



## INDRIYA (Faculty-Function-Power)

*All the suttas below have parallels either in Chinese, Sanskrit and/or Tibetan.*

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In relation to the senses

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Friend, there are these five faculties each with a separate range, a separate domain, and they do not experience one another's range & domain: the eye-faculty, the ear-faculty, the nose-faculty, the tongue-faculty, & the body-faculty. Now what do these five faculties — each with a separate range, a separate domain, not experiencing one another's range & domain: the eye-faculty, the ear-faculty, the nose-faculty, the tongue-faculty, & the body-faculty — have as their [common] arbitrator? What experiences [all] their ranges & domains?"

"Friend, these five faculties — each with a separate range, a separate domain, not experiencing one another's range & domain: the eye-faculty, the ear-faculty, the nose-faculty, the tongue-faculty, & the body-faculty — have the intellect as their [common] arbitrator. The intellect is what experiences [all] their ranges & domains."

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Friend, what can be known with the purified intellect-consciousness divorced from the five [sense] faculties?"

*Nissatṭhena hāvuso, pañcahi indriyehi parisuddhena manoviññāṇena kiṃ neyyan'ti?*

Friend, with the purified intellect-consciousness divorced from the five faculties the dimension of the infinitude of space can be known [as] 'infinite space.' The dimension of the infinitude of consciousness can be known [as] 'infinite consciousness.' The dimension of nothingness can be known [as] 'There is nothing.'

*Nissatṭhena, āvuso, pañcahi indriyehi parisuddhena manoviññāṇena 'ananto ākāso'ti ākāsañācāyatanaṃ neyyaṃ, 'anantaṃ viññāṇan'ti viññāṇañācāyatanaṃ neyyaṃ, 'natthi kiñci'ti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ neyyan'ti.*

**MN 43**

“And how, bhikkhus, does one dwell negligently? If one dwells without restraint over the eye faculty, the mind is soiled among forms cognizable by the eye. If the mind is soiled, there is no

gladness. When there is no gladness, there is no rapture. When there is no rapture, there is no tranquillity. When there is no tranquillity, one dwells in suffering. The mind of one who suffers does not become concentrated. When the mind is not concentrated, phenomena do not become manifest. Because phenomena do not become manifest, one is reckoned as ‘one who dwells negligently.’

“If one dwells without restraint over the ear faculty, the mind is soiled among sounds cognizable by the ear.... If one dwells without restraint over the mind faculty, the mind is soiled among mental phenomena cognizable by the mind.... Because phenomena do not become manifest, one is reckoned as ‘one who dwells negligently.’

**SN 35.97**

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“Thus this way of regarding things and the notion ‘I am’ have not vanished in him. As ‘I am’ has not vanished, there takes place a descent of the five faculties—of the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, the body faculty.

There is, bhikkhus, the mind, there are mental phenomena, there is the element of ignorance.

*Iti ayañceva samanupassanā ‘asmī’ti cassa avigataṃ hoti. ‘Asmī’ti kho pana, bhikkhave, avigate pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ avakkanti hoti — cakkhundriyassa sotindriyassa ghānindriyassa jivhindriyassa kāyindriyassa. Atthi, bhikkhave, mano, atthi dhammā, atthi avijjādhātu.*

**SN 22.47** (major sutta - see [here](#))

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"And how is one a noble one with developed faculties?

There is the case where, when seeing a form with the eye, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants — in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not — cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful.

Idem with ear, nose, tongue, body, intellect.

**MN 152**

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It would be better, bhikkhus, for the eye faculty to be lacerated by a red-hot iron pin burning, blazing, and glowing, than for one to grasp the sign through the features in a form cognizable

by the eye. For if consciousness should stand tied to gratification in the sign or in the features, and if one should die on that occasion, it is possible that one will go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm. Having seen this danger, I speak thus.

It would be better, bhikkhus, for the ear faculty ..., etc.

In regard to this, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple reflects thus: ‘Leave off lacerating the eye faculty with a red-hot iron pin burning, blazing, and glowing. Let me attend only to this: So the eye is impermanent, forms are impermanent, eye-consciousness is impermanent, eye-contact is impermanent, whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant—that too is impermanent.

(idem with ear, nose, tongue, body).

### **SN 35.235**

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In relation to the five powers (pañcabalāni)

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Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five?

