

Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta

The Greater Discourse Vaccha,gotta

[The awakening of Vaccha,gotta as an arhat]

(Majjhima Nikāya 73/1:489-497)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2008

1 Vaccha,gotta

1.1 VACCHA,GOTTA OF RĀJA,GAHA. The **Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73) records Vaccha,-gotta's discourse with the Buddha as a result of which he decides to go forth and, in due course, becomes an arhat. Vaccha,gotta is one of the philosophically inclined of the early disciples, who often questioning the Buddha and the other monks on the unanswered questions (*avyakāṭa pañha*),¹ and on a number of occasions the Buddha simply remained silent.²

The Thera,gāthā Commentary (ThaA 1:235 f) says that Vaccha,gotta, whose personal name is unknown, comes from a rich brahmin family of the Vaccha (Skt *vatsa*) clan (*vaccha,gotta*). After becoming an expert in brahmanical learning, he fails to find the answer he was seeking, and becomes a wanderer (*paribbājaka*), and later turns to the Buddha's Teaching.³

According to the Sutta commentary, the teachings of the two discourses preceding the **Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73)—the **Te,vijja Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 71)⁴ and the **Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72)⁵—have been given to him, along with those of the **Avyakāṭa Saṃyutta** (S 44.7-11)⁶ and the **(Dāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (A 3.57).⁷ However, from these texts, we have no way of knowing their sequence or the time that separates them.

The **Venāga,pura Sutta** (A 3.63) mentions a Vaccha,gotta, a brahmin of Venāga,pura—that is, Venāga,purika Vaccha,gotta—as the spokesman for the villagers there who profusely praises the Buddha.⁸ The Commentaries are silent regarding him, and he does not seem to appear anywhere else in the early Canon. It is possible that he is identical with our wanderer Vaccha,gotta, who is said to be a native of Rāja,gaha.⁹ The Anguttara Commentary explains *venāga,purika* as meaning “resident of Venāga,pura” (*venāga.pura,vāsī*) (AA 2:291), which means that he is not a native there, and probably a visitor who has gone there to meet the Buddha, or even followed the Buddha there, and introduced the Buddha to the Venāga,pura villagers.

1.2 OTHER VACCHA,GOTTAS. There is a member of the Vaccha,gotta clan, a brahmin of Kapila,-vatthu, who is said to be a childhood “playmate in the dust” (*pamsu,kīlika,sahāya*) of the Bodhi,sattva. After the Bodhisattva renounces the world, he becomes an ascetic (*tapassa*) himself. Then, when the Buddha has arisen in the world, he joins the order, and practising in the forest, becomes an arhat. His Thera,gāthā (Tha 13) show his great love for the forest. Hence, he is known as **Vana,vaccha**, Vaccha of the forest (ThaA 1:60 f).

¹ The Nikāyas record over 60 discourses dealing with Vaccha,gotta's questions: M 71-72/1:481-489; S 33.1-55/3:357-263; A 3.57/1:160-162.

² S 44.10/4:100,17+19; SĀ 961 = T2/245n12 & SA2 195 = T2.444c4.

³ For further details, see SD 6.15 Intro (1).

⁴ M 71/1:481-483 = SD 53.3.

⁵ M 72/1:483-489 = SD 6.15.

⁶ The **(Avyakāṭa) Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44) contains 5 suttas (S 44.7-11/4:391-402) where he questions the Buddha (S 44.8+9+10), Moggallāna (S 44.7+8), Ānanda (S 44.10), and Sabhiya Kaccāna (S 44.11) regarding the unanswered (*avyakāṭa*) questions.

⁷ A 3.57/1:160-162 = SD 22.12, which is about giving (*dāna*). MA:PTS 3:200 notes this as “A 5:193” which, although dealing with the “unanswered” (*avyakāṭa*) topics, is addressed to the wanderer Uttiya. **(Dāna) Vaccha,-gotta S** probably records his Vaccha,gotta's first meeting with the Buddha. See SD 22.12 Intro (1).

⁸ A 3.63/1:180-185 = SD 21.1.

⁹ M 1:489.

There is another **Vana,vaccha**, the son of a rich brahmin of Rāja,gaha, who is present at the Buddha's first meeting with rajah Bimbi,sāra. He is so impressed by the whole occasion, that he decides to join the order. He too becomes an arhat and lives in the forest—hence his name, Vana,vaccha (ThaA 1:236 f). His Thera,gāthā is at Tha 113.

2 Related texts

2.1 TEACHING TO VACCHA,GOTTA. The Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta is special in that it records the peak and goal of Vaccha,gotta's spiritual quest. The discourse has two Chinese parallels, found in two existing versions of the Saṃyukta Āgama.¹⁰ The Burmese and Thai canons call this discourse the Mahā Vaccha Sutta.

From this discourse we have textual evidence that he is already very conversant with the main Buddhist teachings, so that he finally decides to join the order, practise meditation, and attain arhathood. In fact, before the events of the Mahā Vaccha,gotta, we have over 60 discourses recording Vaccha,gotta meeting the Buddha and other great disciples, discussing various doctrine points, especially philosophical topics (characteristic of him).

For Vaccha,gotta's spiritual progress leading up to the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta, you should study the following discourses, more or less in this sequence:

- (1) **(Dāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (A 3.57/1:160-162 = SD 22.12), he asks the Buddha about giving.
- (2) **Tevijja Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 71/1:481-483 = SD 53.3), also called the Cūḷa Vaccha,gotta Sutta, where the Buddha defines the threefold knowledge he possesses.
- (3) **Vaccha,gotta Saṃyutta** (S 33/3:257-262), comprising of 55 short discussions or sutta-cycles of teaching of the Buddha to Vaccha,gotta, all dealing with various reasons for one's subscribing to any of the 10 points.
- (4) **(Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 44.7/4:391-395), Vaccha,gotta questions Moggallāna about the 10 points [2-12] and who answers in terms of the selflessness of the five aggregates.
- (5) **(Avyākata) Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (S 44.8/4:395-398), he asks the Buddha the same question (evidently before the Aggī Vaccha,gotta Sutta, M 72).
- (6) **Kutūhala,sāla Sutta** (S 44.9/4:396-400 = SD 23.15). Rebirth is driven by karmic fuel.
- (7) **(Vaccha,gotta) Ānanda Sutta** (S 44.10/4:400 f). Ānanda explains about not-self.
- (8) **(Vaccha,gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta** (S 44.11/401 f). Sabhiya Kaccāna answers regard the unanswered (*avyakata*) questions.
- (9) **Aggī Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72/1:483-489 = SD 6.15), where the Buddha explains the four logical alternatives (*koṭi*); Vaccha,gotta takes refuge.
- (10) **Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73/1:489-497 = SD 27.4), Vaccha,gotta asks about *akusala* and *kusala*; he joins the order and attains arhathood.

