

# 5a

## Miracles

The nature of supernatural and psychic powers  
An introduction by Piya Tan ©2007

### A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS<sup>1</sup>

“Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities.”  
(Voltaire, alternative translation of passage from “Questions sur les miracles,” 1765)

#### 1 What a miracle is not

**1.1 WHAT IS *NOT* A MIRACLE.** Let us start with the easier task of examining what a miracle is *not*. We might agree that a miracle is an *unusual event*, but something that happens all the time or even once a year would not be considered “miraculous, unless we extend our definition to include *states of mind*, such as the “miracle of Vesak,” or technology, such as the “miracle of the computer,” or more broadly, the miracle of the Internet or of space travel.

There was a time when humans were terrified seeing *an eclipse*, and they thought that by making loud sounds, such as firing crackers and banging away at anything that would make a racket, would frighten the dragon into releasing the sun (or the moon). Surely, our ancestors had thought it was some sort of miracle that the sun or moon was clear again. But, the point is that it had always worked. It may be an unusual event, but it cannot be said to be a miracle. What about **John Hospers’** interesting and humorous example:

Perhaps an object may drop from an airplane and in falling strike a telephone wire outside your window and sever the wire, and the segment of wire on its way down to the ground may strike a passing cat and electrocute<sup>2</sup> it. This is surely unusual—“it wouldn’t happen again in a million times”—but it would not be considered miraculous, since everything that occurred in this unusual sequence of events is explainable by known laws. (1967: 450; 1997: 212)

The most famous philosophical statement against miracles is that of the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, **David Hume** (1711-1776), who, in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, says that a miracle is a violation of natural law, or more specifically, it is “a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent” (1748: 114 f).<sup>3</sup> Let us examine this statement further.

**1.2 WHAT CAN BE EXPLAINED BY A NATURAL LAW IS *NOT* A MIRACLE.** Apparently, any event or thing that can be explained by some known natural law or laws *cannot* be said to be a miracle. But is this enough? For example, when it was first noticed that comet’s tails were repelled by the sun, the scientists did not assume that the law of gravitation had failed. They discovered other laws that account for such cases. In other words, in cases where an unusual event has occurred, it makes us suspect that there are some laws of nature we have yet to know.

In ancient times, diseases were often attributed to demons or a punishment from God or the gods. But scientists now know that diseases are caused by bacteria or viruses, or lack of hygiene. We also now better understand the nature of earthquakes and tectonic earth movements, so that we do not really regard them as “acts of God.”<sup>4</sup> In our own times, we have case of Dede, the “half-tree half-man” in Indonesia,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a useful philosophical intro, see John Hospers 1967: 450-455, 1997: 212-216, on which the framework of this section is based.

<sup>2</sup> That is, assuming that the telephone wires has enough current to shock a human or animal; otherwise, we could assume this is to be an electric cable.

<sup>3</sup> See also Michael Levine 2005 & David Corner 2006 §§1, 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> See §3.1 n on Attenborough.

whose limbs were covered with bark-like skin. After testing samples of the lesions and Dede's blood, Dr Anthony Gaspari of the University of Maryland, USA, concluded that his affliction was caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

**1.3 WHAT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY A NATURAL LAW IS NOT A MIRACLE.** From all this, we can be sure that no event or person or thing, no matter how bizarre, is a miracle. Such phenomena are very likely to be explained by some natural law yet to be discovered or formulated. But, let us *suppose* that we could be absolutely sure that such an event were *not* an instance of any law at all, known or unknown—would this mean that God must be its mover? The inevitable answer would be: certainly it would not. It would only prove that *some events are not instances of laws*.

Let us examine another example: suppose I am able to float into the air and stay there, and then I were to declare that you should believe what I teach you. Does the fact that I can float in the air (the causes of which you do not know) authenticate my claim that what I teach is true? Absolutely not, because to establish how I can float into the air (or turn water into wine, or walk on water) is one thing, and whether what I say is true or false (not to say, useful or useless) is another.

The Roman lawyer and philosopher, **Cicero** (106-43 BCE), in his *De Natura Deorum* ["On the Nature of the Gods"], puts it succinctly:

Nothing happens without a cause, and nothing happens unless it can happen. When that which can happen does in fact happen, it cannot be considered a miracle. Hence, there are no miracles.

*(De Natura Deorum bk 1, ch 33)*

Cicero, however, qualified this statement by saying that *miracle stories* may be necessary for the piety of the ignorant.

## 2 Miracles and the God-idea

**2.1 DEFINITION OF MIRACLE.** The word "miracle"—from the Latin *miraculum*, meaning an "object of wonder" (OED)—has been used in a traditional Christian context to refer to an extraordinary event that could not have been brought about by human power alone or by the ordinary working of nature, and so must be ascribed to the intervention of God. For most Christian theologians, only God (that is, the God of a particular Christian tradition) can perform miracles. Saints in the heavens, close to God, function as intermediaries on behalf of a supplicant to request a miracle from God (that is, very much how a peasant would beseech a nobleman or lord to intercede in their immediate needs). Hence, strictly speaking, a traditional Christian would believe that there are no miracles outside their religion—certainly not in Buddhism.

However, more loosely, if we take "miracle" as "object of wonder," it allows miracles to be understood as extraordinary events that, because they cannot be explained by the action of ordinary human powers or the normal working of nature, evokes a sense of wonder (*acchariya*). Such a loose definition "proves useful to describe a wide variety of phenomena, including omens and other extraordinary changes in the natural world, acts of the Buddha and his disciples, and supernormal powers acquired through meditation—all common throughout Buddhist literature." (Macmillan Ency of Buddhism: Miracles p541)

**2.2 A MIRACLE DOES NOT RECUR.** Some—such as the English philosopher and liberal thinker, **John Stuart Mill** (1806-1873)—assert that an event cannot be considered as a miracle no matter how strange it is, *if it would recur if the same set of conditions were repeated*.<sup>6</sup> An event is a miracle only when it occurs *without* having been preceded by a set of conditions which are sufficient to make it happen again. In other words, were there the same conditions present whenever this "miracle" occurs? If so, it is *not* a miracle.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1569156/Tree-man-'who-grew-roots'-may-be-cured.html>.

<sup>6</sup> See his *Three Essays on Religion: Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism*, London, 1874: 220-241 ("Theism").

Furthermore, it is possible that there are other conditions, yet *unknown to us*, but which are causally relevant, and if added to the set of conditions to be repeated, the “miracle” would recur.

If the same conditions were present, but the “miracle” does not recur, what does this mean? It simply implies *indeterminism*, that is, two identical sets of conditions are present, but it is followed by non-identical events. But we have no good reason at all to attribute such a situation to God. It simply means that the universe is *indeterministic*. Understandably, on account this, the existence of miracles it is not a popular argument today as it was before for the existence of God.

**2.3 A MIRACLE AS “GOD’S INTERVENTION.”** Some events, it is claimed, are so *improbable* that they must be miraculous. According to a biblical story, Joshua’s trumpet caused the walls of Jericho to fall, and at a later battle, Joshua asked God to stop the sun and the moon in the sky long enough for him to slaughter every one of his enemies and their animals!<sup>7</sup> Such stories also imply the existence of God, and one who could intervene. As **Hospers** points out:

But this definition, of course, begs the whole question. The question would now become “Are there any miracles in this sense? Is there in fact anything to correspond to this definition?” If there are miracles in the sense we are not considering, then of course God exists, but to say this is only to utter tautology; it is only to say “If God intervenes, there is a God.” But what would establish the statement that God intervenes? The existence of unusual events, as we have just seen, would not prove it. (1967: 452; cf 1997: 214-261)

**David Hume**, in his essay, “On Miracles,” said that it is more probable that those who wrote that the sun stopped in its tracks were deluded, or imagined it, or lied, than that the event really occurred. The same applies to claims that water was turned into wine, that a few fishes and loaves of bread were multiplied to feed thousands, that Lazarus was raised from the dead, and so on. Hume concludes, “No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish.”<sup>8</sup>

We must, in other words, always decide in favour of the lesser miracle. We must ask ourselves, which would be more of a miracle: that Jesus walked on water, or that the scriptural reports of this event are false? While we rarely see testimony that is so strong that its falsehood would be very surprising, we never come across a report, the falsehood of which would be simply miraculous. As such, the reasonable conclusion would be that such a testimony is false.

**2.4 MIRACLES AND CAUSALITY.** The philosophical problem of miracles is basically a problem between the naturalists and the supernaturalists or apologists. While the naturalists say that there are no miracles since nothing can go against the laws of nature, the supernaturalists attribute miracles to divine intervention. The supernaturalists are also *apologists* because they have to defend their claims of divine interventions, since no natural explanation are available.

One of the main problems for the supernaturalists in their claim of miracles is to explain how they come about, that is, the relationship between cause and effect. First of all, what is a *cause*, or better, what is causation? Causation is a relation between two situations, a cause (or a set of causal circumstances) and an effect. The problem here is that there is never a single cause leading to a single effect: there are always multiple causes yielding multiple effects. It is just that we isolate certain linear patterns of events for our own purposes of discourse.

Take for example we see a beautiful rainbow in the sky. First of all, there must be droplets in the atmosphere and sun-light or some light-source must be present in a proper angle to the viewers. The

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<sup>7</sup> Joshua 6:5-21: “Then they utterly destroyed all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and asses with the edge of the sword.” Jos 10.13: “And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.” (The New Oxford Annotated Bible, RSV, 1973)

<sup>8</sup> “On Miracles,” in Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1748: sect 10.

viewers must not be blind or colour-blind, and they should be paying attention to the rainbow. And no two persons are likely think of the same thing when viewing the same rainbow. So there are physical causes of the rainbow, and there are mental conditions for knowing that it is a rainbow.

However, there are many cases where we witness the effect of an invisible cause. For example, we hear a gunshot, but do not see the gun that produced it. We might infer (or guess) that there is a gun somewhere nearby that has gone off. This is an inference from effect to cause, and is similar to what the supernaturalists would do with a miracle: they infer the existence of God (as cause) from the occurrence of the miracle (as effect).

But what makes any inference possible in such cases is the fact that we have observed a regular conjunction of similar causes with similar effects. This, however, is precisely what is lacking when it comes to supernatural causes. We cannot ever experience the conjunction of a supernatural cause with its effect, since supernatural causes are unobservable, nor can we, *without* such an experience, make an inference from any phenomenon in nature to its supernatural cause. Indeed, because of the uniqueness and unpredictability of God's miraculous interventions into nature, it is difficult to speak of, much less, identify, divine causation, as we can of empirical causes.

While the supernaturalists appeal to an invisible entity (God), the naturalists, too, often appeal to invisible entities, such as electrons, magnetic fields, and black holes.<sup>9</sup> But other than the fact they are both invisible, they have no other similarity. They are known only through their observable effects. But the causal properties of such natural entities as electrons and magnetic fields are analogous to those of entities that *are* observable—this is what makes them *natural* entities. Furthermore, these properties have an observable regularity, which means they have predictable behaviour. As such, with our understanding of electricity we can predict what will happen when we turn on a light switch. God is not such a theoretical entity. The way that God and his miraculous interventions are conceived by supernaturalists are unique to them. This is a *very private and limited truth, a virtual reality* that applies only to the supernaturalists.

**2.5 PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS OF MIRACLES.** There is another reason for doubting that God can have causal powers like those of natural objects. God is typically conceived as lacking any location in space or time: he is often said to be beyond the space-time continuum. Causal relationships among natural things only occur in a space-time continuum. Simply put, the point is this: *whatever happens, must happen in space and time*. It is meaningless to speak of something outside of space-time continuum.

The best the supernaturalists can do here is to appeal to *personal* explanation, that is, they attribute a phenomenon to the will of God.<sup>10</sup> While it is true that personal explanations do not have quite the same empirical basis as do scientific ones, they nevertheless do typically have empirical consequences. For example, if I say that Sun Tan gave up his \$10,000 a month job to become a moneyless monk because he wanted to end his sufferings in this life itself, I have given a personal explanation for Sun Tan's conduct, and it is one that is testable. It would be supported, for example, by the fact that he was wearing monastic robes, and on being questioned, he confirmed his desire for awakening in this life. Or, my statement could be undermined if Sun Tan was seen watching TV or shopping at a mall or transacting money in a bank.

The most obvious way in which appeals to divine agency falls short of such typical personal testimony is that they fail to offer any hint of predictability.<sup>11</sup> Suppose we attribute an act of walking on water to divine intervention: from this statement, nothing follows about what we can expect to happen in the future. Unless we can introduce additional information provided by revelation, for example, we have no grounds for inferring that God will show new miracles. We could say that he might, or might not do so. Indeed, we might as well say that some event came about because God *willed* it so, rather than saying that

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<sup>9</sup> See R Douglas Geivett, "The evidential value of miracles," in R Douglas Geivett & Gary R Habermas (eds), *In Defense of Miracles: A comprehensive case for God's action in history*, 1997: 183.

<sup>10</sup> See eg Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 1979: ch 2.

<sup>11</sup> See Patrick Nowell-Smith, "Miracles," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed Antony Flew & Alasdair MacIntyre, 1955.

it had no cause, or it occurred spontaneously. But when someone says, “It was God’s will,” they are really pointing to the fact that the event cannot be explained in any useful way.<sup>12</sup>

**2.6 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS OF MIRACLES.** Miracles, or rather, miracle stories, often arise as people talk to impress others, or they are wildly exaggerated rumours about whom or what they believe in. These are more likely to be wish-fulfilling prophecies about something that they want to believe in, or are already conditioned to believe in. Alleged miracles were mostly reported by people in ancient times so that we can no longer check their claims. Such people were untrained in reporting what they observed without adding anything to it or without colouring it.

It is easy to see how such stories could have arisen as each religion or belief system maintains its own stock of miracles to legitimize or promote its claims. Very often, too, such miraculous accounts are meant to be moral stories, or accounts borrowed from other sources, but are taken literally by the faithful. All this had become puzzles whose clues were lost long ago, so that today it is almost impossible to separate fact from fiction.

The point is that a miracle is firmly believed mostly by those who are already believers or are gullible, and the miraculous claims are used to add weight or respectability to a belief that they hold. Belief in such ideas as God or an immortal soul is difficult, if not impossible, to verify. Because of the impossibility of the creator-God idea, in that they are psychologically linked to a desperate need for *self-security* (God) and *self-perpetuation* (soul), believers, lacking a more spiritual level of understanding, have to resort to religious faith. A God-believer, Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34-1109), wrote: “Nor do I seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand. For this too I believe, that unless I first believe, I shall not understand.”<sup>13</sup> There lies the rub.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 SIGNIFICANCE OF MIRACLES

**3.1 MIRACLES AND THE WISE.** However, not everyone holds the idea that the existence of religious figures such as God or the Buddha need to be supported by the occurrence of miracles. Most thinking believers or practitioners are repelled by miraculous tales because they believe that these alleged miracles are somehow *unworthy of such holy figures*. As noted by **Hospers**:

If God wanted people to believe, why perform a few “parlour tricks” in a remote area where few people could witness them? Instead of healing a few people of their disease, why not cure everyone? Instead of a vision of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, why not put an end to the enormous slaughter of World War I, which was ravaging all around at that time [or keep it from starting]? Or, if this is tampering with people’s free will, why not do something that would save many human lives, such as stopping the earthquake in Lisbon that killed thirty thousand people [1755]<sup>15</sup> as they were gathered in their churches to worship (an example repeatedly cited by Voltaire in his *Candide*)? (1967: 454; 1997: 215)

<sup>12</sup> See David Corner, “Miracles,” 2006 §8, on which this sub-section is based.

<sup>13</sup> See **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4a comy on §3.1 (6) pt 4: Faith in Buddhism.

<sup>14</sup> Ie, the central or most important difficulty; from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* 3.1.65.

<sup>15</sup> As a result of such a catastrophe, many intellectuals in Europe then were disillusioned or troubled by the notion of a loving creator: see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1755\\_Lisbon\\_earthquake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1755_Lisbon_earthquake). British naturalist, **David Attenborough**, in response to hate mails from creationists for not crediting God in his documentaries, explains, “They always mean beautiful things like hummingbirds. I always reply by saying that I think of a little child in east Africa with a worm burrowing through his eyeball. The worm cannot live in any other way, except by burrowing through eyeballs. I find that hard to reconcile with the notion of a divine and benevolent creator.” (“**Wild, wild life.**” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Mar 2003. Attenborough also tells this story in numerous other interviews.) Attenborough went further in his opposition to *creationism*, saying it was “terrible” when it was taught alongside *evolution* as an alternative perspective. “It’s like saying that two and two equals four, but if you wish to believe it, it could also be five...”

Those who believe in miracles put themselves at a great disadvantage. Firstly, they are led by irrational influence, such as enthusiasm, wishful thinking, or sense of mission, even if these are driven by good intentions. Secondly, since they have not *themselves* directly experienced the miracles, they could at best accept it on faith. Thirdly, to believe in a miracle is to place our locus of control *outside* of ourselves, leaving us vulnerable to manipulation by those who have spun the miracle or the miracle story. All such influences are likely to undermine our critical faculties.

**3.2 THE USES OF MIRACLES.** Even today, many people are quick to accept as a “miracle”—even, or especially, if it goes against probabilities—when they perceive it as working *in their favour*. Hundreds died in a plane crash, and only a few survived. These survivors and their families would say, “It’s a miracle!” What about those who perished and their families who are burdened with painful losses? Conversely, what if everyone survives a plane crash, except one. The family of that one dead would not say, “It’s a miracle!” Indeed, it would be very unusual that so many survived such a disaster at such minimal loss. Would the family of the dead say, “It’s a miracle that so many survived!”

Some of the most selfish and deluded people are religious ones. They claim only their God’s actions are miracles, but those of other religions as the work of the devil, or as insignificant events. The point is that it would not be a miracle unless it has a result that people desire. Miracle stories are often used by those who wish to dominate others, and muster power and wealth for themselves. The telling of such stories often empowers the tale-spinner in the eyes of gullible believers.<sup>16</sup>

One serious defect related to the belief in miracles—especially that only the miracles of one’s religion is true—is that it makes believers religiously squinted, even blinded, so that *they fail to respond wholesomely to human suffering*. In the wake of the 2004 tsunami disaster, religious extremists in Indonesia, instead of helping the victims, thundered from their pulpits that the disaster was God’s punishment for those who have strayed (especially women)! Regarding the hurricane Katrina destruction of New Orleans, Franklin Graham (son of the well-known 20<sup>th</sup>-century evangelist Billy Graham) declared that God had targeted the city because of its sinful reputation! The point is that such miracle-mongers clearly lack unconditional love.<sup>17</sup>

**3.3 THE MEANING OF MIRACLES.** A very significant point about miracles, as already noted [2.1], is that God-centred religions tend to ascribe them to God or his agents (divine and human)—in other words, to something beyond the human powers and understanding. In early Buddhism,<sup>18</sup> as we shall see here, explains a miracle simply as “an object of wonder” (*pāṭihāriya*) worked by an intelligent agent (human or otherwise) through psychic power (*iddhi*). In other words, early Buddhism, centuries before Christianity tried to appropriate the idea strictly for itself, accepts the fact that such wonders arise from highly concentrated mind. Despite this, early Buddhism does not regard such wonders as a true mark of divinity, spirituality or even moral virtue. Miracle-working is in fact defined amongst the mundane knowledges and

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Evolution is not a theory; it is a fact, every bit as much as the historical fact that William the Conqueror landed in 1066.” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/27/david-attenborough-science>.

<sup>16</sup> For a Buddhist example, we have the case of the Chinese Chan master, Shénhuì (688-762), who fabricated stories of the Sixth Patriarch and Chan history (incl bowdlerizing the “Northern” school) to promote his own lineage: see **How Buddhism Became Chinese**, SD 40b (5.2).

<sup>17</sup> For a moving account, see Bart D Ehrman, *God’s Problem: How the Bible fails to answer our most important question—why we suffer*, NY: HarperCollins, 2998. Ehrman began his religious life as a born-again Christian in the American South, but as his Bible knowledge deepened, he realized the Bible is not only rife with contradictions, but has no answer for solving human suffering.

<sup>18</sup> In this study, we shall restrict ourselves to early Buddhism, ie the Buddha’s own times up to about the 500 after-years, and the Pāli Canon. Later texts, esp those of the Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna, mostly take a different view of miracles and “regularly commend such miracles, particularly when said to be performed by the Buddha, as an appropriate means of demonstrating his unlimited powers and bringing beings to salvation.” (Oxford Ency of Buddhism: “Miracles”).

powers. It still fetters us to the world [§6], and that there is *only one true miracle*—the miracle of “instruction” (*anusāsantī*) which brings about liberation from evil [§7].

Another interesting point about biblical accounts of miracles is that each of these biblical miracles is mentioned *only once*, and *without any explanation of how they occur*.<sup>19</sup> All such miracles, however, are frequently mentioned in the early Suttas, and are well defined in pericopes (such as **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta**, D 2).<sup>20</sup> Many of these miracles, such as walking on water and transmutation of matter, are explainable by the *kaṣiṇa* meditation.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, *a miracle is not a mark of spirituality*. Let’s say if someone could turn water into oil (or some other miracle you can think of), and then the person declares, “Now believe what I say: (*Insert claim here*)!” The point is that what the person *does* and what he *says* here are not really related at all! Any connection is either based on the miracle-worker’s delusion, or your own perception. If miracles (such as healing) do work, why show it off only to attract followers: why not heal the numerous sick and suffering in hospitals and hospices, where such “miracles” are badly needed? [7.5]

Another interesting point is that if the religious miracles claimed by the various religions (including Buddhism) are true, *how come we do not find a single independent historical record of any of them in other writings of those times?* One possible answer is that these “miracles” are *attributed* (by way of charisma)<sup>22</sup> to the religious teacher.

Most importantly, miracles, or more properly, the claim and belief in miracles, are *really the assertion of “lordship” or desire for power over others*. This is a desperate tool in a situation where other means of gaining power are unavailable or less effective. The best explanation we have here, insofar as we do see some kind of superhuman feat, is that *the human mind is capable of much more than we think*.

In early Buddhism, as stated in **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60), the greatest miracle is not that of psychic power, but of *education*.<sup>23</sup> The reason for this is that in the case of a miracle, “only the one who performs it, experiences it: it belongs only to the one who performs it. Indeed, this miracle seems like *it is related to the false dharma of illusion*” but in the case of “the miracle of education” (*anusāsantī, pāṭihāriya*), much more people, even a whole culture, benefit from it.<sup>24</sup> [7.1]

## A BUDDHIST ANALYSIS<sup>25</sup>

### 4 What is a miracle?

**4.0 FRAME OF REFERENCE.** The Buddhist experience and description of miracles and psychic phenomena often overlap with the terms and notions of parapsychology and New Age. From the start, it is vital to note that despite the convenience of parallels, they never meet. These Buddhist teachings are part of the Buddhist worldview and training for spiritual liberation. Some of these teachings may overlap with scientific findings (hence, “proven” by science) while some others are stories and skillful means for presenting advanced ideas in more easily digestible form. Hence, it is meaningful to speak of **a Buddhist parapsychology**,<sup>26</sup> which has its own frame of reference, based on the Buddha’s admonition regarding

<sup>19</sup> Saying “God did it” is not an explanation, but merely a statement, like “my father has done it,” without detailing how the miracle or event came about.

<sup>20</sup> D 2.89/1:77 f @ SD 8.10.

<sup>21</sup> See *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (9.2)..

<sup>22</sup> See **The Teacher or the Teaching?** SD 3.14 & Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h, available online: <http://pali.house.googlepages.com/Piyasilo.CharismaInBuddhism.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> A 3.60.6c/1:172 @ SD 16.10.

<sup>24</sup> A 3.60.6c/1:172 @ SD 16.10.

<sup>25</sup> Here we shall study the nature of miracles as *iddhi* and *pāṭihāriya* in a general theoretical survey. For a more specialized study on miracles in the Buddha-story, see **The Miraculous Life of the Buddha**, SD 52.1.

<sup>26</sup> From the Greek, *παρά para* meaning “alongside.” and *psychology*. Parapsychologists call the psychic phenomena that they search for, *psi* (from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Greek letter, *ψ psi*, being an abbrev of the Greek *ψυχή psyche*, “mind,

teachings that are *explicit* and teachings that are *implicit*, that is, respectively, those whose “meaning is already drawn out” (*nī’tattha*) and those whose “meaning needs to be drawn out” (*neyy’attha*), or as Dharma language and everyday language.<sup>27</sup>

As a science, **parapsychology**<sup>28</sup> (in the non-Buddhist sense) is a discipline that seeks to investigate the existence and causes of psychic phenomena and abilities, especially life after death and rebirth, using the scientific method. The term *parapsychology* was coined in or before 1889 by the German psychologist Max Dessoir. It was adopted by JB Rhine, a pioneer of parapsychology, in the 1930s as a replacement for the term “psychical research,” to indicate a significant shift toward laboratory methodologies in their work.<sup>29</sup>

**The New Age** movement or cult arose in the 1950s, deeply influenced by Hindu, Buddhist and other oriental traditions. As a result, Buddhism was wrongly perceived by some people (mostly westerners) as a New Age religion. While there are Buddhist influences on New Age lifestyle, there are many important differences so that no informed practising Buddhist would say that he is a New Age follower. Briefly, the characteristics of Buddhism and of New Age are as follows:<sup>30</sup>

#### **Some similarities between Buddhism and New Age teachings**

Holistic view generally based upon monistic philosophy.

Reincarnation (rebirth) is a general assumption.

The greatest human problem is “ignorance” rather than sin.

The quest therefore is for “enlightenment.”

#### **Important differences between Buddhism and New Age teachings**

Buddhism is not “new” but comes from the systematic teachings of the Buddha (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cent BCE).

New Age speaks of “body, mind and spirit” where “spirit” is vaguely equivalent with a soul or abiding entity, a notion radically foreign to Buddhism.

The monastic discipline of Buddhism has no counterpart in New Age.

New Age often draws hodgepodge upon ideas and practices from traditions other than Buddhism.

New Age philosophy tends to be individualistic and subjective depending on the whims of the rich and leisurely.

New Age is primarily concerned with coping with the present life or certain circumstances, while Buddhism teaches personal effort, emotional independence and ultimate liberation.

**4.1 DEFINITION OF PĀṬIHĀRIYA.** In the Suttas, the word that is more or less synonymous with “miracle” is *pāṭihāriya* (Skt *prātihārya*), which simply means “display” (n). Its meaning can be better understood from its Sanskrit forms. The Sanskrit-English Dictionary says that *pratīhārayati* (the verb for *prātihārya*), “he displays,” is the causative form of *prati-√hrī* or *√hr* (“to take”), meaning, “to have one’s self announced to (gen)” [Jātaka,māla 118.13] (SED 673b). The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary gives two readings: *pratīhārayati*, *~reti*, and gives one of its meanings as “has announced, causes to be announced” quoting the same Jtkm source (BHSD 373c).

If we accept this explanation, that *pāṭihāriya* has the sense of “announcing” or attracting attention to oneself by way of a *psychic display*, then it is easy for us to understand that, as a rule, the mere *displaying*

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soul”), used purely as a descriptive term. It was coined by biologist Bertold P Wiesner, and first used by psychologist Robert Thouless in his article, “Experiments on paranormal guessing,” *British Journal of Psychology* 33, 1942: 15-27. See also DJ Bern & C Honorton (1994). “Does psi exist? Replicable evidence for an anomalous process of information transfer,” *Psychological Bulletin* 115, 1994: 4-18. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.115.1.4.

<sup>27</sup> See *Neyy’attha Nī’tattha S* (A 2.3.4-5/1:60), SD 2.6b & **Levels of Learning**, SD 40a.4.

<sup>28</sup> For an intro, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parapsychology>.

<sup>29</sup> J G Melton, “Parapsychology,” in *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, Farmington, MI: Thomson Gale, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Based on David Burnett, *The Spirit of Buddhism* [a Christian perspective on Buddhist thought] [1996]. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Monarch Books, 2003: 296.



of psychic miracles is not a spiritually worthwhile effort.<sup>31</sup> In fact, **Buddhaghosa**, too, notes that the “miraculous display” (*pāṭihāriya*) itself is objected to, but not the psychic power (*iddhi*) that is volitional in nature<sup>32</sup> (VA 1203).<sup>33</sup>

**T W Rhys Davids**, in the introduction to his translation of **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), further notes,

They were not, however, miracles in our Western sense. There was no interference by an outside power with the laws of nature. It was supposed that certain people by reason of special (but quite natural) powers could accomplish certain special acts beyond the power of ordinary men.

(D:RD 1:272)

The phrase “beyond the power of ordinary men,” as pointed out by **Rupert Gethin**, is problematic. As Rhys Davids himself states in the above quote, these powers are “quite natural.”

They are the result of meditation success in exactly the same way as, for example, the *jhānas*. True, as Rhys Davids again points out,<sup>34</sup> they are termed *puṭhujjanika-iddhi* or *iddhi* that may belong to ordinary men as opposed to the *ariyas* or “noble ones” (stream-attainers, once-returners, non-returners and *arahants*). But then this is also true of the four *jhānas* in general and does not constitute any kind of condemnation *per se* as Rhys Davids seems to want to imply.

