

Resistance & Designation

(Notes on DN 15)

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Nāmarūpapaccayā phasso 'ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tadānanda, imināpetam pariāyena veditabbam, yathā nāmarūpapaccayā phasso. Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho rūpakāye adhivacanasamphasso paññāyethā ti?

No hetam, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi rūpakāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho nāmakāye paṭighasamphasso paññāyethā ti?

No hetam, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakāyassa ca rūpakāyassa ca paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho adhivacanasamphasso vā paṭighasamphasso vā paññāyethā ti?

No hetam, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmarūpassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho phasso paññāyethā ti?

No hetam, bhante.

Tasmātihānanda, eseva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa pacayo phassassa, yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ.

—‘With name-&-matter as condition, contact’, so it was said: how it is, Ānanda, that with name-&-matter as condition there is contact should be seen in this manner. Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the name-body is described,—they being absent, would designation-contact be manifest in the matter-body?

—No indeed, lord.

—Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the matter-body is described,—they being absent, would resistance-contact be manifest in the name-body?

—No indeed, lord.

—Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the name-body and the matter-body are described,—they being absent, would either designation-contact or resistance-contact be manifest?

—No indeed, lord.

—Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which name-&-matter is described,—they being absent, would contact be manifest?

—No indeed, lord.

—Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the reason, this is the occasion, this is the arising, this is the condition of contact, that is to say name-&-matter.

1. 'Matter' is required for 'name' to be present. If there would not be that which is 'named', 'name' would not be able to arise. If on the other hand, 'name' is absent, 'matter' would simply be inconceivable. Thus, there is no 'name' without 'matter' and there is no 'matter' without 'name', hence—*name-ℰ-matter*. In this way 'name' *designates* the resistance, and 'matter' *resists* the designation. Without 'name'(-body), there would not be any designation manifested in 'matter'(-body), but without 'matter'(-body), there would not be any resistance manifested in the 'name'(-body). It is these respective *manifestations* of 'designation' and 'resistance' that are *puṭhujjana's* problem.

2. With name-&-matter, he *assumes* that it is *this* 'matter' that is *designated*. Through that *assumption*, designation *manifests* in that matter-body¹. In this way one's 'matter' is *designated*—one is *contacted*.

With name-&-matter, he *assumes* that it is *this* 'name' that is *resisted*. Through that *assumption*, resistance *manifests* in that name-body. In this way one's 'name' is *resisted*—one is *contacted*.

He assumes that it is *this* 'matter' that is designated.

He assumes it is the *same* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; he assumes it is a *different* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; He assumes it is *both-same-ℰ-different* matter that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; He assumes it is *neither-same-nor-different* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'. Either way—the assumption is *there*.

That which resists him he designates as the same, different, both-same-&-different, or neither-same-nor-different, as that because of which 'name' is there—the designation *manifests* in this 'matter'.²

Thus, he designates (*contacts*) his resistance. Contact is there.

He assumes that it is *this* 'name' that is resisted.

He assumes it is the *same* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is a *different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is *both-same-ℰ-different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is *neither-same-nor-different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'. Either way—the assumption is *there*.

That which is designated he resists as the same, different, both-same-&-different, or neither-same-nor-different, as that because of which 'matter' is there—the resistance *manifests* in this 'name'.³

Thus, he resists (*contacts*) his designation. Contact is there.

¹*upādānappaccayā bhavo.*

²'Name' *assumes existence* in 'matter'—'name' *exists*.

³'Matter' *finds footing* in 'name'—'matter' *exists*. Cf. DN 11.

3. Cf. *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, MN 1:

Pathaviṃ pathavito sañjānāti; pathaviṃ pathavito saññatvā pathaviṃ maññati, pathaviyā maññati, pathavito maññati, pathaviṃ meti maññati, pathaviṃ abhinandati. taṃ kissa hetu? ‘apariññātaṃ tassā’ti vadāmi.

From earth, he has a percept of earth; having had from earth a percept, he conceives [that to be] earth, he conceives [that to be] in earth, he conceives [that to be] out of earth, he conceives earth as ‘mine’, he delights earth. Why is that? He has not fully understood it, I say...