The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘Such is he, the Gracious One, the Worthy One, the Perfect Sambuddha, the one endowed with understanding and good conduct, the Fortunate One, the one who understands the worlds, the unsurpassed guide for those people who need taming, the Teacher of gods and men, the Buddha, the Gracious One.’

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple dwells with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; he is strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. He generates desire for the nonarising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the arising of unarisen wholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their nondecay, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. This is called the faculty of energy.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in

feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, monks, a noble disciple, having relinquished sense objects, attains concentration, attains one-pointedness of mind.

Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination (concretism), and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jhāna of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.’ With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the faculty of concentration.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. He understands as it really is: ‘This is suffering.’ He understands as it has come to be: ‘This is the origin of suffering.’ He understands as it has come to be: ‘This is the cessation of suffering.’ He understands as it has come to be: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ This is called the faculty of wisdom.

“These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties.”

**SN 48.10** (somewhat fairly partial sutta SA 647)

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“Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five?

The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom.

2“And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith to be seen? The faculty of faith is to be seen here in the four factors of stream-entry.

3“And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy to be seen? The faculty of energy is to be seen here in the four right strivings.

4“And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness to be seen? The faculty of mindfulness is to be seen here in the four establishments of mindfulness.

5“And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration to be seen? The faculty of concentration is to be seen here in the four jhānas.

6“And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom to be seen? The faculty of wisdom is to be seen here in the Four Noble Truths.

#### **SN 48.8**

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“One who has completed and fulfilled these five faculties is an arahant. If they are weaker than that, one is a nonreturner; if still weaker, a once-returner; if still weaker, a stream-enterer; if still weaker, a Dhamma-follower; if still weaker, a faith-follower.”

#### **SN 48.12**

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Idem than 48.12

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“Thus, bhikkhus, due to a difference in the faculties there is a difference in the fruits; due to a difference in the fruits<sup>199</sup> there is a difference among persons.”

#### **SN 48.13**

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Idem than 48.12

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“Thus, bhikkhus, one who activates them fully (paripūrakārī) succeeds fully; one who activates them partly (padesakārī) succeeds partly (padesam ārādheti). The five faculties, bhikkhus, are not barren, so I say.”

#### **SN 48.14**

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“It is, bhikkhus, because he has developed and cultivated these five faculties that a bhikkhu, by the destruction of the taints, in this very life enters and dwells in the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, realizing it for himself with direct knowledge.”

#### **SN 48.20**

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“Bhikkhus, there are these three faculties. What three? The faculty ‘I shall know the as-yet-unknown (anaññātaññassāmītindriya),’ the faculty of final knowledge (aññindriya), the faculty of one endowed with final knowledge (aññātāvindriya). These are the three faculties.

#### **SN 48.23**

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- A noble disciple who has faith will dwell with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; that he will be strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. That energy of his,

venerable sir, is his faculty of energy.

- A noble disciple who has faith and whose energy is aroused will be mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. That mindfulness of his, venerable sir, is his faculty of mindfulness.

- A noble disciple who has faith, whose energy is aroused, and whose mindfulness is established, will gain concentration, will gain one-pointedness of mind, having made release the object. That concentration of his, venerable sir, is his faculty of concentration.

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It is indeed to be expected, venerable sir, that a noble disciple who has faith, whose energy is aroused, whose mindfulness is established, and whose mind is concentrated, will understand thus: 'This saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. But the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, the mass of darkness: this is the peaceful state, this is the sublime state, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.' That wisdom of his, venerable sir, is his faculty of wisdom.

**SN 48.50**

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"Bhikkhus, so long as noble knowledge (ariyañāṇa) has not arisen in the noble disciple, there is as yet no stability of the [other] four faculties, no steadiness of the [other] four faculties.

**SN 48.52**

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"When, bhikkhus, these five faculties have been developed and cultivated, one of two fruits may be expected: either final knowledge in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning."

**SN 48.65**

## LEXICAL REFERENCE

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इन्द्रिय indriya [ इन्द्र indra-०य -ya - lit. belonging to Indra ]

- power , force , the quality which belongs especially to the mighty Indra RV. AV. VS. TS. AitBr. ŚBr.

- exhibition of power , powerful act RV. VS.

- faculty of sense , sense , organ of sense AV. Suśr.

Note: Indriya should be understood as the power that put the "ground of experience" ([āyatana](#)) of the organ of sense in motion. (see SN 22.47 above).

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