

## 9

## Pabbajita Abhiṅha Sutta

The Discourse on the What a Renunciant Should Do Constantly | A 10.48

Theme: The 10 regular practices of a renunciant

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0 Related sutta

The **Abhiṅha Paccavekkhitabba Tḥāna Sutta** (A 5.57) is a discourse on what a renunciant (a monk or a nun) should practise constantly for his or her spiritual growth. The Sutta, with its 5 reviews, is expanded into the **Pabbajita Abhiṅha Sutta** (A 10.48), with its 10 reviews.<sup>1</sup> Both Suttas have the same 5 reviews —nos (6-10) of A 5.57 = nos (1-5) of A 10.48—except that the latter has an additional set of five reviews (nos 1-5) at the start. While the former is addressed both to renunciants and lay followers, the latter is addressed only to renunciants.

In what follows, we will examine each reflection or review in practical terms especially for the benefit of renunciants, but also to inspire the laity to look deeper into the Dharma as a personal experience for the sake of spiritual growth.

1 A renunciant belongs to a classless community

## 1.1 CLASSLESSNESS

**1.1.1** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**I’ve taken up a classless life**” (*vevaṇṇiyam hi ajjhupagato ’ti*)<sup>2</sup> [§2(1)]. This reflection is clearly based on this famous declaration by the Buddha:

Pahārāda, just as all **the great rivers**, that is to say,  
 the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Aciravati, the Sarabhu and the Mahi,<sup>3</sup>  
 upon reaching the great ocean, losing their former names and gotra [origins],  
 come to be known simply as the great ocean—  
 so, too, Pahārāda, when these 4 classes<sup>4</sup>—  
 the kshatriyas, the brahmins, the vaishyas, the shudras—  
 having gone forth from the house for the homeless life in the Dharma-Vinaya proclaimed by  
 the Tathagata,<sup>5</sup>  
they abandon their former names and gotras [lineages],<sup>6</sup> and are simply known as  
 ‘Sakya-putta recluses’ [‘recluses who are sons of the Sakya’].<sup>7</sup> (A 8.19,14), SD 45.18<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A 5.57/3:71-75 @ SD 5.12.

<sup>2</sup> The 4 classes—“colour” (*vaṇṇa*) or “birth” (*jāti*)—are kshatriya or warrior (*khattiya*), the brahmin or priest (*brāhmaṇa*), the vaishya or merchant (*vessa*), and the shudra or worker (*sudda*). The brahmins invented a myth (the Puruṣa,śūkta, Ṛgveda 10.90) that these arose from “primal man,” and they were born from his mouth, and so God’s voice on earth. The others arose from lower parts of his body. See **Assalāyana S** (M 93,5.2/2:148 @ SD 40a.2).

<sup>3</sup> This parable and the foll [§15] are combined in Miln 70,

<sup>4</sup> On the 4 classes (*vaṇṇa*), see SD 45.18 (2.4.2.4). On how the classes evolved, see **Aggañña S** (D 27,20-31), SD 2.10). On the equality of the 4 classes, see **Madhurā S** (M 84), SD 69.8.

<sup>5</sup> *Evam evaṃ kho pahārāda cattāro ’me vaṇṇā khattiyā brāhmaṇā vessā suddā, te tathāgata-p, pavedite dhamma-, vinaye agārasmā anagāriyam pabbajitvā.*

<sup>6</sup> True classlessness is attained by the monastics’ attaining arhathood: see **Aggañña S** (D 27,31), SD 2.19.

<sup>7</sup> *Jahanti purimāni nāma, gottāni samaṇā sakya, puttīyā tv-eva* [Be:Ka Se *samaṇo sakya, puttīyo tv-eva*] *saṅkham gacchanti*. On *sakya,putta*, see **Pahārāda S** (A 8.19,14) + SD 45.18 (2.4.3).

<sup>8</sup> Also at (**Samudda**) **Uposatha Sutta 1** (A 8.20/4:204-208), SD 59.2a; (**Samudda**) **Uposatha Sutta 2** (U 5.5/-53,6-56,31), SD 59.2b; **Pātimokkha Tḥapana Khandhaka** (Cv 9.1.2-4 @ V 2:237-240), SD 59.2c.

Although only the 4 main classes of Indian society of the Buddha's time are mentioned here, it clearly refers to society as a whole. Whoever joins the Buddhist monastic community are treated, in principle, as social equals. All lay distinctions of class or status are discarded. All monks and nuns are simply known as "renunciants."

**1.1.2** However, for the sake of communal harmony and administrative facility, monastics (monks and nuns) respect one another according to "seniority" (*āvuso*), that is, the number of years spent in properly observing the rains retreat (*vass'āvāsa*).<sup>9</sup> This seniority is especially observed by juniors showing deference to seniors, and in certain sitting arrangements, seniority is observed, with the seniormost at the head of the row or congregation.

### 1.3 DHARMA DECLINE

**1.3.1** In societies where traditional or ethnic Buddhism is well established, **class consciousness** is often a tacit reality. Monastics, especially the monks (rather than the nuns), tend to be treated with great reverence, even as being above any wrong. Sadly, where establishments need funds to run, devotees tend to be "measured" according to their wealth, social status and honorific titles. In such a situation, the less affluent Buddhists tend to be marginalized. The advantage in educating and supporting the whole Buddhist community in a fair and engaged way is that we can draw from a diverse pool of talent, creativity and genius in promoting Buddhist education and growth.

Where a Buddhist establishment or its leaders are weak in Dharma, wealth, class and other biased measures would pervade, even dominate. Such tendencies often characterize ethnic Buddhism, and are used to perpetuate cronyism or family control of assets, and feudalistic class hierarchy. Even monastics are measured by some kind of alleged attainments, whether academic or religious or magical, instead of respecting the spirit of renunciation and the Dharma, so that they are inspired to keep up moral virtue and mental cultivation.

**1.3.2** In the **Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (S 16.13), the Buddha warns us that threats of Buddhist decline are more devastating than challenges from outside:

It is not the earth element, Kassapa, that causes the true Dharma to disappear, nor the water element, nor the fire element, nor the wind element. **It is the spiritually empty people (*mogha-***

(S 16.13/2:225), SD 1.10 (5.3)

Any Buddhist decline is more likely to be rooted in the laxity and worldliness of the Buddhist elite and religious clergy rather than from external challenges. In fact, external challenges (such as evangelical incursions upon the Buddhist community) actually spur to galvanize Buddhist attitude and action in some positive way, or at least bring into relief the real internal problems that we are facing.

**1.3.3** It is wise to recall and heed the Buddha's warning in **the (Kassapa) Ovāda Sutta 3** (S 16.8):

Formerly, Kassapa, there were elders of the order who were forest dwellers, almsfood eaters, rag-robe wearers, triple-robe users, with few wishes, content, lovers of solitude, aloof from society, exertive, and energetic—and they spoke in praise of these qualities.

Then, when such a monk visited a monastery, he was warmly welcomed and honoured as being dedicated to the practice of the Dharma. Then the newly ordained monks would also strive to emulate him in his way of life, and as such would lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time.

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<sup>9</sup> On the rains-retreat, see SD 38.3 (1.2.1).

But now, Kassapa, the elders are no longer forest dwellers, nor almsfood eaters, nor rag-robe wearers, nor triple-robe users, nor are they with few wishes, nor are they content, nor do they love solitude, nor are they aloof from society, nor are they exertive or energetic—nor do they speak in praise of these qualities.

Now, it is the monk who is well known and famous, one who gains robes, almsfood, lodgings and medical requisites, that the elder monks invite to a seat, saying, “Come, bhikshu. What is this monk’s name? This is an excellent monk. This monk is keen on the company of his brothers in the holy life. Come, bhikshu, here’s a seat, sit down.” Then the newly ordained monks will also strive to emulate him, and that leads to their harm and suffering for a long time.

Kassapa, one would be speaking rightly to say, “Those leading the holy life are ruined by the ruin of those who lead the holy life. Those leading the holy life are defeated by the defeat of those who lead the holy life.” (S 6.18/2:208-210), SD 88.5<sup>10</sup>

Although we speak of “Dharma decline,” the reality is that the true Dharma does not decline. It is we, the Buddhists, who are declining in a social and spiritual sense. We may work to “change” Buddhism or “modernize” the Dharma, but it is we, the Buddhists, who need to change, to better ourselves in the spirit of the true Dharma. True Buddhist growth must begin with our respect, study and practice of the Buddha Dharma as preserved in the early teachings. All else that is good is rooted in this.

**1.5 COMMENTARIAL ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION.** Apparently, by the commentarial period, the original meaning of the word *vevaṇṇiya*<sup>11</sup> [§2(1)] was forgotten. Clearly, in the Buddha’s time, *vanna* means “colour,” as a synecdoche for “class” or “caste” (besides its literal sense of “colour”). The Sutta commentary<sup>12</sup> glosses *vevaṇṇiya* as “colourlessness” (*vivanna, bhāvam*), meaning “plain,” in the sense of “simple, unadorned.” It explains the word in two ways: with respect to the body and to things used.

In reference to the body (*sarīra, vevaṇṇiya*), it means keeping oneself clean shaven of hair and beard. The Commentary notes how before, the renunciant wore delicate cloth, took various kinds of food of the best kind, made use of gold and silver, lived in luxurious rooms in exquisite lodgings, and used ghee, clarified butter, and so on, as medicine. As for a renunciant, the word, in terms of things used (*parikkhāra, vevaṇṇiya*), refers to wearing saffron robes sewn together from pieces of rags and dyed in *kāsāya* (probably ochre);<sup>13</sup> taking food, mixed with water, in an iron or clay bowl; resorting to the foot of a tree, etc, for lodging; lying down on mats of reed, grass, etc; sitting on a strip of leather or cloth, etc; and using fermented cow’s urine, etc, as medicine. When we reflect thus, anger and conceit are dispelled. (AA 5:38)

## 2 A renunciant lives dependent on others

### **2.1 DEPENDENT BUT NOT FOR HIRE**

**2.1.1** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “I’m one who lives dependent on others” (*para, paṭi-baddhā me jīvikā’ti*). This is a vital reminder of the renunciation of the monastics, that they have no dealings with money or wealth,<sup>14</sup> and do not indulge in any kind of commerce or gainful employment. The Sutta here, of course, specifically refers to the state and tasks of a renunciant, that we are not, and should

<sup>10</sup> For more related refs to the Buddha’s prophecies, see SD 1.10 (3); on Mahā Kassapa’s prophecies, see (4).

<sup>11</sup> *Vevaṇṇiya* recurs **Samāṇa, saññā S** (A 10.101/5:210; qu at Nett 934/185) (see tr below ad loc); occurs at Ap 2:433 (qu at ThaA 2:2); Ap 2:511, 526 (qu at ThīA 56); MA 2:53; ThaA 2:30, 3:156; CA 24; J 3:394; DhSA 33.