In fact, Buddhaghosa, in commenting on the phrase “**have had a conversations with**” (*saha,kathī*)—where Vaccha,gotta remarks, “I have had conversations with master Gotama for a long time” [§3]—mentions some of these discourses.

2.2 TEACHING “IN BRIEF.” However, Vaccha,gotta also immediately says, “It would be good if the master Gotama would teach me regarding the wholesome and the unwholesome *in brief*.” [§3] **Analayo** thinks that this is strange:

This would seem curious, since one would not expect Vaccha,gotta to come all the way to see the Buddha and then, when asking his question, to make it right away clear that he did not want a long exposition. As a wanderer, one would expect him to have time and therefore to be able to listen to whatever the Buddha might be willing to teach him. (2007, sv M 1:489)

¹⁰ SĀ 964 = T2.246b-247c & SĀ2 198 = T2.446a-447b. SĀ 964 agrees with M 73 in locating the discourse in the squirrels' feeding-ground near Rāja,gaha, while DĀ2 198 simply mentions Rāja,gaha.

Interestingly, the Saṃyukta Āgama versions reports that the Buddha initially refuses to have any discussion at all, and then (on Vaccha,gotta's characteristic insistence) indicates that he will give only a brief exposition on the wholesome and the unwholesome, as he has requested.

Buddhaghosa, however, gives an interesting explanation (that Analayo does not mention), that is, the Buddha knows *that Vaccha,gotta, after all this time, is now ready for spiritual liberation*. Apparently, the Buddha declares that he would give only a brief teaching (since Vaccha,gotta is already familiar with much theoretical Dharma), knowing that Vaccha,gotta would question him further, and this would lead to his joining the order and awakening in due course (MA 3:200).

Analayo, however, makes an interesting connection between Buddhaghosa and the two Saṃyukta Āgama versions of the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta. Buddhaghosa explains that “**in brief**” (*sāṅkhittena*) refers to all the seven works of the Abhidhamma.¹¹

What makes this remark interesting is that the two Saṃyukta Āgama versions also refer to the Abhidhamma [and the Vinaya]. This reference comes as part of their description of what went on in the Buddha's mind before he allowed Vacchagotta to put his questions. According to them, the Buddha decided to make use of the Abhidhamma when listening to Vacchagotta's question.¹²

(2007, sv M 1:489)

It is possible that the translator/s had Buddhaghosa's Majjhima Commentary (the Papañca,sūdanī) (or a related source) with them when they translated this Sutta.¹³ Or, perhaps, as **Analayo** suggests, there is another, even more interesting explanation:

The occurrence of this specification in the two Saṃyukta Āgama versions could however indicate a remark on the Abhidhamma, possibly as representative of teachings in brief, may have formed part of an ancient Indian commentary on this discourse, similar to the remark now found in the Pāli commentary. Such an ancient Indian commentary would have come down during the process of oral transmission together with the discourse to which it belongs, since in an oral setting one would expect both to be recited together.¹⁴ With the discourse and the commentary recited together, it seems quite feasible that due to the dynamics of oral transmission part of the commentary may, perhaps even only accidentally, make its way into the discourse itself. This would explain why the two Saṃyukta Āgama versions, or more probably the Indian originals on which the Saṃyukta Āgama translations were based, bring in the topic of the Abhidhamma in a way that does not seem to make much sense within the context of their presentation. (2007, sv M 1:489)

3 Sutta summary

- [§§1-3] Vaccha,gotta visits the Buddha, remarking that he has had “conversations with master Gotama for a long time” and asks for a “brief teaching” on the wholesome and unwholesome.
- [§§4-5] The Buddha teaches him the ten courses of wholesome karma.
- [§6] The Buddha then abruptly declares that when we destroy craving, we become arhats.
- [§§7-8] Vaccha,gotta asks the Buddha whether there are monks and nuns who are arhats besides the Buddha, the Buddha answers that there are many. Vaccha,gotta questions further and the Buddha answers accordingly regarding:

¹¹ *Satta,pakarane abhidhamma,piṭake ca sabbam saṅkhittam eva* (MA 2:00).

¹² SĀ 964 = T2.246b20: “I will now appropriately use Abhidhamma and Vinaya to accept and receive that [question],” 我今當以阿毘曇律納受於彼 wǒ jīn dāng yǐ āpítánlǜ nà shòu yū bǐ; SĀ2 198 = T2.446a18: “I will listen according to the Abhidhamma and Vinaya to that question,” 吾當聽之若阿毘曇毘尼隨其所問 wú dāng tīng zhī ruò āpítánpīnī suí qí suǒ wèn.

¹³ After all, it is well known that the Vinaya Commentary (Samanta,pasadikā) was tr into Chinese by Saṅgha,-bhadrā in 489, but when it still appears to be an anonymous work. But it is possible that Saṅgha,bhadrā knew or thought that Buddhaghosa was its author: see Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 1996: 104 (§209).

¹⁴ Contra KR Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*, 1997: 158-160. [See detailed n Analayo ad loc.]

- [§9] ...laymen non-returners...
- [§10] ...laymen once-returners and streamwinners...
- [§11] ...laywomen non-returners...
- [§12] ...laywomen once-returners and streamwinners...
- [§13] Vaccha,gotta joyfully roars his lion-roar, declaring the holy life under the Buddha is complete,
- [§14] gives the Ganges simile,
- [§15] takes refuge, and asks to be admitted as a monk.
- [§16] The Buddha tells him regarding the Vinaya provision that outsiders need to go on probation, but makes an exception of him (probably he is already a streamwinner then).
- [§17] Vaccha,gotta is ordained (and attains non-return); he returns to the Buddha to ask for higher teachings.
- [§18] The Buddha teaches him to cultivate calm and insight together, so that he is able to gain the six direct knowledges.
- [§§19-24] the six direct knowledges.
- [§§25-26] Vaccha,gotta goes into solitary retreat and gains arhathood.
- [§§27-28] Meeting some visiting monks, he instructs them to inform the Buddha of his arhathood. The Buddha acknowledges, declaring that he already knew about it from the devas.

