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Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta

The Discourse to the People of Bamboo Gate | S 55.7

Theme: The 4 precepts, the golden rule, values, and streamwinning

Translated by Piya Tan ©2012; revised 2016

1 The golden rule

1.1 The Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta lays down a complete programme for lay training. After the preliminaries of polite greetings [§§1-3], the people of Veḷu,dvāra request a special teaching from the Buddha for them, who are busy worldly lay people [§4]. The Buddha teaches them “**a Dharma teaching for self-application**” (*attūpanāyika dhamma,pariyāya*) [§5].

This teaching opens with the first 7 of the 10 courses of wholesome karma (namely, those of body and speech). This is effectively a training based on an elaboration of the 5 precepts, that is, a programme for **moral conduct** [§§6-12]. Then follows a short section on **mental cultivation**, given as the recollection on the 3 jewels [§§13-15], which, with the accomplishment in moral virtue [§16], leads to stream-winning [§17] in this life itself.

1.2 The Sutta is also a Buddhist classic of the philosophy and practice of moral ethics based on the “**golden rule**” or the doctrine of reciprocity: negatively stated: *Do not do to others what you do not wish others to do to you*, or, positively stated: *do unto others what you wish them to do unto you* [3]. **The Dhammapada** puts it in verse:

<i>Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbe bhāyanti maccuno attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye</i>	All tremble at the rod [violence]; all fear death; making oneself the example, ¹ one should neither kill nor cause to kill. (Dh 129)
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<i>Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbesaṃ jīvitam piyaṃ attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye</i>	All tremble at the rod [violence]; all love life; making oneself the example, one should neither kill nor cause to kill. (Dh 130)
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This moral ethic, however, is not an end in itself, but serves as a foundation for mental cultivation and the greater goal of spiritual liberation. This golden rule forms the basis for the social relationships of the six directions elaborated in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31), where the individual, one party, having performed his duties, is reciprocated with commensurate responses from the other.²

1.3 The section on *the precepts* [§§6-12] exhorts that we should not only keep to the precepts ourselves but also encourage others to do so. For example, in the first precept, it is said: “[H]e himself abstains from harming life, exhorts others to abstain from harming life,” and so on. **The Atta,hita Sutta** (A 4.96/2:96 f) and **the Sikkhā Sutta** (A 4.99/2:98 f) declare such a person as “one who lives both for his own good and for the good of others.”³ [3]

1.4 The Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta seems to assume that the audience already has some idea of the ten unwholesome courses of action (*akusala kamma,patha*) and of wholesome courses of action (*kusala kamma,patha*). These courses of action are defined in **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41), with which this Sutta

¹ Ie putting oneself in another’s place.

² D 31,27-34/3:188-193, SD 4.1.

³ On the 5 precepts, see *Sīlānussati*, SD 15.11 (2.2).

should be studied.⁴ The Veḷudvāreyya Sutta also omits mention of the mental karma, as the Buddha is here focusing on the precepts, namely, the moral virtue of body and speech, that is, the moral training.

1.5 The mental training aspect is found in *the recollections of the 3 jewels and of moral virtue* [§§13-16]. The 4 qualities famously form the 4 “limbs of streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*), that is, accomplishment in wise faith in the 3 jewels and in “moral virtue dear to the noble ones.”⁵ In short, the underlying teaching of the Veḷudvāreyya Sutta is actually the attainment of **streamwinning**.⁶ [1.1]

2 The 5 values

2.1 SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY

Buddhism neither subscribes to the notion that morals are relative or undiscoverable by humans, nor does it relegate moral accountability to a supreme being. While the former is basically man-centred, the latter is God-centred.

A man-centred moral ethics serves only humans, and as such can be exploitative of non-human beings and nature. Human life cannot exist in itself, but is possible on account of the vital yet fragile support of the ecosystem around us. A key principle of Buddhist ethics is respect for our natural environment.

A God-centred system tends to attribute good and evil, right and wrong, to an external power-figure, and since only a believer—one endowed with some kind of power (such as charisma)—defines what sort of being this is, such an attribution can be very arbitrary and induce us to be unaccountable for our actions. Very significantly, a theistic system cannot show any real unconditional love, especially when that love must be directed only to an all-powerful being.

2.2 LIFE-CENTREDNESS

“Unconditional love” means accepting ourselves just as we are, and extending that same openness to others and to nature. This is an open acceptance of the true reality around us. This most basic truth is that all beings love their lives, and these lives are only possible when they coexist with a sustainable environment. This is a life-centred system.

The Buddhist moral system is best described as being life-centred. The very first fact we cannot deny is that *we are alive*, and no one, in his right mind, would want to die (Dh 129 f). We *value life*, meaning that it is good in itself, but it also has a moral purpose. Understandably, Buddhist ethics begins with the value of life, expressed through our *being*. This is the value underpinning **the first precept**, which is against killing.⁷

This principle of our love to live, and understanding that others have the same love is called “the golden rule.” Simply put, it says: “Do not do to other what we do not want others do to us.” This principle is described in **§6** of the Veḷudvāreyya Sutta.

