

3

Timsa Bhikkhu Sutta

The Discourse on the Thirty Monks • S 15.13

Or, **Timsa,matta Sutta**, The Discourse on the 30 or So

Theme: A good word for the wise is sufficient

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008, 2014

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 SUMMARY AND TITLE

1.1.1 Sutta summary. A group of 30 Pāvā¹ forest monks, following some ascetic practices, but still unawakened, go before the Buddha [§§1-3]. The Buddha, seeing their readiness, decides to teach them Dharma [§4]. The teaching is essentially a perception of suffering (*dukkha,saññā*) [§§5-7] in terms of cosmic cyclic time [§§8-10] and rebirth [§§11-20]. That suffering is painfully recurrent and predictable is truth enough for us to want to be liberated from samsara [§§21-23]. As a result of the teaching, the monks attained arhathood [§24].

1.1.2 The 30 monks

1.1.2.1 The Vinaya Commentary says that they were “sons of rajahs, of good fortune, bonded as a group in body and mind, were wandering about” (*rāja,kumārā rūpena ca cittena ca bhaddakā vagga,bandhena ca vicaranti*, VA 971). It adds that “because they were brothers by one father of the king of Kosala, they were known as ‘the group of reputable elders’ (*bhadda,vaggiya-t,thera*).”² (VA 1106). The Commentaries³ identify them with the 30 monks of Pāvā (V 1:253; S 2:187) [2.3 & below].

1.1.2.2 The Commentaries also refer to them as “the fortunate group of boys” (*bhadda,vaggiya kumāra*), who meet the Buddha, who converts them, in the silk-cotton forest grove (*kappāsika vaṇa,-saṇḍa*).⁴ This is soon after Yasa’s conversion,⁵ and the Buddha’s meeting with the matted-hair fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers.⁶ On account of their seniority—being amongst the first to be converted—some monks think that they should have been given precedence over the Great Pair [Sāriputta and Moggallāna] (DhA 1:100).

1.1.2.3 **The Tuṇḍila Jātaka** (J 388) relates how, in the distant past, they were reborn as a group of 30 persons of loose morals (*timsa,dhutta*). The Bodhisattva was then reborn as a pig named Mahā Tuṇḍila (Big Snout) and had a brother, Culla Tuṇḍila. An old woman of a village near Benares adopted and loved them as her own children. One day, the loose men (the 30 young men) made her drunk so that she agreed to sell Culla Tuṇḍila.

Terrified at the news, Culla Tuṇḍila ran to Mahā Tuṇḍila, who advises him that it is the nature of pigs to be slaughtered, and to face death bravely. This teaching is called Tuṇḍila’s advice (*tuṇḍil’ovāda*). When the people of Benares heard this, they flocked to hear Mahā Tuṇḍila. The king adopted the pigs as his sons, and appointed Mahā Tuṇḍila to the seat of judgement.

He taught the 5 precepts to the people, who observed them. In due course, he retired to the forest, but went on teaching for 60,000 years until his death. Culla Tuṇḍila is identified with Ānanda.

¹ *Pāveyyaka*, v1 *pāṭheyyaka* (V 1:253). DPPN takes **Pāveyyaka** as the right one and says that it is the “name given to the inhabitants of Pāvā.” **Pāvā** (Skt Pāvā, modern Padaraona; D 2:218) is mentioned in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 6) as being located across the Kakuṭṭha from Kusinārā (D 4.13/2:126 n, 6.19/2:162), SD 9. **Saṅgīti S** (D 33) calls it a city of the Mallas, the people known as Pāveyyakā Mallā (D 33,1.2/3:207). **Pāṭheyya**, says V Comy, is a kingdom situated to the west of the Kosala country (VA 1105). Malla and Kosala are two of the 16 great states (*mahā,janapada*): see SD 4.18 App. See V:O 2:146 n.

² VA 240, 1106; SA 2:188; AA 1:100, 148, 299; ThaA 2:160, 3:203; ThīA 3; DhA 1:97; CA 3.

³ VA 1106; DhA 2:32.

⁴ J 1:82; DhA 1:97, 100; alluded to at DhA 1:87.

⁵ On **Yasa** and his conversion, see SD 11.2.

⁶ On the matted-hair fire-worshipping **Kassapa brothers**, see **Āditta Pariyāya S** (S 35.28), SD 1.3 & Mv 1.15-21 @ V 1:24-35.

