

15

(Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta

The Discourse to Gotamī (on the Teaching and Discipline) | A 8.53 = Cv 10.5
Or, (Mahā,pajāpatī) Ovāda Sutta The Discourse on the Advice (to Maha Pajāpatī);
or, Saṅkhitta Sutta, The Short Discourse, or Saṅkhitta (Gotamī) Sutta, the Shorter Gotamī Discourse

Theme: Criteria for the Dharma-Vinaya
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta significance

1.1 OCCURRENCES OF THE SUTTA. The (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta (A 8.53) is also found in the Chapter on Nuns (*bhikkhuṇī khandhaka*) in the Culla Vagga of the Vinaya (Cv 10.5). On account of the simplicity of the Sutta’s main formula—the 8 qualities beginning with “lust” (*rāga*)—and also that it is not a common stock phrase, it is likely to be a relatively early sutta, but belonging to a time when the order of nuns was already in existence, possibly in the 5th year of the ministry or soon after. [1.2.1]

This Chapter on Nuns, however, is probably a late addition to the Vinaya, that is, after the rule for monks have been introduced and compiled, but before the schism between the early schools.¹ Although this text is found in the Vinaya, it is also found in the Aṅguttara, which suggests that it is a relatively early sutta, that is, one belonging to the first period of the Buddha’s ministry.²

1.2 MAHĀ PAJĀPATI GOTAMI

1.2.1 Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is the Buddha’s aunt and foster-mother, who herself nurses the child Siddhattha when his own mother, Mahā Māyā (Gotamī’s sister) dies a week after his birth. Gotamī is admitted into the order in the 5th year of the Buddha’s ministry (BA 4).

Traditionally, she is said to be the first nun,³ but we do not have enough internal evidence for this.⁴ Her ordination is unique in that she is admitted by her acceptance of “the 8 principles to be respected” (*aṭṭha garu,dhamma*), and it should be noted that these principles apply only to her, and not to all the other nuns.⁵

1.2.2 The Aṅguttara records the Buddha as declaring Gotamī to be “the foremost of my nun disciples by way of seniority” (*sāvikanāṃ bhikkhuṇīṇaṃ rattaññūnaṃ*, A 1:25,18). The Dīgha Commentary explains *rattaññū* as “one who knows many days that have passed since being established in going-forth” (*pabbajjato paṭṭhāya atikkantā bahū rattiyo jānātīti rattaññū*, DA 1:143). This clearly applies to Aññā Koṇḍañña (A 1:23,17).⁶ Clearly, here *rattññū* (“one who knows (many) nights”), refers to natural age, rather than monastic seniority.

However, it is problematic if we take this to mean that she is the “first” nun. For, historically, we lack internal clear evidence to support such a tradition. On the other hand, we have texts and references that clearly support the existence of nuns even before Gotamī.⁷ Take, for example, no 6 of the 8 principles by which Gotamī is admitted as a nun, refers to “both orders,” that is, the order of monks and the order of nuns, which, as such, presumes the existence of nuns.⁸

1.2.3 The elder Gotamī’s verses are found in **the Therī,gātha 157-162**. The account of her passing away is found in **the Apadāna** (Ap 2.529-543). Other than such verses—and the drama of Pajāpatī’s

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¹ See K R Norman, “Pali Literature,” in Jan Gonda (ed), *A History of Indian Literature*, vol 7,2, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983:24.

² On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 40a.1 (1.3).

³ A 8.51; Cv 10,1 = V 2:253-256, SD 1.9 (2).

⁴ See SD 1.9 (3-6): nn to **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) etc.

⁵ See **Pabbajjā**, SD 45.16 (2.5).

⁶ On his being the first streamwinner, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11.), SD 1.1. On his attaining arhat-hood (with the other 4 monks), see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,24), SD 1.2. On monks named Koṇḍañña, see **Naḷaka,pāna S** (M 68) @ SD 37.4 (1.2.2).

⁷ See SD 1.9 (3-6): nn to **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) etc.

⁸ SD 1.9 (2.4).

arduous efforts to join the sangha [2.5.2]—we hear very little else about her in the suttas.⁹ However, her humility is clearly evident in her enigmatic but moving verses recorded in **the Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī Apadāna** (Ap 531).¹⁰

1.3 RELATED TEACHINGS

1.3.1 Definitive teaching

1.3.1.1 **The (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta** (A 8.53), probably a teaching given early in Gotamī's monastic life, records her as requesting the Buddha for “Dharma in brief” (*sankhitta dhamma*) or a “brief teaching,” with which to reflect on for her solitary retreat. Such a request usually refers to a solitary meditation retreat that culminates in the practitioner's arhathood.¹¹

Gotamī's “Dharma in brief” comprises a set of 8 criteria for authenticating the true teaching, thus:

<u>Not the true teaching</u> [§2]		<u>The true teaching</u> [§3]	
(1) lust	(<i>rāga</i>)	dispassion	(<i>virāga</i>)
(2) bondage	(<i>saṃyoga</i>)	non-bondage	(<i>visaññoga</i>)
(3) accumulation	(<i>ācaya</i>)	non-accumulation	(<i>apacaya</i>)
(4) great desire	(<i>mah'icchā</i>)	little desire	(<i>app'icchā</i>)
(5) discontent	(<i>asantuṭṭhi</i>)	contentment	(<i>santuṭṭhi</i>)
(6) socializing	(<i>saṅganika</i>)	solitude	(<i>paviveka</i>)
(7) indolence	(<i>kosajja</i>)	exerting effort	(<i>viriy'ārambha</i>)
(8) a difficult burden	(<i>dubhara</i>)	an easy burden	(<i>subhara</i>)

1.3.1.2 According to the Commentaries on the Sutta and its Vinaya version, the result of this exhortation is that Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī attains arhathood (VA 1292; AA 4:137)¹² [1.3.2.3]. These pairs of 8 criteria for authenticating the true teaching will be discussed below [2].

1.3.2 The 10 bases of discourse (*dasa kathā, vatthu*)

1.3.2.1 A related longer set of qualities, known as “the 10 bases of discourse,” conducive to spiritual and awakening, are listed in **the Ratha,vinīta Sutta** (M 24,2.3), **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122,12), **the Kosala Sutta 2** (S 10.30,9), and **the Vatthu Kathā Sutta 1** (A 10.49).¹³ In the Mahā Suññata Sutta (M 122), the Buddha admonishes Ānanda thus:

‘Such talk, Ānanda, concerning austerity [effacement], conducing as a support for mind's release, and that leads to complete disillusionment, to fading away (of lust), to ending (of suffering), to inner peace, to higher knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana; that is to say,

- (1) talk about desiring little,
- (2) talk about contentment,
- (3) talk about solitude,
- (4) talk about aloofness from company [not socializing],
- (5) talk about exerting effort,
- (6) talk about moral virtue,
- (7) talk about mental concentration,
- (8) talk about wisdom,
- (9) talk about liberation,

⁹ She is however prominently featured in **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142), SD 1.9, & an important teaching on the criteria for true Dharma is given to her at (**Mahā Pajāpatī Ovāda S** (A 8.53) = V 2:258 f, SD 102.3, which closely parallels **Satthu, sāsaṇa S** (A 7.83), SD 102.4.

¹⁰ Ap 2.17.27-25/531): see **Dh 97 @** SD 10.6 (3.4).

¹¹ Two well known examples incl those of Māluṅkyā,putta, in (**Arahatta) Māluṅkyā,putta S** (S 35.95), SD 5.9, and of Miga,jāla, in **Miga,jāla S** (S 35.64), SD 44.2. Cf Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya, who awakens as an arhat upon hearing the Buddha teaching him the “Dharma in brief”: (**Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10), SD 33.7.

¹² She is already a streamwinner when the Buddha first visits Kapila,vatthu, and expounds **Maha Dhamma,pāla J** (DhA 1:97). On her Apadāna verses, see Ap 2.17.27-25/531): see **Dh 97 @** SD 10.6 (3.4).

¹³ Respectively, M 24,2.3/1:145 (SD 28.3), M 122,12/3:113 (SD 11.4), S 10.30,9/5:67, A 10.49/5:129.

(10) talk about the knowledge and vision of liberation—I shall utter such talk.’

(M 122,12/3:113), SD 11.4

The introduction, “Such talk ... that is to say, ...” is found only in this Sutta.¹⁴

1.3.2.2 This well known set of 10 qualities is also found in **the Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 = U 4.3), where the Buddha teaches them to the monk Meghiya. There it is called the “talk concerned with austerity that is conducive to the opening of the heart.”¹⁵ This set forms the third of the 5 qualities that “bring about the full maturing of the liberation of mind not yet fully matured.”¹⁶

This “opening of the heart” refers to the practice of calm and insight to overcome and ward off the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) (AA 2:275, 4:162). Such a practice leads to spiritual liberation. As the Buddha declares in **Dh 372**, both samatha and vipassana¹⁷—that is, concentration and wisdom—must both be harmoniously cultivated, just as a bird flies on its two wings.¹⁸

1.3.2.3 The (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta is also simply known as **the Saṅkhitta Sutta**, the Short Sutta, reflecting the fact that Gotamī requests for a “short” (*saṅkhitta*) teaching. The Buddha gives her two contrasting sets of qualities—the first, of unwholesome qualities; the second, of wholesome qualities—to reflect on, clearly, on account of her personality. This, then, is a record of Gotamī’s taking leave of the Buddha to go into solitary meditation retreat, as a result of which she attains arhathood [1.3.1.1].

