18

Nālaka Sutta

The Nālaka Discourse | Sn 3.11 (Sn 679–723)

**Vatthu,gāthā**, the verse introduction (Sn 679–698)

Nālaka Gāthā, the Nālaka verses, or **Moneyya Sutta**, the Discourse on Sagehood (Sn 699–723)

Theme: Asita’s visit to the child Bodhisattva and the nature of sagehood

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2016

1 Overview

1.1 THE SUTTA BASICS

1.1.1 The Nālaka Sutta (Sn 3.11) recounts how the sage Asita first meets the new-born infant Siddhattha Gotama in Kapila,vatthu in northern India. This Sutta is the canonical locus classicus of the Asita episode in the traditional Buddha narrative [1.1.3]. It comprises two sections: an introduction, the Vatthu,gāthā [679–698], which contains the Asita story, and the *Nālaka Gāthā*, a record of the Buddha’s instruction to Asita’s nephew, Nālaka [699–723]. [1.2.1]

1.1.2 The Nalaka Sutta (Sn 3.11) is both a narrative and a teaching, all given in verses. The narrative section—known as the “introductory verses” (vatthu,gātha) or “story talk” (vatthu,kathā), in the Siamese canon—gives the introductory story (Sn 679–698) [1.2]. The teaching section—the Nālaka Gāthā or Nālaka Verses—is a dialogue between Nālaka and the Buddha (Sn. 699-723) dealing with sagehood (moneyya), that is, the nature of the “silent sage” (muni).  

1.1.3 Kapila,vatthu

1.1.3.1 Kapila,vatthu (literally, “Kapila’s land”)—in Sanskrit, Kapila,vastu—was the ancient capital city of the Sakyā kingdom. King Sudhodana and queen Mahā Māyā were traditionally said to be the rulers or leaders of the Sakyas. Their only son, Siddhattha Gotama (Skt siddhārtha gautama) is said to leave his palace at Kapilavatthu at 29, to renounce the world, and later to become the Buddha.  

1.1.3.2 Formerly known as Taulihawa, it is today a municipality and administrative centre of Kapilavastu District in Province No 5 of southern Nepal. It is located about 25 km (16 mi) to the south-west of Lumbini, the Buddha’s birthplace. The municipality lies at an altitude of 107 m (351 ft) above sea level on Nepal’s southern border across from Kunhua, Uttar Pradesh state, India. There is today a customs checkpoint for goods while movement of Indian and Nepalese nationals across the border is unrestricted.  

1.1.3 Asita

1.1.3.1 Asita (ts) was a brahmin seer (iṣī), a matted-hair ascetic (jaṭila) [Sn 689a], who was chaplain to king Śiha,hanu, the Buddha’s grandfather, and teacher of the Buddha’s own father, king Sudhodana. Asita visited Sudhodana morning and evening, and was greatly respect by the king. In due course, with the king’s permission, he retired as a hermit in the royal park and was attended by him.

1.1.3.2 After renouncing the world, Asita, through meditation gained the 8 attainments and the 5 powers.  

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1 The notes of this Sutta tr are mostly based on the studies of Jayawickrama 1976, 1978a; see Norman 2001 (Sn:N).
3 For other details, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapilavastu.
4 Attha samāpatti, ie, the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments: see Dhyana, SD 8.4 (12.3).
cycles into the future (J 1:54). Early Buddhism, however, rejects this latter notion—that of seeing far into the future—as the future has not yet happened. [6.1 @ Sn 681]

If it were possible to do so, and such visions were true, then, our lives would be predetermined, and ethics-based religion would be meaningless and useless. Even if only certain events were predetermined and not others, how are we to know which events these would be the ones? In short, we can only speculate about the future, and perhaps make reasoned conclusions or educated guesses about them.6

After his meals in the palace, he would visit the Himalayas or a deva world (such as the heaven of the 4 great kings and so on), to have his day-rest (SnA 483-486). After some time, he retired into solitude in the Himalayas. During a day-rest in the heaven of the 33 devas (tāva, tiṁsa), he learned that the future Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama, had been born as the son of king Sudhodana [Sn 683 f] (J 1:54).

1.1.3.3 Asita went to Sudhodana’s palace to see the infant. When the child was brought to him, to everyone’s surprise, the child’s feet found themselves on Asita’s head. The custom was for his devotees to place their heads at the sage’s feet. However, it is said that if Asita had placed his feet on the Bodhisattva’s head, Asita’s head would have split into 7 pieces! So, he rose from his seat and saluted the auspicious child.7

Asita went on to examine the child and discovered that he was endowed with the 32 marks of the great man (mahā, purisa lakkhana).8 He was sure that the child would become the fully self-awakened Buddha in due course, and jubilated at this fact. Despite his joy, however, Asita was also sad to realize that he had reached 90, and would not live long enough to witness the great awakening. Upon dying, he would be reborn in a formless realm, and so would not be able to listen to the Buddha’s teaching. Hence, he wept.

This is the famous “smiling/weeping” Asita episode. (SnA 2:488)

1.1.3.4 Asita then went to his sister’s house and urged his nephew, Nālaka, to renounce the world in anticipation of the future Buddha’s awakening.9 Nālaka complied and, in due course, renounced as the Buddha’s disciple. Following the teaching given to him by the Buddha, as recorded in the Nālaka Sutta, he attained arhathood (SnA 2:500 f).

1.1.3.5 Asita apparently see the child Bodhisattva either on the very day that he was born, or within three days thereafter. The Buddha, vaṁsa Commentary mentions the 5th day as the “head lustration” and naming day, when 108 brahmins were invited. If these, 8 of them—beginning with Rāma10 (J 1:56, v270) —were versed in reading the 32 marks of the great man. Seven of them raised two fingers, predicting that the child would become a wheel-turner if he lived a household life, and become buddha if he renounced the world.

The youngest of them, Koṇḍañña, was certain of the child’s future, and raised one finger, proclaiming the he would surely become the Buddha. Koṇḍañña later becomes the eldest of the group of 5 monks who attended to the Bodhisattva before his awakening. However, Asita is not mentioned amongst these brahmins.

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5 Pañc’abhīññā, ie, (1) psychic powers, (2) the divine ear, (3) mind-reading, (4) retrocognition (recall of past lives) and (5) karmic recollection—ie, the 6 knowledges (cha-l-abhiññā) without arhathood: Kevaqḍha S (D 11.55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5).

6 On the Buddha’s omniscience, see Kaññaka-thala S (M 90); SD 10.8 (2) & Sandaka S (M 76,21+52): SD 35.7 (3.2); SD 36.2 (5.1.1.2).

