

Meditation on the Elements *(Majjhima Nikaya 62)*

The Buddha gives meditation instructions to his son Rahula.

The commentary tells us Rahula was eighteen years old when this teaching took place. The Buddha encourages his son to dissolve the sense of self into the impersonal elements making up the world. The goal is not to infuse the world with self, but to drain the self of self. It is finding things agreeable and disagreeable, that leads to suffering. With an attitude of “not mine” toward all phenomena, the mind is liberated from its clinging. —A. Olendzki

Rahula, any kind of material form whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self’.

Rahula, whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is	solid, solidified,	and clung-to... this is called the internal	earth	element.
	water, watery,		water	
	fire, fiery,		fire	
	air, airy,		air	
	space, spacial,		space	
Now both the internal and external	earth	element are simply	earth	element.
	water		water	
	fire		fire	
	air		air	
	space		space	

And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus:
‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self’.

When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the	earth	element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the	earth	element.
	water		water	
	fire		fire	
	air		air	
	space		space	
Rahula, develop meditation that is like	earth;	for when you develop meditation that is like	earth,	arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain.
	water;		water,	
	fire;		fire,	
	air;		air,	
	space;		space,	
Just as people throw	clean things and dirty things...	on the earth, and the earth	is not horrified, humiliated, and disgusted because of that...	so too, Rahula, when you develop meditation that is like [the elements], arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain.
Just as people wash		in water, and the water		
Just as people burn		in fire, and the fire		
Just as the air blows on		and the air		
Just as space is not established anywhere...				