More definitively, we can call it **the Saṅkhitta (Gotamī) Sutta**, the Shorter (Gotamī) Sutta. This title not only reflects the short teaching (*saṅkhitta dhamma*) she requests from the Buddha and receives, and on which she is to reflect as part of her meditation in a solitary retreat. It also stands in contrast to a longer Sutta, where she receives another, better known, set of teachings—the 8 rules of respect (*aṭṭha garu-dhamma*)—her acceptance of which constitutes her ordination. This discourse is known as **the (Mahā Pajāpati) Gotamī Sutta** (A 8.51).¹⁹

The well known narrative behind the teaching details the events leading up to Gotamī’s entry into the monastic community by the Buddha. It is in contrast to this longer (*vitthata*) Gotamī Sutta that the namesake at **A 8.53** is called **the Saṅkhitta Sutta**, “the Shorter Discourse” to Gotamī. However, since they are records of two different events, it is more helpful to call A 8.53, **the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta**, which is more descriptive of its contents.

1.4 RELATED SUTTAS

1.4.1 Satthu,sāsana Sutta (A 7.83)

1.4.1.1 Like the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta, **the Satthu,sāsana Sutta** (A 7.83),²⁰ too, deals with a set of criteria for authenticating the Dharma-Vinaya. This teaching, taught to Upāli by the Buddha, similarly as a “Dharma in brief” upon his request, however, differs in applying the well-known *nibbidā* formula. The key passage of the Satthu,sāsana Sutta runs as follows:

Upāli, whatever things that you may know, that these things do *not* lead to revulsion, to dispassion [letting go], to cessation (of suffering), to inner peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana, you should definitely take it that “This is *not* the Dharma, this is *not* the Vinaya, this is *not* the Teacher’s teaching.”

¹⁴ Some of these qualities are mentioned separately, eg **Jiṇṇa S** (S 16.5) says that this passage constitutes Mahā Kassapa’s lion-roar regarding his forest-dwelling (S 16.5/2:202); so too in **Mahā Gosiṅga S** (M 32), he describes the ideal monk in the same terms; **Piṇḍola S** (U 4.6/42 f); **Vaṅganta,putta Upasena Tha** (Tha 581).

¹⁵ *Kathā abhisallekhikā ceto,vivarāṇa,sappāyā*. See (3.11) above.

¹⁶ A 9.3 = U 4.1 (SD 34.2).

¹⁷ Dh 372: There is no (true) meditation without wisdom; | there is no (true) wisdom without meditation || In whom there are both meditation and wisdom, | he is indeed in nirvana’s presence. (*N’atthi jhānam apaññassa | paññā n’atthi ajhāyato || yamhi jhānam ca paññā ca | sa ve nibbāna,santike*).

¹⁸ This famous imagery actually describes the life of a true renunciant: D 2,66/1:71 = M 51,15/1:346 = 112,14/-3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f. See also SD 41.4 (1.4.2).

¹⁹ A 8.51/4:274-279 = V 2:182 f (SD 102.1).

²⁰ A 7.83/4:143 (SD 102.4).

But, Upāli, whatever things that you may know, that these things <i>do</i> lead	
to revulsion, ²¹	<i>nibbidāya</i>
to dispassion [letting go],	<i>virāgāya</i>
to cessation (of suffering),	<i>nirodhāya</i>
to inner peace,	<i>upasamāya</i>
to direct knowledge,	<i>abhiññāya</i>
to awakening,	<i>sambodhāya</i>
to nirvana. ²²	<i>nibbānāya samvattati.</i> (A 7.79/4:143), SD 104.1

1.4.1.2 Note that the criterion, “dispassion” (*virāga*) [2.1], is common to both Suttas. Since both sets of criteria deals with the same task—the authentication of the Dharma-Vinaya—we can surmise that both share the same goal, that is, the spiritual life leading to self-awakening and nirvana. While the Satthu,sāsana Sutta criteria (the *nibbidā* formula) deals with the mental level of training, the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta emphasizes more on its social aspects. These different emphases reflect the idiosyncrasies or spiritual needs of the person to whom the teaching is directed.

1.4.1.3 The criteria taught to Upāli in the Satthu,sāsana Sutta is the well known and well structured *nibbidā formula*—suggesting that it is a relatively late teaching, probably belonging to second period of the Buddha’s ministry.²³ The criteria given to Gotamī in the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta seems less systematic and rare, suggesting that it is likely to be an older formula, and probably belongs to the first period.

This notion is also supported by the fact that Gotamī must have received the teaching soon after her going-forth, which is in the 5th year of the Buddha’s ministry [1.2.1]. It is likely that the Satthu,sāsana Sutta—with its *nibbidā* formula—is given to the younger Upāli (the nephew of the elder Upāli, *bhāgin-eyya upāli*), ordained by his own uncle.²⁴

1.4.2 (Dasaka) Abhabba Sutta (A 10.100)

1.4.2.1 Like the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta, **the (Dasaka) Abhabba Sutta** (A 10.100), too, gives a set of criteria for “quality control,” but in terms of attaining arhathood. It gives an early sutta list of these negative qualities that we must overcome and uproot before we can become arhats, that is, (1) lust (*rāga*), (2) hate (*dosa*), (3) delusion (*moha*), (4) anger (*kodha*), (5) grudge (*upanāha*), (6) denigrating [hypocrisy] (*makkha*), (7) spite (*palāsa*), (8) jealousy (*issā*), (9) miserliness (*macchariya*), and (10) conceit (*māna*).²⁵ As such, it more closely parallels the Satthu,sāsana Sutta (A 7.83) [1.2.1].

1.4.2.2 This is an old list of 10 mental impurities because it recurs in a number of early suttas. Most of them, for example, recur in **the Vatthūpama Sutta** (M 7), where they are called “mental impurities” (*cittassa upakkilesa*), and where the first quality is given as “covetousness and rampant greed” (*abhijjhā,visama.lobha*).²⁶

1.4.2.3 A similar list of 8 pairs of impurities in are given in **the Dhamma Dāyāda Sutta** (M 3).²⁷ A similar shorter list of 12 “faults of a recluse” (*samaṇa,dosa*) is found in **the Cūḷa Assa,pura Sutta** (M 10).²⁸ Some of these terms recur in the Sutta Nipāta. *Kodha*, *upanāhī* (a form of *upanāha*) and *pāpa*,

²¹ See *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1.

²² *Etam hi upāli attha,samhitam etam dhamma,samhitam etam ādi,brahma,cariyakam etam nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati.*

²³ While the “first period” is roughly the first 10-20 years of the Buddha’s ministry, the “second period” covers the last 25-35 years. See SD 40a.1 (1.3).

²⁴ Ap 1.9 f. See ApA 367,³² where his story is told; but the Apadāna (Ap 91,19-93,16), said to be his in ApA, is a second Ap of Upāli (1) the elder. (CPD: Upāli 4): <http://pali.hum.ku.dk/cpd/search.html>. Cf (**Durabhisambhava**) **Upāli Sutta** (A 10.99), SD 30.9.

²⁵ A 10.100/5:209 (SD 98.14).

²⁶ M 7,3-5/1:37 f (SD 28.12).

²⁷ M 3,8-15/1:15 f) & SD 2.18 (3) & Table 3. The Sutta comy discusses these 18 mental impurities (MA 1:168-170): for summary, see M:ÑB 1179 n87.

²⁸ M 40,3+5/1:1:281 f (SD 41.8).

makkhī (“bad and denigrating” or “badly denigrating”) occur in **the Vasala Sutta** (Sn 116a). *Lobha, macchariya* and *kodha* occur in **the Tuvāṭaka Sutta** (Sn 929) in the Atthaka Vagga, one of the earliest strata of the early Buddhist texts.

1.4.2.4 Such evidence shows that there was probably a core list of negative qualities from a very early stratum of the teaching, which was extended or amplified, depending on the teaching situation. Although such lists often recur, they are rarely ever identical as a set. This shows that the Buddha, when he teaches, would respond to the audience’s needs and improvises appropriate teachings for them. This is also a hallmark of an early oral tradition.²⁹

2 Sutta teaching analysis

2.0 FALSE TEACHINGS AND LIVING

2.0.1 Early Buddhism accepts that there is a physical world out there. However, we can neither really know nor need to know what it really comprises. This is because of the nature of our senses. They can only sense the world in a physical manner, that is, as sight, sound, smell, taste and touch—that is, as objects of our physical sense-faculties. Yet, such a perception of the world is sufficient for us to live meaningfully and purposefully in it, and to wholesomely work our way out of suffering, that is, by way of the mind.

We can only know how our senses work, and this is how our mind works. This is the knowledge that will free us from being “world-bound.” To be bound to the world, being caught up with external realities, means that we are fooled and misled by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self, that is, **the 3 characteristics** (*lakkhaṇa*), which are the hallmarks of all (*sabba*) of such existence.³⁰ [2.1.2.4]. However, we are constantly fooled and consistently misled only when we do not really understand their true nature. When this understanding arises, so does our liberating wisdom.

2.0.2 A **false teaching** is one that is unable to fully free us from the world and worldliness. False teachings or systems are those that are rooted in greed, hate, or delusion, **the 3 roots** (*mūla*) of unwholesome motivation,³¹ and we can also include fear, making them **the 4 biases** (*agati*).³² As long as we are unawakened—especially when we are unmindful, our actions or non-actions are rooted in one or other of these 4 biases. The painful fact is that when any of the 4 biases overwhelms us, the other three are likely to lurk in our minds, too, further working on our bias.

In **the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta** (A 8.53), the Buddha tells his former foster-mother, the nun Gotamī (and other monastic practitioners, and indirectly to us, too), to watch out for the tell-tale signs pointing to the fact that we are not really practising the teaching as he has taught us. It is *not* the Dharma-Vinaya, *not* the Buddha’s teaching when we detect any of these 8 negative qualities, that is, (1) lust, (2) bondage, (3) piling up, (4) great desire, (5) discontent, (6) socializing, (7) indolence, and (8) being a difficult burden.