(2001:100 f)

In short, the psychic wonders or miracles in themselves are *not* objected to in early Buddhism; it is their *display* that the Buddha disapproves of. The reasons for this will become obvious below. [7.2]

**4.2 PĀṬIHĀRIYA AND IDDHĪ.** When we speak of the western term “miracles” in terms of early Buddhism,<sup>35</sup> we need to understand the different senses of two related Pāli terms, that is, *pāṭihāriya* and *iddhi*.

**4.2.1 Definitions.** The term *pāṭihāriya*, often translated as “miracle,” actually means “display,” especially in the expression, “psychic display” (*iddhi,pāṭihāriya*). By itself, *pāṭihāriya* can be taken as synonymous with *iddhi*, meaning “psychic power,” but the context should be noted whether it refers to a *display* of *iddhi*, or simply only the *iddhi* itself.

The term *iddhi*, however, has various senses of “power” in both an active (initiating or creating) as well as a passive (enjoying or having certain qualities), in a latent sense (undisplayed power) and an overt sense (display or manifestation of that power), in the mundane sense and a supramundane sense. The Critical Pāli Dictionary (CPD) defines *iddhi* (f) (Skt *ṛddhi*) as follows (summarized):

<sup>31</sup> This is, of course, more true of the Suttas than the Comys, which abound with miraculous stories. Lacking the wisdom and charisma of the Buddha and the early arhats, the later Buddhists were apparently compelled to resort to such stories as a didactic means. See Gethin 2001:100. For a discussion, see **Mythology in Buddhism**, SD 36.1.

<sup>32</sup> *Iddhi,pāṭihāriyan ti ettha vikubban'iddhi,pāṭihāriyam paṭikkhittam, adhiṭṭhān'iddhi pana appaṭikkhittā ti vedittabba* = “Here **display of psychic power** should be understood thus: it refers to the **display** of miraculous psychic power, but the psychic power by resolve is not forbidden.” (VA 2003). CPD explains “psychic power by resolve (*adhiṭṭhān'iddhi*) as “the power of creating by volition only phenomena outside of one’s body.”

<sup>33</sup> This idea of *display* is also emphasized by Rupert Gethin 2001: 97-101.

<sup>34</sup> D:RD 1:272.

<sup>35</sup> In this study, we shall restrict ourselves to early Buddhism, ie the Buddha’s own times up to about the 500 after-years, and the Pāli Canon. Later texts, esp those of the Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna, mostly take a different view of miracles and “regularly commend such miracles, particularly when said to be performed by the Buddha, as an appropriate means of demonstrating his unlimited powers and bringing beings to salvation.” (Oxford Ency of Buddhism: “Miracles”).

prosperity, affluence, success, splendour, high position; mostly either including, or restricted in meaning to, supernormal, miraculous qualities and magic faculties (eg flying, creating phantoms, etc):

- (a) ascribed to men in high positions, kings, etc: *tvaṃ no-s-issariyaṃ dātā manussesu mahantataṃ, tay' amhā labbhitā ~i* (high position) (J 4:42,10\*);
- (b) ascribed more often to superhuman beings (nagas, devas, etc), to (brahmanical) saints and ascetics: (*tāpaso*) *yāya jambuyā ayaṃ Jambudīpo paññāyati, ~iyā taṃ jambuṃ upasaṅkamitvā tato phalaṃ āharitvā* (BA 225,23);
- (c) the popular notions of *iddhi* being shared by Buddhists, *iddhi* figures prominently among the qualities of monks and nuns (*Devadatto pothujjanikaṃ ~im abhinipphādesi*, V 2:-183,23) and the Buddha himself, and is
- (d) systematized in scholastic psychology, as the 8 magic powers, such as flying, walking on water, etc, listed in pericopes, [CPD: *iddhi-vidhā*]; these 8 constitute the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 5 or 6 *abhiññās* [5] and the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 3 *pāṭihāriyas* [below].

The usual verbs for “performing” a miracle is **abhi-nimmināti** and **nimmināti** (both present 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular): the former comes from *abhi* + Skt *nir* + √MĀ, “to measure” (Dhātup 24.54), and the related Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit forms are *abhi-nirmimīte* and *abhi-nirmiṇoti*. The meaning of *abhinimmināti* is “to create (mostly by magic), to produce, to shape.”<sup>36</sup>

However, we do find a broad sense of *pāṭihāriya* as “miracle,” such as the usage found in **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60), where it speaks of the 3 kinds of miracles (*pāṭihāriyā*), namely,

- (1) psychic powers (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*),
- (2) mind-reading (*ādesanā, pāṭihāriya*), and
- (3) instruction (*anusāsānī, pāṭihāriya*) [8].

Here, the term *iddhi, pāṭihāriya* clearly has a specific sense of “psychic wonder” or “psychic miracle,” including “psychic display.” When we specifically mean “psychic power,” the proper term is *iddhi, vidhā*, which translates as “multifarious psychic power” or “various psychic powers” [5.1].

**4.2.2 Ṇāṇa.** Besides “psychic powers (including their display)” (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*), we further find *iddhi* referred to as “knowledge” (**ṇāṇa**), especially as the 6 superknowledges (*cha-l-abhiññā*) [5]. The first five are *supernatural but mundane powers*, that is, they do not bring us spiritual awakening.<sup>37</sup> Only the sixth is “direct knowledge,” one that is also *supramundane*, that is, it is the quality of an arhat, the liberated saint.<sup>38</sup> In other words, *ṇāṇa* (Skt *jñāna*) is a generic term for miracles and psychic powers, both mundane and supramundane.

The Sanskrit term **jñāna** (P *ñāṇa*) is etymologically related to the Greek work *gnosis* (from which we derive the English words “know, knowledge,” etc. **Gnosis** (Greek γνῶσις) is one of the Greek words for

<sup>36</sup> Refs & other forms (CPD) incl as follows: (D 1:77,10 *so imamahā kāyā aññam kāyaṃ ~āti rūpiṃ manomayam*, etc = [209,8] ≈ Pm 2:210,32 (qu at Vism 406,25) ≈ Nc 209,20; 3 pl *~anti* (ditto), M 2:17,25; 18,5; part gen pl *~antānaṃ* (*mano, mayam kāyaṃ*), A 1:24,2, qu UA 319,32; imper 2 sg *~āhi* (*oḷārikaṃ attabhāvaṃ*), A 1:279,2; pot 3 sg *~eyya* (*itthi, rūpaṃ vā purisarūpaṃ vā*, scil *Rajako vā cittakāro vā*), S 2:102,2 — 3:152,13; pot 1 sg *abhi-nimmine* (*aham sahasam ~*), Ap 29,26 = ThA (Ce) 2:108,16\*; aor 3 sg *abhinimmiṇi* (*abhirūpaṃ itthim...iddhi, balena ~*; vl *°nimmitam*; Ee *°nimmi*), DhA 3:115,14 ≈ SnA 243,1 (cf DhA 4:57, J 1:232, PvA 245 *nimmini*); abs: (1) *°nimmitvā*, Thī 229 (*iddhiyā ~ catur-assaṃ ratham*); (2) *°nimminivā*, D 3:27,13 (*satta, tālaṃ accim*); A 1:279,4 (*oḷārikaṃ attā, bhāvaṃ*); S 1:104,6 (*hatthi, rāja, vaṇṇam*, qu VvA 16,25); 106,17 (*sappa, rāja, vaṇṇam*); 112,16 (*balivadda, vaṇṇam*); 115,5 (*kassaka, vaṇṇam*); 117,19 (*brāhmaṇa, vaṇṇam*); 125,2 (*kumāri, vaṇṇa, sataṃ*); DhA 1:139,10 (*kumāra, vaṇṇam*); J 4:21,16\* (*nāvaṃ sucittam*); UA 68,15 (*mahantaṃ bherava, rūpaṃ*); 432,27 (*ākāse paṭhaviṃ*); — pp *abhi-nimmita* (qv); cf *abhinimmiṇa*.

<sup>37</sup> Ie *iddhi yā sāsavā sa, upadhikā no ariyā* (D 28.18/3:112,7-113,10).

<sup>38</sup> Ie *iddhi yā anāsavā anupadhikā ariyā* (D 28.18/3:112,7-113,10).

knowledge, and which is the spiritual knowledge of a mystic or saint. In the Hellenic and Byzantine cultures, *gnosis* was a special knowledge of the infinite, divine and uncreated in all and above all,<sup>39</sup> rather than knowledge strictly into the finite, natural or material world which is called epistemological knowledge. Gnosis is a transcendent knowledge, a mature understanding, and a direct, intuitive and spiritual experiential knowledge,<sup>40</sup> rather than that from rational or reasoned thinking.

All this reminds us of the famous English saying, “knowledge is power.”<sup>41</sup> The phrase implies that knowledge or education increases our potential or abilities. It also refers to an excuse for not sharing information, since some advantage may be gotten by the use or manipulating of knowledge. Another possible meaning for this phrase can be found in philosophical idealism: if the world exists solely as the content of consciousness, then knowledge itself can be used to directly manipulate the content of reality. In the early Buddhist context, such a knowledge (including psychic knowledge) would of course be mundane. Only *abhiññā* as “direct knowledge” is liberating.

### 4.3 THE BASES OF SUCCESS

**4.3.1** How do we develop psychic powers? The simple answer is either through *proper meditation*, or through *the fruition of past karma*. The latter is rare, found only in some miracles stories [eg. 5.5.3]; so, we shall focus on discussing on “proper meditation” as the source of psychic powers. More exactly, this refers to the 4 “bases for success” (*iddhi, pāda*), namely,

- |                            |                    |   |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---|
| (1) will-power, enthusiasm | ( <i>chanda</i> )  | wholesome motivation (incl keeping the precepts);         |
| (2) effort                 | ( <i>viriya</i> )  | sustained effort (incl learning from a spiritual friend); |
| (3) mind                   | ( <i>citta</i> )   | mental concentration; and                                 |
| (4) investigation          | ( <i>vīmaṃsā</i> ) | reviewing difficulties to improve the practice.           |

**4.3.2** The *iddhi, pāda* are explained in the **Chanda Sutta** (S 51.13).<sup>42</sup> The term is elaborated according to the Sutta method in the Vibhaṅga (Vbh 216-220), and according to the Abhidhamma method at Vbh 220-224, where they are factors of the supramundane paths.<sup>43</sup> The Commentaries resolve *iddhi, pādāṃ* as *iddhiyā pādāṃ*, “a basis for success” and as *iddhi, bhūtaṃ pādāṃ*, “a base which is success.”<sup>44</sup> As such, the best translation denoting both senses would be “bases of success.”

**4.3.3** Each of the “bases of success” (*iddhi, pāda*) introduces a particular quality (*dhamma*)—will [desire to act] (*chanda*), effort [energy] (*viriyā*), mind (*citta*), or investigation (*vīmaṃsā*)—as a whole. What is important in each case is the interaction of these with concentration (*samādhi*) and the forces of exertion

<sup>39</sup> St Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) in *Practical & Theological Discourses*, 1.1 The “Philokalia” (Gk φιλοκαλία “love of the beautiful/good”) vol 4: “When men search for God with their bodily eyes they find Him nowhere, for He is invisible. But for those who ponder in the Spirit He is present everywhere. He is in all, yet beyond all.”

<sup>40</sup> The “Philokalia” (see prec n), (trs) GEH Palmer, Philip Sherrard & Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, Glossary 4: 434 “Spiritual knowledge” (γνώσις): the knowledge of the intellect (qv). As such, it is knowledge inspired by God, as insight (noesis) or (revelational, intuitive knowledge (see gnosiology) and so linked with contemplation and immediate spiritual perception. (See Wikipedia: Gnosis).

<sup>41</sup> Orig in Latin, *scientia potentia est*, which the Elizabethan philosopher, Francis Bacon, in his *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597), writes as “For also knowledge itself is power,” and which in modern times is often paraphrased as “knowledge is power.” Bacon was probably paraphrasing Proverbs 24:5: “A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength” (KJV) or “A wise man is mightier than a strong man, and a man of knowledge than he who has strength” (RSV). (Based on Wikipedia.)

<sup>42</sup> S 51.13/5:268 f.

<sup>43</sup> See also Vism 385/12.50-53 & VbhA 303-308.

<sup>44</sup> DA 3:1007; MA 2:69; SA 3:250; AA 2:50.

(*padhāna, saṅkhārā*).<sup>45</sup> The paths seem ultimately to be understood as focusing on one particular thing, namely, success in mental concentration.

**4.3.4 The Apāra Sutta** (S 51.1) is a brief definition of the 4 bases of success (or, the path to spiritual power). **The Uṇṇābha Sutta** (S 51.15)<sup>46</sup> records how Ānanda succinctly explains to the brahmin Uṇṇābha what the four bases are, and that desire is the beginning of the path to arhathood. While the bases are briefly listed in the Apāra Sutta, they are fully listed in **the Chanda Samādhi Sutta** (S 51.13).

**4.3.5** One of the most instructive texts on the 4 bases of success is **the Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 51.20), where each of the 4 “bases of success” (*iddhi, pāda*) or aspects of meditation practice, is moderated progressively so as to avoid the 4 faults (*catu, dosa*), that is, it is too slack, too tense, narrow [constricted] internally, or distracted externally.<sup>47</sup>

**4.3.6** The Commentaries to the latter give examples as regards to the application of these bases of success for attaining the supramundane state (*lok’uttara dhamma*):

The elder Raṭṭha, pāla	enthusiasm	<i>chanda</i>	M 82
The elder Soṇa	effort	<i>virīya</i>	V 1:179-185; A 3:374-379
The elder Sambhūta	mind	<i>citta</i>	Tha 291-294
The elder Mogha, rāja	investigation	<i>vīmaṃsā</i>	Sn 1116-1119

(DA 2:642; SA 3:256; VbhA 306)

**4.3.7** When the 4 bases of success are accomplished, the result is **dhyana** (*jhāna*). On attaining the fourth dhyana, we remain in it as long as necessary during each sitting, that is, until we have mastered it. Then, having emerged from dhyana, we direct our calm and clear mind to cultivating the multifarious psychic powers, that is, the eightfold *iddhi*. In fact, throughout the Nikāyas, see the 4 *iddhi, pāda* associated with the eightfold *iddhi*.<sup>48</sup>

Besides the eightfold psychic power, the bases of success are associated with other meditation-related powers, such as:

- the ability to prolong one’s life;
- the ability to create a kingdom through Dharma, without violence;
- the ability to turn the Himavant into a mountain of gold; and
- continued success (*iddhi*) in meditation.

The first three abilities are listed in **the Rajja Sutta** (S 4.20/1:116 f) [5.3.2]. The fourth power here is a non-technical sense of *iddhi*, meaning “skill, success,” found throughout the Suttas [4.2.1].<sup>49</sup>

## 5 The 6 superknowledges

### 5.0 SUPERKNOWLEDGES AND DIRECT KNOWLEDGE

**5.0.1** In this subsection we will look at the place of miracles and psychic powers in the early texts, such as **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2), which is representative of the Pāli canon, as these definitions are pericopes (stock passages) often found elsewhere in the canon.

<sup>45</sup> On *padhāna, saṅkhārā*, see **Chanda Samādhi S** (S 51.13) below; also S 51.13/5:268 f.

<sup>46</sup> S 51.15/5:271-273 @ SD 10.10.

<sup>47</sup> S 51.20/5:276-281 @ SD 28.14; AA 1:49.

<sup>48</sup> On dhyana as the basis for psychic powers, see SD 49.5b (1.10.1.3).

<sup>49</sup> See Gethin 2001: 97 f & *Cattāro Iddhi, pāda*, SD 10.3.

**5.0.2** The term *abhiññā* (f) (Skt *abhi-jñā*), meaning “‘higher or supernatural knowledge,’ intuition” (CPD) is a verbal noun of *abhiññāti*, “he knows (by intuition).”<sup>50</sup> It refers to any of 6 kinds of special knowledges, the first five of which are *supernatural faculties* (that is, the psychic powers and superknowledges) and the sixth, *a spiritual faculty* (that is, the direct knowledge into true reality defining arhathood).

As such, *abhiññā* can be generally translated as “**superknowledge**” (*abhi + jñā*), that is, when referring the knowledges as a set or part of a set (especially the 6 superknowledges). However, the last or sixth *abhiññā*—the only supramundane one—is best translated as “**direct knowledge**,” to bring out its supramundane sense. As such, as a set or part of a set, “superknowledge” and “direct knowledge” can both refer to the sixth *abhiññā*; but by itself it is known as “direct knowledge.”

**5.0.3** The mundane supernatural knowledges are also known as the “**5 superknowledges**,” “super powers” or “supernatural faculties” (*pañcābhiññā*), namely:

- (1) multifarious psychic power (*iddhi, vidhā* or *iddhi, vidham*), [5.1]
- (2) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*), [5.2]
- (3) mind-reading (*paracitta, vijānanā*, also *ādesanā, pāṭihāriya*), [5.3]
- (4) recollection of past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), and [5.4]
- (5) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*): the knowledge of death and rebirth (*cut’upapāta ñāṇa*) and the knowledge of how beings fare according to their karma (*yathā, kammūpaga ñāṇa*).<sup>51</sup> [5.5]

**5.0.4** The best known set of supernatural knowledges, of course, is **the 6 superknowledges** (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), comprising the 5 superknowledges (*pañcābhiññā*) together with the “knowledge of the destruction of the influxes” (*āsavānaṃ khaye ñāṇaṃ*) as the sixth [5.6]. Then, there is a late and lesser known set of **the 7 superknowledges** (*sattābhiññā*), that is, the 6 superknowledges (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) and the ‘knowledge of the future’ (*anāgataṃsa, ñāṇa*), that is, premonition.<sup>52</sup>

**5.0.5** Hereon, we shall examine each of the canonical **6 superknowledges**, mentioning summaries of some related incidents or examples of miracles as reported in the Canon and Commentaries. One important point to note here is that the miracle-worker *must first attain the fourth dhyana*, and then emerging from it, direct his mind to the cultivation of the appropriate knowledge (*ñāṇa*) of such psychic powers or miracles as mentioned here.

**5.0.6** As already noted, the first five superknowledges are *mundane*, and only the sixth—that of the destruction of the influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*)<sup>53</sup>—is supramundane, since it is liberating knowledge, and is found only in the full-fledged arhat, who as such is known as the “six-knowledge” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) arhat [4.2.1]. The last fourteen discourses of **the Anuruddha Saṃyutta** lists the various powers that the

<sup>50</sup> The dat *~āya* is freq in the *nibbidā* formula, (*ekanta-*)*nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya ~āya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati* (or *saṃvattanti*), “it leads to (utter) revulsion, to dispassion, to ending (of suffering), to peace [stilling], to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana” (D 1:189; S 5:82, 179, 255, 361; A 3:83, 4:143, 5:216; sometimes preceded by same phrase in neg form (D 1:189,13 f, 2:285,18, 3:131,17, 137,1; M 1:431,34, 2:82,-28 f; 3:113,27; S 2:223,21, 5:179,17-25, 255,19, 361,23, 438,17; A 1:30,6, 5:217,26, 238,20; U 36,13); also *na nibbidāya*, etc, *saṃvattati* (A 3:325,29 f); so, too, in the phrase *upasamāya ~āya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati* (V 1:10,16; M 3:230,14; S 4:331,9; 5:80,1; 81,13 (qu UA 61,1); 421,9 (SA)); also *~āya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati* (Vbh 228,4 f). Def at Vism 373-435, Abhāv 104-111, Abhs:SRD 60-65); see also DhsA 182,34 (cf 183,3) = Vism 86,34 (cf 87,1); Nett 19,34-20,3; Vbh 324,26. See *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1.

<sup>51</sup> This last given as *sattānaṃ cutūpapāte ñāṇaṃ* in Vbh 334.13. See Abhs 43,23-25\* (cf Pm 1:111-115); S 2:216,-32-222,5 (*pañcannam abhiññānam evaṃ peyyālo*); Miln 221,15 (*pañcābhiññāyo nibbattetvā brahma, lokūpago ahoṣi*); cf D tr Franke 1913:59. (CPD)

<sup>52</sup> Abhāv 108,4\*; gen *sattannaṃ ~ānaṃ*, ib 5\*; 111,29\* (cf Vism 429,26: *satta abhiññā, ñāṇāni*).

<sup>53</sup> “Mental influxes,” *āsava*: see (5.6)(99a)n.

arhat Anuruddha gains through his successful practice of the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>54</sup> amongst which the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) are defined and detailed as follows:

### 5.1 THE MULTIFARIOUS PSYCHIC POWERS

**5.1.0 In the Iddhi,vidha Sutta** (S 52.12), the arhat Anuruddha declares that it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), that he wields the various kinds of psychic powers.<sup>55</sup> Traditionally, this is the first of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), listed in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) as the eightfold psychic powers as follows:

**89** With his mind thus *concentrated*, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects,<sup>56</sup> pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, he directs and inclines it to [78] the manifold psychic power.<sup>57</sup>

- (1) Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.
- (2) He appears, and vanishes.
- (3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.
- (4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.
- (5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.
- (6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.
- (7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.
- (8) He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world.

**90** Maharajah, just as a skilled potter or his assistant could craft from well-prepared clay whatever kind of pottery vessel he likes, or, maharajah, as a skilled ivory-carver or his assistant could craft from well-prepared ivory any kind of ivory-work he likes, or, maharajah, as a skilled goldsmith or his assistant could craft from well-prepared gold any kind of gold article he likes—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world. [79]

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. (D 2,89 f/1:78 f), SD 8.10<sup>58</sup>

#### COMMENTARY ON “PSYCHIC POWERS”

There are eight such psychic powers, and they are explained in some detail in **the Paṭisambhidā,-magga**, and paraphrased here:

**5.1.1 (1a) Having been one he becomes many.** Being naturally<sup>59</sup> one, he adverts himself to become many or a hundred or a thousand or a hundred thousand; having adverted, he determines with knowledge,

<sup>54</sup> *Satipaṭṭhāna*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>55</sup> S 52.12/5:303.

<sup>56</sup> *upakkilesa*: see §85 n.

<sup>57</sup> *Iddhi,vidhā*. Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11) where the Buddha disapproves of exhibiting such powers (D 11.4-5/1:213 f), SD 1.7. [8.1]

<sup>58</sup> On the 6 *abhiññā*, see Vbh 334,11 f (cf S 2:121,14 f ≈ 126,10 f; S tr Geiger 2:165 f); *cha me ~ā sacchikatā* (Thī 71 = 228 = 233 ≈ 516; D 3:281,13; S 2:217,19 = 222,10; DhA 4:30,14; Sāsv 73,13; Vism 5,13 ~ *pāpuṇāti*; Pm 1:35,1); *cha ~āyo vitthāretabbā* [sic!] (S 5:282,10); acc pl *aññe ~ā appenti* (Ap 3,6); instr *chahi ~āhi samannāgato puggalo cha-ḷ-abhiñño* (Pug 14,10); *chahi ~āhi saddhim arahattaṃ pāpuṇi* (Sāsv 54,1); gen *channaṃ ~ānaṃ* (Nm 143,17 (= *iddhi,vidhādānaṃ*, NmA); loc *chasu ~āsu vasī,bhāvāṃ pāpuṇāti*, (Mīln 214,18; 264,1). (CPD)

<sup>59</sup> *Pakaṭa*. That all such miracles are “natural” is important in suggesting that these are actual palpable experiences, not mere symbolic language. Such miracles are possible in that they do not go against any natural laws, but are the result of a focused mind that has been powered by the fourth dhyana. However, it is useful for those who have difficulty accepting such a notion in appreciating the symbolic or pedagogical aspects of such miracles.

“Let me be many” (*bahulo homî'ti*). He becomes many. The most famous example of this is the Buddha’s performance of the twin wonder, where the Buddha multiplies himself. [3.2.2]

Just as the venerable **Culla Panthaka**,<sup>60</sup> having been one, becomes many—even so the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery,<sup>61</sup> having been one, becomes many. (Pm 22.13/207)

**5.1.2 (1b) Having been many he becomes one.** Being naturally many, he adverts himself to become one; having adverted, he determines with knowledge, “Let me be one” (*eko homî'ti*). He becomes one.

Just as the venerable **Culla Panthaka** [5.1.1], having been many, becomes one—even so, the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, having been many, becomes one. (Pm 22.14/207)

NOTES ON 5.1.1-2. One of the best known and most lovable literary images of self-multiplication is that of Monkey in the Chinese classic, *The Journey West*.<sup>62</sup> Monkey, frustrated at the strenuousness of his task after battling the White Dragon (ch 15), appeals to Guanyin, who provides him with *three life-saving hairs* that he can turn into anything he needs to save himself from disaster. He frequently turns them into mini-Monkeys, thus multiplying his powers.

**5.1.3 (2a) He appears.** He is unveiled, uncovered, revealed, evident. (Pm 22.15/207)

NOTES ON 5.1.3. These two powers naturally work together, that is, one who vanishes, must reappear either in the same place or in another place. There are accounts of the Buddha, using his divine eye [5.3] and noticing monks having difficulties in their meditation. He then appears *in person* before them to assist them, “just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or would bend his stretched arm.” In other cases, he may appear in one of the heavens before a deva or brahma. Here are a few examples:

<b>Pacalā Sutta</b> (A 7.58/4:85-88), SD 4.11	The Buddha disappears from the Deer Park in the Bhesakaḷā Forest at Sumsumāra, giri in Bhaggā country and immediately appears before the venerable <u>Mahā Moggallāna</u> sitting and nodding in the village of Kallavāla, mutta in Magadha.
<b>Brahmā Baka Sutta</b> (S 6.4/1:142), SD 11.6	The Buddha (reading <u>Brahmā Baka</u> ’s mind), appears in the Brahmā world to admonish him.
<b>Aparā Diṭṭhi Sutta</b> (S 6.5/1:145-146), SD 54.3	The Buddha (reading <u>a certain brahma</u> ’s mind as having wrong views) appears before him in the Brahmā world, and goes into fire-kasina. Moggallāna, using his divine eye, looks for the Buddha, and appears there, too (in the east). He is similarly followed by Mahā Kassapa (south), Mahā Kappina (west), Anuruddha (north).
<b>Sama, citta Vagga</b> (A 2.4.6/1:64)	The Buddha appears before <u>Sāriputta</u> in the Mansion of Migāra’s Mother, and admonishes him.
<b>Soṇa (Koḷivisa) Sutta</b> (A 6.55/3:374-379), SD 20.12	The Buddha (reading <u>the monk Sona</u> ’s mind) appears before him, admonishing him to practise the middle way in his meditation.
<b>Nanda Sutta</b> (U 3.2/22), SD 43.7	The Buddha, taking the lovesick <u>Nanda</u> by the arm, brings him to the heaven of the Thirty-three to show him the beautiful nymphs there, and cure him of his pains by forgetting earthly beauty.

We also have cases where a great disciple or meditator appears before someone else, for example:

**Kevaḍḍha Sutta**                      Getting into proper meditation, a certain monk appears before Mahā

<sup>60</sup> DhA 2.3/1:239-255; AA 1:209-220; J 4/1:114-120; Divy 35.483-515.

<sup>61</sup> “The one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery,” *iddhimā ceto, vasi-p, patto*.

<sup>62</sup> Xīyóuji 西遊記 (simplified 西游记), written by Wú Chéng’ēn 吳承恩 (simplified 吴承恩) (ca 1505-1580 or 1500-1582), during the Tang dynasty. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journey\\_to\\_the\\_West](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journey_to_the_West). Teaching resources on *Monkey*: <http://www.exeas.org/resources/buddhism-journey-to-west.html#JttWWorldLit>.

(D 11,80/1:220), SD 1.7	Brahmā to ask him where all the 4 elements disappear without a trace
(D 11,83-84/1:221 f)	Mahā Brahmā refers him to the Buddha. So he goes before the Buddha.
<b>Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta</b>	<u>Moggallāna</u> vanishes from the Mansion of Migāra’s Mother and reappears
(M 37,6/1:252), SD 54.8.	amongst the devas of the Thirty-three.
<b>Cātumā Sutta</b> (M 67,8/1:458)	<u>Brahmā Sahampati</u> (after reading the Buddha’s mind) vanishes from the
SD 34.7.	Brahmā world and appears before the Blessed One.
<b>Āyācana Sutta</b> (S 6.1/1:137)	(As previously), SD 12.2.
<b>Brahma,deva Sutta</b>	<u>Brahmā Sahampati</u> appears before the mother of the monk named
(S 6.3/1:141), SD 12.4	Brahma,deva, and admonishes her not to make offerings to him, but to the worthy monk.
<b>Sakka Sutta</b> (S 40.10/4:269)	<u>Moggallāna</u> appears before Shakra in the heaven of the Thirty-three.
<b>Deva,cārika Sutta 1</b>	<u>Moggallāna</u> appears amongst the devas of the 33 and admonishes them
(S 55.18/5:366)	to have faith in the 3 jewels and to meditate.

#### 5.1.4 (2b) **He vanishes.** He is veiled, hidden, obstructed, enclosed by something. (Pm 22.16/207)

NOTES ON 5.1.4. There are at least two kinds of vanishing power. In the first—that of **in situ invisibility**—we have the case of the youth Yasa, after becoming a streamwinner, is made invisible so that his father is unable to see him, until the father himself becomes a streamwinner, too, and Yasa himself an arhat (Mv 7.7-11 = V 1:16 f.)]