According to the Dhammapada Commentary, the 30 young men, upon hearing **the Tuṇḍil’ovāda**, “Tuṇḍila’s advice,” gave up their loose (*dhutta*) life-style, and kept to the 5 precepts for 60,000 years (DhA 1:100). This was their past good karma (*pubba,kamma*).⁷

1.1.2.4 **The Mahā,vaṁsa** mentions their conversion as a subject to be represented in the relic shrine of the Mahā Thūpa (Mahv 30.79).

1.2 HIGHLIGHTS

1.2.1 Why the monks attained arhathood so easily

1.2.1.1 According to the commentary on **S 15.13**, on the phrase, “All still have fetters,” *sabbe sa-saṁyojanā* [§3], some of these 30 monks were streamwinners, some once-returners, some non-returners, but none either worldlings or arhats.⁸ Hence, they all have wise faith in the Buddha. All the Buddha has to do is to teach them the appropriate Dharma, and under the right conditions, they would awaken as arhats.

1.2.1.2 This is an example of awakening occurring as a result of listening to the Dharma, which is the first of the 5 grounds for freedom (*vimutt’āyatana*), given in **the Vimmut’āyatana Sutta** (S 5.26), which are as follows:

- (1) listening to the Dharma,
 - (2) teaching the Dharma,
 - (3) reciting the Dharma,
 - (4) reflecting on the Dharma, and
 - (5) meditation.
- (A 5.26), SD 21.5

1.2.1.3 The Vimutt’āyatana Sutta is invaluablely helpful in explaining in some detail how this awakening process works, which we can apply to the case of the 30 monks:

Bhikshus, just as the monk **listens to the Dharma** taught by the teacher or the colleague in the holy life⁹ in the role of a teacher,

he knows the goal and he knows the Dharma.

Knowing the goal and knowing the Dharma,	
gladness	arises in him;
because of gladness,	zest arises;
because of zest,	the body becomes tranquil;
when the body is tranquil,	he feels happy;
a happy mind becomes	concentrated.

This, bhikshus, is the ... ground for freedom where the unfreed mind of a monk, dwelling heedful and exertive, finds freedom;

or where the mental influxes,¹⁰ not wholly destroyed, become wholly destroyed, where the unattained unsurpassed safety from the yoke is attained. (A 5.26,2), SD 21.5

According to the Sutta, upon listening to the Dharma (or as a result of any other 4 grounds), we understand the Dharma and its goal, or rather, understanding the purpose of the Dharma, we truly know what to do with the Dharma. As a result, gladness arises, with that there is zest (or joyful interest), which calms the body down, making both body and mind fully comfortable (“happy”), so that it is totally stilled and mentally concentrated in samadhi, that is, we attain dhyana.

⁷ J 388/3:286-293; VA 971.

⁸ SA 2:159; J 1:82; VA 1106; DhA 1:87; BA 19; VA 971; also DhA 1:100. Comy also says that the “Dharma-eye” (*dhamma,cakkhu*) refers to the 3 paths of streamwinning, once-return and non-return (*tayo’pi hi ete maggā “dhamma,cakkhūti vuccanti, V 971*).

⁹ This is the first of the 5 grounds for freedom. Each of the other 4 grounds occurs in the same way: replace the underscored phrase in the template with the appropriate ground for freedom.

¹⁰ There are the 4 influxes (*āsava*), viz, those of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*dīṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*). The destruction of influxes (*āsava-k,khaya*) is synonymous with the attaining of arhathood. See 30.3 (1.3.2).

With the calm and clear mind from **dhyana**,¹¹ we go on to reflect on the true reality, and so attain one of the stages of sainthood. However, with the destruction of all the mental influxes (*āsava*, that is, those of sense-desire, existence, views, and ignorance), we attain arhathood.

1.2.2 Rebirth

1.2.2.1 The Timsa Bhikkhu Sutta assumes that the notion of rebirth is an accepted teaching and truth. Indeed, the whole teaching of this Sutta rests on an acceptance of rebirth as true and real. This is not our only life; we have lived before numerous lives, and will continue to do so numerous more lives. That is, if we do not work to awaken in this life itself. [§§-24]

The Buddha’s teaching consists of two parts:

- (1) the declaration of the cyclic and endless nature of life or samsara [§§5-10; 1.2.2.2]; and
- (2) we ourselves keep going through a recurring loop of birth, suffering and death [§§11-20; 1.2.2.3].

1.2.2.2 Life is an endless cyclic process that keeps repeating itself [§§5-10]. We are so caught up in this loop that we simply take it for granted, and even find it pleasant and fulfilling. This is well illustrated in the infamous case of **Sisyphus** and his rock, which he rolls uphill, and upon reaching the top, it rolls down again. Sisyphus happily runs after it, reaching back to the bottom of the hill, but it is quite a distance he has to go. Catching up with the rock again, he repeats the whole process again, and again.

