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(Mallikā Kāla,kata) Kosala Sutta

The Kosala Discourse (on Mallikā's Death) | A 5.49/3:57

Theme: Impermanence, death and success in life

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2012, 2013

Introduction

1 The (Mallikā Kāla,kata) Kosala Sutta (A 5.49) is a short but important “practice” Sutta centred around aspects of impermanence and death. All other available translations, including that of Bodhi (2013), are drastically abridged (and referred to the preceding translation). This translation gives all the abridgements (*peyyāla*) in full to facilitate meditative reading and listening. The Sutta opens with a report on the death of Mallikā, the rajah Pasenadi's beloved queen [§3], which is not found in the parallel Alabbhanīya Sutta [2].

2 The (Mallikā Kāla,kata) Kosala Sutta, without its narrative introduction, closely parallels the **Alabbhanīya Sutta** (A 5.48).¹ Then, the difference between the two teaching texts is only grammatical: the former is the singular while the latter is in the plural. The (Mallikā Kālakata) Kosala Sutta is addressed to the rajah Pasenadi, and so is presented in the singular, while the Alabbhanīya Sutta is addressed to some monks, and so is in the plural.

Another minor difference is that while in this Sutta, the 5 unattainables [§7] are given as simple statements, those in the latter [A 5.48,2] are given as quotes. The instructions that follow in both the Suttas are practically identical, except for the person addressed, that is, the vocatives: the former addressed to the rajah Pasenadi while the latter to the monks. The teaching in both Suttas are identical: that of the 5 unattainables as a reflection on impermanence.

2 Sutta teaching

2.1 DOUBLE CYCLE

2.1.1 The summary

2.1.1.1 **The (Mallikā Kāla,kata) Kosala Sutta**, unlike the Alabbhanīya Sutta, has a narrative opening, which reports the death of the rajah's beloved queen, Mallikā. On hearing the sad news, the rajah is understandably saddened and sullen [§§3-5]. Noticing this, the Buddha consoles the king by teaching him on the 5 unattainables by way of a reflection on impermanence [§6].

The Sutta teaching follows a simple “double cycle” structure. It opens with the thesis, summary or syllabus of teachings [§7], that to live, whether on earth or in the heavens, or anywhere in the world, is to inevitably experiences these 5 realities, namely, decay, disease, death, destruction and failure.

2.1.1.2 The teachings are then applied in two cycles: the negative, on the untutored worldling [§§8-37], and the positive, on the wise noble disciple [§§38-73]. Here is a summary of the complete cycle of teachings:

For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, [§5 etc]

(*atha kho yāvatā sattānaṃ āgati gati cuti upapatti*)—

for all these beings:

				<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>
(1) what is subject to decay	(<i>jarā,dhammaṃ</i>)	decays	(<i>jīrati</i>)	§8	§38
(2) what is subject to sickness	(<i>vyadhi,dhammaṃ</i>)	falls sick	(<i>vyādhīyati</i>)	§14	§45
(3) what is subject to death	(<i>maraṇa,dhammaṃ</i>)	dies	(<i>mīyati</i>)	§20	§52
(4) what is subject to destruction	(<i>khaya,dhammaṃ</i>)	is destroyed	(<i>khīyati</i>)	§26	§59
(5) what is subject to failure	(<i>nassana,dhammaṃ</i>)	fails	(<i>nassati</i>)	§32	§66

2.1.1.3 The Sutta then closes with a well known set of verses, the Labbhanīya Gātha [2.2.1].

¹ A 5.48/3:54-56 = SD 42.1.

2.1.2 The negative cycle. The Sutta’s negative cycle applies these 5 realities to the “untutored worldling” (*assutavata puthujjana*), that is, anyone who is unawakened and does not know or does not accept the Dharma [§§8-37]. Such a person is “untutored” in the sense that he does not really understand the true nature of life, usually by attributing his life and its vicissitudes to external agencies, to luck, and so on.² More specifically, their sufferings arise from not understanding the four noble truths or rejecting them.

As such, when any of these 5 natural predicaments occur to him, he suffers as a result [eg §11]. It is interesting here that the Sutta reminds us how others would perceive our misfortunes: our enemies would rejoice [eg §11], our friends would be saddened [eg §11]. This point is repeated in the closing verses, clarifying it [§75]. Two significant points should be noted here: (1) the true meaning of friendship, and (2) we should not depend on others’ approval for our happiness.

