(Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta
The Discourse to Saṅgārava | M 100
Theme: Do gods exist?
Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Saṅgārava

1.1 Brahmin youth. The Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (DPPN) gives seven Saṅgārava Suttas. It is possible that the different Saṅgāravas of these sutras were brothers. The Saññiyutta Commentary says that the Dhanañjānī clan was reputed to be the highest of the brahmin clans. They believed that while other brahmins had been born from Brahma’s mouth, they themselves had issued from the top of his head. The brahminess Dhanañjānī was a stream-winner, but her husband was staunchly opposed to the Buddha’s teaching and would block his ears whenever she spoke in praise of the Three Jewels (SA 1:226).

In our sutta, Saṅgārava, a learned brahmin youth (mānava) of Caṇḍala,kappa, very likely the same learned brahmin youth of the (Nivaraṇa) Saṅgārava Sutta (S 46.55). Buddhaghosa says that Saṅgārava was the youngest of the Saṅgārava brothers of Dhanañjānī’s husband (MA.2:808). One day, Saṅgārava sees the brahminess Dhanañjānī (his sister-in-law), who having stumbled and fallen down, exclaims three times, “Homage to the Buddha, the arhat, the perfect self-awakened one!” He faults her for extolling a shaving monk in this manner. However, when she tells him of the Buddha’s marvellous qualities, he feels a desire to meet him.

Later, when the Buddha comes to Caṇḍala,kappa and stays in Todeyya’s mango grove, Dhanañjānī informs Saṅgārava who visits him and questions him on his (the Buddha’s) views on brahmins. The Buddha replies that he has great regard for brahmins who have here and now won the goal, having independently discovered for themselves the Dharma unheard before, of which he himself is one.

1.2 Dhanañjānī Sutta (S 7.1). The opening of the Saṅgārava Sutta [§2] is also found in the Dhanañjānī Sutta (S 7.1/1:160), where the name is spelt Dhanañjānī. In the Dhanañjānī Sutta, however, she makes this inspired utterance before 500 brahmins, whom her husband has invited for a banquet. On the previous day, her husband, the brahmin Bhāradvāja, had pleaded with her not to disgrace him by praising the Buddha before his peers. When Dhanañjānī stumbles over a stack of firewood while serving food to the brahmins, she then kneels down and the inspired utterance honouring the Buddha. Scandalized, the brahmins reviled her husband and walked out without even finishing their meal.

The exasperated Bhāradvāja then tells Dhanañjānī that he is going to humiliate the Buddha by refuting his doctrine. He meets the Buddha and throws his challenge:

613 Having slain what one sleeps happily?
Having slain what does one not sorrow?
What is that one thing,
O Gotama, whose killing you approve of?

614 Having slain anger, one sleeps happily.
Having slain anger, one sorrows not.
Anger, with its poisonous root

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1 See (Nivaraṇa) Saṅgārava S (S 46.55), SD 3.12 (2). Se (M:Se 2:667 = 13/667/724) gives the title as Saṅgārava S, and reads Saṅgārava throughout.
2 See (Nivaraṇa) Saṅgārava S (S 46.55), SD 3.12 (1).
3 A village (gama). Be, MA 3:450 cancāli,kappa; Ce maṇḍala,kappa; Ee caṇḍala,kappa; Ke Se paċcāla,kappa. For other vīl, see Ee 2:209 n8.
4 See SD 3.12 (2003).
5 The suttas mention Saṅgārava (M 100/2:209-213) & Asur’indaka (S 7.3/1:163 f) as his younger brothers. Comy adds that he is the eldest of the Bhāradvājas, and brother of Akkosaka Bhāra, dvāja, who also joins the order and becomes an arhat (S 7.2/1:161-164; SA 1:229; MA 3:452), as do the younger brothers, Sundarika (Sn 3.4; S 7.9) and Pīṅgala(ka) Bhāra, dvāja (S 1:164) (MA 3:452). See Sundarika Bhāra, dvāja S (Sn 3.4), SD 22.2 (1).
And honeyed shoot, O brahmin,
their killing, the noble ones praise:
for having slain them, one sorrows not.  (S 7.1/1:161 = 1.71 = 2.3)

Bhāradvāja is impressed, takes refuge and asks for admission into the Order. In due course, he becomes an arhat. (SA 1:226-228).

Apparently, the brahminic Dhānañjānī is in the habit of making the inspired utterance. As such, the narrative here could be a separate incident, or it could be on the same occasion as the Saṁyutta narrative.

2 Types of recluses and brahmins

2.1 TYPES OF HOLY MEN. In the Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100), we find the Buddha classifying holy persons before and during his time in terms of their ways of knowing in three classes [§7], namely:6

1) The traditionalists (amussavikā), who, on the basis of oral tradition, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The traditionalists derive their knowledge and claims wholly from divine revelation, scriptural tradition and interpretations based on it. Prominent amongst the traditionalists are the brahmins who upheld the authority of the Vedas.7

2) The reasoners and inquirers [metaphysicians and speculators] (takkī vīmaṃsī), who, speculate entirely on the basis of mere faith. Using reasoning and speculating to reinforce that faith, they proclaim their dogmas and ideas. The reasoners derive their knowledge and claims through reasoning and speculations without any claim to extrasensory perception. The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas come under this class. [§2.1]

3) The experientialists, who, in things not heard before, having directly known the Dharma for themselves (sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya),8 proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The experientialists depend on direct personal knowledge and experience, including extrasensory perception on the basis of which their theories are founded. Many of the thinkers of the middle and late Upaniṣads, some of the Ājīvakas and Jains can be put in this class. The materialists, as empiricists (those who advocate reality as known only through personal experience, that is, the senses), may also be classed here, “if not for the fact that they denied the validity of claims to extrasensory perception.”9 The Buddha declares himself to be a teacher in this category.10

The categories here are clearly based on the model of the three types of wisdom (paññā) mentioned in the Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) and the Vibhaṅga (Vbh 324), that is, namely:

- (1) wisdom arising through listening (suta, maya paññā), i.e., received wisdom, academic learning;
- (2) wisdom arising through thinking (cinta, maya paññā), i.e., reflective or philosophical wisdom;
- (3) wisdom arising through cultivation (bhāvanā, maya paññā), i.e., spiritual wisdom, gained through mental development. (D 33,1.10(43)/210; Vbh 324)

The three classes of holy persons are not rigid or mutually exclusive categories, but reflect tendencies found in the respective groups of seers and teachers. The traditionalists, for example, sometimes gave a place to perception and reason. While the materialists did away with scripture, the reasoners of the early Upaniṣads did not entirely do so. The Ājīvakas and later the Jains, too, held their scriptures in high regard.

6 Much of the nn here are taken from Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, 1963, which discusses them in greater detail (esp ch 4).
7 See eg Cāṇki S (M 95.10-15/1:168-171), SD 21.15.
8 This phrase, notes Bodhi, “emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life.” (M:NB 1304 920).
10 M 100.7/2:211.
The experientialists of the middle and late Upaniṣads similarly had very little place for scripture but did not discard reason altogether.

“So what we can claim for this grouping,” concludes Jayatilleke, “is that when we consider the epistemological standpoints of these groups as a whole, the essential or final knowledge claimed by them is said to be derived mainly if not wholly from each of the sources of knowledge emphasized by each group.” (1963:170).

The Buddhist criticism of the traditionalist notions of divine revelation and related views are found in the Cāṇḍikā Sutta (M 95), where the key passage says:

There are five things, Bhāradvāja, that may turn out in two different ways here and now. Now something may be fully accepted out of faith (saddhā), yet it may be empty, hollow and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true and unmistaken. Again, something may be fully approved of (ruci)…well handed down through the oral/aural tradition (anusava)...we thought out (ākāra,parivitakka)...well reflected upon (diṭṭhi, nijjhānakkhanti), yet it may be empty, hollow and false; but something else may be not well reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true and unmistaken.

As such, it is not proper for a wise man, safeguarding the truth, to come to the definite conclusion, “Only this is true, everything else is wrong.” (M 95,14/2:16 f)

The Sandaka Sutta (M 76) similarly says:

Again, Sandaka, here some teacher is a traditionalist, one who regards the oral tradition (anusava) as truth. He teaches a Dharma by oral tradition, by legends handed down, by what is handed down in the scriptures. But when a teacher is a traditionalist, one who regards the oral tradition as truth, some is well handed down and some badly handed down, some is true and some otherwise. (M 76,24/1:520)

The Sandaka Sutta (M 76) further criticizes the theories of the reasoners, based on reasoning (takka) or logical argument (naya), thus:

Again, Sandaka, here a certain teacher is a reasoner, an inquirer [speculator]. He teaches a Dharma put together by reasoning, following a line of inquiry as it occurs to him. But when a teacher is a reasoner, an inquirer, some are well reasoned and some are wrongly reasoned, some are true and some otherwise. (M 76,27/1:520)

2.2 REASONING AND SPECULATING THROUGH MERE FAITH. The Sutta’s definition of the second kind of holy men may appear confusing at first, as it suggests that those who rely on faith make use of reasoning and thinking:

Bhāradvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith (kevālaiṃ saddhā, mattakesa), proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. Such are the reasoners and investigators. [§7(2)]

As Bodhi, in his Majjhima translation, notes,

It is puzzling that the reasoners and investigators (takki, vimanisi) are here said to rely on the basis of mere faith (saddhā, mattakena). Elsewhere faith and reasoning are contrasted as two different grounds of conviction (M 95,14), and “mere faith” seems more closely allied with reliance on oral tradition than with reasoning and investigation.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^\text{11}\) M:NB 1304 n919. See Sandaka S (M 77,27-29/1:520).
Indeed, in a number of suttas, faith (saddhā) and investigative reasoning (ākāra.parivitakka, or investigation and reasoning) are two of the five sources of knowledge. As such, it would be curious to find these two, listed as distinct varieties of knowing (as faith and reasoning would be mutual opposites), to be used in the same expression.

The confusion is unjustified when we look at the Brahma,țjala Sutta (D 1.14), where the synonymous expression, “reasoners and investigators” (takkī hoti vimānasi), listed as the fourth kind of eternalist and the fourth kind of partial-eternalist. The other grounds for eternalist views are listed as direct experience (that is, the memories of the past life in the Brahma world). Analayo says:

As the exposition of the grounds for eternalist views is meant to be comprehensive, the Brahma,țjala Sutta’s presentation entails that all those who hold an eternalist view do so either based on direct experience or else based on “thinking and reasoning.” Thus all those who have faith in an eternal god without having had a direct experience of this god would fall under the category “thinking and reasoning.” Hence in the eyes of the early Buddhists “faith” and “thinking and reasoning” may not have been as different from each other as one may at first sight have assumed, in the sense that thinking and reasoning may turn out to be merely tools to rationalize beliefs.

(A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya (draft), 2005, at M 2:211)

3 Saṅgārava Sutta highlights

3.1 A case of arctic hysteria (latah)? The Sutta opens with a curious incident of the brahminee Dhānañjāṭhā stumbling and uttering “an inspired utterance” [§2]. For some, this clearly hints at a case of arctic hysteria, startle matching, or latah, which is a culture-specific syndrome of hypersensitivity or severe reaction to sudden fright resulting in a dissociative or trance-like behavior, where they lose control of their behavior, mimic the speech (echolalia) and actions (echopraxia) of those around them and obey any commands (command obedience) given them. Latahs are generally not considered responsible for their actions during these episodes.

Arctic hysteria is also the name for those with the condition, which is found, in Malaysia, mainly in middle-aged women. As a culture-specific syndrome, it is has various names: amurakh, irkunii, ikota, olan myriachit, and menkeiti (Siberian groups); baah-ji (Thailand); imu ( Ainu & Sakhalin, Japan); latah (Malaysia and Indonesia); mali-mali and silok (Philippines); piblokto (Unuit). However, it should be that in the various accounts of Dhānañjāṭhā, she would often consciously chant the udana, and they are often consistently uttered. Arctic hysteria or latah are involuntary and the words uttered are usually expletives and are not always consistent words. It should be noted that Dhānañjāṭhā is a stream-winner, a saint who is characterized with great faith. Even if she suffers from latah (which is no sign that she is less spi-
ritual), it is very mild and innocuous, probably an old reflex. Another well known case of arctic hysteria or latah is that of the woman shocked at seeing a monk in the dark of night by a lightning-flash, as recorded in the Lātukikopama Sutta (M 66).