Why does he keep on rolling the rock up the hill, well knowing it will roll down again? If we examine our own lives, we will see the answer. Like Sisyphus, we, too, push our rock uphill daily, and it rolls down again at the end of the day. We do it all over again the next day, and so on. In fact, we don’t just roll a single rock, but many of them. We are so caught up with this rock-pushing, running after it, and catching it and pushing it uphill again, that we actually feel a sense of achievement in doing so! That is, until we realize that it is not really enjoyable at all—because we don’t have to do this at all!¹²

1.2.2.3 The second part of the Buddha’s teaching here is **a reflection on suffering** (*dukkha,saññā*). First, the Buddha reminds the 30 monks how often they were reborn as animals (both domestic and wild), and were killed again and again, mainly for food, or being culled for any reason [§§12-17]. It’s interesting that cows are mentioned as being killed, too. This shows that in the Buddha’s time, the notion of cows being sacred has not yet come into vogue.

Then, the monks are reminded how many lives they lived as bandits raiding villages, robbing travelers on the highways, and raping the women of others [§§18-20]. They were invariably caught and beheaded. The blood they have shed on countless such occasions is impossible to measure. Only a hyperbole—the waters of the great oceans of the world—might help us to visualize the immensity of our sufferings. [§§11-20]

1.2.2.4 Philosophically, we can say that the Buddha here declares the same axiom as Socrates, that “an unexamined life is not worth living.”¹³ Here, the Buddha not only challenges us to examine our lives, but reminds us what we will really see at the bottom of it all, not as philosophy, but as a painful reality. These 30 young friends have lived well, and are now invited to examine their lives.

The Buddha does not stop with examining life. Then that would itself become part of the endless cycle. He exhorts us to do something about it: to break the cycle. Where philosophy ends, as it were, spirituality continues. For some of us, however, it only begins here, but it is a worthwhile beginning, as it will break the wheel of life to usher in true freedom and happiness [§§21-23]. Even as the 30 monks listen, their lives are transformed and they attain arhathood [§24].

1.2.3 Anamat’agga.

1.2.3.1 It is plausible that the Pali term *anamatagga* originally incorporated the senses of the Prakrit forms *añāiya*, “without beginning,” and *anavayagga*, “without end.”¹⁴ The Arđhamagadhī forms are *ana-*

¹¹ On how dhyana (*jhāna*) helps here, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (12).

¹² On Sisyphus, see SD 23.3 (1).

¹³ Plato attributes these words to Socrates as part of his final words, before being condemned to death by an Athenian jury, in *Apology* 38a. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>.

¹⁴ A C Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit*, 2nd ed 1928:158 n1

vadagga and *anavayagga*.¹⁵ The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit form *anavarāgra* is especially helpful. It is resolved as *an* (“not”) + *avara* (“lowest”) + *agra* (“highest”), meaning “without the lowest and highest limits.”

1.2.3.2 This sense is also found in the Tibetan *thog-ma dan tha-ma med pa*, “without top and bottom” (Mahāvīyutpatti 37,10). This, then, makes perfect sense and well fits our Pali passages, with the meaning: “with neither a beginning nor an ending.”

1.2.3.3 **Western philologists** seem, curiously, to resolve *anamatagga* as *anama-t-agga*, based on √NAM, “to bend.” This is an adjective of *samsāra*, which probably means “whereof the beginning is not bent off” or “what does not change.”¹⁶ The idea here is that *samsāra* is “eternal,” in the sense that it does not change, or is “always there.” This is an interesting philosophical notion, but is not easy to explain in terms of early Buddhism.¹⁷

1.2.3.4 It is also possible—in fact, preferable, as suggested by **the Critical Pali Dictionary** (CPD)—that *anamatagga* is resolved (as *an-amat’agga*) as *a-muta* + *agga* (from Skt *a* + *amuta* + *agra*), where if (*a*)*muto* = (*a*)*mata*, we have the meaning “of which you cannot say or know that it begins from here or there.”¹⁸

This important term has been discussed in some detail elsewhere.¹⁹

2 The 30 Pāvā monks

2.1 THE 30 YOUNG MEN

Bhadda, vaggiya Sahāyaka Vatthu

The Story of the Fortunate Group of 30 Friends | **Mv 1.4 @ V 1:23 f**
Theme: Better than seeking a woman is to seek the self

1 Then, the Blessed One, having stayed in Benares as long as he wished, left on foot for Uruvelā. Then, the Blessed One, descending from the road, approached a certain forest grove, plunged into it, and sat down under a certain tree.