2.1.3 The positive cycle. The Sutta’s positive cycle applies these 5 realities to the “instructed noble disciple” (*sutavata ariya,sāvaka*) [§§38-73]. This term refers to all those who understand the inevitability of the five vicissitudes of life mentioned in the Sutta [2.1.1.2]. This includes the “good worldling” (who make every effort to keep to the 5 precepts), the saints of the path, and the arhats.

On account of their accepting or understanding the four noble truths, these true individuals (*sappurisa*) and noble saints’ life unaffected by the vicissitudes of life. They understand that everything in this world is subject to change, including happiness and sorrow.

2.2 THE CLOSING VERSES [§§74-77]

2.2.1 Labbhanīya Ṭhāna Gāthā. The name of this set of verses, which I have given, means “Verses on obtainable states.” The verses recur in the preceding **Alabbhaniya Sutta** (A 5.48) and **the Taca Sāra Jātaka** (J 368).³ These verses are especially important because they are not so much a restatement of the prose teachings, but probably are a more ancient teaching that is explained by the Sutta prose by way of practising in terms of the perception of impermanence.⁴

Here we will briefly examine each verse, especially in relation to other sutta verses and teachings. For the Pali and its notes, see the text below [§§89-92].

2.2.2 Positive attitude towards suffering [§89].

74 Neither by grieving nor by lamenting, does he gain any benefit here, not even a little.⁵
Knowing him to be grieving and suffering, enemies become delighted.

2.2.2.1 This is a teaching on positive and true emotions. The positive emotions are lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity.⁶ Lovingkindness (*mettā*) should especially be cultivated whenever we can so that we purge ourselves of any negative emotions, even if temporarily, and strengthen ourselves with inner strength to attend to the task at hand [§74].

2.2.2.2 A related verse is found in **the Tiro,kuḍḍa Sutta** (Khp 7.11 = Pv 1.5,11), in the context of dealing with a bereavement, which goes thus:

Neither tears nor sorrow they help not the departed—	nor any mourning whatever— the (departed) relatives remain the same. (Khp 7.11/6 = Pv 1.5,11/4) = SD 2.7
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2.2.2.3 Here again, lovingkindness is called for since it benefits the dying, the “dead” (those in the intermediate state) and those who have been reborn, that is to say, “all beings,” including ourselves. This Tiro,kuḍḍa Sutta verse, however, refers specifically to our proper attitude towards the recently deceased, especially those who have been reborn as pretas, that is, a class of disparate beings who suffer from

² A streamwinner is said not to behave in such a way: see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8 esp (5).

³ Respectively, A 5.48/3:54-56 = SD 42.1 & J 368/4:204.

⁴ They recur in the Chin ver of Sn: see M Anesaki, “Sutta-nipāta in Chinese,” *Journal of the PTS*, 1906-07: 51.

⁵ Cf Bodhi’s remark on this at A:B 1728 n1039 where he apparently misread the Ce reading.

⁶ See **Brahma,vihāra: The divine abodes**, SD 38.5.

addictive conduct and are tormented by their past (such as being caught up in a rut of particularly painfully cyclic bad karma).⁷

2.2.2.4 The basic idea is that cultivating lovingkindness is the most effective way of dealing with both the living and “the dead.” Unconditional acceptance of the living empowers us to touch others with our positive emotions so that we interact in positive ways. According to early Buddhism, there are really no “dead” people, except for the pretas or “departed” and the intermediate beings. Otherwise, those who die are reborn in due course as humans, or devas, or animals, or asuras, or hell-beings. Although all such beings progress or regress, prosper or suffer, according to their karma, our lovingkindness can inspire, even empower, them to master their own karma and so walk the path to awakening.

75 But he who is wise, facing misfortunes, is unshaken, knowing how to analyze himself.
His enemies are afflicted, seeing his face of old unaffected.

2.2.2.5 Like the previous verse [§77], this one [§75] deals with failure and misfortune, in the face of which we should remain undaunted, that is, practise equanimity, even on a simple worldly level. An effective way of doing this is to meditate on the breath for some inner calm and clarity, so that we can “analyze ourselves,” meaning to face our problems squarely and define the real issues, not making them bigger than they really are, and be prepared to face all consequence of our actions. That way, we do not prolong them.

2.2.2.6 The constant cultivation of lovingkindness, especially towards those who have harmed us or wish us harm, is a very effective way of dealing with big problems and bad karma. In this way, we do not return hate for hate, but arm ourselves with an aura of positive emotion so that we are still capable of enjoying the happiness of those who truly care for us or the goodness in others.