What a *puthujjana* has to realise is that regardless of *what* he perceives, it is always his *perception* that is perceived. Whether it is ‘earth’, ‘water’, ‘fire’, ‘air’ or any other thing that MN 1 mentions, all one will ever perceive (*puthujjana* and *arahant* alike) is one’s own perception of that ‘matter’.⁴ This is saying nothing else than ‘matter’ is and will *always be outside* of one’s reach, outside of that which has appeared.⁵ Perception is that which is perceived, but perception would not be possible if there is no matter to be perceived; on the other hand matter would be *inconceivable* if perception was indiscernible. If one thinks “it is because of the matter, that perception is there”, *that* thought is *perceived*, which means that *that* which is ‘matter’ *in that thought* is also perceived. But since it is only perception that can be perceived, that ‘matter’ which is perceived in that thought, cannot be that ‘matter’ which cannot be perceived, since it is perceived. In this way, *from* ‘matter’, a *puthujjana* has a percept of ‘matter’, which he *conceives* to be that *same* ‘matter’ because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *different* ‘matter’ because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *both-same-ℰ-different* ‘matter’

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It would be as wrong to say ‘a feeling is perceived’ as it would ‘a percept is felt’ (which mix up *saññā* and *vedanā*); but it is quite in order to say ‘a feeling, a percept, (that is, a felt thing, a perceived thing) is cognized’, which simply means that a feeling or a percept is present (as, indeed, they both are in all experience—see *Majjhima* v,3 (M.i,293)). Strictly speaking, then, what is *cognized* is *nāmarūpa*, whereas what is *perceived* (or *felt*) is *saññā* (or *vedanā*), i.e. only *nāma*. This distinction can be shown grammatically. *Vijānāti*, to cognize, is active voice in sense (taking an objective accusative): consciousness *cognizes a phenomenon* (*nāmarūpa*); consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. *Sañjānāti*, to perceive, (or *vediyati*, to feel) is middle voice in sense (taking a cognate accusative): perception *perceives* [a percept] (or feeling feels [a feeling]). Thus we should say ‘a blue thing (= a blueness), a painful thing (= a pain), is cognized’, but ‘blue is perceived’ and ‘pain is felt’. (In the Suttas generally, due allowance is to be made for the elasticity in the common usage of words. But in certain passages, and also in one’s finer thinking, stricter definition may be required.)—Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Clearing the Path*, 2010, p. 92.

⁵ Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Seeking The Path*, 2010, p. 40, §§17-18: “[Four *mahābhutā*]...will always be just below our feet.”

because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *neither-same-nor-different* 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter. Either way 'matter' is *conceived*. He becomes responsible for the *manifestation* of the conceiving of that 'matter', he "makes" that 'matter' *exist*.⁶ That "creation" is *his*—thus it is 'my' 'matter'.⁷ But, since that 'my matter' is conceived as that 'matter' *because of which* there is a percept of matter, then that percept[ion] too becomes 'my perception'.⁸ The same goes for one's feelings and intentions. They are all conceived as *mine*. Since the *puthujjana's* whole experience is *his*, he thinks he *himself is*—the view of Self exists.⁹

4. When consciousness does not indicate any 'me' or 'mine', that 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter, does not manifest itself in that perception (or feeling, or intention)—it does not manifest itself in 'name'. Thus, in perception there is only perception, i.e. in the seen there is only that which is seen, namely—the seen (and so on for all the senses).¹⁰ One ceases to "perceive 'matter'"; one *knows*¹¹ such a thing is impossible or *inconceivable*,¹² one simply *understands*¹³: *there is* matter, *there is* perception (or feeling, or intention), *there is* (non-indicative) consciousness. One *understands*—there are five "heaps".¹⁴ Since one understands them, one ceases to *assume* them. With the cessation of assumption, *that* which they were *assumed to be*, ceases—*bhava* comes to an end.

⁶Thus, 'matter' can never be perceived, but it can "find footing" in that which is perceived (or felt, or intended).

⁷He delights in his own creation, *because* it is his own creation.

⁸If one is not to conceive that 'matter' *because of which* there is a percept of matter, one would not *conceive oneself* as *that because of which* there is a perceiver and conceiver of the world. Cf. SN 35.116:

The eye... ear... nose... tongue... body... mind... is that in the world *by which* one is a perceiver and conceiver of the world.

Also, cf. Nāṇavīra Thera, *op.cit.* p. 298:

And *when* shall we 'not be that by which'? ... the Buddha tells us: it is when, for us, in the seen there shall be just the seen, and so with the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. And when in the seen is there just the seen? When the seen is no longer seen as 'mine' (*etaṃ mama*) or as 'I' (*eso'ham asmi*) or as 'my self' (*eso me attā*): in brief, when there is no longer, in connexion with the senses, the conceit 'I am', *by which* 'I am a conceiver of the world'.

⁹That's how the sense of the 'mine' leads to the sense of 'Self'.

¹⁰Cf. *Bāhiya Sutta*, Ud. 10/8.

¹¹"Wisdom is to be developed..."—MN 43.

¹²If it were fundamentally subject to one's conceivings, freedom from conceivings would not be possible. Cf. my *Notes on AN 1.51*.

¹³"...consciousness is to be understood".—MN 43.

¹⁴Simultaneous, superimposed, utterly *indifferent* to each other.