At that time, a fortunate group of 30 friends,²⁰ with their wives, were enjoying themselves in that same forest grove. One of them, however, having no wife, brought along a female prostitute.²¹ While they were heedlessly enjoying themselves, the female prostitute stole their belongings and ran away.

2 Then, these friends, doing their friend a service, went out seeking for that woman. Wandering about in the forest grove, they saw the Buddha sitting under a certain tree. Seeing him, they went up to him, and asked,

“Bhante, has the Blessed One seen a woman?” (*Api bhante bhagavā ekaṃ itthiṃ passeyyāti*)

“What, young men, have you to do with a woman?” (*Kim pana vo kumārā itthiyā’ti*)

“We, bhante, the fortunate group of 30 friends, with our wives, were enjoying ourselves in this forest grove. One of us, however, having no wife, brought along a female prostitute. While we were heedlessly enjoying ourselves, the female prostitute stole our belongings and ran away. So, we, bhante, doing our friend a service, went out seeking for that woman in this forest grove.”

3 “What do you think, young men?

Which is better for you—

Taṃ kiṃ maññatha vo kumārā

katamaṃ nu know tumhākaṃ varaṃ

¹⁵ Ardhamāgadhī (AMg) *aṇavadagga*; AMg Jaina Mahārāṣṭrī (JM) *aṇavayagga* = P *anamatagga* = *anamadagra*. For a philological analysis, see Pischel, *A Grammar of the Prākṛit Languages* (rev) 1981:§251 (p207).

¹⁶ Pischel, *A Grammar of the Prākṛit Languages* (rev) 1981:§251 n1 (p207).

¹⁷ See SD 28.7a (2.1.5) Sutta usage.

¹⁸ CPD: *an-amata’agga* (1:156).

¹⁹ SD 28.7a (2).

²⁰ “A fortunate group of 30 friends,” *tiṃsā bhadda, vaggiya sahāyaka*. See (1.1.3.1).

²¹ *Vesi* (fem of *vessa*) a low-caste woman, a harlot, prostitute. (1) *vesī*, V 3:138; J 5:425; cpd *vesī, dvāra* (“the door of a *vesī*”), a brothel, pleasure-house (Thī 73). (2) *vesiyā*, V 4:278; Sn 108; Vbh 247; cpd *vesiyā, gocara*, going on almsround to a prostitute’s house or in a red-light area, DhA 3:275; DhsA 151; VbhA 339.

**that you were to seek a woman,
or you were to seek your selves?”**

*yam vā tumhe itthim gaveseyyātha
yam vā attānam gaveseyyāthāti*

“Truly, bhante, it were better for us, that we should seek our selves.”

“Well, then, young men, sit down. I will teach you the Dharma.”

Saying, “Yes, bhante,” this fortunate group of 30 friends saluted the Blessed One, and sat down at one side.

4 The Blessed One gave them a progressive talk—that is to say, he spoke on giving, moral virtue, and the heavens.

He explained

the danger, the vanity and the disadvantages of sensual pleasures, and the advantages of renunciation.

When the Blessed One perceived that the listeners’ minds were prepared, pliant, free from obstacles, uplifted and lucid, then he explained to them the teaching peculiar to the buddhas, that is to say, suffering, its arising, its cessation, and the path.

Then, just as a clean cloth, without any black spots would easily be dyed, even so, as they sat right there on their seats,

the dust-free, dirt-free Dharma-eye arose to them, that
whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease.²²

5 They, having seen the Dharma, attained the Dharma, understood the Dharma, plunged into the Dharma, [23]

having crossed over doubt, gone beyond uncertainty, won spiritual confidence, who, independent of others, dwells in the Teacher’s teaching, said this to the Blessed One:

“May we, bhante, receive the going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence!

May we receive the ordination!”

“Come, bhikkhus!” said the Blessed One, “Well taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the sake of ending suffering!”²³

Just this was the venerable ones’ ordination.

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2.2 THE ORIGIN OF KATHINA

SD 48.3(2.2)

Kaṭhina Ānujānanā

The Allowance of Kaṭhina | Mv 7.1-3 @ V 1:253 f
Theme: How the kathina robe-giving was introduced

1 At that time, the blessed Buddha [the awakened one],²⁴ was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvattihī.