7 In the Jātaka version of the Asita story, the Bodhisattva does not place his feet on Asita’s head (J 1:55,3). The JA account, however, is later than SnA, which it quotes.

8 On the 32 signs of the great man, see Sn 690b n below.

9 Sn pp131-136; SnA 483: J 1:54 f; BA 276 f (called Kāla,devala).

10 This Rāma is prob the father of Rāma,putta. The full list of names is given at J 1:56 v170.

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1.1.3.6 In the Pali sources, Asita was also known as Кāla,deva (SnA 487,3; J 1:54), Кapha,siri (Sn 689; SnA 487,13) and Siri,kaňha (SnA 487,14).11 These names attest to the fact that he was of dark complexion (kaňhā). Asita’s alternate name of Кāla Devala in the Jātaka—or Кāla Devala 1—should not be confused with his namesake, alternately called Asita Devala 1 [4.2.2], whose story is recorded in the Assalāyana Sutta (M 93), and is said to be the Buddha himself in a past life12 (MA 3:411) [3.2.2].

1.1.3.7 The Sanskrit parallels of the vatthu,gāthā, especially the Mahā,vastu13 (Mvst 2:30-45) [2.2.3.3] and the Lalita,vistara (Lalv 76 ff),14 agree in the main details with the Pali version. However, the Mahāvastu says that Asita was the son of a brahmin from Ujjēṇī and he lived in the Vindhyā mountains, and then he was said to live on Mount Kailāśa, a range in the Himalayas. There seems to be a confusion between our Asita and Asita Devala, who was a different person [1.1.3.6].

The Lalita,vistara gives the name of Asita’s nephew as Nārada, but the rest of its account agrees somewhat closely with that of the Mahāvastu. Both works are more developed than the Nālaka Sutta, hence later than the Nālaka Gāthā. The Vatthu,gāthā, too, is late [1.2.2]. However, both the Nālaka Gāthā and the Mahāvastu parallel contain old materials that go back to probably an older common source (an ur-text).15

1.2 THE SUTTA INTRODUCTION

1.2.1 The vatthu,gāthā

1.2.1.1 Scholars have noted that, as a rule, introductions to old Pali ballads (narrative and teachings in verses)16 are considerably later than the poems themselves.17 As a rule, the verse introductions to other suttas—such as the “introductory verses” or vatthu,gāthā to the Pārāyana (Sn 976-1031)—recount the events leading up to the teaching. In the case of the Nālaka Sutta, its vatthu,gāthā seems to have been added at a late canonical time, perhaps, as an editorial afterthought.

1.2.1.2 There is an interesting parallel between the vatthu,gāthā of the Nālaka Sutta and of the Pārāyana. Bāvāri who sends his 16 students to see the Buddha, Asita sends Nālaka to wait for the Buddha’s awakening. Jayawickrama compares Nālaka to Śrīkṛṣṇa (viz Krishna) but he is clearly not the divine charioteer of the Bhagavadgītā, a post-Buddha polemical work against Buddhism. See SD 36.1 (1.7.1).

11 SnA 487 says that Kaňha,siri and Siri,kaňha are his alternate names. Siri,kaňha is Śrīkṛṣṇa (viz Krishna) but he is clearly not the divine charioteer of the Bhagavadgītā, a post-Buddha polemical work against Buddhism. See SD 36.1 (1.7.1).

12 Assalāyana S (M 93,17.3-18.30/2:154), SD 40a.2. See Ency Bsm 2:176 f, sv Asita Devala.

13 Mahā,vastu (Mvst), “the great chapter,” or, fully, Mahāvastu Avadāna, the earliest Skt biography of the Buddha, a part of the Vinaya Pitaka of the Lokottara,vāda (affiliated with the Mahāśāṅghika). Like the major Buddhist Skt works, it is heavily interpolated, parts of which may date as early as the 2nd cent BCE. Ed E Senart, 3 vols, Paris, 1882-1897. GRETEL, 2005. Tr J J Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3 vols, London, 1949-1956.


16 Besides the vatthu,gātha of Nālaka S (Sn 679-698), there are also those of (Kalyāṇa,mitta) Rāhula S (Sn 335 f), SD 64.20, and of Pārāyana (Sn 976-1031).


18 On the account of Bāvāri’s 16 youths, see Pārāyana Vagga (Sn ch 5); on Śrīkṛṣṇa, see Śrīkṛṣṇa Māṇava Pucchā (Sn 5.17), SD 49.6b.

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1.2.1.3 In the case of the Pārāyana [1.2.1.1] and the Sela Sutta (M 92), we see their respective vatthu,gāthā introducing us directly into their respective teachings.\(^{20}\) In terms of temporal sequence, the vatthu,gāthā of the Nālaka Sutta are widely separated from the *Nālaka Gāthā\(^{21}\) or the Sutta proper by over 30 years. Asita meets the new-born Siddhattha, who renounces the world at 29, and awakens 6 years later at 35.\(^{22}\) If Nālaka joins the Buddha in the first year of the ministry, the time-span is exactly 35 years.

1.2.1.4 The vatthu,gāthā of the Nālaka Sutta apparently only serve to introduce us to Asita’s nephew, Nālaka. In terms of the Buddha narrative, the vatthu,gāthā, however, recounts the interesting and famous “Asita episode,” which inspires us with the beauty of the Buddha’s infancy story.

1.2.1.5 We find independent accounts of the vatthu,gāthā materials in the Nidāna,kathā (the introduction to the Jātaka Commentary), the Mahāvastu, the Lalita,vistara and the Tibetan Vinaya (Dulva)—all of which are post-canonical works and, hence, later than the Sutta Nipāta. This attests to the fact the Nālaka Sutta—comprising the Vattu,gāthā and the *Nālaka,gāthā—“are in reality two independent poems differing in age, brought together at a subsequent date which, most probably, coincided with that of the final collation of Sn.” (Jayawickrama 1978:16)

The sutta redactor’s placing of the two related texts into a single sutta is clearly helpful for those studying the suttas. It connects two important events in the Buddha’s life: his birth and his early teaching on sagehood (moneyya). It is the story of Nālaka that links the two accounts together—which also shows that they are not really independent accounts.

1.2.2 Age of the vatthu,gāthā

1.2.2.1 The form of the vatthu,gāthā—its language, style and metre—differs quite starkly from those of the Nālaka Verses [Sn 699-723]. The vatthu,gāthā features various aspects of the Buddha legend, such as allusions to the 32 marks of the great man (lakkhana) [§12] and also the term bodhisatta [§Sn 683a].\(^{23}\) Further signs of the lateness of the vatthu,gāthā are the accounts of the devas rejoicing at the Buddha’s birth\(^{24}\) [§§679-684] and Asita’s prophecy [§693].

