù chù; Skt. *sadāyatana*) are the precondition. The six sense faculties also have a precondition and do not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of six sense faculties?

Name & form (名色 míngsè; Skt. *nāmarūpa*) are the precondition. Name & form also have a precondition and do not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of name & form?

Awareness (識 shí; Skt. *viñāna*) is the precondition. Awareness also has a precondition and does not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of awareness?

Constructs (行 xíng; Skt. *saṃskāra*) are the precondition. Constructs also have a precondition and do not lack a precondition. What is the precondition of constructs?

Ignorance (無明 wúmíng; Skt. *avidyā*) is the precondition.

Ignorance is the cause (緣 yuán; Skt. *pratyaya*) of constructs; constructs cause awareness; awareness causes name & form; name & form causes the six sense faculties; the six sense faculties cause contact food; contact food causes contact; contact causes desire; desire causes sensation; sensation causes becoming; becoming causes birth; birth causes old age and death; old age and death cause suffering;

With suffering as a precondition there will be faith. With faith as a precondition, there will be wise attention. With wise attention as a precondition, there will be mindfulness & attentiveness. With mindfulness & attentiveness as a precondition there will be guarding the senses; morality; non-regret; joy; rapture; calming down; bliss; integration (*samādhi*); knowing and seeing things as they are; disgust; cessation of desire; liberation. With liberation as cause there will be *nirvāna*.

This is what the Buddha said. The bhikkhus heard and they all rejoiced.

shí/lè shí: the nourishment that one takes through the contacts of the six senses”. (p.47) The collective term for the four kinds of food is *catvāra āhārāḥ*. In the *Yogacarabhūmi* [manobhūmidvitīyā] itself we find “[*te punaścātvāra āhārāḥ | kavaḍānkāra āhārāḥ sparśo manaḥsañcetanā viñānam ca |* <http://dsbc.uwest.edu/manobhūmidvitīyā>. The idea of contact as food occurs in the Pāli (See Nyanaponika 1981. ‘The Four Nutriment of Life: An Anthology of Buddhist Texts.’ *Wheel Publication*. No. 105/106 Buddhist Publication Society. But it is used very differently. In Pāli contact *is* nourishment; here contact-nourishment *is a precondition* for contact.

*Chinese Text – reformatted from Taisho*¹⁰

(五五) 中阿含 - 習相應品 - 涅槃經 - 第十四(初一日誦)

我聞如是： 一時，佛遊舍衛國，在勝林給孤獨園。

爾時，世尊告諸比丘：

「**涅槃**有習，非無習。何謂**涅槃**習？

答曰**解脫**為習。**解脫**亦有習，非無習。何謂**解脫**習？

答曰**無欲**為習。**無欲**亦有習，非無習。何謂**無欲**習？

答曰**厭**為習。**厭**亦有習，非無習。何謂**厭**習？

答曰**見如實**、**知如真**為習。**見如實**、**知如真**亦有習，非無習。何謂**見如實**、**知如真**習？

答曰**定**為習。**定**亦有習，非無習。何謂**定**習？

答曰**樂**為習。**樂**亦有習，非無習。何謂**樂**習？

答曰**止**為習。**止**亦有習，非無習。何謂**止**習？

答曰**喜**為習。**喜**亦有習，非無習。何謂**喜**習？

答曰**歡悅**為習。**歡悅**亦有習，非無習。何謂**歡悅**習？

答曰**不悔**為習。**不悔**亦有習，非無習。何謂**不悔**習？

答曰**護戒**為習。**護戒**亦有習，非無習。何謂**護戒**習？

答曰**護諸根**為習。**護諸根**亦有習，非無習。何謂**護諸根**習？

答曰**正念**、**正智**為習。**正念**、**正智**亦有習，非無習。何謂**正念**、**正智**習？

答曰**正思惟**為習。**正思惟**亦有習，非無習。何謂**正思惟**習？

答曰**信**為習。**信**亦有習，非無習。何謂**信**習？

答曰**苦**為習。**苦**亦有習，非無習。何謂**苦**習？

答曰**老死**為習。**老死**亦有習，非無習。何謂**老死**習？

答曰**生**為習。**生**亦有習，非無習。何謂**生**習？

答曰**有**為習。**有**亦有習，非無習。何謂**有**習？

答曰**受**為習。**受**亦有習，非無習。何謂**受**習？

答曰**愛**為習。**愛**亦有習，非無習。何謂**愛**習？

答曰**覺**為習。**覺**亦有習，非無習。何謂**覺**習？

答曰**更樂**為習。**更樂**亦有習，非無習。何謂**更樂**習？

答曰**六處**為習。**六處**亦有習，非無習。何謂**六處**習？

答曰**名色**為習。**名色**亦有習，非無習。何謂**名色**習？

答曰**識**為習。**識**亦有習，非無習。何謂**識**習？

答曰**行**為習。**行**亦有習，非無習。何謂**行**習？

答曰**無明**為習。

¹⁰ http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/T01/0026_010.htm (key terms are bold – see table below for lists)

「是為緣無明行，緣行識，緣識名色，緣名色六處，緣六處更樂，緣更樂覺，緣覺愛、緣愛受，緣受有，緣有生，緣生老死，緣老死苦。

習苦，便有信。習信，便有正思惟。習正思惟，便有正念正智。習正念正智，便有護諸根、護戒、不悔、歡悅、喜、止、樂、定、見如實、知如真、厭、無欲、解脫。習解脫，便得涅槃。」

佛說如是。彼諸比丘聞佛所說，歡喜奉行。

涅槃經第十四竟。

Key Chinese phrases

何謂 = what is?

習 = precondition (*upaniṣad*)

答曰 = the answer [is]

為習 = is the precondition

亦有習 = also has a precondition

非無習 = does not lack a precondition

是為 = is

緣 = cause (*pratyaya*)

便有 = there will be

「」 = quotation marks

Key Terms – in order of the text

涅槃	nièpán	nirvāṇa	
解脫	jiětuō	vimokṣa	liberation
無欲	wúyù	virāga	cessation of desire
厭	yàn	nirveda	disgust, disillusion
見如實、知如真	jiàn rúshí, zhī rú zhēn	yathābhūta- jñānadarśana	to know and see things as they really are
定	dìng	samādhi	
樂	lè	sukha	
止	zhǐ	praśrabdha	calming down
喜	xǐ	pīti	rapture
歡悅	huānyuè	prāmodya	joy
不悔	bù huǐ	avipratīṣāra	non-regret
護戒	hù jiè	śīla	morality
護諸根	hù - zhūgēn	gupta indriya?	guarding sense faculties
正念 正智	zhèngniàn zhèngzhì	samyak-smṛti & saṃprajāna	mindfulness & attentiveness ¹¹
正思惟	zhèng sīwéi	yoniśo manasikāra ¹²	wise attention
信	xìn	śraddhā	faith
苦	kǔ	duḥkha	suffering
老死	lǎo sǐ	jarā-maraṇa	old age and death
生	shēng	jāti	birth
有	yǒu	bhava	becoming
受	shòu	vedanā	sensation
愛	ài	kānti	desire
覺	jué	spr̥sati	contact
更樂	gèng lè	sparṣo āhāra	contact food
六處	liù chù	sadāyatana	six sense-faculties
名色	míng sè	nāmarūpa	name & form
識	shì	vijñāna	awareness
行	xíng	saṃskāra	constructs
無明	wú míng	avidyā	ignorance

¹¹ Not samyag-jñāna as I previously thought!

¹² This combination also used for *samyak-saṃkalpa* right intention