3.2 An early life of the Buddha. The Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100) contains one of the most comprehensive canonical accounts of the Buddha’s life from the great renunciation to the great awakening (§§9-41), all of which are found elsewhere in the Canon:

1 The Bodhisatva’s disillusionment with the household life and subsequent renunciation of the world §§9-10 M 26,13-14 = M 36,12-13
2 Āḷara Kāḷāma §11 M 26,15 = M 36,14
3 Uddaka Rāmaputta §12 M 26,16 = M 36,15
4 “An agreeable spot” at Senānigama near Uruvelā §13 M 26,17 = M 36,16
5 Similes of the fire-sticks §§14-16 M 36,17-19
6 The Bodhisatva’s self-mortification §§17-27 M 36,20-31
7 Recalling the 1st dhyyana while father is “working” §28 M 36,31
8 Wholesome pleasure: the 4 dhyanas §§29-34 M 36,32-37
9 The great awakening §§35-41 M 36,38-44
10 (The knowledge of the destruction of the influxes) §39 D 2,97

Table 3.2 The Buddha’s early-life sutta parallels

| M 26 | Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta | SD 1.11 |
| M 36 | Mahā Saccaka Sutta | SD 49.4 |
| M 100 (Deva) | Saṅgārava Sutta | SD 10.9 |
| D 2 | Sāmaṇṇāphala Sutta | SD 8.10 |

3.32 Do gods exist? Saṅgārava then asks whether there are gods [§42]. The Buddha replies that “supergods” (adhidevā) do exist, so that, by implication, we can say that the gods or God do exist. The Buddha does not merely answer “yes” because, firstly, it is common knowledge that the masses believe in their existence. The subtle humour here is often missed: the deva not only means “god or God” (gods through rebirth, upapatti,deva) but also the rajah or king (gods by convention, sammuti,deva).

Secondly, and more importantly, he wants to impress on Saṅgāra that the existence of gods or God is neither useful nor necessary for the spiritual life, and that it is possible to rise above them and be “supergods” through our own spiritual liberation. The reference here is clearly to the arhats, the “gods through purity” (visuddhi,deva). As K R Norman puts it, the Buddha, “so far from conceding the existence of the brahanical devas as Saṅgārava presumed, was merely saying that there were in the world earthly princes who were by convention called devas, but there were others, Buddhas like himself, who were superior to these” (1977: 336). Saṅgārava is pleased and goes for refuge in the Three Jewels [§43].

For the rest of this Introduction [§§4-7], we will examine the question whether devas exists [§42]. The same question—whether devas exists—is asked in the Kaṇṇaka-t.thala Sutta (M 90), but there the Buddha, according to K R Norman, merely concedes that there are “super-gods” (adhidevā) by birth.

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18 See Anabhiriti S or Arati S (S 8.2), comprising Vaṅgīsa’s self-admonitions against his dissatisfaction (anabhiriti) with his teacher Nigrodha,kappa. The latter was a residential solitairian (vihāra,garuka)—he placed importance (garuka) on keeping to his cell—as soon as he returned from his alms-round, he would enter his cell and not emerge until evening or the next day. This disaffected Vaṅgīsa, but he quelled through self-admonition (S 1:186; SA 1:169 f). He also had doubts about Nigrodha,kappa’s awakening as he had seen him sleeping with his arms moving about involuntarily (hattha,kukkucca). Generally this was unbecoming of an arhat, but in his case it was an old habit (of no new karmic consequence). (S 8.2/1:186 f). See (Vaṅgīsa) Ananda S (S 8.4), SD 16.12 Intro.

19 M 66,6f/1:448 f @ SD 28.11.

20 For a more detailed collation, see SD 49.4 (Table 7).

21 The 3 kinds of “gods” (deva), see Nc 307; KhpA 123.

22 SD 10.8.
(upapatti, devā), “but he refuted (or rather, Ānanda, speaking on his behalf, refuted) the idea that their pre-eminent nature was of any importance” (M 90.14) (Norman 1981:154).23

4 Problem readings

4.1 In 1977, K R Norman wrote an interesting paper, “The Buddha’s view of devas” (1977),24 where he discusses the Saṅgārava Sutta. In 1981, Norman published another paper, “Devas and adhidevas in Buddhism” (1981),25 a piece of scriptural “detective work” by piecing together an acceptable reading for corrupt passages in the Kaṇṭaka-t, thala Sutta (M 90/2:125-133).26 Norman’s views have been summarized here and in the Introduction to the Kaṇṭaka-t, thala Sutta. He thinks that the existing editions and translations of Saṅgārava Sutta27 are unsatisfactory, and in this paper [1977] we will examine the relevant portion of the sutta [§14], in the hope of throwing new light upon it. Norman adds that

[t]he circumstances in which the brāhmaṇa Saṅgārava asks the Buddha about the existence of devas are not clear in the PTS edition of the sutta, for the details are omitted there and readers are merely referred back to a parallel passage in another sutta. In fact the question is asked immediately after the Buddha’s statement that devatās had approached him and shown him great concern about his weak condition during his pre-enlightenment ascetic stage. The purpose of Saṅgārava’s question can only be to ascertain the Buddha’s view on the eternal reality of devas, since the story he had told about the devatās necessarily implies that he admitted some sort of existence for them.

(Norman, “The Buddha’s view of devas,” 1977:331)

4.2 In this translation, I have rendered all the stock omissions (peyyāla) in full for easier reading and understanding. In our examination of the relevant section on the existence of gods (deva) [§14], we shall follow K R Norman’s prefixed Pāli text of §14 of the sutta (with Norman’s reconstructions in bold print):28

(A) kin nu kho, bho gotama, athhi devā ti.
(B) thānaso me taṁ [better m’etam], bhāra, dvāja, viditaṁ yaddi’an athhi (adhi)devā? ti
(C) kin nu kho, gotama, athhi devā ti puṭṭho samāno, thānaso me taṁ [better m’etam],
   bhāra, dvāja, viditaṁ yaddi’an athhi (adhi)devā ti vadesi29
(D) nanu, bho gotama, evam same tucchā musā hoti?
(E) athhi devā ti, bhāra, dvāja, puṭṭho samāno, athhi (adhi) devā ti yo vadeyya, thānaso viditā [better to omit viditā] me viditā ti yo vadeyya, atha khy-ettha viṇñā, purisena ekaṁsenā
   niṭṭhanā gantabbaṁ yaddi’an athhi devā ti.
(F) kīśa pana me bhavāmi gotama dākien’ eva na byākāsi ti
(G) ucce sammatāṁ kho etam, bhāra, dvāja, lokasaṁni yaddi’an aththi devā ti. (M 100,42/2:212 f)

4.3 Robert Chalmers’ translation (1927)

“No, are there gods?”

“I knew offhand there were gods.”

“Why do you give that answer to my question, Gotama? Is it not false and untrue?”

23 This question is examined in more detail in Kaṇṭaka-t, thala S (M 90) & SD 10.8 Intro.
26 M 90/2:125-133 = SD 10.8.
27 Norman refers to the PTS Pāli text and translations by R Chalmers (1927) and by I B Horner (1957). I have added the Nāṇamoli/Bodhi tr below.
28 Norman’s reconstruction is summarized in the next section.
29 Comy support this reconstruction with the gloss, devā pana adhidevā [vā atidevā] nāma, “devas are called superior devas” (MA 3:454).
“Anyone who, when asked if gods there be, answers that there are gods and that he knew offhand there were,—why, anyone of intelligence must come irresistibly to the conclusion that there are gods.”

“Why did you not make this clear at the outset, Gotama?”

“The world is loud in agreement that there are gods.”

( M:C 2:122 f)

4.4 1 B Horner’s translation (1957)

“But now, good Gotama, are there devas?”

“Certainly, Bhāradvāja, it is known to me that there are devas.”

“But why do you, good Gotama, on being asked is there are devas say that it is certainly known to you that there are devas? Even if this is so, good Gotama, is it not a vain falsehood?”

“If on being asked, Bhāradvāja, ‘Are there devas?’ one should say, ‘There are devas’ and should say: ‘Certainly they are known to me, then the conclusion to be reached by an intelligent person is indubitable, namely, that there are devas.”

“But why did not the revered Gotama explain this to me at the beginning?”

“It is commonly agreed in the world, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas.”

(M:H 2:401 f)

4.5 Ēnāmoli/Bodhi translation (1995, 2nd ed 2001)

“But how is it, Master Gotama, are there gods?”

“It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods.”

“But how is this, Master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods?’ If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”

“Bhāradvāja., when one is asked ‘Are there gods?’ whether one answers, ‘There are gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be the case [that there are gods],’ a wise man can draw the definite conclusion that there are gods.”

“But why didn’t Master Gotama answer me in the first way?”

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods.”

(M:NB 821)

4.6 In all these translations, the underlined passages clearly are puzzling. For when the Buddha is asked if there are devas, and he says that there are devas, then Bhāradvāja reply that his answer is false makes no sense. The Majjhima Commentary says that Saṅgārāva thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bhikkhu Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:NB 1304 n921).

4.7 M M J Marasinghe, in his God in Early Buddhism, notes the difficulties in the Buddha’s answer, and proposes a solution by taking thānaso to mean “on the spot,” “in a moment,” “in its causal occasion”—basically referring to the place of occurrence—as it is used elsewhere in the Canon. Applying this meaning to the sutta passage, he concludes that it means “in the above circumstance” or “in the above context,” that is, of the devatās approaching the Buddha (1974:126-129).

5 Views of Norman and of Analayo

5.1 NORMAN'S RECONSTRUCTION. K R Norman, disagreeing with Marasinghe, says

This interpretation does not seem entirely satisfactory, because it does not explain why the Buddha’s answer at first seemed to the questioner to be false, but was later accepted. I cannot see that thānaso has anything other than its usual meaning of “completely, certainly” here. The ending—so is not the ablative ending as PED supposes [sv thāna], but the adverbial suffix —so (Skt -śas). The word therefore means “from the point of view of place, basis,” ie “basically,” “fundamentally,” and then “completely, certainly.” The other usage with hetuso “causally” reflects the use of thāna in the sense of kāraṇa “cause.” Although the commentaries frequently explain thānaso as khaṇen’ eva “immediately, in a moment,” the aṭṭhakathā makes no comment here.

30 The German tr by K E Neumann, vol 2, Leipzig. 1900:649 f, closely resembles the English tr, and offers no help with the problem (Norman’s fn).
I should like to suggest that a pointer towards the solution of this problem lies in the variant reading adhidevā, which occurs in place of devā in Chalmer’s Burmese MS B throughout (according to his critical apparatus), and once in his Sinhalese MS S (in [G]). As will be seen below [1977:334], the athakatha includes the word adhidevā (or atidevā) in its commentary, which indicates the presence of the word somewhere in the sutta. The Burmese [Chattha Sangayanā] edition reads adhidevā in place of atthi devā in (B) and (C) [vol 2 p438]. According to this reading, when Saṅgārava asks, “atthi devā?”, the Buddha replies, “ṭhānaso m’ etam viditām yadidām adhidevā.” (Norman 1977:332 f)

Norman suggests that yadidām here should be followed by a finite verb to be—yadidām atthi—although not found neither in the Pāli-English Dictionary (sv ya) nor the Critical Pāli Dictionary (sv aya), nor could he “at present quote it from any text other than those mentioned here, although the usage with a verb is common.”

The usage with a verb seems to be an extension of the Sanskrit use of yad especially after verbs of saying, thinking etc, often introducing an oratio directa [direct speech] with or without iti. The use of the construction yadidām atthi with nīṭhān gantabbanthi in (E), with sammatan in (G), and with nātān in the tīkā’ s explanation of this, viz, nātām etam yadidām atthi devā, suggests that sentences (B) and (C) with viditām should also include atthi. This not only makes the construction consistent throughout the passage, but also enables us to give an explanation for the corruption which has crept into the text of the sutta and caused the whole problem.

(Norman 1977:333)

When we reconstruct (B) and (C) as viditām yadidām atthi adhidevā (or atidevā) (“superior devas”), following Norman’s suggestion, then “the corruption whereby atthi or adhi- disappeared in the different scribal traditions becomes intelligible (1977:333). Similarly, using the Commentaries and Majjhima Porāna Tīkā (ancient sub-commentary), Norman suggest that (E) should read: atthi adhidevā ti yo vadeyya, and that in (G) the reading atthi devā is correct.

I suggest therefore, that the text of the sutta should be corrected by changing atthi devā to atthi adhidevā in the three sentences (B), (C) and (E). It will be seen that the passage is then no longer puzzling. The Buddha is asked, “Do devas exist?” He replies, “I know for a fact that adhidevas exist.” Saṅgārava’s anger is understandable. Is the answer not off the point? The Buddha replies, “If anyone is asked if devas exist, and replies that super-devas exist, then anyone with sense can deduce that devas must exist (for super-devas are superior to them). Saṅgārava then asks why the Buddha did not say in the first place that devas exist. The Buddha answers that (it was unnecessary because) it is firmly accepted in the world that devas exist. Saṅgārava is satisfied with this reply.