1.2.2.2 The language, style and metre of the vatthu,gāthā [2] significantly differs from those of the Nālaka Gātha, that is, the Sutta proper. The vatthu,gāthā shows important developments in the Buddha-narrative or the early Buddhist mythos. This legendary tone is clearly absent from the Nālaka Gātha (the Sutta proper), which presents only teachings. Clearly, the vatthu,gāthā is later than the Sutta proper.

However, despite the apparently weak link between the preamble and the Sutta itself, the internal [2] and external evidence [3] attest to a concatenation of two independent poems. Although the two poems are well separated in time, the vatthu,gāthā prepares us for the greatest spiritual event in religious history: the advent of the historical Buddha. Nālaka plays the role of Everyman, as it were, reminding us that this is no small ripple in the human ride, and that we should flow with it to reach the shores of nirvana.

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\(^{19}\) Jayawickrama 1978:13.
\(^{20}\) M 92 = Sn 3.7 (SD 45.7a).
\(^{21}\) The initial star means that this name is an innovation, one which I have used to refer to the second part of the Nālaka Sutta—the Sutta proper.
\(^{22}\) See the n on the “7 years”: SD 51.11 (1.2.1).
\(^{23}\) According to Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, the Bodhisattva doctrine arose prob in the 2nd century BCE (1932:43). However, the Pali bodhisatta is clearly older, but does not reflect an older stratum in the texts.
\(^{24}\) The story of Asita’s epiphany which moved him to visit the child Siddhattha (Sn 679-698) is accepted by many scholars as the source for the Biblical story of Simeon’s visit to the infant Christ (Luke 2:8-14, 25-35): see E W Lanman, *Buddhist Legends*, 1921:10.
2 Language, style and verse

2.1 LANGUAGE AND STYLE

2.1.1 Sanskritic forms

Jayawickrama, in his critical study of the Sutta Nipāta, notes that there are many late and Sanskritic forms lying side by side with equally numerous very old Pali forms, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Pali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sn 680</td>
<td>(b) cittiṁ karitvā; (c) atiriva kalya, rūpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 681</td>
<td>(c) loma, haṁsano; (d) marū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 683b</td>
<td>(b) manussa, loke hita, sukhatāya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 684</td>
<td>(abd) the epithets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 685a</td>
<td>avāṁsari (an analogical form) (cf samavassari, Thī 210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 687a</td>
<td>siki (fire), related imageries in lines bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 689d</td>
<td>patīggahe (an artificial form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 690a</td>
<td>sakyā, puṅgavain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 691</td>
<td>(a) gamanāṁ (= maraṇāṁ), (b) akalya, rūpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 692</td>
<td>the sandhis, (a) isim-avoca, (c) cāp’imassa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 692d</td>
<td>the phrase adhimanasā bhavātha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 694</td>
<td>(b) kāla, kiriyā, (c) asama, dhurassa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn 697</td>
<td>hita, manasena</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such Sanskritisms and late forms in the vatthu,gāthā suggest that these verses were composed at a late canonical time. The early verses—such as those of the Nālaka Gāthā—do not have any Sanskritism or late form. [2.2]

2.2 STYLE

2.2.1 The narrative and the instructive

2.2.1.1 The Nālaka Gāthā or Sutta proper significantly differs in style from the vatthu,gāthā or Verse Story (the introduction). The vatthu,gāthā are full of the miraculous and supernatural. Even its narrative parts are highly ornate, filled with similes and metaphors. The child Siddhattha Gotama (the Bodhisattva) is described to be “blazing just like gold, | fashioned so skilfully at the furnace’s mouth” [Sn 686ab] and to be

… like crested flame, | pure bright lord of stars, crossing the heavens.
burning like the sun in the cloudless autumn sky. [Sn 687abc]

2.2.1.2 The style of the Nālaka Gāthā is comparatively simpler. We do not see any such hyperbole or fabulous imageries in the Nālaka Gāthā at all. The main reason for this is clearly that the Nālaka Gāthā is predominantly instructive. Whatever figurative language that is used is directed to highlighting or clarifying the teaching given. Such figures are powerful in drawing our attention and very effective in presenting the Buddha’s intention behind his teaching. [2.2.2]
2.2.2 Imagery and figures in the Nālaka Gāthā

2.2.2.1 The Nālaka Gāthā, in fact, applies about just as much figurative language as does the vatthu-gāthā. However, such imagery and figures play a didactic role—they attract our attention to the meaning and purpose of the teaching. We will look the imagery and figurative devices used in the Nālaka Gāthā.

2.2.2.2 Here is a list of figurative expressions in the Nālaka Gāthā. For more details, see the references under (4.2):

- Sn 703a = 714a “high and low” (uccāvacca) = “good and bad”
- Sn 704d “moving or still” (tasa, thāvara) = worldly and saints, etc [4.2]
- Sn 714a = 703a “high and low” (uccāvacca) = “difficult and easy”
- Sn 714c “the far shore” (pāra) = nirvana
- Sn 715b “whose stream is cut off” (chinna, sota) = abandoned all defilements
- Sn 715d “fever” (parilāha) = heedlessness arising from greed or hate
- Sn 717c “free of raw stench” (niramagandha) = free from defilements
- Sn 719a “brighten the ten quarters” (bhāsihi dasa, disā) = his fame will spread everywhere
- Sn 720 imagery of water and noise
- Sn 721 imagery of volume and solidity

2.2.2.3 Here is a list of similes and metaphors in the Nālaka Gāthā. For more details, see the references under (4.2):

- Sn 703b “like crests of flames in a forest fire” (dāye aggi, sikhāpamā), of karma
- Sn 716b “sharp like a razor’s edge” (khura, dhārūpamo) = mindful in using life supports
- Sn 720cd “noisily go the little streams, | silently flow the great ocean”
- Sn 721cd “like a half-filled pot is the fool, | like a full lake is the wise.”

2.2.3 Metre

2.2.3.1 Metre is a poetic measure of sound and rhythm in a line, usually a verse. The vatthu-gāthā [Sn 679-698] have “a jumble of metres,”25 which A K Warder named Ānandajāta, after the first word of the section.26 The vatthu-gāthā are composed partly in the Triṣṭubh/Jagati metre27 and partly in an extended version of the Triṣṭubh with a redundant long syllable resolved into two short syllables.28

2.2.3.2 Unlike the vatthu-gāthā, the Nālaka Gāthā [Sn 699-723] are in uniform śloka metre—like the Pabbajjā Sutta (Sn 3.1) and the Padhāna Sutta (Sn 3.2).29 Although it is generally held that, historically, the sloka metre is later than the Triṣṭubh, does not necessarily imply that the Nālaka Gātha slokas are later than the Triṣṭubh verses in the vatthu-gāthā.