<sup>12</sup> This is **Sumaṅgala, vilāsini**, the commentary to Aṅguttara Nikāya. Along with the Comys to the first 4 Nikayas and other canonical texts, first compiled in Pali in India a few centuries after the Buddha, brought to Sri Lanka by the monk Mahinda during Asoka’s time (2<sup>nd</sup> cent BCE) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Council; translated by Mahinda into vernacular Sinhala. Translated back into Pali by Buddhaghosa (5<sup>th</sup> cent). See Ency Bsm 2:336 f.

<sup>13</sup> See **Gavesī S** (A 5.180.33), n on “saffron robe,” SD 47.16.

<sup>14</sup> See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19.

not, be gainfully employed in any way, and are totally dependent on the laity for our basic support. Hence, as renunciants, we should daily and constantly reflect on the 4 supports (almsfood, robes, shelter, and medicine) before and after using them.<sup>15</sup>

**2.1.2** A renunciant teaches the Dharma because it is the liberating truth, so that others, renunciants and the laity, are inspired to practise the Dharma to work for awakening in this life, at least by attaining streamwinning.<sup>16</sup> The laity, inspired by the Dharma, offers almsfood and other allowable offerings [2.2], out of faith. A renunciant does not indulge in any kind of gainful or worldly livelihood [2.2], or does anything for the sake of some kind of gain.

In short, he is neither a “hireling” (*bhataka*) nor “one bought” (*upakkitaka*), “who lives the holy life for a reason” (*hetu brahma, cariyam carati*), as in the case of the love-sick Nanda.<sup>17</sup> He is not a “hireling,” is clearly exemplified in **the Kasi Bhāra, dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4), where the brahmin Kasi Bhāra, dvāja only decides to give alms to the Buddha as a “reward” for teaching inspiring Dharma. The Buddha rejects such an offering, thus:

*Gāthā’bhigītāṃ me abhojaneyyāṃ*

*sampassatāṃ brāhmaṇa n’esa dhammo  
gāthā’bhigītāṃ panudanti buddhā  
dhamme satī brāhmaṇa vutti-r-esā*

Whatever is sung over with verses is improper to be taken  
by me—

this is not the way, brahmin, of those who truly see.

Buddhas reject what has been sung over with verses:

where there is Dharma, brahmin, this is the livelihood.

(Sn 81 = S 480)<sup>18</sup>

**2.1.3** This reflection, in the reflection, is a reminder of not only our state and tasks as a renunciant, but as an anagarika, a postulant, a full-time lay Dharma-worker, a retreatant, or a lay person. The essential practice of a true Dharma-inspired Buddhist is that of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). A true monastic practises renunciation fully in body and mind, in keeping with the 3 trainings [8.1], with the goal of awakening in this life itself [2.1.2].

A lay person who wishes to commit himself more fully to the spiritual life without being a renunciant, should reflect on the 5 precepts and the 4 divine abodes (which facilitate our practice of moral conduct), and practise them constantly. First, we need to renounce what is unwholesome in terms of our body and speech—this is our moral conduct. Secondly, we need to renounce what is mentally unwholesome—this is our mental training. Thirdly, we have to renounce wrong views, so that our minds are calm and clear, and we understand the purpose of the spiritual life, and aspire to attain at least streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>19</sup> [10]

**2.2 THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD** of renunciants is embodied in the 4 kinds of morality, comprising the 4 full purifications by way of moral virtue (*catu, pārisuddhi sīla*), that is:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) restraint with regard to the monastic code   | <i>pātimokkha, saṃvara sīla,</i>          |
| (2) sense-restraint                              | <i>indriya, saṃvara, sīla,</i>            |
| (3) full purification of livelihood              | <i>ājīva, pārisuddhi sīla,</i> and        |
| (4) moral virtue with regard to the 4 requisites | <i>paccaya, sannissita sīla.</i> (Vism 1) |

These 4 purifications of livelihood are alluded to in the well known pericope on “the true purpose of recluseship” that often precede the “fruits of recluseship” passages, such as those found in **the Sāmañ-**

<sup>15</sup> On the reflections on the supports, see **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-17) + SD 30.3 (2.3).

<sup>16</sup> See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25,1), SD 16.7.

<sup>17</sup> **(Arahatta) Nanda S** (U 22,19), SD 43.7

<sup>18</sup> See SD 37.8 (1.4.3): A renunciant is not for hire.

<sup>19</sup> See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

**ñā,phala Sutta** (D 2) and **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51), thus (item nos 2 and 3 are stated in reverse here):

A houselord or a houselord's son, hearing the Dharma, [63] gains faith<sup>20</sup> in the Tathagata and reflects, thus:

‘The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life fully, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

Then, after some time, he abandons all his wealth and relatives, shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the saffron robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

(1) When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code [Pāṭi-mokkha], possessed of proper conduct and resort.

Having taken up the rules of training, he trains himself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults.

(2) He comes to be accomplished in wholesome bodily and verbal deeds, his livelihood is purified, and he is possessed of moral virtue.

(3) He guards the sense-doors, is accomplished in mindfulness and clear comprehension, and is content. (D 2,41-42/1:62 f), SD 8.10

(4) He is content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes he sets out only with these<sup>21</sup> with him.

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 body<sup>22</sup> and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.

(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)

**2.3 SPIRIT OF RENUNCIATION.** A monastic (a monk or a nun) is a **renunciant** who has given up his home and worldliness to dedicate himself fully to the goal of awakening in this life itself, that is, as an arhat, if not at least as a streamwinner.<sup>23</sup> Since a monastic has vowed to eschew all worldliness, the laity labours to support him in his physical needs by way of providing him with the 4 supports of robes, almsfood, shelter and medical care when he needs them, and in accordance with the giver's ability.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “Faith,” *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlika,saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170,21); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,-8 401,23); also called *avecca-p,pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlaka* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Ledi Sayadaw** speaks of 2 kinds: “ordinary faith” (*pakati saddhā*) and “faith through cultivation” (*bhāvanā saddhā*) (*The Manuals of Buddhism*, 1965:339 f). “Ordinary faith” is mainly based on giving and pious acts (which can be either wholesome or unwholesome, depending on the intention). “Faith through cultivation” is founded on mindfulness practice and meditation. **Gethin** also speaks of 2 kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith, & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith is its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary” (Gethin 2001:107; my emphases).

<sup>21</sup> “These,” ie the 8 requisites (*aṭṭha parikkhāra*): a small razor (*khuddaka,vāsi*), needle (*sūci*), water-strainer (*parissāvāna*), almsbowl (*patta*) with a shoulder-strap, the triple robe (*ti,cīvara*), belt (*kāya,paṭibandha*) (MA 2:213 = DA 1:297; DA 1:206 = J 1:65; DhA 2:61; J 4:342, 5:254). Explained in detail at DA 1:206 f.

<sup>22</sup> As in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,66/1:71), SD 8.10.

<sup>23</sup> See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

<sup>24</sup> On the 4 supports, see **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-16), SD 30.3; **Santuṭṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

A monastic who reneges on his vows or tries to “modernize” the unique and specialized tools for attaining nirvana, as such, is one who goes back on his own word. This is not only wrong speech, but also reflects wrong action, both of which are rooted in wrong view. When such a monastic stays on, putting up a false front of what he neither upholds nor practises, he is said to be a “thief” (*cora*), since he acts stealthily and thinks that no one knows about his real state or intent.<sup>25</sup> [10.3]

The Commentaries say that a false monk eats the country’s alms as a *thief*, while a good monk who eats without reflecting is a *debtor*, a saint on the path takes his almsfood as an *heir*, while an arhat is the *owner* of his almsfood (MA 5:32; SA 2:199).<sup>26</sup> A renunciant, in other words, should remind himself of his “original vow” when he renounced the world to join the monastic community and live a spiritual life working for awakening in this life itself.

**The Ādhipateyya Sutta** (A 3.40) closes with these powerful reminders by the Buddha himself:

There is in the world no secret You yourself, O man,	of one who does a bad deed. <sup>27</sup> know what is true or what is false!
Alas! Sir, you, the witness, How can you hide the bad that there is	look down upon your own self! in the self from the self? [150]
The devas and the Tathagatas The one who lives with self as supreme,	see the fool living falsely in the world. and the one for whom the world is supreme, should be wise and engaged in meditation.

(A 3.40,4-6), SD 27.3

### 3 A renunciant is apart from others

**3.1** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**My deportment should differ from that of others**” (*añño me ākappo karaṇīyo ’ti*). While the Dharma, in significant ways, provides both the monastic and laity with an equal opportunity to gain awakening in this life itself, the Vinaya is specially introduced to set the monastics apart from the laity.

A monastic should be different from the laity, for the simple reason of an avowed choice. A monastic has taken the vows of renunciation to work for his awakening in this life itself. Hence, the monastic life-style must clearly be different from that of the laity. The Commentary says that laypeople walk, with chest puffed up, with noses in the air, with playfulness, with uncertain steps. A renunciant should reflect, “But my manner will be different. I will walk with calm faculties, with a calm mind, with slow and measured steps, like a cart passing through water or over rough ground.” Thus, reviewing that his posture is proper, he fulfills the 3 trainings (of moral conduct, mental cultivation and wisdom). (AA 5:39)

**3.2** In the **Ūmi Bhaya Sutta** (A 4.122), the Buddha, using four “river” or “water” parables, warns renunciants of the dangers of “waves” (anger and despair), of “crocodiles” (gluttony), of “whirlpools” (sensual pleasures), and of “river dolphins” (sexual lust).

(1) A renunciant should not feel upset when he is taught the decorum of a monastic renunciant, even when his teacher or instructor is younger than him.

(2) A renunciant should learn to cultivate moderation in food—taking less food, avoiding certain kinds of food, and eating only at the right time—unlike before when he was still a lay person.

(3) When a renunciant goes amongst houses on almsround, he should be mindful to avoid seeing lay people frolicking in sensual pleasures and worldly ways, and be enticed by them.

<sup>25</sup> See Susīma’s confession: **Arahatta Susīma S** (S 12.70,58), SD 16.8.

<sup>26</sup> See also SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2).

<sup>27</sup> These 2 lines are esp well known: J 3:19; VA 1:215, 238.

(4) Again, when a renunciant goes amongst houses on almsround, he should be mindful to avoid looking at scantily dressed women, which might arouse lust in him.

**3.3** In short, a renunciant should not think or act like a layman, but should reflect on his state so that he is diligent in his spiritual training, and avoid being distracted by the ways of the world.<sup>28</sup> When a monastic acts in a manner other than that of a renunciant, such acts are likely to be rooted in greed, hatred or delusion. Indeed, the renunciant’s conduct is not to impress others as a politician, an executive, a salesman or an entertainer would, but as a renunciant so as to inspire others to follow the eightfold way as he is himself doing.