2.3 HAPPINESS

However, if we were to stop here then we would be no better than a wild brute or an oblivious fish. We all have to work for a living, or we are supported by others who work for a living. Through industry

⁴ M 41,7-14/1:286-288 @ SD 5.7. See eg, §8 (M 41,8/1:286) for the negative precept & §12 (M 41,12/1:287) for its positive counterpart. However, the third factor of the golden rule is omitted here.

⁵ See **Dhamma,dinna S** (S 55.53,5), SD 46.4.

⁶ On the significance of this, see **Dhamma,dinna S** (S 55.53) @ SD 46.4 (2.2).

⁷ On the golden rule regarding value of life, see §6 below.

and honesty, we earn our life supports. We are able to feel happiness expressed through owning things, and through our ideas and feelings—this is the “value of happiness.”

When such property or idea is disrespected or violated, we are deprived of the source of our happiness. If someone were to take that source of our happiness away, it would bring us suffering. When we steal from someone, we are wrongfully and effectively taking away his happiness. Happiness, then, is the value underpinning **the second precept**, which is against taking the not-given.

2.4 FREEDOM

If our happiness is in having things, it is incomplete or meaningless if we are unable to actually *enjoy* them. This means that they benefit both our bodies and minds. One of the key ways that we enjoy what we have is through our healthy bodies. Through our bodies, too, we express our acceptance and love for others. This is a complicated process because we have to be sure that both parties know what they are doing and are willing to share responsibility.

If others violate our bodies, especially when we say *no* to a relationship, then we are being deprived of our freedom. We have lost control of our bodies, as it were. We should be free to accept or reject any relationship. Hence, **the third precept** is against sexual misconduct, which is underpinned by the “value of freedom,” expressed through our actions or non-action, as dictated by our conscience and wisdom.

2.5 TRUTH

For all these statements to be meaningful and applicable, they have to be *true*—this is the “value of truth.” This is actually a shorthand for “right speech,” which is free from falsehood, from inciting disharmony, from harshness, and from frivolity. This is again something natural: if there is no truth, then it is of no use for me to write about all this. You would have wasted your time reading this! Truth is the very basis of wholesome human communication. This is the value underpinning **the fourth precept**, which is against communicating falsehood.

2.6 THE MIND

The first three precepts regulate and purify our body, while the fourth keeps our speech wholesome. The fifth precept—refraining from taking intoxicants and addictives—regulates both body and speech, and, mostly importantly, also the mind. For, if we are drunk or high with drugs, we are likely to break all the other four precepts, and face various other social, legal and health problems, too.⁸

The purpose of the fifth precept is to prevent our **mind** from being clogged or clouded up, or to lose self-control. The fifth precept is like a door leading to mental cultivation or meditation. If our mind is clear, then it is easier to cultivate it—we have a healthy mind that is calm, clear and attentive.

When we have a healthy mind in a healthy body, we are both well and wise. This is the value—that of the mind, or better, mental health—so that it is the basis of true wisdom. Hence, this value underpins **the fifth precept**, which is against mental confusion and addictiveness.⁹

2.7 VALUES, INSTRUMENTAL & INTRINSIC

What we can *have*—family, friends, wealth, things, status, or power—are all means to higher ends: they are of instrumental or extrinsic value. In other words, they are *not* ends in themselves, but are the means to higher ends. They are “extrinsic” in the sense that they are not really an essential part of us—we do not *have* them (yet), they are *outside* of us, as it were—and even if we do have them, they need not in themselves bring us happiness or satisfaction.

⁸ On the breath of the 5th precept, that against drinking, intoxication and substance abuse, see SD 47.3b (2.2.1.2).

⁹ Further on “truth and value,” see SD 44.1 (3.4).

Those higher wholesome ends are said to be of intrinsic value: they are good in themselves. Life, happiness, freedom, truth and mental health are of intrinsic value because they are good in themselves. At least, in a daily, worldly sense. Intrinsic also refers to what we *are*, our natural and wholesome being, that is, something good or useful to us that we need to cultivate from *within* us.

On a spiritual level, even these wonderful qualities that we see as intrinsic to our worldly lives, are in themselves instrumental to an even higher goal, that of spiritual freedom or awakening. Our lives then have a higher purpose. Our happiness is even more refined and blissful. Our freedom frees us from the limitations of our bodies. The truth we realize allows us to see more directly into true reality. And our mind becomes a vision of true awakening. We have not only reached the heights of our human lives, but we can also enjoy the divine emotions of lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity [2.9].