At that time, some 30 monks from Pāvā,²⁵ all forest dwellers, all alms-round-goers, all users of dust-heap cloth, all three-robe wearers,²⁶ were going to Sāvattihī to see the Blessed One, for the entry into the

²² *Yam kiñci samudaya, dhamaṃ sabbam taṃ nirodha, dhammaṃ ’ti*, as in the case of Yasa, Mv 1.7.6 @ V 1:16.

²³ *Etha bhikkhavo ’ti bhagavā avoca, svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, caratha brahma, cariyam sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāyāti*. This means that although they have realized the Dharma-eye, they have not yet attained arhathood, and have yet to reach the path’s end. On this ordination formula, see SD 45.16 (1.2).

²⁴ *Tena samayena buddho bhagavā...* This manner of referring to the Buddha is found in the suttas only as part of his 9 virtues [SD 15.7 (1.4) passim], rare in the Vinaya, but common in Comys and later works.

rains-retreat, but they were unable to reach in time.²⁷ So, they broke journey²⁸ and entered the rains-retreat at Sāketa.

They spent the rains in a state of longing,²⁹ thinking:

“The Blessed One is staying close by, just 6 yojanas [leagues]³⁰ from here, but we are not able to see the Blessed One!”

Then, at the end of three months, having observed the rains-retreat, after the invitation³¹ has been done,³² while it was still raining, the waters and mud still abound, their robes all drenched,³³ and feeling exhausted, they approached the Blessed One in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park, in Jeta’s grove, at Sāvaththī.

Having gone up to the Blessed One, they saluted him and then sat down at one side.

2 Now it is the custom for the blessed awakened ones³⁴ to exchange friendly greetings with visiting monks.³⁵ So the Blessed One said this to the monks:

“How are you, bhikkhus? I hope you are bearing up, I hope you can keep going; I hope you’ve spent a comfortable rains-retreat, in fellowship, on cordial terms, harmoniously, and were not wanting in alms-food.”³⁶

“It is bearable, Blessed One; we can keep going, bhante; we have, in fellowship, on cordial terms, harmoniously, spent a comfortable rains-retreat and were not wanting in almsfood.

Here we are, bhante, going to Sāvaththī to see the Blessed One, for the entry into the rains-retreat, but we were unable to reach in time. So, we broke journey and entered the rains-retreat at Sāketa.

We spent the rains in a state of longing, [V 1:253] thinking:

“The Blessed One is staying close by, just 6 yojanas from here, but we are not able to see the Blessed One!”

²⁵ *Timsa, mattiā pāṭeyyakā bhikkhū* [1.1.3]. Comy refers to this event (VA 1106; DhA 2:32, called *anamat’agga, dhamma, desanā*), from which it appears that Dh 65 is uttered in connection with these monks. On Pāvā, see (1.1.2) n.

²⁶ These are the same 4 kinds of ascetic (*dhutaṅga*) practices mentioned in the Sutta [§2] below.

²⁷ “...for the entry into the rains-retreat, but they were unable to reach in time,” *upakaṭṭhāya vassūpanāyikāya nāsakkhiṃsu*.

²⁸ “Broke journey,” *antarā magge*, lit “in between the path, halfway.”

²⁹ “In a state of longing,” *ukkaṇṭhita, rūpā*.

³⁰ “Leagues,” *yojanā*. 1 league is generally said to be about 11.2 km (7 mi). See SD 4.17 (1.2.2) n.

³¹ “Invitation,” *pavāraṇā*, ie, inviting senior monastics point out any of their lapses during the rains. This act highlights the end of the rains retreat: see SD 46.19 (3.2.4).

³² “Invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) officially marks the end of the rains-retreat, and falls on the full moon day of Kattikā (Oct-Nov). See Mv 4 @ V 1:157-177.

³³ “Their robes all drenched,” *oka, puṇṇehi cīvarehi*. Comy glosses *oka* (Dh 34b = Uv 31.1; cf Thī 236) as “water” (*udaka*) (VA 1106, 14; DhA 1:289, 3-8), but scholars think this is wr: see K R Norman: Thī:N 105 n236; Dh:N 69 n34. However, Carter & Palihawadana accept it as “water”: Dh:CP 435 n1*. Even if it is a problematic reading, the context clearly refers to “wet robes.”

³⁴ “The blessed awakened ones,” *buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ*: see §1 n on “blessed Buddha.”

³⁵ Cf V 3:88.