(Norman 1977:335)

5.2 ANALAYO’S FINDINGS. Analayo, in his comparative study of the Majjhima Nikāya, however, finds that the Madhyama Āgama as preserved in the Chinese translations does not support Norman’s reconstructions of the Kannaka-ṭhala and the Saṅgārava Suttas. Both the Pali version and the Chinese

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31 Although in view of the [Chattha Saṅgayanā] edition’s readings it is possible that in some places adhidevā replaces atthi devā (Norman fn).
32 That is, MA 3:454,9-12; MA:Be (Chattha Saṅgayanā) 2:309; MAṬ (Porāna Tīkā) 2:200.
33 See Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, sv yad (Norman’s fn).
34 See §1 for the Pāli text and reconstructions.
35 Uce < Skt ucce. For the meaning see Monier-Williams, sv ucceais. I think that ucce is the correct reading, and the vl uccena, which is preferred by the Chattha Saṅgāyana ed, has entered the text from the gloss uccena saddena (Norman’s fn).
36 M 90.13/2:130,13.
Āgama\textsuperscript{37} version of the sutta presents rajah Pasenadi as simply asking if “there are devas”—\textit{atthi devā} (M 90.13) and 有梵耶\textsuperscript{38} you мне (M 212)—which leads Analayo to conclude:

Thus the Chinese version does not support the emendation to \textit{atthi adhideva} suggested by Norman [1981]. The same is also the case for M 90 at M 2:132,2: \textit{atthi Brahmā}, where MĀ 212 at T1.795a20 reads: 有梵耶 [\textit{yōu fàn ye}], thus not supporting Norman’s emendation to \textit{atthi adhibrahmaś}. While M 90 at M 2:132,26-29 reports king Pasenadi using the expressions \textit{adhideva} and \textit{adhibrahmaṇaṇaṁ} when expressing his appreciation of the Buddha’s replies, according to the corresponding passage at MĀ 212 at T1.795b9 Pasenadi did not refer to his discussion on devas at all, but in relation to the discussion on the Brahmās he again spoke of 有梵 [\textit{yōu fàn}]. This suggests that the Indic original based on which MĀ 212 was translated had in this instance the same wording as in the actual question earlier, a wording corresponding to \textit{atthi brahmaś} in Pāli.

(Analayo 2005 at M 2:130n)

6 Three types of devas

We now have to work out what the Buddha \textit{means} by his answer, “Certainly, Bhāra,dvāja, it is known to me to be the case, that there are \textit{<superior gods>}\textsuperscript{38} (\textit{thānaśo me’ tām, Bhāra,dvāja, vidītaṁ yad idam atthi adhi,devā tī}). Again here, Norman clarifies the problem:

It is, however, by no mean that the Buddha had in fact conceded the point which Saṅgārava, as a brāhmaṇa, had been seeking to make. In the first place, when giving the answer, “I know that adhidevas exist,” he was doubtless referring to himself and other Buddhas, for in the Theragāthā the Buddha is called \textit{atideva} [Tha 489], and in the Culla Niddesa this is amplified to: Bhagavā sammuti-devānaṁ ca upapatti-devānaṁ ca visuddhi-devānaṁ ca devo ca atidevo ca devātidevo ca [Ne §307/173,16-18], while in the Anguttara-nikāya the Buddha’s \textit{nānadassana} is called \textit{adhi-deva-nānadassana} [A 4:304,23]. Moreover, although we do not find the tripartite division of \textit{sammuti}-, \textit{upapatti}-, and \textit{visuddhi}-devas in the first four nikāyas of the Pāli canon, its presence in the Khuddaka-nikāya shows that it is nevertheless old. It seems very probable that the Buddha’s use of the words in answer to Saṅgārava was well chosen, and the employment of \textit{sammatam} was a direct reference to a definition of \textit{deva} which included the word \textit{sammuti}.

(Norman 1977:335)

The Khuddaka Nikāya reference that Norman mentions, is evidently the Culla Niddesa, which speaks of \textbf{3 kinds of devas}, namely, devas by convention (\textit{sammati,devā}), devas by birth (\textit{upapatti,devā}) and devas by purity (\textit{visuddhi,devā}):

Who are devas by convention? Kings, princes, and queens: they are called devas by convention.

Who are devas by birth? The Four Great Kings [\textit{Cātum,mahārājā}], the 33 Devas [\textit{Tāvatīṁsa}], the Yāma devas, the Tūṣita devas, the devas who delight in creation, the devas who lord over the creations of others, the devas of Brahma’s Host, and devas beyond them: these are devas by birth [born devas, congenital devas].

Who are devas by purity? The Tathāgata’s disciples who are arhats whose mental influxes are destroyed and the pratyeka Buddhhas: these are devas by purity.

“The Blessed One is the deva beyond devas” (\textit{devātideva}) means that, by having known, weighed, recognized [judged], understood, and by having made clear, (knows) by superknowledge (\textit{abhiññā}), he is a superior deva (\textit{adhī,deva}) amongst conventional devas, by superknowledge he is “superior deva” amongst the devas by birth, by superknowledge he is “superior deva” amongst the devas of purity.

\textsuperscript{37} MĀ 212 = T1.794c8.

\textsuperscript{38} The words with \langle\text{angle brackets}\rangle\text{ refer to a corrected or preferred reading.}

\textsuperscript{39} See Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S (M 90), SD 10.8 (4) (2005) for Pāli text and further details.
If this interpretation is correct, then the Buddha, “so far from conceding the existence of the brahmanical devas as Saṅgārava presumed, was merely saying that there were in the world earthy princes who were by convention called devas, but there were others, Buddhas like himself, who were superior to these” (1977:336). On the other hand, in the Kaṇṇaka-t.thala Sutta (M 90), the Buddha merely conceded that there were “superior devas” (adhīdevā) by birth (upapatti, devā), “but he refuted (or rather Ānanda speaking on his behalf refuted) the idea that their pre-eminent nature was of any importance” (Norman 1981:154).

7 Saṅgārava’s question on the gods

7.1 The most interesting and puzzling passage in this sutta is perhaps §42 on Saṅgārava’s questioning whether gods exist, and the Buddha’s reply. The passage is here fully quoted:

42 When this was said, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said to the Blessed One:
“Steadfast⁴⁰ indeed is Master Gotama’s striving; of a true person⁴¹ is Master Gotama’s striving—just like that of an arhat, a fully self-awakened one!
But how is it, master Gotama, are there gods?⁴²
“Certainly, Bhārā, dvāja, it is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are (superior) gods.
“But how is this, master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘Are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are (superior) gods’? If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”⁴⁴
“Bhārā, dvāja, when one is asked, ‘Are there gods?’ [213] whether one answers, ‘There are (superior) gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be so,’ a wise man can draw the definite conclusion that there are gods.
“But then why didn’t master Gotama answer me so in the first place?”⁴⁵
“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhārā, dvāja, that there are gods.”⁴⁶ (M 100,42/2:212 f)

7.2 A number of scholars⁴⁷ have noted that it is curious that Saṅgārava should ask the Buddha this question since he is himself a devout and learned young brahmin before meeting the Buddha. After all, the Sutta recounts, it is on account of disapproving of the brahminic Dhānaṇājāni’s faith in the Buddha that he decides to confront the Buddha [§3]. Suttas that recount Saṅgārava’s brahminical background include:

(Udaka Sutta) Saṅgārava Sutta (S 7.21/1:182):
he undertakes ritual purification by washing in water;

⁴⁰ “Steadfast…striving,” atthita…padhānam, which should read atthita, padhānam. I B Horner that this is a tmesis (M:H 2:401 n3), i a separation of the parts of a cpd word by intervening word(s), eg “what things soever” (for “whatsoever things”). This occurs in Pāli as follows: (a) traces of the autonomy of preverbs: a jīha so vasi (Sadd 627,12-17); (b) insertion of ca, eva, su and forms of athi or bhavati after the first member of a nominal cpd (Sadd 202 n(e), 481 n12, 627 n13, 767,17-22, 781,7-11). See CPD 1:33* sv.
⁴¹ Horner also notes this as a tmesis (M:H 2:401 N 4).
⁴² Cf Kaṇṇaka-t.thala S (M 2:130 = SD 10.8; MA 3:359); also A 1:210, 3:287, 313, 316, 5:331, 334.
⁴³ On the preferred reading adhīdeva in the foll 3 paras, see Intro (3-5), esp (5) above.
⁴⁴ Ucce sammataṁ kha etam Bhāradvāja lokasmim yadidam athi devā ti. “Certainly,” ucce, “intensely, very much, emphatically” (CPD). Comy: uccaena saddena sammataṁ (vi sammā) pōkaṭaṁ matam lokasmim, “with a loud sound commonly agreed upon in the world” (MA 3:454). Comy says that Saṅgārava thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:NB 1304 n921).
⁴⁵ Kissa pana me bhavaṁ Gotamo ādiken’eva na vyākāsīti.
⁴⁶ On this apparently puzzling section, see Intro 7 above.
⁴⁷ Eg I B Horner, M 2:xx (1957); K R Norman, 1981; Analayo, A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikaya (draft), 2005 (study of M 100).
All this suggests that he is deeply involved in brahminical beliefs and practices, which makes it highly improbable that he would have doubted the existence of gods. As such, there is no reason that Saṅgārava would be questioning the Buddha on a widely held belief in ancient India, namely, the existence of gods.

7.3 Furthermore, in his autobiographical teachings, such as that which follows [§§9-41], the Buddha mentions the gods a number of times. Here is a list of the Buddha’s references to the devas in his autobiography:

- **Bhaya Bherava Sutta (M 4)**: A being not subject to delusion benefits many, bringing happiness to both gods and humans (M 4,21/1:21).
- **Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26)**: He relates how Brahmā Sahampati invites him to teach the Dharma (M 26,20-21/1:168 f), SD 1:11.
- **Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36)**: He relates how the devas intervene when he collapses during his self-mortification (M 36,26-27/1:244 f = M 100,23-24), SD 1.12.
- **Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100)**: He relates how Brahmā Sahampati invites him to teach the Dharma (M 100,23-24/2:212 = M 36,26-27), SD 10.9.

7.4 Sanskrit Version of the Sutta

7.4.1 Analayo, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikaya*, gives this helpful summary of the problem in the light of what we have the Sanskrit version of the Deva Saṅgārava Sutta:

> The Saṅgārava Sutta continues with an autobiographical account of the Buddha’s awakening. After this account, Saṅgārava asked the Buddha about the existence of devas. The Sanskrit fragments indicate that the discussion on devas occurred in their version at an earlier junction of events.

This difference results in quite a different dynamic of the discourse as a whole, as in the Sanskrit version the question on devas appears to have been the opening question of the discussion between Saṅgārava and the Buddha. Another fragment indicates that the discussion on the sources of knowledge formed the end of the Sanskrit discourse.

Based on these indications, the following sequence suggests itself: In reply to Saṅgārava’s inquiry about devas, the Buddha affirmed his knowledge of their existence. Such an affirmation would naturally lead over to an inquiry on what sources of knowledge the Buddha based himself.

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48 The PTS ed in M 100/2:212,14 mentions only the first 3 dhyanas in the account of the Buddha’s awakening, so that on following this presentation he did not develop the fourth dhyana before attaining the three higher knowledges. This is however merely a mistake in this ed, as the corresponding passages in M:Be 2:437; M:Ce 2:756 and M:Se 2:686 do mention the fourth dhyana. (Analayo’s fn)

49 M 100/2:212,25: athī deva? The corresponding Skt fragment, Hoernle fragm 149/Add.32 in Hartmann 1991:260 has preserved too little of this passage to allow verifying the emendation suggested by Norman 1977:333 to *atthi adhideva*. Norman 1985:150 suggests a similar emendation of the same question athī deva found in M 90/2:130,13, which is not born out by the corresponding Chinese version MĀ 212 = T1.794c8, whose phrasing corresponds to M 90: 有天耶. (Analayo’s fn)

50 Hartmann 1992:44 n87.

51 Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Re in Hartmann 1991:260 refers to the discussion on devas: *saññī dev[ā]s*, which it follows in the next line, Rf, by what appears to be the beginning of the discussion on ways of arriving at knowledge: *saññī bho gauta[mā e]jke śramana(b)ṛ(āḥmaṇāḥ)*. This indicates that the discussion on devas preceded the other topics discussed between Saṅgārava and the Buddha. (Analayo’s fn)

52 Cat no 165 fragm 26 V in SHT IV:200 has preserved parts of the discussion on the different sources of knowledge corresponding to M 100/2:211. The backside of the same fragment has however the beginning of another discourse. This suggests that the discussion on the different sources of knowledge stood at the end of the Skt version. (Analayo’s fn)
In reply, the Buddha would then have given an autobiographical account of his awakening as an exemplification of the fact that whereas others may base a claim to knowledge (among others about the existence of devas) on oral tradition or faith, what the Buddha said and taught was based on his personal realization. Thus from the perspective of the discourse as a whole, the dynamics proposed by the Sanskrit fragments yield a meaningful sequence.

(Analayo 2005 on M 2:212; reparagraphed)

7.4.2 The Buddha goes on to clarify to Saṅgārava that for him (the Buddha) the existence of devas is a matter of personal experience, not mere belief.\(^53\) Saṅgārava apparently misunderstands this reply and even thinks that the Buddha is speaking falsehood.\(^54\) The Buddha corrects Saṅgārava’s misunderstanding, saying that his reply is meant to affirm that there are devas.\(^55\) Analayo then concludes,

The rather strong reaction evinced by Saṅgārava would also seem to fit better to the beginning of their discussion, when Saṅgārava may still have had the feelings of disdain he had voiced earlier to the brahmin woman (M 2:213). The sequence suggested by the Sanskrit fragment would also more naturally lead up to Saṅgārava’s taking of refuge.