The second kind of vanishing power—that of **teleportation**—is more common, such as follows:

<b>Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta</b>	<u>The Buddha</u> , along with the monks, vanish from the near bank of the
(D 16.1.33/2:89)	Ganges and reappears on the far side. <sup>63</sup>
<b>Yasoja Sutta</b> (U 3.3/26)	<u>Yasoja</u> disappears for the Vaggumudā river bank and reappears before
	the Buddha in the Gabled House Hall in Mahā,vana.
<b>Macchhariya Kosiya Setṭhi</b>	<u>Moggallāna</u> teleports the miserly seth Kosiya and his wife to Jeta,vana
<b>Vatthu</b> (DhA 4.5/1:367-376)	to offer their fried cake filled with sour gruel to every one there. <sup>64</sup>
<b>Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja</b>	The rajah Udena, angered that his women have left him to listen to
(SA 3:393 f)	<u>Pindola Bhāra,dvāja</u> , tries to put a red ants’ nest on him, but he
	disappears from the park, and reappears in Sāvattihī.

**5.1.5 (3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.** Being naturally one who gains *the space kasina attainment*, he adverts, “Through the wall, through the enclosure, through the mountain” (*tiro,kuṭṭam tiro,pākāram tiro,pabbatam āvajjati*). Having adverted, he determines with knowledge, “Let there be space” (*ākāso hotū’ti*). There is space. He goes through a wall, through an enclosure, through the mountain.

Just as humans who, by nature are without psychic power, go through something unhindered where this is no obstruction or enclosure, even so the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, goes through a wall, through an enclosure, through a mountain, as through open space. (Pm 22.17-/207)

**5.1.6 (4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.** Being naturally one who gains *the water kasina attainment*, he adverts to water. Having adverted, he determines with knowledge, “Let there be water” (*udakam hotū’ti*). There is water. He goes into the earth and emerges from it.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The Pali texts apparently regard the episode as “symbolic of the Buddha’s attainment of the ‘other side’ of transmigration, ie extinction (*nirvāṇa*), by the power of meditation” (AK Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 1970: 71).

<sup>64</sup> For a summary of the story, see **Miraculous Stories**, SD 27.5b (5.1).

<sup>65</sup> *So pathaviyā ummujjanimujjam karoti*, alt tr “He does the diving in and out of the earth” (Pm:Ñ 379).



Just as humans who, by nature are without psychic power, go into the water and emerges from it, even so the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, goes into the earth and emerges from it, as though through water. (Pm 22.18/207)

**5.1.7 (5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.** Being naturally one who gains *the earth kasina attainment*, he adverts to earth. Having adverted, he determines with knowledge, “Let there be earth” (*paṭhavī hotū’ti*). There is earth. He walks on the water without breaking it.<sup>66</sup>

Just as humans who, by nature are without psychic power, go on unbroken earth, even so the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, goes on water without breaking it, as if on earth. (Pm 22.19/207)

NOTES ON 5.1.7. The most famous canonical example of the “water walk” is surely that of the Buddha during the time he spends just before Uruvelā Kassapa’s conversion. The Vinaya which records the story, actually says, “Then the Blessed One having made the water recede all around, paced up and down in the midst of the dusty ground” (*atha kho bhagavā samantā udakaṃ ussāretvā majjhe reṇu, hatāya bhūmiyā caṅkami*) (Mv 1.20.16).<sup>67</sup>

The introduction to **the Sīlānisamsa Jātaka** (J 190) relates how a lay follower, out of great faith in the Buddha, walks across the river waters as if on dry land. However, while mid-stream he loses focus and begins to sink. Immediately, he regains his focus, and continues untroubled. When he finally meets the Buddha and speaks of his experience, the Buddha relates the Sīlānisamsa Jātaka about how a faithful follower, reflecting on the 3 jewels is rescued by a magical ship.<sup>68</sup>

In another example, we do have an account of a famous disciple of the Buddha—actually that disciple and his following—moving over water as if it were land. In the Dhammapada story (DhA 6.4), it is said that **the rajah Kappina**, in his great eagerness to see the Buddha, performs an act of truth, and crosses over not just one, but *three* rivers, without his or his entourage even wetting the horses’ hoofs.<sup>69</sup>

The Vinaya records how **a deity of Māra’s host** “having come over the water without breaking it” (*abhijjamāne udake āgantvā*), approaches the sham ascetic, Migalaṇḍika, who had been killing monks disgusted with their bodies after doing the cultivation of the impurities, and deludes him into believing that he is doing a good thing by “liberating” the monks! (Pār 3 = V3:69).<sup>70</sup>

**5.1.8 (6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.** Being naturally one who gains *the earth kasina attainment*, he adverts to space (*ākāsa*). Having adverted, he determines with knowledge, “Let there be earth” (*paṭhavī hotū’ti*). There is earth. He walks [moves], or stands, or sits, or reclines in space, in the sky.<sup>71</sup>

Just as humans who, by nature are without psychic power, walks [moves], or stands, or sits, or reclines on earth, even so the one endowed with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, walks [moves], or stands, or sits, or reclines in space, in the sky, like a winged bird. (Pm 22.20/207)

In **the Macchariya Kosiya Setṭhi Vatthu** (DhA 4.5), Moggallāna begins his conversion process of the miserly sesh, Kosiya, by first appearing outside his seventh-floor window, and then assumes *the first three postures* (standing, walking, and sitting) in turn. Then he belches smoke that smarts the miser’s eyes. In the end, the miser relents and gives up his miserliness.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> So *abhijjamāne udake gacchati*, alt tr “He goes unbroken on water” (Pm:Ñ 380). *Abhijjamāna* is neg pass part of *bhijjati*, “to be broken, be destroyed” (which is pass of *bhindati*).

<sup>67</sup> V 1:34 f; J 1:82, 4:180; SnA 2:436 citing V 1:71. For full tr, see **Uruvela Pāṭihāriya**, SD 63.2.

<sup>68</sup> J 190/2:111.

<sup>69</sup> DhA 6.4/2:120 f. See also **Miraculous Stories**, SD 27.5b (4)l also (**Ānāpāna,sati**) **Mahā Kappina S** (S 54.7), SD 24.7 (1).

<sup>70</sup> See **The Body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (2.5).

<sup>71</sup> So *ākāse antalikkhe caṅkamati pi tiṭṭhati pi nisīdati pi seyyam pi kappeti*.

<sup>72</sup> DhA 4.5/1:367-376. For a summary of the story, see **Miraculous Stories**, SD 27.5b (5.1).

**NOTES ON 5.1.8.** At least two examples of astral travel or sky-walking without any mechanical or technical aid are found in the commentaries on the Sunaparanta monk **Puṇṇa**'s story.<sup>73</sup> First, it is said that Puṇṇa travels through the air over the seas to the aid of his brother's ship caught in a bad storm, and calms the waters.<sup>74</sup> Further, it is said that Puṇṇa invites the Buddha and 500 monks to come for alms-offering in Sunaparanta. The Thera,gāthā Commentary says that the Buddha then, "by means of psychic power, goes there along with that many monks."<sup>75</sup>

**5.1.9 (7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.**

Here, the one with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, while sitting or reclining, adverts to the moon or the sun. Having adverted, he determines with knowledge, "Be within arm's reach" (*hattha,-pāse hotū ti*).<sup>76</sup> It is within arm's reach. Sitting or lying down, with his hand he touches, holds, strokes, the moon or the sun.<sup>77</sup>

Just as humans who, by nature are without psychic power, touches, holds, strokes, some physical object within arm's reach, even so the one with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, while sitting or reclining, adverts to the moon or the sun. (Pm 22.21/208 f)

**5.1.10 (8) He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world.** If the one with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, wants to go to the Brahma world, even though it is far away, he determines that it is near, thus, "Let it be near" (*santike hotū 'ti*). It becomes near.

Although it is near, he determines that is far, thus, "Let it be far" (*dūre hotū 'ti*). It becomes far.

Although many, he determines that is few, thus, "Let it be few" (*thokaṃ hotū 'ti*). It becomes few.

Although few, he determines that is many, thus, "Let it be many" (*bahukaṃ hotū 'ti*). It becomes many.

With the divine eye, he sees that Brahma's form.

With the divine ear-element, he hears that Brahma's sound.

With the knowledge of other's mind, he knows that Brahma's mind.

If the one with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, wants to go to the Brahma world with a visible body,<sup>78</sup> he changes his mind in accordance with his body.<sup>79</sup>

Having changed his mind in accordance with his body, he determines his mind in accordance with his body.

Having changed his mind in accordance with his body, and determined his mind in accordance with his body, he, having entered into easy perception and quick perception,<sup>80</sup> goes to the Brahma world with a *visible* body.

If the one with psychic power, who has attained mind mastery, wants to go to the Brahma world *with an invisible body*,<sup>81</sup> he changes his body in accordance with his mind.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>73</sup> His canonical story is found in **Puṇṇ'ovāda S** (M 145/3:267-270 ≠ **Puṇṇa S** (S 35.88/4:60-63), SD 20.15.

<sup>74</sup> M 145@ SD 20.15 (1.5); ThaA 1:168. For a story of the Buddha parting the waters, see **Miraculous Stories**, SD 27.5b (4).

<sup>75</sup> *Bhagavā ca iddhānubhāvena tattakehi bhikkhūhi saddhim tattha gantvā* (ThaA 1:169).

<sup>76</sup> *Hattha,pāsa*, lit "the side of the hand," ie within armslength (here not tt): Vinaya tt, meaning close enough to entail an offence (V 3:200, 4:47, 82, 95, 221, 230). When monks are performing a Sangha act, they must sit close together *hattha,pāsa*. It is def by Vinaya,vinicchaya Ṭikā as *aḍḍhatēyya, ratana-p, pamāṇa, desam*, 2½ ratanas (ie 2½ cubits), probably meaning from the shoulder-joint to the middle finger-tip: see Nāṇamoli, *A Pali-English Glossary of Buddhist Technical Terms*, 1994: 141. A related expression is *hattha,pattam*, "within the hand's reach," where in Yasa's life-story, we find his thought, "One would think it was a charnel ground within the hand's reach [within armslength]!" (*hattha,pattam susānam maññe*, V 1:15), SD 11.2(7),

<sup>77</sup> *So nisinnako vā nipannako vā candima,sūriye pāṇinā āmasati parāmasati parimajjati*.

<sup>78</sup> *Dissamānena kāyena brahma,lokaṃ gantu,kāmo hoti*.

<sup>79</sup> *Kāya,vasena cittaṃ pariṇāmeti*.

<sup>80</sup> *Sukha,saññaṃ ca lahu,saññaṃ ca okkamitvā*

<sup>81</sup> *Adissamānena kāyena brahma,lokaṃ gantu,kāmo hoti*.

Having changed his body in accordance with his mind, he determines his body in accordance with his mind.

Having changed his body in accordance with his mind, and determined his body in accordance with his mind, he, having entered into easy perception and quick perception, goes to the Brahma world with a *invisible* body.

He projects a form before that Brahma, mind-made, with all its limbs, without defect in any faculty.<sup>83</sup>

If the one with psychic power walks up and down [moves], the image [hologram]<sup>84</sup> walks up and down [moves] there, too.

If the one with psychic power stands, the image stands there, too.

If the one with psychic power sits, the hologram sits there, too.

If the one with psychic power lies down, the hologram lies down there, too.

If the one with psychic power fumes, the hologram fumes there, too.

If the one with psychic power blazes, the hologram blazes there, too.

If the one with psychic power speaks Dharma, the hologram speaks Dharma there, too.

If the one with psychic power asks a question, the hologram asks the question there, too.

If the one with psychic power answers a question, the hologram answers the question there, too.

If the one with psychic power stands, converses and have a discussion with that Brahma, the hologram stands, converses and have a discussion with that Brahma there, too.

Whatever the one with psychic power does, the hologram does just that, too.

This is the power of determination.

(Pm 22.22/209)

**NOTES ON 5.1.10.** The best known examples of power of astral travel to high heavens and related psychic miracles are found in **the Māra Nimantanika Sutta** (M 49), where the Buddha, *reading the mind* [5.3] of Brahmā (the High God of the brahminical universe), notices he has the wrong view of eternalism (such as regarding himself and his heaven as being permanent). The Buddha declares,

Having known with my mind the thought in the brahmā Baka's mind, just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or would bend his stretched arm, I vanished from the foot of the royal sal tree in the Subhaga Grove at Ukattā,<sup>85</sup> and reappeared in the brahma world.

(M 49,3.1/1:326), SD 11.7

The Brahmā Baka himself welcomes the Buddha, and after the initial cordial exchanges, the Buddha points out the impermanence of all things. Māra takes over control of the minds of Brahmā Baka and his heavenly host, and challenges the Buddha. The Buddha declares that he knows Māra is there (M 49.30), and then challenges Māra to disappear, but he is unable to do so. The Buddha makes himself invisible so that Māra is unable to see him.

Buddhaghosa classes this *invisibility* miracle by the Buddha together with the monk Mahaka's fire miracle shown to Citta the houselord, as recorded in **the Mahaka Pāṭihāriya S** (S 4.14)<sup>86</sup> [7.2]. In both cases, only the miracle is seen, but not the miracle worker.<sup>87</sup>

## 5.2 CLAIRAUDIENCE (DIVINE EAR)

In **the Dibba,sota Sutta** (S 52.13), the arhat Anuruddha declares, it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>88</sup> that he wields the divine ear.<sup>89</sup> Traditionally, this

<sup>82</sup> *Citta,vasena cittam pariṇāmeti.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ahīn-indriya*: see (4.5.3) (87) n.

<sup>84</sup> *Nimitta*, or “projection.” This is a sort of realistic 3-D hologram, that is basically able to do whatever its creator (esp the Buddha) does or wants it to.

<sup>85</sup> In **Baka Brahmā S** (S 6.4) account: “he vanished from Jeta,vana [Jeta's grove]” (S 6.4/1:142).

<sup>86</sup> S 4.14.16/4:290 @ SD 27.2.

<sup>87</sup> *Vism* 12.85 f/393 f.

psychic power is the second of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-l-abhiññā*), defined in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows:

With his mind thus *concentrated*, he hears, by means of the divine-ear element,<sup>90</sup> purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

Maharajah, just as if a man travelling along a highway were to hear the sounds of bheri [conical drum], mridanga [tom-tom],<sup>91</sup> conch-shell, cymbals, and dindima [small drum], he would know,

‘That is bheri sound; that is mridanga sound; that is conch sound; that is cymbal sound; that is dindima sound’—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he hears, by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. (D 2.91 f/1:79), SD 8.10

**5.2.1 Textual references to clairaudience.** We have here some examples of how the Buddha and his disciples listen in to significant turns in various conversations, and also stories from the Commentaries which feature or suggest clairaudience.

<b>Mahāpadāna Sutta</b>	(D 14.1.2/2:1)	<u>The Buddha</u> overhears monks discussing rebirth.
<b>Udumbarika Siha,nāda Sutta</b>	(D 25.6/3:38)	<u>The Buddha</u> overhears the wanderer Nigrodha insulting and challenging him.
<b>Māgandiya Sutta</b>	(M 75.6/1:502)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears Bhāra,dvāja conversing with the wanderer Māgandiya who insults the Buddha.
<b>Sakk’udāna Sutta</b>	(U 3.7/30)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears how Shakra tricks Mahā Kassapa into accepting his (Shakra’s) alms.
<b>Juṇha Sutta</b>	(U 4.4/40)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears the conversation between Sāriputta and Moggallāna praising one another. <sup>92</sup>
<b>Milinda,pañha</b>	(Miln 6)	<u>Assa,gutta</u> <sup>93</sup> hears that king Milinda wants to meet wise teachers to answer his Dharma questions.
<b>Aññatara Bhikkhu Vatthu</b>	(DhA 3.2/1:297)	<u>A monk</u> hears the laywoman Māṭika,māta says that she was his wife a hundred lives ago. [5.4.1]
<b>Macchariya Kosiya Setṭhi Vatthu</b>	(DhA 4.5/1:374)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears the monks praise Moggallāna for converting a wealthy miser. <sup>94</sup>
<b>Mahā Kassapa-t,thera Piṇḍapāta,dinna Vatthu</b>	(DhA 4.10/1:429)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears Shakra’s exultation on Mahā Kassapa accepting his alms-offering.
<b>Tissa-t,thera Vatthu</b>	(DhA 18.3/3:342)	<u>The Buddha</u> hears a louse (an ex-monk) attached to his robe, crying in despair.

A detailed technical definition of the divine ear is given in the Udāna Commentary (UA 201).<sup>95</sup>

**5.2.2 Comments of clairaudience.** The “divine ear” is somewhat related to the modern term, *clairaudience*. However, we should be aware that such terms come from parapsychology or the New Age [4.0],

<sup>88</sup> See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>89</sup> S 52.13/5:304.

<sup>90</sup> “Divine-ear element,” *dibba,sota,dhātu*, clairaudience.

<sup>91</sup> “Mridanga,” *mutiṅgā*, vl *mudiṅgā* (V 1:15, S 2:267). See **Āṇi S** (S 20.7.2), SD 11.13.

<sup>92</sup> See UA 53.

<sup>93</sup> Comys cite him as an example of a “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa mitta*), a true and effective guide for our meditation training (DA 779;VbhA 272).

<sup>94</sup> For a summary of the story, see **Miraculous Stories**, SD 27.5b (5.1).

<sup>95</sup> For tr, see UA:M 492 f. See also PmA 1:12.

and can have its own baggage. It is vital to define its Buddhist usage right from the start, especially that the Buddhist terms do not entail any abiding entity or essence, such as a soul.

In parapsychology, **clairaudience**—from late 17<sup>th</sup>-century French *clair* (clear) & *audience* (hearing)—is a form of extrasensory perception (ESP), that is, a paranormal or suprasensory manner of listening, or that is often considered to be a form of *clairvoyance* (suprasensory seeing)<sup>96</sup> [5.5]. Clairaudience is essentially the ability to hear in a suprasensory manner, as opposed to suprasensory seeing (clairvoyance) or feeling (clairsentience).

Clairaudient people are said to have *psi*-mediated hearing, that is, the hearing is by means, for example, of the “inner or mental ear” similar to the way many people think words without having auditory impressions. It may also refer to actual perception of sounds, such as voices, tones, or noises which are not apparent to other humans or to recording equipment. For instance, a clairaudient person might claim to hear the voices or thoughts of the spirits of dead persons. It is not always possible to distinguish clairaudience from the delusional voices heard by the emotionally troubled or mentally ill, even when it is evident that the information did not come by normal means (including “cold reading”<sup>97</sup> or other magic tricks).

### 5.3 MIND-READING

In the **Ceto,pariya Sutta** (S 52.14), the arhat Anuruddha declares, it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>98</sup> that he wields the power of mind-reading.<sup>99</sup> Traditionally, this is the third of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), defined in the **Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows:

**93** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of mind-reading.<sup>100</sup> He knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind.<sup>101</sup>

*He knows a mind with lust as a mind with lust,*

*and a mind without lust as a mind without lust. [80]*

*He knows a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,*

*and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion.*

*He knows a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,*

*and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion.*

*He knows a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,*

*and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and worry] as a distracted mind.*

*He knows an exalted mind [through the lower or higher dhyana] as an exalted mind,*

<sup>96</sup> From [Parapsychological Association website, Glossary of Key Words Frequently Used in Parapsychology](http://www.parapsychology.org/Glossary_of_Key_Words_Frequently_Used_in_Parapsychology), Retrieved 23 Jan 2009.

<sup>97</sup> **Cold reading** is a technique used by psychics, mentalists, mediums and fortune tellers, to determine details about another person in order to convince them that the reader knows much more about a subject than he or she actually does. Even without prior knowledge of a person, a clever cold reader can quickly obtain much information about him by carefully analyzing his body language, dressing, hairstyle, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, education, speech, place of origin, etc. Cold readers commonly employ high-probability guesses and sweet-talk about the subject, quickly picking up on signals from their subjects as to whether their guesses are in the right direction or not, and then emphasizing or reinforcing any chance connections the subjects acknowledge while quickly rationalizing or moving on from missed guesses. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold\\_reading](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_reading).

<sup>98</sup> See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>99</sup> S 52.14/5:304.

<sup>100</sup> “Mind-reading,” *ceto,pariya,ñāna*.

<sup>101</sup> 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.

*and an unexalted mind [not developed by dhyana] as an unexalted mind.  
 He knows a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,  
 and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind.<sup>102</sup>  
 He knows a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,  
 and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind.  
 He knows a released mind as a released mind,  
 and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.*

**94** Maharajah, just as if a young man or woman, fond of ornaments, examining the reflection of his or her own face in a bright mirror or a bowl of clear water would know ‘blemished’ if it were blemished, or ‘unblemished’ if it were not—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind. He knows a mind with lust... without lust;...with aversion...without aversion; ...with delusion ... without delusion; a contracted mind, a distracted mind; an exalted mind, an unexalted mind; a surpassable mind, an unsurpassable mind; a concentrated mind, an unconcentrated mind; a released mind, an unreleased mind—he knows each of them just as it is. **[81]**

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. (D 2,93 f/1:79 f), SD 8.10

### 5.3.1 Suttas on mind-reading

In the **Puris’indriya,ñāṇa Sutta** (A 6.62), as the sutta title suggests, the Buddha speaks on his ability to read others’ minds. He does so to determine the moral quality of the person.<sup>103</sup> Other suttas and texts that have accounts of mind-reading or allude to it are as follows:

<b>Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta</b> (M 12,38-42/1:75-78)	By scanning a being’s mind, the Buddha, studying his mental states and personal habits, is able to forecast what kind of rebirth he will have.
<b>Cūla Gosiṅga Sutta</b> (M 31,20/1:210)	By scanning a being’s mind, the Buddha is able to say what kind of meditation level or spiritual attainment he has.
<b>Raṭṭha,pāla Sutta</b> (M 82,15/2:61)	Reading Raṭṭha,pāla’s mind, the Buddha knows that he is incapable of giving up the training to return to the lay life.
<b>Mātā Sutta,</b> (S 17.37-43/2:242 f)	In 7 discourses, the Buddha says that he has read the minds of those who, on account of their <i>mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter or wife</i> , would not lie, yet would do so for gain, honour and praise.
<b>Dibba,cakkhu Sutta</b> (S 52.23/5:305)	Anuruddha declares that his power of mind-reading is attained through his mastery of the 4 satipatthanas.
<b>Paṇihita Accha Vagga</b> (A 1.5.4/1:8 f)	When a clarified mind ( <i>pasanna,citta</i> ) is able to read others’ minds.
<b>Kakudha Thera Sutta</b> (A 5.100/3:123)	Moggallāna, after being informed by the deva Kakukadha that Devadatta plots to take over the sangha, scans the deva’s mind to confirm the truth of his words.
<b>Citta Hatthi,sāriputta Sutta</b> (A 6.60/3:398)	The elder Mahā Koṭṭhita, reading the monk Citta’s mind, predicts his future as a monk.
<b>(Samudda) Uposatha Sutta 1</b> (A 8.20/4:205)	The Buddha surveys the minds of the monks assembled for the Pātimokkha recital and finds that one of them is impure.
<b>Nanda Sutta</b> (U 3.2/24, 25)	The Buddha fathoms Nanda’s mind, and learns that he is freed.
<b>Suppabuddha Sutta</b> (U 5.3/49)	The Buddha, surveying the minds of those assembled, sees that the leper Suppabuddha is ready for liberation.
<b>Samudda) Uposatha Sutta 2`</b>	The Buddha surveys the minds of the monks assembled for the Pāti-

<sup>102</sup> Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

<sup>103</sup> A 6.62/3:404-409 @ SD 61.5.

(U 5.5/52)	mokkha recital and finds one of them is impure.
<b>Paduṭṭha Citta Sutta</b> (It 1.2.10/12) <sup>104</sup>	The Buddha, surveying one’s mind, is able to know if it is afflicted ( <i>paduṭṭha</i> ).
<b>Pasanna Citta Sutta</b> (It 1.3.1/14) <sup>105</sup>	The Buddha, surveying one’s mind, is able to know if it is devoted ( <i>pasanna</i> ).
<b>Vaṅḡsa Thera Vatthu</b> (DhA 26.37/4:226-228)	The wanderer Vaṅḡsa, by tapping on a skull, is able to tell where the person was reborn, that is, until he tapped on an arhat’s skull! (This is actually a case of <i>psychometry</i> .) <sup>106</sup>

### 5.3.2 Comments on mind-reading

**5.3.2.1** If we had the knowledge of mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*), we could surely directly and truthfully communicate with one another. Indeed, since we can read one another’s minds, there is no change for falsehood to arise, except in the case of ignorance or delusion. The Suttas inform us that the Buddha has the power of mind-reading, and would often use it to scan the minds of others so that he could help them by giving them a suitable teaching. But mind-reading, as a rule, comes from a focused mind, which is rare in the unawakened.<sup>107</sup>

**5.3.2.2** Another related psychic ability is called **telepathy** (Gk τηλε, *tēle* meaning “distant” and πάθεια, *patheia*, “to be affected by”), that is, *the transfer of thoughts or feelings* between individuals by extrasensory means, that is, pure on a mental level.<sup>108</sup> Telepathy, in other words, includes thought-transfer and mind-reading. Transhumanists<sup>109</sup> believe that technologically-enabled telepathy, called “techlepathy,” will be the inevitable future of humanity, and seek to develop practical machines for this.

**5.3.2.3** Another paranormal phenomenon, **clairsentience**,<sup>110</sup> is a form of extra-sensory perception that enables a person to psychically acquire information primarily by means of feeling or sensing.<sup>111</sup> In Buddhism, this often refers to the ability to experience and understand *individual vibrations*. [8.2]

There are many different degrees of clairsentience ranging from the perception of diseases of other people to the thoughts or emotions of other people. Unlike clairvoyance [5.5], this kind of ability does not give vivid mental picture, but works on very vivid feelings or sensations.

<sup>104</sup> Recurs at A 1.5.3/1:8, without verses and It pericopes; an untraced parallel occurs at Nett 130 f.

<sup>105</sup> Recurs at A 1.5.4/1:8 f, without verses and It pericopes; an untraced parallel occurs at Nett 139.

<sup>106</sup> **Psychometry** is the paranormal ability to obtain information about an individual through physical contact with an object that belongs to him. The term was introduced in 1842 by Joseph Rodes Buchanan, who developed the theory that all things give off an emanation. See

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/6460/bio/B/uchananJR.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Cf **thought-reading** [5.5.4.4]. See **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11 (5.2).

<sup>108</sup> The term was coined in 1882 by the classical scholar Fredric WH Myers, a founder of the Society for Psychical Research, specifically to replace the earlier expression *thought-transference*. See Robert Todd Carroll, [The Skeptic’s Dictionary: Telepathy](#), SkepDic.com, 2005; [Glossary of Parapsychological terms - Telepathy](#), Parapsychological Association.

<sup>109</sup> **Transhumanism**, often symbolized by H+ or h+, is an international intellectual and cultural movement (beginning around 1957) promoting the use of science and technology to improve human mental and physical characteristics and capacities. The movement regards aspects of the human condition, such as disability, suffering, disease, aging, and involuntary death as unnecessary and undesirable. Transhumanists look to biotechnologies and other emerging technologies for these purposes.

<sup>110</sup> From French *clair*, “clear,” + *sentience*, “feeling,” ultimately derived from Latin *clarus*, “clear,” + *sentiens*, der from *sentire*, “to feel.”

<sup>111</sup> [Parapsychological Association historical terms glossary](#).

#### 5.4 THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES (AS AN ASPECT OF THE DIVINE EYE)<sup>112</sup> [5.5.4].

This knowledge of retrocognition is also known as the “knowledge of redeaths and rebirths” (or simply as “knowledge of death and birth”) (*cut’upapāta ñāṇa*) or the “knowledge of how beings fare according to their karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga ñāṇa*), **The Udāna Commentary** recounts how the Buddha, during the first watch of the Vesak full moon night, recalls his past lives, in the middle watch purifies his divine eye, and in the last watch reflects on dependent arising (UA 50). [5.3.2.2]

In **the Pubbe,nivāsa Sutta** (S 52.22), the arhat Anuruddha declares, it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>113</sup> that he wields the power to recall past lives.<sup>114</sup> Traditionally, this is the fourth of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), defined in **the Sāmañña,-phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows:

**95** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the recollection of past lives.<sup>115</sup> He recollects his 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 joy 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 joy and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’

Thus, maharajah, he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details.<sup>116</sup>

**96** PARABLE OF THE TRAVELLER. Just as if a man were to go from his home village to another village, and then from that village to yet another village, and then from that village back to his home village. The thought would occur to him,

‘I went from my home village to that village over there. There I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I went to that village over there, and there I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I came back home’;<sup>117</sup> [82]

Even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he recollects his manifold past lives...in their modes and details.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. (D 2,95-97/1:81 f), SD 8.10

**5.4.1 Textual references to the recollection of past lives.** The Buddha’s disciples who are foremost in recalling past lives are the elder **Sobhita** (amongst the monks) and the elder nun **Bhaddā Kāpilāni** (amongst the nuns) (A 1:25).

<sup>112</sup> *Pubbe,nivāsānussati ñāṇa*. This knowledge and the foll 2 (ie 4-6) constitute “the three knowledges” (*te,vijja*) of the Buddha and the arhats (D 33.1.10(58)/3:220, 34.1.4.(10)/275; A 10.102/5:211), and is a shorthand for “the 6 knowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) listed here and elsewhere.