What appear as an inspiring or liberating religious teaching or practice can still delude us with imaginative ideas and “benefits” of community (tribalism) and commitment (crowd control). We are ourselves still stuck in the mire of biases and fanaticism, so that we are moved by greed, hate, delusion or fear to express ourselves, or to succeed in life, or to get things done by controlling others. We might not know what all this means so that we are caught up in cultism, for example. Even then, if we truly understand the nature of our biases (on account of greed, hate, delusion or fear), we might just be able to get out of the situation unscathed or not too badly.

2.0.3 If our ends are biased, our means are likely to be biased, too. This means that what we wish for, or really get, would be also rooted in *greed, hate, delusion or fear*—despite our “good” intentions. Here, the means seems to “justify” the end, in the sense that we rationalize our goals on account of the fact that

²⁹ See **Oral tradition**, SD 58.1.

³⁰ On the 3 characteristics, see SD 19.13 (1). On the “all” of existence, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SDd 7.1.

³¹ On the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*), see **Mūla S** (A 3.69/1:201-205), SD 18.2 & **(Kamma) Nidāna S** (A 3.33) @ SD 4.14 (1.5).

³² On the 4 biases (*agati*), see **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,4+5), SD 4.1.

we desire pleasure and plenty; we hate whatever or whoever that hinders or lessen such goals. We are deluded by the notion that it is all right if “I” have these drives to be “more” or “better” than others, or perhaps because others have these drives, too, so “I” have to be “more” or “better” than what I am or have now. We simply fear pain or failure, not understanding what it really is, or to what what it really leads us.

We will now examine each pair in the (Dhamma,vinaya) Gotamī Sutta’s two sets of 8 criteria for authenticating the true teaching, especially in terms of Buddhist training, that is, moral virtue, mental cultivation (meditation), and wisdom. We shall discuss the first pair (“Lust and freedom from lust”) [2.1] in some detail as it forms the basis for an understanding of the other criteria.

2.1 LUST AND FREEDOM FROM LUST

2.1.1 Lust (*rāga*)

2.1.1.1 *Rāga* literally means “dye, colour.”³³ Figuratively, lust tends to colour the mind, that is, make an object of attraction seems more than what it really is. Simply, *rāga* refers to the way that an unawakened person tends to see the world and react to it. More specifically, this tendency is called “sensual lust” (*kāma,rāga*). The term *kāma* (sensuality) has two key senses, that is, (1) subjective sensuality, or “sense-desire,” and (2) objective sensuality, or the 5 sense-objects.³⁴ Here, the former is meant, that is, a mental projection and distortion of our sense-experiences.

“Lust” here means a powerful craving, a driving need, like a dirty, tired, thirsty and hungry traveller seeking respite. Unlike a traveller our dirt, tiredness, thirst and hunger are mental. As such, we might not even notice any of them, but simply seek to feed them, instead of letting go (*virāga*) of them.

2.1.1.2 As an underlying defilement or **latent tendency** (*anusaya*), *rāga* is the key and first latent tendency (*rāgānusaya*), and ignorance (*āvijjā*), is the last (*avijjā’nusaya*). The latent tendency of lust has a contrasting bad twin, that is, aversion (*paṭighānusaya*): if we lust, we also dislike what thwarts our craving or grasping after our objects of lust. Hence, lust, aversion and ignorance are the 3 key latent tendencies.³⁵

For the benefit of our better understanding and more effective working to remove these latent tendencies, the suttas further break them down into a set of 7 latent tendencies, that is, those (1) of sensual lust (*rāgānusaya*), (2) of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), (3) of conceit (*mānānusaya*), (4) of views (*diṭṭhānusaya*), (5) of doubt (*vicikicchā’nusaya*), (6) of lust for existence (*bhavānusaya*), and (7) of ignorance (*avijjā’nusaya*): These are the latent mental forces that keep us in the rut of suffering and fuel our continued existence or rebirth, so long as we are unawakened.³⁶

2.1.1.3 There is an active counterpart of the 3 latent tendencies that lurk just below our conscious mind, so to speak, directing our every action when we are not mindful and work to reject them. These are the **3 unwholesome roots** (*mūla*) of action—greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—where the first root is none other than an active form of *rāga*.³⁷

The deepest of the 3 roots is that of delusion, fed by storage root of ignorance; hence, it is the subtlest yet the strongest and most insidious of the roots. Deluded, we do not see things as they really are. So we are nose-led by greed to run after what we see as being pleasurable and promising, and hate goads us into rejecting what we see that anything not helpful in our quest for pleasure.

2.1.1.4 In meditation practice, *rāga* is the first mental and basic mental hindrance we have to deal with. It is coupled with hate as the dvandva, “covetousness and displeasure” (*abhijjhā,domanassa*).³⁸ This is a shorthand for the better known **5 mental hindrances** (*pañca nīvaraṇa*). “Covetousness” refers to the

³³ It comes from √RAJ, “to colour,” and works both as a verb (*rajati*) as well as a noun (*rāga*). The Vinaya, eg, records how the notorious group of 6 monks, making themselves up with “face colour” (*mukha,rāga*) (V 2:107).

³⁴ Technically, the 2 are respectively known as *kilesa,kāma* (sensual defilement) and *vattu,kāma* (sense-object): see eg **Puṇṇ’ovāda S** (M145,3/1:267 ≈ S 35.88/4:60 f), SD 20; also SD 38.4 (3.1.2) & SD 41.4 (2.3.1).

³⁵ See eg S 36.3 @ SD 31.1.

³⁶ D 33,2.3(12); A 7.11-12; Pm §587/123; Vbh §816/341; Yam 268; Vism 22.60. See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

³⁷ See (**Kamma**) **Nidāna S** (A 3.33) @ SD 4.14 (1.5). On how the 3 trainings (*ti sikkhā*) lead to the giving up of the 3 unwholesome roots, see (**Abhabba**) **Tayo,dhamma S** (A 10.76,5-6), SD 2.4.

³⁸ See SD 13.1 (4.2).

first of the 5 hindrances, that is, sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*). More specifically, “displeasure” refers to the second hindrance, that of ill will (*vyāpāda*), which is the other side of sensual desire, as it functions to reject whatever does not serve to promote our desires and its objects.

Rāga then manifests itself as the last three of the mental hindrances. When we are unable to obtain what we desire, we tire mentally and physically: we are confronted with sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*). As the mind and body tire, being teased by *rāga*, we fall deeper in mental hindrance and are overwhelmed with restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), planning ahead and struggling with fear, guilt, and other demons of the past. Caught in this troubling rut, we begin to doubt (*vicikicchā*), uncertain about our own ability to deal with ourselves or work things out.

Any of these hindrances can, by itself, arise to taunt us, so that we want to give up on our mental cultivation.³⁹ The last of the 4 “focuses of mindfulness” (*satipaṭṭhana*)—**the contemplation of dharmas** (*dhammānupassanā*)—fully deals with the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances, where we contemplate a hindrance (1) as it is, (2) when it is absent, (3) when it arises, (4) on letting it go, and (5) the non-arising further of that hindrance.⁴⁰

2.1.2 Freedom from lust (*virāga*)

2.1.2.1 If *raga* refers to colour and colouring, we can also experience it as running or discolouring, that is, when we summon our mental strength towards removing *rāga*, a process or state known as ***virāga***, literally, “without lust.” As a process, *virāga* means “fading away” of lust, that is, by “letting go” (its active aspect) of the object of lust. In the simplest terms, this is to regard the sense-experiences just as they are, nothing more, nothing less. This is tersely phrased in the famous **Bāhiya’s teaching** as taking the sense-experiences objectively, just as they are, that is,

in the seen	there will only be the seen;	
in the heard	there will only be the heard;	
in the sensed	there will only be the sensed;	
in the known ⁴¹	there will only be the known.	(U 1.10), SD 33.7 = (S 35.95,12), SD 5.9

As a state, *virāga* is translated as “dispassion,” that is, the absence of passion or lust. The two senses are closely related, as the former is the process (passive or active), while the latter is the resultant state. The process of “letting go” of *rāga* is by practising, for example, Bāhiya’s teaching.

The state of “dispassion” arises from progressive “fading away” of *rāga*. We often see both senses at play, especially in the term ***rāga, virāga***, “fading away or letting go of lust” and “dispassion,” as stated in **the Gilāna Sutta 1** (S 35.74).⁴² In other words, as our tendency to lust fades away, we feel a deepening sense of joyful release. We see this liberating process in a series of different contexts [2.1.2.2].

2.1.2.2 The idea of “**fading away**” (passive) or “**letting go**” (active) of mental hindrances becomes more prominent in contexts where *virāga* is preceded by impermanence, and followed by ending or “cessation” (*nirodha*). There are at least two key forms of this formula: “the shorter impermanence formula” (which we will examine here), and “the longer impermanence formula” [2.1.2.3].

The shorter impermanence formula covers impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering), and letting go (of defilements), as, for example, famously laid out in **the Ānāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 118), thus,

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| (13) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating <u>impermanence</u> , | I will breathe in’; |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating impermanence, | I will breathe out’; |
| (14) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating <u>fading away</u> (of lust), | I will breathe in’ |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), | I will breathe out’; |
| (15) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating <u>cessation</u> (of suffering), | I will breathe in’; |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), | I will breathe out’; |

³⁹ On the 5 mental hindrances, see *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

⁴⁰ See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36), SD 13.3.

⁴¹ On tr *viññāta* as “the known,” see SD SD 3.13 (5.2.1.5+5.2.1.5).

⁴² S 35.74/4:47 @ SD 70.1.