³⁶ *Kacci bhikkhave khamāṇīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ, kacci sammaggā sammodamānā avivādamānā phāsukaṃ vassam vasiṭṭha na ca piṇḍakena kilamithhāti* (V 1:253); also at V 3:88. The first 5 words with the vocative adjusted accordingly is stock: V 1:158, 3:103, 148, 181, 230. Similar occasions: V 1:59, 212, 313, 350, 351, 4:56, 2:11; **Cūḷa Go,siṅga S** (M 31,5/1:206); (**Anuruddha**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,7/3:155 f×2); **Suppavāsā S** (U 2.8/17). More commonly, asking after someone sick or in pain: V 4:25; **Dhanañjāni S** (M 97,28/2:192); **Anatha,piṇḍik’ovāda S** (M 143,3/3:259); **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144.4/3:264); **Assaji S** (S 2.88/3:125); **Khemaka S** (22.89/3:127); **Gilāna S 1** (S 35.74/4:46); **Gilāna S 2** (S 35.75/4:47); **Channa S** (S 35.87/4:56); **Gilāna S 1** (S 46.14,4/5:79); **Gilāna S 2** (S 46.15,5/5:79); **Sirivaḍḍha S** (S 47.29/5:177); **Dīghāvu Upāsaka S** (S 55.3/5:345); **Anātha,piṇḍika S 1** (S 5.26/-5:381); **Anātha,piṇḍika S 2** (S 55.27/5:385); **Phagguna S** (A 6.56/3:379); **Yakkha Pahāra S** (U 4.4/40); **Soṇa S** (U 5.6/59).

Then, at the end of three months, having observed the rains-retreat, after the invitation has been done, while it was still raining, the waters and mud still abounding, our robes all drenched, and feeling exhausted, we approached the Blessed One in Anātha,piṇḍika's park, in Jeta's grove, at Sāvathī.

3 Then, the Blessed One, having, on that occasion, given a Dharma-talk,³⁷ addressed the monks, saying:

“I allow you, bhikshus, to make up kathina³⁸ cloth when monks have completed the rains-retreat. Five things will be allowable to you, bhikshus, when the kathina-cloths have been made up:

- (1) going (to families for alms) without having asked for permission;³⁹
- (2) walking (for alms) without bringing along the triple robes;⁴⁰
- (3) taking a group-meal;⁴¹
- (4) taking as many robes as you require;⁴² and
- (5) whatever robe-material accrues there, that will be for them.⁴³

These five things will be allowable to you, bhikshus, when the kathina-cloths have been made.

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2.3 THE STORY OF 30 MONKS OF PĀVĀ

SD 48.3(2.3) **Timsa,matta Pāveyyaka,bhikkhu Vatthu**

The Story of the 30 monks | DhA 5.6/2:32 f ad Dh 65

Theme: Even the bad can benefit from the Dharma, if they accept it

1 “Even though the wise, for but a moment.” This Dharma teaching was given by the Blessed One while he was staying in Jeta,vana in connection with some thirty Pāvā monks.⁴⁴

2 The Blessed One first taught the Dharma to them in a silk-cotton grove when they were looking for a woman. At that time, they all attained monkhood by being called forth, “Come, O monk!”⁴⁵ and they bore robes and bowl by psychic means.

3 Taking up the 13 ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*).⁴⁶ After a long period, they approached the Blessed One, who taught them the discourse on “**the beginningless state**” (*anamatagga,dhamma,desanā*).⁴⁷ They attained arhathood right there as they sat.

³⁷ Comy says that the Buddha gave a talk on the immeasurability of samsara (*anamataggiya,katham kathesi*, VA 5:1106): see (1.1.1).

³⁸ *Kathina* refers both (1) to the wooden frame used by the monks for stitching robes (V 2:116,10 f; VA 1206), and (2) the robe-giving ceremony held at the end of the first or early rains-retreat (*vass'āvāsa*), in the month of Kattikā (Nov-Dec). The robe is offered to a monk who has properly observed the rains, and who needs new robes (Mv 7 @ V 1:253-267). For the ceremony, see Kkhv 53 f; cf VA 1106-1114; V 5:172,2-179,13. See C S Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms*, Varanasi, 1975: Kathina II.

³⁹ This is a relaxation of Pāc 46, which orig forbids a monk from visiting families without prior taking leave of the monks (V 4:100,9-13). Referred to in **Kulūpaka S 1** (A 5.225/3:259), SD 69.10.

⁴⁰ This is a relaxation of Nis 2 (V 3:199,24 ff). V 1:298 also says that the outer robe may be put aside when the *kathina* cloth has been made.

⁴¹ Ordinarily, monks are not allowed to take a group meal (commensality) (Pāc 32 @ V V 4:74,24-27).