<sup>113</sup> See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>114</sup> S 52.22/5:305, SD 92.12(12).

<sup>115</sup> *Pubbe,nivāsānānussati,ñāṇa*, lit “the knowledge of the recollection of past abidings [existences].” The remainder of this section 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 is used to explain how the eternalist view arose.

<sup>116</sup> This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

<sup>117</sup> The 3 villages represents the “three existences” (*tīsu bhavesu*), ie, the sense world, the form world, and the formless world (DA 1:224).



Besides the well known *recollection of past lives* pericope, found in such discourses as the Sāmañña-phala Sutta, as mentioned above, there are numerous accounts in the early texts of past-life recalls. Here are some examples:

<b>Nakula,pitā</b> (AA 1:399)	The Buddha recalls being the son of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,māta in 500 - past lives, and related in many more.
<b>Pilinda Sutta</b> 3.6/28)	The Buddha recollects Pilinda,vaccha's past life, to explain a present (U characteristic of his. = DhA 26.25.
<b>Pilinda,vaccha Vatthu</b> (DhA 26.25/4:181 f)	[As for Pilinda Sutta, U 3.6: see preceding.]
<b>Aññatara Bhikkhu Vatthu</b> (DhA 3.2/1:297)	A laywoman Mātika,mātā recalls that a hundred lives ago she was a monk's wife. [5.2.1]
<b>Isi,dāsī Therī,gāthā</b> (ThīA 260-271)	The nun Isi,dāsī recalls her past lives when, as a man, she committed various immoral acts and suffered various painful rebirths. <sup>118</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Comments on recollection of past lives.**

**5.4.2.1 BUDDHIST AND NON-BUDDHIST RETROCOGNITION.** The “divine eye” is a term for the knowledge of death and birth, that is, how beings fare according to their karma. If we exclude the teaching of karma, or interpret it loosely to refer to some form of moral causality, then we can call it by the modern term of “retrocoognition” or “regress knowledge.” An important difference should be noted: Buddhist *knowledge of past lives* refers to a deliberate conscious process of recall, whereas in *parapsychology and popular cult beliefs*, they are usually linked either spontaneous recall (usually by children) or regression hypnosis (in either case, they are involuntary).

**5.4.2.2 IAN STEVENSON.** In the field of parapsychology, scientific investigation has been conducted in this rebirth and recollection of past lives. This quantum leap in rebirth studies has been made by **Ian Stevenson** (1918-2007), proclaimed as “the Galileo of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” by a 1977 issue of the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*.<sup>119</sup> As Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, Stevenson especially investigated what is known as “spontaneous past life recall.”

Over a number of years Stevenson interviewed over four thousand children from the United States, England, Thailand, Burma, Turkey, Lebanon, Canada, India and other places, who claimed that *they could remember a number of incidents from a past life*. Procedural scientific investigation included the relevant checking and analysis of documents, letters, autopsy records, birth and death certificates, hospital records, photographs, newspaper reports and the like.

In some cases, medical records of violent death often provide valuable links with the previous life. Such an example of birthmark cases is that of Ravi Shankar. He recalled being horrifically decapitated as a child by a relative who was hoping that he would inherit the child's father's wealth. The reborn child was found to have a birthmark encircling his neck. When his claim was investigated it was found that the person he claimed to have been, did in fact die by decapitation.

**5.4.2.3 ANTARĀ,BHAVA & LBL.** One of the profitable encounters between early Buddhist psychology and contemporary parapsychology is in the field of rebirth studies, especially a specific area known as

<sup>118</sup> See **Why Some Marriages Fail**, SD 3.8(I) Isi,dāsī.

<sup>119</sup> Harold Lief's actual words are: “Either he [Dr. Stevenson] is making a colossal mistake. Or he will be known as the Galileo of the 20th century,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 165,3 Sep 1977 A cubit (*ratana*) here, according to Comy, that of a medium-sized man (UA 245), ie, twice the distance between the tips of the thumb and of the index finger with the fingers outstretched (VbhA 343), which would be about 16 ins or 41 cm. As such, 7 cubits would be about 9 ft 2 ins or 2.85 m.. See also <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/10/AR2007021001393.html>.

“**life-before-life**” (LBL) recall. LBL refers to recalling the events or conditions from the point of death in a previous life to the point of birth as a human being in this life. Of Stevenson’s anthology of over 2500 cases, only 276<sup>120</sup> have been identified to be LBL recalls.<sup>121</sup>

Apparently, LBL recalls are relatively common in Myanmar, where Jim Tucker reported 35 cases of children who remember events that occurred during the intermission between the end of the previous life and their current birth. These children generally have very good memories which were verified later. Their reports follow a three-stage process: a transition stage, a stable stage in a particular situation and a return stage involving conception or selection of parents. (Sharma & Tucker 2004: 107 f)<sup>122</sup>

## 5.5 THE DIVINE EYE (*dibba,cakkihu*)

**5.5.0 The Udāna Commentary** recounts how the Buddha, during the first watch of the Vesak full moon night, recalls his past lives, in the middle watch purifies his divine eye, and in the last watch reflects on dependent arising (UA 50).<sup>123</sup> In **the Dibba,cakkhu Sutta** (S 52.23), the arhat Anuruddha declares that it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>124</sup> that he wields the divine eye, that is, the power to see the dying and rebirth of beings according to their karma.<sup>125</sup> Traditionally, this is the fifth (and last mundane unit) of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), defined in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows:

**97** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings.<sup>126</sup> He sees—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],<sup>127</sup> 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 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, with the body’s breaking up, have re-arisen 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, with the body’s breaking up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

Thus, maharajah, by means of the divine eye, **[83]** he sees beings passing away and re-arising, and *how they fare according to* their karma.

<sup>120</sup> By 2004, only about half of Ian Stevenson’s cases had been entered into a computerized database with statistical analysis. The actual number of LBL recall cases is probably more than 276. (Note by PHANG Cheng Kar 2008: 3)

<sup>121</sup> See Jim B Tucker, *Life Before Life*, 2006: <http://lifebeforelife.com/casestudies.htm>. Tucker worked with Ian Stevenson, and is regarded as one of his academic successors. On the possibility of *opapātika* referring to the intermediate state, see **Rebirth in Early Buddhism**, SD 57.1(3).

<sup>122</sup> The number is prob more, as the database at that time was not fully sorted out.

<sup>123</sup> See also BA 33.

<sup>124</sup> See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>125</sup> S 52.23/5:305.

<sup>126</sup> *Cutūpapāta ñāṇa*, “the knowledge of the falling away and rebirth (of beings),” or “knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga ñāṇa*), or “the divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*): see foll n.

<sup>127</sup> *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.

**98 PARABLE OF THE CITY SQUARE.**<sup>128</sup> Maharajah, just as if there were a mansion in the central square [where four roads meet], and a man with good eyesight standing on top of it were to see people entering a house, leaving it, wandering along the carriage-road, and sitting down in the central square [where four roads meet]. The thought would occur to him,

‘These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting down in the central square [where four roads meet].’<sup>129</sup>

Even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he sees by means of the divine eye, how beings *fare in accordance* with their karma.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. (D 2,97-98/1:82 f), SD 8.10

### **5.5.1 Types of eyes**

The **(Ti) Cakkhu Sutta** (It 3.2.2) speaks of **the 3 eyes** of the Buddha, also listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), namely:

- |                      |                              |                                    |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) the physical eye | ( <i>maṃsa cakkhu</i> ),     |                                    |
| (2) the divine eye   | ( <i>dibba cakkhu</i> ), and |                                    |
| (3) the wisdom eye   | ( <i>paññā cakkhu</i> ).     | (D 33.1.10(46)/3:219; It 3.2.2/52) |

The Commentaries in due course comprehensively systematized the Buddha’s knowledges and powers as **the “5 eyes”** (*pañca cakkhu*) of the Buddha, namely,<sup>130</sup>

- (1) the physical eye (*maṃsa cakkhu*), which is exceptionally beautiful, sensitive and powerful;
- (2) the divine eye (*dibba cakkhu*), which is the one referred to here;
- (3) the wisdom eye (*paññā cakkhu*), that is, the wisdom “that gives rise to vision, to knowledge, to peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana”;<sup>131</sup>
- (4) the Buddha eye (*buddha cakkhu*), that is, the knowledge of the inclinations and latent tendencies (*āsayānusaya,ñāṇa*) of beings, and the knowledge of higher and lower faculties (ie the degree of spiritual maturity) of others (*indriya,parôpariyatta ñāṇa*), with which the Buddha daily surveys the world to seek out those ready for spiritual admonition and liberation (V 1:6); and
- (5) the universal eye (*samanta cakkhu*), as in the phrase, “O wise one, Universal Eye, | Ascend to the palace of the Dharma!” that is, (according to the commentarial tradition) the Buddha’s omniscience.<sup>132</sup> (D 14,3.7/2:39\*)<sup>133</sup>

The best known “eye” is of course **the “Dharma eye”** (*dhamma cakkhu*), frequently and famously mentioned in the early Suttas in reference to *the first three paths and fruitions* (that is, from streamwinning until non-returning), namely, the “vision of the Dharma, dustless, stainless.”<sup>134</sup>

<sup>128</sup> On this parable, see also SD 2.17(8).

<sup>129</sup> On the significance of this simile in confirming canonical acceptance of the intermediate state (*antarā,bhava*), see “**Is Rebirth Immediate?**” SD 2.17.8.

<sup>130</sup> See Nc 235; MA 2:179; SA 1:200; BA 33 f; ItA 2:26.

<sup>131</sup> See **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11.3/5:421), SD 1.1.

<sup>132</sup> On the Buddha’s omniscience, see **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90/2:125-133), SD 10.8 (2) & **Sandaka S** (M 76), SD 35.7. See also **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1.

<sup>133</sup> Also at **M 26,20/1:168\***, **85,43/2:93\***; **S 559\*/6.1/1:137\***; **It 33\***; **Sn 345b, 346c, 378c, 1063c, 1069c, 1073b, 1090d, 1133a**; **Tha 1265b, 1266c**; **Ap 1:176, 2:205**; **Nm 360 (×2), 454 (×2)**; **Pm 1:133**. See also SD 50.20 comy 14-15 (2).

<sup>134</sup> V 1:11. 16; D 1:110, 2:288; S 4:47; A 4:186, etc.

The divine eye, or the ability to see the past lives of others, according to how they have fared and will fare according to their karma. This knowledge is consummate only in the Buddha, who fully understands the nature of karma, and is able to fully encompass its working. **The Acinteyya Sutta** (A 4.77), which lists the “4 unthinkables” (*cattāri acinteyyāni*),<sup>135</sup> is here translated in full:

### 5.5.2 The Discourse on the Unthinkables (A 4.77)

#### SD 27.5a(5.5.2)<sup>136</sup>

## Acinteyya Sutta

The Discourse on the Unthinkables | A 4.77/2:80; DhA 2:199

A 4.2.3.7 = Ānguttara Nikāya 4, Catukka Vagga 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 3, Apaṇṇakka Vagga 7

Theme: The 4 unfathomable things

Bhikshus, there are these 4 unthinkables that one should not think about [not speculate on], thinking of which would bring one a share of madness or vexation.<sup>137</sup>

What are the four?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) <u>The range of understanding of the Buddhas</u> , <sup>138</sup> bhikshus,<br>is unthinkable [beyond thought],<br>thinking about which would bring one | should not be thought about,<br>a share of madness or vexation. |
| (2) <u>The range of a meditator’s dhyana</u> , <sup>139</sup> bhikshus,<br>is unthinkable [beyond thought],<br>thinking about which would bring one         | should not be thought about,<br>a share of madness or vexation. |
| (3) <u>The result of karma</u> , <sup>140</sup> bhikshus,<br>is unthinkable [beyond thought],<br>thinking about which would bring one                       | should not be thought about,<br>a share of madness or vexation. |
| (4) <u>Thinking about the world</u> , <sup>141</sup> bhikshus,<br>is unthinkable [beyond thought], <sup>142</sup><br>thinking about which would bring one   | should not be thought about,<br>a share of madness or vexation. |

These, bhikshus, are these 4 unthinkables

that one should not think about, thinking of which bring one a share of madness or vexation.<sup>143</sup>

— — —

COMMENTS ON ACINTEYYA SUTTA. It would be impossible for any to fathom the Buddha’s mind because he is the most highly evolved being amongst us, and the unawakened mind lack the capacity to do so. Even the arhats have difficulty to fully understand the Buddha’s mind because his wisdom goes far beyond the arhat’s.

Similarly, **the mind of one in dhyana** is difficult to be fathomed by one who is not in dhyana, much less by those who do not meditate. The superknowledge (*abhiññā*) of the dhyana-attainer is similarly

<sup>135</sup> A 2.77/2:80,15 (AA); DhA 2:199,3 (cf 288,11 = AA ad A 2:80,15: *cintetum ayuttāni, na cintetabbāni*).

<sup>136</sup> Also at SD 35.1(7).

<sup>137</sup> *Cattār’imāni bhikkhave acinteyyāni na cintetabbāni yāni cinto ummādassa vighātassa bhāgī assa.*

<sup>138</sup> *Buddhānam buddha,visayo.*

<sup>139</sup> *Jhāyissa jhāna,visayo.*

<sup>140</sup> *Kamma,vipāko.*

<sup>141</sup> *Loka,cintā.*

<sup>142</sup> *Loka,cintā bhikkhave acinteyyā.* This is rendered rather literally (ie foll the Pali idiom). Idiomatically, this should read: “Thinking about the world (*loka,cintā*) is thinking about something beyond thought [inconceivable].” In such situations, we have the choice of keeping the Pali idiom but also keeping in mind the English idiom.

<sup>143</sup> See the enigmatic **Loka,cintā S** (S 56.41/5:446-448), SD 77.11.

impossible to be fathomed by those inexperienced in dhyana states. The reason is simple: such dhyanas are attained by letting go of worldly states, of limitations and measurements, a state that is totally free of any mental hindrance or thought as we know it.

**The workings of karma** is never linear, but an inconceivably wide range of interconnected conditionality of causes and effects that affect one another, the karmic matrix of one being intricately linked with those of numerous other beings. We can at best only *imagine* some kind of linear causality and discuss it in a theoretical or academic manner. The point is that the karmic process is also our mental process, and neither remain the same for even a moment. We can at best talk *about* it, but that's just not it.

“**Worldly speculation**” here, according to the Commentary, is such thought as “By whom are the sun and moon created, or the earth, or the oceans? How did beings arise? Who made the mountains, and such things as mangoes, palms, coconuts, and so on?”<sup>144</sup> Even by today's standards, such speculative thoughts are never final, except in the mind of the biased theologian or intolerant fanatic. Not only have basic ideas about religion changed and evolved through the ages, even science itself does not have final answers but works as only a way of measuring and perceiving the universe depending on the current state of scientific knowledge. Each generation of scientists and philosophers would in some way build up, and in due course, knock down the past theories, proposing better theories and realities.

The only thing worth fathoming is our own minds, with which we live everyday, every moment of our waking lives. As our understanding of the mind grows, so too we begin to understand how people think and how our senses work, giving rise to feeling of like, dislike and neither. When we begin to understand how feeling arises, we begin to understand why people have different views and inclinations, even why there is religion.<sup>145</sup>

### **5.5.3 Textual references to the knowledge of death and rebirth**

The divine eye is mentioned in only two contexts in the early texts, namely, as a quality of the Buddha and that arhats (that is, as the first of the three knowledges, *te, vijjā*)<sup>146</sup> and as a special mundane *karmic ability to locate lost and hidden treasures*.

<b>Mahā Sudassana Sutta</b> (D 17,1.16/2:176)	The Buddha tells Ānanda that rajah Mahā Sudassana has the divine eye on account of his karma ( <i>kamma, vipāka, ja dibba, cakkhu</i> ), that could locate lost treasures. <sup>147</sup>
<b>Bāla, paṇḍita Sutta</b> (M 129,41/3:175)	The universal monarch is said to have the divine eye on account of his karma, too. <sup>148</sup>
<b>Pilinda Sutta</b> (U 3.6/28)	The Buddha recollects that he was a brahmin in his past life which accounts for his manner of addressing others as “outcaste.”

<sup>144</sup> *Kena nu kho candīmasūriyā katā, kena mahāpathavī, kena mahāsamuddo, kena sattā uppāditā, kena pabbatā, kena ambatālanāḷikerādayo' 'ti evarūpā lokacintā* (AA 3:108).

<sup>145</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the 4 unthinkables, see SD 35.1 (7). See also **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,105/1:39 f), SD 25.2.

<sup>146</sup> **The 3 knowledges** (*te, vijjā*): (1) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), ie, the recollection of past lives; (2) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421). See **Tevijja S** (D 13), SD 1.8 Intro 2.2.

<sup>147</sup> Clearly here some form of mundane “divine eye” is meant, for no reference is made to the rajah knowing *his own* past karma. See foll n.

<sup>148</sup> Similarly here “divine eye” refers *only* to the universal monarch's ability for locating treasures, on account of his past good karma. See prec n.

### 5.5.4 The divine eye: Its evolution

**5.5.4.1 THE DIVINE EYE AND THE 3 KNOWLEDGES** [5.5]. In the suttas, the “divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance, is originally a broad set of superhuman (*atikkantā manusakā*) but still worldly (*lokiya*) psychic powers, a form of superknowledge (*abhiññā*) that neither brings awakening or helps to attain it. It is the second of **the 3 knowledges** (*ti,vijjā*) of an arhat, including the Buddha—those of:

- (1) the recollection of past lives (*pubbe.nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*),
- (2) **the “divine eye”** that is the knowledge of the redeaths and rebirths of beings (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*), and
- (3) the destruction of the influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), the only direct knowledge in the set.<sup>149</sup>

The elder Anuruddha is the foremost of monks with the divine eye (A 1:23,21).

In the earliest strata of the suttas—such as **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2,95) and **the Kassapa Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 8,3)<sup>150</sup>—*dibba,cakkhu* is not a separate power, but merely used to explain the “knowledge of arising and fall away (rebirth and redeath)” (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*). The purpose of the divine eye, at this stage, is not only the knowledge of the rebirth and redeath of beings, but also that of how they fare according to their karma (*yathā,kamm’upagā*)—to explain the complexity of karma and rebirth—as shown in **the Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 136,9-12).<sup>151</sup>

**5.5.4.2 THE DIVINE EYE AND TIME.** In the Commentaries, *dibba,cakkhu* has grown—to reflect its usage in the suttas—to encompass these 3 powers of discerning external events over time, that is,

- (1) the knowledge of the redeaths and rebirths (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*),
- (2) the knowledge of how beings fare according to their karma (*yathā,kamm’upagā*), and
- (3) the knowledge of the future (*anāgat’aṃsa,ñāṇa*).<sup>152</sup>

When (1) and (2) appear together, they form a set familiarly known as “the knowledge of the recollection of past lives” (*pubbe,nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*). In the early texts, this is not considered as an aspect of *dibba,cakkhu*, but this is later clarified to be so in the exegetical work, **Peṭṭakōpadesa** (Peṭk 38). In other words, *dibba,cakkhu* as “divine eye,” simply means the psychic ability (acquired through the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana) to gain some kind of mental knowledge short of awakening itself.<sup>153</sup>

**5.5.4.3 THE DIVINE EYE AND THE 6 SUPERKNOWLEDGES.** A special function of the “divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*) [5.3.2.2] is that of mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa* or *para,citta,vijānana*). It is the third of **the 6 superknowledges** (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) of an arhat, including the Buddha—that is, those of:

- (1) psychic powers (*iddha,vidhā*);
- (2) the divine ear (*dibba,sota*) or clairaudience;
- (3) **mind-reading** (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa* or *paracitta,vijānana,ñāṇa*) or telepathy;

<sup>149</sup> See **Te,vijja S** (D 13) @ SD 1.8 (2.2.2); **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,23-25) SD 40.5; and as nos. 7-9 of the Buddha’s 10 powers (*dasa,bala*): **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,17-19) SD 49.1 = 2.24 (abr). On the influxes (*āsava*), see (5.6.1.3).

<sup>150</sup> Respectively, D 2,95/1:82 (SD 8.10); D 8,3/1:161 f (SD 73,12).

<sup>151</sup> M 136,9-12/3:210 (SD 4.16).

<sup>152</sup> These 3 knowledges are, however, listed in **Das’uttara S** (D 34,1.4(8)/3:275,20); see also Tikap 156,2, 322,30; Vism 13.125/434,12; VbhA 373,12.

<sup>153</sup> For Buddhaghosa’s detailed explanations of *dibba,cakkhu*, incl how to attain it: Vism 13.72-129/423-435. See Ency Bsm 4:604-609: dibbacakkhu.

- (4) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, retrocognition or the recollection of past lives;  
 (5) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and  
 (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*) that ends rebirth.

(D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)

Note here that the “**divine eye**” stands on its own as the 5<sup>th</sup> superknowledge. In simple terms, we can see (3) functioning as present knowledge of another’s mind (in a broad sense), and (5) as a general knowledge of the past karmic situation of a person (sometimes, the future, too).<sup>154</sup>

In the suttas, we see the sense of *dibba, cakkhu* (the divine eye) evolving, in due course, to include or to be discerned as “mind-reading” (*ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*) and the “knowledge of redeaths and rebirths” (*cutū-papāta, ñāṇa*). *Dibba, cakkhu*, then, is a the mental ability to develop a special aspect of either or both of these distinct faculties of the present (mind-reading) or the past (recollection of redeaths and rebirths).<sup>155</sup>

### 5.5.5 THOUGHT-READING

**5.5.5.1 THOUGHT-READING AND MIND READING.** A special aspect of “mind-reading” (*ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*) is the **wonder [miracle] of thought-reading** (*adesana, pāṭihāriya* or *ādesana, vidhā*), both of which are themselves aspects or faculties of the “divine eye” (*dibba, cakkhu*).<sup>156</sup> Most of us today often confuse the two—mind-reading and thought-reading—and regard them as being the same. In fact, from sutta usages of the two words, we can clearly notice some interesting differences.

A key difference is that while “thought-reading” can be found even in a worldly person—say, in a seasoned conman—“mind-reading” is found only in someone with a well-cultivated mind, especially one who has attained the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana. In other words, while “mind-reading” is, as a rule, a superknowledge (*abhiññā*), “thought-reading” is merely a “wonder or marvel,” even a “miracle” (*pāṭihāriya*).<sup>157</sup>

**5.5.5.2 THE BUDDHA’S DISAPPROVAL.** For this reason, too (amongst others), the Buddha does not highly regard thought-reading, and does not regard it as some great “miracle.” Indeed, the Buddha disapproves of miracles as any hallmark of spirituality. Even the display of actual miracles is unhelpful and dangerous to the masses who are unlikely to appreciate its actual significance, and forbids monastics from making any public display of them<sup>158</sup>

In the **Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), the Buddha points out that even a person “without faith or devotion” is able to use the “jewel charm” (*maṇiko nāma vijjā*, literally, “jewel knowledge”) to read others’ minds. We have no further information about this “charm.” Suffice it here to say that one who knows some mentalism (the skill of stage illusions, parlour magic, or “cold readings”) [5.2.2], or hypnotism, or even a good judge of character, may be able to read others’ minds. Hence, declares the Buddha,

Seeing this (*imam*) danger in the display of miraculous power, Kevaḍḍha, I am troubled, ashamed, disgusted<sup>159</sup> regarding the display of miraculous power ... regarding the miracle of mind-reading.<sup>160</sup>

(D 11,5+7/1:213 f; emphasis added)

<sup>154</sup> See **Nalaka S** (Sn 3.11)—at **Sn 692bc**—where Asita uses *anussarāmi*, “I recall” in ref to his vision of the child Siddhattha’s future as the Buddha: see SD 49.18 (6.1.1), under Sn 692bc.

<sup>155</sup> See Ency Bsm 4:109 f: *cetopariyañāṇa*.

<sup>156</sup> Besides the power of thought-reading (*ādesana pāṭihāriya*) (eg **Kevaḍḍha S**, D 11,6/1:213 f), SD 1.7, the Buddha (and he alone) is said to have the knowledge of the maturity levels of others’ spiritual faculties (*indriya, paropariyatta ñāṇa* or *āsayañusaya ñāṇa*): see eg SnA 1:15, 331; J 1:504. At DhA 3:245 ff; J 1:182, the term *Buddha, veneyya* (“receptive of the Buddha”) is used.

<sup>157</sup> See (**Pāṭihāriya**) **Saṅgārava S** (A 3.60,5/1:170), SD 16.10, & **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28,6/3:104 f), SD 14.14, for a more details on thought-reading (*ādesana, vidhā*). On similar statements and mental words, see SD 17.8a (12.4).

<sup>158</sup> On the Vinaya rule against public display of “miracles,” see SD 1.7 (3.3).

<sup>159</sup> “I am troubled, ashamed, disgusted,” *aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi*. See SD 1.7 (3).

The Buddha does not, however, speak of mind-reading in this tone. After all, mind-reading is a natural result of a mind that has attained at least the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana, and used in Dharma-teaching and facilitates the helping and healing of the ignorant, misguided and troubled.

**5.5.5.3 DEFINITION. The Kevaddha Sutta** (D 11) gives us a helpful definition, from which we have a good idea of the nature of “thought-reading,” thus:

And what, Kevaddha, is **the miracle of thought-reading** (*ādesanā, pāṭihāriya*)?

Here, Kevaddha, a monk reads the mind, mental state, thought, pondering, of other beings and other individuals, thus: ‘This is your mind: such is your mind; such is your thought.’

(D 11,6/1:213) SD 1.7

The Pali of the definition given above is: *Idha kevaddha bhikkhu para, sattānaṃ para, puggalānaṃ cittaṃ pi ādisati cetasikam pi ādisati vitakkitam pi ādisati vicāritam pi ādisati: “Evam pi te mano ittham pi te mano iti pi te cittaṃ ti.”* Notice that the nouns (underlined above) in this phrase—“the mind (*mano*), mental state (*cetasika*), thought (*vitakkitam*), pondering (*vicāritam*)”—is actually a synonym-string.<sup>161</sup>

*Mano* clearly means “mind.” *Cetasika* here does not have its later Abhidhamma sense of “mental factor.” If we want to get technical here, we can say that while *mano* refers especially to thoughts connected with the 5 physical senses, *cetasika* is thoughts arising from the mind itself.

Although we are familiar with the dvandva (twin compound), *vitakka, vicāra* (“initial application and sustained application” as meditation terms), they are here used non-technically, meaning simply “thinking” and “pondering” respectively.<sup>162</sup>

Chapter 26 of **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**—on “the marvels” (*pāṭihāriya*)—gives us a further clue to the nature of thought-reading. It says that we are able to read the person’s mind by listening to the sounds [words] of thinking and pondering arising from them” (*vitakkayato vicārayato vitakka, vicāra, saddaṃ sutvā ādisati*). Clearly, this refers to “inner speech” or subverbalization that often goes on in our “heads.” A thought-reader is also able to read the mind of someone in *samādhi* that is free of thinking and pondering—no dhyana (*jhāna*) is mentioned here.<sup>163</sup>

**5.5.5.3 THE 4 MODES OF THOUGHT-READING. The Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28) records Sāriputta as explaining that there are 4 modes of thought-reading (*ādesana, vidhā*)—how to read others’ thoughts—which are summarized as a general definition in **the Kevaddha Sutta** (D 11), abridged, thus:

(1) By means of a sign,<sup>164</sup> that is, through external signs, reflecting the person’s mental state, or through a revelation one receives from a deva who has supernormal knowledge of others’ minds, one declares: “Such is your mind: this is your mind; such is your thought.”

(2) After listening to the sounds of humans, of non-humans, or of devas, that is, having directly heard their sounds, one declares, “*Such is your mind: this is your mind; such is your thought.*”

(3) From having initially applied and sustained his mind, listening to the sound of a person’s thought-vibrations [or mental chatter],<sup>165</sup> that is, depending on the subtle sounds produced by the

<sup>160</sup> *Imaṃ kho ahaṃ Kevaddha iddhi, pāṭihāriye ādīnavaṃ samanupassamāno iddhi, pāṭihāriyena aṭṭiyāmi hara-yāmi jigucchāmi.*

<sup>161</sup> Comys explain both *vitakkita* and *vicārita* as “thinking” (*vitakka*) (DA 1:122; VbhA 506).

<sup>162</sup> In fact, this phrase appears only here (hapax legomenon) in the suttas, and one other place: it is quoted in the Abhidhamma by Kathā, vatthu (Kvu 339).

<sup>163</sup> Pm 2:227.

<sup>164</sup> *Nimitta*, which Comy glosses as external signs, reflecting the person’s mental state (AA 2:269). On other meanings of *nimitta*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss**, SD 13.1 §3.1d. & *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.



thoughts that are penetrated by the divine ear itself, one declares, ‘*Such is your mind: this is your mind; such is your thought.*’

(4) By a samadhi free from thinking and pondering,<sup>166</sup> one knows the mind of another with his own, that is, for one in a thought-free (*avitakka*) concentration, the mind-reader can only predict, on the basis of the meditator’s mental disposition, the thoughts he would think on emerging from the meditation, and says thus: “By the way the mental formations of this good man are inclined, the depth of that mind will think such and such a thought.”<sup>167</sup>

(D 28,6/3:103 f), SD 14.14; (D 11,6/1:213), SD 1.7; AA 2:269-271

**5.5.5.4 WHAT DOES THOUGHT-READING READ?** By “thought-reading,” then, is meant being aware of another’s cognitive processes—how we cognize<sup>168</sup> or sense things—and perhaps some conative (willing) process—“intending” (*ceteti*) to do something or the “intention” (*cetanā*) behind an action, but only to a very limited extent. The affective (feeling) process is beyond the range of “thought-reading.” Our affective process is signified by the verb *paṭisaṃvedeti*<sup>169</sup> (“to know, feel”)—how we emotionally respond or react to a situation or our emotional state of mind—we cannot “think” this; we may “think” we know this, but we lack the “feeling” of it.

