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(Māra) Samiddhi Sutta

The Discourse on Samiddhi (and Māra) | S 4.22/1:119 f

Theme: Māra is overcome by knowledge

Translated by Piya Tan ©2011

1 The elder Samiddhi

Samiddhi belongs to a householder family of Rājagaha. The Commentaries say that he is called Samiddhi because of his excellent, superbly handsome and pleasing personality.¹ From the time of his birth, his family prospers, and he is himself very handsome, happy, and good (ThaA 1:125); hence, his name, Samiddhi (Skt *samṛddhi*), meaning “great prosperity or success, growth, increase, thriving, welfare, good fortune, perfection, excellence.”

According to the Thera, gāthā Commentary, Samiddhi is present at the meeting between the Buddha and rajah Bimbisāra.² He is so inspired by seeing the Buddha’s majesty in the company of Bimbisāra (*bimbisāra, samāgame buddhānubhavam disvā*) that faith arises in him and he joins the order (ThaA 1:125). As a young monk, Samiddhi appears to be naïve at times, but is invariably a good example of a true practitioner.

The (Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta (S 1.20) relates how a devata, seeing the young handsome monk Samiddhi drying himself after a bath in the dawn light, falls in love with him, and tries to seduce him with a clever wordplay (SA 1:39 f). Samiddhi not only successfully resists the temptation, but invites her to meet the Buddha, who then admonishes her.³ The Sāmyutta Commentary says that this is a female devata or nymph (*deva, dhītā*), an earth-bound deity (*bhumma, devatā*), residing in the grove (SA 1:39 f).

The Samiddhi Jātaka (J 167) has the events of the (Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta as its background, but with more literary details. In fact, this Jātaka is told by the Buddha as a story of the past in connection with the same devata, where she is said to be a “deva’s daughter, goddess” (*deva, dhītā*), that is, a young nymph. At that time, the ascetic that the devata tries to seduce is the Bodhisattva himself.⁴

The Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka, ratta Sutta (M 133) opens in a similar way as the Samiddhi Sutta (S 1.20) (with Samiddhi drying himself after his bath). This time, the female devata asks Samiddhi whether he remembers the summary and analysis of the *bhadd’eka, ratta*. When Samiddhi confesses ignorance, the devata asks him to learn it from the Buddha. After the Buddha has given him the teaching in brief, Mahā Kaccāna elaborates on it.⁵

The Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 136) is taught on account on Samiddhi. When he is only three rains in the order, he meets the wanderer Potali,putta, who makes two misstatements on karma to him. Samiddhi’s reply, however, only further confuses the issues. Potaliputta then sarcastically retorts that Samiddhi is only pretending to expound the Dhamma, being only three years in the order.

On Ānanda’s advice, Samiddhi and Ānanda meet the Buddha. After questioning Samiddhi, the Buddha rebukes him to be a “misguided person” (*mogha, purisa*), and admonishes on how to answer questions of such nature. The Buddha then gives a detailed analysis of karma.⁶

The (Māra) Samiddhi Sutta (S 4.22) records Māra’s unsuccessful attempts to frighten the monk Samiddhi. Once, while Samiddhi is staying in Sīla, vatī in Sakya country (or, in the Tapod’ārāma, according to the Thera, gāthā Commentary), musing on his good fortune as a monk, Māra tries to terrify him with loud earthquake-like sounds. Samiddhi consults the Buddha about this, and is instructed to cultivate a still mind and confront Māra, exposing him.⁷ [2]

¹ *Therassa atta, bhāvo samiddho abhirūpo pāsādiko* (MA 5:5 = SA 1:39; 2:367; AA 4:175).

² See Mv 1.22 = V 1:35-38.

³ S 1.20/1:8-12 = SD 21.4.

⁴ J 167/2:56-58. See **(Devatā) Samiddhi S** (S 1.20/1:8-12) = SD 21.4 (1.1) & Tha:RD 51.

⁵ **Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka, ratta S** (M 133/3:192-199).

⁶ M 136/3:207-214 = SD 4.16.

⁷ S 4.22/1:119 f.