In the Pāli version, Saṅgārava’s decision to become a lay disciple comes at the end of the discussion on devas.\(^56\) As this discussion involves a misunderstanding that even caused Saṅgārava to wonder if the Buddha was speaking the truth, it comes a little surprising when right after this misunderstanding has been clarified Saṅgārava takes refuge. In contrast, it would seem more natural to imagine the same taking place at the end of a full account of the Buddha’s approach to awakening as a corroboration of the fact that what he taught was based on personal realization.

(Analayo 2005 on M 2:212)

7.5 The (Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta has no Chinese parallel. However, it has a Sanskrit version, which as we have noted [7.4] is considerably different from the Pali version. We are uncertain which school the

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\(^{53}\) M 100/42/2:212,26: thānas-o me taṁ...viditaṁ yadidaṁ ‘atthi devā ‘ti (M:Be 2:38 reads: yadidam adhidevā ‘ti) a reply Horner tr as: “certainly,…it is known to me that there are devas” (M 2:401) and Nānamoli/Bodhi tr as: “it is known to me to be the case [that there are gods]” (M:NB 82). Marasinghe discusses this passage and suggests it to mean that “in the above context…[he] have found that there are gods” (1974:127). The implications of the ablative thānas-o in the present passage remain unclear, as in other contexts thānas-o indicates that something happens “immediately” or “on the spot,” cf eg V 3:70,23; S 8.8/1:193,6; S 45.156/5:50,7; S 54.9/5:321,25; S 55.26/5:381,29; A 5.194/3:238,6; A 7.16/3:298,2; A 8.46/4:263,4; A 10.60/5:108,29. Yet such a meaning does not fit the present context, as it would make little sense for the Buddha to answer that he “immediately” or “on the spot” knew that there are devas. Perhaps thānas-o in the present context was in order to underline the expression vidita as a pointer to the personal realization of the Buddha. Perhaps the Buddha’s use of the word thānas-o in a somewhat unusual manner was what caused Saṅgārava’s misunderstanding. Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Rb+d in Hartmann 1991:260 reads: [tr]e [dā]nāṁ naikāṁśena vyā and yena na ekāṁśena vyākarosi samti devāḥ, indicating that in the Skt discourse, too, a similar misunderstanding took place. (Analayo’s fn, normalized)

\(^{54}\) M 100/42/2:212,30: “If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?” nanu ... evam santē tucchā musā hoti? According to Comy, “the young Brahmin spoke thinking ‘the perfectly awakened one declared this without knowing it,’” mānao ’samma-sambuddho ajānanto ’va pakasesitī saṅgārava āha (MA 3:454). This explanation would however not fit the Pāli version too well, as here the Buddha had already described his knowledge of the existence of devas in his autobiographical account. (Analayo’s fn)

\(^{55}\) According to M 100/42/2:213,2, the Buddha clarifies that on hearing his earlier statement “a wise man should draw the clear conclusion that there are devas,” atha kho thetā viniṭṭa, purissena ekaṁśena nithāma gantabbaṁ yadidam ‘atthi devā ‘ti, thereby implicitly suggesting that it was Saṅgārava’s lack of wisdom that has caused him to misunderstand the Buddha’s reply. (Analayo’s fn, normalized)

\(^{56}\) M 100/43/2:213,14. (Pāṭīhāriya) Saṅgārava S (A 3:60) also concludes with Saṅgārava taking refuge (A 3.60/-1.173,7). Horner (without knowing the Skt fragment) comments: “it is a little disconcerting to find Saṅgārava, at the end of this tremendous dissertation [ie, the autobiographical account of the Buddha’s awakening]...hurrying on to ask him if there were devas...I find the sudden introduction of this question about devas rather perplexing” (M 3:xx). (Analayo’s fn, normalized)
Sanskrit belongs to, but it is possible that it is the Mūla,sarvāstivāda. Even then, it is clear that this is a much later text than the Pali.

As such, we can safely surmise that the Sanskrit reflects a later development in the sutra compiler’s attitude towards the nature of the Indian gods. Of course, it might be possible that the Sanskrit version is a work based on an ancient text that was as old as the Pali or even older. This does change in any way affect our understanding the the early Buddhist attitude towards the gods. We can still accept that even in the discussion in the Sanskrit version, the Buddha is not declaring that the gods exists.

Here, the Buddha is only saying that, it is through his own direct knowledge, he knows of the existence of the gods. He does not, however, elaborate what kind of gods these were. In the Pali version, however, he does refer to them as adhiveka, “superior gods or supergods” [8.1.3]. This is of course of great significance, as we will see.

8 Do gods really exist?

8.1 SUPergods

8.1.1 The saints as gods. Apparently, from the reconstructed §42 (based on Norman’s findings) [7], the Buddha does not give any indication that gods exist. He is merely indicating the fact that the belief in gods is a popular notion. But what does the Buddha say here? He says that there are the “supergods” (adhiveka), the gods above the gods. They are the real “gods” (pure by realization), neither mythical nor theistic beings. They are the arhats, and more broadly, the other three kinds of saints: the non-returners, the once-returners, and the streamwinners.

8.1.2 The Buddha’s silence. What does the Buddha not say. He does not directly say there are no gods. This would be too big of a quantum leap for a congenital, and we might say professional, god-believer like the brahmin Saṅgārava, and like many of us today who simply cannot let go of the God-concept. There are those of us who still need our familiar security blanket like Linus van Pelt in the Christian-themed cartoon, Peanuts.

The Buddha gives a similar response to Vaccha,gotta when he asks about the abiding soul (attā; Skt ātman), as recorded in the (Ānanda) Vaccha,gotta Sutta (S 44.10). The Buddha remains silent, not answering Vaccha,gotta’s asking the “10 questions,” which include those concerning the soul. The Buddha rejects all notions and discussion on such a self as being unhelpful and unrelated to the spiritual goal.

8.1.3 A provisional answer. In the case of Saṅgārava’s question whether gods exist [§42], the Buddha does not remain silent, but does given a “provisional” (pariyāya) answer, here giving Saṅgārava “the benefit of the doubt.” The Buddha does not directly declare that there are gods. He says that there are “superior gods” or “supergods” (adhiveka). If we take the prefix adhi- and abhi- to be equivalent (at least here), then we can render adhiveka as “concerning the gods,” in the sense of doing what the gods would do, such as cultivating the divine abodes. In other words, it means that we can become god-like. Such a theme is important and common in the suttas.

If the Buddha were to affirm to Saṅgārava that gods exists, he would be going against his own teachings and entrenching Saṅgārava in his old brahminaltheistic beliefs strongly refuted in such discourses as the Te,vijja Sutta (D 13 = SD 1.8). If the Buddha were to give a straightforward denial of the existence of gods, Saṅgārava would probably be religiously traumatized by such a radical answer. So the Buddha gives him a provisional “middle way” answer that there are “superior gods.”

57 See Analayo 2011:10.
58 The comic strip is by Charles M Schulz, and first appeared in 1952. Linus is also the intellectual, philosopher and theologian of the comic strip, often quoting the Bible.
59 S 44.10/4-140 f = SD 2.16(5). Cf Aggi Vaccha,gotta S (M 72.7-14/1:484-486), SD 6.15.
60 See Silence and the Buddha, SD 44.1.
61 See Pariyāya Nippariyāya, SD 68.2.
62 For cases where adhi sometimes alternates with abhi-, see words beginning the abhi- in PED, CPD or DP.
63 See esp Te,vijja S (D 13.76-79 + 80-81), SD 1.8. Note esp the Buddha’s remarks in §§80-81 here and his criticism of the brahminal God-idea, §§12-36. For other related suttas and teachings, see Brahma,vihāra, SD 38.5 esp (1.2).

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Such an answer allows Saṅgārava (and those of us still holding on to a God-belief) a common ground to stand on—a ground that tolerates false notions or personal ideas, as it were—which, at the same time, prepares us for a higher or less theistic vision of personal divinity and selfless sainthood in due course.

8.2 The 5 Realms and Aliens

8.2.1 A mind-made universe? If we accept as a fact that the Buddha denies the existence of gods, that they are merely mythical figures used in didactic stories, and that they are not external realities but only our own mental constructions—how do we explain, for example, the sutta teaching on the 5 realms (pañca,gaṭi)—that is those of devas, humans, animals, pretas and hell-beings? Some scholars have suggested a few solutions, which are worth our consideration.

Rune Johansson, one of the pioneers of modern Buddhist psychology, for example, interprets the canonical passages on “the world” (loka) thus: “There is no independently existing world. The world is a dynamic process, constantly being produced and deliberately constructed by our senses, our thoughts and our desires.” This view would be correct if we only speak of the internal “world” of our thought-processes.

8.2.2 Independent worlds. However, it is clear from the early texts that the external world exists independent of our minds. For that reason, lightly put, if we were to close our eyes and walk around the room, we would stumble into some furniture, or the wall, or someone else. And if we were to go away from our home or country, it is still there when we return.

The Titthāyatana Sutta (A 3.61), for example, says, “Based on the six elements [earth, water, fire, air, space, consciousness], there is conception ['descent into the womb']” (A 3.61/1:176). In other words, says Peter Harvey in The Selfless Mind, the six elements “are seen as the basic ingredients for the production of a being in the womb, from the time of conception, before any active thoughts exist.”

Furthermore, the Saṅghī Sutta (D 33) speaks of three kinds of physical form (rūpa), here summarized with the Dhamma,saṅgānī’s explanation within [square brackets]:

(1) visible and reacting [resisting] (sanidassana sappatīgha) [the sphere of visible objects];
(2) invisible and reacting [resisting] (anidassana sappatīgha) [the spheres of the other four physical sense-objects, and the five [sic] physical sense-organs];
(3) invisible and non-reacting [non-resisting] (anidassana appatīgha) [the remaining aspects of physical form, such as the faculties of femininity and masculinity and life, all of which are included in the sphere of mind-objects].

This shows that early Buddhism accepted that there were types of “material form” [rūpa] that could not be known by the physical senses, but only by the mind. The only way that one can differentiate such a thing from a pure fantasy, as an object of mind, is to say that it exists as a type of “material form” known either by direct meditative intuition or by reasoning, just as eg electrons are imperceptible but known to exist by reasoning (aided by certain instruments).

(8.2.3 Other worlds

8.2.3.1 Beyond the Senses. From what we have discussed so far, we can summarize and say that there is no evident, or not enough support, from the suttas (of early Buddhism), to clearly suggest that the gods (and demons) exist they way we exist. Even if this were the case, there should be no significant change in the way we practise the Dharma (if that is our aim, in the first place). Early Buddhism is not merely stories of gods and demons, but about personal development. Even if we are to relegate such stories to the realm of literature and fiction (such as the movie series Star Wars and TV series Star Trek), our meditation practice is in no way affected by such non-belief.

64 A 9.68 = SD 2.20.
67 Harvey 1995:81, cf 118.
For meditators, the “other world” is the suprasensual world, the dhyanas that transcend the limits of our human senses and even the divine qualities to attain supradivine states of the formless attainments. We are limited by our own senses—how we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think—and yet these very senses when understood can become tools for inspiring others to understand them so that they can are able to breath through these sense-limits for higher worlds, even nirvana.

8.2.3.2 Parallels Universes. Even if we reject the notion that the gods exist, we are not saying that only humans and the visible world exist. We are today keenly aware of the vastness of our universe and the possibility of other lives out there in the remoteness of outer space. This is not science fiction, because the Buddha himself has clearly declared that there are parallel universes, world besides ours, such as in the Kosala Sutta 1 (A 10.29):

Bhikshus, as far as the sun and the moon revolve, illuminating the quarters with their light, there extends the thousandfold world-system.68 (A 10.29/5:59 f), SD 16.15; Kvu 13.1/476

In that thousandfold world-system there are, continues the Buddha, there are a thousand moons, suns, “Sineru” (axes mundi or galaxies), worlds like ours, heavens (with their gods) like ours, in systems “where Mahā Brahmā is regarded as the foremost.”

Yet even in Mahā Brahmā there still is uncertainty, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that.

Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior. (A 10.29/5:59 f), SD 16.15; Kvu 13.1/476

It is clear here that although the Buddha speaks of the gods, even of God, he is only reflecting popular beliefs. He certainl does not say in any way that we should worship them or that they have any power at all over our destiny. Indeed, if they exist, they too are all part of the evolving, changing universe and the life within it. For to exist is to change; there is no existence without change.

8.4 Is it Wrong View NOT TO BELIEVE IN GODS?

8.4.1 What wrong views do. A wrong view is like reading a wrong map for the place we plan to go to. It might be a high-quality map or device with the best printing or technology, but it is a map of our actual journey. So we would not be really going anywhere, or worse, we could end up in a place that is much worse that what we are now. A wrong view is also a clue to what we are right now, or is troubling us deep inside. We could say that our view of a person turns him into a god; our mistreatment of another turns him into an animal; our exploiting others turns them into an asura; our lack of love for another turns him into a preta; our violence towards others turns them into hell-beings.

But who does the viewing, the mistreating, the exploiting, the unloving, the violence? We are ourselves the source of that pain and suffering. I’m using ourselves as examples because it is easier to see how we can help or better ourselves than to do this to others. Furthermore, if we are emotionally healed and healthy, we would be more effective in helping others.