The knowledge of mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*), on the other hand, is defined in a stock passage as: “He understands a mind with lust as a mind with lust; ... a mind with aversion ... a mind with delusion ... and so on<sup>170</sup> [5.3]. Only a mind that is seasoned by the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana can correctly and properly read another mind this way.<sup>171</sup>

Buddhadatta, the author of the Buddha,vaṃsa Commentary, connects thought-reading with Dharma-teaching. “By thought-reading (*ādesana*),” he explains, “is meant talk that is the marvel of thought-reading, having known the thought-process of another, constantly found in the Dharma-teaching of the Buddha and his disciples” (*ādesanāti parassa cittācāraṃ ñatvā kathanāṃ ādesanā,pāṭihāriyaṃ, taṃ sāvakaṇāṇca buddhāṇāṇca satata,dhamma,desanā*, BA 34).<sup>172</sup>

**5.5.5.4 MĀRA.** The Suttas also record that devas, and even Māra, are capable of reading the thoughts of others, including the Buddha’s (but *not* their minds).<sup>173</sup> The most famous case of a deva reading the Buddha’s thought is the one recorded in **the Āyācana Sutta** (S 6.1/1:137), where Brahmā Sahampati, *reading that the Buddha* is considering the difficulties of teaching the Dharma, appears before the Buddha, imploring him to teach the Dharma.<sup>174</sup> Brahmā similarly intervenes again in **the Cātumā Sutta** (M 67,8) [5.1.3].

<sup>165</sup> “But from ... thought-vibrations,” *api ca kho vitakkayato vicarayato vitakka,vipphāra,saddaṃ sutvā*. **Paṭisaṃbhidā,magga** (ch 3.7 = 27) def these 3 marvels. There, instead of *vitakka,vuipphāta,saddaṃ*, we have *vitakka,vicāra,-saddaṃ*, “the sound of thinking and pondering” (ie, mental chatter or subverbalization)—this is prob a better reading.

<sup>166</sup> Here “samadhi that is free from initial application and sustained application” can refer to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana, esp the last, where psychic powers (such as mind-reading) arises for the meditator. However, it is impossible to read the thoughts of one in dhyana because there are none (except maybe in the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana). See **Sāmañña,-phala S** (D 2,81-94/1:71-82), SD 8.10. See also SD 17.7(6.2).

<sup>167</sup> *Yathā imassa bhoto mano,sankhārā paṇihitā imassa cittassa antarā amun,nāma vitakkaṃ vitakkissatī ti*.

<sup>168</sup> It’s helpful not to presume that such technical terms are technical terms as defined in modern psychology. The early suttas are best understood when we progressively understand the contexts and usage of such terms as they appear in our translations. Such terms are defined by the suttas themselves.

<sup>169</sup> *Paṭisaṃvedeti*, lit means “to feel” (both cognitively and affectively), in a mostly passive sense of experiencing karmic fruition: see SD 17.3 (1.2.2).

<sup>170</sup> See eg **Sāmañña,-phala S** (D 2,93.2/1:79 f), SD 8.10.

<sup>171</sup> See Ency Bsm 1:194: ādesanā-pāṭihāriya.

<sup>172</sup> Also in comy to **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11) (DA 2:390).

<sup>173</sup> “Thought-reading” (*ādesana,pāṭihāriya*) refers only to the reading of another’s thoughts (the cognitive process) but not their emotional state (the affective process), which seems more difficult to do, due to their subtlety, variety and volatility.

<sup>174</sup> S 6.1/1:137 (SD 12.2).

In the **Māra Saṃyutta** (S 4), the following discourses record Māra reading the Buddha's thoughts, and making distracting remarks out of unwholesome motives:

<b>Tapo Kamma Sutta</b>	S 4.1/1:103	blames the Buddha for giving up austere practices	SD 79.8
<b>Rajja Sutta</b>	S 4.20/1:116	encourages the Buddha to take up world lordship	SD 61.17
<b>(Māra) Samiddhi Sutta</b>	S 4.22/1:119	made earth-splitting sound to terrify Samiddhi	SD 36.11
<b>(Māra) Godhika Sutta</b>	S 4.23/1:120 f	reads Godhika's mind as he attempts suicide, and blames the Buddha for it	SD 61.16

In every case, however, Māra is routed by the Buddha or the monk not giving in to his suggestions, and knowing him for what he really is. Māra is defeated through knowledge and mental focus.

### **5.5.6 Contemporary views on the divine eye**

The divine eye is usually known as *clairvoyance* in worldly lingo, but the two are not always synonymous. **Clairvoyance** (from 17th century French with *clair*, “clear,” and *voyance*, “visibility”) is the apparent ability to gain information about an external object, location or physical event through means other than the 5 physical senses and the mind, that is, as a form of extra-sensory perception (ESP). A person purporting to have clairvoyance is called a *clairvoyant*.

Parapsychological research studies of **remote viewing** (RV) and clairvoyance have produced favourable results significantly beyond mere chance, and meta-analysis of these studies increases their significance. For instance, at the Stanford Research Institute, in 1972, parapsychologists Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ initiated a series of human subject studies to determine whether participants (the *viewers* or *percipients*) could reliably identify and accurately describe salient features of remote locations or *targets*. In the early studies, a human *sender* was typically present at the remote location, as part of the experiment protocol.

A three-step process was used, the first step being to randomly select the target conditions to be experienced by the senders. Secondly, in the viewing step, participants were asked to verbally express or sketch their impressions of the remote scene. Thirdly, in the judging step, these descriptions were matched by separate judges, as closely as possible, with the intended targets. The term was introduced by parapsychologists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff in 1974.<sup>175</sup>

## **5.6 THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INFLUXES**

The most important of the 6 superknowledges is the sixth, **the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes** (*āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa*). The Udāna Commentary recounts how the Buddha, during the first watch of the Vesak full moon night, recalls his past lives, in the middle watch purifies his divine eye, and in the last watch reflects on dependent arising (UA 50).<sup>176</sup> In the Dibba, cakkhu Sutta (S 52.23), the arhat Anuruddha declares that it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),<sup>177</sup> that

by the destruction of the influxes, I attain and dwell in this very life in the influx-free freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom,<sup>178</sup> realizing it for myself with direct knowledge. ( S 52.23/5:305)

<sup>175</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clairvoyance> & [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remote\\_viewing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remote_viewing).

<sup>176</sup> See also BA 33.

<sup>177</sup> See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.

<sup>178</sup> The one freed of mind has destroyed all the mental hindrances, and as such could attain dhyana at will. The one freed by wisdom “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha* = *jhāna*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70,16/1:478): see **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.2) for details; also **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122), SD 11.4 Intro (3.3). On freedom of mind by lovingkindness, see **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7), SD 30.7 (1.2.2).

While all the previous 6 knowledges are mundane (not related to awakening), only this sixth knowledge is supramundane, as it is the hallmark of an arhat, the fully-freed saint, and is defined in **the Sāmañña-phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows:

99.1 With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes.<sup>179</sup>

99.2 He knows, as it is really is,	‘This is suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of suffering’; <sup>180</sup>
he knows, as it really is,	‘These are mental influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of influxes.’ <sup>181</sup>

99.3 His mind, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released *from the influx of sensual desire, the influx of existence, the influx of ignorance*.<sup>182</sup> With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released (am I)!’ He knows that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life has been lived, done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’<sup>183</sup>

**100** Maharajah, just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen, clear, limpid, unsullied,<sup>184</sup> where, a person with good eyes, from its edge, would see shellfish and shells, or gravel and pebbles, or shoals of fish moving about or resting in it,<sup>185</sup> and it would occur to him, ‘This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting’—even so, with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and utterly unshakable, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental influxes, *and in due course is freed*. (D 2,99-100/1:84), SD 8.10

<sup>179</sup> *Āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*. For details on the term, see “5.6.1 Comments” below.

<sup>180</sup> These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called “noble truths” here (nor in **Ariya,pariyesanā S**, M 26.43). Norman remarks that these four statements, which also likewise appear in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M36.42/1:249), but are not referred to as the noble truths about suffering, “and 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 [here], which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of four statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide a symmetry” (Norman 1990:26). For a discussion on the formulation of the noble truths, see Norman 1982:377-91 & also Schmithausen 1981:205.

<sup>181</sup> As in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26.42), SD 1. On the application of the four noble truth template to both *dukkha* and to *āsava* here, see Analayo 2003:224 n28 + SD 17.4 (8.4)

<sup>182</sup> See n above on *āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*.

<sup>183</sup> *Nāparam itthatāya*: lit. “there is no more of ‘thusness.’” See **Mahānidāna S** (M 15.22), SD 5.17.

<sup>184</sup> “Clear, limpid, unsullied,” *accho vipassanno anāvilo*.

<sup>185</sup> *Udaka,rahado accho vippasanno anāvilo tattha cakkhumā puriso tīre thito passeyya sippi,sambukam pi sakkhara,katthalam pi maccha,gumbam pi carantam pi tiṭṭhantam pi*. This whole section also in **Pañihita Acchanna Vagga** (A 1.5.5-6) in the same context, differently worded.

### 5.6.1 Comments

**5.6.1.1** This 6<sup>th</sup> *abhiññā* is unique: it is both a “superknowledge,” transhuman like the preceding five superpowers, but it is also (and only so) a “direct knowledge,” a personal realization and attainment of spiritual liberation. It refers to the end of the journey on the noble eightfold path, that is, attaining of arhathood and nirvana.

**5.6.1.2** The 6<sup>th</sup> superknowledge—the direct knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes—is *the greatest miracle of all*, that of spiritual liberation, namely, arhathood. As we note below [8], this spiritual liberation arises from true education (*anusāsānī*), that empowers us in effecting the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava*)

**5.6.1.3** The term *āsava*, here translated as “mental influxes, or mental fluxes” (literally, “inflow, outflow”) comes from the verb *ā-savati*, “it flows towards” (that is, either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as “taints (or deadly taints), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence),” or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influxes of

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| (1) sense-desire                               | ( <i>kām’āsava</i> ),       |
| (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming | ( <i>bhav’āsava</i> ),      |
| (3) views                                      | ( <i>diṭṭh’āsava</i> ), and |
| (4) ignorance                                  | ( <i>avijjāsava</i> ).      |

(D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937).

These 4 are also known as the “4 floods” (*oghā*) (we can be “drowned” in them) and “4 yokes” (*yogā*) (we are fettered to them, becoming habitual creatures). *The influx of existence* is the attachment and desire for the realm of form and of formlessness (including rebirth therein), and as such, is the craving for the dhyanas, on account of *the false views* of either eternalism or annihilationism. As such, *the influx of view* is subsumed under the influx of existence (MA 1:67).

The list of **3 influxes** (omitting the influx of views) is clearly older and found more frequently in the Suttas, that is, those of (1) sense-desire, (2) existence and (3) ignorance.<sup>186</sup>

## 6 The 10 kinds of psychic powers

**6.0** Famously, after the Buddha’s time, scholarly monks with great philosophical minds attempted to catalogue and standardize his teachings, even editing them, resulting in the rise of the almost comprehensive scholastic system known as the Abhidhamma. One such attempt puts the well known stock of the eight psychic powers as *the first* group in a late scholastic attempt at comprehensive listing of all the *iddhis*, that is, **the 10 psychic powers**, namely,

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (1) Power by resolve,                   | <i>adhiṭṭhānā iddhi</i>       |
| (2) Power of transformation,            | <i>vikubbanā iddhi</i>        |
| (3) Power of the mind-made,             | <i>mano,mayā iddhi</i>        |
| (4) Power by intervention of knowledge, | <i>ñāṇa,vipphārā iddhi</i>    |
| (5) Power by intervention of samadhi,   | <i>samādhi,vipphārā iddhi</i> |
| (6) The noble one’s power,              | <i>ariyā iddhi</i>            |
| (7) Power of karmic fruit,              | <i>kamma,vipāka,jā iddhi</i>  |
| (8) Power of the meritorious,           | <i>puññavato iddhi</i>        |
| (9) Knowledge-made power,               | <i>vijjā,mayā iddhi</i>       |

<sup>186</sup> D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63. See BDict under *āsava*

- (10) Power by way of success on account of sustained right exertion. *tattha tattha sammā, payoga, paccayā ijjan'atthena iddhi*  
(Pm 2:205,8-12; 207,1-214,16; Vism 12.22-44/378,17-384,9; BA 26,1-27,21; DhsA 91)

We shall now briefly examine each of the 10 powers in turn.

**6.1 POWER BY RESOLVE (*adhiṭṭhānā iddhi*).** The Paṭisambhidā, magga defines “power by resolve” as:

- (1) Having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one.
- (2) He appears, and he vanishes.
- (3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.
- (4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.
- (5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.
- (6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.
- (7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.
- (8) He has power over his body as far as the Brahmā world. (Pm 22.9-22/2:207-210/Vism 12.23/378)<sup>187</sup>

**6.1.1 Textual references to psychic powers.** These 8 powers, the best known of *the psychic powers*, have been defined above [5.1]. In the **Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28), Sāriputta speaks of two kinds of psychic powers, that is, the worldly and the spiritual. More fully, the former is called “the ignoble power [success] with influxes and birth-basis” (*iddhi sāsavā sa, upadhikā no ariyā*), and the latter, “the noble power [success] that is without influxes, without birth-basis” (*iddhi anāsavā anupadhikā ariyā*).<sup>188</sup>

The above 8 powers are said to be “ignoble with influxes and birth-basis” because they do not bring about awakening. In fact, even one without any spiritual inclination (such as Devadatta) can cultivate them. Such powers not only do *not* remove the influxes (*āsava*),<sup>189</sup> they are likely to give both the power-wielder and the audience various wrong views, and as such heap up birth-basis (*upadhi*).<sup>190</sup> Only the sixth and last of the superknowledges [5.6], is said to be “the noble power [success] that is without influxes, without birth-basis,” as it defines awakening.

**6.2 POWER OF TRANSFORMATION (*vikubbanā iddhi*)**

**6.2.0 Definition.** The Paṭisambhidā, magga defines “power of transformation” as follows:

What is “power of transformation”?

A disciple of the Blessed One Sikhī, the arhat, fully self-awakened one, named **Abhibhū**, stood in the Brahma world and using his voice communicated with the ten-thousandfold world system.

He teaches the Dharma with a visible body; with an invisible body; with lower half of his body visible, the upper invisible; with the upper half visible, the lower half invisible.

Giving up his normal appearance, he appears as a boy, or as a naga [dragon], or as a suparna,<sup>191</sup> or as a yaksha, or as Indra, or as a deva, or as a Brahma, or as an ocean, as a mountain, or as

<sup>187</sup> Vism 12.23/378 mentions only power (1) as an example.

<sup>188</sup> D 28.18/3:112,7-113,10.

<sup>189</sup> *Āsava* see (5.6).

<sup>190</sup> *Upadhi* (BHS *upādhi*), meaning “remnant, substrate,” or better, “birth-basis” or “accumulation,” attachment to which leads to rebirth. Despite the subtle but important difference in meaning, most modern commentators regard them as synonymous, and do not try to explain how and why the difference arose (see KR Norman, “Mistaken Ideas about *Nibbāna*,” *The Buddhist Forum* 3, ed T Skorupski & U Pagel, 1995:215). See SD 28.11 Intro (3.2).

<sup>191</sup> *Supanna*, lit “well-winged,” in ancient Indian mythology, a fabulous harpy-like being with bird-like lower torso, with wings, and a human upper torso. The most famous suparna was called Garuḍa. Suparnas were the mortal

a forest, or as lion, or as tiger, or as a leopard, or as an elephant, or as a horse, or as a chariot, or as a foot-soldier, or in various army arrays.

This is the power of transformation.

(Pm 22.23/2:210; Vism 12:24/378)

### **6.2.1 Textual references to the power of transformation.**

**6.2.1.1 MUCALINDA.** One of the earliest and best known transformation story is the Vinaya account of sixth week of the Great Awakening. While the Buddha was staying under **the Mucalinda tree** (*Bar-ringtonia acutangula*), a heavy storm begins to break out. Immediately, the serpent-king (*nāga,rāja*) Mucalinda emerges from his subterranean abode and coiling around the Buddha's body seven times, spreads his hood over the Buddha to protect him from the rain, cold, heat, insects, and other discomforts. At the end of the seventh day, the serpent-king uncoils himself. Turning himself into a comely young man, he pays his respects to the Buddha. The Buddha gives him a brief instruction.<sup>192</sup>

In mythological terms, Mucalinda's emerging up from the earth's bowels to shelter the Buddha is like the Buddha's compassion. Then turning himself in to a handsome youth, he worships the Buddha. Like Sthavarā or Vasudharā, the earth deity, Mucalinda, too, comes from deep beneath the earth, that is, from deep inside our unconscious or creative side (represented by his youth). To show compassion, we need to appear in a form (looks as well as actions) that would benefit others (energy, beauty, power, and joy).

We can even stretch the mythology further to say that the *nāga* form of Mucalinda represents *compassion* while his form as a youth personifies *wisdom*, from the fact that wisdom is eternal and unchanging. While *wisdom* is embodied in the Bodhisattva figure of **Mañjuśrī**, *compassion* is embodied in the figure of **Avalokiteśvara** and his countless forms and appearances.<sup>193</sup>

**6.2.1.2 TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE BUDDHA.** It is interesting there is no account of the Buddha appearing in a different form (human or otherwise) to his followers or outsiders. However, there is an interesting passage from **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) on "the eight assemblies" (*aṭṭha parisa*), which says,

**3.21** <sup>194</sup>Now, Ānanda, there are these eight assemblies?

What are the eight?

- (1) The kshatriya [noble class] assembly,
- (2) the brahmin [priestly] assembly,
- (3) the houselord assembly,
- (4) the recluse assembly,
- (5) the assembly of the Four Great Kings,
- (6) the assembly of the Thirty-two Gods,
- (7) Māra's assembly, and
- (8) the assembly of Brahmās.

**3.22** Ānanda, I recall having approached a kshatriya assembly of many hundreds, assembled with them before, and conversed with them before, and engaged in discussion with

---

enemies of the nagas (*nāga*). Historically, they were prob the falcon-worshipping or falcon-rearing Iranians who conquered the Naga territories of north-west India. Sometimes, they might refer to the ancient dragon-worshipping Chinese. Some believe that they were a race of intelligent Dragons in the family of Dinosaurs, that became extinct during the dawn of human civilizations.

<sup>192</sup> Mv 1.3 = V 1:3.

<sup>193</sup> See also **Mythology in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 & **The Buddha as a Myth**, SD 36.2.

<sup>194</sup> Foll §§ [3.21-23] also in **Parisā S** (A 8.69/4:307 f) and nearly identical to a passage in **Maha Sīhanāda S** (M 12.29/1:72). Apparently, the passage on the "8 causes of earthquakes" attracted 3 more "eights" [§§3.21-33], directly connected with the Teaching. These passages have been interpolated here apparently because such vital teachings reflect the urgency of the moment.

them before. Whatever their colour was then,<sup>195</sup> so was my colour, too. Whatever was their voice then, so was my voice, too. I instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk.

But even as I was speaking, they knew me not, wondering, “Who could this be who speaks? A deva or a human?”

And having instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk, I disappeared. And when I have disappeared, they wondered, “Who is this who has disappeared? A deva or a human?”

**3.23** Ānanda, I recall having approached a brahmin assembly of many hundreds,...

...I recall having approached a householder assembly,....

...I recall having approached a recluse assembly,....

...I recall having approached an assembly of the Four Great Kings,....

...I recall having approached an assembly of the Thirty-two Gods,....

...I recall having approached Māra’s assembly,....

Ānanda, I recall having approached an assembly of Brahmas of many hundreds, assembled with them before, and conversed with them before, and engaged in discussion with them before. Whatever their colour was then, so was my colour, too. Whatever was their voice then, so was my voice, too. I instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk.

But even as I was speaking, they knew me not, wondering, ‘Who could this be who speaks? A deva or a human?’

And having instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened them with Dharma talk, I disappeared. And when I have disappeared, they wondered, “Who is this who has disappeared? A deva or a human?” (D 16,3.21-23/2:110 f), SD 9

This account is repeated in **the Parisā Sutta** (A 8.69/4:307 f), and a nearly identical record is found in **the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 12.29/1:72). Both the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta and the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta show characteristics of a late composition (full of legendary and mythical statements), while the Parisā Sutta is a scaled-down version of the longer text, suitable for the laity.

We do, however, have accounts of the Buddha appearing *as himself* before various classes of humans, from the lowest to the highest, and also before gods of various levels.<sup>196</sup> In fact, we have more accounts of the gods appearing before the Buddha than the reverse. And the gods are also recorded as appearing before monastics.

**6.2.1.3 DIVINE TRANSFORMATIONS.** Shakra, king of the devas, famously appears as Vajrapānī, in the head-shattering episode found in **the Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3) and **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35), where he threatens to shatter the heads of Ambaṭṭha and of Saccaka when they initially refuse to answer the Buddha’s question that is fairly asked.<sup>197</sup>

**Sakra** (P *sakka*) again features on one in the humorous, yet inspiring, story of how he tricks the austere **Mahā Kassapa** into receiving almsfood from him. Mahā Kassapa, out of great compassion to help the poor benefit gain great merit and so uplift themselves from their difficulties, decides to accept almsmeals only from the poor, the sick and the lowly.

Shakra, desiring merit, changes himself into a poor weaver, and the celestial nymph, Sujātā, into the poor weaver’s wife, living in the poorest part of the city. He is unable to contain his joy when Mahā Kassapa accepts their alms-offering, thus revealing themselves. Mahā Kassapa reprimands Shakra, but the Buddha explains why even the gods would go so far to be a giver: “Bhikshus, the gods and humans love

<sup>195</sup> “Then,” *tattha*, lit “in that place.”

<sup>196</sup> See eg **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49/317-320), SD 11.7 [Notes on 5.1.10].

<sup>197</sup> See respectively D 3.1.20-21/1:94 f & M 35.14/1:231 f. On head-shattering, see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3), SD 21.3 Intro (4.1).

him who gives to the elder.” Then the Buddha speaks of the power of moral virtue (with which Mahā Kassapa is endowed so that he is loved by the gods).<sup>198</sup>

**Māra the bad one**, too, often appears in various forms trying to terrorize or distract the Buddha or monastics. **The Māra Saṃyutta** (S 4) records Māra taking the following forms (often when the Buddha is teaching, on dark nights, or in bad weather):

<b>Hatthi,rāja,vaṇṇa Sutta</b>	(S 4.2/1:103f)	(dark night) as a fearful bull elephant;
<b>(Māra) Subha Sutta</b>	(S 4.3/1:104)	(dark and drizzling) diverse shining shapes, both beautiful and ugly;
<b>Sappa Sutta</b>	(S 4.6/1:106 f)	(dark night) a giant serpent king;
<b>Patta Sutta</b>	(S 4.16/1:112)	an ox (to confound the monks);
<b>(Māra) Kassaka Sutta</b>	(S 4.19/1:114 116)	as a dishevelled farmer, claiming ownership of the body;
<b>(Māra) Sambahula Sutta</b>	(S 4.21/1:117 f)	as a sacrificial brahmin encouraging young monks to enjoy sense-pleasure before renouncing the world.

#### 6.2.1.4 SEXUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

(1) **Isi,dāsī**. There are at least two accounts of sexual transformation (or spontaneous sex-change) in the texts, one canonical and the other commentarial. The canonical story is from **the Isi,dāsī Therī,gāthā** (Thī 400-447), about the nun Isi,dāsī. In her last life (during our Buddha’s time), Isi,dāsī is a beautiful woman, daughter of a wealthy merchant of Ujjenī. Her first marriage is to another merchant’s son. Although she loves and serves him well, he still hates her. The same thing happens in the second marriage, and also the third (to a young ascetic). In the end, she becomes a nun, and cultivating herself well, she awakens with full powers, and is able to recall her past lives. [5.5]

Eight lives ago she was a man, that is, a rich and handsome young goldsmith who seduced the wives of others. After that, he was born in hell; then he is reborn as a castrated monkey; then a gelded sheep; and then as an ox. Three more times as an animal, and after that as a hermaphrodite. And in her last birth, she is reborn as Isi,dāsī.

The Isi,dāsī story should not be misunderstood as that it is our bad karma to be born as a woman or a hermaphrodite. The moral of the story is that we are victims of our own habitual tendencies, which will follow us in some form, life after life. As we think, so we act; as we thus act, so we reap the fruits. The point is very clear: we should take care what we desire for because ultimately we become what we desire, virtually or really.<sup>199</sup>

(2) **Soreyya**. The second sex-change story is from the Dhammapada Commentary, **the Soreyya Thera Vatthu** (DhA 3.9). In the city of Soreyya, it is said, the seth’s son Soreyya, seeing the golden-hued body of the arhat Mahā Kaccāna, lustfully thought, “Oh, that this elder might become my wife! Or, may the hue of my wife’s body have the hue of his body!” Right there and then, he changes into a woman! Ashamed, he sets out on the road to faraway Takka,silā. Caravan travellers, seeing her, proposes that she marries the Savatthī seth’s son who is unmarried. She does so and bears him two sons.

In due course, an old friend meets Soreyyā, and she confessed her foolish deed. The wise friend suggests that she meets Mahā Kaccāna and ask for forgiveness. She does this, and she reverts to being a man again. Having learned his lesson, and deeply moved by religious feeling, he renounces the world, and in due course becomes an arhat. When the story breaks, curious people ask him which of his sons—the two he fathered, or the two he mothered—that he loves the more. His answer: the two that he mothered!<sup>200</sup>

Here again we have a powerful statement, by way of a dramatic story, of how we can get exactly what we desire! If all our wishes and prayers were really answered, we would have learned nothing about life,

<sup>198</sup> For the full annotated story, see DhA 4.10/1:423-430; U 3.7/29 f; also **Beggars can be Choosers**, SD 30.14. Cf Paṇḍita Sāmanera Vatthu (DhA 6.5/2:132-139).

<sup>199</sup> For the full story, see **Why some marriages Fail**, SD 3.8 (I). For sexual identity in rebirth, see Harvey 1995: 68 f.

<sup>200</sup> **Soreyya-t,thera Vatthu**, DhA 3.9/1:325-332 (Dh 43); for Eng tr, see *Buddhist Legends* (DhA:B) 2:23-28.



except to take things for granted.<sup>201</sup> We are born imperfect, and living rightly makes us perfect in due course—that is, when we awaken to true reality.<sup>202</sup>

**6.2.2 Comments on “power of transformation.”** In popular, especially non-religious, language, this phenomenon is often called “**shape-shifting**.” It is a common theme in mythology and folklore, as well as in science fiction and fantasy stories. In its broadest sense, it is a *metamorphosis* (change in the physical form or shape) of a person or animal. Shapeshifting<sup>203</sup> involves physical changes such as alterations of age, gender, race, or general appearance, or changes between human form and that of an animal (therianthropy),<sup>204</sup> a plant,<sup>205</sup> or inanimate object.<sup>206</sup>

We have already mentioned Mucalinda’s transformation [6.2.1.1]. His seven coils have fascinated non-Buddhists and Buddhists “by faith, spiritualists at heart.” Such people would often point to these seven coils, as being not only numerological significant, but that they represent the seven chakras. A chakra (Skt *cakra*; P *cakka*, “wheel, disc”) is believed to be a center of activity that receives, assimilates, and expresses life force energy. It refers to a spinning sphere of bioenergetic activity emanating from the major nerve ganglia branching forward from the spinal cord. Generally, *six* of these wheels are described, stacked in a column of energy-fields that span from the very base of the spine to the crown (top of the head). The seventh is above the crown, beyond the physical region. It is the six major chakras (nerve centres) that correlate with basic states of consciousness.<sup>207</sup> Each of these chakras in our spinal column is believed to influence or even govern bodily functions in its periphery around the spine.<sup>208</sup>

**6.3 POWER OF THE MIND-MADE (*mano,mayā iddhi*). The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) famously lists the power of the mind-made as the first in its list of psychic powers.<sup>209</sup> The Paṭisambhidā,magga, too, defines “power of the mind-made,” as follows:

[With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, he directs and inclines it to creating **a mind-made body**.]

*Here, from this body a monk creates another body, endowed with form,<sup>210</sup> mind-made, complete in all its parts, without defect in any faculty.<sup>211</sup>*

*Just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath, the thought would occur to him:*

<sup>201</sup> See **Itṭha S** (A 5.43/3:47-49), SD 47.2.

<sup>202</sup> See **Self & selves**, SD 26.9 (1.6.3).

<sup>203</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapeshifting>.

<sup>204</sup> The autochthonous peoples of north Asia and north America (esp in shamanism) believe in the possibility of transformations between humans and animal forms. Children’s fairy tales are full of therianthropic themes: the frog prince (Grimm), the wild swans (Andersen); and werewolves (lycanthropy) and vampires (turning into bats, etc).