2.2.3.3 This metre occurs in the Mahāvastu, but not in the Asita episode, which suggests, concludes Norman, “that these biographical details are taken from a common store of history and legend concerning the Buddha, but are not closely related” (1983b:67).

25 Jayawickrama 1978:14. On these metres, see SD 49.12 (2.2).
27 Like that of the “3 refuges,” Buddhān saranaṁ gacchāmi, etc: see SD 49.13 (2.2.3).
28 For technical details, see Warder 1967:213 n2; Sn:N 301 n679-98.
29 Pabbajjā S (Sn 3.1/405-424), SD 49.19; Padhāna S (Sn 3.2/425-449), SD 51.2. Dhammapada (Dh) is the best known collection of verses in sloka. On the sloka, see SD 49.13 (2.2).
The divergence in the metres of the *vatthu, gātha* and the Nālaka Gāthā suggests that these two works were composed separately and later put together in their present form. In fact, the Sanskrit versions—which are close parallels with the two sections of the Nālaka Sutta—are preserved separately in the Mahāvastu: Asita and the young Gotama (Mvst 2:31-43) and the questions of Nālaka (Mvst 3:382-389) respectively.30

3 Nālaka

3.1 WHO IS NĀLAKA?

3.1.1 Asita’s nephew

3.1.1.1 Nālaka was the nephew of Asita (the son of his sister). When Asita realised that he would not live to meet the Buddha, he visited Nālaka and asked him to at once become an ascetic in readiness to benefit from the Buddha’s awakening. It is said that Nālaka’s aspiration to learn and practise solitary silent sagehood (*moneyya*) was made in the time of Padum’uttara Buddha.31

3.1.1.2 Although very wealthy—possessing some 800 billion gold coins—Nālaka renounced the world and spent his time in Himavā (the Himalaya foothills). When the Buddha had arisen in the world, he visited him a week after he has given the first discourse. Nālaka questioned him on the practice of solitary silent sagehood (*moneyya, paṭipadā*) (SnA 2:453). Hence, it is also called the *Nālaka,paṭipadā*, and also because it is included in the Nālaka Sutta, that is, the *Nālaka Gāthā* [Sn 699-723].

3.1.1.3 Nālaka retired once more into Himavā and there attained arhathood. There, he spent seven months leaning against a golden rock, practising the path of sagehood (spiritual silence and solitude) in its highest form. After his death, the Buddha, with some monks, visited his remains, cremated them and built a (*cetiya*) over them.

3.1.1.4 The Mahāvastu calls him Nālaka Kātyāyana (P kaccāna) (Mvst 3:380, 387), Nālaka of the Kātyāyana (P kaccāna) clan or gotra.32 His father was a very wealthy brahmin from the Avantī town of Markaṭa (P makkarakatā).33 He was the purohita and teacher to king Ujjhebhaka Toṇeḥāraka of Avantī, and has two sons, Nālaka and Uttara.

3.1.1.5 The Tibetan sources give a very different account of his conversion,34 but shares some similarities with the introduction to the Mahāvastu version, such as the episode of Nāga Elapatra which precedes the Nālaka story.

3.1.2 Nālaka’s sagehood

3.1.2.1 At the conclusion of the Buddha’s teaching, Nālaka—says the Commentary—was so inspired that he gained the quality of fewness of wishes (*app’icchatā*) in 3 things—seeing, hearing and questioning. Having saluted the Buddha, he left for the forest. Never again did he have the longing (*lola, bhāvaṁ*), “O, if only I may see the Blessed One!” This was his fewness of wishes regarding seeing (*dassane app’icchatā*).

30 These have be tr respectively in Mvst:J 2:27-42 and Mvst:J 3:379-388.
31 J 1:55; SnA 2:483, 501. Padum’uttara was the 13th buddha from first Taṇhaṅkara mentioned in the texts, and the 15th from Gotama Buddha. See SD 36.2 (3), esp (3.4.3).
32 Mvst 3:379-388. In Mvst 2:43, it is Nārada who belong to this clan, while at Mvst 2:63, he is said to belong to the Kauśika clan.
33 A town associated with the Kaccāna clan: DPPN sv Makkarakatā.
34 Dulva XI f 118 ff; Rockhill 1883:18, 45 f.

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Further, he never again had the longing, “O, that I may hear the teaching!” This was his fewness of wishes regarding hearing (savaṇe app‘icchātā). And he never again had the longing, “O, that I may again ask about the path of sagehood!” This was his fewness of wishes regarding questioning.

3.1.2.2 Being of few wishes, he left for the hills. Henceforth, he did not spend two days in the same forest grove. He did not sit for two days at the foot of the same tree. He did not go into the same village for alms for two days. He wandered from forest to forest, from tree to tree, from village to village. Following the proper practice, he attained the foremost fruit (arhathood).

3.1.2.3 Now, a monk who wins sagehood in the highest degree lives for only 7 months. One who fulfils it to a middle degree, lives for 7 more years. And one who fulfils sagehood to a minor degree, lives for 16 more years. Nālaka fulfilled his sagehood in the highest degree.

Hence, at the end of the 7 months, knowing that he would soon die, he bathed, and then put on his lower robes and double upper robe. Facing the Buddha’s direction, he prostrated, saluting him. Then, leaning against the Hiṅgula mountain, he attained the nirvana-element without residue.35

The Buddha, learning of Nālaka’s final passing-away, went there with the community of monks. He had the Nālaka’s body cremated, the relics collected, had them enshrined in a caitya, and then left. (SnA 500 f)

3.2 Christianity: Parallels and Influences

3.2.1 The Simeon Story

3.2.1.1 Various attempts have been made by scholars to show a connection between the nativity stories in Buddhism and in Christianity. In the case of Christ’s birth (Luke 2:22-32), Bunsen,36 Seydel37 and Lillie38 see an echo of the story of the Buddha’s birth. Thomas notes that Seydel, Edmunds39 and Pischel see in the story in the Sutta Nipāta the original story of Simeon.40 According to Pischel, the differences between the two stories are less than their correspondence.41

3.2.1.2 C F Aiken, an American theologian, understandably rejects all these works as being merely based on “spurious evidence used to impugn the originality of the Gospels.”42 Windisch discusses the parallels in his Buddha’s Geburt,43 and in Festschrift Kuhn, he traces Asita Devala back to brahminical

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35 On the “nirvana-element without residue” (anupādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu), see Nibbāna, dhatu S (It 2.2.7), SD 50.13.
42 C F Aiken, The Dharma of Gotama Buddha and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Boston, 1900:xiv.
43 E Windisch, Buddha’s Geburt, Leipzig, 1908:195 ff, 221.
literature. He regards it “not absolutely proved that the Simeon of St Luke owes his existence to the Asita of the Buddhist legend.”