## 4 Self-reproach

### 4.1 SELF-REVIEW

**4.1.1** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**Do I reproach myself regarding moral conduct?**” (*kacci nu kho me attā sīlato na upavadatīti*). A daily practice of a renunciant is to “examine his conscience,” that is, how he has guarded his 3 doors of actions, that is, the body, speech and mind. **The Parihāna Sutta** (A 10.55), Sāriputta instructs how we should examine our conscience. Just as a young person would carefully examine his face in a mirror to ensure that it is clean, spotless and presentable, we (especially a monastic) should examine ourselves:

Even so, avuso, it is of great benefit for a monk<sup>29</sup> to **review his wholesome states**, thus:

(1) ‘Do I often dwell	without longing?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(2) ‘Do I often dwell	without ill will?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(3) ‘Do I often dwell	without sloth and torpor?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(4) ‘Do I often dwell	without restlessness?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(5) ‘Do I often dwell	having overcome doubt?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(6) ‘Do I often dwell	without anger?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(7) ‘Do I often dwell	without a defiled mind?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(8) ‘Am I an attainer of	internal dharma joy? <sup>30</sup>	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(9) ‘Am I an attainer of	internal mental calm?	Does this state occur in me or not?’
(10) ‘Am I an attainer of	insight into states relating to wisdom? <sup>31</sup>	Does this state occur in me or not?’

But, avuso, if a monk, while reviewing, does not see any of these wholesome states in himself, then, avuso, desire, and effort, and industry, and perseverance, and persistence, and mindfulness, and clear comprehension [circumspection], beyond measure, should be cultivated by that monk, for the sake of attaining *all these wholesome states*.

(A 10.55,6-7), SD 43.5

**4.1.2** The Sutta goes on to stress the urgency of cultivating wholesome states “beyond measure” (*adhimatta*) “just as one whose clothes are ablaze, whose head is ablaze” (id).

<sup>28</sup> A 4.122/2:123-126 @ SD 47.9. On the differences between the joys of the household life and the joys of renunciation, see **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,10-20), SD 29.5.

<sup>29</sup> Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). See also SD 13.1 (3.1.1).

<sup>30</sup> *Lābhī nu kho’ mhi ajjhataṃ dhamma, pāmujjassa*. Here I have rendered *dhamma* as “dharma,” which refers to Dharma as mental states or as phenomena (as in *dhammānupassanā*, “recollection of phenomena”: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36-45), SD 13.3.

<sup>31</sup> *Lābhī nu kho’ mhi adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya*, alt tr, “Am I an attainer of insight into the higher wisdom in mental states?”

**4.2 TĀLA,PUṬA THERA.** The best known case of self-reproach in the early suttas is that of the ex-dance manager who becomes a monk, as recorded in **the Thera,gāthā** (Tha 1091-1145). His soliloquy in 13 verses begins with these words:

When indeed will I dwell alone in a mountain gully, without a companion,<sup>32</sup>  
with insight seeing all existence as impermanent?

This thought of mine—  
when indeed will this be?

**Tha 1091**

When indeed will I, hearing the cry of the crested twice-born,<sup>33</sup> the peacock,  
in a forested mountain cave,  
rising up, give full thought<sup>34</sup> to attaining the death-free—  
when indeed will this be?

**Tha 1103<sup>35</sup>**

### 4.3 CAKKHU,PĀLA THERA

**4.3.1 Mahā,pāla renounces.** Another well known case of self-reproach is that of the monk Cakkhu,pāla, as recorded in the very first story of **the Dhammapada Commentary**. In this account, he addresses himself as Pālita (“Little Sheltered One”).<sup>36</sup> He is the son of a landlord (*kuṭumbika*), Mahā Suvanna, of Sāvathī, and is called Mahā,pāla (Pāla the elder), and younger than his brother, Culla,pāla (Pāla the younger). The boys are called Pāla (“protected”), it is said, on account of being protected at birth by a tree deity.

Mahā,pāla hears the Dharma from the Buddha at Jeta,vana and renounces the world. After 5 years with his teachers (the minimum years of tutelage),<sup>37</sup> he goes with sixty others to the forest to meditate. He takes up the ascetic practice of not lying down to sleep.<sup>38</sup> After a month, he contracts an eye disease

<sup>32</sup> “Dwell alone, without a companion,” *ekākiyo adutiyo* [v1 *addutiyo*]: cf Tha 541 & Miln 398. *Adutiyo* is glossed by Comy on 54 as “alone,” meaning “without a companion, abstaining from associating with defilements and with groups” (*adutiyo ti asahāyo, kilesa,saṅgaṇikāya gaṇa,saṅgaṇikāya ca virahito*), and in the Comys on 896 and 1091, it is glossed as “without craving” (*nittanḥo*). **Norman**: “This explanation is justified by such references as *taṇhā, -dutiyo poso* (A 2:10; It 9, 109 etc) and *taṇhā hi’ssa dutiya* (S 4:37), although at S 1:25, 38, we find *saddhā dutiyā purisassa hoti*.” (Tha:N 135 54n)

<sup>33</sup> Birds are generally known as “**twice-born**” (*dija* or *dvija*) because they are first formed in the mother’s womb, and then they hatch out from eggs (SnA 1:178). The ancient brahmins often boast that they are “twice-born” (ThīA 269): the first is biological (ie born of the mother), and second, religious, when the 7-year-old initiate (only a male brahmin, kshatriya or vaishya) learns the Gāyatṛī Mantra, and by way of the *upanayana* ceremony, when the brahmin youth is invested with a sacred cord (*yajño,pavīta*; Hindi *janeo*), worn permanently over the left shoulder and under the right arm. Non-brahmins and women are prohibited from wearing it. See A L Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 1989:39 & n5. In **Vasala S** (Sn 1.7), the Buddha humorously says, “He who here harms life, whether once-born [humans, etc] or twice-born [birds, reptiles, etc] | And has no compassion for living beings, he should be known as an outcaste.” (Sn 117).

<sup>34</sup> “Will...give full thought,” Comy: *sañcintaye manasi,kareyyam vipasseyyan ti attho* (“~ means wisely consider, see with insight”). It is an optative used in the sense of the future: see Tha:N 167 n223.

<sup>35</sup> **Tālapuṭa Tha 1091-1145**, SD 20.9.

<sup>36</sup> DhA 1.1/1:3-21.

<sup>37</sup> The monastic tutelage (*nissaya*) is a minimum of 5 years that a new monk must spend under training with a suitable teacher, but if he has difficulty in this, his tutelage may be extended indefinitely (Mv 1.53+73 = V 1:79 f, 91). See also SD 40a.8 (4.2.2.3).

<sup>38</sup> Comy actually says that he “does not fall asleep” (*niddam anokkamantassa*), however, this is not part of any ascetic rule. It is possible that he tries not to sleep, and so suffers its consequence. The ascetic rule in this case is clearly that of not lying down to sleep, ie, the practice of the sleeping (only) in the sitting posture (*nesajjik’anga*), which is taken up with the resolution, “I reject the lying posture; I take upon myself the practice of the sitter” (*seyyam paṭikkhipāmi, nesajjik’angam samādiyāmi*): see **Bakkula S** (M 124) + SD 3.15 (2.1(13)).

(*akkhi, roga*), and is given an eye-drop by a doctor. However, he neglects his eyes, devoting all his time to meditation and the duties of recluseship.

**4.3.2 Mahā,pala’s self-counsel.** Having no relatives (and he being the seniormost of the monks in that group), he decides to self-counsel,

“Come now, avuso Pālita, tell me this. Do you see with eyes or with the Buddha’s teaching?<sup>39</sup> For, in this round of lives without conceivable beginning, there is no counting of the times you have been without eyes [blind]. But while many hundreds and thousands of buddhas have passed, you have not served even a single one of them!<sup>40</sup> Now, in this rains, you resolved not to lie down for 3 months. Therefore, let your eyes fail or perish. Keep only the Buddha’s teaching, not your eyes!”

And admonishing his own physical body, he utters this verse:

Let my beloved eyes perish!	Let my ears and body, too, perish!
Let all that depend on the body perish!	Why, Pālita, are you heedless!
Let my beloved eyes decay!	Let my ears and body, too, decay!
Let all that depend on the body decay!	Why, Pālita, are you heedless!
Let my beloved eyes break up!	Let my ears and body, too, break up!
Let all that depend on the body break up!	Why, Pālita, are you heedless!

Then, he applies the ointment to his nose, while remaining seated as before. During his almsround in the village, the physician asks after him. On learning that he has not lain down to properly apply the ointment, the doctor finally gives up on him. Cakkhu,pāla then reflects:

Given up an incurable, abandoned by the doctor, too.  
Destined for the King of Death – why, Pālita, are you heedless?

**4.4.1 Cakkhu,pala’s arhathood.** With this verse, he fully applied his efforts to the recluse’s duties. During the middle watch (between 10.00 pm-2.00 am), he destroys all his mental defilements, and attains arhathood, and becomes blind at the same time. Hence, the prefix *cakkhu* (“eye”) to his name.<sup>41</sup>

Later, Cakkhupāla’s colleagues return to Sāvatti to pay their respects to the Buddha and, at his own request, Cakkhupāla’s brother sends his nephew Palita, ordained as a novice, to fetch him. On the return journey through the forest, near Katṭha,nagara, Pālita is distracted by a woman’s singing and, asking his uncle to wait, sees the woman and lies with her.

Upon his return, when Cakkhupāla questions him, he remains silent. Cakkhu,pāla then refuses to travel with him, even if he should die on the way. Sakra’s throne heats up, and he appears as a traveller to the elder, and brings him safely to Sāvatti. There, he is looked after by his brother to the end of his days.<sup>42</sup>

**4.4 The Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3) has these two verses of a pratyeka-buddha<sup>43</sup>

If one finds a zealous<sup>44</sup> companion,                      who dwells in the good,<sup>45</sup> wise, with whom to fare,

<sup>39</sup> *Vadehi tāva, āvuso pālita, tvaṃ kiṃ akkhīni olokessasi, udāhu buddhasāsanam?* (DhA 1:10 f)

<sup>40</sup> *Tesu te ekabuddhopi na paricīṇṇo* (DhA 1:11). Here, *paricīṇṇa* (pp of *paricarati*, “attended to, worship”) means to successfully practise or benefit from the Buddha’s teaching.

<sup>41</sup> It is said that in a previous birth he was a physician, and because a woman, whose eye disease he had cured, tried to cheat him out of his promised reward, he gave her an ointment which blinded her. (DhA 1.1a/120 f)

<sup>42</sup> DhA 1.1/1:3-21; ThaA 1:206-209.

<sup>43</sup> A pratyeka-buddha (*pacceka,buddha*) or “individual buddha,” is a self-awakened arhat, arising at a time when there are no full-awakened buddhas, and one who does not establish the Dharma on a wide scale or for posterity. See SD 36.2 (2.2.2).

then, overcoming all dangers, one should joyfully fare with that wise one. **Sn 45**

If one finds not a zealous companion, who dwells in good, wise, with whom to fare,  
then, like a king abandoning his fallen realm, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros. **Sn 46**

The Commentary on these two verses recounts how two close friends, after falling from their divine state, are reborn, one as the eldest son of the rajah of Benares, and the other as the youngest of the royal chaplain. When they reached 20, they renounced and lived together in a leaf-hut, practising meditation.