- (16) He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe in’;
 He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe out.’
 (M 118,21/3:83), SD 7.13

This is, in fact, found in the fourth tetrad (steps 13-16)—“observing dharmas [realities]” (*dhammānu-passanā*)—of the 16 stages of the breath meditation. It should be noted here that “contemplating” (*anupassanā*) here, in practical terms, has two aspects. As a beginner or one who has not attained dhyana, we must actively, but mindfully (in a gentle but firm way), direct our mind towards “seeing” these 4 aspects or stages in terms of impermanence, fading away, cessation and letting go.

The whole cycle is repeated in the second half of the Ānāpāna, sati Sutta—“perfecting” the practice as a “focus of mindfulness” (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—by way of observing or contemplating the dharmas (in the same words)—leading up to the climax: “**Having seen with wisdom the abandonment of covetousness and displeasure** [2.1.1.4], **he closely looks on with equanimity.**”⁴³ In short, with the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances, we go on to attain dhyana.⁴⁴

2.1.2.3 **The longer impermanence formula** adds the word “change” (*vipariṇāma*), but omits the ending phrase, “letting go” (*paṭinissagga*), thus: impermanence, change, fading away (of lust), and cessation (of suffering). The sense of the phrase “letting go” is implicit in the passages applying the longer impermanence formula, as we shall see. (For this reason, it is called the “longer” impermanence formula.)

The Atta, dīpa Sutta (S 22.43) describes how a person uninstructed in the Dharma regards any or all of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) in terms of an abiding self or essence. As a result, when any of these aggregates (eg the body) changes, he is troubled.

The wise, instructed practitioner or disciple sees no abiding self in any way in any or all of the 5 aggregates, or even outside of them. With this understand, he sees “the impermanence, change, fading away and cessation” of the aggregates. Seeing the aggregates as being impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change, he is untroubled. Being untroubled, he lives happily. One who thus lives happily is said to be “quenched to that extent” (*tad-aṅga nibbuta*).⁴⁵

This Sutta teaching is very significant as it shows that we need not be fully awakened to be free from suffering. As long as we keep up the perception of impermanence, we would be free of the pains of those who fail to see the impermanence of existence. However, we must sustain our efforts to enjoy this happiness. For the saints, especially the arhats, such happiness comes naturally, almost without any effort.

2.1.2.4 A very short *virāga* formula comprises abandoning (*pahāna*), dispassion (*virāga*) and cessation (*nirodha*). This can be called the short *pahāna* (abandoning or removal) formula. The three qualities, in fact, correspond with the **3 characteristics** of what are universally impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*).⁴⁶ While these characteristics of true reality need to be understood with insight, “abandoning” (of unwholesome thoughts), “dispassion” (or freedom from lust and displeasure) and “cessation” (of suffering) describes the nature of our mind when we have understood these universal characteristics.

The Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta (S 46) describes the practice of the 10 perceptions, the last six of which are relevant to us here, namely:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (5) the perceptions of impermanence, | <i>anicca, saññā</i> ⁴⁷ |
| (6) the perceptions of suffering, | <i>dukkha, saññā</i> ⁴⁸ |
| (7) the perceptions of non-self, | <i>anatta, saññā</i> |

⁴³ M 118,27/3:85 @ SD 7.13.

⁴⁴ The Sutta goes on to show how the 7 awakening-factors are then perfected, leading on to the “perfection of true knowledge and liberation,” ie awakening itself. See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118,12) & nn, SD 7.13. In advanced practitioners, this stage refers to the emergence from dhyana. Otherwise, it refers simply to a temporary experience of a deep and joyful mental focus reflecting moments of these 4 progressive stages.

⁴⁵ S 22.43/3:42 @ SD 93.8.

⁴⁶ On the 3 characteristics, see SD 19.13 (1).

⁴⁷ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) & SD 16.7 (5).

⁴⁸ See SD 2.23 (3.4.3).

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| (8) the perceptions of abandonment, | <i>pahāna,saññā</i> |
| (9) the perceptions of dispassion, and | <i>virāga,saññā</i> |
| (10) the perceptions of cessation. | <i>nirodha,saññā</i> |

These 6 perceptions, in fact, form the constituents of true knowledge (*vijjā,bhāgiya dhamma*), which are mentioned in **the Dīgh’āvu Sutta** (S 55.3).⁴⁹ Except for (6) the perception of suffering, they are all described in full in **the Giri-m-ānanda Sutta** (A 10.60), although they are not listed as above.⁵⁰

The listing of the perception in the Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta is helpful, as it shows the progression of practice, and how the first triad is related to the second triad. We should begin with the perception of impermanence, which makes us realize that what is impermanent is “suffering” or unsatisfactory. Taking up this perception of suffering, we go on to understand the nature of non-self. The perception of non-self is based on the understanding that what is impermanent and suffering has no essence or abiding entity.⁵¹ Hence, one perception, properly practised, progressively leads into the other.

Similarly, the Girim-ānanda Sutta shows how the perception of abandonment is based on our letting go of all thoughts of sensuality, anger and violence. The perception of dispassion and the perception of cessation refer to directing the mind towards the final goal by reflecting the calm and clear mind, thus: “This is peaceful! This is sublime! That is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving...” that this fading away, this cessation, is nirvana.⁵²

2.1.2.5 Hence, the term *virāga* [2.1.1.4] is often used as a description of nirvana, where it occurs frequently in these stock phrases, “the ending of craving, letting go (of lust), ending (of suffering), nirvana” (*taṇha-k,khaya virāga nirodha nibbāna*),⁵³ or “disgust, letting go, ending, peace...nirvana” (*nibbidā virāga nirodha upasama...nibbāna*).⁵⁴

2.2 BONDAGE AND NON-BONDAGE

2.2.1 Bondage (*saṃyoga*)

2.2.1.1 Whatever brings about bondage has nothing to do with the true teaching; it has to do with false teachings. The native commentary glosses *saṃyoga* as “the rounds” (*vatta*), which clearly refers to “the rounds of life and death,” or samsara (*samsāra*), that is, rebirth (AA 4:137). However, other commentaries are more helpful, especially the Sutta Nipāta Commentary on the line that defines an arhat (here figurative referred to a *nāga*):⁵⁵ “having left behind all bonds that bind” (*sabba,saṃyoge visajja bandhanāni*, Sn 522).⁵⁶

2.2.1.2 More often, “bond,” also a translation of *yoga*, refers to “**the 4 bonds**” (*catu yoga*).⁵⁷ The 4 bonds are also known as the 4 “floods” (*ogha*),⁵⁸ a figurative rendition of the 4 influxes (*āsava*). The Abhidhamma and Commentaries give a list of **4 influxes**,⁵⁹ which is also found in the Nikāyas, that is, the

⁴⁹ See **Dīgh’āvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347), SD 23.16 (1).

⁵⁰ A 10.60/5:110 @ SD 19.16.

⁵¹ See eg **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,12-16), SD 1.2.

⁵² A 10.60,8-10 @ SD 19.16.

⁵³ V 1:5; S 1:136; A 2:118; It 88.

⁵⁴ M 1:431; S 2:223. Further on (2.0), see Analayo, *From Craving to Liberation*, Carmel, NY, 2009:29-43 <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/from-craving.pdf>, or Ency Bsm, sv Rāga.

⁵⁵ *Nāga* here metaphorically alludes to a bull elephant, a king cobra, or serpent spirit (what we would today see as a “dragon”), meaning “a truly noble, wise and liberated individual.”

⁵⁶ Sn 522 @ SD 77.8.

⁵⁷ On the 4 bonds (*catu yoga*), see **Yoga S** (A 4.10/2:10-12), SD 105.1.

⁵⁸ See esp (**Catu**) **Ogha S** (S 45.171/5:59); also V 3:5,27 f; **D 16**,1.12/2:81,26 = 84,5 & passim, **33**,1.11(31)/3:-230,10 f; **MA** 1:62,6 f (ad M 1:6, 22, quoting S 4:256,4; SA 2:65,1 f); **AA** 2:355 (ad A 1:241,24), 3:79,1 (ad A 2:-38,28), 3:321,24 (ad A 3:245,15), 3:395,20 (ad A 3:388,1); **ThaA** 1:202,23, 214,26; **Vbh** 373,34 f; **Dhs** 1:448; **Kvu** 515,2; **Abhs** 32,6; **Mohv** 97,8; **Vism** 7.59/211,1, **22.56**/683,34.

⁵⁹ The 4 asavas are an extended form of the older set of 3 *asavas*, also called the 3 graspings (*ti,gaha*), viz, craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*) and views (*diṭṭhi*), on account of which arise, respectively, the notions “this is mine,” “this I am,” and “this is my self”: see eg **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,18/1:38), SD 28.12. See SA 3:137; AA 3:13; DhA 3:233; ThaA 2:47; ThīA 8, 11; ItA 2:16.

influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj'āsava*).⁶⁰

These 4 are also known as “influxes” (*āsava*) or “floods” (*ogha*) because they “flow” (*āsavati*) into our being as sense-experiences through the 6 sense-doors. They flood and overwhelm us, skewing our perceptual process, so that we drown in them, suffering, and yet we never seem to have enough of them.