2.2.2.7 According to discourses such as **the Saṅkha(dhama) Sutta** (S 42.8) and **the Brahma, vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208), if we properly cultivate lovingkindness, we would be able to contain the effects of bad karma so that they do not follow us into future lives.⁸ In other words, if we unconditionally accept ourselves and have a mentally wholesome attitude towards others, even those negative towards us, we would be able to master our own karma so that our problems are properly solved even in this life itself. Through constant lovingkindness, we would somehow prosper here and now, without the cost of creating more bad karma.

2.2.3 Proactive attitude [§76]

2.2.3.1 This verse is problematic as we take it simply on the word level. Line a, *jappena mantena subhāsitenā*, literally translates “If by chanting mantras [If by chants and mantras], by words well spoken” This is, in fact, how the Commentaries interpret this line.⁹ However, this would clearly go against the grain of the early Buddhist teachings.

Textual scholars might tell us that we should accept such changes, as they reflect the social realities of the times. Those more concerned with worldly happiness, success and power, too, would agree with such scholars. However, if we are to accept the Buddha’s teachings, then we have to turn to the early suttas.

2.2.3.2 **The Caṇḍāla Sutta** (A 5.175), for example, defines a true lay follower—called a jewel layman (*upāsaka, ratana*), a lotus layman (*upāsaka, paduma*), or a white-lotus layman (*upāsaka, puṇḍarīka*)—as follows:

- (1) He has faith (*saddho*).
- (2) He is morally virtuous (*sīlava*).
- (3) He does not believe in rituals to invoke luck (*akotuhala, maṅgaliko*).
- (4) He relies on karma, not on luck (*kammaṃ pacceṭi no maṅgalāṃ*).

⁷ See **Tiro, kuḍḍa S** (Khp 7/Pv 1.5) @ SD 2.7 (3+4).

⁸ Respectively, S 42.8/4:322, SD 57.9 & A 10.208/5:299, SD 2.10.

⁹ AA 3:225; J 3:205,17. See tr text below [§76] for the comy passages.

- (5) He does not seek the gift-worthy outside the teaching but gives his priority here (in the teaching) (*na ito bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyam gavesati idha ca pubba,kāram karoti*).

(A 5.175/3:206), SD 45.12¹⁰

2.2.3.3 Now let us look at the verse from **the Labbhanīya T̥hāna Gāthā**:

- 76** If by speech, wise thought, well-spoken words, by regular giving,¹¹ or tradition,¹²
by which he will gain his goal, let him exert himself through such means.

In this first verse line, “speech, wise thought, well-spoken words,” respectively refer to wholesome, wise and pleasant speech respectively. This line is a classic example of early Buddhist wordplay on popular words raised to a more spiritual level.

2.2.3.4 On the other hand, as evident in line b, the Buddha is not against our being charitable (giving) or keeping to wholesome family or social traditions, “by which (we) will gain (our) goal” [line c]. That is to say, if our charity and observances promote our wellbeing, social harmony, even worldly success, we should by all means pursue them.¹³

2.2.3.5 However, if we keep to the suttas, we know that “goal” (*attha*), also means “purpose,” especially that of the 3 trainings and of walking the path to awakening.¹⁴ In other words, our engagement with the world should in no way hinder our spiritual progress towards awakening. As for the renunciant, since he has renounced “the world,” he should disengage himself from it even more completely.¹⁵

2.2.4 Dealing with failure [§92]

2.2.4.1 In most worldly systems, especially in educational and management circles, we are, as a rule, taught how to excel in our studies and succeed in our work. We are almost never taught how to face failure. Some are motivated by such sayings as “Failure is not in my dictionary.” Such an attitude only makes the pain of failure more real and more painful. The reason is simple: we are thinking in terms of the absolute duality of success and failure.

Whatever we do in life may or may not have a purpose. There is no purpose in our waking up in the morning or feeling tired, or worrying or being happy, or falling sick or being healthy: they occur or do not occur when the conditions are right. Of course, we often plans some actions, like studying hard to do well in an exam, or looking for a good or suitable job, or seeking a proper life-partner, or even writing something like this. Again here it is not a question of success or failure, but of conditions that allow us to do something to our satisfaction.

2.2.4.2 In other words, success and failure are really subjective, depending very much on how we view life or what we want at the moment. When we change our minds, our views of success and failure change accordingly. Furthermore, we are also influenced by others in how we look at success and failure. The same conditions apply to others, too. So there are no real good reasons to take others as our absolute measure of success or failure.

2.2.4.3 This, of course, does not mean that success and failure are not real, that is, they do have some kind of effect on us, especially where what we do would affect our happiness and that of others. The wisdom here is to see success and failure for what they really are: to define them, to understand the condi-

¹⁰ For a similar list, see **Parihāna S** (A 7.27/4:25), also called Hani S, and (**Upāsaka**) **Parābhava S** (A 5.176/-4:26). See SD 12.14 (2). See also **Kiñci Saṅkhāra S** (A 6.93), SD 12.14.