In due course, the son of the royal chaplain (*purohita,putta*), finding this arrangement distracting, admonished himself not to fall under the power of his mind, left alone for the forest to practise. In due course, he attains pratyeka buddhahood (SnA 1:93).

## 5 Reproach from the wise

**5.1 A LEARNING COMMUNITY.** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**Do my wise fellow brah-macharis, who are discerning, reproach me regarding moral conduct?**” (*kacci nu kho maṃ anuvicca viññū sabrahmacārī sīlato na upavadantīti*). To truly be a member of the Buddha’s monastic community is to join the spiritual stream of training that originated from the Buddha and the great arhats of early Buddhism. If we renounce our old selves that were caught up with the world, we would be able to connect with the lifeblood that still flows through the spiritual community.

The most vital aspect of being a part of the spiritual community, apart from attaining any of the 4 stages of sainthood,<sup>46</sup> is to diligently spend the minimum of 5 years of dependence (*nissaya*) with a wise and compassionate teacher who will mentor us in being a true renunciant destined for awakening in this life itself.

### 5.2 RĀHULA

**5.2.1 The Ambalaṅṅhikā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61) is a good example of using an “object lesson” in teaching Dharma to the young. The admonition begins with three parables—those of the water-pot, the royal elephant and the mirror—with which the Buddha impresses on Rāhula the importance of not lying, even in jest (§§3-8). From the use of imagery, the Buddha goes on to teach in terms of ideas (*dhamma*) regarding the 3 doors of action and how one should wisely attend to each before, during and after the deed (§§9-17). The admonition significantly closes with a statement of the universality of the moral virtue of such actions.<sup>47</sup>

**5.2.2 The Cūḷa Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 147 = S 35.121/4:105-107), given shortly after Rāhula’s higher ordination (when he is 20 years old), recounts how he attains arhathood after listening to a discourse by the Buddha on the development of insight.<sup>48</sup> The Buddha declares Rāhula to be the foremost amongst those monks desirous of training (*sikkhā,kāma*) (A 1:24). The Commentaries say that Rāhula, rising early

<sup>44</sup> “Zealous,” *nipāka*, usu tr “prudent,” but here “zealous” (K R Norman) is better, in keeping with Comy, which says that this refers to one who is wise in the basic skills of kasina meditation and so on (*pakati,nipuṇaṃ pañḍitaṃ kasina,parikamm’ādi,kusalaṃ*) (SnA 1:93). On *kasina*, see *Viññāṇa*, SD 17.8a (4.1); *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (9.2).

<sup>45</sup> “Dwells in the good,” *sādhu,vihāri*, ie, being accomplished in sustaining full concentration or access concentration (*appanā,vihārena vā upacārena vā samannāgataṃ*, SnA 1:93). On full concentration and access concentration, see SD 15.1 (9.3); SD 33.1a (3.1).

<sup>46</sup> The 4 stages of sainthood are those of (1) the streamwinner (*sotāpanna*), (2) the once-returner (*sākadāgāmi*), (3) the non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and (4) the arhat (*arahata*). See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,42-47), SD 3.13 ≈ **Ānāpāna,-sati S** (M 118,9-12), SD 7.13.

<sup>47</sup> M 61/1:414-420 @ SD 3.10.

<sup>48</sup> M 147/3:277-280 = S 35.121/4:105-107 @ SD 70.7.

in the morning, and taking a handful of sand in his hand, would aspire, “May I today receive just as much advice from the Buddha, and my preceptor and teachers!”<sup>49</sup>

### 5.3 INVITATION TO ADMONISH

**5.3.1** Since monastic life is a learning and awakening process, monastics, from the highest to the lowest, are spiritually open to one another for admonition, even criticism. Traditionally, a junior monastic would invite (*pavāreti*) a senior monastic to admonish him over any fault that the senior has seen, heard or suspected of the junior.

The practice of such a formal “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) is described in **the Pavāraṇā Sutta** (S 8.7), where the Buddha himself invites the monks, thus: “Come now, bhikkhus, I invite you. Is there or not any bodily or verbal deed of mine that you would censure?” (*handa dāni bhikkhave pavāremi vo. Na ca me kiñci garahatha kāyikaṃ vā vācasikaṃ vā ’ti*). On behalf of the monks, Sāriputta replies no. In his turn, he too invites the Buddha to censure him if there is a need for it.<sup>50</sup>

**5.3.2** The formal “invitation” is so significant for the wholesomeness of a spiritual community that it highlights the end of the rains-retreat (the full moon day of Oct-Nov), which properly ends on the following day.<sup>51</sup> Groups of junior monks would call on the senior monks to invite them to admonish them as needed. This is a time when even the abbot would go along with other junior monks to “invite” those more senior to admonish them.

### 5.4 DHARMA-VINAYA

**5.4.1** The real task of a renunciant is to master the Dharma-Vinaya. He learns **the Vinaya** so that he is a wholesome member of the spiritual community who would not exploit the lay community. He masters **the Dharma** so that he is able to effectively meditate, work towards awakening in this life itself, and inspire others with the Dharma and his personal example.

As the Dharma-Vinaya becomes more diluted and coloured up through the ages, it is the task of the true monastic, no matter what tradition he belongs to, to carefully study early Buddhism, both its teachings as preserved in the suttas and its spiritual practice (especially meditation), so that he neither falls into the rut of ethnic parochialism (a racist form of Buddhism) [1] on the one extreme, nor gets caught up with worldliness and careerism (such as becoming a salaried professional) on the other.

**5.4.2** A true monastic should have a proper understanding of the nature of the “Dharma-ending,” not so much as in time or an “age,” as it is in terms of personal practice and aspirations to awakening in this life itself. For those who see Buddhism merely as an ethnic, cultural, social or political manifestation, the Dharma has ended for them. For those who see Buddhism as merely as an academic, professional, commercial or worldly career, the Dharma has ended for them.

**5.4.3** A true practitioner should carefully study and reflect on the spirit of the prophetic suttas, especially the following:

<b>Anāgata,bhaya Sutta 1-4</b>	S 5.77-80/3:100-110	SD 1.10 (3)
<b>Ovāda Sutta 1-3</b>	S 16.6-8/2:204-210	SD 1.10 (4)
<b>Sugata Vinaya Sutta</b>	A 4.160/2:147-149	SD 1.10 (3.5)

The teachings of such Suttas are not meant to provoke a dismal alarmist sentiment, but a sense of spiritual urgency not to take things for granted. People easily parasite and project their greed, hate, delusion or fear onto Buddhist teachings.<sup>52</sup> Wealth is easily used to create the memes<sup>53</sup> of imaginative and

<sup>49</sup> MA 3:134; AA 1:258. His Elder’s Verses are at Tha 295-298.

<sup>50</sup> See **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7/1:190), SD 49.11.

<sup>51</sup> V 1:155, 160, 2:32, 167; D 2:220.

<sup>52</sup> See **Cult Buddhism**, SD 34.5.

self-propelled ideologies. The true monastic and lay Dharma worker—indeed, any Buddhist worth the name—has to be diligent to harmoniously dispel wrong views of the 3 jewels, by both his teachings and his example.<sup>54</sup>

In the same Dharma spirit, he should not be belligerently intolerant or unfriendly towards the ethnic or sectarian forms of Buddhism. Through Dharma fellowship and proper education, we must diligently work to give everyone an informed choice, especially that they are well informed of the availability and vibrance of early Buddhism, especially its spirit and practice.

## 6 Reflecting on impermanence

**6.1 IMPERMANENCE.** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**There is a becoming-other of all that are dear and pleasing to me, a separation from them**”<sup>55</sup> (*sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānā, bhāvo vīnā, bhāvo ’ti*). It’s important to note the present simple tense here: it is a true reality of things. The emphasis is on “A becoming-other...a separation” (*nānā, bhāvo vīnā, bhāvo*) (the nominative). This is a reflection of impermanence, which can be elaborated by way of understanding it in the perspective of the 8 worldly conditions.

### 6.2 WORLDLY CONDITIONS

**6.2.0 The 8 worldly conditions** (*aṭṭha loka, dhamma*), according to **the Loka, dhamma Suttas 1 & 2** (A 8.5+6), comprises the following 4 pairs of vicissitude or vagaries, that is,

gain and loss,	<i>lābho ca alābho ca</i>
fame and ill-fame [obscurity].	<i>yaso ca ayaso ca</i>
blame and praise,	<i>nindā ca pasāmsā ca</i>
joy [pleasure] and sorrow.	<i>sukhañ ca dukkhañ ca</i>

(A 8.5/4:156 f), SD 42.2 = (A 8.6/4:157 f), SD 42.3

#### 6.2.1 Gain and loss (*lābhālābha*)

**6.2.1.1** Basically, gain and loss refer to accumulating what we need (food, clothing, shelter, and health facilities) or what we want (in terms of tangibles), especially wealth and assets. However, all these material gains are easily lost, often easier than the way that we gain them. **The Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) advises us to guard our hard-earned wealth, so that

kings	would not seize it,	(through offences, or dying intestate, etc);
thieves	would not steal it,	(or being cheated or conned);
fire	would not burn it,	
water	would not wash it away,	
unloving heirs	would not take it away.	(A 8.54/4:281-285), SD 5.10

**The Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha Sutta** (M 14) then grimly warns that “even as he guards and protects his wealth, kings seize it, thieves steal it, fire burns it, water washes it away, unloving heirs take it away.”<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See **Memes**, SD 26.3.

<sup>54</sup> On how Buddhism can be made to change on a large scale and its effects, see **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.

<sup>55</sup> It’s important to note the present simple tense here: it is a true reality of things. The emphasis is on “A becoming-other...a separation” (*nānā, bhāvo vīnā, bhāvo*) (the nominative).

<sup>56</sup> M 14,9/1:92 @ SD 4.7.

**6.2.1.2** These are reflections for the laity, but in a time when monastics and temples have more funds, wealth and assets, such a reflection applies even more truly to them. In religious and clerical terms, we can speak of gaining members and patronage. When monastics worry about such worldly things, then they will be affected by the real and perceived loss or change of heart of their followers and members, or diminishing of their wealth or destruction of their property, and so on. In other words, even monastics (perhaps more so), should constantly reflect on the uncertainty of such worldliness.

**6.2.1.3** The most universal vagary is that of life and death. We gain human birth in this world unbidden, through our parents, who feed, raise, love and humanize us. Then we lose our parents, our loved ones, our partners, husbands and wives, even our children and young ones. We gain friends, and we lose them in different ways. They themselves grow up, change their ways of things, move away, or lose touch, or fall out of love, grow old and die, too. Our teachers and students, our supporters and loving carers, depart, too. The pets and animals that we raise, too, often die before us. We, too, decay, fall ill, and die, we know not when, but we surely will.