8.4.2 The right view pericope. Rightly viewing ourselves, others and our environment (the world) is the beginning of our journey towards spiritual wisdom and liberation. As our convenient guide, the suttas give us this famous “right view” pericope:

(1) There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed.
(2) There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions.
(3) There is no this world, there is no next world;
(4) there is no mother, no father;
(5) there are no spontaneously born beings;
(6) there are no recluses or brahmans who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.

(D 2 = M 41 = 76 = 117)69

68 A good intro to ancient Buddhist cosmology is Gethin 1998:112-132 (ch 5).
Simply put, these wrong views—wrong and unhelpful ways of looking at things (with a psychological or philosophical example given)—are (1) that there is no good in giving or charity (selfishness); (2) that there no karma (amoralism); (3) that there is no hereafter (self-centred pragmatism); (4) that we are unconnected as humans (individualism); (5) that there is no rebirth (materialism); and (6) that humans lack potential for goodness and happiness (pessimism).70

What is significant here is that there is no mention gods, God or even heaven (sentence (3) here refers to the notion of life after death or rebirth). This right view perisope, in other words, assert that our actions have consequences (they are significant), that this is not our only life, that we are not alone here, and above all, we are capable of bettering ourselves. There is no need for any belief in gods or even God. Be
faith, to actually deal with. These wrong views are refuted in Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60, f 22A 9/2, Majjhima Pañña 2, Majjhima Nikāya 2). The wrong views here are refuted in Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60, f 22A 9/2, Majjhima Pañña 2, Majjhima Nikāya 2). The wrong views here are refuted in Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60, f 22A 9/2, Majjhima Pañña 2, Majjhima Nikāya 2).

8.4.3 The world out there. The Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60) clearly states that the external world exists in these words:

Since there is actually another world (para loka) [rebirth in this world or the next world],
   one who holds the view “there is no other world” has wrong view.
   …one who intends, “there is no other world,” has wrong intention.
   …who declares, “there is no other world,” has wrong speech.

Since there is actually another world,
   one who holds the view “there is another world” has right view.
   …one who intends, “there is another world,” has right intention.
   …who declares, “there is another world,” has right speech.

(M 60,9+11/1:402, 403 f)

In this passage, “world” (loka) does not refer to the physical world (okāsa loka, “space world”) but “the world of formations” (saṅkhāra loka).72 However, since the Pāli texts speak of various “worlds of beings” (satta, loka) into which one can be reborn, this statement, taken in the light of “the three kinds of physical form” of the Saṅgīti Sutta, implicitly means that the external world exists in the sense that they are independent of our internal senses.

8.4.4 The Pātāla Sutta (S 36.4) records an important statement by the Buddha on the nature of other worlds. Although the Buddha makes this statement specifically regarding “a bottomless abyss” (pātāla)

Bhikshus, when the uninstructed ordinary person makes the statement:
   “In the great ocean there is a bottomless abyss (pātāla),” he makes such a statement about something that is non-existent and false.

4 This “bottomless abyss,” bhikshus, is rather a designation (adhivacana) for painful bodily feelings.

(S 36.4/206), SD 2.25

Here, the Buddha states that the “abyss” (pātāla) is not a hell in the the great ocean. To the ancient Indians, this is a whirlpool mid-ocean, an entrance to a subterranean watery abysmal hell. Or, like other pre-scientific ancient cultures, they, too, believed that the world was flat and if we went too far, we would fall off into the abyss.

69 Sāmañña-phala S (D 2.23/1:55), SD 8.10; Sāleyyaka S (M 41.10/1:287), SD 5.7; Sandaka S (M 76.7.2/1:515), SD 35.7; Mahā Cattārīsaka S (M 117.5/3:71 f), SD 6.10. The wrong views here are refuted in Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60, 5-12/1:401-404), SD 35.5.
70 Further see Notion of diṭṭhi, SD 40a.1 (5).
71 See eg Kesa,puttiya S (A 3.65), SD 35.4a.
72 Visuddhi, magga speaks of 3 kinds of “world” (loka): the world of formations (saṅkhāra, loka), the world of beings (satta, loka) and the physical world (“world of space”) (okāsa, loka) (Vism 204; DA 1:173; MA 1:397).
The Buddha would have none of this, and declares that “abyss” (patāla) as meaning something more close and more real to us (psychologically, at least), that is, it is “a term (adhiyacana)” for painful bodily feelings. In other words, hell is not a place we go to, but a suffering state of mind that can arise any time, anywhere.

If “hell” is a mental state, then “heaven,” too, is a mental state. It is how we think, feel, and live that keep us happy and empowers to make others happy, too. Furthermore, we should understand how our senses and sense-experiences tend to define our lives. When we fail to see the impermanence of such experiences—that they must also change and become other—we see them as “things” to collects: we desire to have more and more pleasures.

8.4.5 The realms as allegories. We can, in fact, take this understanding a step further, and see these realms as allegories, that is, stories in which the characters and events stand for ideas about human life, or for political or historical situations. When we say that a certain story is an allegory, we mean that it is us, or that it can be us. It is a mirror reminding us the bad or the good that we can be, and to choose and work wisely on it. To successfully do this, we need to be familiar with the Buddha’s model of the two kinds of teaching, the implicit and the explicit.

The implicit teaching is one “whose meaning needs to be drawn out” (neyy’attha), while the explicit teaching is one who meaning has been drawn out” (niṭ’attha). While the former would include stories and allegories, the latter are direct references to terms and ideas of true reality. Wherever the suttas mention “gods” (deva) and related terms, we need to tease out their import: we need to ask ourselves: “What is the meaning of this statement?” The answer, or the right answer, may or may not come at once, but as long as we keep questioning in this way, we will continue to get an ever bigger and clearer vision of the Dharma.

This vital strategy also applies to suttas accounts of the hell-states. One important example will suffice. The Deva,dūta Sutta (M 130) tells us how the lord of the hells, king Yama, regularly questions those who have fallen into the hells why they do not heed the 5 divine messengers (rebirth, old age, disease, suffering, and death) and turn away from bad. In due course, it is said, even king Yama himself seeks to hear the Buddha’s teaching so that he is freed from samsara itself.

8.4.6 The realms as mental states. When we understand that if we free our minds from such a sense-based and cyclic way of thinking, but accept impermanence for what it is, and let go of our ideas of “fixing” such experiences, then we are on the way be truly happy. It is helpful here to reflect the nature of “having” and “being,” and their differences. On this level, it is meaningful to say, “having” burdens us; “being” frees us.

If we must habitually have pleasure and success, then we are devas or gods, but when such pleasures and success are gone or we realize they are not what we thought them to be, then these things that brought us heaven, would transmogrify into hell. When he think that all we must have is food, clothing, housing, health, and that money is what this is all about, then we are caught in the cyclic and predictable lives as animals. If we must habitually have things or experiences, but we are never satisfied with them,

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73 SD 36.4/4:206 f = SD 2.25. On the hells as metaphors, see Bala,paṇḍita S (M 129), SD 2.22 Intro.
74 See Myth in Buddhism, SD 36.1 (3.3).
75 Neyy’attha Niṭ’attha S (A 2.3.5/1:60), SD 2.6b.
76 A better known set is that of the 3 divine messengers (an old man, a sick man, and an aged man: allegories of decay, disease and death) described in (Yama) Deva,dūta S (A 3.35) by king Yama himself, and the Sutta closes with Yama himself aspiring to hear the Buddha’s teaching for the sake of his own liberation (A 3.35/1:138-142), an account found also in Cūja Dukkha-k, khandha S (M 130.28-30/1:186 f), SD 2.23. The “3 messengers” account is prob older. This triad evolved into the first 3 three sights, of the 4 sights of prince Siddhattha, which arouse samvega in him. On seeing the 4th sight, that of a pleasant-looking recluse, Siddhattha feels joyful faith (pasādā), and is moved to renounce the world (J 1:59; cf AA 1:36; Dha 1:84 f). Siddhattha, in other words, heed the warnings of the dice messengers.
77 See (Yama) Deva,dūta S (A 3.35/1:138-142), SD 48.10, & Cūja Dukkha-k, khandha S (M 130.28-30/1:186 f), SD 2.23. On the hells as allegories, see Deva, dūta S (M 130) @ SD 2.23 (3). Further see Myth in Buddhism, SD 36.1 (4.3).
we are addicted to them, then we are pretas. When we must habitually have violence and destruction, then we have become hell-beings.

In our movies, TV shows and other entertainment media nowadays, we see a “seventh” realm, as it were—that of the zombies, the undead. They are lifeless bodies that physically consume the living, but seems to have no will of their own. They seem stuck in their habit of mechanical walking, without any human love, doing the only thing to know: consuming others. Doesn’t that sound familiar?

Our real spiritual task is to at least be human. This is what the 5 precepts are about: seeing the values of life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom. As long as we are guided and sustained by such values and act accordingly, then we are humane. To be humane means we accept ourselves just as we are (especially the fact that we are impermanent and can change), and accept others unconditionally in the same way. Above all, we understand, or persist to understand, how our senses work, and to use them wisely, that is as tools for understanding our mind better. Then our spiritual journey is well on the way.78

8.4.7 Learning aids. Although I am now more convinced that the Buddha, as represented in the suttas, rejects the historical reality of the gods and the various realms, they are vital teaching-tools that can touch the depths of our being that is inaccessible by intellectual discourses, even scientific learning. We all love stories, especially stories that teach us that it is all right to fail and to learn from such failures; stories of joy and how we can be that joy.

The gods and the realms are our life’s stage where we explore the possibilities of our human potential and stretch our creative imagination to understand why we do bad thing and how low we can fall, and also how we must do good and rise even beyond our own imaginations. We are capable of better things: the stories we tell and love often hint at such possibilities: they point to true reality and the true happiness that awaits us.

8.5 DUALITY. The last word, however, comes from the Kaccāna,gotta Sutta (S 12.15), where the Buddha declares to the monk Kaccāna.gotta regarding right view:

This world, Kaccāna, mostly79 depends upon a duality: upon [the notion of] existence and [the notion of] non-existence.

But for one who sees the arising of the world as it really is with right wisdom, there is [no notion of] non-existence regarding the world.

And for one who sees the ending of the world as it really is with right wisdom, there is [no notion of] existence regarding the world...

‘Everything is [all exists],’ Kaccāna, this is one extreme. ‘Everything is not [all does not exist],’ this is the second extreme.

Without resorting to either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Teaching by the middle [that is, dependent arising].

(S 12.15/2:16-17), SD 6.13

This is of course an “inner journey,” ie, meditation: see Bhāvanā, SD 15.1.

79 “Mostly,” yebhuyyena, here refers to the ordinary being, except for the noble saints (ariya, puggala) who hold on to the extreme notions of either something exists (atthitā) (eternalism, sassata) or does not exist (natthitā) (annihilationism, ucceda) (SA 2:32). See foll n.
The Discourse to Saṅgārava (on Devas)

M 100

1 Thus have I heard.
At one time the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] in Kosala country by stages (on a teaching tour)\(^8^0\) with a large community of monks.

The brahminee Dhānañjānī

2 Now at the time, a brahminee named Dhānañjānī,\(^8^1\) full of faith in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha, was living\(^8^2\) in Caṇḍalaka, kappa. Once, when she stumbled,\(^8^3\) she thrice exclaimed the inspired utterance,\(^8^4\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Namo tassa bhagavato} & \quad \text{Homage to him, the Blessed One,} \\
\text{arahato sammā,sambuddhassa} & \quad \text{the worthy one, the fully self-awakened one!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Namo tassa bhagavato} & \quad \text{Homage to him, the Blessed One,} \\
\text{arahato sammā,sambuddhassa} & \quad \text{the worthy one, the fully self-awakened one!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Namo tassa bhagavato} & \quad \text{Homage to him, the Blessed One,} \\
\text{arahato sammā,sambuddhassa} & \quad \text{the worthy one, [210] the fully self-awakened one!}\(^8^5\)
\end{align*}
\]

3 At that time there was a brahmin youth [Maṇīja] named Saṅgārava living\(^8^6\) in Caṇḍalaka, kappa. He was a master of the Three Vedas,\(^8^7\) along with their invocations and rituals; phonology and etymology;

\(^8^0\) “Wandering...by stages,” cārikam caramāno, lit “walking the walk,” that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people. See n ad loc in Tevijja S (D 13.1/1:235), SD 1.8.

\(^8^1\) She is called Dhanañjāni in Dhanañjāni S (S 7.1/1:160 f), SD 45.5. See Intro (1.2).

\(^8^2\) Paṭivasati.