It's like Sisyphus who is punished by the gods to push a huge boulder up a hill, and it rolls down as soon as it reaches the hill-top. Sisyphus runs after it to the bottom, and pushes it all over again, and ever again. In fact, he seems to enjoy it!⁶¹

The influxes arise and overwhelm us because of our unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and ignorance.⁶²

2.2.1.3 The Sutta Nipāta Commentary explains *saṃyoga* here as referring to “**the 10 mental fetters**” (*dasa saṃyojana*),⁶³ “beginning with sensual bondage” (*kāma,yog'ādika*) (SnA 2:428).⁶⁴ The 10 mental fetters are as follows:

(1) self-identity view,	<i>sakkāya,diṭṭhi</i> ⁶⁵	} the 3 fetters	} lower fetters
(2) doubt,	<i>vicikicchā</i> ⁶⁶		
(3) clinging to rituals and vows,	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa</i> ⁶⁷		
(4) sensual craving (lustful desires), [2.1]	<i>kāma-c,chanda = kāma,rāga</i> ⁶⁸	} higher fetters	
(5) ill will,	<i>vyāpāda = dosa</i> ⁶⁹		
(6) craving for form existence,	<i>rūpa,rāga</i>	} higher fetters	
(7) craving for formless existence,	<i>arūpa,rāga</i>		
(8) conceit,	<i>māna</i> ⁷⁰		
(9) restlessness, and	<i>uddhacca</i> ⁷¹		
(10) ignorance.	<i>avijjā</i>		

The 10 fetters are the defilements that hold us back in the suffering of samsara (the repetitive cycle of births and deaths). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), so called because they bind us to the

⁶⁰ See (Cātu) Yoga S (S 45.172/5:59); (Catukka) Yoga S (A 4.10/2:10-12), SD 105.1. See also D 16,1.12/2:82, 16,2.4/2:91, 33,1.11(31)/3:276 (“floods,” *ogha*) = 33,1.5(4)/3:276, 33,1.11(32+33)/3:230 (“yoking,” *yoga* + “unyoking,” *visamyoga*); Pm 1.442, 561, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937. For details, see eg **Sabb'āsava S** (M 2), SD 30.3.

⁶¹ The French author, **Albert Camus**, in his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), sees Sisyphus as personifying the absurdity of human life, but concludes, “one must imagine Sisyphus happy” as “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart.” See **Yodh'ājīva S** (S 42.3), SD 23.3 (1).

⁶² **Sabb'āsava S** (M 1) admonishes us to guard our senses, so as to reduce, even stop, the influxes. 5 methods of sense-restraint or overcoming distractions are given in **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20), namely: (1) thought displacement, (2) aversion therapy, (3) non-attention or avoidance, (4) thought reduction or mental analysis, and (5) will-power (M 20), SD 1.6. The perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) can also be applied in all our sense-experiences to ward off the influxes: see **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,23), SD 3.11.

⁶³ See **Kīṭṭa,giri S** (M 70) @ SD 11.1 (5.1); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3(2); also S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377.

⁶⁴ Or, *kāma,yog'ādayo saṃyogā* (DhA 4:140). *Kāma,yoga* is sometimes mentioned with *bhava,yoga*, “the yoke of existence” (that is, life, death and rebirth), esp **Kāma,yoga S** (It 95).

⁶⁵ See “**I**” the nature of identity, SD 19.1.

⁶⁶ See *Vicikicchā*, SD 32.9; also **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(5) & **The notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40.1.

⁶⁷ See also **Superstition**, SD 36.7.

⁶⁸ See also “**Mine**” the nature of craving, SD 19.3.

⁶⁹ See *Vyāpāda*, SD 32.5; also **Mūla S** (A 3.69/1:201-205), SD 18.2.

⁷⁰ See **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a.

⁷¹ See *Uddhacca,kukkucca*, SD 32.7 (2.1).

lower realms, that is, the sense-world. The rest are the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya*), that bind us to the higher realms, that is, the form and the formless worlds.⁷²

2.2.2 Non-bondage (*visamvoga*)

2.2.2.1 Whatever has to do with non-bondage has the mark of the true teaching. The most important point to remember is that we should, in this life itself, aspire to break at least the first 3 fetters [2.2.1.3]. First, we should try to understand what they are,⁷³ and then practise the perception of impermanence⁷⁴ so as to break them for good. A consistent practice of the perception of impermanence guarantees us the attaining of streamwinning, the first step in the path to full awakening.⁷⁵

2.2.2.2 The second half of **the (Catukka) Yoga Sutta** (A 4.10) gives a description of how we can sever our mental bondages in terms of breaking the bonds of sensuality, of existence, of views, and of ignorance. The Sutta prescribes that we should “understand, as it really is, its arising and passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape” in regard to each of the influxes. In the case of the last influx—that of ignorance (*avijjā’sava*)—the Sutta specifically instructs that this formula should be directed to “the 6 sense-bases.”⁷⁶

2.2.2.3 The commentary on **the Cūḷa Sīha, nāda Sutta** (M 11,7), explains that the arising (*samudaya*) of the views of being (*bhava, diṭṭhi*) and non-being (*vibhava, diṭṭhi*) are due to any of these 8 conditions (*aṭṭha-ṭ, thāna*), that is, the 5 aggregates, ignorance, sense-contact, perception, thought, unwise attention, bad friends and another’s voice [Pm 1:138]. Their disappearance (*atthaṅgama*) is the path of streamwinning which eradicates all wrong views. Their gratification (*assāda*) may be understood as the satisfaction of psychological need that they provide; their danger (*ādīnava*) is the continual bondage that they entail; the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them is nirvana (MA 2:11).⁷⁷

2.3 ACCUMULATION AND NON-ACCUMULATION

2.3.1 Accumulation (*ācaya*)

2.3.1.1 Craving and ignorance are at the roots of the unawakened life. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means not knowing what we really need in life; craving (*taṇhā*) is the drive for succour and solutions outside of ourself, without making any self-effort in self-understanding, in truly knowing our self. In our ignorance, we *measure* others, and then see ourself as lacking what others “have.” Unconsciously, we see what are worth *having* as the objects of our physical senses: sights, sounds, smells, taste and touches. “Sounds” include praises and pleasantries from others, which we view as self-affirming, and thus desirable. Hence, we mistake having to be true happiness.

As such, we keep on wanting what we think we do not *have*, and keep seeking for them: things, money, pleasure, power, holiness, and love. Upon getting these things—or, we think we have a hold on them—we grasp them and cling on to them. We do not even know that we are doing this. Ignorance is a blind man carrying Craving, who is lame, and who directs and decides where to go.

What we grasp take the shape of our hand: we become those thoughts that make us grasp, we are shaped by the things that we grasp, so that we are less than human by unmindfully, but deliberately,⁷⁸ breaking the precepts, and compelling others to do the same.⁷⁹

2.3.1.2 Whatever induces us to accumulate things or build up our negative habits “to have” has nothing to do with the true teaching. According to the *Netti, pakaraṇa*, a post-canonical work on exegesis (a

⁷² On how these fetters are broken, leading to the attaining of sainthood, see **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 3.85), SD 3.3-(2). On the worlds mentioned here, see SD 1.7 (Table 1.7).

⁷³ On the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁷⁴ On the perception of impermanence, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (5) & **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,23), SD 3.11.

⁷⁵ On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

⁷⁶ **(Catukka) Yoga S** (A 4.10/2:11 f), SD 105.1.

⁷⁷ See also **Chachakka S** (M 148) where the latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses (M 148.28-33/3:285), SD 26.6.

⁷⁸ Karma can be deliberate and planned, or habitual, both whether knowingly or unknowingly (motivated by delusion). On how karma can be unconscious, see **The unconscious mind**, SD 17.8b.

⁷⁹ On the precepts and being human, see SD 38.4 (4.4.3.2). .

critical explanation of the early Buddhist texts), “There are 2 types of craving, the wholesome and the unwholesome. Unwholesome craving leads to samsara, but the wholesome is the way of non-accumulating, that is, the abandoning of craving” (Nett 87).⁸⁰

While unwholesome craving goes with the cycle of life and death, wholesome craving goes with non-accumulation (*apacaya*), that is, the abandoning of craving (Nett 87). Here, craving (*taṇhā*) is used in a neutral sense of “motivating factor,” whose moral tone depends on the whether the motivation is rooted in the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion, or rooted in the wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion.

2.3.1.3 Unwholesome craving (*akusala taṇhā*) is the desire to “have,” an acquisitive and accumulative impulse that are instinctively sense-based. Wholesome craving (*kusala taṇhā*), on the other hand, is the desire to “be,” a *mental* cultivating of the lightening and enlightening drive that keeps the senses in check, and in the service of true happiness.

The desire to “have” is unwholesome because what we see as worth having—the sense-objects—are all impermanent, and hence, unsatisfactory. **The desire to “be”** is wholesome insofar as it is understood to be impermanent, unsatisfactory and lacking any essence. Whatever happiness we can “have” by way of the senses is only in the moment, in letting it go, just as we breathe in, we must then breathe out.

The desire to be enhances our happiness when we have the mind and heart to remember and rejoice in the good that we have enjoyed and the good that others have done for us.⁸¹ While sense-based pleasures last only the moment, mind-based joy can be sustained as long as we are mindful of it, such as in the cultivating of lovingkindness. Yet, we must see even this “joy of being” is also of the nature of rising and falling, conditioned, changing and becoming other.⁸²

2.3.2 Non-accumulation (*apacaya*)

2.3.2.1 The Buddha Dharma teaches us how to let go of things. On a simple level, this means learning to truly enjoy what we have in a way that benefits us and others (or at least not harming anyone). When we truly enjoy what we are, we feel satisfied, and so we do not need *want* them any more. It’s like eating our favourite food. Once we are full, we stop eating, feel satisfied and happy.

2.3.2.2 Non-accumulation, on a spiritual level, also means understanding the difference between having and being. Whatever we have is external to us, and so it is really insecure and can easily be lost. The good that we are remains with us forever, even in our memory. In lovingkindness meditation, for example, we can recall some happy memory, no matter how long ago it was. *We are* happy recalling such good.

2.3.2.3 Often enough in our lives, no matter how poor we may be, there are times when we have more of a good thing than we need, so that we can, and should, share it with others. Recall the days when we were young children, when we had a bit of delicious food, we would share it with others. We might have intangible goodness such as strength and time, which we may share with others by helping them when they need it, or spending quality time with them, such as listening wisely to them.