The **Therīgāthā** record these verses of the nun Paṭācārā, reflecting on the loss of all her loved ones all in the same day:

Uninvited, he came from there,  
having come from who knows where,

unpermitted, he goes from here<sup>57</sup>—  
living (here) for but a few days.

From here he has gone by one path;  
Through a human form one has passed on,  
As he came, so he went:

there he goes on by another.  
one will go journeying on in samsara.<sup>58</sup>  
what is there to weep about?

**Thī 129 f**

## **6.2.2 Fame and ill-fame** (*yasāyasa*)

**6.2.2.1** If we had renounced the world with noble intentions [6.2.4.1], the initial joy of renunciation would grow with our meditation. Even when we are new monks, less than 5 rains,<sup>59</sup> when we are asked to speak on the Dharma, or even to simply speak on why we renounced the world, the audience, especially of lay people, would invariably be moved with faith and joy.

The first 5 years of our monastic life is called “dependence” or “tutelage” (*nissaya*), because we are meant to be inducted or “house-broken” in the real sense of the word, we are gently routinized to break away from the mind and ways of the house-life that we had lived. We are being trained to *be* a renunciant through moral conduct (*siḷa*), that is, the restraint of body and speech, so that the mind becomes at home with the monastic life.

Even from the very start as monastics, we are likely to have admirers. One reason is that we are now, by renouncing the world, “available” to the world, especially those who are in some way attracted to us or are compassionately disposed to us. As the rains retreats accumulate, and we mature into elders, having completed at least 10 rains, we would have been famous, especially when we have been giving Dharma talks, conducting meditation sessions, given spiritual counselling to the laity.

**6.2.2.2** As long as all this popularity and patronage do not get into our heads, whether as monastics or as the laity, we will grow and prosper in the teaching. Fame is just a passing glance at us from the world. If we see monastic life or Dharma work as a means from profiting from the world, then we would be trouble when such a passing state passes.

<sup>57</sup> We are born and die according to our karma, whose workings it is almost impossible to know.

<sup>58</sup> The sentiment here is that of a cyclic, repetitive process of continuous births, rebirths, meeting and parting, as sort of Sisyphian experience. On the theme of *repetition*, see *Anusaya*, SD 31.9. On *Sisyphus*, see *Yodh’ājīva S* (S 42.3), SD 23.3 Intro.

<sup>59</sup> A “new monk” (*navaka*): see *Dhamma,dāyāda S* (M 3,6.4), SD 2.18.

How we perceive our own fame, and how that fame has been attributed to us are, as a rule, based on very different processes. Others may rightly or wrongly see us as having special qualities. More often than not, our fame arises from a significant number of people who see that our views, or even personality, concur with theirs. It is a congruence of similar likes and dislikes. As the sayings go, great men think alike; fools seldom differ.

**6.2.2.3** Obscurity, on the other hand, would not trouble us if we are more concerned with personal practice and spiritual progress. For, fame can be at least a subtle hindrance or diluter of our spiritual efforts. Fame might also delude the best or best-intentioned of us, into thinking that the voice of the people is that of our conscience, so that we take liberties with the training-rules and moral conduct.

Monastics, including forest monks, whether Asians or non-Asians, can be vulnerable to fame, especially when the laity equates faith and admiration as a flow of currency. Monastics who make a habit of accepting cash donations and raising funds are likely to be walking in a quagmire of worldly worries, so that they hopefully cast about crumbs of Dharma in the worldly waters to net fishes of fortune at the risk of drowning in those waters.<sup>60</sup>

### **6.2.3 Blame and praise** (*ninsā,pasasmā*)

**6.2.3.1** Renunciation means letting go, not just of material things, but also of the non-material, that is, the *idea* of gain, the *clinging* to honour, and the *desire* for praise. A mind running after gain, honour and praise will not really be able to be focused or stilled, or that focus and stillness are easily forgotten and lost, especially in a morally weak or heedless monastic.

For this reason, we see, recorded in many of the 43 discourses of **the Lābha,sakkāra Saṃyutta** (S 17/2:225-243) just as many warnings against a monastic running after gain, honour and praise. In **the Miḥhaka Sutta** (S 17.5), the Buddha compares such a monastic to a dung-beetle pushing its dung-ball, and boasting to other dung-beetles of the great heap of dung before it!<sup>61</sup> Hence, we hear the Buddha's unequivocal warning to monastics (which may well apply to the laity, too) repeated in almost every one of these suttas:

Dreadful [Terrible], bhikshus, are gain, honour, and praise, bitter, vile obstructive to attaining  
the supreme safety from bondage. (S 17/2:225-243)<sup>62</sup>

In short, we, monastic or lay, should simply distantly smile at fame as a passing friend, and warmly embrace obscurity as a welcome respite. We must also be wary that any unwholesome conduct on our part will attract ill fame, which can seriously hamper our efforts to study and spread the Buddha Dharma, and also discourage and misguide those who know or hear of us.

**6.2.3.2** Goodness and moral conduct, on the other hand, always, surely in the long run benefit both us and beyond, Whichever way the wind blows, the fragrance of moral virtue wafts against it, for our own good and happiness and those of others.

<p><i>Na puppha,gandho paṭivātam eti na candanaṃ tagara,mallikā vā sataṅ ca gandho paṭivātam eti sabbā disā sappuriso pavāti</i></p>	<p>The fragrance of flowers goes not against the wind, nor does the fragrance of sandalwood, tagara,<sup>63</sup> or jasmine, but the fragrance of the good goes against the wind, the true individual pervades all the quarters. <span style="float: right;">(Dh 54)</span></p>
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<sup>60</sup> See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19.

<sup>61</sup> S 17.5/2:228 f (SD 100.11).

<sup>62</sup> On how gain, honour and praise can break up the sangha, see **Bhindi S** (S 17.31), SD 46.24.

<sup>63</sup> Indian valerian (Valeriana wallichii), or East India rosebay or taggar (Tabernaemontana coronaria), a shrub and the fragrant obtained from it; “incense” (V 1:203; Dh:N). For refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernaemontana\\_divaricata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernaemontana_divaricata).

<i>Candanam tagaram vā'pi uppalam atha vassikā etesam gandha,jātānam sīla,gandho anuttaro</i>	Sandalwood or tagara [incense], lotus or jasmine, too: of these fragrances the fragrance of moral virtue is supreme.	(Dh 55)
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### **6.2.4 Joy and sorrow** (*sukha,dukkha*)

**6.2.4.1** When we first renounced the world, it was with sublime joy. We experience a sense of being free of a great burden or that some invisible shackles have been broken and removed from us. Our body feels light in our new robes; our head, too, feels cool, free of its worldly cover. If our intentions are noble, then we would also feel that people we were close to, now feel a happy distance away. This is the beginning of the joy of renunciation.

**The Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137) advises us, as renunciants, to cultivate feelings associated with renunciation in order to abandon those of the household life. That is to say, by attaining the joy of renunciation, we abandon *household joy*; through the pain associated with renunciant's life, we abandon *the pain of household life*; and the equanimity of renunciation pushes away *that of the household life*. Then, depending on the joy of renunciation, we should overcome *the pain of renunciation*. And finally, we should overcome this joy itself by the equanimity of renunciation. Hence, both the joy and the pain of renunciation are transcended, and we are ready for deeper meditation.<sup>64</sup>

**6.2.4.2** As serious practitioners, monastic or lay, we are likely to experience some level of **restlessness** (*uddhacca*), especially in relation to the true teaching or true reality; hence, it is called "dharm restlessness" (*dhamm'uddhacca*). In an important spiritual sense, this is the "ultimate pain," the unease, even angst, that something good has not come about.<sup>65</sup>

**The (Yuganaddha) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.170) speaks of a special kind of restlessness that can actually lead to final liberation.<sup>66</sup> We can reach the path to final liberation when the mind is under the influence of *dhamm'uddhacca*, that is, restlessness related to the Dharma (but also translatable as "restlessness of mental states"). Once the mind settles down and becomes focused, the path is attained.

In spiritual training, then, we have come to terms with both joy and pain, and transcend them, so that we would in no way be distracted by either of them, at least at the moment of awakening. Even a wholesome thought directed externally can distract us through thinking, so that we break from our mental stillness and miss the fullness of our potential awakening.

**6.2.4.3** Happiness and sorrow always go together. On the worldly level, the absence of one defines the other: happiness is the absence of sorrow, and sorrow the absence of happiness. Happiness is a holiday, a break from the real world, the thinking trudging world. As long as we are able to *feel* that happiness, it lasts.

But once familiar and routine thought flood back into our minds, we fall back into the world of pain and suffering. Perhaps this is because we miss the happiness of the past, so that we also miss what is right before us, unwilling or unable to relate to it. Then, we realize we have lost the present, too.

**6.2.4.4** In the **Cūla Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the arhat nun Dhamma,dinnā explains to the lay non-returner Visākha, that

<u>pleasant feeling</u> is	<i>pleasant</i> when it persists,	<i>painful</i> when it changes;
<u>painful feeling</u> is	<i>painful</i> when it persists,	<i>pleasant</i> when it changes;

<sup>64</sup> M137,10-20 @ SD 29.5.

<sup>65</sup> On *dhamm'uddhacca*, see SD 41.5 (5); SD 32.7 (2.2.1, 2.3.3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1).

<sup>66</sup> A 4.170,5/2:157 @ SD 41.5.

neutral feeling is *pleasant* when there is knowledge of it, *painful* when there is no knowledge of it.  
(M 44,24), SD 40a.9

Pain, in other words, lies latent in pleasure, and becomes pleasure when rise above pain, understanding that it is impermanent and not identifying with it.<sup>67</sup> Pleasure, like breathing is momentary, and we can only enjoy the moment, like our breath, by letting it go. Even if we try to hold on to it, it melts away like a drop of water on a red-hot pan.<sup>68</sup> We have reinforced the latent tendency of lust.

If we are pained by the loss or absence of pleasure, and react to it with anger or ill will, then we have reinforced the latent tendency of repulsion. When both pain and pleasure are absent, we are likely to be bored. If we are troubled by this boredom, then we feed the latent tendency of ignorance.<sup>69</sup> The best way out is to see it as being impermanent.<sup>70</sup>

## **6.2.5 Pain is natural, suffering is optional**

**6.2.5.1 Pain is natural, suffering is optional.** Pain comes naturally to the body simply because it is physical, meaning that it is made up of the 4 elements—earth (solidity and resistance), water (fluidity and stickiness), fire (heat and decay) and wind (air and movement)—which are all unstable and ever-changing. Pain means some of these elements are being destroyed. This is the nature of our body, but it also regenerates itself, while life remains in it.

Bodily pain is, in Buddhist psychology, regarded as “external pain,” an objective feeling. It arises from one of the sense-objects or “external sense-bases,” that is, from what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think. Note that “thinking, including thoughts” are regarded as being psychologically *external*.