\(^8^3\) “She stumbled,” upakkhalitvā, also “having stumbled.” Dhanañjāni S (S 7.1/1:160) (prob in a different context) reads upakkamiti (“having approached, gone to”), with vl upakkhalitvā. MA 3:451 reads pakkhalitvā, which means either “having stumbled” or “having washed.” Brahmins often wash themselves before a ceremonial event. I B Horner however suggests, “I have chosen to render [it] by ‘tripped’ in conformity with the textual meaning. The udāna (solemn or inspired utterance) may then be an expression used for warding off the ill-luck which might otherwise ensure after stumbling” (M H:2:398). However, considering the fact that Dhanañjāni is a stream-winner, and as such, not superstitious, she utter the Salutation (namo tassa...) either as a Buddhānussatī or simple to regain her mindfulness after tripping. Cf Mahv 3:223. See (3.1) above on arctic hysteria.

\(^8^4\) “Exclaimed the inspired utterance,” udānam udānī. See prec n on “she stumbled.” On the utterance of namo tassa by other brahmins, see Kāraṇa, pali S (A 45194,2.1 + SD 45.11 (1.2.3).

\(^8^5\) The narrative up to this point is also found in Dhananjanī S (S 7.1/1:160), SD 45.5, where however there is a different turn: Dhananjanī made this inspired utterance before 500 brahmins. Apparently, Dhananjanī is in the habit of making this inspired utterance: as such, the narrative here could be a separate incident, or it could be on the same occasion as the Sānīyutta narrative. The brahmin Jānussoni, too, publicly utters the Namotassa formula in Cūla Hatthi, padopama S (M 27,8), SD 40.5 (qv). For details, see Intro (1.2) above.

\(^8^6\) Paṭivasati.

\(^8^7\) As at Ambāṭṭha S (D 3.1,3/1:88), Soṇa, danda S (D 4.5/1:114, also 120, 121, 123), Kūta, danta S (D 5,6/1-130, also 138, 141), Brahmapāyu S (M 91,2/2:133, also 134, 141, 142); Sela S (M 92,2/2:146, also 147 = Sn p105); Canki S (M 95,8/2:165, also 168); Saṅgarava S (M 100,3/2:210); also A 1:163, 166, 3:223 (x2); Nc:Be 56 = Se 57. Sometimes it includes knowledge of the marks of the great man (mahā, purisa, lakkhana) (eg D 3.1.3). All this is a stock passage of the qualities of a learned brahmin. Comys throughout say that the 3 Vedas are the Iru, Yaju and Śāma [Rg, Yajur and Śāma] (DA 1:247; MA 3:362; AA 2:261; Snā 2:447; BA 68; NcA 14; ApA 274, 276, 430). The fourth Veda, the Atharva, is not mentioned as it is a later text. MA however says that its existence is implied when the Itihāsa (histories) [see foll n] are called the “fifth,” referring to the works regarded as authoritative by the brahmins. J A too glosses itihāsa, paṇcaamah as veda, catukkaṁ, “the four Vedas” (J 5:451), the reason being that it was after the fact, i.e. by the time the Comys were completed, the fourth Veda already formed part of the Vedic collection. Bodhi notes, “It is more likely, however, that the histories are called ‘the fifth’ in connection with the
and the Itiḥāsa Purāṇas as the fifth; and well versed in materialistic philosophy and the marks of the Great Man. He became a teacher well known far and wide, instructing 500 brahmin youths in the sacred mantras. Having heard the brahmīne named Dhānaṇājāṇi utter those words, he said to her:

“This brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi must be disgraced and degraded, since when there are brahmins around, she praises that bald-headed recluse!”

[The brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi:] “Noble sir, does not know the virtue and wisdom of the Blessed One. If noble sir knew that Blessed One’s virtue and wisdom, noble sir, you would never think of abusing and reviling him.”

“Then, madam, inform me when the recluse Gotama comes to Čandala,kappa.”

“Yes, noble sir,” the brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi replied to the brahmīn youth Saṅgārava in assent.

Then, after wandering by stages in Kosala country, the Blessed One eventually arrived in Čandala,kappa. There in Čandala,kappa, the Blessed One stayed in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan.

Saṅgārava sees the Buddha

5. The brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi heard that the Blessed One had arrived in Čandala,kappa, and that he is staying in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan. Then the brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi approached the brahmīn youth Saṅgārava and said this to him,

“It is said that the Blessed One had arrived in Čandala,kappa, and that he is staying in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan. Now, noble sir, you may go when you think the time is right [at your convenience].”

“Yes, madam,” the brahmīn youth Saṅgārava replied to the brahmīne Dhānaṇājāṇi.

Then the brahmīn youth Saṅgārava approached the Blessed One, and having exchanged greetings with him, sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the brahmīn youth Saṅgārava said this to the Blessed One:

6. “Master Gotama, there are some recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. Amongst these recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have

four branches of study auxiliary to the Vedas that precede them in the description” (M:NB 1296 n850). On technical terms here, see Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

88 Itiḥāsa Purāṇas are the aural tradition of brahminical legends of kings and sages. See prev n.
89 Saṁyutta account (S 7.1) says that Dhanaṇājāṃ’s furious husband berates her as an “outcaste” (vasali) (S 7.1/-1:160).
90 “Noble sir,” bhadra,mukha, lit “lucky- or happy-faced one,” perhaps in modern jargon, “(my) fine fellow” as vocative, esp to a junior. As at M 2:53, 210; S 1:74 (see S:RD 1:100 n3).
91 “Virtue and wisdom,” sila,pañña, as at D 1:124. This term is syn with the more common vijjā,caṇa (knowledge and conduct), with the qualities reversed.
92 “Brahmins of the Todeyya clan,” todeyyānaḥ brahmāṇam, so called because they are from the village of Tudi or Tudi,gāma (DA 2:399; MA 3:443; AA 3:164), near Sāvatthī (DA 2:384; MA 5:8). Only the head of the clan is called Todeyya, who is also village head.
93 “Who proclaim…etc…here and now,” dittha,dhammābhiñña, vosāṇa,pārami-p,patṭa ādi, brahmacariyaṃ pañjāṇanti. MA says that they declare the fundamentals of a holy life, saying, “Having directly known here and now in this present existence and having reached the consummation, we have attained the nirvana called ‘perfection,’ that is, the transcendence of everything” (MA 3:453). On abhiñña, vosāṇa,pārami-p,patṭa, see Mahā Sakul’udāyi S (M 77.15/2:11; A 3:9). MA glosses it as the attainment of arhathood (arahatta,vasena) (MA 3:262, 265) or the attainment of nirvana (nibbāna-p,patṭa) (MA 3:453); or as awakening (bodhi) itself (AA 3:225). Bodhi notes: “This may be the only sense that the word pārami bears in the four Nikāyas. In the later Theravāda literature, beginning perhaps with such work as the Buddhavamsa, this word comes to signify the perfect virtues that a bodhisatta must fulfil over many lives in order to attain Buddhahood. In that context it corresponds to the pāramitā of the Mahāyāna literature, though the numerical lists of virtues overlap only in part” (M:NB 1284 n763).
reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now, where does master Gotama stand?”

Types of holy men

7 “Bhāra, dvāja, I say that there is a diversity amongst those recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now:

(1) Bhāra, dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who are traditionalists, who on the basis of an aural tradition proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now. Such are the brahmins of the Three Vedas.

(2) Bhāra, dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. Such are the reasoners and inquirers.

(3) Bhāra, dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, in things not heard before, having directly known the Dharma for themselves, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.

8 I, Bhāra, dvāja, am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves regarding things not heard before, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.

As to how I am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now, that may be understood in the following way.

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

9 Here, Bhāra, dvāja, before my awakening, while I was still only an unawakened Bodhisattva, I considered thus:

“The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life completely, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

94 Anussavīkā, lit “those of the aural tradition,” see Sandaka S (M 76.24-26/1:520).
95 Anussavana, “through hearsay,” ie blindly following tradition, which according to Jayatilleke has 3 possible senses: (1) divine revelation, (2) authoritative tradition, and (3) report (1963:182). For details, see Jayatilleke 1963: 182-193. Technically, I have rendered “oral’ (mukha, pātha) for the Buddhist reciter (bhānaka) tradition. On anusavana (tradition), see Jayatilleke 1963:193-195.
96 Sānti bhāra, dvāja eke samaṇa, brāhmaṇa anussavikā, te anussavamena diṭṭha, dhammabhūtiṇī, vosāna, pārami-pattā ādi, brahma, cariya paṭṭananti. Here the attainments mentioned refer to those of the non-Buddhist system.
97 Bodhi notes, “It is puzzling that the reasoners and investigators (takkī, vīmāṇī) are here said to rely on the basis of mere faith (saddhā, makkhā). Elsewhere faith and reasoning are contrasted as two different grounds of conviction (M 95,14), and ‘mere faith’ seems more closely allied with reliance on oral tradition than with reasoning and investigation” (M:NB 1304 n919). See Sandaka S (M 77.27-29/1:520).
98 Sāmaṇa yeva dhammaṁ abhiṇāya. This phrase, notes Bodhi, “emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life,” (M:NB 1304 920), ie, not learning (hearing) it from others. Cf the newly awakened Gotama’s reply to Upaka: na me ācariyo atthi, “No teacher have I” (V 1:8).
99 Regarding things not heard before, pubbe anussutesu dhammesu, as at A 3:9; cf D 2:33; S 2:9, 105. AA glosses dhammesu as catuṣaka, sacca, dhammesu, “in the four noble truths” (AA 3:225).
100 The previous phrase and this whole narrative as at Ariya Pariyesanā S (M 26,14-17/1:163-167). Cf Mahā Saccaka S (M 36,12/1:240). Opening phrase, pubbe va sambodhā anabhissambuddhassa bodhiṣṭattasseva sato, as at Bhaya, Herava S (M 4,3/1:17), Dvedhā, Vitakka S (M 19,2/1:114), Mahā Saccaka S (M 36,12/1:240), Bodhi Rāja, Kumāra S (M 85,10/2:93), Saṅgārava S (M 100,9/2:211), but different contexts. See also S 2:5, 10, 104, 170, 3:27, 4:7, 8, 97, 289, 5:263, 281; A 1:258, 3:240-242 (passim), 4:439; Pm 2:109; Miln 235.
What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?

10 Later, Bhārā, dvāja, [212] while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robe, and went forth from the household life into the homeless life.

THE TWO TEACHERS

Āḷāra Kālāma

11 Having thus gone forth in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and said this to him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Discipline.’

Bhārā, dvāja, Āḷāra Kālāma replied:

‘The venerable one may stay here. This Dharma is such that a wise man enters and dwells in it, realizing for himself through direct knowledge his own teacher’s doctrine.’

Bhārā, dvāja, I soon quickly learned that Dharma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and confidence, and there were others who did likewise.

11.2 Bhārā, dvāja, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that Āḷāra Kālāma declares: “By realizing through direct knowledge, I enter upon and dwell in this Dharma” Certainly Āḷāra Kālāma dwells knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

Then, Bhārā, dvāja, I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, in what way do you declare that by realizing for yourself through direct knowledge you enter upon and dwell in this Dharma?’

Bhārā, dvāja, he declared that it was the base of nothingness.

11.3 Bhārā, dvāja, I thought thus: ‘Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom; I, too, have them. Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Āḷāra Kālāma declares he attains and realizes for himself through direct knowledge?’

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103 Sambādho gharavāso rajā, patho. There is a wordplay on sambādha, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male (V 1:216, 2:134) or female (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). Rajā, patho, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (M 100, 9/2:211, 29), SD 10.9.

104 Buddhaghosa says that Āḷāra, also called Dīgha, piṅgala; Kālāma was his family name (DA 2:569 = MA 2:179, 20; UA 237, 27).

105 Sambādho gharavāso rajā, patho, abbhokāso pabbajjā. This is stock: Mahā Sacca S (M 36, 12/1:240, 20), SD 49, 4; Mahā Taṅkhā Saṅkhaya S (M 38, 32/1:267, 24), SD 7, 10; Kandaraka S (M 51, 13/1:344, 30), SD 32, 9; Saṅgārava S (M 100, 9/2:211, 29), SD 10, 9; Deva, da Sā (M 101, 31/2:226, 8), SD 18, 4; Cha-b, bisodhana S (M 112, 12/3:33, 8), SD 59, 7; Danta, bhūmi S (M 125, 14/3:134, 2), SD 46, 3; Āvata S (S 16, 11/4:2, 19, 25), SD 77, 5; Thapati S (S 55, 6/18+22/5:350, 23, 351, 21), SD 42, 7; Attan Tapa S (A 4, 198/7/2:208, 23) = (Pug 4, 24/57, 12), SD 56, 7; Upāli S (A 10, 99, 5/5:204, 17), SD 30, 9.

106 This whole section (the episodes of Āḷāra & of Uddaka) as at Ariya Pariyesanā S (M 36, 17/1:240-247).

On Āḷāra and Uddaka, see SD 1, 11 (4).

107 The story of the Bodhisatta's first two teachers (15-16] is found in several places in the early Canons: Mahā Sacca S (M 36, 12/1:240); Saṅgārava S (M 100, 9/2:211, 29); Madhyamāgama of the Sarvāstivāda (T26.776b5-777a4); Vinaya of the Dharmaguptakas (T1428.780bt-c19); cf J 1:66; DhA 1:85; ApA 71; BA 6; DhsA 34; MahvsT 66. “No word is said about the Buddha's relationship to these two people, nor indeed do we hear what these men had been or done. This would be hard to explain if the training of the Bodhisatta under them had been related at that time a few pages earlier as it is now.” (Bronkhorst 1993: 85 f; see n to §§22-23 on “The first listeners” below).