The Anguttara Commentary (AA 4:175) says that Samiddhi is a pupil (*saddhi, vihārika*) of the elder Sāriputta, and **the (Saṅkappa, vitakka) Samiddhi Sutta** (A 9.14) contains a record of a lesson given by Sāriputta to Samiddhi regarding “purposive thoughts” (*saṅkappa, vitakka*).⁸

According to the Thera, gāthā Commentary, Samiddhi, as a result of keeping to the Buddha’s instructions, attains arhathood (ThaA 1:125). His declaration of direct knowledge (*aññā*), that is, arhathood, is recorded in **Thera, gāthā 46**, which is identical with the verse in **the (Māra) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 4.22) [§10] [2.4].

A series of suttas is recorded as being taught, in answer to Samiddhi’s queries, at the squirrels’ feeding ground in the Bamboo Grove, as follows:

(Māra Paññatti) Samiddhi Sutta	on Māra’s qualities (<i>māra paññatti</i>)	(S 35.65/4:38 f);
(Satta) Samiddhi Sutta	on the definition of a “being” (<i>satta</i>)	(S 35.66/4:39);
(Dukkha) Samiddhi Sutta	on the definition of suffering (<i>dukkha</i>)	(S 35.67/4:39);
(Loka) Samiddhi Sutta	on the definition of the world (<i>loka</i>)	(S 35.68/4:39 f).

The various answers are given each time in terms of the 18 elements (*dhātu*), that is, the 6 internal sense-faculties, the 6 external sense-objects, and the 6 sense-consciousnesses.⁹

2 Samiddhi’s verse

2.1 LINE C OF THE VERSE. The closing verse is quite straight forward except for two important points: it is also found in the Thera, gāthā, and line (*pāda*) c has a problem reading. The closing verse also appears as the single-versed **Samiddhi Thera, gāthā** (Tha 46), but the two verses are not exactly identical. While all the extant Saṃyutta texts read *sati, paññā ca me buddhā* (“and mindfulness and wisdom have awakened in me”) the Thera, gāthā texts invariably read *sati, paññā ca me vuḍḍhā* (“and mindfulness and wisdom have matured in me”).

Here we will try to resolve this interesting intertextual problem.

2.2 THE SAṂYUTTA VERSE. The Saṃyutta reading of *buddhā* is consistent in all the texts. Even its Commentary glosses *buddhā* as *nāta*, “has known” (SA 1:182),¹⁰ suggesting that Samiddhi is an arhat. We cannot, however, ascertain this from the Sutta itself. The Ṭīkā, however, adds, “They [mindfulness and wisdom] have been understood [awakened to] by the noble path by way of its ability of knowing” (*ta ariya, maggena jānana, samatthana, bhāvena avabuddhā*) (SAṬ:Be 1:216).

The word *buddhā* in the text itself is the past participle of *bujjhati* (“he understands, awakens”), which is best rendered here as “has awakened to” or “has understood.” If so, then we can surmise that Samiddhi has attained awakening and is indeed an arhat. We might even say that this is further attested by the Samiddhi Thera, gāthā and its commentarial explanations.

2.3 THE THERA, GĀTHĀ. The Thera, gāthā reading of *vuḍḍhā*, too, is consistent in both its texts (Tha 46) and its commentary (ThaA 1:126). The relevant commentarial passage is here given:

Sati, paññā ca me vuḍḍhā’ti saraṇa, lakkhaṇā sati, pajānana, lakkhaṇā paññā’ti ime dhammā vipassanā-k, khaṇato paṭṭhāya magga, paṭipāṭiyā yāva arahattā me vuḍḍhā vaḍḍhitā, na dāni vaḍḍhetabbā atthi satipaññā vepulla-p, pattā’ti dasseti

In the line “**and mindfulness and wisdom have matured in me,**” mindfulness is the characteristic of remembering, wisdom is the characteristic of knowing. It should be understood as follows: “These are the dharmas [states] in me that have grown to maturity from the moment of insight, by way of realizing the path up to arhathood. There is now no more satipatthana [focus of mindfulness] to be cultivated [brought to maturity] to the point of full development. (ThaA 1:126)

⁸ A 9.14/4:385 f.