**6.2.5.2** What does this mean? First, we need to understand that “**thinking**” refers to an on-going present interaction with any of the 6 senses.<sup>71</sup> In fact, our 6 senses are working all the time: *our senses are processing sense-data through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind all the time*. However, through our attention (*manasikāra*),<sup>72</sup> we direct our mind to only one of these sense-stimuli.<sup>73</sup> If we are able to keep this attention properly focused on any of these sense-processes, we would notice that they are all impermanent. We see their “rise and fall.” This is a kind of meditation known as the perception of impermanence.<sup>74</sup>

**6.2.5.3** The word “**thought**” (uncountable) usually has broader sense, referring to what we do with our conscious mind (thinking), or what arises in it (thoughts). However, here, it helps to understand *thought* (past tense) as how we recall the past, how we construct our memories. Notice also that we are often mistaken with such memories, and we change our opinions about them as we age.<sup>75</sup>

The point here is that these are “objective” experiences of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts (notice that they are all substantive nouns, not verbal nouns, that is, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking). As such, we can and should leave them where they belong, “outside.” In other words, let them come, let them go: this is how our mind “breathes.” If our mind tries to hold its breath, it will not last very long before it loses itself in a thought explosion.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>67</sup> On “not owning the pain,” see **Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 61,17), SD 3.10.

<sup>68</sup> For some helpful similes for impermanence, see **Phena,piṇḍa S** (S 22.95), SD 17.12.

<sup>69</sup> For a sutta statement on this, see **Cuḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,25-28), SD 40a.9.

<sup>70</sup> On the latent tendencies, see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

<sup>71</sup> On the 6 senses (*saḷāyatana*), see **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:216-222), SD 29.5.

<sup>72</sup> On attention, see **Nandi-k,khaya S 1-4** (S 35.156-159/4:142 f), SD 12.7+8 & SD 93.1+2.

<sup>73</sup> See **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

<sup>74</sup> See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>75</sup> See eg Daniel L Shacter (ed), *Memory Distortion: How minds, brains, and societies reconstruct the past*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press, 1995:47-68.

<sup>76</sup> On thought proliferation (*papañca*), see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14 (2).

**6.2.5.4** Earlier on, we said that “pain is natural, suffering is optional” [6.2.5.1]. “Pain” here refers to the natural reaction of the body to being “transformed [molested] by cold, transformed by heat, transformed by hunger, transformed by thirst, transformed by the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and serpents.”<sup>77</sup> The natural affliction of the physical body is graphically described in the 4 Nikayās as follows:

This body is form made up of the 4 elements, born from mother and father, built up on rice and porridge, subject to impermanence, rubbing, pressing, breaking up, and crumbling. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.

(D 2; M 23, 109; S 35.105; A 9.15, 55.21; J 12) [3.4]

Significantly, **the “body”** (*kāya*) here has the broad sense of form (*rūpa*), an aggregate that comprises the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (that is, the physical body). As physical organs, the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, suffer the same kind of “molestation” of being “subject to impermanence, rubbing, pressing, breaking up, and crumbling.” (id)

**6.2.5.5** However, the quote above adds, “**And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here**” (id). This refers to the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) or, more broadly, “the mind” behind each and every one of the sense-experiences. Collectively, these are also known simply as “consciousness” or “the mind.” Here, the 5 physical sense-faculties (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) and the mind (as a sense-faculty) are regarded as “the internal sense-bases” (*ajjhātik’āyatana*), while their respective objects or “sense-stimuli” are “the external sense-bases” (*bahir’āyatana*).<sup>78</sup>

It is helpful to remember here that “the mind” as an internal sense-faculty is called *man’āyatana*, and as an external sense-object is called *dharm’āyatana*, an important aspect of which is attention (*manasikāra* or “mental engagement,” *samannāhāra*).<sup>79</sup> In other words, here, we should distinguish between a “passive” reaction and an “active” response to a sense-experience or “sensation.”<sup>80</sup>

Both pain and pleasure arise at the 6 “sense-doors” (this figure helps), and should be left there. These are the “passive reactions” that naturally occur, over which we do not have much or any real control. However, when we direct and hold our attention on any of these “external” events, then we “internalize” or “own” them (so to speak), then suffering arises on that account.

**6.2.5.6** Technically, it should be noted that the “bodily feelings” (*kāyikā vedanā*) connected with the 5 physical senses for a category of their own, while “mental feelings” (*cetasikā vedanā*) forms a separate category, as laid out in **the Sall’atthena Sutta** (S 36.6), where an unwise person, after being hit by a dart of pain, reacts with anger or hate, and so is hit by a second dart. So he suffers twice, physically and mentally.

**A wise person**, on the other hand, clearly comprehending the bodily pain, takes it as it is, without any emotional “value-adding,” without any negative emotion. Hence, leaving the bodily pain where it is, he feels only one kind of pain, the bodily, which then subsides or ends more easily. In other words, he *feels* the pain, but does not *suffer* it.<sup>81</sup>

**6.2.5.7** In this connection, in **the Nakula, pitā Sutta** (S 22.1), the Buddha famously advises the aged Nakula, pitā, “My body may be sick but my mind will not be sick.”<sup>82</sup> “Sick” here, of course, applies to all kinds of physical pains. In fact, this teaching also applies to pleasurable feelings. They, too, should be

<sup>77</sup> **Khajjaniya S** (S 22.79,5), SD 17.9.

<sup>78</sup> On the 6 senses (*saḷ,āyatana*), see **Ṣaḷ,āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:216-222), SD 29.5.

<sup>79</sup> On attention as *manasikāra*, see **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14. On attention (*samannāhāra*), see **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28,27 etc), SD 6.16.

<sup>80</sup> Note also here an interesting experience of how meanings are attributed to words as they are used. These words within “quotes” are used in a relative sense (*pariyāya*), to reflect their special usage.

<sup>81</sup> S 36.6,7-8 @ SD 5.5.

<sup>82</sup> S 22.1,7 @ SD 5.4.

fully noted (which is to truly “enjoy” them), and leave them where they are. That way, when they end (and it is their nature to end), we do not feel the pain of missing them. This is how we deal with the opposing winds of pleasure and pain in connection with bodily and mental pains.

**6.2.5.8** Mental pains, displeasure or sorrow are more difficult to deal with, but with training and wisdom, we can see that they are just like bodily pains: they rise and fall away, too. In other words, mental pain is an “external” event, a sense-object or experience which we should be “objective” about. The same applies to mental pleasures: they, too, are impermanent, and having fully noted them, we should simply leave them at the sense-door (the mind), and not let them into our lives, so to speak.

**6.2.5.9** When we understand these teachings, then we have a better idea of this udana (verse of uplift) uttered by the Buddha at the end of **the (Arhatta) Nanda Sutta** (U 22):

For him who has crossed over the mire,	who has crushed sense-desire’s thorn,
who has reached the destruction of delusion—	that monk trembles not before joy or sorrow.
	(U 22,30), SD 43.7

## 7 We are accountable to our own karma

**7.1 ALL WE OWN IS OUR KARMA.** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:

“I’m the owner of my deeds [my karma],	<i>kamma-s,sako ’mhi</i>
the heir to my deeds,	<i>kamma,dāyādo</i>
the womb of my deeds,	<i>kamma,yoni</i>
the relative of my deeds,	<i>kamma,bandhu</i>
my deeds are my refuge;	<i>kamma,paṭisaraṇo</i>
whatever deed I do, <sup>83</sup>	<i>yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi</i>
good or bad,	<i>kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā</i>
I’ll be its heir.” <sup>84</sup>	<i>tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi ti</i>

Although a renunciant owns nothing in the world, he still generates karma, and it will follow him. This is also true of the laity, and all unawakened beings. Our karma is the only thing that is really ours in the sense that we cannot be free of them except through full awakening. Only an arhat has fully rid himself of any new karma. However, as long as he is alive, that is, bearing the remainder of his body and mind (that is, the 5 aggregates), past karma may ripen when the conditions are right. However, as an awakened being, although he feels the impact of those past karma, they do not affect him mentally or spiritually in any significant way.<sup>85</sup>

## **7.2 THE MONK WHO STUMBLED**

**7.2.1** At the same time, a renunciant understands that not all our actions are karma, and not all that we enjoy or suffer are due to karma. There are occasions when something happens to us, not because of karma, but simply because we are unmindful. Once, it is said, a meditating monk emerges from his cell, and as he is stepping down into the walkway for his meditation, he stumbles and falls flat on the ground.

<sup>83</sup> *Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi*, lit “whatever karma I will do.” The future tense here reflects a conscientious evaluation rather than a hindsight, as is clearly intended by the Pali. See foll n.

<sup>84</sup> *Yaṃ kammaṃ karonti, kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā, tassa dāyādā bhavanti*. For a full stock sentence, with prec line, see: 1 sg fut, **Abhiṅha Pacca,vekkhitabba Thāna S** (A 5.58/3:74); 1 sg pres, **Saṃsappanīya Pariyāya S** (A 10.205/5:288, 290, 291). See prec n.

<sup>85</sup> See **Beyond good and evil**, SD 18.7.

Without feeling any anger, he mindfully gets up, goes back into his cell to meditate, and attains arhathood in due course.<sup>86</sup>

The monk's falling down has nothing to do with karma. He falls because he is unmindful or tired. Realizing this, he returns to his room to continue his meditation in a more restful posture. Even when we are mindful, accidents do occur. However, when we are mindful, the effects of such accidents are less serious, as in the case of the monk here.

**7.2.2** However, there are cases, when despite our mindfulness, accidents or unforeseen events do occur. For example, warns **the (Aṭṭhaka) Maraṇa,sati Sutta** (A 8.74),

- (1) we could be stung by a snake, a scorpion, or a centipede;
- (2) we could stumble and fall;
- (3) our food might not agree with us;
- (4) our bile might act up (liver problem);
- (5) our phlegm might act up (lung problem);
- (6) sharp winds in us might act up (muscular or nervous problem);
- (7) we could be attacked by other people; or
- (8) we could be attacked by non-humans (eg wild animals, or unknown causes). (A 8.74), SD 48.6

Hence, not only should we be mindful externally, but we should also be mindful internally, that is, keep a mind of calm and clarity with, say, perceiving impermanence or being mindful of death.

**7.3 LOVINGKINDNESS, A MORAL BOOSTER.** Moral virtue, the first of the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*), is best cultivated with lovingkindness. While a rational mind helps us to explain why we should cultivate moral virtue, if we use reason alone, we also tend to explain away the spiritual vitality of the precepts, or dilute our resolve to keep them. When we wish others well as we would be well ourselves, putting our places in those of others, we are empowered to self-restraint and respect others' lives, others' property, another's person, the truth and keep our mind and body free from intoxicant and what is addictive. In this sense, lovingkindness is a great enhancer of wholesome karma.

**7.4 LOVINGKINDNESS LIMITS KARMA.** If lovingkindness can enhance our good karma by inspiring us to live a moral life, it also limits, even prevents, the fruiting of our unwholesome karma. Lovingkindness strengthens us inwardly so that we see our own spirituality despite of the lack of spirituality in others. Or, we might even be moved by compassion because of the lack of spirituality in others, because they would surely face its negative consequences. In our compassion, we are empowered to forgive others, even help them, although they do not deserve any kindness at all. In this way, lovingkindness limits our negative karma.