3.2.2 Common source?

3.2.2.1 Most probably, the Asita story was introduced into the biographical accounts of the Buddha in pre-Christian times. Both the early Buddhists of India and the ancient Israelites might have drawn from a common ancient source of the story. However, any suggestion of a borrowing on the part of Christianity or even of a common origin prior to the birth of Christianity may cast serious doubts on the originality and uniqueness of the Gospel legends.

On the other hand, it is possible that both stories might have originated independently and were merely parallel developments. However, it is difficult to imagine that both the ancient Indians and the ancient Israelites had contact whatsoever with one another.

3.2.2.2 Comparative studies of the origins of religious stories, or even of religion themselves, can be fascinating—but they are admittedly mostly speculative and likely to be biased. The point is that a living religion is successful significantly because it is able to respond to external challenges, especially from other religions. They are likely to make on-going reviews and adaptations from such challenges.

Even then, no religion would openly admit that they have borrowed, say, meditation from Buddhism. They will somehow “theologize” such new developments—explain it away in terms of their own dogmas and casuistry. Interesting as the parallels may be, it should be remembered that parallels never meet.

3.2.2.3 The major world religions may be said to contain nothing much that is unique or original in their teachings. Their success is not so much due to their beliefs and teachings, as it is to their public relations and social dominance. Much of their success of modern religion can be seen to have come from their organizational abilities, political lobbying and, above all, the mustering and deployment of wealth in their conversion or marketing image.

3.2.2.4 If we are truly seeking some kind of real meaning and purpose of religion—or better, of life itself—then, we must be courageous and persistent in our quest for the liberating truth. This is not a quest for external structures and success, but a pilgrimage away from the worldly crowd. We must take an inner journey to discover the conditions that have shaped our personality and how we can fully realize the genius of our humanity and potential for spiritual awakening and liberation. The historical Buddha is an excellent, even ideal, model to start and end with.

4 Textual sources for the Asita story

4.1 Late composition

4.1.1 We have already noted that the vatthu,gāthā are a later work than the Nālaka Gāthā [1.2.2]. The fact that the vatthu,gāthā is only distantly connected with the Nālaka Gāthā further shows that it was the work of later editors—as is clearly the case of the vatthu,gāthā of the Pārāyana Vagga, too. They are the works of the Council fathers (sangīti,kāra) (SnA 483 & 580 respectively).

44 Ernst Windisch, Festschrift Kuhn, Munich, 1916.
45 Colonialism started in Renaissance Europe with the Roman Church, and the fever to conquer and colonize “lesser” races—the heathens and pagans of Christianity—then spread to western Europe. The colonial spirit is deeply seated in the heart of God-centred faiths to “have dominion … over all the earth” (Genesis 1.26). The blatant and bloody colonialism may be over, but the colonial heart is still beating. If it stops beating, it will die—so they have no choice, no free will, but to relentlessly continue colonizing others and their faiths.

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4.1.2 The Lalita, vistara, the Mahāvastu, the Nidāna, kathā and Dulva—although they are all later than the Sutta Nipāta—all treat the accounts of the vatthu, gāthā and Nālaka Gāthā as independent texts. This attests to the fact that the two parts of the Nālaka Sutta were originally two independent poems differing in age. At some later date, they were put together into a single Sutta, most probably with the final compilation of the Sutta Nipāta. We can safely say that this would certainly be by Asoka’s time (mid-2nd century BCE), perhaps even earlier.

4.2 Commentarial Pali Sources

4.2.1 The Nidāna, kathā (J 1:54 f) account, with its elaborate details and accounts of miracles, is clearly later than the well known Buddhist Sanskrit sources. The Nidāna, kathā narrative, however, basically agrees with the older sources in essential details. The name of the aged sage is Kāla, devala, “Devala the dark”; the name asita also means “dark” (kāla) (M 2:80). He is simply an ascetic (tāpasa) from Avanti Dakkhiṇa, patha (Ujjeni; cf. Mvst); he is not a seer (ṛṣi). The Buddha is said to awaken at 35, as in the Tibetan Vinaya (Dulva).

4.2.2 Among other references to the name Asita in the Pali Canon are two named Asita, devala (Devala the dark). We shall call them Asita Devala 1 and Asita Devala 2. Asita Devala 1 is mentioned in the Assalāyana Sutta (M 93), and was said to be the Buddha in a past life [1.1.3.6]. Asita Devala 2 was more commonly known as Kāla Devala (Devala the black), an ascetic of Arañjara (a mountain town in the Middle Country). His younger brother was Narada, also a resident of Arañjara or Arañjara, giri. 46

In the concluding connection (samodhāna) of the Indrīva Jātaka (J 423/3:469), Kāla, devala is identified with Kaccāna, perhaps the counterpart of Nālaka Kātyāyana in the Mahāvastu or Mahā Kātyāyana of the Dulva (Rockhill 1883:18, 45). Narada of Arañjara is also mentioned in the same Jātaka (J 423/3:463-469) and the Sara, bhaṅga Jātaka (J 522/5:133 f). Such confusion could have arisen over time as the stories became more complex with the influence of Sanskrit legends.

4.2.3 Although the accounts of the Nidāna, kathā and the Dulva are later than the Buddhist Sanskrit sources, their general agreement suggests a common origin for all these accounts. Although Thomas views that there is no evidence to show that the Asita story itself was pre-Christian (1949:39), Jayawickrama proposes that “this alone is no proof of its being so late as that” (1978:16).

Jayawickrama thinks that the story might have existed independently long before it was canonised in the vatthu, gāthā. There is no reason to exclude the vatthu, gāthā from the Sutta Nipāta, which was known to the author of the Milinda, pāñhā (Miln 411, 414, etc). Thus, it is very likely that this narrative goes back to pre-Christian times. However, it is certainly younger than the Nālaka Gāthā (1978:16).