⁴² Nis 1 (V3:196,9 ff) says that when the *kathina* privileges have been removed (the robe-making task is done), an extra robe may be used for at most 10 days. Cf VA 1107 which says that as many robes as required are allowed as long as they are not allotted or assigned. One who keeps to the ascetic rule of the 3-robe wearer, however, should not accept a fourth (Vism 64 f).

⁴³ This refers to the robe of a dead monk, or a gift to the sangha, or a robe that accrues to the order in any way (VA 1107).

⁴⁴ The source of this story is Mv 1.14 = V 1:23 f; cf DhA 1.8e/1:10.

⁴⁵ This is the oldest formula of admission into the monastic order used only by the Buddha himself: see S 2:204 f, 209 f; VA 241 f; Pāṭmka 17; MA 3:399; AA 1:190, 2:165; DhA 1:86 f; ThaA 2:203; VbhA 330.

4 The monks who had gathered in the Dharma hall, talked amongst themselves,
“How quickly these thirty or so companion monks understood the Dharma!”

Hearing that, the Blessed One said,

“Bhikkhus, this is not the first time that these thirty or so monks had been wicked (*dhutta*). They were so too in a previous existence. But having heard the Dharma teachings of Mahā Tuṇḍila in **the Mahā Tuṇḍila Jātaka** (J 388),⁴⁸ they quickly understood the Dharma, and undertook the 5 precepts. It is merely by this karmic support (*upanissaya*) that they attained arhathood right where they sat.”

5 The Blessed One then uttered this verse:

*Muhuttam 'pi ce viññū
paṇḍitaṃ payirupāsati
khippaṃ dhammaṃ vijānāti
jivha sūpa,rasaṃ yathā*

Even though the wise, for but a moment,
associates with the wise,
he quickly understands the Dharma,
just as the tongue tastes the soup.”

(Dh 65)⁴⁹

— — —

The Discourse on the Thirty Monks

S 15.13

The 30 monks of Pāvā

1 (The Blessed One was) residing in the Bamboo Grove at Rāja,gaha.

2 Then, some 30 monks from Pāvā,⁵⁰

⁵¹all forest dwellers, all alms-round-goers, all users of dust-heap cloth, all three-robe wearers,⁵²
all still having fetters,⁵³ approached the Blessed One.⁵⁴

Having gone up close to the Blessed One, they saluted him and sat down at one side.

3 Then, it occurred to the Blessed One:

⁴⁶ See **Bakkula S** (M 124), SD 3.15 (2).

⁴⁷ **Anamatagga Saṃyutta** (S 15/2:178-193); see **Tiṃsa Bhikkhū S** (S 15.13/2:187-189), SD 48.3 which clearly refers to these same 30 Pāvā monks.

⁴⁸ J 388/3:286-293. The Bodhisattva was born as a wild-boar who saves his younger brother's life, by teaching the Dharma to those who wanted to harm him.

⁴⁹ For Dh 64 f, see SD 24.6a (1.3) & **Samāṇa Gadrabha S** (A 3.81b) @ SD 24.10b (1.1).

⁵⁰ Pāvā was a country (*raṭṭha*) in the west of Kosala (VA 1105).

⁵¹ The 4 practices appear to be very ancient, perhaps beginning with the Buddha himself during the first period (on the 2 periods, see SD 40a.1 (1.3)). They are listed in the same sequence in eg **Mahā Gosiṅga S** (M 32,7.3), SD 44.-12 & **Pasāda,kara,dhamma Vagga** (A 1.20.1/1:38) = A:B 1:378-381. The Buddha allows monks who keep to the first 3 practices to see him any time they want, even when he is on solitary retreat (V 3:231,20). Cf **Santuṭṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

⁵² Rules regarding the 3 robes are prescribed at Nis 1-3 (V 3:196, 188, 203) = Bhī Nis 13-15; Bhī Pāc 30 (V 4:-288). They are to be made of dust-heap cloth. These are 4 of the 13 strict but optional ascetic practices (*dhut'aṅga*): see **Bakkula S** (M 124) + SD 3.15 (2).

⁵³ **The 10 fetters** are: (1) Self-identity view (*sakkāya,ditṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 10.13/5:17; Vbh 377). In some places, no. 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyā-pāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*).

⁵⁴ *Atha kho tiṃsa,mattā pāveyyakā* [Be Ee Comy; Ce *pātheyyakā*] *bhikkhū sabbe ārañṇikā sabbe piṇḍa,pātikā sabbe paṃsu,kūlikā sabbe te,cīvarikā sabbe sa,samyojanā yena bhagavā ten'upasaṅkamimsu*, On *pāveyyaka* or *pātheyyaka*, see (1.1.2) n.