4 Some key terms

4.1 AKUSALA AND KUSALA. There are two pairs of ethical terms common in early Buddhism, that is, *puñña,pāpa* (“good and evil”) and *kusalākusala* (“wholesome and unwholesome”) [§§4-5]. The former, *puñña,pāpa* are the older terms, used by non-Buddhists mostly in a ritual sense, that is, when the ancient (usually brahmanical) religious rituals were properly discharged and performed, it was said to be *puñña* (“good, merit”), and when neglected or improperly performed, as *pāpa* (“bad, evil, demerit”). It is in this connection that **the Padhāna Sutta** (Sn 3.2) records the Bodhisattva as declaring to Māra, “I see not even the slightest need for merit” (*anumatto’pi puññena attho mayham na vijjati*).¹⁵

The reason for the Bodhisattva’s declaration is understandable: both *puñña* and *pāpa* (or *apuñña*)—that is, good and evil, merit and demerit, keep us in samsara. Our store *puñña* bring us with good rebirths, worldly blessings, and continued existence. But they come in pairs: there is either *puñña* or there is *pāpa*. We either enjoy life or suffer when the sources of joy are absent, and it goes on like that. Indeed, the world turns on *puñña* and *pāpa*; for, it is karma. And karma is either suffering or delayed and disguised suffering: the world stands in suffering (*dukkhe loko patiṭṭhito*).¹⁶ The world turns on suffering.

The more common early Buddhist term of good and evil in the spiritual or liberating sense is *kusalākusala*, that is, wholesome and unwholesome. The word originally and generally means “skillful,” as one is skilled in some field of study, or an art, or playing a musical instrument, and so on. The Buddha gives new meanings to this pair of word. Here, *kusala* (“wholesome” refers to the vehicle of karma that takes a spiral path leading out of samsara, that is, in to nirvana.

The Buddha re-visioned that nature and usage of good and evil: firstly, by demythologizing *puñña,-pāpa*, and secondly, by spiritualizing *kusalākusala*, that is, going beyond its sense of merely mundane skills. As **Nathan Katz** has proposed, “*puñña* could better be seen as the habituating ground of *kusala*... so that the practice of *puñña* and the practice of *kusala* are not separate and discrete, but continuous” (1982: 166).

One of the simplest Buddhist models used here for the “wholesome path” is that of the three trainings (*ti,sikkhā*), that is, the training in moral virtue (body and speech), in meditation (the mind), and in wisdom (liberating knowledge).¹⁷ The Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta uses the model of the ten wholesome courses of karma (*dasa kusala,kamma,patha*) [§5].¹⁸ But **what is the difference between *puñña* and *kusala* here?**

¹⁵ Sn 431; Mvst 2:238,17*; Lalv 261,18*. See Sn:N 1992:228 n431.

¹⁶ **Uḍḍita S** (216/1.67/1:40) = **Pihita S** (218/1.68/1:40).

¹⁷ See **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c.

¹⁸ See **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.7-14/1:286-288) = SD 5.7.

The key difference, as already hinted above, is that while *puñña* is related to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,-bata*), which are externalized acts, *kusala* involves wholesome intention (*kusala,cetanā*), that is, mindfulness (*sati*) and some level of wisdom (*pañña*), which entails internalized practices.

In short, we can here speak of three levels of good, as **Y Karunadasa** has done.¹⁹ What is morally good has two levels: one represented by *puñña* and the other by *kusala*. Karunadasa explains:

Both have significance in the context of the Buddhist doctrine of karma, because both operate within the sphere of karma. In this connection it must also be noted here that Nibbana is described as *kammanirodha*, ie as the cessation of karma. (1994: 27 f (digital ed p7 of 10)

Now this question arises: if acts of *kusala* prepare us on the way to nirvana, what is the position of *kusala* after that? It should be understood here that since nirvana transcends karma, there cannot be any acts of *kusala* karma for one who has attained nirvana. However, notes **Karunadasa**,

there is evidence to suggest that at this level *kusala* begins to operate at a higher level, a level that transcends the operation of karma. This explains why one who has attained Nibbana is described as *sampanna,kusala* (endowed with *kusala* qualities), *parama,kusala* (has reached the culmination in what is *kusala*). He is the one who has reached perfection (*parami-p,patta*) in noble virtue (*ariya,sīla*), in noble concentration (*ariya,samādhi*), in noble wisdom (*ariya,paññā*) and in noble emancipation (*ariya,vimutti*). (1994: 27 f (digital ed p7 of 10; Pali standardized)

The various *kusala*-compounds quoted by Karunadasa are from **the Samaṇa,maṇḍika Sutta** (M 78), which explains *kusala* and *akusala* in terms of the arhat, that is, how the arhat is both awakened and morally virtuous:

And, carpenter, **where do these wholesome habits end without remains?**

Of their ending, too, it has been spoken: here, carpenter, a monk is morally virtuous (*sīlavā*), but he is *not made of moral virtue* [he does not identify with it] (*sīla,maya*),²⁰ and he understands, as they really are, the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, where these wholesome habits end without remains. (M 78.11(3)/2:27) = SD 18.9

It is in this sense, that the arhat is said to have abandoned both good and evil (*puñña.pāpa,pahīna*, Dh 39c).²¹

4.2 LIBERATION OF MIND & LIBERATION THROUGH WISDOM. The terms, “liberation of mind” (*ceto,vimutti*) and “liberation through wisdom” (*paññā,vimutti*) are mentioned by Vaccha,gotta [§7]. The former, the liberation of mind (*ceto,vimutti*), refers to mental freedom that arises through the destruction of the mental hindrances,²² while the latter, the liberation through wisdom (*paññā,vimutti*) is the realization or nirvana.

All arhats, as such, are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration.²³ One who is “liberated by

¹⁹ See Karunadasa 1994: 27 f (digital ed p7 of 10).

²⁰ *Nirodho pi nesam vutto, idha thapati, bhikkhu sīlavā hoti no ca sīla,mayo*: see §11(3)n. Of *sīla,maya*, Comy says that, being endowed with moral habits, there is nothing further than this to be done (MA 3:270). On the various meanings of *-maya*, see VvA 10.

²¹ For a discussion, see **Beyond Good and Evil** = SD 18.7 esp (9).

²² **Mental hindrances** (*nīvaraṇa*), ie (1) sense-desire (*kāma-c,chanda*) or covetousness (*abhijjhā*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*), (4) restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), and (5) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*). They hinder mental focus or samadhi. For details, see **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126) = SD 3.12 & **Mahā Assapura S** (M 39.12-18/1:274 f); also **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.69-73/171-73), (**Ānanda**) **Subha S** (D 10/1:207), **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36/1:60). MA 2:318-321 gives a detailed account of each of the 5 similes. See also Nyanaponika, *The Five Mental Hindrances*, BPS Wheel no 26, 1961: 27-34.

²³ The differences btw the 2 types of liberation are mentioned in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f).

wisdom” or “wisdom-liberated” (*paññā,vimutta*) arhat “may not have reached the eight liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*)²⁴ ‘in his own body’ (that is, personally attaining it), but through seeing with wisdom, his ‘mental influxes are destroyed’ (*khīṇ’āsava*)”²⁵ (M 70.16/1:478).

The arhats who can attain the eight liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*) are called liberated both ways (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*), that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. These liberations include the nine successive attainments reached by the power of concentration, that is, the four dhyanas (*jhāna*), the four formless attainments (*ārappa samāpatti*), and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha* = *nirodha,samāpatti*).