⁹ For further details, see **(Devatā) Samiddhi S** (S 1.20) @ SD 21.4 (1.1).

¹⁰ *Sati, paññā ca me buddhā’ti mayā sati ca paññā ca ñātā* (SA 1:182).

The Commentary thus assumes that Samiddhi has attained arhathood after consulting the Buddha and receiving instructions from him.

2.4 POSSIBLE RESOLUTION. **Bodhi** has suggested reading *buddhā* in line c (line b in his reference) simply as a variant spelling of *vuḍḍha* (the reading at Tha 46).¹¹ This is of course purely conjectural, as it is not attested by any grammatical authority nor by any such historical occurrence. However, we do find *buddha* (Be *vuddha*), “old, in old age” (D 2:162,26) for *vuḍḍha* (Skt *vṛddha*).¹² There are also the variant forms *vuddha* and *vaddha* (“grown up, old”) (J 1:177,1*). No occurrence of *buddha* as a variant of *vuḍḍha* has been found anywhere in the texts or Commentaries.

An alternative solution is that we can take the two words—*buddho* (S 1:120,14*) and *vuḍḍho* (Tha 46c)—as synonyms. If this is right, then we could choose a uniform translation for the two words, possibly “realized,” but this is rather free. This is, of course assuming that they both refer to the same occasion. Again we are not sure of this.

It is more likely that the two passages are really *two different events*, even if they might be closely related, or occurring close together. We will see below that they actually occur in two different places.

It is probable that the events of **the (Māra) Samiddhi Sutta** occur first, at Sīla,vaṭī in Sakya country [§1]. Samiddhi is here declaring that mindfulness and wisdom have awoken (*buddhā*) in him, meaning that he is now better in his meditation, and also with the Buddha’s personal admonition, he now knows that it is really Māra trying to scare and distract him. His fear has been allayed, and he goes back to his meditation.

On the hand, **the Samiddhi Thera,gāthā** (Tha 456), as is traditionally the case with the Thera,gāthā,¹³ records the testimonies and exultations of the elders at the time of their awakening. Samiddhi is here in the Tapod’ārāma, near Rāja,gaha. This second verse, with only one different word—*vuḍḍhā* instead of *buddhā* (in line c)—after all, is Samiddhi’s Thera,gāthā, his awakening verse.

The near-identity of the two otherwise disparate verses can be explained by the fact that the Saṃyutta verse is uttered after Samiddhi’s encounter with Māra. Samiddhi then goes back to his meditation (at once or in due course), gains awakening, and then utters the *second* verse (Tha 46). I think this explanation is more likely.

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The Discourse on Samiddhi (and Māra)

S 4.22/1:119 f

1 At one time, the Blessed One was staying at Sīla,vaṭī, amongst the Sakyas.

Samiddhi’s exultation

2 Now at the time, the venerable Samiddhi was dwelling not far from the Blessed One, diligent, exertive, and resolute.

3 Then, while the venerable Samiddhi was alone in solitary retreat, this reflection arose in him:

¹¹ S:B 419 n307,

¹² Geiger & Norman, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994: §46.1.

¹³ It should be noted that as these are verses uttered by the monks and nuns, and as such are not exactly “Buddha-word” (*buddha,vacana*), but as they are “beautifully spoken” (*subhāsita*) by saints, they hold equal weight. In some cases, the verse authorship is doubtful, and could have been attributed to the elder by reciters. See K R Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 1983:72 f (§3.5.8); Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 1996 §106

*Lābhā vata me,
suladdham vata me,
yassa me satthā araham sammā,sambuddho*

“A gain indeed it is for me!
Well gained indeed it is for me,
that my teacher is an arhat, the fully self-awakened
one!

*Lābhā vata me,
suladdham vata me,
yvāham evam svākkhāte dhammavinaye
pabbajito*

A gain indeed it is for me!
Well gained indeed it is for me,
that I have gone forth in the well-taught Dharma
and Vinaya!

*Lābhā vata me,
suladdham vata me,
yassa me sa,brahma,cārino sīlavanto
kalyāṇa,dhammā*

A gain indeed it is for me!
Well gained indeed it is for me,
that my fellow brahmacharis [fellows in the holy
life] are virtuous, of good character!”