¹¹ Comy: “By regular giving and for the thousands” (*satassa vā saḥassassa vā dānena*, AA 1:255).

¹² Such as by way of keeping to a family tradition (AA 1:255): see eg **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (A 7.49,5/4:61), SD 2.3. On types of donors, see (**Aṭṭha**) **Dāna S 1+2** (A 8.31 f) @ SD 6.6 (2).

¹³ All this however, should be understood in the spirit of the teachings of such suttas as **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (A 7.49,5/4:61), SD 2.3.

¹⁴ On the spiritual sense of attha, see (**Agata,phala**) **Mahā,nāma S** (A 6.10) @ SD 15.3 (4). See also **Neyy’attha Nīt’attha S** (A 2.3.5-6/1:60), SD 2.6b.

¹⁵ On the renunciant’s disengagement from the world, see **Aggi-k,khandhōpama S** (A 7.68/4:128-135), SD 52.-12.

tions behind them, to envision an accomplished state, and work towards that goal. (This is in fact an application of “the 4 noble truth” teaching model.)

2.2.4.4 A shorthand version of what we have said here is found in this truly instructive verse:

77 If he should know, “Not to be attained is this goal by me, or by any other,”
then, ungrieving, he would bear it thus: “What shall I do now with resolve?”¹⁶

— — —

The Kosala Discourse (on Mallikā’s Death)

A 5.49/3:57

- 1 At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvathī.
- 2 Then the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One, saluted and sat down at one side.

Queen Mallikā dies

- 3 Now at that time queen Mallikā (just) died.¹⁷
- 4 Then a certain person approached the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala, and whispered in his ear, “Your majesty, queen Mallikā has died.”
- 5 When this was said, the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala sat, afflicted, grieving, his shoulders drooping, face down [hanging his head], glum, unable to speak.¹⁸
- 6 Then the Blessed One, knowing that *the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala sat, afflicted, grieving, his shoulders drooping, face down [hanging his head], glum, unable to speak*, said this to him:

The 5 unattainables

- 7 “Maharajah, there are these five states unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world. What are the five?
 - (1) That which is of the nature to decay might not decay—
this is state unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world.
 - (2) That which is of the nature to be diseased might not be diseased—
this is state unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world.
 - (3) That which is of the nature to die might not die—

¹⁶ Lit, “What firm action do I take now?”

¹⁷ *Tena kho pana samayena mallikā devī kālaṅ, katā hoti*: Ee Se; Be within parenthesis; Ce in note.

¹⁸ *Dukkhi dummano patta-k, khandho adho, mukho pajjhāyanto appaṭibhāno nisīdi* (A 3:57,11). Cf *tuṅhī, bhūtaṃ manku, bhūtaṃ patta-k, khandhaṃ adho, mukhaṃ pajjhāyantaṃ appaṭibhānaṃ viditvā*, D 3:53,26 = M 1:132,34 = 234,4 = 258,31 = 2:154,27 = 3:298,23 ≠ A 3:57,13 (*dukkhīṃ dummanāṃ patta-k, khandhaṃ* +). **Tuṅhī, bhūto** +, M 1:132,30 (= Comy: *kiñci paṭibhānaṃ apassanto chinna, paṭibhāno*, lit “not seeing any wit, wit uprooted,” ie at one’s wit’s ends, at a loss) = 234,2 (= Comy: *uttaraṃ apassanto*, “not seeing a refutation [not knowing how to answer]”) = 258,29 = 2:154,25 = 3:187,18 = 208,22 = M 3:298,21 = S 1:124,12 = A 1:186,29 ≈ A 3:57,11 (*dukkhī dummano patta-k, khandho* +) ≈ D 3:53,22 (see precn). **3 pl nisidimsu tuṅhī, bhūtā** +, V 3:162,4 = 2:78,24 ≈ D 3:57,13 = A 5:188,-18.

this is state unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world.

(4) That which is of the nature to be exhausted might not be exhausted—

this is state unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world.

(5) That which is of the nature to be destroyed might not be destroyed—

this is state unattainable by a recluse, a brahmin, a deva, a Mara, a brahma, or by anyone in the world.