2.8 RELATED QUALITIES

By way of summary, we can show the correlations of these precepts, their traditional values, contemporary values, and the spiritual action they embody, along with their wholesome counterparts, thus:¹⁰

<u>Precept</u>	<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Wholesome quality</u>
(1) against killing	lovingkindness	life	being	compassion
(2) against stealing	charity	happiness	having	charity
(3) against sexual misconduct	contentment	freedom	doing	contentment
(4) against false speech	truthfulness	truth	speech	wholesome communication
(5) against intoxication	mindfulness	wisdom	mind	mental calm and clarity

Table 2.8. The 5 Precepts in terms of values

This Table summarizes what we have discussed so far. However, each of the 5 sets reflecting each of the 5 precepts should be mindfully discussed in the light of sutta teachings for deeper insight into them.

2.9 THE PRECEPTS AND THE DIVINE ABODES

We have already stated that by keeping the precepts, we celebrate our humanity¹¹ and enjoy the divine abodes of lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity [2.7]. Of these four abodes, lovingkindness is the most fundamental and the other three abodes are successively more refined forms of lovingkindness. As such, we must always begin with lovingkindness in this practice, and gradually refine it.

Here, it is helpful to know that the cultivation of lovingkindness greatly helps us to keep to the 5 precepts.¹² If we are lovingkind, it is easier not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to become drunk or drugged. And when we are morally virtuous, it is easier for us to go deeper into our meditation, especially the mindfulness of the breath.¹³ Furthermore, as we are dealing with the precepts and karma, it should be noted that lovingkindness is efficacious in limiting the effects of our bad karma.¹⁴

¹⁰ See further **Notion of *ditṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (13.1). On intrinsic and extrinsic values, see also SD 44.1 (3.4).

¹¹ See Piya Tan, “Becoming human: It’s easier than you think,” R95, 2009 = *Revisioning Buddhism*, Singapore: The Minding Centre, 2009 ch 2.

¹² **The 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*)** as we commonly know them today are found in D 33,2.1(9)/3:235; **Sāraḷja S** (A 5.171/3:203), SD 84.13, (**Pañca, sīla**) **Bhikkhu S** (A 5.286/3:275), SD 84.16; Vbh 285.

¹³ On **the 4 divine abodes**, see **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 38.5.

¹⁴ See (**Karaja, kāya**) **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208, 1.3/5:299 *passim*) & SD 2.10 (2).

3 The threefold purity

3.1 We have already mentioned that the “golden rule” or the doctrine of reciprocity or reciprocity can be stated negatively as: *do not do to others what you do not wish others to do to you* (such as in Confucianism), or, positively: *do unto others what you wish them to do unto you* (such as in Christianity) [1]. But these are very brief statements. The fullest statement on the golden rule is found in the Buddha’s teaching of the “threefold purity” (*ti,koṭi parisuddha*) and admonitions on moral virtue given in such discourses as the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta (S 55.7).

This full formulation of the “threefold purity” is found in the “moral conduct” (training of body and speech) section of the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta [§§6-12], that is to say,

- we should keep the precepts ourselves,
- we should encourage others to do the same, and
- we should “speak in praise” of the precepts.

In short, moral virtue is not a private ethic: it is *a social reality*, without which society cannot exist.

3.2 The threefold purity is viewed from another angle in **the Dhammika Sutta** (Sn 2.14), thus:

<i>Pāṇam na hane, na ca ghātayeyya</i>	Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill,
<i>na cānujaññā hanatam paresam</i>	nor approve of killing by others,
<i>sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍam</i>	Laying aside the rod [violence] toward all beings,
<i>ye thāvarā ye ca tasanti loke</i>	both the still and the moving in the world.

(Sn 394), SD 87.1

This stanza gives the essence of the 5 precepts (Sn 393-99). The key term here is “the three-pointed utter purity” or simply “the threefold purity” (*ti,koṭi,parisuddha*) which comprises:

- (1) not breaking the precept oneself,
- (2) not causing another to do so, and
- (3) not approving of any breach of the precept.¹⁵

3.3 The Sutta Nipāta Commentary on the Dhammika Sutta says that, in the case of the first precept (against taking life), the 3 points form the “first half” (*purim’aḍḍhena*), that is, the negative or omission aspect, of the precepts, while the “latter half” (*pacchim’aḍḍhena*), that is, the positive or commission aspect, is formed by beneficent conduct (*hita,paṭipatti*) towards living beings (SnA 376). This is the pattern of practice that is given by the Buddha in such discourses as **the Sevittabbāsevitabba Sutta** (M 114).¹⁶

3.4 The Vinaya definition of *ti,koṭi,parisuddha* is different from that given in the suttas. For Theravāda monastic members, meat and fish are “pure” (that is, usable) if the following 3 conditions are fulfilled: if one has not seen, heard or suspected that the being has been killed for one (V 3:171; VA 604); the allowable meat is known as “available meat” (*pavatta,mamsa*, V 1:217, 3:172).