The arhat liberated both ways, as such, has knowledge of the different realms of existence. This indirect reference to the realms gives the Buddha the occasion to present a psychocosmic map. Having explained the conditions for rebirth, the Buddha goes on to show how the realms are divided into the seven stations for consciousness (*viññāṇa-t,thitiyā*) and the two spheres (*āyatana*).²⁶ Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways.”²⁷ Both win arhathood through wisdom and their wisdom is the same. In short,

The distinguishing mark between them, then, is the “bodily suffusion” of the immaterial liberations—the four immaterial [formless] attainments and the cessation of perception and feeling.

The *ubhatobhāgavimutta* arahat has this experience, the *paññāvimutta* lacks it.

(Bodhi 1984:47 f; see 48 n1)

4.3 CALM AND INSIGHT. The Aṅguttara says that the two states that partake of (or conduce to) spiritual knowledge (*vijjā,bhāgiyā*) are, namely, calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) [§18]. The cultivation of calm leads to the destruction of passion, and the cultivation of insight to the destruction of ignorance (A 2.4.10/1:61). The distinction between the two is expressed by “liberation of mind” (*ceto,vimutti*) and “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā,vimutti*) respectively. “However,” notes **Analayo**,

these two expressions are not simply equivalent in value relative to realization. While “freedom by wisdom” (*paññā,vimutti*) refers to the realization of *Nibbāna*, ‘freedom of the mind’ (*ceto-vimutti*), unless further specified as ‘unshakeable’ (*akuppa*), does not imply the same. “Freedom of the mind” can also connote temporary experiences of mental freedom, such as the attainment

²⁴ For a full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f) & SD 5.17.35 Intro (10). See also **Saṅgīti S** (D 33/3.1(11)3:262, **Das’uttara S** (D 34.2.1(1)/3:228); **Vimokkha S** (A 8.66/4:306); also **Saṅkhār’upapatti S** (M 120.37/3:103) = SD 3.4.

²⁵ *Āsava*, “mental influxes, or mental fluxes” (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*oghā*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (**D 33.1.10(20)3:216**; **M 9.68-71/1:55**, **39.21/1:279**; **A 3.59/1:166-168**, **3.67/1:197-199**, **6.63/3:410-417**). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to the attainment of arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

²⁶ See eg **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15/2:55-71) = SD 5.17. Elsewhere these are called “the 9 abodes of beings” (*nava,satt’āvāsa*) (**D 33.3.2(3)/3:263**, **34.2.2(3)/3:288**; **A 9.24/4:401**). Here *āyatana* is rendered as “sphere,” referring to a realm or level of meditation; where it refers to the senses, it is tr as “base.” *Avacara* (lit “down-wandering”) is tr as “realm,” but “sphere” is often used here, too. See SD 5.17 Intro, Table 2 & SD 17.8a (5.2) & (11.2).

²⁷ On the 4 types of arhats, see **Te,vijja S** (D 13) = SD 1.8(2.1). **Richard Gombrich**, in ch 4 of his book *How Buddhism Began* (1996:96-134), discusses how he thinks *ceto,vimutti* and *paññā,vimutti* came to mean different things in the early development of Buddhist doctrine. This development was closely connected with the later scholastic view that one could gain awakening without meditation, which some scholars like Gombrich think the Buddha did not envisage (1996:96). See also T Brekke, *Religious Motivation and the Origins of Buddhism*, 2002: 67.

of the four dhyana, or the development of the divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) [eg M 1:296]. Thus this passage is not presenting two different approaches to realization but two aspects of the meditative path, one of which is not sufficient by itself to bring realization.

(Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, 2003:89 f)²⁸

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²⁸ See also Lily de Silva, “Cetovimutti, paññāvimutti and ubhatobhāgavimutti,” *Pāli Buddhist Review* 3,3 1978: 118-145.

The Greater Discourse to Vaccha,gotta

(M 73/1:489-497)

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the squirrels' feeding ground in the Bamboo Grove near Rāja,gaha.

Vaccha,gotta meets the Buddha

2 Then the wanderer Vaccha,gotta approached the Blessed One, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta sat down at one side. Sitting thus as one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said this to the Blessed One:

3 "I have had conversations with master Gotama for a long time.²⁹ It would be good if the master Gotama would teach me regarding the wholesome and the unwholesome *in brief*."

"Vaccha, I could teach you regarding the wholesome and the unwholesome *in brief*, and I could teach you regarding the wholesome and the unwholesome *in detail*, too. But, Vaccha, I will teach you regarding the wholesome and the unwholesome *in brief*.³⁰

Listen well, pay attention, I will speak."

"Yes, master Gotama," the wanderer Vaccha,gotta answered the Blessed One in assent.

The 10 courses of wholesome karma

4 The Blessed One said this:

"Greed, Vaccha, is unwholesome;	non-greed is wholesome.
Hate, Vaccha, is unwholesome;	non-hate is wholesome.
Delusion, Vaccha, is unwholesome;	non-delusion is wholesome.

Such, Vaccha, are these three unwholesome states and three wholesome states.

5 Vaccha,³¹

(1) destroying life is unwholesome;	refraining from destroying life is wholesome;
(2) taking the not-given is unwholesome;	refraining from taking the not-given is wholesome;
(3) sexual misconduct is unwholesome;	refraining from sexual misconduct is wholesome;
(4) false speech is unwholesome;	refraining from false speech is wholesome;
(5) malicious talk is unwholesome; [490]	refraining from malicious talk is wholesome;
(6) harsh speech is unwholesome;	refraining from harsh speech is wholesome;
(7) idle chatter is unwholesome;	refraining from idle chatter is wholesome;
(8) covetousness is unwholesome;	refraining from covetousness is wholesome;
(9) ill will is unwholesome;	refraining from ill will is wholesome;
(10) wrong view is unwholesome;	refraining from wrong view is wholesome. ³²

Such, Vaccha, are these ten unwholesome states and ten wholesome states.

6 ³³Vaccha, when a monk has abandoned craving, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth,

²⁹ *Dīgha,rattāham bhotā gotamena saha,kathī*. See Intro (2.1-2).

³⁰ On a teaching "in brief" (*saṅkhittena*), see Intro (4.1).

³¹ For a more detailed listing, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.7-14/1:286-288) = SD 5.7.