4 Then Māra the evil one, having known the venerable Samiddhi’s mind with his own, approached him, and not far away from the venerable Samiddhi, made a great sound of fear and dread, as if the earth were splitting up.

Samiddhi see the Buddha

5 Then the venerable Samiddhi approached by Blessed One, saluted him, and then sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Samiddhi said this to the Blessed One:

6a “Here I was, bhante, dwelling not far from the Blessed One, diligent, exertive, and resolute. Then, while I was alone in solitary retreat, this reflection arose in me:

‘A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that my teacher is an arhat, the fully self-awakened one!

A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that I have gone forth in the well-taught Dharma and Vinaya!

A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that my fellow brahmacharis [fellows in the holy life] are virtuous, of good character!’

6b Then, bhante, not far away from me, there was a great sound of fear and dread, as if the earth were splitting up!”¹⁴

The Buddha reassures Samiddhi

7 “That, Samiddhi, was not the earth splitting up. That was Māra the evil one, who has come to blind¹⁵ you. Go now, Samiddhi, you stay right there, diligent, exertive, and resolute!”

8 “Yes, bhante,” the venerable Samiddhi answered the Blessed One. [120] Then he rose from his seat, and keeping the Blessed One to his right, departed.

9a For the second time, the venerable Samiddhi stayed right there, diligent, exertive, and resolute. Then, while the venerable Samiddhi was alone in solitary retreat, this reflection arose in him:

“A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that my teacher is an arhat, the fully self-awakened one!

A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that I have gone forth in the well-taught Dharma and Vinaya!

¹⁴ “As if the earth were splitting up,” *paṭhavim maññe udriyati* (Be *undriyati*; Ce Ee *udīrayati*): as at (Māra) **Āyatanā S** (S 4.17/1:113,15) = SD 61.12. PED explains it as a pass form from *ud* + *dr̥ṇoti*. See SED 492: *dr̥*, under *dīryate* (pass). See Geiger, A Pāli Grammar, 1994: §53,2; Lüders, *Beobachtungen* §39. On its development, see Hinüber, “Remarks on the Critical Pāli Dictionary (II),” 1980:26 f = *Selected Papers*, 1994:152-155. See DP: *udriyati*.

¹⁵ *Vicakkhu,kammāya*, from *vi* + *cakkhu* (“eyeless, blind”) + *kamma* (“making”), ie “making blind or perplexed” (S I:111, 118); cf BHS *vicakṣu,karma* (Mvst 3:416; Lalv 490).

A gain indeed it is for me! Well gained indeed it is for me, that my fellow brahmacharis [fellows in the holy life] are virtuous, of good character!”

9b Then, for the second time, Māra the evil one, having known the venerable Samiddhi’s mind with his own, approached him, and not far away from the venerable Samiddhi, made a great sound of fear and dread, as if the earth were splitting up.

10 Then the venerable Samiddhi addressed Māra the evil one in verse, thus:

*Saddhāyāham pabbajito
agārasmā anagāriyam
sati,paññā ca me buddhā¹⁶
cittañ ca susamāhitam
kāmañ karassu rūpāni
n’eva mañ vyādhayissasī ti.*

Out of faith, I went forth
from the house into homelessness
and mindfulness and wisdom have awakened in me,
and well focussed is my mind.
Create whatever pleasurable forms you wish!
None will ever make me tremble. (Tha 46)

11 Then Māra the evil one, realizing, “The monk Samiddhi knows me!” sad and downcast disappeared right there.

— evaṃ —

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¹⁶ Be Ce Ee Se *buddhā* (“have awakened to”); Tha *vuḍḍhā* (“have matured”). Here, we can take *buddhā* as a vl of *vuḍḍhā*. Comy however has *buddhā*, glossed as *nāta*, “known” (SA 1:182), suggesting that Samiddhi is awakened, but we have no evidence of this here. Tīkā, however, adds, “They have been understood by the noble path by way of its ability of knowing” (*Ta ariya, maggena jānana, samatthana, bhāvena avabuddhā*) (SAṬ:Be 1:216). See Intro (2).