THE UNTUTORED WORLDLING

(1) Decay: Not reflecting on it, we suffer

8 Maharajah, for an untutored worldling, what is subject to decay decays [grows old].¹⁹

9 When what is subject to *decay* does decay, he does not reflect thus.²⁰

“I’m not the only one who,²¹ subject to *decay*, decays.”²²

10 For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings,²³ for all these beings what is subject to *decay* decays.²⁴

11 And when what is subject to *decay* decays,

if I were to²⁵ sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast,²⁶ or lament,²⁷

I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.²⁸

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.²⁹

I would not be able to get any work done, too.³⁰

¹⁹ *Assutavato mahā,rāja puthujjanassa jarā,dhammaṃ jīrati.*

²⁰ *So jarā,dhamme jīṇṇe na iti paṭisañcikkhati.*

²¹ “I’m not the only one...who,” *na kho mayh’ev’ekassa* [So Be Ee Se; Ce *mayham ev’ekassa*].

²² *So jarā,dhamme jīṇṇe na iti paṭisañcikkhati: na kho mayh’ev’ekassa jarā,dhammaṃ jīrati.* See prec n.

²³ *Atha kho yāvataṃ sattānaṃ āgati gati cuti upapatti.* Here, “coming and going” (*āgati gati*) here refers to karmic activities of the unawakened, while “death and rebirth” (*cuti upapatti*) refer to samsaric processes of repeatedly moving from birth to birth. See **Cetanā S 3** (S 12.40) & Comy for full doctrinal context of “Where there is coming and going (*āgati,gati*), there is passing away (here) and being reborn (there). Where there is passing away and being reborn (*cutūpapāto*), there comes to be further births, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair” (S 12.40,3/2:67), SD 7.6c

²⁴ *Sabbesaṃ sattānaṃ jarā,dhammaṃ jīrati.*

²⁵ This phrase + foll line, “if I were to...I would only,” *ahañ c’eva kho pana...* The phrase *ceva* here can read either as *ca eva*, “and only,” or as *ce eva*, “if only.”

²⁶ “Beat my breast,” *ura-t,tālīm*, Se *ura-t,tālī*, lit “beating the breath, breast-beating,” from *uras* + *namul* abs of √TAD, “to beat”; cf Skt *udara,tāḍam*; see Warder, *Pāli Metre*, 1967:80.

²⁷ This & next line: *soceyyaṃ kilameyyaṃ parideveyyaṃ, ura-t,tālīm* [Se *ura-t,tālī*] *kandeyyaṃ | sammohaṃ āpaj-jeyya*. This is stock, occurring 20 times in this Sutta [§§6, 9, 14, 17, 22, 25, 39, 34, 38, 42, 46, 49, 55, 58, 64, 68, 73, 76, 82, 86] + **Nārada S** (A 5.60/3:60×2, 61×2); with *na*, Nm 2:428 ×2 (with *na parāmaseyya*, “were not to be attached to (it)” after *na kilameyya*). More common in pres ind as *socati* etc (sg): **M** 1:86×2, 92×2, 136×2, 137×2, 239×2, **3**:165, 171, 285×2, 286×2; **S** 4:206×2, 208×2, 209×2; **A** 2:174×4, 175×3, 176, 188, 189, **3**:54, 55×2, 56, 60, 61×32, 416, **4**:293, 294, 295×2, 325, 326, 327×2; (pl) *socanti* etc: Nm 1:38, 48, 122; Miln 11; *socato socāpayato* etc: M 1:56; S 3:208. Cf (caus) *socayato socāpayato kilamato kilamāpayato*, “when one inflicts sorrow, cause others to inflict sorrow, causes oppression, causes others to inflict oppression”: M 76.10/1:516 = S 24.6/3:208.

²⁸ *Bhattam pi me na-c,chādeyya*, lit, “My food would not be appetising.” Comy glosses *na-c,chādeyya* as “would not enjoy [would not indulge in]” (*na ruceyya*, AA 3:254).

²⁹ *Kāye’pi dubbaññiyāṃ okkameyya*, Said to be 1 of the 5 signs of a deva’s impending demise: **Pañca Pubba,ni-mitta S** (It 83/17,16), SD 23.8a(1.2).

³⁰ *Kammantā’pi na-p,pavatteyyuṃ* [So Be Ee Se; Ke *kammanto’pi na-p,pavatteyya*].

My enemies would rejoice.
My friends would be saddened.”

12 So, when what is subject to *decay* decays,
he sorrows, feels stressed, laments, beats his breast, weeps, falls into confusion.

13 This, maharajah, is called an untutored worldling, pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow,³¹ who only torments himself.³²

(2) Disease: Not reflecting on it, we suffer

14 Furthermore, maharajah, for an untutored worldling, **[55]** what is subject to sickness falls sick.³³

15 When what is subject to *sickness* does fall sick, he does not reflect thus:³⁴

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *sickness*, falls sick.