108 “Mere lip-reciting and rehearsal,” ottha, pahata, mattena, lapita, lāpana, mattena, “merely moving the lips and reciting what had been recited” (Thomas 1949: 62)

109 I could speak with knowledge and confidence,” ŋaŋa, vādaŋ ca thera, vādoŋ ca.
Bhāra, dvāja, I soon quickly entered upon and dwelled in that Dharma by realizing it for myself through direct knowledge. Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare for yourself that you enter upon and dwell in this Dharma through direct knowledge?’

‘That is the way, avuso, that I entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘That is the way, too, avuso, that I have entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘It is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dharma that I declare to have myself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge. [1:165]

And the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that I declare to have myself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge.

You have realized what I have realized. So you know what I know. As I am, so you are.

Come now, avuso, let the two of us lead this community!'

Thus, Bhāra, dvāja, Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and accorded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: ‘This Dharma does not lead to disenchantment [with the world], to cessation [of suffering], to direct knowledge, to awakening, to Nirvana, but only to rebirth in the base of nothingness.’

Bhāra, dvāja, dissatisfied with that Dharma, I left.

### Uddaka Rāmaputta

#### 12 Bhāra, dvāja, still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta

and said to him:

‘Avuso, I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Discipline.’

Bhāra, dvāja, the venerable one accepted me [in the same way as Ālāra did]...

Soon, monks, as far as lip reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I mastered everything with knowledge and confidence, as did others.

12.2 Bhāra, dvāja, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that Rāma declared: “By realizing through direct knowledge I entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma.” Certainly Rāma dwelled knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

Then, Bhāra, dvāja, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him:

‘Avuso, in what way did Rāma declare that by realizing for himself through direct knowledge he entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma?’

Bhāra, dvāja, Uddaka Rāmaputta declared that it was the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

12.3 Bhāra, dvāja, I thought thus:

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107 *Ehi dāni āvuso, ubho va santā imāni gaṇāni parahārāmā ti.* See *Ariya Pariyesanā S* (M 26. 16c), SD 1.11 n on the leadership of the community.

108 “Base of nothingness,” āsāciṇṇaṭṭha-atītika. Comy: Ālāra taught him the seven attainments (of calmness meditation) ending with the base of nothingness, the third of the four formless attainments. Though these states are spiritually exalted, they are still mundane and do not in themselves lead to nirvana, but merely to rebirth in the sphere of nothingness. The lifespan there is 60,000 aeons (world-cycles) but at the end of which one returns to a lower world. As such, one is still caught in Māra’s trap.

109 It is clear from the Uddaka Sutta (§ 35.103) that Uddaka Rāmaputta had no high spiritual attainment: “Bhikshus, though Uddaka Rāma, putta was not himself a knowledge-master (vedagū), he claimed: ‘I am a knowledge-master.’ Though he was not himself an all-conqueror (sabba, jī), he declared: ‘I am an all-conqueror.’ Though he had not removed the tumour’s root [craving], he declared: ‘I have removed the tumour’s root’.” (§ 35.103.2/4:83). At §12.2, it is clear that the reference is to Rāma, Uddaka’s father. See SD 1.11 (4).
‘Not only Rāma had faith, [1:166] energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom; I, too, have them. Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Rāma declared he entered upon and realized for himself through direct knowledge?’

Bhārā, dvāja, I soon quickly entered upon and dwelled in that Dharma by realizing it for myself through direct knowledge. Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and said this to him:

‘Avuso, was it in this way that Rāma declared for himself that he entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma through direct knowledge?’

‘That is the way, avuso, that Rāma entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for himself through direct knowledge.’

‘That is the way, too, avuso, that I have entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘It is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dharma that Rāma declared to have himself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge.

And the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that Rāma declared he entered upon and realized for himself through direct knowledge.

You have realized what Rāma had realized. So you know what Rāma knew. As Rāma was, so you are.’

Come now, avuso, lead this community!’

Thus, Bhārā, dvāja, Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, placed me in the position of a teacher and accorded me the highest honour. But, monks, it occurred to me: ‘This Dharma does not lead to disenchantment [with the world], to cessation [of suffering], to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvāna, but only to rebirth in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Bhārā, dvāja, dissatisfied with that Dharma, I left.

13 Bhārā, dvāja, still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. [1:167] There I saw

110 Iti yāti dhāmaṁ rāmo aññasi tāṁ tvāṁ dhāmaṁ jānāsi, yāni tvāṁ dhāmaṁ jānāsi tāṁ dhāmaṁ rāmo aññasi. Iti yādīsa rāmo ahosi tādīsa tuvaṁ, yādīsa tuvaṁ tādīsa rāmo ahosi. These sentences are crucial in showing “Rāma,” i.e. Uddaka’s father, is referred to, and no Uddaka himself. Note further the past tense ahosi used in connection with Rāma. Bh Bodhi: “Both Horner in [Middle Length Sayings] and N[ānanomi] in MS err in their translations of the account of Bodhisatta’s meeting with Uddaka Rāmaputta by assuming that Uddaka is identical with Rāma. However, as his name indicates, Uddaka was the son (putta) of Rāma, who must have already passed away before the Bodhisatta arrived on the scene. It should be noted that all references to Rāma are in the past tense and the third person, and that Uddaka in the end places the Bodhisatta in the position of teacher. Though the text does not allow for definite conclusions, this suggests that he himself had not yet reached the fourth immaterial attainment.” (Bodhi, 2001:1217 n303)

111 Ehi dāni āvuso, tvāṁ imaṁ ganaṁ parihrātī. Note here Uddaka is asking the Bodhisattva to himself lead the community. Cf §15c where Āḷāra invites the Bodhisattva, “Let the two of us lead this community!” (Ubho va santaṁ imaṁ ganaṁ parihrātī ti).

112 “Neither-perception-nor-non-perception,” n eva, saññā, nāsaññā āyatana. This is the name for the 4th dhyana of the formless sphere (arūpāvacara), a semi-conscious state that is surpassed only by the state of complete suspension of consciousness called or the cessation of perception and feeling (saññā, vedayita, nirodha) or the attainment of cessation (nirodha, samāpatti, S 14.11) [42 & n]. The absolute necessary precondition to this attainment are said to be the perfect mastery of all the 8 dhyanas as well as the previous attainment of non-return or arhathood. Cony says that this state may last for 7 days or even longer. Immediately at the arising of the state, however, there arises in the non-returner the fruition of non-return (anāgāmi, phala), and in the arhat the fruition of arhathood (arahatta, phala). Mahā Vedalla S (M 43) explains the difference between death and cessation as follows. In the case of one who is dead, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, life is exhausted, the vital heat extinguished, the faculties destroyed. In the case of one who has entered the cessation of perception and feeling, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, but his life is not exhausted, the vital heat is not extinguished, the faculties become exceedingly clear (M 43.25/1:296 abr; see also M 44.16-21). See §43 below.
an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I sat down there thinking: ‘This is conducive for spiritual striving.’

**SELF-MORTIFICATION**

**The similes of the fire-sticks**

14 “Then 3 similes, never heard before, naturally [spontaneously] occurred to me.

1. **THE WET SAPPY STICK IN WATER.** Suppose, Bhāra,dvāja, there were a wet sappy stick left in water, and a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhāra,dvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire-stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“No, master Gotama. Why is that so? Master Gotama, it is because the stick is wet and sappy, and it is left in water. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

14.2 “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, those who do not dwell away from sense-pleasures, and have not totally abandoned and suppressed them internally,

even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

14.3 So too, Bhāra,dvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmmins who still do not dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,

14.4 even if these good recluses and brahmmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

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113 This passage (repeated in Ariya Pariyesanā S. M 26,17/1:167 = 100,13/2:212) is the oldest reference to an ideal place for meditation. This stock phrase of 3 places conducive to meditation are at D 2:29; M 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; S 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; A 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; Pm 1:175, 2:36. In Sāmañña,phala S (D 2), the folio instruction is given: “Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue and this aggregate of noble sense-restraint and this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear comprehension and this aggregate of noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a forest, a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw” (D 2,67/-1:71); this stock passage also at Sāmañña,phala S (D 2), SD 8.10.67 (2005). A briefer version is found in Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S (D 22), Satipaṭṭhāna S (M 10) and Anāpāna,sati S (M 118): “Here, monks, a monk who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty place, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.” (D 22,2/2:291 = M 10,4/1:56 = 118,17/3:82).

114 Mahā Saccaka S (M36.20-31) picks up from here with graphic details of the Bodhisatta’s self-mortification (see Appendix). This account, however, seems to be an abridgement of the longer account given in Mahā Sīhanāda S (M 12,44-6/1:77-82). A brief mention of his ascetic experience is given in Bhaya,bherava S (M 4,20/ 1:21).

115 On §§14-16, as at Mahā Saccaka S (M 36,17-19/1:240-242), SD 49.4. On the problem of the location of these similes of the fire-sticks, see M:NB 1229 n387. According to Bronkhorst, this episode of the 3 similes (M 36,17-19) and the episode where Saccaka contrasts the composed behaviour of the Buddha with the evasive reactions of the six heterodox teachers (M 36,48): “If we remove these portions…we are left with what may be called the ‘Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.’ From the beginning this Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra must have contained the episode on meditation without reduced intake of food. This episode itself may or may not have existed before the composition of the Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.” (1993:18).

116 Allām kāṭṭhaṁ sa,snehaṁ udake nikkhitthāṁ.

117 Ēvam eva kho, bhāradvāja, ye hi keci sāmañña vā brāhmaṇa vā kāya eva citta eva ca kāmehi avāpakaṭṭha viharanti, yo ca nesaṁ kāmesu kāma-c, chando kāma,sneho kāma,mucchā kāma,pipāsā kāma,pariśīhato so ca ajjhatthā na supāpiṇo hoti na supagāpiṇassaddhā.

118 Opakkamikā cepi te bhonto sāmañabrāhmaṇā dukkā dībhā khaṭkā vedanā vedayanti, abhābhāva te ṇānāya dassanāya anuttaraṁ sambodhāya.
14.5 and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are still incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Bhārādvāja, was the first simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.  

15 (2) THE WET SAPPY STICK ON DRY LAND. Furthermore, Bhārādvāja, a second simile, never heard before, naturally occurred to me.

Suppose, Bhārādvāja, there were a wet sappy stick left on dry ground far away from water, and a man were to come holding an upper fire stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhārādvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?"

“No, master Gotama. Why is that so?

Master Gotama, it is because, although the stick is left on dry land, it is still wet and sappy. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

15.2 “Even so, Bhārādvāja, those who do not dwell away from sense-pleasures, and have not totally abandoned and suppressed them internally,

even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

15.3 So too, Bhārādvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmins who still do not dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,

15.4 even if these good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;

15.5 and even if these good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are still incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Bhārādvāja, was the second simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.

16 (3) THE DRY SAPLESS STICK ON DRY LAND. Furthermore, Bhārādvāja, a third simile, never heard before, naturally occurred to me.

Suppose a man were to use a dry sapless stick, lying on dry ground far away from water, and a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhārādvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?’

“Yes, master Gotama. Why is that so?

Master Gotama, it is because the stick, dry and sapless, is left on the ground, far away from water.”

16.2 “Even so, Bhārādvāja, those who dwell away from sense-pleasures, and have totally abandoned and suppressed them internally, even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

16.3 So too, Bhārādvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmins who do dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,

16.4 even if these good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;

16.5 and even if these good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are still capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.  

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119 Ayaṁ kho marṣ, bhārādvāja, paṭṭhamā upamā paṭṭhāsi anacchariyā pubbe assuta, pubbā.
120 Allaṁ kaṭṭhaṁ sa, snehaṁ ārakā udakā thale nikkhitthām.
121 Sukkaṁ kaṭṭhaṁ koḷāpam ārakā udakā thale nikkhitthām.
122 As noted by Nāṇamoli & Bodhi, it is puzzling that in the foll paras the Bodhisattva is shown engaging in self-mortification after he had here come to the conclusion that such practices are useless for the attainment of awakening. “This dissonant juxtaposition of ideas raises a suspicion that the narrative sequence of the sutta has become jumbled. The appropriate place for the simile of the fire-sticks, it seems, would be at the end of the Bodhisattva’s period of ascetic experimentation, when he has acquired a sound basis for rejecting self-mortification” (M:NB 1229 n387). Comy to M 36 however accepts the above sequence but asks why the Bodhisattva underwent austerities when
This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the third simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me. These, Bhāra,dvāja, are the 3 similes, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.

The Bodhisattva’s self-mortification

17 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran down from my armpits.

17.2 Bhāra,dvāja, it was just like a strong man holding a weaker man by the head or shoulders, were to restrain, subdue, attack him; even so, Bhāra,dvāja, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind, and sweat ran down my armpits.

17.3 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained [1:243] and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

18 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there was sound loud sound of winds coming out from my ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith’s bellows.