³² *Micchā,ditṭhi kho, vaccha, akusalam sammā,ditṭhi kusalam*. This is qu at Kvu 14.8.3/505, which also quotes: "Puṇṇa, there are two destinies for one with wrong view, I say: either hell or the animal kingdom!" (M 57.3b/1:388; S 42.2/4:307)

³³ This new statement comes in rather abruptly, as the prec section speaks of the 10 courses of karma, and here it is about "cutting off craving at the root," ie, the attainment of arhathood. The two Saṃyukta Āgama version, however, provide a link between these two topics, indicating that to understand the 3 roots and the 10 courses of karma according to reality forms the basis for the destruction of the influxes and attaining liberation (SĀ 964 = T2.246c3; SĀ 198 = T2446a29).

then that monk is an arhat, with mental influxes destroyed,³⁴ who has lived the holy life, done what has to be done, laid down the burden,³⁵ reached his own goal, destroyed the fetters of being, liberated through right knowledge.”³⁶

Monastic arhats

7 (a) ARHAT MONKS. “Other than master Gotama,³⁷ is there any one monk, a disciple of master Gotama, who,

having right here and now realized for himself through direct knowledge, attained and dwelled in the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom³⁸ that are influx-free, with the destruction of the mental influxes?”³⁹

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more monks, who are my disciples, who,

having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom that are influx-free, with the destruction of the mental influxes, dwell therein.”

8 (b) ARHAT NUNS. “Other than master Gotama, other than the monks, is there any one nun, a disciple of master Gotama, who,

having right here and now realized for herself through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom that are influx-free, with the destruction of the mental influxes, dwells therein?”

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more nuns, who are my disciples, who,

having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom that are influx-free, with the destruction of the mental influxes, dwell therein.”

Laymen saints

9 (c) LAYMEN NON-RETURNERS. “Other than master Gotama; other than the monks; other than the nuns, is there any one layman, a disciple of master Gotama, a householder, dressed in white, a brahmachari [a celibate], who,

having exterminated the five lower fetters,⁴⁰

³⁴ “Mental influxes destroyed,” *khīn’āsava*: see Intro (4.2).

³⁵ “Laid down the burden,” *ohīta,bhāra*. Comy mentions 3 kinds of burden: the aggregates (*khandha*); the mental defilements (*kilesa*); and formations (*abhisankhāra*) (MA 1:43). We are nothing but the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness); the mental defilements cause us suffering; the formations are karma that fuel our lives and rebirth.

³⁶ The prec portion of this sentence is a stock description of the arhat. “Right knowledge” (*samma-d-aññā*), alt tr “final knowledge,” ie liberating wisdom that is the basis for arhathood.

³⁷ *Ṭiṭṭhatu bhavaṃ gotamo*. Here *ṭiṭṭhatu* (imp of *ṭiṭṭhati*, “he stands”) has a curious idiomatic usage, reflection an exception, eg “not only in the world to come, but even in this world itself, he digs up his root” (*ṭiṭṭhatu para,loko so pana puggalo idha,lokasmim yeva...attano mūlam khaṇati*, DhA 3:356); see DPL: *Ṭiṭṭhati* and *Ṭhāti* (p509).

³⁸ “Liberation of mind and liberation through wisdom,” see Intro (4.2).

³⁹ Paraphrase: “Is there any other disciples of yours who has directly attained the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom living now?” On this question and the next, Comy says that Vaccha,gotta thinks that arhathood is the exclusive domain of the Buddha (MA 3:201). On “mental influxes,” *āsava*, see Intro (4.2)n.

⁴⁰ **The 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*) are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,dīṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (or remorse) (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*kāma,rāga*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oramabhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*ud-dhambhāgiya*). The abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*) (see **Ānā-**

who spontaneously arises (in the Pure Abodes),⁴¹ therein attains nirvana,
and of a nature not to return from that world?”⁴²

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more laymen, who are my disciples, householders, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibates], who,

having exterminated the five lower fetters, [491]
spontaneously arise (in the Pure Abodes), therein attain nirvana,
and of a nature not to return from that world.”

10 (d) LAYMEN STREAMWINNERS. “Other than master Gotama; other than the monks; other than the nuns; other than the laymen, householder, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibates], is there any one layman, a disciple of master Gotama, a householder, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures,⁴³

who is a doer of the Teaching,
follower of instructions,
crossed beyond doubt,
become free of uncertainties,
gained fearless confidence,
and independent of others, dwells in the Teaching?”⁴⁴

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more laymen, who are my disciples, householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures,

who are doers of the Teaching,
followers of instructions,
crossed beyond doubt,
become free of uncertainties,
gained fearless confidence, and
independent of others, dwell in the Teaching.”

pānasati S, M 118.10 = 7.13). This verse technically refers to the non-returner, but here is spoken of an arhat, one who has broken all 10 fetters: see **Laṭukikopama S** (M 66.17/1:454) = SD 28.11.

⁴¹ The Pure Abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*) are the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to and attain nirvana as arhats (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). The 5 pure abodes, ie their inhabitants and respective lifespans, are: These worlds are Āviha (“Non-declining,” 1000 MK), Ātappa (“Unworried,” 2000 MK), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible,” 4000 MK), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned,” 8000 MK) and Akaniṭṭhā (“Highest,” 16000 MK) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). MK = *Mahā Kappa*. that is, a full cycle of a world-period or cycle of the universe (V 3:4 = D 3:51, 111 = It 99; D 1:14; A 2:142). For celestial map, see **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11/1:211-223) = SD 1.7; for world cycle, see **Aggañña S** (D 27/3:80-97) = SD 2.19.

⁴² “Householder... from that world,” *atthi pana bhoto gotamassa ek'upāsako 'pi sāvako gihī odāta,vasano brahma,cārī yo pañcannaṃ oram,bhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhaya opapātiko tattha parinibbāyī anāvatti,-dhammo tasmā lokā'ti*. This question is about the non-returner, which even a layman may attain. However, such laymen will remain naturally celibate because they have destroyed the fetter of sense-desire. Note here that no lay disciples are mentioned as attaining arhathood: see **Laymen Saints** = SD 8.6(13).

⁴³ “A householder... enjoying sense-pleasures,” *gihī odāta,vasano kāma,bhogī*.

⁴⁴ “Gone beyond doubt... in the Teacher’s Teaching,” *sasana,karo ovāda-p,paṭikāro tinna,vicikiccho vigata,-katham,katho vesāraja-p,patto apara-p,paccayo satthu,sāsane viharati*, which refers to the once-returner and the streamwinner, who may be incelibate laypersons (but keeping to the 5 precepts): as in **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3/1:110), **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5/1:148), **Cūla Saccaka S** (M 35.24/1:234 f), **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.10/1:491), **Upāli S** (M 56/1:380), **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73/1:491), **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74/1:501), **Brahmāyu S** (M 91/2:145), **(Licchavī) Siha S** (A 8.12/4:186), **Ugga S 1**(A 8.21/4:210), **Ugga S 2**(A 8.22/4:213), **Suppabuddha Kuṭṭhi S** (U 5.3/50). A longer pericope—*diṭṭha,dhammo patta,dhammo vidita,dhammo pariyogaḥa,dhammo tinna,vicikiccho vigata,katham,katho vesāraja-p,patto apara-p,paccayo satthu,sāsane* (“having seen, mastered, known, immersed and himself in the Dharma,...”)—is found in ref to: Yasa’s father (Mv 7.10c/V 1:16) = SD 11.2(7), & the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti (**Ambaṭṭha S**, D 3.2.22/1:110) = SD 21.3.