4.3 Sanskrit Sources

4.3.1 The more fabulous Buddhist Sanskrit accounts are clearly later than that of the vatthu, gāthā. The vatthu, gāthā account of the Buddha’s birth generally agrees with parallels in the Nidāna, kathā (the Jātaka introduction) and Sanskrit works, that is, the Lalita, vistara, the Mahā, vastu, and the Dulva (the Tibetan Vinaya), but they differs considerably in details. 47

4.3.2 Although the prose section of the Lalita, vistara (Lalv ch 7) parallels the vatthu, gāthā account, its verses show no connection at all with the Nālaka Sutta. It seems to have developed with its own fascinating details, telling its own story. The following interesting points of this account should be noted:

46 See DPPN, sv Asita Devala.
47 E J Thomas (1949:38-43) gives a brief comparative study of this without going into any details.
(1) Asita’s nephew is Nara, datta and not Nalaka as in Sn.
(2) There are more miracles, but the Bodhisattva does not place his feet on Asita’s forehead (J 1:55).
(3) Asita, with the divine eye, sees the birth of the Buddha and informs his nephew of it, declaring the only two courses of action open to such a being. [PBR 3.1, 1978]
(4) He brings his nephew along to Kapilavastu and meets Suddhodana, but not the Sakyas, as in Sn.
(5) The 32 marks of the great man are dealt with in great detail.
(6) After announcing that the new born babe would become the Buddha, he returns to the ashram and advises Naradatta to follow the Buddha when the time comes.

The details of the Mahāvāstu version are even more similar to those of the Lalita, vistara.

4.3.3 The Mahā, vāstu version agrees closely with the vatthu, gātha account, but differs from the Nālaka Gāthā (the Sutta proper). In the Mahāvāstu, Asita, the see (Skt rṣi) from Ujjayini (P ujjenī) goes to Kapilavastu with his pupils, including Nalaka (who later in the same account is called Narada).

Although the soothsayers (Skt naimittika) declare that the child would become a wheel-turner (Skt cakra, vartin), Asita is certain of his becoming the Buddha. Amongst the other miracles is that of the birth of 500 each of girls, boys, male and female slaves, etc., connatals of the Bodhisattva.

The Mahāvāstu verses that follow (Mvst 2:33-43) describe the same event in greater detail. Asita advises Narada to practise the holy life under the Buddha. It is also noteworthy that the Buddha’s interlocutor here is called Nālaka Kātyāyana (Mvst 3:386), who on the advice of his father, the purohita to king Tūnehāra, seeks ordination and is admitted by the ehi bhikṣu formula.

5 The Nālaka Gāthā or (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta

5.1 THE SUTTA PROPER

5.1.1 An early work

5.1.1.1 The Sutta proper of the Nālaka Sutta is called the *Nālaka Gāthā (“Nālaka’s Verses”) or (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta (“The (Nālaka) Discourse on Sagehood”) (Sn 699-723). It deals with the nature of silent sagehood (moneyya), describing the proper conduct of a silent sage (muni). He is a forest-dwelling ascetic who often dwells alone, but may live his solitary life in a small remote community of silent sages. This subject is indicative of the verses’ early origin, and belongs to a category of suttas in the Sutta Nipāta designated as the “muni class.” [5.1.2]

5.1.1.2 Unlike its preamble, the vatthu, gāthā [5.1.1], the Nālaka Gāthā contain no late forms by way of language, style or metre. The language is old and preserves several archaic forms many of which are poetic. Its verses are in uniform śloka metre—like those of the Dhammapada [2.2.3.2]. This divergence shows that the Nālaka Gāthā and its vatthu, gāthā are two independent works that had been put together in their present form [2.2.3.3].

5.1.2 The “muni” suttas

5.1.2.1 There is an ethical theme underlying the Gāthā, which is much more pronounced than even in the Muni Sutta (Sn 1.12) or the Sammā Paribbājaniya Sutta (Sn 2.13). This theme is fully and best presented in the Khagga, visāna Sutta (Sn 1.3) [5.1.2.4] with their ethical undertone centering on to the monk as a “silent sage” (muni). This is the earliest Buddhist ideal itinerant monk who wanders alone “like a rhinoceros” is the main theme of the Khagga, visāna Sutta.

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5.1.2.2 The ideas of the Gāthā have much in common as contemporary Indian thought. This is not surprising at all—in fact, it is to be expected because the Buddha often speaks in the language of his immediate audience, and he employs “natural adaptation,” a skillful means by way of adapting mainstream and prevalent ideas as vehicles for his teachings.49

5.1.2.3 The stanzas Sn 702, 703, 705, 711, 712, 713, 714, 716, 720-722 are examples of ideas common to the literature of the period: we see echoes of the Brahmanas (commentaries on the Vedas) and the Upaniṣads. In Sn 716, we have mention of a yogic practice done by the Bodhisattva before his awakening, described more fully in the Vitakka Saṃṭhāna Sutta (M 20), thus: “with clenched teeth and the tongue pressing on the palate, he should subdue, restrain, attack the (bad) mind with the (good) mind.”50

The theme of the whole poem, however, is distinctively Buddhist. The theme pervading the whole Gāthā is that of a lone ascetic. K E Neumann, in his German translation of the Sutta Nipāṭa, Die Reden Buddho Gotamos ... Suttanipato (1911)51 mentions in his footnotes some of such parallels and connections in the themes.

5.1.2.4 Among the oldest suttas of early Buddhism are the “muni” suttas or “muni class” of suttas, that is, discourses dealing with the theme of silent sagehood (moneyya) or the way of the solitary silent sage (sage). These are the suttas that are representative of the state of the muni:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khagga,visāṇa Sutta</th>
<th>Sn 1.3/6-12 = Sn 35-75</th>
<th>SD 109.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muni Sutta</td>
<td>Sn 1.12/35-38 = Sn 207-221</td>
<td>SD 49.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammā Paribbājaniya S</td>
<td>Sn 2.13/63-66 = Sn 359-375</td>
<td>SD 103.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nālaka Gāthā52</td>
<td>Sn 3.11/131-139 = Sn 699-723</td>
<td>SD 49.18 The sutta proper of Sn 3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tika) Moneyya Sutta</td>
<td>A 3.120/273</td>
<td>SD 49.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Iti) Moneyya Sutta</td>
<td>It 3.2.8/5653 = It 67</td>
<td>SD 49.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṅgīti Sutta</td>
<td>D 1,10(53)/3:220</td>
<td>Only mentions the 3 kinds of sagehood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.2.5 The (Iti) Moneyya Sutta (It 3.2.8) of the Iti, vuttaka is a very short sutta that succinctly summarizes the teaching of Nālaka Gāthā, that is, on sagehood (moneyya). It mentions the 3 kinds of sages (muni), or rather, the 3 qualities of a sage, that is, in terms of good conduct of the body, of speech and of the mind, thus:

Kāya,muniṁ vācā,muniṁ mano,muniṁ anāsavaṁ
muni,moneyya,sampannaṁ āhu nīṇhāta,pāpakar ‘ti

The sage in body, sage in speech, sage in mind, influent free—
the sage accomplished in sagehood,
they say, is one with evil [bad] washed away.
It 3.2.8/56 (SD 49.21)

5.1.2.6 The (Tika) Moneyya Sutta (A 3.120)54 almost identically repeats the (Iti) Moneyya Sutta definition, but defines the 3 qualities of the sage—those of body, speech and mind—as the tenfold abstention, that is, not committing any of the 10 courses of unwholesome karma (akusala kamma, patha).55

49 On the Buddha’s “natural adaptation,” see SD 39.3 (3.3.4).
50 M 20,71/1:120 f (SD 1.6), where see §7.1 n for refs. It should be noted that this is the only place in the early Buddhist texts where this practice seems to be recommended, even then as a last resort.
51 Karl Eugen Neumann, (German) Die Reden Gotamo Buddhos, aus der Sammlung der Bruchstücke Suttanipato des Pali-Kanons, Munich: R Piper, 1911:220-232 (tr of Nālaka S).
52 Also called (Nālaka) Moneyya S, the (Nālaka) Discourse on Sagehood. Both these titles are neologisms. The second name was already used by Jayawickrama (1978).
53 Jayawickrama wrongly refers to this as “It 3.3.8,” which is a different sutta.
54 A 3.120/1:273 (SD 49.20).
The (Tika) Moneyya Sutta also closes with the same verse as the (Iti) Moneyya Sutta, but for two exceptions: in line b, the (Tika) Moneyya Sutta reads ceto,muniṁ instead of mano,muniṁ (both phrases mean the same thing), and in the last line (pāda), it replaces ahu niṅhāta,pāpakām with sabba-p,- pahāyinaṁ, “one who has abandoned all.” [5.1.2.7]

5.1.2.7 The muni or silent sage, then, is one who has “let go” of “the all”—he is one who is no more defined by his senses, that is, by external realities. What we experience—even mentally—are regarded as being “external” (bāhiddha), meaning that the muni is neither defined nor limited by his sense-experiences, “the all.” He is liberated, awakened to nirvana—an arhat.56

5.1.2.8 Although the Nālaka Gāthā neither clearly specify the 3 kinds of sages (in terms of body, speech and mind), nor directly mention the abstaining from the 10 unwholesome courses of karma, all this is clearly implied in it. The Gāthā covers a wider range than the focused teaching of the (Tika) Moneyya Sutta (A 3.120) or the (Iti) Moneyya Sutta (It 3.2.8) mentioned above.

Besides alluding to the abstention from the 10 unwholesome courses of karma (Sn 704-706), the Nālaka Gāthā list the positive qualities of the muni. The lack of a well-defined or technical list of doctrines, and the focus on the nature of the muni, the lone, wandering, forest-living recluse, all attest to the fact that the Nālaka Sutta is earlier than two Sutta mentioned above.

5.1.3 The Asokan inscriptions

5.1.3.1 On Asoka’s Calcutta-Bairāṭ rock edict, its fifth “Dharma exposition” (dhammapaliyāya), the “Moneya-sūte,”57 has been identified as the (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta or Nālaka Gāthā (Sn 699-723).58 Kosambi suggested this (1912:40). Mrs Rhys Davids wrongly identifies it with It 3.2.8,59 and Winternitz (1933 2:607) echoes it.60 If the “Moneya-sūte” in Asoka’s edict refers to the Nālaka Gāthā, it means that the Gāthā must be pre-Asokan61 (the 3rd century BCE or earlier). It is also possible that the Nālaka Gāthā was still an independent text during Asoka’s times, but we cannot be certain of this.

5.1.3.2 Although the Asokan edict use of the title “Moneya-sūte” coincides with the title of the Moneyya Sutta (A 3.120 + It 3.2.8), it is highly unlikely that “Moneya-sūte” refers to either of them. The teachings are simple and focused on only the abstention from the 10 unwholesome courses of karma. The Nālaka Gāthā, on the other hand, not only alluded to this, but also to various other interesting aspects of the muni, which would apply to both monastics and the laity. As an emperor, Asoka surely would be concerned over the Buddhist community as a whole, and not merely the reclusive silent sage.62

5 The 10 unwholesome courses of karma (akusala kamma, patha), are: 3 of body (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct), 4 of speech (false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, frivolous chatter), and 3 of mind (covetousness, ill will, wrong views). See Śāleyyaka S (M 41.7) SD 5.7; Saṅcetanika S (A 10.206,1-7) SD 3.9.

56 On “the all,” see Sabba S (S 35.23), SD 7.1.


59 ≈ A 1:273,18-36. C A F Rhys Davids, A Manual of Buddhism, London, 1932:312-314. “It 367” is clearly a misprint for It no 76. Chalmers (1932:xi) states that the Nālaka S is called Moneyya Sutta, but gives no authority for his statement. Jayawickrama states that the corresponding section of Mvst (Mvst 3:387 f) is called Mauneya (1948c: 230 = 1978:19), but there seems to be no evidence for this. He also wrongly refers to Moneyya S as “It 3.3.8,” which is a different sutta.

60 M Winternitz, [1912] 1933 2:607

61 Emperor Aśoka reigned c 268-232 BCE.

5.1.3.3 Norman’s caveat on the identification of such ancient suttas should be noted:
“The fact that suttas sometimes have alternative names complicates the task of identifying the suttas mentioned by Aśoka. Aśoka’s [Calcutta-Bairāṭ] edict means only that suttas with these names were in existence at the time of Aśoka. If these identifications are correct, it does not mean that these suttas were parts of the Sn in Aśoka’s time, nor that they were in their present form. If they are correct, the fact that the names used by Aśoka are not those by which the suttas are known at present show that the nomenclature was not fixed in the third century BC.” (Sn:N 2001:xxxiv §16)

5.1.4 The Nālaka Gāthā and the Mahāvastu

5.1.4.1 Of all the Nālaka accounts in the Pali and the Buddhist Sanskrit texts, the only one that closely parallels the Nālaka Gāthā or (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta (Sn 699-723) is to be found at the Mahāvastu (Mvst 3:387-389). Often the parallels are so close that their only difference seems to be that of language—one is in Pali, the other in Buddhist Sanskrit. Where they do diverge, it is of no great significance.