But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

19 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, violent winds cut through my head, just as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword.

19.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

20 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there were violent pains in my head, just as if a strong man [1:244] were tightening a tough leather strap around my head as a headband.

he could have attained Buddhahood without doing so. It explains that he does so, first, to show that his own exertion (parakkama) to the world, rejoicing in the “virtue of his crushing energy” (viriya, nimmathana, goṇa), feeling like a rajah who wins supreme sovereignty after crushing his enemies; and second, showing compassion (anukampamāno) to later generations, so that they too would strive with the same determination for awakening as he himself has done. (MA 2:288)
20.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

21 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, violent winds carved up my belly, just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox’s belly with a sharp butcher’s knife.

21.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

22 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there was a violent burning in my body, just as if two men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of burning coal.

22.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

23 Now, Bhāra,dvāja, when [1:245] the devas saw me, some said: ‘The recluse Gotama is dead!’ Other devas said: ‘The recluse Gotama is not dead but dying!’ Still others said: ‘The recluse Gotama is neither dead not dying: he is an arhat, for such is how arhats dwell!’

24 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise cutting off food entirely.’ Then, Bhāra,dvāja, devas came to me and said, ‘Good sir, do not do so. If you do so, we shall infuse divine essence through the pores of your skin and you will live on like that.’

24.2 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘If I claim to be completely fasting while these devas infuse divine essence through the pores of my skin and I live on that, then I shall be lying.’ So, Bhāra,dvāja, I dismissed the devas, saying, ‘There is no need!’

25 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, perhaps of bean soup or lentil soul or vetch soup or pea soup.’

25.2 Bhāra,dvāja, when I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little, Bhāra,dvāja,

- my limbs became like the joints of vine stems or bamboo stems;
- my backside became like a camel’s hood;
- the projections of my spine stood out like corded beads;
- my ribs jutted out like the crazy rafters of an old broken shed;
- the gleam of my eyes sank deep down into their sockets, looking like the gleam of water gone far down in a deep well;
- my scalp shrivelled and withered like [1:246] green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun;
- my belly skin touched my backbone so that when I touched my belly I felt my backbone and if I touched my backbone I felt my belly skin;
- when I defaecated or urinated, I fell over on my face right there;
- when I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at their roots, fell off from my body as I rubbed—all because of eating so little.\(^{131}\)

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\(^{127}\) According to Agniveśa’s Caraka Samhītā, Sūtra,sthāna 20.11 (p113), headache (śiroruc) [21-23] and belly (udarāveṣṭah) [24]; the Ayurvedic commentator Cakrapāṇidatta explains: udarasāvēṣṭanam irodarāveṣṭah are caused by wind (vāta). Heat (dāha), on the other hand, is caused by bile (pitta): see Sūtra,sthāna 20.14 (p114). See Bronkhorst 1993:20 f & n29.

\(^{128}\) “Divine essence,” ofa, ambrosia.

\(^{129}\) A bean-like climbing plant.

\(^{130}\) Ōlegga, collapsing and fallen down, dilapidated.

\(^{131}\) The Bodhisattva’s self-mortification. There are at least three well known statues of the Buddha looking very emaciated. In his paper, “The Emaciated Gandhāran Buddha Images: Asceticism, Health and the Body,” Robert L Brown argues that although most people think that these images depict the Bodhisattva at the height of his self-mortification, on closer examination of the details on these images, they actually represent the Buddha fasting during the

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THE MIDDLE WAY

Wholesome pleasure

26 Bhāra, dvāja, When people saw me, some said, ‘The recluse Gotama is black.’ Others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is not black, he is brown.’ Others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is neither; he is golden-skinned.’ So much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.’

27 Then, Bhāra, dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘In the past, recluses and brahmans have experienced painful, racking, piercing pains; in the future, recluses and brahmans will experience painful, racking, piercing pains; at present, recluses and brahmans are experiencing painful, racking, piercing pains—but, Bhāra, dvāja, this is the utmost extreme, there is none beyond this.

27.2 But by these painful austerities, I did not attain any superhuman state, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.

Could there be another path to awakening?’

49 days following the Great Enlightenment (Brown 1997:106, 112). Brown, however, fails to note perhaps the clearest evidence that it is the Buddha, not the Bodhisattva, who is represented in the Sīkri and the Jamalgarhi images (and very likely in the Takht-i-Bahi image, too)—namely, the presence of the halo or aureole behind the image’s head—which Brown acknowledges in a personal communication in 2002.

132 The ploughing festival, i.e., a ritual sowing, vappab, maṅgala (MA 2:290; J 1:57). On this “first dhyāna” episode (Mahā Saccaka S, M 36.31 f/1:246 f), cf Chinese version, T1428.781a4-11.

133 That is, regarding the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breaths (MA 2:291).

134 On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the pleasure of awakening—see Araṇa Vihaṅga S (M 139.9/3:233), SD 7.8. On pleasure experienced by the awakened mind, see Uṇṇāba S (S 51.15), SD 10.10.

135 This group of 5 monks (pāñca, vaggīya) traditionally comprise of Koṇḍaṇṇa, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assajī. It is said that the Buddha gives his first discourse to them on the night of the full moon day of Asāḷha (June-July), following the great awakening. This becomes a festival still celebrated today amongst Theravāda Buddhists as Asāḷha Pūjā (V 1:10 ff; S 5:420 ff.; Mvst 3:330 f; Lalv 540(416) f.). As a result of this event, the first sangha comprising the 5 monks and the Buddha is born. See SD 1.3 (3); 1.11 (6).
32 With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, I entered upon and dwelled in the second dhyāna, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.\footnote{The 2nd dhyāna is known as “the noble silence” (ariya,tuṅhī, bhāva): see n3.}

33 And with the fading away of zest, I entered upon and dwelled in the third dhyāna, of which the Noble Ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness,’ he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another’s suffering, nor of both of them.

34 And with the abandoning of joy and pain, I entered upon and dwelled in the fourth dhyāna, that is neither pleasant nor painful, with a mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.\footnote{\text{The great awakening}\footnote{This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.7} \footnote{At the end of each of these 3 paras here, Mahā Saccaka S (M 36) adds: “But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain” (M 36.39/1:248). See end of §17 n above.}}

The great awakening\footnote{This whole section is as at Bhaya,bherava S (M 4.27-33/1:22 f). The passage at Sāmañña,phala S (D 2) is more detailed with similes (D 2.93-98/1:81-84).}

35 (1) When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness, [1:248] I directed it to the knowledge of the recollection of past lives.\footnote{This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.} I recollect my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, (recollecting,)

‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.\footnote{Be \\& Se abbreviate: “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, with my mind thus concentrated, I recollect my manifold past lives...in their modes and details.”}

36 This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the first true knowledge won by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.\footnote{Dibba,cakkhu, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (dhamma,cakkhu) (see n in §102).}

37 (2) When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness, I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.\footnote{This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.72-101/423-429.} I see—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],\footnote{This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.} purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, faring in accord with their karma:

‘These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—after death, when the body has broken up, have re-appeared in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’
Thus, by means of the divine eye, I see beings passing away and re-appearing, and understand how they fare according to their karma.

38 This, Bhāra, was the second true knowledge won by me in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute. [1:249]

39 (3) When my mind was thus concentrated the purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness, I directed it to the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes.144

I directly knew as it really is:

‘This is suffering;
This is the arising of suffering;
This is the ending of suffering;
This is the path leading to the ending of suffering.’ 145

These are the influxes;
This is the arising of the influxes;
This is the ending of the influxes;
This is the path leading to the ending of the influxes.’ 146

40 When I knew and saw thus, my mind was freed from the influx of sensual desire, from the influx of existence, and from the influx of ignorance. When it was freed, there arose the knowledge: ‘It is freed!’ I directly knew:

‘Birth is ended. The holy life has been lived. Done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’ 147

41 This, Bhāra, was the third true knowledge won by me in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent and resolute.

Do gods exist?

42 When this was said, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said to the Blessed One:

“Steadfast indeed is Master Gotama’s striving; of a true person is Master Gotama’s striving—just like that of an arhat, a fully self-awakened one!

144 āsava-k, khaya, ṃāna. The term āsava (lit “inflow, outflow”) has been variously tr as “taints, corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence),” or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 āsavas: the influx of (1) sense-desire (kāmāsava), (2) desire for eternal existence (bhavāsava), (3) wrong views (dīṭhāsava), (4) ignorance (avijjāsava) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (ogha) and “yokes” (yoga). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [§43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). See BDICT under āsava.

145 These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called noble truths here (and in Sāmaṇṇa, phala S, 2.97/1:83). Norman remarks that “since they appear to be subordinate to the four statements about the āsavas, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition, which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of 4 statements being evolved about the āsavas, to provide symmetry. See Schmithausen 1981:205 & Norman 1982:377-91, 1990:130.

146 As in Sāmaṇṇaphala S (D 2.97/1:83 f), SD 8.10.

147 Nāpārāma itthatāya: lit. “there is no more of ‘thusness.’” See Mahā, nidāna S (D 15.32), SD 5.17.

148 “Steadfast...striving,” atṭhita...padhānam, which should read atṭhita, padhānam. I B Horner that this is a tmesis (M:H 2:401 n3), ie a separation of the parts of a cpd word by intervening word(s), eg “what things soever” (for “whatsoever things”). This occurs in Pāli as follows: (a) traces of the autonomy of preverbs: aijja so vasi (Sadd 627,12-17); (b) insertion of ca, eva, su and forms of aththi or bhavati after the first member of a nominal cpd (Sadd 202 n(e), 481 n12, 627 n13, 767,17-22, 781,7-11). See CPD 1:33* sv.

149 Horner also notes this as a tmesis (M:H 2:401 N 4).
42.2 But how is it, master Gotama, are there gods? \(^{150}\)

“Certainly,\(^{151}\) Bhāra, dvāja, it is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are (superior) gods.\(^{152}\)

42.3 “But how is this, master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘Are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are (superior) gods’? If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?\(^{153}\)

“Bhāra, dvāja, when one is asked, ‘Are there gods?’ [213] whether one answers, ‘There are (superior) gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be so,’ a wise man should draw the clear conclusion that there are gods.”

42.4 “But then why didn’t master Gotama answer me so in the first place?”\(^{154}\)

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhāra, dvāja, that there are gods.”\(^{155}\)

Sanāgārava takes refuge

43 When this was said, the brahmin youth Sanāgārava said to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, Master Gotama! Venerable sir, just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or 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 master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to master Gotama\(^{156}\) for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.\(^{157}\) May master Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evam —

Bibliography

Brown, Robert L.

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\(^{150}\) Cf Kappaka-t.thala S (M 2:130; MA 3:359); also A 1:210, 3:287, 313, 316, 5:331, 334.

\(^{151}\) The implications of the ablative thānaso in the present passage remain unclear, as in other contexts thānaso indicates that something happens “immediately” or “on the spot,” cf eg V 3:70,23; S 8.81/1:193,6; S 45.156/5:50,7; S 54.9/5:321,25; S 55.26/5:381,29; A 5.194/3:238,6; A 7.16/3:298,2; A 8.46/4:263,4; A 10.60/5:108,29. Yet such a meaning does not fit the present context, as it would make little sense for the Buddha to answer that he “immediately” or “on the spot” knew that there were devas. Perhaps thānaso in the present context was intended to underline the expression vidita as a pointer to the personal realization of the Buddha. Perhaps the Buddha’s use of the word thānaso in a somewhat unusual manner was what caused Sanāgārava’s misunderstanding. Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Rb+d in Hartmann 1991:260 reads: [tr]e [dā]niṁ naikāṁṣenā vyā and yena na ekāṁse[na] vyākarosi samt(i devāḥ), indicating that in the Skt discourse, too, a similar misunderstanding took place. (Anatayo’s fn)

\(^{152}\) On the reading adhīdeva in the foll 3 paras, see Intro (3-7), esp 5 & 7 above.

\(^{153}\) Ucce sammatāṁ kho etam Bhāradvāja lokasmiṁ yad idam athi devā ti. “Certainly,” ucce, “intensely, very much, emphatically” (CPD). Comy: ucce nanna sammatāṁ (vi sammā) pākātaṁ matam lokasmiṁ, “with a loud sound commonly agreed upon in the world” (MA 3:454). Comy says that Sanāgārava thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:NB 1304 n921). For Norman’s views, see 1981.

\(^{154}\) Kissa pana me bhavami Gotamo ādiken’ eva na hyākāṣ ti.

\(^{155}\) On this apparently puzzling section, see Intro 7 above.

\(^{156}\) “Blessed Gotama,” bhagavatanaṁ Gotamaṁ.

\(^{157}\) “The community of monks” (bhikkhu,sangha) here clearly refers to the noble community of saints (ariya,sangha). Even today, when a Buddhist takes refuge, he respectively takes the Buddha, the Dharma (the true teaching) and the Sangha (the noble community of saints) as his personal ideal, his method of spiritual development, and his exemplars. These 3 jewels (ti.ratana) are also the refuges and ideals of the conventional Sangha members (ie those who are still unawakened and not even streamwinners yet).


