

# 17

## (Tika) Agga-p,pasāda Sutta

The (Threes) Discourse on the Foremost Faith | It 90

Theme: Three kinds of foremost faith

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

### 1 Introduction

**1.1 The (Tika) Agga-p,pasāda Sutta** (It 90) comprises a prose section (the introduction) and four verses (the closing). Parallel versions of the Sutta’s teachings are found two other suttas, both in the Aṅguttara (A 4.34 and 5.32). **The Netti-p,pakaraṇa** quotes It 90, categorizing it as an eulogy or paean (*thava*).<sup>1</sup>

**The Visuddhi,magga** partially quotes §(3) (on the conditioned and the unconditioned), which is common to all three texts (given as (2) in the other two texts: see below), citing it as a reflection for “the recollection of peace” (*upasamānussati*), which is actually a recollection on nirvana as the stilling of all suffering.<sup>2</sup>

**1.2** Here is the sutta collation table:

	<b>(Catukka) Agga-p,pasāda S</b> A 4.34 @ SD 45.13	<b>Cundī Rāja,kumārī Sutta</b> A 5.32 @ SD 66.4	<b>(Ti) Agga-p,pasāda Sutta</b> It 90/3.5.1 @ SD 45.17
(1) <u>Audience</u>	The monks	Princess Cundī	The monks
(2) <u>Prose</u>	1. The Tathagata 2. The noble eightfold path 3. The Dharma: dispassion 4. The Sangha [none]	1. The Tathagata <i>omitted</i> 2. <i>identical</i> 3. <i>identical</i> 4. Morality of the aryas <i>identical</i>	1. The Tathagata [ ] <i>omitted</i> <sup>3</sup> 2. <i>identical</i> 3. <i>identical</i> [none] <i>identical</i>
(3) <u>The verses</u>	<i>identical</i>	<i>identical</i>	<i>identical</i>

**1.3** Both A 4.34 and It 90 are addressed to the monks, while A 5.32 is address to princess Cundī. **The prose** of A 4.34 deals with 4 **headings**: the Tathagata, the noble eightfold path, the Dharma (dispassion) and the Sangha. Heading 2 (the noble eightfold path) is omitted in A 5.32 and It 90. The other 3 **headings** are common to all three suttas—suggesting this is part of an urtext (common source teaching or text).

**1.4** A 5.32, however, adds its own **fourth** heading (morality of the aryas), which shows that it is a special teaching for princess Cundī, a lay person. Hence, the inclusion of a section on morality is understandable. It 90 has only 3 **heading** (the Tathagata, the Dharma and the Sangha) in its prose section.

**1.5 The closing verses**, in *anuṣṭubh* sloka,<sup>4</sup> are common to all the three suttas, suggesting that they are originally part of an urtext. Note that these verses mention neither the eightfold path nor the moral virtue of the aryas. This is another clue to their age.

**1.6** From all this, it is likely that **It 90**, also the briefest of the three, is the oldest of them. Both A 4.34 and A 5.32 are probably around the same age. It is clear, however, that the oldest core has only the 3 jewels in the prose section and the 4 closing verses. The two Aṅguttara versions are based on this ancient core, and taught to a different audience in each case.

**1.7 The faith** (*saddhā*) here is a “wise faith” (*avecca-p,pasāda*), that is, one of a direct and joyful experience of true reality.<sup>5</sup> Having understood the true nature of life—that everything is impermanent—

<sup>1</sup> Nett 188; cf Peṭk 56.

<sup>2</sup> Vism 8.245/293.

<sup>3</sup> Here, Se inserts (within parentheses) the “missing” section (on the “noble eightfold path”) found in **(Catukka) Agga-p,pasāda S** (A 4.34) ad loc, with the n “At this time, this passage is omitted in other texts” (*eth’antare ayam pāṭho na dissati*). However, as we note below, this is unnecessary at all.

<sup>4</sup> They are all quatrains with 8 syllables per line (like the verses of the Dhammapada, the Sutta Nipāta, the Thera-, gāthā, and the Therī,gāthā): see SD 45.7a (1.1.3.1).

we are not troubled by the vicissitudes of life, be they gain or loss, fame or ill-fame, blame or praise, joy or pain.<sup>6</sup> This joy empowers us to assert the foremost of wholesome states, that is, diligence (*appamāda*).<sup>7</sup>

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## The (Threes) Discourse on the Foremost Faith

It 90

**1** This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat [worthy one], thus have I heard.<sup>8</sup>

**2** There are, bhikshus, these **three kinds of foremost faith**. What are the three?

(1) Bhikshus, as far as there are beings—

whether legless, two-legged, four-legged, many-legged,

whether form or formless,

whether conscious, unconscious, or neither-conscious-nor-non-conscious—

that is to say,<sup>9</sup> the Tathagata, worthy one, full self-awakened, is declared to be the foremost amongst them.

**3** Bhikshus, those who have faith in the Buddha,

have faith in the foremost (of beings);<sup>10</sup>

and those who have faith in the foremost, win the foremost fruit.<sup>11</sup>

(2) Bhikshus, as far as there are truths, conditioned or unconditioned,<sup>12</sup>

dispassion is said to be the foremost amongst them,<sup>13</sup>

that is to say, the crushing of intoxication,

the removing of thirst,

the uprooting of attachment,

the cutting off of the cycles (of lives and deaths),

the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana.<sup>14</sup>

**4** Bhikshus, those who have faith in the truth of dispassion,

have faith in the foremost (truth),

and those who have such a faith, win the foremost fruit.