<sup>205</sup> In Greek mythology, **Daphne** (“bay laurel”), a dryad (tree-nymph), daughter of the river god, Peneus, was a hunter who dedicated herself to Artemis, goddess of the hunt, and, like the goddess, refused to marry. The god Apollo fell in love with Daphne, and when she refused his advances, he pursued her through the woods. She cried out to her father for help, and was changed into a bay laurel tree (Greek *daphne*). The grief-stricken Apollo made the bay laurel his sacred tree.

<sup>206</sup> Guanyin is said to be able to transform herself into any object that would bring succour to others.

<sup>207</sup> See Anodea Judith, *Eastern Body, Western Mind : Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*, 1996: 5.

<sup>208</sup> See Susan G Shumsky, *Exploring Chakras*, 2003: 24.

<sup>209</sup> D 2.87 f/1:77 @ SD 8.10.

<sup>210</sup> Exactly the same as the physical body (but mentally created). This mind-made body is what is mistaken for a soul or self.

<sup>211</sup> *Ahīn’indriya*: D 2:13,17 (DA 2:436,8-10) = M 3:121,20 (MA 4:181,11-13); D 1:77,11 ≈ M 2:17,26 (MA = AA); 18,6; Nm 340,15; Nc 209,21; D 1:34,24 (= *paripunn’indriyo*, AA), 186,14 f, 195,26.

“This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.”

Or, as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would occur to him:

“This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.”

Or, as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough. The thought would occur to him:

“This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough”;

Even so, with his mind thus concentrated, from this body he creates another body, endowed with form, mind-made, complete in all its parts, without defect in any faculty.

*This is the power of the mind-made.* (D 2,87 f/1:77, SD 8.10 [addition parenthesized]; Pm 22.24/2:210 f, *additions italicized*; Vism 12.25/379)

**6.3.1 Textual references to the power of the mind-made.** This is the first power listed in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), where it is known as “knowledge of the mind-made body” (*mano,mayā ñāṇa*). Of this psychic power, **Peter Harvey**:

This shows that that consciousness is seen as able to leave the physical body by means of a mind-made body. Such a body could be seen as a kind of “subtle body,” for a being with a mind-made body is said to feed on joy (D 1:17), not on solid nutriment (D 1:195): it thus lacks the four great elements of the physical body (solidity, cohesion, heat and motion, D 1:195). As such a body relates to the “realm of (pure) form,” the subtle matter composing it can only be visible and audible matter (Vbh 405). However, the mind-made body is invisible to the normal eye (Pm 2:209). [This is actually unattested: the passage says that the wonder worker could determine visibility or invisibility or any form. (Piya)] It occupies space, but does not impinge on gross physical matter, for the ‘selfhood’ of a certain god with a mind-made body is said to be as large as two or three fields, but to cause no harm to anyone (A 3:122). With such a body, a person can exercise psychic powers such as going through solid objects, being in many places at once, or flying (D 1:78). (Harvey 1993:8 digital ed)

A power similar to the knowledge of the mind-made is the last (the eighth) of the multifarious psychic powers [5.1.10]. However, this latter power of *physically* travelling unaided anywhere within the sense-world up to the Brahma world (that is, the form realms). This is in fact a form of *teleportation*, where the wonder-worker disappears from one spot and appears in another [5.1.3-4].

The power of *the mind-made*, however, means that the wonder-worker remains here, deep in meditation, while *his astral body* travels elsewhere. In terms of space technology, the astral body is like a space shuttle leaving the mother ship and later returning to it. One of the most famous accounts of such an astral travel is that of Rohitassa, as recorded in **the Rohitassa Sutta** (S 2.26), along with a profound lesson from the Buddha:

**5** Once in the past, venerable sir, I was a seer named Rohitassa Bhoja,putta [son of Bhoja], possessed of spiritual power, able to travel through the sky [space]. **[62]** My speed was such, venerable sir, that I could move just as fast as an archer with a strong bow, trained, skillful, well-practised, experienced, could easily shoot past the shadow of a palmyra tree with a light arrow.

**6** My stride was such, venerable sir, that it spanned the eastern ocean and the western ocean.

Then, bhante, the wish arose in me, ‘I will reach the end of the world by going.’

**7** Possessing such speed and such a stride, and having a lifespan of a hundred years, without pausing except to eat, drink, take meals and snacks, to void and pee, to sleep and dispel tiredness. Yet I died along the way without reaching the end of the world.

8 It is marvellous, bhante! It is wonderful, bhante! How well this was stated by the Blessed One: ‘As to that end of the world, friend, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, does not arise—it cannot be known, seen or reached by going, I say.’”

9 “However, friend, without having reached the end of **the world**, there is no making an end to suffering, I say.”

Friend, **in this very fathom-long body** endowed with perception and mind, that I make known the world, the arising of the world, the ending of the world, and the way leading to the ending of the world.” (S 2.26/1:61 f), SD 7.2

By “**the world**” (*loka*) here the Buddha means the “world of formations” (*saṅkhāra, loka*), speaking on the level of “ultimate truth” (*param’attha, sacca*) in response to Rohitassa question based in reference to the “physical world” (*okāsa, loka*), that is, on the level of “conventional truth” (*sammuti, sacca*).<sup>212</sup>

In the phrase, “**in this very fathom-long body**” (*imasmiñ-ñ-eva vyāma, matte kaḷevare*), the Pāli word *kaḷevare* is probably cognate with the English “cadaver.” The Commentary glosses the four statements in the last paragraph as a restatement of the four noble truths. Thus the Buddha shows: “I do not, friend, make known these four truths in external things like grass and wood, but right here in this body composed of the four great elements.” (SA 1:117 f)

**6.3.2 Comments on “power of the mind-made.”** A remarkable case in our times of what might be construed as a case of the mind-made body or “astral projection” is reported by **Wendy Loh** in her paper presented to the “Closer to Reality Conference” (KL, Dec 2008), where she described how a Kuala Lumpur woman helped her daughter in a distant country through out-of-body experience (OBE). Her daughter phoned her saying that she was having difficulties with the airport authorities in Canada. The mother sat in meditation, and without understanding what was happening, she found herself with her daughter at the airport.

She could see her daughter, the immigration officers and other people as if she was right there herself. She tried to whisper to her daughter, directing her, but of course she could not hear her. Anyway, the daughter managed to approach the right officer, and had herself cleared. In due course, the daughter verified her mother’s story, and stated that although she could not detect her mother’s presence, she felt compelled to go to the officer her mother had intuitively selected for her!<sup>213</sup>

This sort of story, whether you accept it as true or not, represents how the early stages of lovingkindness cultivation works. When a meditator has reached some level of mental focus, he directs his mind of lovingkindness to the desired location, say, where a beloved is ill. Once the meditator, is able to visualize the situation, or have some idea of it, he directs the well-wishing thoughts, meditation instructions, or feelings, to the distant subject. Incidentally, this process might to some level work with evil intentions, too, but the karmic consequences would be very heavy, as we are polluting our own minds.

## 6.4 POWER BY INTERVENTION OF KNOWLEDGE (*ñāṇa, vipphārā iddhi*).

**6.4.1 Definition.** The Paṭisambhidā, magga defines it as follows:

The aim of abandoning the perception of permanence (*nicca*) is effected by the contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

The aim of abandoning the perception of pleasure (*sukha*) is effected by the contemplation of suffering (*dukkhānupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

The aim of abandoning the perception of self (*attā*) is effected by the contemplation of not-self (*anattānupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

<sup>212</sup> On the two levels of language, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9/1:178-203) in SD 7.14 Intro (4).

<sup>213</sup> Wendy Loh, 2008: 5.

The aim of abandoning delight (*nandī*) is effected by the contemplation of revulsion (*nibbidā'nupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

The aim of abandoning lust (*rāga*) is effected by the contemplation of fading away (*virāgā'nupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

The aim of abandoning arising (*samudaya*) is effected by the contemplation of cessation (*nirodhā'nupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

The aim of abandoning grasping (*ādāna*) is effected by the contemplation of relinquishment (*paṭinissaggā'nupassanā*); thus, it is called “power by intervention of knowledge.”

There was the power by intervention of knowledge in the venerable Bakkula, the venerable Saṅkicca, the venerable Bhūta,pāla.

This is the power by intervention of knowledge. (Pm 22.25/2:211/Vism 12.26-29/379 f)

**6.4.2 Textual references to the power by intervention of knowledge.** This “power” is actually that of the “*viveka,nissita* formula,” listing the final stages of spiritual liberation,<sup>214</sup> and is one of the most important formulas commonly found in the Sutta. The formula runs thus:

*viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ*

...dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust) [dispassion], dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

The *viveka nissita* formula is a clear statement of the purpose of the religious life—spiritual liberation. The Nikāyas have many suttas that apply the *viveka,nissita* formula to the awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*), the most famous of which serves as the conclusion of **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118) [2]. The formula is also found at the end of the noble eightfold path formula (in place of “right knowledge” and “right liberation”), for example, in **the Nāvā Sutta** (S 51.158).<sup>215</sup>

## 6.5 POWER BY INTERVENTION OF SAMADHI (*samādhi,vipphārā iddhi*).<sup>216</sup>

**6.5.1 Definition.** The Paṭisambhidā,magga defines it as follows:

The purpose [meaning] (*attha*) of abandoning *the mental hindrances* is accomplished [succeeds] (*ijjhati*)<sup>217</sup> through the first dhyana,<sup>218</sup> thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

The purpose of abandoning *zest* (*pīti*) is accomplished through the third dhyana, thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

The purpose of abandoning *happiness-and-pain* is accomplished through the fourth dhyana, thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

The purpose of abandoning *the base of infinite consciousness* is accomplished through the base of infinite space, thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

The purpose of abandoning *the base of infinite space* is accomplished through the base of nothingness, thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

The purpose of abandoning *the base of nothingness* is accomplished through the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, thus it is success through samadhi intervention.

<sup>214</sup> The formula is discussed in some detail in *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4.

<sup>215</sup> For a detailed study of *viveka,nissita* formula, see Gethin 2001:9, 147, 162-168, 254 & Bodhi, S:B 1891 n7.

<sup>216</sup> Cf Attha,sālinī list where *bhāvanā,mayā iddhi* is substituted for *samādhi,vipphārā iddhi* (DhsA 91,12-16).

<sup>217</sup> *Ijjhati* (v), “he succeeds, prospers, is accomplished”; *iddha* (adj) “successful, prosperous, accomplished”; *iddhi* (n) “success, prosperity, accomplishment.”

<sup>218</sup> *Paṭhama-jjhānena nīvaraṇānaṃ pahān'attho ijjhatī ti samādhi,vipphārā iddhi*.

There was success through samadhi intervention for the venerable Sāriputta, the venerable Sañjīva, the venerable Khāṇu, the venerable Koṇḍañña, the laywoman Uttarā, and the laywoman Sāmāvātī. (Pm 22.26/2:211 f; Vism 12.30-35/380 f)

**6.5.2 Textual references to the power of intervention by samadhi.** The Buddhist commentator, Buddhaghosa, in his work, **the Visuddhi,magga**, speaks of how the dhyanic state is, as it were, *indestructible*, or at least, untouched by external forces. He calls this phenomenon “success through samadhi intervention” (*samādhi,vipphārā iddhi*). He gives examples of the early saints who manifested such powers.

From what we have already discussed, this virtual indestructibility of the meditator’s body can be explained in this manner. In deep dhyana, all the physical senses have shut down, and only the mind is operative. Since the mind is in full charge, and the body inoperative (as it were), it does not respond to external stimuli. In short, it is a real case of *mind over matter*.<sup>219</sup>

## 6.6 NOBLE POWER (*ariyā iddhi*).

**6.6.1 Definition.** The Paṭisambhidā,magga defines it as follows:<sup>220</sup>

- (1) If he wishes, ‘Let me dwell *perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive*,<sup>221</sup> so there he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive.
- (2) If he wishes ‘Let me dwell *perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive*,<sup>222</sup> so there he dwells perceiving the repulsive.
- (3) If he wishes, ‘Let me dwell *perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and in the unrepulsive*,<sup>223</sup> so there he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive.
- (4) If he wishes, ‘Let me dwell *perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and in the repulsive*,<sup>224</sup> so there he dwells perceiving the repulsive.
- (5) If he wishes, ‘Let me, *rejecting both the repulsive and the unrepulsive, dwell equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending*,<sup>225</sup> so there he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending.

- (1) How does he dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive?

In the case of a disagreeable object, he pervades it with lovingkindness, or he considers it as the four elements.<sup>226</sup>

<sup>219</sup> For a more detailed study, see *Samādhi Vipphāra Iddhi*, SD 24.4.

<sup>220</sup> D 28.18/3:112 f @ SD 14.14. Given briefly in **Metta,sahagata S = Halidda,vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 + SD 10.11) and in detail in **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 + SD 2.12 Intro). See also Vism 12.36/381 f; SA 3:171 f

<sup>221</sup> *Paṭikūle appaṭikūla,saññī vihareyya*. In the case of a disagreeable object (eg a hostile person), he either pervades it with lovingkindness or regards it as physical elements. For example, he reflects: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin...?” (Vism 9.38/306).

<sup>222</sup> *Appaṭikūle paṭikūla,saññī vihareyya*. In the case of a disagreeable object (eg a hostile person), he either pervades it with lovingkindness or regards it as physical elements. For example, in the case of a repulsive object, he reflects: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin...?” (Vism 9.38/306).

<sup>223</sup> *Paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūla,saññī vihareyya*. In other words, he pervades both agreeable and disagreeable objects with the thought of lovingkindness or regards them as physical elements; thus he perceives both as unrepulsive.

<sup>224</sup> *Appaṭikūle ca paṭikūle ca paṭikūla,saññī vihareyya*. He regards form as only form, sound as only sound, smell as only smell, taste as only taste, touch as only touch, thought as only thought; he is neither glad nor sad, but abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.

<sup>225</sup> *Paṭikūle appaṭikūla,saññī vihareyya*. In the case of a an agreeable object (eg a sensually attractive person), he either pervades it with the thought of foulness or regards it as impermanent. For an example of this method, see Vism 9.38/306: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair...?”

<sup>226</sup> *Aniṭṭhasmim vatthusmim mettāya vā pharati, dhātuto vā upasamharati*.

- Thus he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive.
- (2) How does he dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive?  
In the case of an agreeable object, he pervades it with the foul, or regards it as impermanent.<sup>227</sup>
- Thus he dwells perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive.
- (3) How does he dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive?  
In the case of a disagreeable and agreeable object, he pervades it with lovingkindness,<sup>228</sup> or he considers it as the four elements.<sup>229</sup>
- Thus he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive.
- (4) How does he dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and in the repulsive?  
In the case of an agreeable disagreeable object, he pervades it with the foul, or regards it as impermanent.<sup>230</sup>
- Thus he dwells perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive.
- (5) How does he dwell rejecting both the repulsive and the unrepulsive, dwell equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending?  
Here, bhikshu, *seeing form with the eye*, he is neither glad nor distressed; he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.<sup>231</sup>  
*Hearing a sound with the ear*, he is neither glad nor distressed—he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.  
*Smelling a smell with the nose*, he is neither glad nor distressed—he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.  
*Tasting a taste with the tongue*, he is neither glad nor distressed—he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.  
*Feeling a touch with the body*, he is neither glad nor distressed—he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.  
*Cognizing a mental state with the mind*, he is neither glad nor distressed; he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.
- This is the noble one’s power. (Pm 22.27/2:212 f; Vism 12.36-38/381 f)

**6.6.2 Textual references to the noble power.** In the *Sampasādanīya Sutta* (D 28), the Buddha declares the eightfold manifold psychic powers<sup>232</sup> to be “ignoble power” (*anariya iddhi*), and **the five perceptions** (*pañca saññā*) to be the “power of the noble ones” (*ariya iddhi*), or, more fully, “powers that are influx-free, free from birth-basis, noble” (*iddhi anāsavā anupadhikā ariyā*).

## 6.7 POWER OF KARMIC FRUIT (*kamma, vipāka, jā iddhi*).

**6.7.1 Definition.** The Paṭisambhidā, magga defines it as follows:

(Such as those) of all the birds, of all the devas, of some humans, of some beings in the lower realms.<sup>233</sup>

This is the power of karmic fruit. (Pm 22.28/2:213; Vism 12.39/382)

<sup>227</sup> *Iṭṭhasmiṃ vatthusmiṃ asubhāya vā pharati, aniccato vā upasamharati.* “Pervades it with the foul” (*asubhāya vā pharati*) means regards it as being foul, ie note what is unpleasant or disgusting in it

<sup>228</sup> See also Vism 9.38/306.

<sup>229</sup> *Aniṭṭhasmiṃ ca iṭṭhasmiṃ ca vatthusmiṃ mettāya vā pharati, dhātuto vā upasamharati.*

<sup>230</sup> *Iṭṭhasmiṃ ca aniṭṭhasmiṃ ca vatthusmiṃ asubhāya vā pharati, aniccato vā upasamharati.*

<sup>231</sup> *Idha bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā neva sumano hoti na dummano, upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno.*

<sup>232</sup> *Iddhi, vidhā.* Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.5 @ SD 1.7) where the Buddha disapproves of exhibiting such powers.

<sup>233</sup> *Sabbesaṃ pakkhīnaṃ, sabbesaṃ devānaṃ, ekaccānaṃ manussānaṃ, ekaccānaṃ vinipātikānaṃ.*

**6.7.2 Textual references to the power of karmic fruit.** The Paṭisambhidā,magga Commentary gives examples for each of the beings mentioned, as follows: “**birds**” (*pakkhika*) refers of all those that are naturally winged that move through the air without dhyana or superknowledge. Likewise, “**all the devas,**” and “**some humans**” at the beginning [first age] of the aeon. Likewise, “**some beings in the lower realms,**” such as Piyaṅkara’s mother (see DA 509), Uttara’s mother (PvA 140), Phussa,mittā (DA 509; SA 4:6), Dhamma,guttā (DA 509; AA 4:26); and of pretas that have a constituent of joy (*sukha,samussaya*), and of nagas and suparnas that travel through space, and so on. (PmA 3:676)

## 6.8 POWER OF THE MERITORIOUS (*puññavato iddhi*).

**6.8.1 Textual references to the power of karmic fruit.** The Paṭisambhidā,magga defines it as follows:

The wheel-turning monarch [chakravarti] moves through space with his fourfold army, even with his grooms and cattle herders.

The houselord Jotika had the power of the meritorious.

The houselord Jaṭilaka had the power of the meritorious.

The houselord Ghosita had the power of the meritorious.

The houselord Meṇḍaka had the power of the meritorious.

That of the five with great merit is the power of the meritorious.

This is the power of the meritorious. (Pm 22.29/2:212; Vism 12.40-42/382 f)

**6.8.2 Textual references to the power of the meritorious.** Buddhaghosa notes that “in brief, however, it is the distinction accomplished when the accumulated merit comes to ripen that is the “power of the meritorious” (Vism 12.40/383).

The stories of both **Jotika** and of **Jaṭilaka** are found in **the Jaṭila-t,thera Vatthu** (DhA 26.33) of the Dhammapada Commentary. It is said that a crystal palace and sixty-four wishing trees arose for the houselord Jotika;<sup>234</sup> and a golden rock 80 cubits<sup>235</sup> high arose for Jaṭilaka.<sup>236</sup> All these arose through the power of their merit (past good karma).

The story of **Ghosita** is found in **the Sāmāvati Vatthu** (DhA 2.1), where he is known as Ghosaka. Although attempts on his life was made in seven places (due to his casting away his own son seven times in a past life as Kotūhalaka), he was safely survived all of them. This arose through the power of his merit (which arose when he was merely a dog and attended to a pratyeka-buddha).<sup>237</sup>

The story of the seth **Meṇḍaka** is found in **the Meṇḍaka Seṭṭhi Vatthu** (DhA 18.10). It is said that Meṇḍaka had seven rams the size of elephants, which, like Aesop’s fable of the goose that laid golden eggs, provided him with whatever he needed.<sup>238</sup> This arose through the power of his merit.

The story of “**the five with great merit**” (*pañca mahā,puñña*) is found in the account of rajah Bimbisāra in the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya, where the five are listed as the seth Meṇḍaka, his wife Canda,-paduma,siri, his son the seth Dhanañjaya, his daughter-in-law Sumana,devī, and his slave Puṇṇa. They each help to support Bimbisāra’s fourfold army<sup>239</sup> and the country in their own special way. Meṇḍaka gave an endless supply of red rice; his wife, gave enough cooked rice to serve the whole country (India was much smaller then!) Their son gave sufficient funds for everyone. The daughter-in-law provided

<sup>234</sup> DhA 26.33/4:207.

<sup>235</sup> A cubit (*ratana*) here, according to Comy, that of a medium-sized man (UA 245), ie, twice the distance between the tips of the thumb and of the index finger with the fingers outstretched (VbhA 343), which would be about 16 ins or 41 cm. As such, 7 cubits would be about 9 ft 2 ins or 2.85 m.

<sup>236</sup> DhA 26.33/4:216.

<sup>237</sup> DhA 2.1/1:174.

<sup>238</sup> DhA 18.10/3:364.

<sup>239</sup> Viz, elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers, ie armoured division, artillery, cavalry and infantry.

more than enough paddy (unhusked rice). And the slave was more than efficient in ploughing the land, so that it yielded abundantly.<sup>240</sup>

## 6.9 KNOWLEDGE-MADE POWER (*vijjā, mayā iddhi*).

**6.9.1 Textual references to knowledge-made power.** The Paṭisambhidā, magga defines it as follows:

Knowledge-masters [vidyadharas], having uttered their spells, travel through the air, and the space of the sky they show an elephant, a horse, a chariot, a foot-soldier, and a various army arrays.

This is the power of the meritorious. (Pm 22.30/2:213; Vism 12.43/383)

**6.9.2 Textual references to knowledge-made power.** This power apparently refers to what is not dhyana-based (namely, “power by resolve,” the first kind here) [6.1]. This could refer to a power acquired through some occult system or to some kind of technology not yet well known in the times.

## 6.8 POWER BY WAY OF SUCCESS ON ACCOUNT OF SUSTAINED RIGHT EXERTION (*tattha tattha sammā, payoga, paccayā ijghan’atthena iddhi*).

**6.10.1 Textual references to knowledge-made power.** The Paṭisambhidā, magga (and the Visuddhi, magga quoting it) gives an abridged list, but which is fully listed here (based on Pm 1.134/1:31-33):

### The 7 hindrances

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| (1) The abandoning of <i>sense-desire</i> is effected through          | renunciation.            |
| (2) The abandoning of <i>ill will</i> is effected through              | non-ill will.            |
| (3) The abandoning of <i>sloth and torpor</i> is effected through      | the perception of light. |
| (4) The abandoning of <i>restlessness</i> is effected through          | non-distraction.         |
| (5) The abandoning of <i>doubt</i> is effected through                 | definition of ideas.     |
| (6) The abandoning of <i>ignorance</i> is effected through             | knowledge                |
| (7) The abandoning of <i>non-delight [boredom]</i> is effected through | gladness.                |

### The 4 dhyanas

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| (1) Through <i>abandoning the hindrances</i> , he gains                                | the 1 <sup>st</sup> dhyana. |
| (2) Through abandoning <i>initial application and sustained application</i> , he gains | the 2 <sup>nd</sup> dhyana. |
| (3) Through abandoning <i>zest</i> , he gains  | the 3 <sup>rd</sup> dhyana. |
| (4) Through abandoning <i>joy [happiness]</i> , he gains                               | the 4 <sup>th</sup> dhyana. |

### The 4 formless attainments<sup>241</sup>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) Through abandoning <i>the perception of form, perception of resistance</i> , <sup>242</sup> and <i>perception of difference</i> , he gains | the attainment of base of boundless space.                      |
| (2) Through abandoning <i>the perception of boundless space</i> ,  | he gains the attainment of the base of boundless consciousness. |
| (3) Through abandoning <i>the perception of boundless consciousness</i> ,  | he gains the attainment of the base of nothingness.             |

<sup>240</sup> Mhv 6.34.5-9/V 1:240-242. Alluded to at the start of **Visākha Vatthu** (DhA 4.8/1:384).

<sup>241</sup> See **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (10.2).

<sup>242</sup> *Paṭigha, sañña*, here means “sense-stimulus,” ie sense-reaction is absent in the formless attainments.



(4) Through abandoning *the perception of nothingness*,

he gains the attainment of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

### **The 18 principal insights**

- (1) *The perception of permanence* is abandoned through
- (2) *The perception of pleasure*<sup>243</sup> is abandoned through
- (3) *The perception of self* is abandoned through
- (4) *The perception of delight* is abandoned through
- (5) *The perception of lust* is abandoned through
- (6) *The perception of arising* is abandoned through
- (7) *The perception of clinging*<sup>244</sup> is abandoned through
- (8) *The perception of compactness* is abandoned through
- (9) *The perception of karma-accumulation* is abandoned through
- (10) *The perception of lastingness* is abandoned through
- (11) *The perception of the sign* is abandoned through
- (12) *The perception of delight* is abandoned through
- (13) *The perception of adherence (to views)* is abandoned through
- (14) *The perception of grasping and adherence to the idea of substance* is abandoned through
- (15) *The adherence to delusion*<sup>245</sup> is abandoned through
- (16) *Attachment and adherence* are abandoned through
- (17) *Thoughtlessness [unmindfulness]* is abandoned through
- (18) *Entanglement and clinging*<sup>247</sup> are abandoned through

contemplation of impermanence.  
contemplation of suffering.  
contemplation of not-self.  
contemplation of revulsion.  
contemplation of dispassion.  
contemplation of ending.  
contemplation of abandoning.  
contemplation of destruction.

contemplation of passing-away.  
contemplation of change.  
contemplation of the signless.  
contemplation of desirelessness.

contemplation of emptiness.

insight into states of higher wisdom.  
knowledge and vision according to reality.  
contemplation of danger.<sup>246</sup>  
contemplation by way of review.  
contemplation of turning away.

### **The 4 paths**

- (1) Abandoning defilements related to *wrong views* results in
- (2) Abandoning *gross defilements* results in
- (3) Abandoning *the attendant defilements*<sup>248</sup> results in
- (4) Abandoning *all defilements* results in

the streamwinning path.  
the once-returning path.  
the non-returning path.  
the arhat path.

This is the power by way of success on account of sustained right exertion.

(Pm 22.31/2:213 f; Vism 12.44/383 f)

**6.10.2 Textual references to the power of sustained exertion.** Thematically, this power (more fully, “the power by way of success on account of sustained right exertion”) deals with right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), which is here called “right exertion” (*sammā payoga*). Both the Visuddhi,magga (by Buddhaghosa) and the Paṭisambhidā,agga Commentary (by Mahānāma), however, quote an untraced Commentary which says, “Any work related to such trade (*sippa*) as cart assembling, or to any medical work, or the learning of the Three Vedas, or the learning of the Tipiṭaka, even work connected with ploughing, sowing, etc—the distinction produced by such work is the power by way of success on account of sustained right exertion.”

<sup>243</sup> *Sukha*, ie a sense of joy or happiness arising from external sense-stimuli.

<sup>244</sup> *Ādāna*.

<sup>245</sup> About self and the world.

<sup>246</sup> *Ādīnavānupassānā*; also tr as “contemplation of misery (as the result of evil actions).”

<sup>247</sup> *Saññogābhīnivesaṃ*.

<sup>248</sup> *Anusahagata kilesa = oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*.

As a set of doctrines, this last power—the power by way of success on account of sustained right exertion—also the longest named, is the most comprehensive summary of the pilgrim’s progress from the start of meditation practice to the attainment of arhathood, that is, culminating in the sixth superknowledge, that is, the superknowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa*). [5.6]

## 7 MIRACLES AND SPIRITUALITY

### 7.1 MIRACLES IN BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE.

**7.1.1 The magic of instruction.** While later stories of psychic wonders, especially the commentarial accounts, tend to glorify the Buddha and the saints, *the canonical accounts*, as a rule, try to show how the Buddha successfully instructs the person, even converting him. The context, in other words, is almost always a *pedagogic* one, a teaching situation. Here are some famous accounts of the Buddha’s psychic wonders in instruction:

#### **Yasa and his father** (V 1:15-18)

The rich young man Yasa experiences samvega (a sense of religious urgency),<sup>249</sup> meets the Buddha, listens to the Dharma, and becomes a streamwinner. His father, searching for him, meets and asks the Buddha about Yasa, who is made *invisible* by the Buddha until his father himself attains streamwinning, and Yasa, arhathood. Then the father *sees* the son. (**Yasa Pabbajjā** (Mv 7.1-14 = V 1:15-18), SD 11.2)

#### **The Kassapa brothers** (V 1:24-35)

Soon after Yasa’s conversion, the Buddha visits Uruvelā Kassapa, the eldest of the three fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers. Despite the Buddha’s performing various psychic wonders (such taming a fierce serpent, parting the waters, etc) Kassapa is not impressed; that is, until finally the Buddha, *reading his mind*, tells him that he thinks himself an arhat, but the reality is that he is *not*. And so Kassapa is awakened to true reality. (**Uruvelā Pāṭihāriya** (Mv 1:15-21 = V 1:24-35), SD 63.2)

#### **The serial killer** **Āṅguli,māla** (M 86)

Āṅguli,māla is ready to kill anyone, including his own mother, to get his thousandth finger (and so completing his bloody task). The Buddha intercedes by appearing before him. No matter how fast Āṅguli,māla runs, he is unable to catch up with the walking Buddha to kill him, each time *the earth seems to turn around*, as it were. That is, until he shouts at the Buddha to *stop*. The Buddha then explains the real meaning of “stop” to him.<sup>250</sup>

#### **The gay monk Vakkali** (DhA 25.11/4:118 f)

The brahmin youth Vakkali, on first seeing the Buddha, is at once attracted to his physical beauty. He becomes a monk just to spend his time admiring the Buddha. When the Buddha enters into the rains retreat, Vakkali despairs at not seeing the Buddha for the three months of the retreat. Out of depression and desperation, he decides to throw himself off Mt Vulture Peak. At that moment, the Buddha sends forth *a radiant image* of himself, pronouncing, “Come, Vakkali! Fear not...I will release you!” Even while in mid-air, Vakkali suppresses his intense joy and reflecting on the Buddha’s words, becomes a full-fledged arhat, and descends to the ground.<sup>251</sup>

<sup>249</sup> See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 Intro (7f).