3.5 A psychological ethic, given in **the Amba,jaṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61), speaks of the purity of “the 3 doors of action”—of body, speech and mind—by way of “the examination of one’s conscience” or self-review (*paccavekkhana*) (M 61,18). In the case of wrong acts of body or of speech, they should be confessed to virtuous elders (M 61,9-14); in the case of wrong mental acts (ie, thoughts) one should reject

¹⁵ Cf SnA 376 f; S 5:354 f.

¹⁶ **Sevittabbāsevitabba S** (M 114/3:45-61), SD 39.8.

them with disgust (M 61,15-17). The idea here is to purify our intention (or conscience) so that wholesome conduct follows.

The Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta further gives a set of criteria—another “**threefold purity**”—whereby one determines one’s actions. If an action would harm oneself, or harm others, or harm both, such an action should not be done. Here “both” is not redundant, but also refers to “society” at large, or in today’s lingo, “the environment.” In other words, whatever one does, *it should not in any way harm oneself, others or the environment.*¹⁷

3.6 “Harm,” in other words, describes *an act contrary to nature*. If we accept this as a moral truth, then not harming others (or stealing, etc) constitutes natural morality (ie, not a relative set of morals). In that case, if A consents to B killing A (as in euthanasia), for example, the deed would still be wrong (with or without consent): B would have committed murder.

3.7 The first two of the threefold purity of moral action is applied to the 4 accomplishments of a lay follower in **the (Upāsaka) Mahānāma Sutta** (A 8.25).¹⁸ The four accomplishments of a lay follower are as follows:

- (1) a lay follower is one who takes the 3 refuges;
- (2) he keeps himself morally by keeping to the five precepts;
- (3) he lives for his own welfare; and
- (4) he lives for the welfare of others. (M 61/1:414-420), SD 3.10

3.8 In **the Saleyyaka Sutta** (M 41), the 5 precepts are examined more broadly and in greater detail by contrasting them with the 10 unwholesome courses of conduct (*akusala kamma,patha*).¹⁹

4 The world-protectors

4.1 The roots or motivating factors behind moral virtue—why we should behave civilly—is graphically explained in **the Hiri Ottappa Sutta** (A 2.9), a short discourse, here given in full:

Bhikshus, there are the two bright states²⁰ that protect the world. What are the two?

Moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*).

Bhikshus, if these two bright states were not to protect the world, then there would be no mothers nor mothers’ sisters nor uncles’ wives nor teachers’ wives nor gurus’ wives. Instead, the world would come to confusion such as there is amongst goats and sheep and fowl and pigs and dogs and jackals.

But, bhikshus, since these two bright states do protect the world, therefore there are seen mothers, mothers’ sisters, uncles’ wives, teachers’ wives and gurus’ wives.

(A 2.9/1:50), SD 2.5c

4.2 MORAL SHAME

4.2.1 Moral shame (*hiri*) is the civil regard for others and is twofold: (a) the understanding that one’s actions (bodily and verbal) affect others, and (b) that we could be judged and “shamed” by others. This “self-regarding” or “self-respect” aspect of moral conduct cannot function alone without a spiritual

¹⁷ **Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 61/1:414-420), SD 3.10.

¹⁸ **(Upāsaka) Mahānāma S** (A 8.25/4:220-222), SD 6.3.

¹⁹ M 41/1:285-290 (SD 5.7).

²⁰ “Bright states,” *sukka dhamma*, that is, wholesome conditions.

dimension—for, a society or social relationship founded merely on *shame* would be dominated by a “shame culture” centering around “saving one’s face.”²¹ [4.2.2]

4.2.2 There is a vital difference between moral shame and “shame culture.” **Moral shame** is rooted in respect for others and seeing their worth with lovingkindness, so that we are moved by a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) when our act may mislead others by arousing greed, hate or delusion in them. It encompasses any act that is not conducive to the individuation of a person, that is, his spiritual progress.

Shame culture, on the other hand, is a status marker and reinforcer: whatever we do should not allow others to perceive us as if we were acting below our social class or station. It is a measured relationship of appearances and worldliness within a tribal ambience. In short, while moral shame is about moral virtue, shame culture is about conformity to the tribe or crowd.

4.2.3 Moreover, both moral shame and moral fear are not moral virtues in themselves. They cannot each function alone, but in tandem with one another, that is, involving both self-regard and other-regard. They are—as aspects of moral virtue—also of **instrumental value**, that is, they are the bases for further spiritual development, that of mental cultivation, that is, a part of the 3 trainings.²²

4.3 MORAL FEAR

4.3.1 If moral shame is the flesh and bones of moral virtue, then, its spiritual blood is **moral fear** (*ottappa*), the understanding and acceptance that our actions have consequences upon others: this is *the law of conditionality*. How we act, whether in secret or openly, will somehow, directly or indirectly, affect others in a positive or negative way. We would rather abstain from any action that will have a negative effect on others, and to diligently work and wisely correct those negative effects whenever possible.