(3) Bhikshus, as far as there are sanghas or groups,

<sup>5</sup> On wise faith, see **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41,11), SD 3.3(4.2). On how faith arises from suffering, see **Upanisā S** (S 12.23), SD 6.12.

<sup>6</sup> These are the 8 worldly conditions (*aṭṭha loka,dhamma*): see **Loka,dhamma S 1+2** (A 8.5+6), SD 42.2+3.

<sup>7</sup> See the Tathagata parable at (**Dasaka**) **Appamāda S** (A 10.15,1/5:21), SD 42.23.

<sup>8</sup> *Vuttam h'etaṃ bhagavatā. Vuttam arahatā' ti me sutam*. This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj'uttarā**: see SD 16.14 (1).

<sup>9</sup> “That is to say,” *yad idaṃ*, omitted in A 4.34 @ SD 45.13 & its Comy.

<sup>10</sup> *Ye bhikkhave buddhe pasannā, agge te pasannā, agge kho pana pasannānaṃ aggo vipāko hoti*.

<sup>11</sup> Foll this, Se inserts (within parentheses) the “missing” section found in (**Catukka**) **Agga-p.pasāda S** (A 4.34) ad loc, with the n “At this time, this passage is omitted in other texts” (*etth'antare pothakesu ayam pāṭho na dissati*). See (1.2) Table & n.

<sup>12</sup> In the suttas, only nirvana is said to be “unconditioned” (*asaṅkhata*). All others are states that are “conditioned” (*saṅkhata*). The noble eightfold path, since it leads to nirvana, the unconditioned, it is the next “foremost” or best thing. However, since it has a purpose, it is conditioned, but it is *the foremost* of conditioned states.

<sup>13</sup> *Virāgo tesam aggam akkhāyati*.

<sup>14</sup> *Yad idaṃ mada,nimmadano pipāsa,vinayo ālaya,samugghāto vaṭṭ'upacchedo taṇhā-k,khayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam*.

the sangha of the Tathagata's disciples is said to be the foremost of them,  
that is to say, the 4 pairs of persons, the 8 individuals:

this sangha of disciples of the Blessed One is  
worthy of offerings,  
worthy of hospitality,  
worthy of gifts,  
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,  
a supreme field of merit for the world.

- 5 Bhikshus, those who have faith in the sangha, have faith in the foremost (group),  
and those who have such a faith, win the foremost fruit.
- 6 These, bhikshus, are the three kinds of foremost faith.
- 7 This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. The meaning here is spoken thus:

### The verses of the foremost<sup>15</sup>

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 8  | <i>Aggato ve pasannānam<br/>aggam dhammam vijānatam<br/>agge buddhe pasannānam<br/>dakkhiṇeyye anuttare</i>     | For those with faith in the foremost,<br>knowing the foremost truth [Dharma],<br>faithful in the Buddha, the foremost,<br>peerless, worthy of gifts;                                   |
| 9  | <i>agge dhamme pasannānam<br/>virāgūpasame sukhe<br/>agge saṅghe pasannānam<br/>puñña-k,khette anuttare</i>     | for those with faith in the Dharma,<br>in the joy of the peace that is dispassion,<br>for those with faith in the foremost sangha,<br>the supreme field of merit;                      |
| 10 | <i>aggasmim dānam dadatam<br/>aggam puññam pavaḍḍhati<br/>Aggam āyu ca vaṇṇo ca<br/>yaso kitti sukham balam</i> | for those giving gifts to the foremost,<br>the foremost of merits grow,<br>the foremost by way of life and beauty,<br>fame, glory, happiness, strength.                                |
| 11 | <i>Aggassa dātā medhāvī<br/>agga,dhamma,samāhito<br/>deva,bhūto manusso vā<br/>agga-p,patto pamodaṭṭi</i>       | Wise giver of the foremost to the foremost, <sup>16</sup><br>mentally settled on the foremost state,<br>having become a deva or a human,<br>rejoices, having attained to the foremost. |

- 12 This matter [meaning] too was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.<sup>17</sup>

— evam —

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<sup>15</sup> The foll verses are identical in (Catukka) Agga-p,pasāda S (A 4.34), SD 45.13, Cundī Rāja,kumārī S (A 5.32), SD 66.4, and (Tika) Agga-p,pasāda S (It 90), SD 45.17. See (1.2).

<sup>16</sup> “Giver of the foremost to the foremost” is an amplified tr of *aggassa dātā*. Iti,vuttaka Comy explains that the *aggassa* (dative-genitive) can be taken to denotes either the recipient of the gift or the gift itself. “To the foremost,” that is the foremost 3 jewels (ie not any other triad of gems) that he gives to, or “giver of the foremost” means he generates immense merit on account of the giving of the foremost of what should be given (ie appropriate giving to the sangha) (*aggassa ratana-t,tayassa dātā, atha vā aggassa deyya,dhammassa dānam uḷāram katvā tattha puññam pavattetā*, ItA 2:111,5-7). On a grammatical n related to Sadda.nīti (Sadd 390), see ItA:M 2:661 n1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ayam pi attho vutto bhagavatā. Iti me sutan ti.*