<sup>250</sup> **Āṅguli,māla S** (M 86.4-6/2:99 f), SD 5.11.

<sup>251</sup> **Vakkali Thera Vatthu** (DhA 25.11/4:118 f), SD 8.8; cf Vakkali S (S 22.87/3:119-124), SD 8.8; also Ap 2:465 f; AA 1:248-251; ThīA 2:146-150; Vism 4.45/129.

**Queen Khemā**  
(DhA 24.5)

Bimbisāra's queen Khemā is so infatuated with her own beauty that she refuses to meet the Buddha, for fear that he might find fault with bodily beauty. The rajah instructs a court singer to praise of the beauty of Veḷu,vana (where the Buddha is staying), so that she desires to go there. As she enters, she sees a projected figure of an extraordinarily beautiful woman (*abhirūpam itthim nimmini*) standing by the Buddha, fanning him. As she stands riveted, gazing at her beauty, the Buddha transforms the projected figure (*nimmāna*) from being a maiden into a primigravida [a woman pregnant the first time], then one middle-aged, then a decrepit and bent old hag with a deformed body, then one diseased, she then screamed aloud and fell in a swoon into her own filth; then she dies, then a bloated corpse, then an oozing corpse infested with maggots, then a carcass torn apart by crows and dogs. Perceiving the impermanence of bodily form, she hears the Buddha's admonition and becomes a streamwinner. And at the end of another discourse, she becomes an arhat.<sup>252</sup>

In all such accounts, the psychic wonders performed by the Buddha is not so much to show off his power,<sup>253</sup> but rather as *a skillful means to expedite the learning process of the individual*, especially when his mind is in turmoil or confusion, so that ordinary teaching methods would not have worked.<sup>254</sup> In many cases, the accounts also have a psychologically significant layer of meaning.

Take the case of **Yasa's father**, for example: as a father, it is difficult for him to understand his son Yasa's spiritual crisis and his ensuing spiritual liberation. Only when the father himself has attained to the son's level of sainthood (streamwinning) that he really *sees* his son. The son has indeed become the father of spiritual manhood.

None of the Uruvelā miracles impressed Kassapa, except the Buddha's power of mind-reading. As Saṅgārava points out in **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60), regarding miracles other than that of instruction:

[such a] miracle, master Gotama, only the one who performs it, experiences it: it belongs only to the one who performs it. Indeed, master Gotama, this miracle seems like it is related to the false dharma of illusion. (A 3.60,4-6/1:171), SD 16.10<sup>255</sup>

**7.1.2 Consciousness-altering instructions.** Even the Buddha's conversion of **Aṅguli,māla**, one of the most dramatic of his compassionate acts, has a psychological explanation. Firstly, we know from the **Aṅgulimāla Sutta** that despite the evil life that he was thrown into by his foolish erstwhile guru, he had had thoughts of the Buddha:

Long have I revered the recluse, the mighty sage, who has entered the great forest,  
Therefore, having heard your stanza on the Dharma,  
I will renounce a thousand evils.<sup>256</sup> (M 86,6\*/2:100 = Tha 868), SD 5.11

<sup>252</sup> **Khemā Therī Vatthu** (DhA 24.5/4:57-59); parallels: AA 1:343 f; ThīA 127-136. The holographic projection of a beautiful woman is only briefly mention, and the narrator alludes to same psychic wonder shown to Rūpa,nandā who similarly attains streamwinning and then arhatood, as recounted in **Janapada,kalyāṇī Rūpā,nandā Therī Vatthu** (DhA 11.5/3:113-119; AA 1:363-365; SnA 1:241-243). See also DhA:B Intro §7d.

<sup>253</sup> It is interesting that in almost every case of psychic wonder performed by the Buddha, there is an element of spiritual instruction behind it. God-centred "miracles" on the other hand, appear to be power-oriented, ie, to assert some kind of lordship of God or show his glory. Buddhist miracles are characteristically in the "love-mode," while theistic miracles tend to show a "power-mode."

<sup>254</sup> See **Skillful means**, SD 30.8.

<sup>255</sup> Chinese **Madhyama Āgama** parallel, 傷歌權經 Shānggēluó Jīng, is at MĀ 143 = T1.650b11-652a06.

The Buddha's demeanour of lovingkindness disempowers Aṅguli,māla of his wickedness and violence, infected by a foolish worldly guru; the wise awakened teacher liberates him. The conversion of such a violent serial killer merits being dramatized as an earth-turning event. For, Aṅguli,māla's bloody world as he knew it is over; a new dimension of awakening opens up to him. To do this he needs to catch up with the Buddha, and this can only be done by slowing down into inner stillness. [8.4.3]

The case of the lustful young "groupie" Vakkali who keeps following the Buddha around, reminds us of the teachings of **the (Anubaddha) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3)<sup>257</sup> and **the Saṅghāṭi,kaṇṇa Sutta** (It 92),<sup>258</sup> where the Buddha strongly disapproves of our being merely *physically* close to him without making sufficient effort in our personal development, and that it is our taste of the Dharma that brings us to really *see* him.

In his great compassion, the Buddha closely monitors Vakkali's mental state, and at the right moment, heals him forever of his lustful fever. Vakkali must completely let go of his mentally constructed Buddha, an object of his desire, so that he meets the true Buddha, and so becomes an arhat.<sup>259</sup>

Both queen Khemā and Janapada,kalyāṇī Rūpa,nandā are extremely beautiful woman, the latter in fact to be married to prince Nandā, who abruptly renounces the world on the day they are to wed. To heal these two women of their infatuation with bodily beauty, the Buddha projects what we would today call a "time-lapse sequence" of the human decaying process. What would take a life-time is shown in a moment, with world-shattering effect. The false world of virtual appearances is shattered revealing true reality. Upon seeing what the women fear most, there is really nothing to fear; for, *the seeing is the healing* that frees their minds forever.

**7.2 THE VINAYA RULE AGAINST PSYCHIC DISPLAY. The (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60) throws some light here. The same three miracles mentioned in the Kevaḍḍha Sutta are defined in the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta, and, when asked by Saṅgārava who else besides the Buddha himself have such powers, the Buddha goes on to declares,

"Not just one hundred, brahmin, nor two hundred, nor three hundred, nor four hundred, nor five hundred, but even more than that are endowed with these three miracles!"

"And, master Gotama, where are these monks dwelling now?"

"In the very community of monks, brahmin." (A 3.60,7.2/1:172 f), SD 16.10 [8.2]

There are, of course, numerous other Sutta passage regarding monks with psychic powers, and often these powers are mentioned to be the result of attaining the fourth dhyana.<sup>260</sup> As such, it is clear that the Buddha is not *condemning* these powers, but the *public display* of such powers, especially where they have no didactic purpose or value. This is clear from the definition of the term *pāṭihāriya* above, and from the Vinaya, which we shall now examine.

**Rupert Gethin**, in his study of *iddhi*, points to the key passage relating to the Buddha's disapproval of miracles (*iddhi*), as stated in the Kevaḍḍha Sutta, thus:

Seeing this (*imam*) danger in the miracle of psychic power, Kevaḍḍha, I am pained, ashamed, disgusted<sup>261</sup> regarding the miracle of psychic power...regarding the miracle of mind-reading.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Here I follow Tha:PTS: *so 'ham cājissāmi sahassa,pāpaṃ*. M:ÑB has: "Oh, at long last this recluse, a venerated sage, | Has come to this great forest for my sake." Comys say that at this point, Aṅgulimāla realizes that he was before the Buddha himself and who had come to the forest for the express purpose of helping him. (MA 3:333; ThaA 3:37 f). For Gombrich's reconstruction, see Intro, above.

<sup>257</sup> S 47.3/5:152-144 (SD 24.6a).

<sup>258</sup> It 92/3.5.3/90-92 (SD 24.10a).

<sup>259</sup> See **Skillful Means**, SD 30.8 (3.4.1).

<sup>260</sup> See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.81-96/1:75-83), SD 8.10.

<sup>261</sup> "I am pained, ashamed, disgusted," *aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi*. See Intro (3).

(D 11,5+7/1:213 f; emphasis added)

Gethin makes this important observation regarding this passage:

As soon as *imam* is translated the particularity rather than the generality of the condemnation of eightfold *iddhi* becomes obvious. The Buddha's condemning the display of miraculous eightfold *iddhi* to houselords because he views it as unhelpful and dangerous for precisely the reasons I have just outlined.<sup>263</sup> He is not making a general judgement about the practice of the eightfold *iddhi* at all. (2001:100)

Gethin's opinion is supported by the Vinaya prohibition regarding the display of miracles (*iddhi*, *pāṭihāriya*) and superhuman states (*uttari*, *manussa*, *dhamma*). **The Culla,vagga** of the Vinaya Piṭaka contains this rule:

Bhikshus, a superhuman psychic miracle should not be shown to householders. For whom ever shows it, there is the offence of wrong-doing. Bhikshus, break the wooden bowl into small fragments, and then give them to the monks as scent-mixed ointment.<sup>264</sup> And, bhikshus, a wooden bowl should not be used.<sup>265</sup>

*Na, bhikkhave, gihīnam uttarimanussadhammaṃ iddhipāṭihāriyam dassetabbaṃ. Yo dasseya, āpatti dukkaṭassa. Bhindath'etaṃ, bhikkhave, dāru.pattam sakalikaṃ sakalikaṃ katvā, bhikkhūnam añjan'upapisaṇam detha. Na ca, bhikkhave, dāru.patto dhāretabbo. Yo dhāreyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā'ti.* (Cv 5.8.2 @ V 2:110 f)

The case history behind this prohibition concerns the monk **Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja**,<sup>266</sup> whose miracle story is found in all the extant Vinayas, albeit with some variants.<sup>267</sup> In the Pali Vinaya, the Buddha is recorded as rebuking Piṇḍola for performing a cheap miracle. The seth of Rājagaha has placed a sandalwood bowl on a high pole and challenges any holy person to bring it down. Piṇḍola hears of this and, at Moggallāna's suggestion, rises into the air by his psychic power and brings it down.

On learning of Piṇḍola's deed, the Buddha reprimands him for using his psychic power in an unworthy manner. The Buddha explains that such an act is neither impressive to those without faith in the Dharma nor to the faithful,<sup>268</sup> and it is unworthy, like a woman exposing herself for a mere coin. The Buddha then announces the Vinaya rule against such displays before the laity. The bowl is given to the monks to be broken and ground into sandal paste (Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112). Here again, we see that it is the *display* of psychic power to the laity or unordained that is condemned, not the practice itself.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>262</sup> *Imam kho aham Kevaḍḍha iddhi,pāṭihāriye ādīnavaṃ samanupassamāno iddhi,pāṭihāriyena aṭṭiyāmi harayāmi jigucchāmi.*

<sup>263</sup> See Gethin 2001:98-100.

<sup>264</sup> Cf V 1:203 where sandalwood is one of the five perfumes (*añjan'upapisaṇa*) allowable.

<sup>265</sup> See also Cv 5.37 = V 2:143; cf Niss 21.3 = V 3:243 (V:H 2:115 & = nn1-2), Pāc 40.2.1 = V 4:123 (V:H 2:415 n1).

<sup>266</sup> See **Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja S** (S 35.127), SD 27.6.

<sup>267</sup> Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112; the story is given in greater detail at DhA 14.2a/3:199-203. In Comys, the Piṇḍola incident forms the prelude to the Buddha's performance of the twin wonder (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*) [SD 27.5b (3.1.5)]: the explanation given is that the Buddha made the rule for his disciples, but not for himself! (DA 1:57; DhA 3:204; SnA 570; J 483/4:263). See JS Strong 1979, & S Sylvain Lévi & E Chavannes, "Les seize arhat protecteurs de la loi," *Journal Asiatique* 7 1916: 233-347.

<sup>268</sup> The full stock passage runs: "It neither conduces to faith for those without faith, nor to growth for the faithful. Indeed, bhikshus, it conduces to the lack of faith for those without faith, and to the loss of faith of some in the faithful (*n'etaṃ bhikkhave appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya pasannānaṃ vā bhiiyyo,bhāvāya, atha kho taṃ bhikkhave appasannānaṃ c'eva appasādāya pasannānaṃ ca ekaccānaṃ aññathattāyā ti*). (V 2:112, cf V 2:2)

<sup>269</sup> The V Comy says that it is the miracle (*vikubban'iddhi,pāṭihāriya*) that is objected to, not the psychic power that is volitional in nature (*adhiṭṭhān'iddhi*) (VA 1203). We do find, eg, in (**Pasāda,kampana**) **Moggallāna S**, the

There are two other rules that are related to this rule, namely, the fourth Pārājika and the eighth Pācittiya. The fourth Pārājika states that a monk who makes a false claim to any kind of superhuman state entails defeat (that is, automatic falling from monkhood) (V 3:87-109). The eighth Pācittiya prohibits the declaration of a superhuman state that one actually possesses to an unordained (that is, either a novice or the laity), an offence that entails expiation (V 4:23-30). Again here these two rules do not condemn psychic power, but their false claim and telling the unordained about it.

In short, the Vinaya were instituted so that, firstly, worldly monastics do not make false claims of superpowers. Secondly, neophytes and the laity are not misled into believing the spirituality of a monastic or teacher merely on the basis of his psychic powers. Thirdly, as psychic display are fantastic illusions, only the performer and the wise know what they really are: *illusions*. The spiritual path is more than mere illusion: the path itself is the true miracle when we go forth on it.

**7.3 MAHAKA. The (Pāṭihāriya) Mahaka Sutta** (S 41.4) recounts how the monk Mahaka obliges the famous layman Citta the householder's request for a psychic wonder. Apparently, Mahaka has great kasina meditation powers since he could manipulate the weather and manifest the elements. The relevant passages from the Sutta runs thus:

**15** Seated thus at one side, Citta the householder said this to the venerable Mahaka:

“It would be good, bhante, if the noble (*ayya*) Mahaka were to show me an act of superhuman miraculous power.”<sup>270</sup>

“In that case, householder, spread your upper robe [cloak] upon the verandah and scatter a bundle of grass upon it.”

**16** Then the venerable Mahaka, having entered his dwelling and bolted the door, performed an act of superhuman miraculous power, such that fire shot through the keyhole and the chinks in the door, but neither the grass nor the cloak was burnt.<sup>271</sup>

**17** Then Citta the householder, having shaken off his cloak, stood at one side, filled with *samvega*<sup>272</sup> and his hair bristling [horripilating].

**18a** Then the venerable Mahaka came out of his dwelling, and said this to Citta the householder:

“Householder, is this much enough?”

“Bhante Mahaka, this much is enough. What has been done is sufficient, bhante Mahaka, what's been offered is sufficient, bhante Mahaka!

**18b** Let the noble Mahaka delight in the pleasant wild mango park near Macchikā,saṇḍa. I will make every effort to provide the noble Mahaka with robe, almsfood, lodging, and medical support and supplies for the sick.”

“You speak kindly, householder.”<sup>273</sup>

**19** Then the elder Mahaka put his lodging in order and, taking robe and bowl, left Macchikā,saṇḍa. When he left Macchikā,saṇḍa, it was for good, and he never returned.<sup>274</sup>

(S 41.4,15-19/4:290 f), SD 27.2

If Mahaka's miracle were fire alone and it is capable of burning, then it would be the fire kasina; but here it is likely to be a mental holographic projection, like when the Buddha projected holographic images

Buddha instructing Moggallāna to use his powers to shake up Migāra's Mansion wherein some monks are cavorting on the second floor (S 51.14/5:269-271 @ SD 27.8), and the Buddha himself occasionally performing miraculous feats publicly, such as when crossing the Ganges on his last journey (D 2,1.33/2:89), SD 9.

<sup>270</sup> *Sādhu me, bhante, ayyo mahako uttari manussa, dhammam iddhi, pāṭihāriyam dassetu'ti*. See Intro (2).

<sup>271</sup> See **(Pāṭihāriya) Mahaka S** (S 41,4), SD 27.2 (1.3).

<sup>272</sup> See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 (7f).

<sup>273</sup> *Kalyāṇam vuccati, gahapati'ti*. See **(Pāṭihāriya) Mahaka S** (S 41.4), SD 27.2 (2.1).

<sup>274</sup> *Yam macchikā,saṇḍamhā pakkāmi, tathā pakkanto'va ahosi, na puna paccāgacchi*. Here, *pakkāmi* is the preterite (simple past)<sup>274</sup> aspect of *pakkamati* (“he goes away”) (M 1:105; Pug 58; DA 1:94; PvA 13). See Intro (2.2).

of a beautiful young woman fanning him, and she appears to progress rapidly through the stages of youth, maturity, decay, and death, so that as queen Khemā watches, *saṃvega* arises in her. [7.1]

The closing of the (Pāṭihāriya) Mahaka Sutta is significant. When Citta invites Mahaka to have the freedom of his park and accept material support, Mahaka is non-committal (“You speak kindly, householder.”). Mahaka perhaps gives the psychic display not to offend Citta, or perhaps out of obligation that he is a leading lay follower. Understandably, to avoid and future embarrassment, Mahaka leaves the place for good.

**7.4 THE ARHAT’S 6 SUPERKNOWLEDGES.** Although there are strict rules disallowing monastics from showing off their psychic powers [7.2], even learned Buddhists today believe that the Buddha and the early great saints have great psychic powers. The Buddha takes pains to ensure that miracles do not in themselves water down his true teachings, that the medium does not become the message!

In other words, such claims of power are taken on faith by most Buddhists—which means that even if we do not accept, or seriously accept, the supernatural nature of such psychic powers, this should not affect our personal practice; that is, provided we keep up our practice. The meditation mind, while it may need some catalyst to start it off or even maintain its focus, must let go of all ideas and thoughts in the end. The idea is to cultivate our own direct knowledge so that we can personally taste true reality for ourselves.

The full-fledged awakened one is the “*six-knowledge arhat*” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā arahata*). They have all been described in some detail above [5]. As a set, these six powers are very potent: they are like a set of high-powered tools in the hands of master craftsmen! We can further analyze **the arhat’s 6 superknowledges** in psychological and spiritual terms, that is, how each of these powers are manifestations of the arhat’s transcending of mind and matter, time and space, and the duality of the worldliness, thus:<sup>275</sup>

- (1) **the multifarious psychic power**      The 8 powers (such as invisibility and teleportation) of this set seem to break natural laws, but we are closer to explaining them in natural and scientific terms than ever before. The point is that the arhat has *naturally* mastered these natural laws which science has yet to fully understand.
- (2) **the divine ear**      His hearing is so sensitive that not only is he greatly attentive, but his mind overcomes the limitations of *space* by being able to hear sounds from great distances, even of other beings and from other worlds.
- (3) **mind-reading**      The arhat’s wisdom of not-self breaks through the *self-other* duality, so that the minds of others are like his own, and in fact, he is able to understand them better than the “owners” themselves! Thus, he is able to counsel and help them better.
- (4) **recollection of past lives**      By overcoming the *time-space* construct, the arhat is able to read his past lives like replaying the security tapes of his life. He better understands the setbacks or blessings he has, and have no more need of them.
- (5) **the divine eye**      Through his supreme mental focus, the arhat is able to see with eyes closed: he sees with the mind’s eye well beyond the range of physical sight. This is a heightened form of mind-reading which him, as it were, to look at the past-life recordings of others, so that he is able to explain their present state and spiritual potentiality.
- (6) **the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava*)**      This “direct knowledge” is the most important of the 6 superknowledges, as it what really liberates him, making him an arhat. His wisdom has revealed the true nature of the 6 *senses* so that he is no moved by like and dislike. His vision of time and space makes him fully understand the nature of *existence*. Fully understanding not-self, he is finally free from *ignorance*, and has no need of *views*. With all this, he goes beyond all limitations, worldly and divine.

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<sup>275</sup> Cf Peter Harvey 1995: 173.

## 7.5 MIRACLES THEMSELVES ARE *NOT* A MARK OF SPIRITUALITY.

**7.5.1 Two kinds of psychic powers.** Sāriputta, in his long encomium [praise] of the Buddha, speaks of two kinds of psychic powers (*iddhi*), that is, the ignoble (*anariya*) and the noble (*ariya*), thus:

Furthermore, bhante, unsurpassable is the Dharma that the Blessed One teaches concerning **the manifold psychic powers**. Bhante, there are these two psychic powers:

There is, bhante, the psychic power of one with mental influxes, with birth-basis [attachment], that is called ignoble [unarya], and there is, bhante, the psychic power of one without mental influxes, without birth-basis, that is called noble [arya].

(1) And what, bhante, is **the psychic power accompanied by mental influxes**, accompanied by birth-basis, that is called “ignoble [unarya]”?<sup>276</sup>

Here, bhante, some recluse or brahmin, by means of ardour, by means of effort, by means of devotion, by means of heedfulness, by means of right attention, he directs and inclines it towards the manifold psychic powers.<sup>277</sup>

Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.

He appears, and vanishes.

He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.

He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.

He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.

Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.

With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful.

He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world.

This, bhante, is the psychic power accompanied by mental influxes, accompanied by birth-basis, that is called “ignoble [unarya].”

(2) And what, bhante, is **the psychic power that is influx-free**, without birth-basis, that is called “noble [arya]”?<sup>278</sup>

a. Here, bhante, if a monk wishes, “Let me dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,”<sup>279</sup> so he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive.

b. If he wishes, “Let me dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,”<sup>280</sup> [113] so he dwells perceiving the repulsive.

c. Here, bhante, if a monk wishes, “Let me dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and in the unrepulsive,”<sup>281</sup> so he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive.

<sup>276</sup> *Katamā ca bhante iddhi s’āsavā sa, upadhikā no ariyā ti.*

<sup>277</sup> *Iddhi, vidhā.* Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.5 @ SD 1.7) where the Buddha disapproves of exhibiting such powers.

<sup>278</sup> *Katamā ca bhante iddhi anāsavā nirupadhikā ariyā ti.*

<sup>279</sup> *Paṭikūle appaṭikūla, saññī vihareyya*, Walshe’s tr: “Let me abide with the disgusting not feeling disgust” (D:W 424). According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, here one should do so with the thought: “May no hate arise in me towards objects that arouse hate.” (Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f). In the case of a disagreeable object (eg a hostile person), he either pervades it with lovingkindness or regards it as physical elements. For example, he reflects: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin...?” (Vism 9.38/306). See **Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 @ SD 10.11) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 @ SD 2.12).

<sup>280</sup> *Appaṭikūle paṭikūla, saññī vihareyya*. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, here one should do so with the thought: “May no lust arise in me towards objects that arouse lust.” (Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f). In the case of a disagreeable object (eg a hostile person), he either pervades it with lovingkindness or regards it as physical elements. For example, in the case of a repulsive object, he reflects: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin...?” (Vism 9.38/306). See **Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 @ SD 10.11) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 @ SD 2.12).



d. Here, bhante, if a monk wishes, “Let me dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and in the repulsive,”<sup>282</sup> so he dwells perceiving the repulsive.

e. Here, bhante, if a monk wishes, “Let me, rejecting both the repulsive and the unrepulsive, dwell equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending,”<sup>283</sup> so he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending.

This, bhante, is the psychic power without mental influxes, without birth-basis, that is called “noble [arya].”

With regards to the various psychic powers, bhante, this is unsurpassable.

This the Blessed One knows without exception [entirely]. The Blessed One has directly known this without exception, and beyond this, there is nothing more to be known. In this direct knowing, there is no other recluse or brahmin who is great or wiser (in direct knowledge) regarding the manifold psychic powers. (D 28,18/3:112 f), SD 14.14

The sentiment here is that psychic display (*iddhi pāṭihāriya*) of any kind is not a mark of spirituality or spiritual awakening, especially where the performer is not an awakened being. An external display of power does not necessarily and truly reflect the performer’s spiritual state. Here, Sāriputta refers to the five perceptions (*saññā*) of the saints, here specially in reference to the nature of the arhat’s mind, as truly spiritual miracles because they attest to the nature of the awakened mind.

**7.5.2 The Buddha’s attitude towards psychic powers.** It is not the psychic powers that make the saint, but rather through the arhat’s saintliness, his wisdom and conduct are best described in worldly terms as being *miraculous* in themselves. It is not the tools, even the finest, that makes the craftsman, but it is the *craftsmanship* that knows how to use even the simplest or crudest tools to create beautiful and wondrous marvels. In themselves, these magical tools are useless and meaningless to the great saints, the arhats: they have no need of them, and might even disapprove of them, since they have the potential of creating misunderstanding. It is like a very wealthy heir who lives a simple happy life, knowing that to show his wealth would only attract the wrong people and troubling circumstances.

Midway through **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), the Buddha express to Kevaḍḍha his disapproval of miracles or psychic wonders (*pāṭihāriya*), especially the miracle of psychic power (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*) [D 11.4-5] and of mind-reading (*ādesana, pāṭihāriya*) [D 11,6-7]. In fact, the Buddha disapproves of them in the strongest terms, using the well known stock phrase or formula, “I am pained, ashamed, disgusted” (*aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi*).<sup>284</sup> Although this is the only time in the Suttas that we find the Buddha

<sup>281</sup> *Paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūla, saññī vihareyya*. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, here one should do so with the thought:] ‘May no hate arise in me towards objects that arouse hate, and may no lust arise in me towards objects that arouse lust.’ (Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f). In other words, he pervades both agreeable and disagreeable objects with the thought of lovingkindness or regards them as physical elements; thus he perceives both as unrepulsive. See **Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 @ SD 10.11) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 @ SD 2.12).

<sup>282</sup> *Appaṭikūle ca paṭikūle ca paṭikūla, saññī vihareyya*. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, here one should do so with the thought:] ‘May no lust arise in me towards objects that arouse lust, and may no hate arise in me towards objects that arouse hate.’ (Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f). In other words, he regards form as only form, sound as only sound, smell as only smell, taste as only taste, touch as only touch, thought as only thought; he is neither glad nor sad, but abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending. See **Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 @ SD 10.11) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 @ SD 2.12).

<sup>283</sup> *Paṭikūle appaṭikūla, saññī vihareyya*, Walshe’s tr: “Let me abide with the disgusting not feeling disgust” (D:W). According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, here one should do so with the thought:] ‘May no hate arise in me towards objects that arouse hate.’ (Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f). [In the case of an agreeable object (eg a sensually attractive person), he either pervades it with the thought of foulness or regards it as impermanent.] For an example of this method, see Vism 9.38/306: “What am I angry with: his head hair, body hair...?” See **Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:119 @ SD 10.11) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144/3:169 @ SD 2.12).

<sup>284</sup> D 28.5+7. MA glosses *aṭṭiyitabbam* as *aṭṭena pīḷitena bhavitabbam*, “one should be distressed, (feel) harassed”; *harāyitabbam* = *lajjitabbam*, “one should be ashamed”; *jigucchitabbam* = *gūṭham disvā viya jigucchā uppād-*

doing so in *these words*,<sup>285</sup> elsewhere we see him making similar unequivocal disapproval, as in the case of **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja**.<sup>286</sup>

In the Kevaḍḍha Sutta, the Buddha first defines the miracle [D 11,4. 6], and goes on to mention the reaction of one with faith and one without faith regarding it. The one who has faith in the miracle speaks of it to an unbeliever, who is unimpressed, for he claims that in the case of the miracle of psychic power (or thaumaturgy), he knows of the Gandhārī charm<sup>287</sup> [D 11,5], and in the case of mind-reading, he knows of the Maṇika charm<sup>288</sup> [D 11,7].

**7.5.3 Spirituality and miracles.** In a contemporary or a futuristic scenario, this can be explained in this way. The unbeliever sees no special merit in *the talk of psychic power* because it could be done with, say, holographic images, airplanes, antigravity devices, etc; nor any the merit in *the talk of mind-reading* because this could be done by mind-imaging machine.<sup>289</sup> Or, as **Luis O Gomez** puts it: “they are not the exclusive property of the enlightened, or other people could come into possession of these powers by other means, such as the magical arts of Gandhāra (*gandhārī nāma vijjā*)” (1977:221). It should also be added that, as pointed in **the Susīma Sutta** (S 12.70), there are also arhats who do *not* possess any psychic power,<sup>290</sup> and that their spiritual status is in no way inferior to any other arhat.

