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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

### Summary

This sutta explains that all beings exist in the Four Nutrients (Edible Food, Senses-impression, Volitional Thought and Consciousness). However, it would be possible for all beings to be liberated and to end the suffering, if one can fully understand and become impartial towards these Nutrients.

The extract provides an explanation for each of the Nutrient, and how it can be overcome with full understanding and detachment.

### The Four Nutrients of Life

The following is an extract from The Wheel Publication 105/106 -Nyanaponika Thera. (pp 18-23)

“Monks, when a monk becomes entirely dispassionate towards One thing, when his lust for it entirely fades away, when he is entirely liberated from it, then he is one who, after fully comprehending the Goal, makes an end of suffering here and now.

"What one thing? "All beings subsist by nutriment. When a monk becomes entirely dispassionate towards this one thing (Nutriment), when his lust for it entirely fades away, when he is entirely liberated from it, and when he sees the complete ending of it, then, O monks, he is one who, after fully comprehending the Goal, makes an end of suffering here and now”.

Anguttara-Nikaya, Dasaka Nipata (The Tens) Sutta No. 27

The Discourse on "Son's Flesh" or The Similes for the Four Nutriments:

At Savatthi.

"There are, O monks, four nutriments for the sustenance of beings born and for the support of beings seeking birth. What are the four?"

"Edible food, coarse and fine; secondly, sense-impressions; thirdly, volitional thought; fourthly, consciousness."

"How, O monks, should the nutriment 'Edible Food' be considered? Suppose a couple, husband and wife, have set out on a journey through the desert, carrying only limited provisions. They have with them their only son dearly beloved by them. Now, while these two travelled through the desert, their limited stock of provisions ran out and came to an end; but there was still a stretch of desert not yet crossed. Then the two thought: Our small stock of provisions has run out; it has come to an end; and there is still a stretch of desert that is not yet crossed. Should we not kill our only son, so dearly beloved, prepare dried and roasted meat, and eating our son's flesh, we may cross in that way the remaining part of the desert, lest all three of us perish?"

"And these two, husband and wife killed their only son, so dearly beloved by them, prepared dried and roasted meat, and, eating their son's flesh, crossed in that way the remaining part of the desert. And while eating their son's flesh, they were beating their breast and crying: 'Where are you, our only and beloved son? Where are you our only and beloved son?'"

What do you think, O monks? Will they eat the food for the pleasure of it, for enjoyment, for comeliness' sake, for (the body's) embellishment?"

"Certainly not, O Lord."

"Will they not rather eat the food merely for the sake of crossing the desert?"

"So it is, O Lord."

"In the same manner, I say, O monks, should edible food be considered. If, O monks, the nutriment Edible Food is comprehended, the lust for the five sense-objects is (thereby) comprehended. And if lust for the for sense-objects is comprehended, there is no fetter by which enchained a Noble Disciple might come to this world again."

"And how, O monks, should the nutriment 'Sense-impression' be considered? Suppose, O monks, there is a skinned cow that stands close to a wall, then the creatures living in the wall will nibble at the cow; and if the skinned cow stands near a tree, then the creatures living in the tree will nibble at it; if it stands in the water, the creatures living in the water will nibble at it; if it stands in the open air, the creatures living in the air will nibble at it. Wherever that skinned cow stands, the creatures living there will nibble at it."

"In that manner, I say, O monks should the nutriment 'Sense-impression' be considered. If the nutriment 'Sense-impression' is comprehended, the three kinds

of feeling are thereby comprehended. And if the three kinds of feeling are comprehended, there is I say no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple.

"And how, O monks, should the nutriment 'Volitional Thought' be considered? Suppose, O monks, there is a pit of glowing embers, filled to cover a man's height, with embers glowing without flames and smoke. Now a man comes that way, who loves life and does not wish to die, who wishes for happiness and detests suffering. Then two strong men would seize both his arms and drag him to the pit of glowing embers: Then O monks, far away from it would recoil, that man's will far away from it his longing, far away his inclination. And why? Because the man knows: "If I fall into that pit of glowing embers, I shall meet death or deadly pain.""

In that manner, I say, O monks should the nutriment "Volitional Thought" be considered. If the nutriment "Volitional Thought" is comprehended, the three kinds of craving (sensual craving, craving for eternal existence, craving for self-annihilation) are thereby comprehended. And if the three kinds of craving are comprehended, there is, I say, no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple."

And how, O monks, should the nutrient "Consciousness" be considered: Suppose, O monks, people have seized a criminal, a robber, and brought him before the king saying: "This is a criminal, a robber, O majesty! Mete out to him the punishment you think fit!" Then the king would tell them: "Go, and in the morning strike this man with a hundred spears." At noon the king would ask his men: "How is that man?" - " He is still alive your Majesty." -"Then go and strike him again at noon time with a hundred spears!" So, they did, and in the evening the king asks them again: "How is that man?"--"He is still alive."-- "Then go and in the evening strike him again with a hundred spears!" And so, they did.

"What do you think, O monks? Will that man, struck with three hundred spears during a day, suffer pain and torment owing to that?"-- "Even if he were to be struck only by a single spear, he would suffer pain and torment, owing to that. How much more if he is being struck by three hundred spears!"

"In that manner, I say, O monks, should the nutriment "Consciousness" be considered. If the nutriment "Consciousness" is comprehended, Mind and Body are thereby comprehended. And if Mind and Body are comprehended, there is, I say, no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple."

Samyutta-Nikaya, vol. I I:  
Nidana-Samyutta, Sutta 63