It is natural that we not need and cannot “collect” good things. Their goodness arises from our experiencing them and letting them go. Good is *not* what we have: it is what we *are*. It is like our breath: we take in a breath, and then we breathe it out again. We never hold our breath, not too long anyway. So, too, love: it is only love when we show it and give it away. Goodness, then, is what we habitually and wholesomely are.

2.3.2.4 One of the best examples of non-accumulation is the practice of meditation. A good meditator learns not to accumulation anything, whether they are things or views. The first step to proper effort in meditation is to sit comfortable. This means simply letting go of all sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, that is, letting them rise and fall away, and never holding them back.

⁸⁰ *Tattha taṇhā duvidhā kusalāpi akusalā’pi. Akusalā saṃsāra, gāminī, kusalā apacaya, gāminī pahāna, taṇhā* (Nett 87); cf Peṭk 97. Cf the 3 kinds of cravings, viz, for form (*rūpa, taṇhā*), for formlessness (*arūpa, taṇhā*) and for cessation (*nirodha, taṇhā*) (D 33,1.18(16)/3:216).

⁸¹ See **Kataññu Kata, vedī Sutta** (A 2.11.2), SD 3.1(1.4.4).

⁸² See also Reflection, “To have or to be?” R166, 2010.

Then, we notice how feelings rise and fall away. We simply smile at them and let them come and let them go without being drawn to pleasant feelings or rejecting unpleasant one. When we notice neutral feelings, we reflect on their impermanence.

So, too, with thoughts: we see them for what they are: mind-made states running back to the past, bringing on remorse and guilt, or rushing into the future, bringing on restlessness. In either case, we notice how lust, hate, delusion and fear try to mislead us away from our meditation object.

Then, as our minds become more calm, we begin to better understand what really hinders our mental well-being and spiritual progress. We cultivate joyful insights into true reality, see impermanence, suffering, even non-self, as it is, and more clearly and directly experiencing the 4 noble truths for ourselves, thus ennobling ourself.

2.4 GREAT DESIRE AND LITTLE DESIRE

2.4.1 Great desire (*mah'icchā*). Whatever that entices us to have great desires (more of “having”) [2.3.2.2], that is, an unwholesome drive for ever more things, tangible or intangible, is rooted in a false teaching. The idea of renunciation (*nekkhama*) should be at the heart of every monastic, and those who are on a meditation retreat. Renunciation simply runs contrary to the currents of the world, which is that of great desires, that of seeking sensual pleasures for its own sake, and desire ever more of them.

The greater our desires for the worldly, the deeper we fall under the power of our senses, meaning that we see only the surface of things and that of appropriating them—this is craving. Where there is craving, there is also its bad twin, ill will or dislike. Caught and swinging with the pendulum between liking and disliking, we fall deeper into physical stress and mental dullness.

2.4.2 Little desire (*app'icchā*). One of the key characteristics of a true teaching is that it teaches us to have little desire. The commentator Dhammapāla explains that a true practitioner has few wishes (*app'icchā*) in 4 ways, that is,

- (1) he desires little in terms of requisites (almsfood, robes, shelter, medication);
- (2) he does not make known what strict ascetic practice (*dhutaṅga*)⁸³ he is doing;
- (3) he does not reveal that he is learned in the texts; and
- (4) he does not reveal his spiritual attainment.

(UA 228)

Monastics are often admonished with a “talk on desiring little” (*app'icchā, kathā*). This refers to having only what is necessary for supporting life so that we can practise the holy life, and which facilitates freedom of movement, going where we wish to dwell for our solitary retreat. Such a monk moves about freely, only with his robe and bowl, like a bird freely flying on its two wings.⁸⁴ [2.5.2.2]

2.5 DISCONTENT AND CONTENT

2.5.1 Discontent (*asantutthi*). A false teaching preys on our discontent, falsely promising some kind of panacea and after-life salvation in some imaginative heaven or supreme state. As long as we do not understand the nature of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), we will remain unsatisfied and discontented. Discontent arises in our inability or unwillingness to attend to and appreciate the goodness that is right before us.

We often have enough, or even more than enough, for our daily lives. Indeed, if we are diligent, we will have enough for what we need; if we measure ourselves against others, we will never have enough for our greed. Better than merely wishing for something—what is good for us, that is—is to live our lives jappily and exert diligence so that we attain some spiritual goal, especially streamwinning.⁸⁵

2.5.2 Contentment (*santutthi*)

2.5.2.1 One of the first teachings that renunciants will be given is that all they need are the 4 supports (*paccaya*)—almsfood, robes, shelter and health [2.7.1.3]—and that they should be contented with what they get. They should be *contented* with them in 3 ways, that is, regarding what he has received (*yathā*,

⁸³ For a full list of strict ascetic practices, see **Bakkula S** (M 124/3:124-128) + SD 3.15 (2).

⁸⁴ D 2,66/1:71 = M 51,15/1:346 = 112,14/3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f.

⁸⁵ See **It̐ha S** (S 5.43), SD 12.4(2).

lābha,santosa), in terms of his strength (*yathā,bala,santosa*), and with what is befitting (*yathā,sāruppa,santosa*). These are the twelvefold contentment regarding a renunciant’s supports.⁸⁶

2.5.2.2 The Buddha Dharma teaches us contentment as a basis for true happiness. True contentment begins with our accepting and understanding our own weakness and strengths. Unconditional acceptance of self and of others is the practice of lovingkindness. Accepting our mistakes and those of others, allows us to learn from them: this is compassion, that is, being kind to ourselves and to others even when we or they do not deserve it. This takes some generosity and humility.

Rejoicing in the goodness of others brings us joy, too. It means that our lovingkindness and compassion have become stronger. The bottom line is that despite all our efforts, the world is what it is. If we cannot change the world, we should at least change ourselves.⁸⁷ In fact, when we better ourselves, we will also view the world with greater lovingkindness, compassion and gladness, and understanding that we all fare according to our karma. This is called equanimity, the highest form of contentment.⁸⁸

2.5.2.3 While “desiring little” [2.4.2] concerns *external* aspects, “contentment” covers the *internal* or mental aspects of the practitioner. “Talk on contentment” (*santuṭṭhi,kathā*) is, for the practitioner, communicating only what is necessary and wholesome. “Necessary” here refers to communication related to personal health and personal discipline. “Wholesome” refers to communication related to learning and practising the Dharma, and proper mental cultivation.

“Talk on contentment,” then, conduces to the living a simple life and lessening of thoughts for the sake of quicker and better mental focus.⁸⁹ In other words, it has to do with the cultivation of inner peace and clarity for the purpose of attaining insight wisdom. Simply put, to be contented means to live as if we would die tomorrow, and to learn as if we would live forever.⁹⁰

2.6 SOCIALIZING

2.6.1 Socializing (*saṅganika*)

2.6.1.1 Socializing for renunciants and retreatants is unhelpful to our spiritual training because our task here is to renounce the world (even temporarily) so that we can examine and understand our own minds, and calm and clear them for gaining insight wisdom into true reality. **Socializing**, while not bad in itself, is a very demanding process for two important reasons.

2.6.1.2 Firstly, we have to clearly understand ourself before we can effectively and beneficially communicate with others. However, often we are not even aware of how we think or feel, and simply react to other people, off the cuff, without any forethought. We tend to act in haste and repent at leisure. Often, we might not even know what to repent about, or our guilt is simply a conditioned reflex from which nothing is learned that helps our spiritual growth. So, we keep on repeating our mistakes, and wonder why we are hurting significant others and ourselves.

2.6.1.3 Secondly, when we try to communicate with others, we have to deal with a world of actions, thoughts and emotions arising through the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. Very often, we are able to experience only the external or appearances of those we are communicating. Even when we feel we know someone else’s mind, we are not always able to communicate effectively or beneficially with that person. We are mostly goaded on by urges and attractions.

2.6.1.4 So, for the sake of harmony or popularity—more often out of lust, hate, delusion or fear—we try to agree with others, or to pretend to. This leaves us dissatisfied with our actions, and if this is a habitual process, we *become* our habits: hollow zombies, reactive robots. In short, socializing is often distract-

⁸⁶ See **Anaṅgaṇa S** (M 5), SD 37.7 (3.1); (**Anubuddha**) **Bhikkhu S** (S 47.3), SD 24.6a (2.3.1(2)). See also SD 38.3 (4.4).

⁸⁷ On “the world” as our senses, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

⁸⁸ On the 4 divine abodes, see **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5.

⁸⁹ See UA 229-231.

⁹⁰ Here, “to live as if we would die tomorrow” refers to our diligence in practising and seeing (*ehi,passika*) the Dharma for ourselves “here and now” (*sandiṭṭhika*); and “forever” is a wordplay on the “timeless, or time-free” (*akālika*) quality of the Dharma. See **Dhammānussati**, SD 15.9 esp (2).

ing, especially when we want to know ourselves better. We simply need to free ourselves from the madding crowd, and spend time with ourself.

2.6.2 Solitude (*paviveka*)

2.6.2.1 Solitude is a necessary quality of the true teaching and a vital factor for personal development. To truly and beneficially understand ourself, we need to look within, into our mind and heart. As already stated [2.6.1], we need to rise above the unthinking crowd and our own inner crowd of thoughts and emotions that overwhelm us through our 6 senses. The notion of solitude is not that we should avoid people for its own sake, but that we need to spend some time getting to know ourself truly in-depth but seeing directly into our own mind. It is only through self-realization are we able to understand others and the world.