Laywomen saints

11 (e) LAYWOMEN NON-RETURNERS. “Other than master Gotama; other than the monks; other than the nuns; other than the laymen, householders, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibates]; other than the laymen, householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures, is there any one laywoman, a disciple of master Gotama, a householder, dressed in white, a brahmachari [a celibate],

who, having exterminated the five lower fetters,
spontaneously arises (in the Pure Abodes), therein attains nirvana,
and of a nature not to return from that world?”

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more laywomen, who are my disciples, householders, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibates],

who, having exterminated the five lower fetters,
spontaneously arise (in the Pure Abodes), therein attain nirvana,
and of a nature not to return from that world.”

12 (f) LAYWOMEN STREAMWINNERS. “Other than master Gotama; other than the monks; other than the nuns; other than the laymen, householders, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibates]; other than the laywomen, householders, dressed in white, brahmacharis [celibate], is there any one laywoman, a disciple of master Gotama, a householder, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures,

who is a doer of the Teaching,
follower of instructions,
crossed beyond doubt,
become free of uncertainties,
gained fearless confidence, and
independent of others, dwells in the Teaching?”

“Not just one, Vaccha, nor a hundred, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but far more laywomen, who are my disciples, householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures,

who are doers of the Teaching,
followers of instructions,
crossed beyond doubt,
become free of uncertainties,
gained fearless confidence, and
independent of others, dwell in the Teaching.”

Vaccha,gotta’s lion-roar: The holy life is complete

13a “Master Gotama, if master Gotama were to be the only one accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished monks, [492] —then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.⁴⁵

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama is accomplished in the Dharma, *and* the monks, too, are accomplished—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

13b Master Gotama, if master Gotama and the monks were to be the only ones accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished nuns—then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama, the monks, *and* the nuns, too, are accomplished in the Dharma—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

13c Master Gotama, if master Gotama, the monks, and the nuns, were to be the only ones accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis—then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.

⁴⁵ *Sace hi bho gotama imam dhammam bhavam yeva gotamo aradhako abhavissa, no ca kho bhikkhu aradhaka abhavissamsu; evam idam brahma,cariyam aparipuraṃ abhavissa ten’aṅgena.*

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, *and* the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, too, are accomplished in the Dharma—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

13d Master Gotama, if master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, and the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, were to be the only ones accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished laymen householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures—then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, *and* the laymen householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures, too, are accomplished in the Dharma—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

13e Master Gotama, if master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, and the laywomen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, were to be the only ones accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished laywomen householders, white-dressed [493] brahmacharis—then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, the laymen householders, dressed in white enjoying sense-pleasures, *and* the laywomen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, too, are accomplished in the Dharma—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

13f Master Gotama, if master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, and the laywomen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, were to be the only ones accomplished in this Dharma, but there were to be *no* accomplished laywomen householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures—then, the holy life would be incomplete on that account.

But, master Gotama, because master Gotama, the monks, the nuns, the laymen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, the laymen householders, dressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures, the laywomen householders, white-dressed brahmacharis, *and* the laywomen householders dressed in white enjoying sense-pleasures, too, are accomplished in the Dharma—then, this holy life is thus complete on that account.

The Ganges simile⁴⁶

14 Master Gotama, just as the river Ganges slopes towards the ocean, leads to the ocean, inclines towards the ocean, flowing into the ocean,⁴⁷

even so, this assembly of master Gotama, with its householders and renunciants,⁴⁸ slopes towards nirvana, leads to nirvana, inclines towards nirvana, emptying into nirvana.⁴⁹

Vaccha,gotta joins the order

15 Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, master Gotama! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or

⁴⁶ This imagery is perhaps the most common imagery in the Saṃyutta, illustrating the various aspects of the Dharma leading to nirvana, and is as such called **Gaṅgā Peyyāla** (the Ganges repetition). They occur at the end of the foll: Magga Saṃyutta (S 5:38), Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta (S 5:190), Indriya Saṃyutta (S 5:241), Bala Saṃyutta (S 5:251), & Iddhi,pāda Saṃyutta (S 5:290). The Saṃyukta Āgama versions of the Mahā Vaccha,gotta, however, do not have this simile; instead they compare the disciple's gradual awakening toward nirvana to how water from heavy rain flows towards the sea (SĀ 964 = T2/247a15 & SĀ 198 = T2.446c17).

⁴⁷ *Seyyathā'pi, bho gotama, gaṅgā nadī samudda'ninnā samudda'poṇā samudda'pabbhārā samuddam āhacca tiṭṭhati*. This simile is found in **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.14/1:493), **Samudda,ninna S 1** (S 45.97/5:39), **Samudda,ninna S 7** (S 45.109/5:40), **Samudda,ninna S 13** (S 45.121/5:41), **Samudda,ninna S 19** (S 45.133/5:41). The expression *āhacca tiṭṭhati* is fig here, but also occurs as *amata,dvāram āhacca tiṭṭhati*, “he stands knocking at the door of the deathless” (S 2:43, 45, 58, 80).

⁴⁸ *Parisā sa,gahaṭṭha,pabbajitā*, cf V 1:115.

⁴⁹ *Evam evāyam bhoto gotamassa parisā sa,gahaṭṭha,pabbajitā nibbāna,ninnā nibbāna,poṇā nibbāna,pabbhārā nibbānam āhacca tiṭṭhati*. See 2 prec nn.

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,
 even so, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by master Gotama.

I go to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

May I receive the going-forth before master Gotama;⁵⁰ may I receive the ordination.” [494]

16a ⁵¹“Vaccha, anyone who was previously a follower of an outside teaching and wishes to go forth in this Dharma and Vinaya, and wishes for the ordination, has to go on a probation of four months.⁵²

At the end of the four months, the monks who are satisfied⁵³ would give him the going-forth [novice initiation] and ordain him into the state of a monk [higher ordination].

However, I see a difference amongst individuals here.”⁵⁴

16b “If, bhante,⁵⁵ anyone who was previously a follower of an outside teaching and wishes to go forth in this Dharma and Vinaya, and wishes for the ordination, has to go on a *probation of four months*, ... I will take that probation for four years!