The key passage of **the (Karaja,kāya) Brahma,vihāra Sutta** says:

“Indeed, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness should be developed by a woman or a man. Whether you are a woman or a man, you cannot take this body along when you depart (from this world).

Bhikshus, this mortal life is but an intermediate state of consciousness.

But the noble disciple knows, ‘Whatever bad deed I did before with this physical body, their result will be experienced here and they will not follow me.’<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> The elder Bhagu, overcome by torpor (*middha*), falls flat on the ground, but is undaunted, goes on to attain arhathood: SD 32.6 (3.3.3.3): Tha 271-274.

<sup>87</sup> Comy says “It will be a karma ripening in this existence (*diṭṭha,dhamma,vedanīya,kamma*). They will not follow one to the next existence because the ripening in the next existence (*upapajja,vedanīya*) has been cut off through the practice of lovingkindness. This passage should be understood as a reflection made by a streamwinner or a once-returner.”

Lovingkindness, if developed in such a way, will lead to the state of non-return, in the case of a monk who is established in the wisdom found here [in this teaching], but who has not attained to a higher liberation. (A 10.208,2.2/5:300)

**7.5 OUR KARMA BECOMES US.** Above all, we must constantly remind ourselves that karma is not a check-list of good deeds and their rewards. Even less should we see the happiness, beauty, health, success, power, wealth and blessings of others merely as good karma, but that these arise also on account of their own efforts and the right conditions. We then move beyond lovingkindness to gladness, rejoicing in the blessings of others.

Karma does not merely reward us for good or punish us for bad. It sticks and stays with us like the food we consume, which produces waste or sometimes disagree with us, but also keeps us healthy and fuels us to be able to do good through our body, speech and mind. Indeed, our karma becomes us. Our karma shapes our very being. We may have a human body, but our karma shapes our mind. So if we habitually conduct ourselves in a subhuman way, we have already fallen into the realms of the asuras, the pretas, the animals, and the hellbeings,<sup>88</sup> even before dying.

And yet, by our habitual karma of the divine abodes<sup>89</sup>—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness, and equanimity—we live as gods even here in this world itself. For, the seeds of divinity are within our own hearts; we only need to see it and cultivate. The seeds of awakening, too, are within us, waiting for the right conditions—those free from self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows—so that we blossom as streamwinners in this life itself.<sup>90</sup>

## 8 Daily routine and habits

**8.1 PURPOSE OF RENUNCIATION.** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**How am I passing my nights and days?**” (*katham, bhūtassa me rattin, divā vītivattantīti*). A true monastic’s sole purpose is to gain awakening in this life itself. This sole purpose entails the 3 trainings in moral conduct, mental cultivation and insight wisdom. The monastic should spend his time mastering and understanding the Paṭimokkha and the Vinaya, although he need not be an expert in it.

He spends his time daily in this task so that he would not have any doubt about any Vinaya rules, especially when he leaves the community to work on his solitary retreat. Any such doubt might hamper his progress in meditation, which is his second training. He spends his time in meditation on a daily basis, doing both sitting and walking meditation, and any other meditation that he has learned that would expedite his attaining of mental stillness and breakthrough into mental liberation.

**8.2 ROLE OF THE VINAYA.** In the Buddha’s time, the Vinaya or monastic discipline clearly forbids monastics from using money, which means eschewing any kind of gainful employment or rewards, and not to be socially engaged, that is, to completely avoid fraternizing with the laity. This does not mean that monastics should be distant and cold towards the laity.

On the contrary, whenever the laity meet up with monastics, under proper circumstances and keeping to proper decorum, monastics should invariably show respect and concern for the laity, as would the laity, on his part. Monastics however should be extremely careful in not being too close with the laity, so as to form attachments or arouse the suspicion or misunderstanding of others.

**8.3 MONASTICS HAVE NO LEISURE.** In our times, monastics are likely to be easily distracted from their monastic or retreat routines when they have handphones, fixed phones, computers and various electronic gadgets. Although such gadgets are necessary in the lives of the laity, they should be kept to a minimum for monastics and in the monasteries.

<sup>88</sup> On these 4 subhuman planes, see SD 2.22 (1.7).

<sup>89</sup> See **Divine abodes**, SD 38.5.

<sup>90</sup> See (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

A monastic who spends inordinately long hours online, even chatting on Dharma blogs or networks, means that they are not using those times in personal practice or executing monastic duties. Even if a monastic is able to discuss and disseminate the Dharma online for the benefit of a global network, the laity would criticize him for having a lot of “leisure time.” The situation would, of course, be worse if the monastics spend too much time online writing emails and surfing the Internet. This would be like the monastic is frequenting a cybercafe, only in this case, it is the cybercafe that has come to the monastic.

## 9 Delighting in empty places

### 9.1 COMMENTARIAL GLOSSES

**9.1.1** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus: “**Do I delight in empty places?**” (*kacci nu kho ahaṃ suññāgāre abhiramāmiti*). The key word here is “empty places” (*suññāgāra*), which can mean “an empty place” [9.1.2], or practising “all alone” in such a place [9.1.3], or a quiet place suitable for meditation [9.1.4], or more broadly, solitude related to meditation [9.2].

The native commentary explains *suññāgāra* as referring to “bodily solitude” (*kāya, viveka*), that is, constantly reflecting, “How now shall I delight in finding the opportunities for being apart from others, of being all alone in all my postures [standing, walking, sitting, reclining]?” (*vivitt’okāse sabb’iriyā, pathesu ekako’va hutvā kacci nu kho abhiramāmiti*, AA 5:40). This solitary life is, of course, a basis for moral virtue and mental cultivation, the first two of the 3 trainings [8.1].

**9.1.2** The compound *suññāgāra* is resolved as *suñña* (adj), “empty” + *agāra* (also *āgāra*, especially when suffixed),<sup>91</sup> meaning “a house or building, household or home life.” The Commentaries gloss the phrase as “a place devoid of people (*jana, vivitta-ṭ, thānaṃ*).”<sup>92</sup>

**9.1.3** The Commentary on **the Kassapa Sīha, nāda Sutta** (D 8) gives an alternative gloss, that is, as meaning a house or building (*ghara*, a synonym of *agāra*), as in “having sat down all alone in an empty house” (DA 2:360).

**9.1.4** The Commentary on **the Bhaddiya Sutta** (U 1.10) explains “having gone to an empty place,” *suññāgāra, gato*, more broadly, as follows. First, it quotes the **Vinaya**, where it is said, “Except for a village and a village’s surroundings, the rest is **forest** (*arañña*)”<sup>93</sup> (V 3:46). Any other dwelling-place that is proper for a renunciant, such as a mountain or a cave and so on, is what is implied here by *suññāgāra*, on account of the absence of people; or, alternatively, whatever place that is apart [remote] (*vivitta*)<sup>94</sup> on account of the absence of sounds that are thorns to dhyana,<sup>95</sup> should be understood as an “empty place.” (UA 161)

**9.1.5** The Commentary on **the Paṭisallāna Sutta** (It 45) explains the phrase, “*irūhetā suññāgāranam*, “frequenting empty places” or “frequenter of empty places,” adding that here “empty places” refers to any place suitable for one who is intent on meditation, especially samatha and vipassanā,<sup>96</sup> both day and night. Such places can also be a single-storey mansion (*eka, bhūmikādi, pāsāda*), and so on.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> That is, as *in fine compositi* (ifc), used terminally (in a compound), such as *suññāgāra*.

<sup>92</sup> MA 1:195 = SA 3:111 = AA 3:266.

<sup>93</sup> *Araññaṃ nāma thapetvā gāmaṃ ca gāmaṃ upacārā ca avasesaṃ araññaṃ nāma* (V 3:46,30).

<sup>94</sup> Cf UA 427.

<sup>95</sup> “Thorns to dhyana” (*jhāna, kaṇṭaka*). On sounds being thorns to dhyana, see **Kaṇṭaka S** (A 10.72), where the Buddha declares, “Noise, bhikkhus, has been said by me to be a thorn to dhyana” (*sadda, kaṇṭaka hi bhikkhave jhānā vuttā mayā*) (A 10.72/5:134 f), SD 80.17; Vism 269.

<sup>96</sup> See *Samatha, vipassanā*, SD 41.11.

**9.2 TYPES OF SOLITUDE.** The 3 solitudes are often mentioned in the Commentaries<sup>98</sup> as follows:

- |                                  |                           |                                  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) solitude of the body         | ( <i>kāya viveka</i> ),   | that is, physical solitude,      |
| (2) solitude of the mind         | ( <i>citta viveka</i> ),  | that is, spiritual solitude, and |
| (3) solitude from the substrates | ( <i>upadhi viveka</i> ), | that is, nirvana.                |

We often find long passages on these 3 kinds of solitude in the suttas. In a well known dhyana pericope in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), for example, a monk or meditator is, firstly, said to resort to a suitable meditation place: this is his physical solitude.<sup>99</sup> Implicit here is, of course, that he is diligently keeping up his moral training of restraint in body and speech, too.<sup>100</sup> Secondly, he gains mental focus, he works towards inner stillness by overcoming the 5 mental hindrances,<sup>101</sup> so that he attains dhyana:<sup>102</sup> this is his mental solitude. Finally, with a calm and clear mind, he goes on to work to attain the path and its fruition, that is, become an awakened saint. When he fully overcomes the “substrates” (*upadhi*)—the defilements (*kilesa*), the aggregates (*khandha*), and the formations (*abhisankhāra*)—he becomes an arhat.<sup>103</sup>

## 10 The true purpose of renunciation

**10.1 SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT.** A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:

<p>“<b>Have I realized any superhuman states,</b> the distinction of knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, so that in my last days, when asked by fellow brahmacharis, I’ll not be embarrassed?</p>	<p><i>atthi nu kho me uttari,manussa,dhammo alam-ariya,ñāṇa,dassana,viseso adhigato yenāham<sup>104</sup> pacchime kāle sabrahmacārīhi puṭṭho na maṅku bhavissāmīti</i></p>
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The native commentary explains the term “**superhuman states**” (*uttari,manussa,dhamma*) as referring to the 10 wholesome courses of karma—3 of the body (abstaining from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct), 4 of speech (abstaining from false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, and frivolous chatter) and 3 of the mind (abstinence from covetousness, ill will, and wrong view)<sup>105</sup>—which should be fully

<sup>97</sup> ItA 1:168; NmA 2:405 f. For details on *suññāgāra*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4): n on “empty place,” SD 13.3. For further details on *suññāgāra*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4): n on “empty place,” SD 13.3.

<sup>98</sup> Nm 27, 140, 157, 341; DA 169; MA 2:142; UA 163, 206, 231, 396; SA 3:122; DhA 2:103, 3:129.