4.3.2 While moral shame entails the understanding that our actions have effects upon others, moral fear arises from the notion that we are responsible for our actions—that we will ourselves face the consequences of our deliberate acts (karma). We are accountable for our actions.

By “**fear**” here is meant a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) that we have created or allowed the arising of conditions that do not conduce to our spiritual growth. This is not a “fear of God.” For, if this were the case—that God is the ultimate will behind man—then, man cannot be responsible for his actions.²³ However, when we accept self-responsibility, we are likely to be more restrained and judicious regarding our actions.²⁴

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²¹ On the Chinese notion of “face,” see eg, Michael Harris Bond (ed), *The Psychology of the Chinese People*, Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 1986:225 f, 243-249, 280 f, 286 f. See also **Pindolya S** (A 3.40), SD 28.9a (3.4).

²² On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

²³ See for example **Titth’āyatana S** (A 3.61.3/1:174) and **Bhūridatta J** (J 543/6:208).

²⁴ On moral shame & moral fear, see SD 2.5.

The Discourse to the People of Bamboo Gate

S 55.7

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] by stages²⁵ in Kosala country with a large community of monks and, in due course, arrived at the brahmin village of Veḷu,dvāra [Bamboo Gate].

A. THE DHARMA TEACHING FOR SELF-APPLICATION

The Buddha visits Veḷu,dvāra

2 The brahmin houselords²⁶ of Veḷu,dvāra heard that:

“It is said, sirs, that the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son who went forth from the Sakya clan, has been wandering in Kosala with a large community of monks and has come to Veḷu,dvāra.

Concerning this Blessed One, this fair report has been spread about:²⁷

‘So, too, is he the Blessed One:²⁸ for, he is²⁹

arhat,
fully self-awakened one,
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
well-farer,
knower of worlds,
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,³⁰
teacher of gods and humans,
awakened,
blessed.

²⁵ “Wandering...by stages,” *cārikam caramāno*, lit “walking the walk,” ie, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering to the people. See n ad loc in **Tevijja S** (D 13,1/1:235), SD 1.8.

²⁶ *Brāhmaṇa,gahapatikā*, also spelt as *brāhmaṇa,gahapati*, which is invariably a collective term, never an individual, ie, the landed community of the brahmin villages (*brāhmaṇa,gāma*) or fiefs (*brahma,deya*) as a whole. This classification is based on land-ownership (ie their economic function), who nonetheless still identified with the larger priestly class. As such, individually, they (such as Kūṭa,danta, Caṅkī, etc) are still referred to simply as *brāhmaṇa*. See Chakravarti 1987:72 f.

²⁷ For details on this **Buddhānussati**, see SD 15.7b.

²⁸ Alt tr: “For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]...” On the meaning of *iti pi so*, see CPD: **ḷiti**: ...*kitti-saddo abbhuggato*: “~ *pi so bhagavā*: *arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho*...” (“for the following reasons, too, he is a *bhagavā*: because he is *arahaṃ*...”), V 3:1,13 = D 1:49,27 = M 2:133,22 = S 1:219,31 = A 3:312,8, qu Vism 198,4 and MahvṬ 26,11 (VA 112,4 = DA 146,5 ≠ Vism 198,8: *so bhagavā ~ pi arahaṃ ~ pi sammāsambuddho*, ...*iminā ca iminā ca kāraṇenā ti vuttam hoti*). Translating *iti pi so* this way explains the double occurrence of Bhagavā. See L S Cousins, “Review of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*,” in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4, 1997: 165.

²⁹ The Skt parallel to this opening reads: *Iti hi sa bhagavāṃ tathāgato*, but *tathāgato* here is missing from the Pali version. See **Dhajagga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5 Intro (2) & n. On this tr, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

³⁰ **Purisa,damma sārathī**. Here *-damma* (adj) is grd, meaning “to be tamed or restrained,” often spoken of a young bullock (M 1:225, *bala,gāvā damma,gāvā*, “the strong cattle and cattle to be tamed,” ie, bulls and young steers); also of other animals: *assa,damma,sārathī*, a horse trainer (A 2:112); It 80. In *purisa,damma sārathī*, fig (“the trainer of the human steer”) of unconverted persons, likened to refractory bullocks; D 1:62 (wr *-dhamma*) = 2:93 = 3:5; M 2:38; A 2:112; Vv 17.13; cf VvA 86.

Having realized, by his own direct knowledge, this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people, he makes it known to others.

He teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.³¹

It is good to see such arhats.³² [353]

3 Then the brahmin householders of Veḷu,dvāra went up to the Blessed One.

Some greeted the Blessed One, and sat down at one side; some exchanged greetings with the Blessed One, and then sat down at one side; some having saluted the Blessed One with lotus palms, sat down at one side; some announced their name and clan before the Blessed One, and then sat down at one side.³³ Some kept silent and sat down at one side.³⁴

A Dharma teaching for self-application

4 Sitting thus at one side, the brahmin householders of Veḷu,dvāra said to the Blessed One:

“Master Gotama, we have such desires, such wishes, such hopes:

‘May we dwell in a home crowded with children!

May we enjoy Kāsī sandalwood!

May we wear garlands, scents and make-up!

May we enjoy gold and silver [using jewelry and money]!³⁵

When the body breaks up, after death, may we be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.³⁶

As we have such desires, such wishes, such hopes, may master Gotama teach us the Dharma in such a way

that we might dwell in a home crowded with children,

that we might enjoy Kāsī sandalwood,

we might wear garlands, scents and make-up,

that we might enjoy gold and silver [using jewelry and money],

that when the body breaks up, after death, may we be reborn in good destination, in a heavenly world.”

5 “I will teach you, householders, **a Dharma teaching for self-application.**³⁷ Listen, pay close attention. I will speak.”

³¹ This para is part of the renunciation pericope: for refs, see (Ānanda) Subha S (D 10,1.7) n, SD 40a.13. For an explanation of this Dharma pericope, see SD 40a.1 (8.1.2).

³² *Sādhū kho pana tathā,rūpānaṃ arahataṃ dassanaṃ hotī ti*: V 3:1,21; D 1:88,2; Sn p103,16. Here *arahataṃ* is pl gen.

³³ The desire to have one’s name announced to a holy person appears to have been a part of pre-Buddhist devotional practice of seeing (*dassana*; Skt *darśana*) a holy person. In **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), eg, we have the Mallas being announced to the Buddha, thus: “Bhante, the Malla named so-and-so with his children, with his wife, with his servants, with his companions, pay homage with their heads at the Blessed One’s feet” (D 16,22.1/ 2:148). It is customary that those well-disposed to the Buddha would announce their names when visiting him. This passage here and others in the Pali Canon indicate that it was quickly adopted by the Indian Buddhists. It continued in the Buddhist custom of having the donor’s name inscribed in bas-reliefs near or on a stupa, even in locations where the name would not be directly visible to human eyes.

³⁴ *App’ekacce tuṅhī,bhūtā ekam antaṃ nisīdimsu*. No counterpart in Chin Āgamas, but cf Skt fragment 3v2: *apy ekatyā bhagavataḥ saṃtike svakasvakāni mātā,pitrkāni nāma,gotrāni anuśrāvayitvā ekatamaṃte niśīdimsu* (Hartmann 2002:4, parallel to M 95), as in Divyāvadāna 33: *apy ekatyā bhagavataḥ purataḥ svakasvakāni mātā,pitrkāni nāma,gotrāni anuśrāvyaikānte niśannāḥ* (Divy Cowell 1886:619,2) & in Mahāvastu: *apy ekatyā bhagavato svakasvakāni mātā,pitrkāni nāma,gotrāni anuśrāvayitvā ekamante niśīdensuḥ* (Senart 1897 3.443,20 or in Basak 1968:266); cf Skilling, *Mahāsūtras* 1, 1994:128 n9. See also Analayo 2011:452 (on M 81). On “kept silent” as social or emotional distance, see SD 44.1 (2.2); also see **Love**, SD 38.4 (6.3).

³⁵ The 5 wishes above form a well known stock (in a single passage): see **Dhamma,dinna S** (S 55.53,4), SD 46.4.

³⁶ Cf **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,1/4:281) for a parallel passage.

“Yes, bhante,” the brahmin householders of Veḷu,dvāra replied in assent to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said:

“What, householders, is the Dharma teaching for self-application?”

B. TRAINING OF BODY AND SPEECH

(1) Respect for life

6 “Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die; who desires happiness, who dislikes suffering.

Since I am one who wishes to live and does not wish to die, who desires happiness and dislikes suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.³⁸

Now, if I were to take the life of another—of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who desires happiness, who dislikes suffering—that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me [354] is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF BODILY CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,

he himself abstains	from destroying life,
he exhorts others to abstain	from destroying life, and
he speaks in praise of abstaining	from destroying life. ³⁹

Thus, his bodily conduct is purified in three respects.⁴⁰

(2) Respect for the not-given

7 Furthermore, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to take from me what I have not given, that is, to steal⁴¹ from me, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to take from another what he has not given, that is, to steal from him, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF BODILY CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,

he himself abstains	from taking the not-given,
he exhorts others to abstain	from taking the not-given, and

³⁷ *Attūpanāyikaṃ dhamma,pariyāyam*. A teaching that one, having applied to oneself, should apply to others (S Porāṇa Ṭīkā). This teaching comprises the first 7 of the 10 courses of wholesome action, each practised in 3 ways: *by observing them oneself, by exhorting others to observe them, and by praising such actions* (S:B 2000:1955 n328). This “personal teaching” evidently refers to a spiritual lifestyle conducive to the attainment of streamwinning.