At the end of the four years, let the monks who are satisfied give me the going-forth [novice initiation] and ordain me into the state of a monk [higher ordination].”⁵⁶

17a Then Vaccha,gotta the wanderer, received the going forth and the ordination in the presence of the Blessed One.⁵⁷

Vaccha,gotta learns about psychic powers

17b And, the venerable Vaccha,gotta, not long after he was ordained, half a month after he was ordained, the venerable Vaccha,gotta approached the Blessed One, and saluted him. Having saluted the Blessed One, he sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the venerable Vaccha,gotta said this to the Blessed One:

⁵⁰ Note that even up to this point, Vaccha,gotta addresses the Buddha as “master Gotama” (*bho Gotama*). But see §16b where he begins to address the Buddha as *bhante*.

⁵¹ This section on the ordination of outsiders, as at **Kassapa Sīhanāda S** (D 8.24/1:176), **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.5.28b-29) = SD 9, **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57.14a/1:391) = SD 23.11, **Acela Kassapa S** (S 12.17/2:18-22) = SD 18.5, & **Sabhiya S** (Sn 3.6/p102).

⁵² This rule and procedure are found at Mv 1.38 = V 1:69; see also D 1:176; M 1:494, 512; S 2:21; Sn p101 f.

⁵³ “Satisfied,” *āraddha,citta*, ie satisfied that the probate has fulfilled all conditions as stipulated at Mv 1.38 = V 1:69 (VA 5:990; DA 2:363; MA 3:106; SA 2:37; SnA 2:436).

⁵⁴ *Api ca m’etha puggala,vemattatā viditā ti. Saṅkhitta S 2* (S 48.13) explains that “the difference in individuals” (*puggala,vemattatā*) is due to one’s level in cultivating the 5 spiritual faculties (*indriya*)—faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom—“Thus, monks, due to a difference in the faculties there is a difference in the fruits; due to a difference in the fruits, there is a difference among individuals” (S 48.13/5:200). In other words, the Buddha takes exception of him, as he does in the case of the fire-worshipping matter hair ascetics (the 3 **Kassapa brothers**) (V 1:34 f; J 1:82, 4:180; SnA 2:436 citing V 1:71) and **Acela Kassapa** (D 8.24/2:176 f); see SnA 2:436. The wanderer **Sabhiya**, however, has to observe the 4-month probation (Sn 3.6/p102). It is possible that these candidates are already at least streamwinners: see §16b where Vaccha,gotta declares his faith. See **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57.14a/1:391) n = SD 23.11.

⁵⁵ This is the first time the Buddha, Vaccha,gotta addresses the Buddha as *bhante* (“venerable sir”), ie, after the Buddha waives the 4-month probation period for wanderers, so that he is accepted into the order immediately.

⁵⁶ This response is also recorded of the foll people: Acela Kassapa (**Mahā Sīha,nāda S**, D 8.24/ 2:176 f); the wanderer Subhadda (**Mahā,parinibbāna S**, D 16.5.29/2:152 = SD 9); the wanderer Vacchagotta (**Mahā Vaccha,-gotta S**, M 73.16/1:494); and Māgandiya (**Māgandiya S**, M 75.27/1:512). However, Subhadda’s case is unique in that he wins arhathood on the same night. Considering the faith shown in this manner, it is possible that these candidates are already at least streamwinners, which would also explain why the Buddha “sees a difference amongst individuals here.” [§16a]. See prec n.

⁵⁷ *Alattha kho vaccha,gotto paribbājako bhagavato santike pabbajjam alattha upasampadam*. The preposition *santike* (“in the presence of”) here, does not presuppose that the Buddha himself ordains Vaccha,gotta. From what is already stated regarding probation for candidates who are erstwhile “outside the teaching,” it is more likely that he is ordained by a chapter of monks.

“Bhante, whatever knowledge that a trainee should attain, I have attained. May the Blessed One teach me a higher teaching (*uttari dhamma*).”⁵⁸

18 “In that case, Vaccha, cultivate two higher teachings: calm and insight.⁵⁹ Vaccha, when these two teachings—calm and insight—are cultivated further, they bring about a penetration of the many elements (*dhātu*).

19 (1) THE VARIOUS PSYCHIC POWER.⁶⁰ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,
‘May I wield **the various psychic powers**, thus.’⁶¹

Having been one, may I become many; having been many, may I become one.

May I appear, may I disappear.

May I go unhindered through walls, through ramparts, through mountains as if through space.

May I dive in and out of the earth as if it were water.

May I walk on water without sinking as if it were earth.

May I, sitting cross-legged, fly through the air like a winged bird.

May I, with my hand, touch and stroke even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful.

May I have power over my body up to as far as the Brahmā world.’—

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.⁶²

20 (2) THE DIVINE EAR (CLAIRAUDIENCE).⁶³ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,

‘May I, by means of **the divine-ear element**, [495] purified and surpassing the human, hear both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.’—

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

21 (3) MIND-READING.⁶⁴ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,

‘May I, having encompassed them with my own mind, **understand the minds of other beings**, of other individuals.’⁶⁵

May I know a mind with lust as a mind with lust,

and a mind without lust as a mind without lust.

May I know a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,

and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion.

⁵⁸ Comy qu Dhs: “what is the state of trainees” (*katame ca dhammā sekhā*) (Dhs 1016, 1400), and says that non-return is attained. He asks the Buddha about the practice of insight for attaining the path of arhathood. The Buddha however sees that he has the supporting conditions for the six direct knowledges. So he is taught calmness (*samatha*) for producing the five mundane direct knowledge and insight (*vipassanā*) for attaining arhathood. (MA 3:201 f)

⁵⁹ *Samatho ca vipassanā ca*: see Intro (4.3).

⁶⁰ *Iddhi,vidhā*. Cf **Ākañkheyya S** (M 6), which mentions the 6 direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) (M 6.14-19/1:34-36) = SD 59.1; See M:ÑB 37. Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11) where the Buddha disapproves of exhibiting such powers (D 11.4-5/1:213 f) = SD 1.7. For details on the 6 direct knowledges, see Vism 12-13.

⁶¹ The foll passage is in the 3rd person, but is here rendered as 1st person, in keeping with this opening line.

⁶² *Yassa yassa ca abhiññā,sacchi,karaṇiyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhininnāmeti abhiññā,sacchikiriyāya, tatra tatr’eva sakkhi,bhabbataṃ pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane*. Qu at DA 125. The latter phrase—*tatra tatra...sati sati āyatane*—is a common stock phrase that introduces the attainment of the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*): **Mahā Vaccha,-gotta S** (M 73.19/1:494 = SD 27.4); **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119.29 f/3:96 f = SD 12.21); **Paṃsu,dhovaka S** (A 3.-100a.4/1:255 = SD 19.11a); **Upakkilesa S** (A 5.23/3:16-19); **Pañcaṅgika S** (A 5.28.11/3:27); **Dutiya Iddhi,pāda S** (A 5.68/3:82 f); **Sakkhi,bhabba S** (A 6.71/3:426 f); **Gāvī Upamā S** (A 9.35/4:421 f). It refers to the preliminary conditions (*āyatana*) for the 6 direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) which follow later. The preliminary condition for the first 5 direct knowledges (the mundane ones) is the 4th dhyana, and insight, for the 6th direct knowledge (the destruction of the influxes, which is supramundane), ie arhathood. See SD 12.21 Intro (6).