<sup>99</sup> See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,67), SD 8.10.

<sup>100</sup> In the first 13 suttas of **Dīgha Nikāya**, we have the 3 trainings laid out in detail in **the fruits of recluship pericope**. The first training, that of moral virtue, is a long section of “the moralities,” an ancient formulation of monastic rules: see eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,43-62), SD 8.10.

<sup>101</sup> See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,68), SD 8.10. On the mental hindrances, see **Nīvaraṇā**, SD 32.1.

<sup>102</sup> See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

<sup>103</sup> Comys give more details on the 3 solitudes with some technical variations in their nature. Where there are such variations, priority of understanding should be based on sutta teachings. See **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4 (4.2).

<sup>104</sup> Be:Ka Ce Ee *yo’ham*; Se *so’ham*.

<sup>105</sup> **The 10 wholesome courses of karma** (*kusala kamma,patha*) cover all the 3 doors of action (body, speech and mind) of a monastic. **The training of a laity** is embodied in the 5 precepts, which essentially encompasses only the body (the precept against killing, stealing and sexual misconduct) and speech (the precept against lying). The fifth precept (against taking intoxicants and addictive habits) covers all the 3 doors (since if were drunk, we would be less inhibited so as to break all the other precepts). The fifth precept is also a preparation for *mental cultivation*. A lay person, can, whenever he wishes, practise meditation and work to overcome wrong views (which is *wisdom training*), which would be the practice of the 10 wholesome courses of karma: see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; **Saṅcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-10), SD 3.9. On the first 7 of these courses (viz on body and speech), for **lay training**, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,6-12), and mind-training is given as *recollection on the 3 jewels* (§§13-15), which,

cultivated by a monastic; meditation leading up to dhyana; and the attaining of sainthood (*ariya*) (AA 5:40). “**The distinction in knowledge and vision**” (*ñāṇa, dassana, visesa*) refers to the progress through the stages of mental purification and spiritual attainment, fully laid out in such discourses as **the Ratha,vinīta Sutta** (M 24).<sup>106</sup> In simple terms, the “distinction” or “excellence” (*visesa*) here also refers to any of the 4 stages of sainthood, especially arhathood.<sup>107</sup>

**10.2 PERCEPTION OF IMPERMANENCE.** Ideally, according to the suttas, monastics should work to attain arhathood, only then their work is said to be completed, with nothing more to be done.<sup>108</sup> However, as time separates us further away from the Buddha, as more new Buddhisms arise in the world, the Buddha Dharma becomes dimmer and more diluted, so that it is more difficult for us, even monastics, today to attain arhathood.

It is clear from sutta teachings that even if we are to attain only streamwinning in this life itself, we would surely move on towards full awakening within 7 lives at the most.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the Buddha assures us in at least 10 suttas—those of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25)—that if we habitually practise the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*), we would surely attain streamwinning in this life itself, if not at the moment of passing away.<sup>110</sup>

### 10.3 BENEFITS OF REFLECTING ON IMPERMANENCE

**10.3.1 The (Ānisaṃsa) Anicca Saññā Sutta** (A 6.10) lists the following 6 advantages of reflecting on impermanence:

1. All formations will appear transient to me (*sabba, saṅkhārā ca me anavaṭṭhito khāyissanti*).
2. My mind will not delight in all the world [or in the world of the all] (*sabba, loke ca me mano nābhiramissati*).
3. My mind will rise above all the world (*sabba, lokā ca me mano vuṭṭhahissati*).
4. My mind will tend towards nirvana (*nibbāṇa, poṇaṇ ca me mānasam bhavissati*).
5. The mental fetters will be broken by me (*saṃyojanā ca me pahānaṃ gacchanti*).
6. And I shall attain to supreme recluseship (*paramena ca sāmāññena samannāgato bhavissāmī ti*).  
(A 6.102/3:443)

**10.3.2** The vitality and benefit of the perception of impermanence is graphically stated in **the Velama Sutta** (A 9.20), thus:

And, houselord, even though the brahmin Velāma gave those great gifts, and even if he were to cultivate a heart of lovingkindness for just as long as it takes to tug at the cow’s teat (to milk it), greater would be the fruit if he were to cultivate the perception of impermanence for even the moment of a finger-snap!  
(A 9.20, 5.2/4:395 f), SD 16.6

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with accomplishment in moral virtue (§16), leads to streamwinning (§17), SD 1.5. On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

<sup>106</sup> M 24 (SD 28.3).

<sup>107</sup> For definitions, see eg **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 112, 9-12/3:80), SD 7.13. Cf the story of Sāriputta’s meeting with Assaji: when Sāriputta realizes that he does not attain any “higher distinction” (*upari, visesa*), ie any higher attainment than streamwinning, he decided to meet the Buddha himself (DhA 1:94). See also **Cūḷa Go, siṅga S** (M 31 passim), SD 44.11; **Miga, sāla S** (A 6.44), SD 3.2 & (A 10.75).

<sup>108</sup> On “nothing further beyond this,” see **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39, 21.3), SD 10.13.

<sup>109</sup> See **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5 (3).

<sup>110</sup> See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

**10.3 DHARMA-HEIRS AND OWNERS.** When a monastic strays from the spirit of renunciation and falls into worldliness, yet continues to pretend to be a renunciant, he is said to be a “**thief**” (*cora*) in the teaching, since he acts stealthily and thinks that no one knows about his real state or intent.<sup>111</sup> [2.3]

However, even a good monk who uses the supports (*paccaya*)—almsfood, robes, shelter or medication—he has received [2.1.1], without reflecting, is a **debtor**. A saint on the path, because he is on the way to awakening, takes his almsfood as an **heir**, while an arhat, since he is fully awakened, is the **owner** of his almsfood.<sup>112</sup> A renunciant, in other words, should remind himself of his “original vow” when he renounced the world to join the monastic community and live a spiritual life working for awakening in this life itself.

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## The Discourse on What a Renunciant Should Do Constantly

A 10.48

- 1 There are these 10 things, bhikshus, that should be constantly reviewed by a renunciant.<sup>113</sup>
- 2 What are the ten?

### The 10 things to be constantly reviewed

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“I’ve taken up a <u>classless life</u> [classlessness].” <sup>114</sup>                                     | <i>vevaṇṇiyam hi ajjhupagato ’ti</i>   |
| (2) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“I’m one who lives dependent on others.” <sup>115</sup>   | <i>para,paṭibaddhā me jīvikā ’ti</i>   |
| (3) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“My deportment should differ from that of others.” <sup>116</sup>   | <i>añño me ākappo karanīyo ’ti</i>   |
| (4) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“Do I reproach myself regarding moral conduct?” <sup>117</sup>  | <i>kacci nu kho me attā sīlato na upavadatīti</i>                              |
| (5) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“Do my wise fellow brahmacharis, who are discerning, reproach me regarding moral conduct?” <sup>118</sup>   | <i>kacci nu kho maṃ anuvicca viññū<br/>sabrahmacārī sīlato na upavadantīti</i> |
| (6) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<br>“There is a becoming-other of all that are dear and pleasing to me, a separation from them.” <sup>119</sup> | <i>sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi<br/>nānā,bhāvo vīnā,bhāvo ’ti</i>                |

<sup>111</sup> See Susīma’s confession: **Arahatta Susīma S** (S 12.70,58), SD 16.8.

<sup>112</sup> MA 5:32; SA 2:199. See also SD 45.18 (2.3.3.2).

<sup>113</sup> *Dasa-y-ime bhikkhave dhammā pabbajitena abhiṇham paccavekkhitabbā.*

<sup>114</sup> *Vevaṇṇiya* (from *vi-vaṇṇa*, “discoloured, pale, wan” (Sn 585; Thī 79; J 2:418), “state of having no caste, life of an outcaste”; cf BHSD *vaivarnika*, “outcaste,” Divy 424. This line recurs at **Samaṇa Saññā S** (A 10.101/5:210) & qu at Nett 934/185. On this section, see (1).

<sup>115</sup> On this section, see (2).

<sup>116</sup> On this section, see (3).

<sup>117</sup> Here “I” (*attā*, “self”) refers to the mind (*citta*) (*Attā ’ti cittam*, AA 5:49). On this section, see (4).

<sup>118</sup> On this section, see (5).

<sup>119</sup> It’s important to note the present simple tense here: it is a true reality of things. The emphasis is on “A becoming-other...a separation” (*nānā,bhāvo vīnā,bhāvo*) (the nominative). On this section, see (6).

- (7) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:  
 “I’m the owner of my deeds [my karma],  
 the heir to my deeds,  
 the womb of my deeds,  
 the relative of my deeds,  
 my deeds are my refuge;  
 whatever deed I do,<sup>120</sup>  
 good or bad,  
 I’ll be its heir.”<sup>121</sup>
- (8) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:  
 “How am I passing my nights and days?”<sup>122</sup>
- (9) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:  
 “Do I delight in empty places?”<sup>123</sup>
- (10) A renunciant should constantly reflect thus:<sup>124</sup>  
 “Have I realized any superhuman states,  
 the distinction of knowledge and vision,  
 worthy of the noble ones, so that in my last days,<sup>125</sup>  
 when asked by fellow brahmacharis,  
 I’ll not be embarrassed?”
- 3 These, bhikshus, are the 10 things that should be constantly reviewed by a renunciant.

*kamma-s,sako ’mhi**kamma,dāyādo**kamma,yoni**kamma,bandhu**kamma,paṭisaraṇo**yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi**kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā**tassa dāyādo bhavissāmī ti**kathaṃ,bhūtaṃ me rattaṃ,divā vītivattaṃtīti**kacci nu kho ahaṃ suññāgāre abhiraṃmāmiti**atthi nu kho me uttari,manussa,dhammo**alam-ariya,ñāṇa,dassana,viseso adhigato**yenāhaṃ<sup>126</sup> pacchime kāle**sabrahmacārīhi puṭṭho**na maṅku bhavissāmīti*

— evaṃ —

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<sup>120</sup> *Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi*, lit “whatever karma I will do.” The future tense here reflects a conscientious evaluation rather than a hindsight, as is clearly intended by the Pali. This reflection and the next are found at A 5.5.8: see foll n.

<sup>121</sup> *Yaṃ kammaṃ karonti, kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā, tassa dāyādā bhavanti*. As a full stock sentence with prec line: **Abhiṇṇa Pacca,vekkhitabba Thāna S** (A 5.57/3:74) 1 pl future (SD 5.12); **Saṃsappanīya Pariyāya S** (A 10.205/5:288, 290, 291), 1 sg present (SD 39.7). See prec n. On this section, see (7).

<sup>122</sup> Qu at Miln 392. On this section, see (8).

<sup>123</sup> See (9).

<sup>124</sup> See (10).

<sup>125</sup> Comy: “...last days” means “while lying down on the deathbed” (*Pacchime kāle’ti maraṇa,mañce nipanna,kāle*. AA 5:40).

<sup>126</sup> Be:Ka Ce Ee yo ’ham; Se so ’ham.