16 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings,*
for all these beings what is subject to *sickness* falls sick.

17 And when what is subject to *sickness* falls sick,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

18 So, when what is subject to *sickness* falls sick,
he sorrows, feels stressed, mourns, beats his breast, laments, falls into confusion.

19 This, maharajah, is called an untutored worldling, pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, who only torments himself.

(3) Death: Not reflecting on it, we suffer

20 Furthermore, maharajah, for an untutored worldling, what is subject to death dies.³⁵

21 When what is subject to *death* does die, he does not reflect thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *death*, dies.

22 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings,*
for all these beings what is subject to *death* dies.

23 And when what is subject to *death* dies,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

24 So, when what is subject to *death* dies,
he sorrows, feels stressed, mourns, beats his breast, laments, falls into confusion.

25 This, maharajah, is called an untutored worldling, pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, who only torments himself.

³¹ *Savīṣena soka,sallena*: alluded to in **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105.18/2:256,27), SD 94.3.

³² *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, assutavā puthujjano viddho savīṣena soka,sallena attānaṃ yeva paritāpeti.*

³³ *Puna ca param bhikkhave assutavato puthujjanassa vyādhī,dhammaṃ vyādhīyati.*

³⁴ *So vyādhī,dhamme vyādhīte na iti paṭisañcikkhati.*

³⁵ *Puna ca param bhikkhave assutavato puthujjanassa maraṇa,dhammaṃ mīyati*

(4) Destruction: Not reflecting on it, we suffer

26 Furthermore, maharajah, for an untutored worldling, what is subject to destruction is destroyed.³⁶

27 When what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed, he does not reflect thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *destruction*, is destroyed.

28 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to destruction is destroyed.*

29 And when what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

30 So, when what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed,
he sorrows, feels stressed, mourns, beats his breast, laments, falls into confusion.

31 *This, maharajah, is called an untutored worldling, pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, who only torments himself.*

(5) Failure: Not reflecting on it, we suffer

32 Furthermore, maharajah, for an untutored worldling, what is subject to failure fails.³⁷

33 When what is subject to *failure* does fail, he does not reflect thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *failure*, fails.

34 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to failure fails.*

35 And when what is subject to *failure* fails,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

36 So, when what is subject to *failure* fails,
he sorrows, feels stressed, mourns, beats his breast, laments, falls into confusion.

37 *This, maharajah, is called an untutored worldling, pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, who only torments himself.*

THE WISE NOBLE DISCIPLE

(6) Decay: Reflecting on it, we suffer not

38 And, maharajah, for a noble disciple, too, what is subject to decay decays [grows old].³⁸

39 When what is subject to *decay* does decay, he reflects thus:³⁹

³⁶ *Puna ca param bhikkhave assutavato puthujjanassa khaya,dhammam khīyati.*

³⁷ *Puna ca param bhikkhave assutavato puthujjanassa nassana,dhammam nassati.* *Nassana*, lit “loss, destruction.” The tr “failure,” which is connoted in *nassana* relates better to our society today.

³⁸ *Sutavato ca kho bhikkhave ariya,sāvakassa jarā,dhammam jīrati.*

³⁹ *So jarā,dhamme jinne iti paṭisañcikkhati.*

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *decay*, decays.

40 For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to *decay* decays.

41 And when what is subject to *decay* decays,
if I were to sorrow, *be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament*,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

42 So, when what is subject to *decay* decays,

he sorrows not, feels stressed not, mourns not, beats not his breast, laments not, falls not into confusion.⁴⁰

43 This, maharajah, is called a noble disciple, not pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow,⁴¹ like the untutored worldling who only torments himself.⁴²

44 The noble disciple is sorrowless, the dart drawn out,⁴³ attains nirvana himself.⁴⁴

(7) Disease: Reflecting on it, we suffer not

45 Furthermore, maharajah, for a noble disciple, too, what is subject to sickness falls sick.⁴⁵

46 When what is subject to *sickness* does fall sick, he reflects thus:⁴⁶

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *sickness*, falls sick.