From all that has been said here, we must conclude that in Buddhism, in early Buddhism for sure, miracles are regarded as *a by-product* of religious attainment and not as a mark of it. The miraculous is simply a wondrous event, but no matter how wondrous, it is no mark of true spirituality. When used with care and wisdom, miraculous display can enhance a teaching or even change lives for the better. Indeed, the greatest miracle—indeed, we might even say, the only true miracle—is that of instruction, that is, the miracle of *education*.

## 8 The highest miracle: education

**8.1 KEVAḌḌHA.** **The Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11) opens with the houselord of Nālandā, Kevaḍḍha, thrice requesting the Buddha to invite some monk to perform a psychic display (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*) of the superhuman state (*uttari, manussa, dhamma*)<sup>291</sup> so that more people would be attracted to the Buddha’s Teaching. After twice refusing the request, on the third request, the Buddha says that a person “of faith

*etabbā*, “one should arouse disgust (in oneself) as if looking at excrement” (MA 3:129). Elsewhere the 3rd person stock phrase, *aṭṭiyati harāyati jigucchati*, is more common: A 1:145; M 1:423 = A 4:374; M 3:300; A 4:435, 5:111 (by all formations); J 2:143, 5:280; V 1:87, 88, 3:68. *Aṭṭiyati* (“he is sickened, disgusted, worried, bored, or incomed (with)”) is denom of *aṭṭa* (Skt *ārta*), “hurt, afflicted, tormented, desperate (Sn 694). *Harāyati* is denom of *hiri* (moral shame). *Jigucchati* (Skt *jugutsati*) (he shuns, avoids, loathes, detests, is revulsed at, disgusted with, horrified at) is desid or redupl of √GUP, “to protect.” A *denominative* is a noun or a verb derived from a noun or adjective, eg “man” (a fleet) or “localize.” See Intro (3) above & *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1.

<sup>285</sup> The stock *aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi*, however, is also found in **Vuṭṭha S** (A 9.11.4/4:377, spoken by a certain monk). The form *aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi* is found in **Vijayā S** (S 5.4/530\*/1:31), **Khemā Thī** (Thī 140), and **Khalātya Pv** (Pv 1.10.2/8).

<sup>286</sup> See **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127/4:110-113), SD 27.6; also Cv 5.8 = V 2:110 f.

<sup>287</sup> The Gandhārī charm, *Gandhārī nāma vijjā*. The Jātaka mentions this charm as especially efficacious for making one invisible (J 4:498 f).

<sup>288</sup> The Maṇika charm is identified by DA as the *Cinta, maṇī vijjā*, ie the charm of the wish-fulfilling gem, which, however, according to **Jātaka** is efficacious for following up trails or tracing footsteps (J 3:504).

<sup>289</sup> On various forms of mind-imaging machines, see SD 17.8c(6.7).

<sup>290</sup> S 12.70/2:119-128 @ SD 15.8.

<sup>291</sup> The term *uttari, manussa, dhamma* is not restricted to the multifarious psychic powers. At **V 3:87** it refers to the 4 dhyanas, streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning, arhatness, and the 6 superknowledges (*abhiññā*); at **V 3:91** it refers to dhyana, liberation (*vimokkha*), samadhi, the attainments (*samāpatti*), knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa, dassana*), cultivation of the path (*magga, bhāvanā*), realization of fruition (*phala, sacchikiriyā*), the mind’s freedom from hindrances (*vinīvaranātā cittassa*), and delighting in empty dwelling (*suññāgāre abhirati*). (Gethin 2001:99 n75)

and devotion” (*saddho pasanno*) might witness a monk endowed with the eight psychic powers, and then he relates it to someone who lacks faith and devotion (*asaddho apassano*).

While the former may be inspired with faith, the latter remains unimpressed, declaring that such psychic wonders could be performed through some kind of mantras. After confirming with Kevaddha that he agrees with this, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he is “pained, ashamed, disgusted” with such psychic displays [7.2].

As in **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60), the Buddha goes on to explain the three kinds of miracles—the multifarious psychic power, mind-reading and instruction—and declares the last, the miracle of instruction, to be the greatest miracle. The tone of both the discourses is clear: the Buddha is not condemning all psychic powers (after all, they exist and arise as a result of the fourth dhyana). He disapproves of a public display of such powers, especially before the laity. As **Gethin** puts it,

Simply this: the display of miraculous *iddhi* as a rule achieves nothing worthwhile. The man already of confidence and trust sees it as wonderful (and is perhaps impressed for the wrong reasons), while the man without such confidence mistrusts it and sees it as a trick with no deeper significance. (2001: 100)

Gethin goes on to note that in our own time, reaction to the “paranormal” is not very different: the faithful tend to point enthusiastically to various people and incidents, while the skeptics, maintaining that trickery or self-deceit has been involved, doggedly seek out “rational” explanations. (ib n85).

**8.2 THE 3 KINDS OF MIRACLES.** One of the most instructive discourses on the place of miracles in early Buddhism is **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60). The Sutta opens with the brahmin Saṅgārava meeting the Buddha and claiming that brahmins benefit the masses more by getting them to perform meritorious deeds, but becoming a monk, one only benefits it alone.

The Buddha replies that the Tathagata arises in the world for the benefit of the masses, teaching others the liberating truth that he himself has discovered, benefitting countless people. Saṅgārava is unable to retort, and so remains silent. The Buddha then changes the subject and asks about what talk is going on in the palace, and Saṅgārava replies

The topic of conversation is this, Master Gotama: “Formerly there were fewer monks but there were more who performed miracles; but now there are more monks, but fewer who perform miracles.” (A 1:170)

The Buddha replies by speaking on the three miracles (*pāṭihāriyā*):

- (1) multifarious psychic powers (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*),
- (2) mind-reading (*ādesanā, pāṭihāriya*), and
- (3) instruction (*anusāsani, pāṭihāriya*). (A 3.60,4-6/1:171), SD 16.10

Here the Buddha gives a more detailed account of the second miracle (mind-reading) than in **the Kevaddha Sutta** (D 13) [8.1]. This is especially interesting because it explains how “someone with faith”<sup>292</sup> and

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<sup>292</sup> “Faith,” *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p, pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlika* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence

devotion<sup>293</sup> is able to be an informed eye-witness of such a mind-searching psychic display by another, that is,

- (1) by means of a sign (*nimitta*);
- (2) by hearing the voices of humans, non-humans or devas;
- (3) by listening to the sounds of a person's thought-vibrations<sup>294</sup> (*vitakka, vipphāra, sadda*);
- (4) by mentally penetrating the direction of his mental dispositions when he is in a thought-free state of meditation.

All these have been explained elsewhere [5.3.1].

Let us look at Saṅgārava's second question again: Why is that "Formerly there were fewer monks but there were more who performed miracles; but now there are more monks, but fewer who perform miracles"? The Buddha's answer reflects a shift in missiological method: now there is the emphasis on *instruction*. Let me venture to add that in the past, there were more occasions for psychic wonders because less people understood the teaching proper, unlike now. Moreover, there are now rules prohibiting psychic displays. [7.2]

Anyway, Saṅgārava himself agrees with the Buddha that the best of miracles is that of instruction (*anusāsani pāṭihāriya*) [7.1]. This is supported by a very significant point that Saṅgārava raises in relation to the multifarious psychic powers and mind-reading:

[Such a] miracle, master Gotama, only the one who performs it, experiences it: it belongs only to the one who performs it. Indeed, master Gotama, this miracle seems like it is related to the false dharma of illusion. (A 3.60,6/1:172), SD 16.10

At the end of the exposition, Saṅgārava takes refuge in the 3 jewels for life.

**8.3 THE GREATEST MIRACLE.** A canonical explanation of the Buddha's miracle of instruction is given in **the Acchariya Sutta 2** (A 4.128), where it is said, after listening to the Buddha's teachings,

- (1) those attached to the world let go of their worldly attachments (*ālaya*);
- (2) the conceited let go of their conceit (*māna*);
- (3) those not delighting in peace (*anupasama, rata*) turn to peace;
- (4) those with ignorance destroy their ignorance (*avijjā*). (A 4.128/2:131 f)

The Aṅguttara Commentary on the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta further explain the miracle of instruction, thus: "You should think thoughts of renunciation, not thoughts of sensuality. You should practise the perception of impermanence, not the perception of permanence. You should give up desire for the 5 cords of sensual pleasure and acquire the supramundane Dharma of the four paths and fruits." (AA 2:271)

Let us reflect once again on the greatest of miracles, as stated in the Kevaddha Sutta (D 11) and the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta (A 3.60):

And what, brahmin, is **the miracle of instruction** (*anusāsani, pāṭihāriya*)?

Here, brahmin, a certain person instructs thus:

"You should think in this way, not think in that way.

Direct your attention to this, not to that.

Let go of this; dwell, cultivating that."<sup>295</sup>

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towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary." (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

<sup>293</sup> D 11.4, 6/1:212 f @ SD 1.7.

<sup>294</sup> Bodhi's tr. Also known as *clairsentience* [5.3.2].

This, brahmin, is called the miracle of instruction.

(D 11,8/1:214), SD 1.7; (A 3.60,6.3/1:172), SD 16.10

## 8.4 MIRACLES OF INSTRUCTION

**8.4.1 Dynamics of the miracle of instruction.** The Buddha is the ultimate miracle-worker, but his “miracle” is neither a show of religious power nor glory. In fact, even if we discount or omit all the miracles of Buddhist scripture, the Buddha’s teaching is not diminished in any negative way. Indeed, the teaching would stand as a paralleled “miracle” all its own—that of the miracle of *instruction*, of personal conversion, of a movement from ignorance to liberating wisdom, from evil to good.

The essence of Buddhist miracle is *neither* in its show of external wonder *nor* in that it subjugates others. It does not set aside the miracle worker aside from others. For, in the ultimate analysis, there is *no* performer, no miracle worker, but only the miracle. What this means is that everyone of us can empower ourselves to look into our own radiant stillness within. Sometimes this happens with help of another, or more correctly, we experience compassion and wisdom in action, and we acknowledge them.

The Buddha’s teaching reminds us that we can free ourselves from sin and suffering. We can even say that there are no sin and suffering, but our ideas and beliefs about them. When we hold wrong views about them, we bring on suffering; when he see with right view, we are free. The fact remains that only we can help ourselves; for, no one else can (Dh 160).

Self-reliance means allowing ourselves to learn; self-learning is self-empowering. When we allow ourselves to learn, what do we really see? We see change: everything changes. We can easily notice external or physical change, but some effort is needed to see internal or mental change. One of the most important vision of change is simply: *we can change for the better*. This change occurs as a movement towards true reality, a quantum leap into liberation. Let us briefly examine two timeless examples of such a change.

**8.4.2 The miracle of Kisā Gotamī’s instruction.** Kisā Gotamī’s concern for her status in a society that places a premium in a woman looking healthy and beautiful, and being fruitful, is devastated when her only child dies. She falls into psychological denial of her loss, and wanders about seeking a cure for her dead child. At this point, let us examine an interesting religious possibility: suppose she meets the Buddha (or any miracle worker) who brings her dead baby back to life. She gains faith in the Buddha, glorifies him, and everything is status quo.

There is the biblical legend of Lazarus of Bethany who had died and was brought back to life by Jesus<sup>296</sup>—but it remains that *he must nevertheless die all over again!* One dead resuscitated does not change the universality of death. Two thousand years before Jesus, the Buddha teaches Kisā Gotamī the ultimate lesson in life and death.

When Kisā Gotamī beseeches the Buddha to revive her dead child, the Buddha instructs her to fetch him a handful of mustard seeds, but *it must come from a house where no one had died*. As she goes from house to house throughout the city, the message of impermanence and death is echoed and re-echoed into her being. At the end of her Sisyphean search, physically exhausted but spiritual awakened, her unconscious defence of denial is raised into consciousness, so that she becomes aware of the true state of things: death is universal.

She goes into the forest and leaves her dead baby in the charnel ground, and returns to the only person who has opened her eyes to true reality. She requests to go forth, and is received as a nun, who in due course becomes an arhat.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> *Evam vitakketha, mā evam vitakkayittha; evam manasi karotha, mā evam manasākattha; idam pajahatha, idam upasampajja viharathā’ ti.*

<sup>296</sup> John 11.41-44.

<sup>297</sup> See **Kisā Gotamī**, SD 43.2 & **Skillful Means**, SD 30.8 (3.4.1).

### **8.4.3 The miracle of Aṅgulimāla's instruction**

**8.4.3.1** In spiritual terms, the Buddha greatest miracle is his conversion of the serial killer, Aṅgulimāla, who is rabidly seeking for his last victim who finger he needs to complete his garland of 1000 fingers. He is ready to kill anyone, even his own mother, for that end. Yet in the darkest night, the brightest dawn awaits: the Buddha, seeing Aṅgulimāla's spiritual potentiality, approaches him despite dire warnings by villagers against going into the forest where Aṅgulimāla lurks.

Once inside the forest, the Buddha could have well stood in wait for the murderous Aṅgulimāla, for Aṅgulimāla is well acquainted with every part of it. Once he sees the Buddha, he prepares to attack him. But no matter how hard he tries, the Buddha is simply some distance ahead. Legend has it that the Buddha makes the earth turn around so that Aṅgulimāla is always behind the Buddha no matter how fast he runs.

**8.4.3.2** Finally, like Kisā Gotamī at the end of her *Sisyphian walk* [8.4.2], Aṅgulimāla after failing to catch up with the Buddha, at the end of his *Sisyphian run*, tires and stops. His will is broken; the old self is weakened. Almost in desperation, he calls out to the Buddha to stop. The Buddha replies with the ego-shattering words, "I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla! You stop, too!"

Fascinated by the vaguely familiar words, Aṅgulimāla asks the Buddha to explain them, the Buddha does so. Before this, Aṅgulimāla is still under the spell of his foolish guru's presence in the dark depths of his mind. The Buddha's instruction effectively liberates him from the guru's ghost. He is now free to be his true self, a true individual, a free being. [7.1]

**8.4.3.3** The spiritual significance of Aṅgulimāla's conversion is in no way diminished—indeed even enhanced—without the miraculous aspects, as noted by the German scholar monk, **Analayo**:

In fact, one might even imagine the whole scene without any magical feat, since the Buddha's refusal to obey the brigand's obey to stand still, and his fearless rebuttal, "I have stopped, you to stop too!", would fit in well at such a juncture and be sufficient to account for the subsequent denouement of events. (Analayo, 2008: 143)

**8.4.3.4** Analayo admits that "[t]hrough the miracle might have been introduced into the account of Aṅgulimāla's conversion at a time early enough to be present in all versions, this remains evidently hypothetical, given all versions state that a miracle took place." (id). However, he adds an interesting and important note: All the versions agree that what really change Aṅgulimāla are the words spoken by the Buddha,

since after the miracle he just commands the Buddha to stop, whereas after the words spoken by the Buddha he throws away his weapons and asks to be accepted as a monk. Moreover, after the magical feat, Aṅgulimāla still addresses the Buddha as "recluse,"<sup>298</sup> a mode of address used in the early discourses by outsiders that have no particular relation to or confidence in the Buddha. After the words spoken by the Buddha, however, a change of attitude takes place, as he refers to the Buddha as "Sage," "Blessed One" or "Venerable One."<sup>299</sup> These epithets express Aṅgulimāla's

<sup>298</sup> W Stede, "Aṅgulimāla and liberation," BSOAS 20, 1957: 34, however, feels that "there can be little doubt that the account is true and that the miracle actually happened."

<sup>299</sup> SĀ 1077 = T2.280c29: 沙門; SĀ2 16 = T2.378b27: 沙門; M 86/2:99,17 and Th 866: *samaṇa*; T118 = T2.509b2: 沙門; T119 = T2.510c26: 沙門; EĀ 38.6 = T2.720a18: 沙門; T212 = T4.703c15: 沙門. N Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay, 1966: 56 explains that the use of the address *samaṇa* here "denotes a certain indifference." (Analayo's fn, normalized)

appreciation of the wisdom underlying the Buddha’s explanation and probably also his respect for the Buddha’s fearless response when commanded to stand still by an armed brigand.<sup>300</sup>

(Analayo 2008: 143 f)

**8.4.3.5** A vital theme that runs through all versions of these Kisā Gotamī stories is her *walk* in search of a handful of mustard seeds that would revive her dead son. This action represents a spiritual movement away from her old suffering self towards a new free self. We see a similar movement in the Buddha’s conversion of Aṅgulimāla, where he *runs* after the Buddha to kill him, but he could not catch up with the Buddha until he *calls* out to the Buddha. The ensuing dialogue marks the spiritual turning-point in Aṅgulimāla’s life.<sup>301</sup>

**8.5 READ YOUR OWN MIND FIRST!** How do we work our own miracles? One of the simplest statements on miracles, and yet the most practical, is found in **the Satthā Sacitta Sutta** (A 10.51). The discourse opens with the Buddha’s invitation:

Bhikshus, if a monk is not skilled in knowing another’s mind, then he should cultivate the skill in knowing his own mind. This is how you should train yourself. (A 10.51/5:92), SD 5.13

Here, as Buddhaghosa reminds us, the vocative “monk” refers to the meditator.<sup>302</sup> And how should we the meditator or practitioner, cultivate the skill in knowing his own mind?

- 4** If, bhikshus, on reflecting, a monk knows thus:
- |                        |                                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I dwell with           | much covetousness;                    |
| I dwell with           | much ill will in mind;                |
| I dwell in the grip of | much sloth and torpor;                |
| I dwell with much      | anger;                                |
| I dwell with           | a very defiled mind;                  |
| I dwell with           | a very agitated body;                 |
| I dwell                | very often lazy;                      |
| I dwell                | very often lacking in concentration”— |

then, bhikshus, that monk should apply his utmost will, effort, energy, and unrelenting mindfulness and clear comprehension, to the abandoning of the evil unskillful states.

Bhikshus, it is just as if a man whose clothes or head were on fire<sup>303</sup> would apply his utmost will, effort, energy, and unrelenting mindfulness and clear comprehension, so that the fire on his clothes or turban would be extinguished.

Even so, bhikshus, that monk should apply his utmost will, effort, energy, and unrelenting mindfulness and clear comprehension, to the abandoning of the evil unskillful states. [94]

- 5** However, bhikshus, if a monk, on reflecting, knows thus:
- |                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| I dwell very often | without covetousness;       |
| I dwell very often | without ill will;           |
| I dwell very often | free from sloth and torpor; |
| I dwell very often | without restlessness;       |

<sup>300</sup> SĀ 1077 = T2.281a16: “Sage,” 牟尼; SĀ2 16 = T2. 378c15: “such a man,” 如此人 and “Blessed One,” 婆伽婆; M 86/2:100,1 and Tha 868: “Venerated Sage,” *mahesi*; T118 = T2.509b13: “Great Sage,” 大聖; EĀ 38.6 = T2.-720b16: “Venerable One,” 尊; and T212 = T4.704a6: “Great Sage,” 大聖. (Analayo’s fn, normalized).

<sup>301</sup> **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86.5/2:98 f), SD 5.11.

<sup>302</sup> Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (DA 3:756; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 11; M 22) = Intro §3.1a.

<sup>303</sup> This is a popular parable of the blazing head (*āditta,sīsa*): **Samādhi S 2** (A 4.93/2:93), SD 95.8; **Maraṇa-sati S 2** (A 6.20/3:307, 308); **Maraṇa-s-sati S 2** (A 8.74/320 f), SD 48.6; (**Satthā**) **Sa,citta S** (A 10.51,4/2/5:93), SD 5.13; (**Sa,citta**) **Sariputta S** (A 10.51/5:95) = A 10.51; **Samatha S** (A 10.54/5:99 f), SD 83.8; **Parihāna S** (A 10.5,7.2/5:103+8.2/5:105), SD 43.5.

I dwell very often	free from doubt;
I dwell very often	without anger;
I dwell very often	without a defiled mind;
I dwell very often	without an agitated body;
I dwell very often	exerting myself;
I dwell very often	concentrated in mind’—

then, bhikkhus, grounding<sup>304</sup> himself on these wholesome states, he should further devote himself to the destruction of the mental influxes.<sup>305</sup> (A 10.51.4-5/5:93 f), SD 5.13

This is how we know our own mind, even if we are unable to read the minds of others. In doing so, we begin to look deeper into true reality, and attain spiritual liberation.

**8.6 THE SUPREME WORSHIP.** Now we come to the Buddha’s last word on miracles and psychic wonders. One of the Buddha’s most important statements on miracles and psychic wonders is made in his last days, as recorded in the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16). Due to its importance, the passage is reproduced in full here:

**5.3** Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda:

“Ānanda, the twin sal trees are bursting forth with full blossom and fruit, albeit untimely, the blossoms falling on the Tathagata’s body, showering down upon it, covering it up, in homage to the Tathagata.

Heavenly mandārava [coral tree] flowers are falling from the sky, heavenly sandalwood powder are falling from the sky, showering down upon the Tathagata’s body, covering it up, in homage to the Tathagata.

Heavenly music is resounding through the sky in homage to the Tathagata. Heavenly songs are wafting through the sky in homage to the Tathagata.<sup>306</sup>

**5.3.2** But, Ānanda, this is not the way to honour, respect, revere, worship, or esteem the Tathagata.<sup>307</sup> Ānanda, whatever monk, nun, layman or laywoman<sup>308</sup> practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, properly practising, living in accordance with Dharma, he honours the Tathagata, respects him, reveres him, worships him with **the supreme worship**.<sup>309</sup> Therefore, Ānanda, consider thus:

<sup>304</sup> “Grounding,” *patiṭṭhita*, lit “established.” Here I follow Bhikkhu Bodhi.

<sup>305</sup> “Mental influxes,” *āsava*: see (5.6)(99a)n.

<sup>306</sup> *Sabba,phāliḥullā kho Ānanda yamaka,sālā akāla,pupphēhi Tathāgatassa sarīram okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti Tathāgatassa pūjāya. Dibbāni pi mandārava,pupphāni antalikkhā papanti, tāni Tathāgatassa sarīram okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti Tathāgatassa pūjāya, dibbāni pi candana,cuṇṇāni antalikkhā papanti, tāni Tathāgatassa sarīram okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti Tathāgatassa pūjāya. Dibbāni pi turiyāni antalikkhe vajjenti Tathāgatassa pūjāya. Dibbāni pi saṅgūtāni antalikkhe vajjenti Tathāgatassa pūjāya.* This identical passage [§5.3a] appears in the previous para [§5.2], but I have rendered it here differently according to English idiom. The versatility of Pali syntax in terms of tense (both using the historical present) is evident here, but not reflected in the English tr

<sup>307</sup> See **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35), where the arhat is said to do all this by declaring that the Buddha is “awakened...; mentally tamed...; stilled...; crossed over...; quenched...” and “teaches the Dharma” for the same of these (M 35.26b/1:235), SD 26.5.

<sup>308</sup> Note here that this important exhortation on the “supreme worship” is addressed to all the four companies (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen). However, there is evidence of a monastic-lay distinction here in Buddhaghosa’s commentary: see SD 9 (7b).

<sup>309</sup> “**Supreme worship**,” *paramā pūjā*, alt tr “highest homage,” ie the highest puja: see **Intro (7b)** above. On the story of Dhamm’ārāma, see **Intro (14)**. Cf **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35), where in a similar connection, the arhat is said to accomplished in the 3 supremacies (*anuttariya*) (M 35.26b/1:235), SD 26.5.



‘We will practise the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, properly practising, dwelling in accordance with the Dharma!’—this is how you should train yourself.”<sup>310</sup>

(D 16,5.3/2:138), SD 9

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## 9 Appendix

# Knowledge of the mind-made body and the 6 superknowledges

Source: The Sāmañña,phala Sutta (D 2,87-100/1:78-83), SD 8.10

[See 7.4 for short list; for details, see SD references given at each heading below]

### Knowledge of the mind-made body [SD 27.5a (6.3)]

**87** With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, he directs and inclines it to creating a **mind-made body**. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, mind-made, complete in all its parts, without defect in any faculty.

**88** Maharajah, just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath, the thought would occur to him: ‘This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.’

Or, maharajah, as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would occur to him: ‘This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.’

Or, maharajah, as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough. The thought would occur to him: ‘This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough’;

Even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, from this body he creates another body, endowed with form, mind-made, complete in all its parts, without defect in any faculty.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

## KNOWLEDGE OF THE MODES OF SUPERNORMAL POWER

*Mundane superknowledge* [§89-98]

### (1) PSYCHIC POWERS: [SD 27.5a (5.1)]

**89** With his mind thus *concentrated*, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, he directs and inclines it to [78] the manifold psychic power.

- (1) Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.
- (2) He appears, and vanishes.
- (3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.
- (4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.
- (5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.
- (6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.

<sup>310</sup> *Tasmāt ih’ Ānanda dhammānudhamma,paṭipannā viharissāma samīci,paṭipannā anudhamma,cārinō ti, evaṃ hi vo Ānanda sikkhitabban ti.* Comy’s explanations of the key words here, see SD 9 (7b).

(7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.

(8) He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world.

**90** Maharajah, just as a skilled potter or his assistant could craft from well-prepared clay whatever kind of pottery vessel he likes, or, maharajah, as a skilled ivory-carver or his assistant could craft from well-prepared ivory any kind of ivory-work he likes, or, maharajah, as a skilled goldsmith or his assistant could craft from well-prepared gold any kind of gold article he likes—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world. [79]

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

**(2) CLAIRAUDIENCE (DIVINE EAR): [SD 27.5a (5.2)]**

**91** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he hears, by means of the divine-ear element, purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

**92** Maharajah, just as if a man travelling along a highway were to hear the sounds of bheri [conical drum], mridanga [tom-tom], conch-shell, cymbals, and dindima [small drum], he would know,

‘That is bheri sound; that is mridanga sound; that is conch sound; that is cymbal sound; that is dindima sound’—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he hears, by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

**(3) MIND-READING: [SD 27.5a (5.3)]**

**93** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of mind-reading. He knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind.

*He knows a mind with lust as a mind with lust,*

*and a mind without lust as a mind without lust. [80]*

*He knows a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,*

*and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion.*

*He knows a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,*

*and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion.*

*He knows a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,*

*and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and worry] as a distracted mind.*

*He knows 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.*

*He knows a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,*

*and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind.*

*He knows a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,*

*and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind.*

*He knows a released mind as a released mind,*

*and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.*

**94** Maharajah, just as if a **young man or woman, fond of ornaments**, examining the reflection of his or her own face in a bright mirror or a bowl of clear water would know ‘blemished’ if it were blemished, or ‘unblemished’ if it were not—even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind. He knows a mind with lust... without lust;... with aversion... without aversion; ... with delusion... without delusion; a contracted mind, a distracted mind; an exalted mind, an unexalted mind; a surpassable mind, an unsurpassable mind; a concentrated mind, an unconcentrated mind; a released mind, an unreleased mind—*he knows each of them just as it is. [81]*

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

**(4) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES: [SD 27.5a (5.4)]**

**95** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the recollection of past lives. He recollects his 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 joy 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 joy and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’

Thus, maharajah, he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details.

**96** PARABLE OF THE TRAVELLER. Just as if a man were to go from his home village to another village, and then from that village to yet another village, and then from that village back to his home village. The thought would occur to him,

‘I went from my home village to that village over there. There I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I went to that village over there, and there I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I came back home’; **[82]**

Even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he recollects his manifold past lives...in their modes and details.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

**(5) THE KNOWLEDGE OF DEATH AND BIRTH (THE DIVINE EYE): [SD 27.5a (5.5)]**

**97** With his mind thus *concentrated*, he directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings. He sees—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance], 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 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, with the body’s breaking up, have re-arisen 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, with the body’s breaking up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

Thus, maharajah, by means of the divine eye, **[83]** he sees beings passing away and re-arising, and *how they fare according to* their karma.

**98** PARABLE OF THE CITY SQUARE. Maharajah, just as if there were a mansion in the central square [where four roads meet], and a man with good eyesight standing on top of it were to see people entering a house, leaving it, wandering along the carriage-road, and sitting down in the central square [where four roads meet]. The thought would occur to him,

‘These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting down in the central square [where four roads meet].’

Even so, maharajah, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he sees by means of the divine eye, how beings *fare in accordance* with their karma.

This, too, maharajah, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

## SUPRAMUNDANE DIRECT KNOWLEDGE

**(6) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF MENTAL INFLUXES [SD 27.5a (5.6)]**

**99** With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes.

<b>99.2</b> He knows, as it is really is,	‘This is suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘These are mental influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of influxes.’

**99.3** His mind, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the influx of sensual desire, the influx of existence, the influx of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released (am I)!’ He knows that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life has been lived, done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’

**100** Maharajah, just as if there were **a pool of water in a mountain glen**, clear, limpid, unsullied, where, a person with good eyes, from its edge, would see shellfish and shells, or gravel and pebbles, or shoals of fish moving about or resting in it, and it would occur to him,

‘This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting’—even so, with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and utterly unshakable, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental influxes,

He knows, as it is really is,	‘This is suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of suffering’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘These are mental influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the arising of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the ending of influxes’;
he knows, as it really is,	‘This is the path to the ending of influxes.’

His mind, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the influx of sensual desire, the influx of existence, the influx of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released (am I)!’ He knows that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life has been lived, done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’

— evam —

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