2.6.2.2 The “talk on solitude” (*paviveka, kathā*) concerns the practitioner’s total devotion to spiritual training. Dhammapāla quotes **the Mahā Niddesa** on the 3 kinds of solitude (*viveka*),⁹¹ namely:

- (1) solitude of body (*kāya, viveka*): living in a solitary dwelling (in terms of body) and avoiding social intercourse (such as, being involved in some kind of business);
- (2) solitude of mind (*citta, viveka*), that is, the 8 attainments, that is, the 4 dhyanas and 4 formless attainments), or more simply, deep meditation, and working towards streamwinning, with the solitude from the self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rules and rituals.
- (3) solitude from life-substrates (*upadhi, viveka*),⁹² that is, nirvana.

(Nm 26 f, 140, 157, 341; UA 163, 231, 328, 396; DhA 3:129)⁹³

2.6.2.3 In monastic and meditation training, the “talk on non-socializing” (*asamsagga, kathā*) concerns the *avoidance* of the following 5 kinds of socializing (*samsagga*), on account of which a monk might leave the order to become a layman due to being captivated by a beautiful village girl through any of these 5 ways:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) socializing by way of <u>hearing</u> : | he hears about her great beauty; or, |
| (2) socializing by way of <u>seeing</u> , | he sees her great beauty; or |
| (3) socializing by way of <u>conversation</u> : | he converses with her, and is captivated by her giggling,
etc; or |
| (4) socializing by way of <u>enjoyment</u> : | defilements arise in him through using something given
to him by a woman in the present or in the past; or |
| (5) socializing by way of <u>the body</u> : | through such intimacy as holding a woman’s (or a nun’s)
hand. (UA 232) |

The same teaching applies, mutatis mutandis, to nuns. It reminds lay meditators to keep to the precepts and practise sense-restraint so that they are able to focus their energies to mental cultivation.

2.6.2.4 **The Hālidakāni Sutta** (S 22.3) and **the Dāru-k, khandha Sutta 1** (S 35.241) states the same points in a single verse and addressed to the laity:

Here, houselord, one lives associating with laypeople—he rejoices with them, he sorrows with them. He is happy when they are happy, and sad when they are sad. He involves himself in their current affairs and duties as if they were his own.⁹⁴ It is in such a way that one is intimate with the village. (S 22.3/3:11 @ SD 10.12; S 35.241/4:180 @ SD 28.5)⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Viveka* and *paviveka* are synonyms.

⁹² *Upadhi* is an early term referring generally to whatever sustains this life and rebirth, and specifically to “acquisitions” that constitute such a state, and which can be translated as: life-substrate, acquisition (that supports life) “prop” or basis of life (and rebirth) (M 66, 14/1:453). Comys generally explain it as fourfold: (the objects of) sense-pleasures (*kām’upadhi* or *kāma, guṇ’upadhi*), the 5 aggregates (*khandh’upadhi*), defilement (*kiles’upadhi*), and volitional constructions (ie karmic activities) (*abhisankhār’upadhi*) (MA 2:112, 3:169, 5:60; SA 1:31; ItA 2:64; SnA 436; cf MA 4:55, 56).

⁹³ For details, see SD 34.2 (3.3).

⁹⁴ Such intimacy with the laity is considered unbecoming and unskillful of a monastic. See also **Nāgadatta S** (S 9.7/1:200 f) & **A 3:116 f**. The phrase *samāna, sukha, dukkha* (“same in joy and sorrow”) (D 3:187; S 1:201) is exem-

2.7 INDOLENCE AND EXERTING EFFORT

2.7.1 Indolence (*kosajja*)

2.7.1.1 Indolence or laziness clearly works against the true teaching by preventing our diligence in moral virtue and mental cultivation. More specifically, indolence here refers to not exerting ourselves in meditation, especially in reference to the hindrance of sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*). In this connection, we find “indolence” included amongst those negative qualities bring them about, that is, “discontent, apathy, fidgeting, indolence, after-meal drowsiness, and mental sluggishness.”⁹⁶

2.7.1.2 Even the laity is exhorted to be diligent so that they gain well-earned riches, enjoy them, be free of debt, and be free of blame—a teaching found in **the Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41).⁹⁷ A similar advice against laymen being lazy is also found in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31).⁹⁸ If the laity is admonished to be diligent physically and socially, the monastics are exhorted to exert themselves mentally and spiritually.

There are at least two important reasons for this: (1) monastics are avowed renunciants who depend on the laity for their basic needs [2.7.1.3], and (2) the purpose of renunciation is to undergo training for the sake of awakening in this life itself [2.7.1.4].

2.7.1.3 Monastics are avowed renunciants who fully depend on the laity for their **basic physical needs** or supports (*paccaya*), that is, almsfood, robes, shelter and health needs.⁹⁹ As a rule and in spirit, a monastic is an economically insecure person.¹⁰⁰ An economically employed or wage-earning monastic is clearly a contradiction in terms.¹⁰¹ In short, a renunciant is not for hire!¹⁰² Such a monastic loses both ways. Since he habitually breaks his monastic vows (the rule that he has undertaken to follow), he is not a renunciant. He does not spiritually benefit from the layman’s career since he is not a layman. Such a monastic is said to have fallen from the elephant’s back.¹⁰³

2.7.1.4 **The purpose of renunciation** is to awaken in this life itself. The monastic life provides renunciants with the ideal conditions for attaining spiritual liberation and awakening in this life itself. As such, monastics have to undertake the 3 “higher” trainings,¹⁰⁴ that is,

plified in a negative sense at **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3,18/3:11), but in **Sigāl’ovāda S**, it has a positive sense, characteristic of a true friend (D 31,21/3:187): see SD 3.16.

⁹⁵ See also SD 34.2 (3.4). For a detailed study, see *Viveka, nissita*, SD 20.4.

⁹⁶ *Aratī, tandī, vijambhikā bhadda, sammado cetaso ca līna, cittani*: **(Āhāra) Kāya S** (A 1.2,1-5/1:3 f), SD 16.3; see also **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna Vagga** (S 46.2/5:64 f), SD 62.9; AA 1:33,27 qu Vbh 352,3.

⁹⁷ A 5.41/3:45 f @ SD 2.1; see also **Dīgha, jānu S** (A 8.54), SD 5.10.

⁹⁸ D 31,13 @ SD 4.1.

⁹⁹ These are the 4 “supports” (*paccaya*) of life (Mv 1.30 @ V 1:58) offered by the laity (SD 37.7 (3)), but which monastics cannot ask for, unless given an “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) to do so or from relatives: see Ariyesako, *The Bhikkhus’ Rules: A guide for laypeople*, 1998:69-71 (see index). These supports are to be used mindfully and reflectively: **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-16/1:10), SD 30.3.

¹⁰⁰ See SD 24.6a (2.3.1.3)(3).

¹⁰¹ Such a monastic, eg, breaks the rules against handling money. See **Maṇi, cūḷaka S** (S 42.10): “For whomever gold and silver [money] are allowable, for him the 5 cords of sense-pleasure are allowable, too.” (S 42.10,8/4:326), SD 4.21; also **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

¹⁰² See **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (1.4.3); also SD 38.2 (3.3.3).

¹⁰³ According to Buddhaghosa, going forth outside the Buddha’s teaching brings small gain, so one who falls away from that falls away only from mundane attainment. He meets no great suffering, just as one who falls from the back of a donkey is only covered with dust. But the going forth in the Dharma brings great gain—the paths, the fruits and nirvana. Thus, one who falls away from this meets great suffering, just as one who falls from the back of an elephant (MA 4:165). On an extreme level, **(Arahatta) Susīma S** (S 12.70) calls such a one “a thief of the Dharma” (*dhamma thena*) (one who ordains for selfish reasons, or who transgresses monastic rules), who would face suffering more painful than any earthly punishment, his conduct “results in more suffering, bears more bitter fruit, and it even leads one to the lower realms” (S 12.70,62/2:128), SD 16.8.

¹⁰⁴ See D 33,1.10(47)/3:219; **Ti, sikkhā S** (A 3.88) + SD 24.10c (2). See also **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6; **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2).

- (1) “higher moral training” (*adhisīla sikkhā*), living under the restraint of the monastic code and right livelihood;¹⁰⁵
- (2) “higher mind training” (*adhicitta sikkhā*), practising meditation, and attaining dhyana to fully overcome any need for sensual pleasures or attraction to them;¹⁰⁶ and
- (3) “higher wisdom training” (*adhipaññā sikkhā*), the realization, or at least a good understanding, of the 3 universal characteristics, especially that of non-self.¹⁰⁷

This training is famously declared to bring about the “fruits of recluseship” (*sāmañña,phala*),¹⁰⁸ a teaching model often elaborated in the longer suttas, especially in all the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya.¹⁰⁹ Such a training clearly precludes indolence and demands diligence and effort.

2.7.2 Exerting effort (*viriy’ārambha*). Teachings on exerting effort are found in many suttas. The “talk on exerting effort” (*viriy’ārambha,kathā*), for example, is exemplified in such discourses as **the Atta,kārī Sutta** (A 6.38),¹¹⁰ **the (Nīvaraṇa Bojjhaṅga) Āhāra Sutta** (S 46.51),¹¹¹ and in **the (Āhāra) Kāya Sutta** (S 46.2), where it is said:

There are, bhikkhus, the element of initiating effort (*ārambha,dhātu*), the element of endeavour (*nikkama,dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama,dhātu*). Frequently giving wise attention to them is the food for the arising of unarisen awakening factor of energy, and for the fulfillment by cultivation of the arisen awakening factor of energy. (S 46.2/5:66), SD 62.9

The Sutta’s Commentary explains that these three are progressive stages of increasing strength (SA 3:141 = Vism 132). This is, as such, a more refined version of the 4 right efforts.¹¹²

A simpler and better known term for “exerting effort” (*viriy’ārambha*) is diligence (*appamāda*). It is said to be the foremost of wholesome states.¹¹³ If we cultivate heedful diligence, it will be beneficial both in this world as well as in the hereafter, meaning that heedful diligence can lead us even to awakening itself.