⁶³ “Divine-ear element,” *dibba,sota,dhātu*, clairaudience.

⁶⁴ *Ceto,pariya,ñāna*.

⁶⁵ The following section (italicized) is a list of mental states is apparently taken from **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.12/2:299 = M 10.34/1:59), where it fits more appropriately. (Walshe, D:W 546 n131). On another def of mind-reading (4 kinds), see **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28.6/3:103 f) = SD 14.10.

*May I know a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,
and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion.
May I know a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,
and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and remorse] as a distracted mind.
May I know an exalted mind [through the lower or higher dhyana] as an exalted mind,
and an unexalted mind [not developed by dhyana] as an unexalted mind.
May I know a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,
and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind.⁶⁶
May I know a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,
and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind.
May I know a released mind as a released mind,
and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.’—*

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

22 (4) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES.⁶⁷ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,

‘May I **recollect my manifold past existence**, that is to say, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, thus:

“There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. 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 pleasure and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.”—

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right. [496]

23 (5) THE KNOWLEDGE OF DEATH AND BIRTH (THE DIVINE EYE).⁶⁸ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,

‘May I see—by means of **the divine eye** [clairvoyance],⁶⁹ purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-arising, and he knows how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, in the heavens, in the suffering states, faring in accordance to 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, with the body’s breaking up, have re-arisen in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

⁶⁶ Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

⁶⁷ *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati,nāṇa*, lit “the knowledge of the recollection of past dwellings [existences].” The remainder of this is expanded into 4 sections in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.1.31-34/1:13-16 = SD 25.3(76.3)) and 3 sections in **Sampasādaniya S** (D 27.15-17/3:107-112 = SD 10.12). In both cases, each explains how the eternalist view arose. This knowledge and the foll three (ie 4-6) constitutes “the three knowledges” (*te,vijja*) of the Buddha and the arhats (D 3:220, 275; A 5:211), and is a shorthand for “the 6 knowledges” (*cha-l-ābhiñña*) listed here and elsewhere. This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

⁶⁸ *Cutūpapāta nāṇa*, “the knowledge of the falling away and rebirth (of beings),” or “knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga nāṇa*), or “the divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*), ie clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see §104 n). On the relationship of this knowledge to the 62 grounds for wrong views, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1) = SD 25.3(76.3).

⁶⁹ *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §104). On the relationship of this knowledge to the 62 grounds for wrong views, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1) = SD 25.3(76.3). See prec n.

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, with the body’s breaking up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.”—

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

24 (6) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF MENTAL INFLUXES.⁷⁰ Vaccha, even as far as you might wish,

‘May I, having right here and now realized for myself through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom that are influx-free, with the destruction of the mental influxes, dwell therein.’—

You will gain the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.”

Vaccha,gotta becomes an arhat

25 Then the venerable Vaccha,gotta, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word, rose from his seat, saluted the Blessed One, and going rightwise, departed.

26 Then, the venerable Vaccha,gotta, dwelling alone, aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute, having right here and now realized for himself through direct knowledge, after attaining, dwelt in the supreme goal of the holy life, for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

He directly knew: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being.”⁷¹

And the venerable Vaccha,gotta became one of the arhats.⁷²

Vaccha,gotta informs the Buddha

27a Now, at that time, some monks were going to see the Blessed One. The venerable Vaccha,gotta saw them coming from the distance. Seeing the monks, he approached them, and said this to them: [497]

“Where are the venerables going?”

“We are going to see the Blessed One, avuso.”

“In that case, may the venerables pay homage in my name with their heads at the Blessed One’s feet, saying, ‘Bhante, the monk Vaccha,gotta pays homage with his head at the Blessed One’s feet.’

Then say, ‘The Blessed One has been served [worshipped] by me! The Sugata [well-gone] has been served [worshipped] by me!’”⁷³

“Yes, avuso,” the monks replied the venerable Vaccha,gotta in assent.

27b Then the monks approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and then sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the monks said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, the venerable Vaccha,gotta pays homage with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and says thus:

‘The Blessed One has been served [worshipped] by me! The Sugata [well-gone] has been served [worshipped] by me!’”

⁷⁰ *Āsava-k,khaya,ñāna*, ie the knowledge of the destruction of: (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*), which defines the state of arhathood: see Intro (4.2) sv *khīṇ’āsava*.

⁷¹ On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.56b/1:203) n = SD 7.14.

⁷² **Vaccha,gotta Thera,gāthā**: *Tevijjo’haṃ mahā,jhāyī ceto,samatha,kovido | sadattho me anuppatto katam buddhassa sāsanam*, “One with the three knowledges am I, a great meditator, skilled in stilling the mind, | I have won the true goal, the Buddha’s teaching has been done.” (Tha 112)

⁷³ *Paricīṇṇo me bhagavā, paricīṇṇo me sugato*. “Has been served,” *paricīṇṇa*, here is an arhat’s lingo or intended language, with which Vaccha,gotta informs the Buddha of his arhathood. The reporting monks probably do not understand the statement’s real meaning; so the Buddha explains its significance to them. Cf M 144.7/3:264 = S 35.-87/4:57; Tha 178, 604, 687, 792, 891.

28 “Before this, bhikshus, having read his mind with my own, I already knew of the monk Vaccha,-gotta, thus:

‘The monk Vaccha,gotta is one who has attained the three knowledges,⁷⁴ one of great psychic power, of great might.’

And the devas⁷⁵ also told me this,

‘The monk Vaccha,gotta is one who has attained the three knowledges, one of great psychic power, of great might.’

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved of the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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⁷⁴ *Te,vijja*, “the three direct knowledges” (*abhiññā*) of the arhat, namely, the knowledge of the recollection of past lives (*pubbe.nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*) [§22], the divine eye or knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings (according to their karma) (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*) [§23], and the knowledge of the destruction of these mental cankers (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*) [§24]. See **M** 2.10/1:8, 9.70/1:55; **D** 33.1.10.58/3:220, 34.1.4.10/3:275; **A** 3.59/1:166 f, 3.67/-1:197-199, 6.63/3:414, 10.102/5:211.

⁷⁵ Ie, devatas with such abilities (MA 3:202); cf DA 120.