47 For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to *sickness* falls sick.

48 And when what is subject to *sickness* falls sick,
if I were to sorrow, *be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament*,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

49 So, when what is subject to *sickness* falls sick,

⁴⁰ *So jarā, dhamme jīṅṅe na socati, na kilamati, na paridevati, na ura-t, tālīm kandati, na sammohaṃ āpajjati.*

⁴¹ *Ayam vuccati bhikkhave ariyasāvako abbaḥi [So Ce Comy; Be Ee Se abbuhī] saviṣaṃ sokasallam.*

⁴² *Yena viddho assutavā puthujjano attānaṃ yeva paritāpeti.*

⁴³ *Visalla:* cf M 105.18/2:256; Tha 404; Sn 939. See A 5.48, 10 n @ SD 42.1.

⁴⁴ *Asoko visallo ariya, sāvako attānaṃ yeva parinibbāpeti.* This sentence, like the classic “sorrowless, stainless, secure” (*asokaṃ virajam khemaṃ*, A 3:354 = Khp 3 = Sn 271 = Pv 24 = Tha 227 = 263 = Thī 361) clearly refers to the final goal of awakening. *Asoka*, “sorrowless,” means one is free of mental suffering, *visalla*, “dart pulled out,” free of physical suffering; this is descriptive of an arhat, esp with the verb *parinibbāpeti* (also tr as “he quenches himself”). **Parinibbāpeti** = *pari* + *nibbāpeti* (Skt *nirvārayati*) reflexive causative of *nirvati*, “make cool by blowing” (eg RV 10.16.13); adjs *nibbuta*, *parinibbuta*. PED: *nibbuta* for etym. The verb here denotes totality and self-effort, and often appears as a phrase with *sameti* = *sammati* (become still) and *dameti* (become tame, mastered, conquered): cf *damathaṃ samathaṃ ca* (UA 87). The former clearly refers to *samatha*, mental calmness, and the latter, *vipassanā*, insight wisdom, both contributing to awakening, as in such phrases as: (pl) *damenti...samenti...parinibbāpentī*, D 26/3:6,113 = A 5.41/3:46,2; (fut) *damesatti vinessatti* [“will be disciplined”] *parinibbapessati* (M 8/1:45,7); *attānaṃ dameti...attānaṃ sameti...attānaṃ parinibbāpeti* (A 4.61/2:68,15). For explanation, see D 25/3:54,27-55,2; M 1:235,30-35. See PED: *parinibbāpetar*.

⁴⁵ *Puna ca param bhikkhave sutavato ariya, sāvakassa vyādhi, dhammaṃ vyādhīyati.*

⁴⁶ *So vyādhi, dhamme vyādhite na iti paṭisañcikkhati.*

he sorrows not, feels stressed not, mourns not, beats not his breast, laments not, falls not into confusion.

50 *This, maharajah, is called a noble disciple, not pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, like the untutored worldling who only torments himself.*

51 The noble disciple is sorrowless, the dart drawn out, attains nirvana himself.

(8) Death: Reflecting on it, we suffer not

52 Furthermore, maharajah, for a noble disciple, too, what is subject to death dies.⁴⁷

53 When what is subject to *death* does die, he reflects thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *death*, dies.

54 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to death dies.*

55 And when what is subject to *death* dies,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

56 So, when what is subject to *death* dies,

he sorrows not, feels stressed not, mourns not, beats not his breast, laments not, falls not into confusion.

57 *This, maharajah, is called a noble disciple, not pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, like the untutored worldling who only torments himself.*

58 The noble disciple is sorrowless, the dart drawn out, attains nirvana himself.

(9) Destruction: Reflecting on it, we suffer not

59 Furthermore, maharajah, for a noble disciple, too, what is subject to destruction is destroyed.⁴⁸

60 When what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed, he reflects thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *destruction*, is destroyed.

61 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to destruction is destroyed.*

62 And when what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed,
if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,
I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

63 So, when what is subject to *destruction* is destroyed,

he sorrows not, feels stressed not, mourns not, beats not his breast, laments not, falls not into confusion.

64 *This, maharajah, is called a noble disciple, not pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, like the untutored worldling who only torments himself.*

65 The noble disciple is sorrowless, the dart drawn out, attains nirvana himself.

⁴⁷ *Puna ca param bhikkhave sutavato ariya,sāvakassa maraṇa,dhammam mīyati.*

⁴⁸ *Puna ca param bhikkhave sutavato ariya,sāvakassa khaya,dhammam khīyati.*

(10) Failure: Reflecting on it, we suffer not

66 Furthermore, maharajah, for a noble disciple, too, what is subject to failure fails.⁴⁹

67 When what is subject to *failure* does fail, he reflects thus:

“I’m not the only one who, subject to *failure* fails.

68 *For as long as there are the coming and going, passing away and rebirth of beings, for all these beings what is subject to failure fails.*

69 And when what is subject to *failure* fails, [56]

if I were to sorrow, be stressed, mourn, beat my breast, or lament,

I would only fall into confusion.