The significance of heedful diligence is highlighted by the fact that **the Dhammapada** dedicates the whole of its second canto—**the Appamāda Vagga** (Dh 21-32)—to it. The very first verse of this canto declares its vital role in our spiritual life, thus:

<i>Appamādo amata,padam</i>	Heedful diligence is the path to the death-free; ¹¹⁴	
<i>pamādo maccuno padam</i>	heedlessness is the path of death.	
<i>appamattā na mīyanti</i>	The heedfully diligent do not die;	
<i>ye pamattā yathā matā</i>	the heedless are as if already dead.	Dh 21

2.8 A DIFFICULT BURDEN AND AN EASY BURDEN

2.8.1 A difficult burden (*dubhara*)

2.8.1.1 The “difficult burden” here refers to either the difficulties of living a household life, with all its duties, chores and difficulties, or the habit of thinking about sensual pleasures or being drawn to them. Indeed, the house-bound is burdened by both difficulties. Not only does the household life demands that

¹⁰⁵ For an overview, see *Sīlānussati*, SD 15.11.

¹⁰⁶ For an overview, see *Dhyana*, SD 8.4.

¹⁰⁷ See eg **Samādhi S 1** (A 4.92), SD 95.7; *Sīlānussati*, SD 15.11 (2.1). On “higher wisdom,” see SD 41.3 (3.1).

¹⁰⁸ On the “fruits of recluseship” (*sāmañña,phala*), see SD 8.10 (3).

¹⁰⁹ SD 25.1 (2.1).

¹¹⁰ A 6.38 (SD 7.6).

¹¹¹ S 46.51 (SD 7.15).

¹¹² See SD 34.2 (2.4).

¹¹³ See eg **(Chakka) Appamāda S** (A 6.53), esp SD 42,22 (2); also **Kusala S 1** (S 46.31/5:91), **Patiṭṭhita S** (S 48.56/232, where *appamadā* is defined as *cittam rakkhati*, “he guards the mind”).

¹¹⁴ *Amata,pada*, as an epithet of nirvana, is usu tr as “the death-free state,” but here the context is that of spiritual training. Cf Dh:N 66 n21 & K R Norman, “Mistaken ideas about nibbāna,” 1994A:217 f = *Collected Papers* 6, 1996:9-30.

we seek to satisfy our daily physical needs—which means we have to work or earn a living—but we also have to deal with our social tasks and emotional needs.

In the **(Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.20), there is a wordplay on “time” (*kāla*), that is to say that sensual pleasures are “time-consuming” (*kālika*). The Dharma, on the other hand, “is visible right here, immediate, inviting us to come and see, accessible, to be personally known by the wise.”¹¹⁵ In simple terms, the world is caught up in sense-pleasures, burdened with them, and so is not free to truly enjoy real happiness. Sensual pleasures, in other words, are never satisfying—that is why we keep wanting them, like a habit-forming drug. On the other hand, one who practises the Dharma diligently will see its benefits in this life itself.

2.8.2 An easy burden (*subhara*)

2.8.2.1 The suttas often remind us never to be so busy that we do not even have time for ourselves, that is, for personal development and mental cultivation. If we are too busy with *doing* things so that we may *have* things, it will only lead to our own undoing. We need to look for an opening out of such busyness, to see ourselves for what we really *are*, so that we uplift our *being* to a true level of joy and liberation. Only then we are really capable of being truly happy, so that we are resourceful, creative and empowered to help others, too. It is best to be healthy ourselves before we can effectively help the sick.

In this spirit, the **Karaṇiya Metta Sutta** (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8) famously says that one who is “skilled in good” (*attha, kusala*) or one understands the goal of the spiritual life, would be one “**with little busyness and living a simple life**” (*appa, kicco ca sa-l, lahuka, vutti*),¹¹⁶ unburdened by worldliness, and free from negative emotions. Living such a contented and simple life, a renunciant is as free as a bird, as the suttas say:

Here, just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden, so, too, he is content with robes to protect his body¹¹⁷ and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.¹¹⁸

2.8.2.2 The contentment and simplicity of a renunciant is to free him from the burden of worldliness, because his real burden or true task is that of working for spiritual liberation, that is, to find an opening out of this worldliness. In the **Sambādh’okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26), Mahā Kaccāna famously declares

How the attaining of ‘the open’ (*okāsa*) in the closed [the confined] (*sambādha*)¹¹⁹ has been discovered by the Blessed One, who knows, who sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of physical and mental pain,¹²⁰ for gaining the right way,¹²¹ for realizing nirvana. (A 6.26,2), SD 15.6

The word, “open” (or “opening,” *okāsa*), here, means both a “spaciousness” (as against the suffocating crowdedness or narrowness of the household life), and an “opportunity” for us to get out and be free of that crowdedness or narrowness for the spiritual openness and freedom. This opening is mental cultivation, especially one leading to the attaining of dhyana.¹²²

¹¹⁵ S 1.20,5+15+20-23 @ SD 21.4.

¹¹⁶ Khp 9,2 = Sn 1.8,2 @ SD 38.3.

¹¹⁷ As in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,66/1:71), SD 8.10.

¹¹⁸ D 2,66/1:71= M 51,15/1:346 = 38,34/1:268 = 112,14/3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f.

¹¹⁹ Here, “the closed” or “the confined” refers to the household life. *Sambādhe okāsādhigamo*, where the reconstructed Skt version reads *sambādhe avakāṣe viśeśādhigamā*, “the realization of a distinctive opening in the closed”: see SD 15.6 (2.3.2).

¹²⁰ *Dukkha, domanassa*, sometimes tr as “pain and sadness.” See Walshe 1996 (D:W 589 n627). For a broader sense of *domanassa*, see §3 n on *abhijjhā, domanassa*.

¹²¹ “For gaining the right way,” *nāyassa adhiḡamāya*. See Intro (3.3) above.

¹²² A related teaching (following the teachings above, and leading to the “open”) is that of the 10 kinds of “talks concerned with austerity that is conducive to the opening of the heart” (*kathā abhisallekhikā ceto, vivaraṇa, sappāyā*) [1.3.2.2].

The Buddha Dharma, in other words, is the “opening” through which we, of the world, are able to go into the “openness” of liberating wisdom and spiritual bliss in this life itself. After death, we continue to enjoy the truly “open,” that is, nirvana, or at least, happy rebirths in spacious planes that are conducive to Dharma practice and living.

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The Discourse to Gotamī (on the Dharma-Vinaya)

A 8.53 = Cv 10.5

1 At one time, the Blessed One was residing in the hall of the gabled house¹²³ in the Great Wood outside Vesālī.

Then, Mahā Pājā,patī Gotamī approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and stood at one side. Standing thus at one side, Mahā Pājā,patī Gotamī said this to the Blessed One:

“It is good, bhante, if the Blessed One were to teach me Dharma in brief, so that I may dwell alone, aloof (from society), heedful, exertive, and resolute.”¹²⁴

2 “Gotamī, whatever things that you may know, that these things

(1) conduce to <u>lust</u> ,	not being lust-free,	<i>rāga</i>
(2) conduce to <u>bondage</u> ,	not to non-bondage,	<i>saṃyoga</i>
(3) conduce to <u>accumulation</u> ,	not to non-accumulation,	<i>ācaya</i>
(4) conduce to <u>great desire</u> ,	not to little desire,	<i>mah’icchā</i>
(5) conduce to <u>discontent</u> ,	not to content,	<i>asantuṭṭhi</i>
(6) conduce to <u>socializing</u> ,	not to solitude,	<i>saṅgaṇika</i>
(7) conduce to <u>indolence</u> ,	not to exerting effort,	<i>kosajja</i>
(8) conduce to <u>being a difficult burden</u> ,	not to being an easy burden,	<i>dubhara</i>

then, Gotamī, you should definitely take it that

‘This is *not* the Dharma, this is *not* the Vinaya, this is *not* the Teacher’s teaching.’

3 But, Gotamī, whatever things that you may know, that these things

(1) conduce to <u>being lust-free</u> ,	not to lust,	<i>virāga</i>
(2) conduce to <u>non-bondage</u> ,	not to bondage,	<i>visaññoga</i>
(3) conduce to <u>non-accumulation</u> ,	not to accumulation,	<i>apacaya</i>
(4) conduce to <u>little desire</u> ,	not to great desire,	<i>app’icchā</i>
(5) conduce to <u>content</u> ,	not to discontent,	<i>santuṭṭhi</i>
(6) conduce to <u>solitude</u> ,	not to socializing, [281]	<i>paviveka</i>
(7) conduce to <u>exerting effort</u> ,	not to indolence,	<i>viriy’ārambhāya</i>
(8) conduce to <u>being an easy burden</u> ,	not to being a difficult burden,	<i>subhara</i>

then, Gotamī, you should definitely take it that

‘This *is* the Dharma, this *is* the Vinaya, this *is* the Teacher’s teaching.’”

— evaṃ —

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¹²³ “The hall of the gabled house,” or simply “the gabled house” (*kūṭ’āgāra,sālā*) located . See SD 45.1 (2).

¹²⁴ This is normally a stock passage for a monk seeking leave to go into solitary retreat and later to emerge as an arhat, eg (Arahatta) Mālunḱyā,putta S (S 35.95,16-17, SD 5.9). We know from Comy that he is an *ehi,bhikkhu* arhat (MA 5:91; Divy 22.14): see SD 45.16 (1.4). However, it is odd that, if he is already an arhat, the Buddha still needs to admonish him on patience. However, we must admit that this is a teaching of “supreme patience,” clearly difficult for any ordinary monk, but worthy of an arhat. It also serves as an excellent example for us.