³⁸ This is the locus classicus for the “golden rule”: see Intro (1).

³⁹ “[H]e himself abstains from harming life, exhorts others to abstain from harming life,” that is, one keeps the precepts oneself and encourages others to do the same: this is “one who lives both for his own good and for the good of others,” **Atta,hita S 1** (A 4.96/2:96 f), SD 64.6; **Atta,hita S 4** (A 4.99/2:98 f), SD 64.9. “[He] speaks in praise of abstaining from harming life” refers to spiritual friendship and the practice of altruistic joy (*muditā*).

⁴⁰ See prec note.

⁴¹ For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.8/1:286 & 41.12/1:287), SD 5.7.

he speaks in praise of abstaining from taking the not-given.
Thus, his bodily conduct is purified in three respects.

(3) Respect for the body

8 Furthermore, houselords, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to have sexual intercourse with my wives,⁴² that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to have sexual intercourse with the wives of another, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF BODILY CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,

he himself abstains	from sexual misconduct,
he exhorts others to abstain	from sexual misconduct, and
he speaks in praise of abstaining	from sexual misconduct.

Thus, his bodily conduct is purified in three respects.

(4) Respect for truth

9 Furthermore, houselords, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to damage my welfare with false speech,⁴³ that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to damage the welfare of someone else with false speech, [355] that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF VERBAL CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,

he himself abstains	from false speech,
he exhorts others to abstain	from false speech, and
he speaks in praise of abstaining	from false speech.

Thus, his verbal conduct is purified in three respects.

(5) Respect for harmony

10 Furthermore, houselords, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to divide me from my friends by divisive speech,⁴⁴ that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to divide someone else from his friends by divisive speech, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

⁴² *me dāresu*, lit. “with my womenfolk.” By extension and natural adaptation, this applies today to “spouses or partners.” For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,8/1:286 & 41.12/1:287 f), SD 5.7.

⁴³ For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,9/1:286 & 41.13/1:288), SD 5.7.

⁴⁴ For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,9/1: 286 & 41.13/1:288), SD 5.7.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.
How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF VERBAL CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,
 he himself abstains from divisive speech,
 he exhorts others to abstain from divisive speech, and
 he speaks in praise of abstaining from divisive speech.
 Thus, his verbal conduct is purified in three respects.

(6) Respect for proper speech

11 Furthermore, houselords, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to address me with harsh speech,⁴⁵ that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to address someone else with harsh speech, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF VERBAL CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,
 he himself abstains from harsh speech,
 he exhorts others to abstain from harsh speech, and
 he speaks in praise of abstaining from harsh speech.
 Thus, his verbal conduct is purified in three respects.

(7) Respect for useful speech

12 Furthermore, houselords, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘If someone were to address me with frivolous talk and idle chatter,⁴⁶ that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to me.

Now, if I were to address someone else with frivolous talk and idle chatter, that would be neither desirable nor agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too.

How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

THREEFOLD PURITY OF VERBAL CONDUCT

Having reflected thus,
 he himself abstains from frivolous talk and idle chatter,
 he exhorts others to abstain from frivolous talk and idle chatter, and
 he speaks in praise of abstaining from frivolous talk and idle chatter.
 Thus, his verbal conduct is purified in three respects.

⁴⁵ For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,9/1: 286 & 41.13/1:288), SD 5.7.

⁴⁶ For def, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,9+13), SD 5.7.

C. THE LIMBS OF A STREAMWINNER⁴⁷(1) Faith in the Buddha.

13 He has wise faith⁴⁸ in the Buddha, thus:
 ‘So, too, is he the Blessed One: for, he is⁴⁹
 arhat,
 fully self-awakened one,
 accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
 well-farer,
 knower of worlds,
 peerless guide of persons to be tamed,
 teacher of gods and humans,
 awakened,
 blessed.’ [356]

(2) Faith in the Dharma

14 He has wise faith in the Dharma [the True Teaching], thus:
 ‘Well-taught is the Blessed One’s Dharma,
 visible here and now,
 having nothing to do with time,
 inviting one to come and see,
 accessible,
 to be personally known by the wise.’⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Sotāpannessa aṅga*: see **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70), SD 3.3. The limbs for streamwinning (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*) (ie factors conducive to becoming a streamwinner) are: association with true persons, hearing the True Teaching, wise attention and practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma: see **(Sotāpatti) Phala S** (S 55.55/5:410 f; A 5.246/2:245).

⁴⁸ *Avecca, pasāda*, that is, faith through understanding; synonymous with *ākāra, vati saddhā*, faith founded on seeing. There are 2 kinds of faith: (1) “rootless faith (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170,21); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,⁸ 401,²³). M 1:401 AA 3/227 DhA 1/72 5/81 UA 369 (all Se). *Amūlika* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy).