“The 30 or so monks from Pāvā, all forest dwellers, all alms-round-goers, all users of dust-heap cloth, all three-robe wearers, all still have fetters!”⁵⁵

4 What now if I were to teach them the Dharma in such a way so that their minds would be freed from the influxes through non-clinging even while they are still on their very seats?”⁵⁶

Blood or water?

5 Then, the Buddha addressed the monks, “Bhikshus!”
“Bhante!” the monks replied in assent to the Blessed One.

6 The Blessed One said this:

“With neither a beginning nor an ending,⁵⁷ bhikshus, is this samsara [cycle of rebirths and redeaths].⁵⁸

7 Indiscernible is a first point of beings, roaming and wandering, shrouded in ignorance, fettered by craving.⁵⁹

8 What do you think, bhikshus? Which is more—
the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey—

this or the waters in the four great oceans?”⁶⁰

9 “Bhante, as we understand the Dharma as taught by the Blessed One,

This flowing stream of blood, bhante, that we have shed when we were **beheaded [188]** as we roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—
but not the waters in the four great oceans!”⁶¹

10 “Good, good, bhikshus! It is good, bhikshus, that you have understood the Dharma as taught by me.

*This flowing stream of blood, bhikshus, that you have shed when you were beheaded as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—
but not the waters in the four great oceans!”*

11 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **cows** (*go*),
and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as cows, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—
but not the waters in the four great oceans.

12 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **buffalos** (*mahisa*),
and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as buffalos, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—
but not the waters in the four great oceans.

13 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **sheep** (*urabbha*)
and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as sheep, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—
but not the waters in the four great oceans.

14 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **goats** (*aja*),
and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as goats, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

55

⁵⁶ *Yaṃ nūnāhaṃ imesaṃ tathā dhammaṃ deseyyaṃ, yathā nesaṃ imasmiṃ yeva āsane anupādāya āsavehi cittāni vimucceyyuṃ’ti.*

⁵⁷ *Anamatagga*: see Intro (2.1).

⁵⁸ *Anamat’aggo’yaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro.*

⁵⁹ *Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjā, nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhā, saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ.*

⁶⁰ The whole sentence: *Taṃ kiṃ maññatha bhikkhave, katamaṃ nu kho bahutaraṃ, | yaṃ vā vo iminā dīghena ad-dhunā sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ sīsa-c, chinnānaṃ lohitaṃ pasannaṃ paggharitaṃ, | yaṃ vā catūsu mahā, samud-desu udakaṃ’ti.*

⁶¹ *Na tv-eva catūsu mahā, samuddesu udakaṃ.* The other translations seem to have missed this nuance.

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

15 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **forest animals [deer]** (*miga*),⁶² and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as forest animals [deer], as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

16 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **chickens** (*kukkuṭa*), and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as chickens, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

17 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **pigs** (*sūkara*), and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as pigs, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

18 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **village-raiding bandits** (*cora gāma,ghāta*), and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as village-raiding bandits, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

19 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **highway bandits** (*cora paripanthaka*), and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as highway robbers, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

20 For a long time, bhikshus, you have been **bandits who violate the women of others** (*cora pāra,-dārikā*),

and the flowing stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as bandits who violate the women of others, as you roamed and wandered on through this long journey, this alone is more—

but not the waters in the four great oceans.

21 What is the reason for this?

With neither a beginning nor an ending, bhikshus, is this saṃsāra [cycle of rebirths and redeaths]. Indiscernible is a first point of beings roaming and wandering shrouded in ignorance, fettered by craving.

22 It is enough for wanting freedom.”⁶³

23 The Blessed One said this. The monks, joyful at heart, approved of the Blessed One’s word. [189]

24 Now, while this exposition was being given, the minds of the 30 Pāvā monks were freed from the influxes through non-clinging.

— evaṃ —

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⁶² *Miga* is here polysemous, meaning (1) wild animal (mostly in cpds: *~ābhibhū*, “lord of the beasts,” the lion, Sn 684; *~bhūta*, “like a wild beast,” M 1:450; *~rājā*, “king of the beasts,” the lion, D 3:23 f), and (2) deer (Sn 39, 72; J 1:154, 3:270, 5:416; Nc 509; PvA 62, 157). For *miga* similes (with refs), see JPTS 1907:123,

⁶³ *Alaṃ vimuccitun’ti*.