I would have no appetite for food, too.

My body would discolour [turn ugly], too.

I would not be able to get any work done, too.

My enemies would rejoice.

My friends would be saddened.”

70 So, when what is subject to *failure* fails,

he sorrows not, feels stressed not, mourns not, beats not his breast, laments not, falls not into confusion.

71 *This, maharajah, is called a noble disciple, not pierced by the venomous dart of sorrow, like the untutored worldling who only torments himself.*

72 The noble disciple is sorrowless, the dart drawn out, attains nirvana himself.

73 These, maharajah, are these five states unattainable by a recluse, or a brahmin, or a deva, or Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone in the world.

***Labbhanīya Thāna Gāthā⁵⁰**

74 *Na socanāya na paridevanāya
attho idha labbhati⁵¹ api appako pi,
socantam enam dukkhitam viditvā
paccatthikā attamanā bhavanti.*

Neither by grieving nor by lamenting,
does he gain any benefit here, not even a little.⁵²
Knowing him to be grieving and suffering,
enemies become delighted.

75 *Yato ca kho paṇḍito āpadāsu
na vedhati atta, vinichayaññū,
paccatthikāssa dukkhitā bhavanti
disvā mukham avikāram purāṇam.*

But he who is wise, facing misfortunes,
is unshaken, knowing how to analyze himself.
His enemies are afflicted,
seeing his face of old unaffected.

76 *Jappena mantena⁵³ subhāsitena*

If by speech, wise thought, well-spoken words,

⁴⁹ *Puna ca param bhikkhave sutavato ariya, sāvakaṃ nassana, dhammam nassati.*

⁵⁰ These verses, whose name (meaning, “Verses on obtainable states”) I have given, recur in the **Alabbhanīya Thāna S** (A 5.48/3:54-56), SD 42.1 & **Taca Sāra J** (J 3:204) with one line [§92a] slightly variant and whose comy differs from AA here. It also recurs in the Chin ver of Sn: see M Anesaki, “Sutta-nipāta in Chinese,” *Journal of the PTS*, 1906-07:51.

⁵¹ So Se; Be Ee *attho’ dha labbhā*; Ce *attho alabbho api appako pi*, “he gains no benefit, (not) even a little,” which is awkward.

⁵² Cf Bodhi’s remark on this at A:B 1728 n1039 where he apparently misread the Ce reading.

⁵³ J reads *japena*. AA explains: “beautiful speech...merely by the great efficacy (for this) to work” (*vaṇṇa, bhaṇanena ... mahānubhāva, matta, parivattanena*, AA 3:255). JA gives a late worldly gloss: “By the uttering of mantras, by learning mantras [grasping wisdom] (*manta*) with the help of the wise (*manta, parijapanena... pandit-ehi saddhiṃ manta, gahaṇena*, J 3:205,17). The whole line has to do with wholesome, wise and pleasant speech respectively. To render this line such as “By the muttering of mantras and good words” is clearly against the early

*anuppadānena paveniyā ca,
yathā yathā yattha⁵⁶ labhetha attham
tathā tathā tattha parakkameyya.*

by regular giving,⁵⁴ or tradition,⁵⁵
by which he will gain his goal,
let him exert himself through such means.

77 *Sace pajāneyya alabbhaneyyo⁵⁷
mayā ca⁵⁸ aññena vā esa attho
asocamāno adhvāsāyeyya
kammaṃ dalhaṃ kinti karomi'dānīti.*

If he should know, “Not to be attained
is this goal by me, or by any other,”
then, ungrieving, he would bear it thus:
“What shall I do now with resolve?”⁵⁹

— evaṃ —

130303; 130309; 130403; 130503r

Buddhist spirit. This line is a classic example of early Buddhist wordplay on popular words raised to a more spiritual level.

⁵⁴ Comy: “By regular giving and for the thousands” (*satassa vā sahasassa vā dānena*, AA 1:255).

⁵⁵ Such as by way of keeping to a family tradition (AA 1:255): see eg **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (A 7.49,5/4:61), SD 2.3. On types of donors, see (**Aṭṭha**) **Dāna S 1+2** (A 8.31 f) @ SD 6.6 (2).

⁵⁶ Ke *yathā yattha yattha*.

⁵⁷ At J 368, this line reads *Yato ca jāneyya alabbhaneyyo*, “And if he were to know that it is not to be attained.”

⁵⁸ So Ce; Be *māyāva*; Ee Ke Se *mayā vā*.

⁵⁹ Lit, “What firm action do I take now?”