⁴⁹ The Skt parallel to this opening reads: *Iti hi sa bhagavāṃ tathāgato*, but *tathāgato* here is missing from the Pali version. See **Dhajajga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5 Intro (2). On this tr, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

⁵⁰ *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akālika ehi, passiko opanayiko paccattaṃ vedītabbo viññūhī ti* (M 7.6/1:37; A 6.10.3/3:285). The Dharma is something that can be seen for oneself (*sandiṭṭhika*); that can be known immediately (*akālika*); that it entails personal verification (*ehi, passika*); that it is accessible (*opānāyika*); that it is to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattaṃ vedītabbo viññūhī*). “The terms all highlight, not the intrinsic nature of the Dhamma, but its relation to human knowledge and understanding. They are all epistemological in import, not ontological; they are concerned with how the Dhamma is known, not with the temporal status of the known.” (Bodhi, 1998 §27/p31 digital ed). Bodhi also notes that “the common rendering of [*opānāyiko*] as ‘leading onward’ seems difficult to justify either on etymological grounds or by reference to the texts. The Commentaries take it as an implicit gerundive, *upanetabba*, ‘to be brought near, to be drawn close to.’ Hence ‘accessible’ may be the English word that best captures the intended sense. (See *Vism* 7.83 f.)” (Bodhi op cit n44). On the tr of this passage, see *Brahmavaṃso*, 2003b:59-62.

(3) Faith in the Sangha

15 He has wise faith in the Sangha, thus:⁵¹

‘The Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to	the good way;
the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to	the straight way;
the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to	the right way;
the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to	the proper way. ⁵²

These four pairs of persons, the eight individuals,
are this Blessed One’s community of disciples:

worthy of offerings,⁵³
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of gifts,⁵⁴
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,
a supreme field of merit for the world.’

(4) Accomplishment in moral virtue

16 He has the virtues dear to the noble ones—unbroken, untorn, unblemished, untarnished, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished,⁵⁵ leading to mental concentration.⁵⁶

D. THE BENEFITS

Streamwinning

17 When, houselords, the noble disciple has these seven virtuous qualities and these four desirable states, if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself:

‘Destroyed is hell for me! Destroyed is the animal birth! Destroyed is the realm of the departed!
Destroyed is the plane of misery, the bad bourn [destination], the lower realm! A streamwinner am I, no longer bound for the lower world,⁵⁷ sure of going over to self-awakening!’⁵⁸

⁵¹ M 7,7/1:37; A 6.10,4/3:286.

⁵² These seem to be an abrupt break here, with the mention of “These four pairs of persons...” which seems to refer back to some missing passage, which evidently is found in the Skt version: see Intro 3: Saṅghānusr̥ti & **Aṭṭha,puḅḅala S 1** (A 4:292 = D 33,3.1(3)/3:255), SD 15.10a(1).

⁵³ *Āhuneyyo*. That is, worthy of receiving sacrifices or offerings. The Skt cognate *āhavanīya* refers to that which was offered as an oblation as in *āhuneyy’aggī*, one of the 3 brahminical sacrificial fires (the one in the east).

⁵⁴ *Dakkhiṇeyyo*. Specifically refers to offerings made for the benefit of the departed by way of dedication of merits to them.

⁵⁵ *Aparāmaṭṭhehi*, “untarnished,” ie, unsmirched by craving and wrong view (DA 537); alt tr, “unattached to” on account of craving or wrong view.

⁵⁶ Found in almost all of the preceding 6 suttas in the Veḷudvāra chapter and also in the Mahānāma S (A 3:286). Explained at Vism 7.101-106/221 f. The noble ones do not break any of the 5 precepts even when they are reborn into a new existence; hence, these virtues are dear to them. See also **Virtue ethics**, SD 18.11(2.2).

⁵⁷ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggatī*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 destinies or courses (*pañca,gaṭī*) (D 33,2.1/3:234, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal kingdom (*tirachāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first 3 are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugatti*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

⁵⁸ *Khīṇa,nirayo’ mhi khīṇa,tiracchāna,yoni khīṇ,petti,visayo khīṇ’āpāya,duggatī,vinīpāto, sotāpanno’ham-asmi avinīpāta,dhammo niyato sambodhi,parāyaṇō ti*. D 2:93 f; S 2:68, 70, 71, 5:356, 357-360, 387, 389; A 3:211, 213, 4:405, 407 f, 182, 184.

The houselords take refuge

18 When this was said, the brahmin houselords of Veḷudvāra said:

“Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, master Gotama! Just as if one

were to place upright what had been overturned,

were to reveal what was hidden,

were to show the way to one who was lost, or

were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,

in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made known by master Gotama.

We go to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge, from this day forth, for life.”

— evaṃ —

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