5.1.4.2 The 24 verses of the Mahāvastu relating to the Buddha’s birth follow a sequence different from that of the 25 verses of the Nālaka Gāthā. Sn 718 and 719a have no correspondence in the Mahāvastu. Sn 709 and 714 only vaguely parallels their Mahāvastu counterparts. Sn 706 is slightly expanded in the Mahāvastu. The pairs of verses, Sn 708ab + 707ab and 708cd + 709cd, respectively form two stanzas in the Mahāvastu.

5.1.4.3 Other noteworthy difference between the two texts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nālaka Gāthā (Sn)</th>
<th>Mahāvastu (Mvst)</th>
<th>Meaning (J J Jones)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>702d sanu anunato care</td>
<td>3:387,7 kṣánto cânunatō bhava</td>
<td>“be calm and humble”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>711a āgamma</td>
<td>3:387,19 āsādyā</td>
<td>“when he has descended on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>711d payutaṁ</td>
<td>3:388,1 prepsutāṁ</td>
<td>“when he has obtained it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>708b abhirārave</td>
<td>3:388,6 abhirakṣaye</td>
<td>“he should keep to (the forest edge)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>715a visatā</td>
<td>3:388,10 sari tà</td>
<td>“(no) flow (of desire)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>716a moneyyaṁ te upaññissam</td>
<td>3:388,14 evaṁ mauneyam upeṣyasi</td>
<td>“Thus will you attain the stage of a sage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>714b na pāraṁ dviguṇāyati</td>
<td>3:389,2 nāpi caivaṁ guṇāyati</td>
<td>“The Beyond is not a future twice-repeated”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.4.4 Despite their differences, the Nālaka Gāthā or (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta and its Mahāvastu version bear more significantly close parallels. It is likely that the Pali Nālaka Gāthā are older than its Buddhist Sanskrit Mahāvastu parallel. However, it is unlikely that the Mahāvastu account is based on the Nālaka Gāthā. We may surmise that the two texts were based on a common older text or tradition. Besides, there are several other Moneyya Suttas in the Pali canon [5.1.2.4].

63 Jayawickrama erroneously refers to “the Buddha’s nativity” in comparison to “Mvastu III, 386 ff.” (1978:18).
64 However, see the case of Pabbajjā S (Sn 3.1), where there are significant divergences between the Pali version and its BHS parallel in Mvst: SD 49.19 (1.2).
65 Amended to anunnato, “not raised” (Mvst:J 3:385 n2).
66 Amended to na pāraṁ dviguṇāyati (Mvst:J 3:388 n1).
6 The Sutta summary with notes

6.1 THE INTRODUCTORY VERSES (VATTHU, GĀTHĀ)

6.1.1 Asita’s vision

Sn 679. Asita, through his meditations, attained special powers that enable him to visit the heavens of the sense-world [1.1.3.2]. While the seer Asita is taking his noon siesta in the heaven of the 33 (“host of 30”), he sees them well-dressed, reveling and singing praises with their leader, Sakra.

Sn 680. Asita is curious why the devas are celebrating, [681] in a manner even more exuberant than when they celebrated their victory over the asuras. [682] He wants to know the reason for their great joy.

Sn 681-682. The Commentary says that Asita is able to recall 40 world-cycles into the past and future (atītānāgate cattālīsā, kappe anussaritum). The verb anussarati usually means “to recall (the past)” but here more broadly means to “know the past and the future.” (SnA 2:485,18). The Jātaka Nidāna, in fact, states that ascetic Asita is able to “know or see” 40 world-cycles (tāpaso atīte cattālīsā kappe, anāgata cattālīsāti asīti kappe anussarati, J 1:54,31-35). The verb anussarāmi (“I see”; literally, “I recall”) is used in this sense at 692b, too. [1.1.3.2]

Sn 683. The devas tell him of the Bodhisattva’s birth amongst the Sakyas in Lumbinī. [684] He will turn the Dharma-wheel.

Sn 684. Asita prophesizes the coming of the world teacher.

Sn 685. Asita hurries down to see king Suddhodana, and at once asks to see the new born child. [686] The child, in all his splendour, is brought to Asita, [687] and he is overjoyed. [688-689] He sees the gods themselves attending to the child with all the royal regalia.

Sn 686-689. Asita’s epiphany: he sees the infant Siddhattha is glorious divine form.

Sn 690. Joyfully smiling, Asita—after examining the boy’s bodily marks—announces that he will become Buddha.

Sn 691. Then, recalling his advanced age and impending death, he weeps, realizing that he will not be able to meet the Buddha or hear his teaching [694]. The Sakyas, seeing this, are suddenly worried.

Sn 692. Asita comforts them, [693] declaring that the child will teach the Dharma and holy life. [Sn 694] He is sad, he explains, because he is unable to hear the Buddha’s Dharma. Asita will pass away before the Buddha’s awakening (SnA 2:489,9).

692bc. These two lines record Asita’s prophecy regarding the infant Siddhattha. Interesting, he uses the verb anussarāmi, usually translated as “I recall” some past life or event. At Sn 681. Asita actually recalls how the devas how the god rejoiced when they defeated the asuras in past battles. [6.1.1 ad loc]

Sn 693, see 692.

Sn 694, see 692.
6.1.2 Nālaka

Sn 695. The narrator then tells us that Asita then visits his nephew, Nālaka, to urge him to renounce the world in preparation to meet the Buddha. [696] He tells Nālaka that the moment he hears the word “Buddha,” it means that the Dharma has been taught. Nālaka should then go directly to the Buddha to live the holy life under him.

Sn 697. Nālaka, who has himself a great store of merit [3.1.1.1], lives a morally pure life, awaiting the Buddha.

Sn 698. As soon as he hears word that the Buddha has taught the Dharma, he goes to the Buddha and asks him about sagehood. And so Asita’s prophecy is fulfilled. The preceding verse and this one (697-698) refer to a time well after Asita, when the Buddha is arisen and teaching the Dharma. These two verses link the Vatthu, gāthā with the Nālaka Gāthā that follow. The Commentary says that Nālaka meets the Buddha a week after the 1st discourse (SnA 4:290).

6.2 THE NĀLAKA GĀTHĀ OR (NĀLAKA) MONEYYA SUTTA

Sn 699. Nālaka tells the Buddha about Asita, and how he (Nālaka) himself wishes to ask the Buddha a question. [700] Nālaka declares his desire to live as a bhikkhu or alms-man’s life to attain the highest spiritual state, that is, silent sagehood, here an allusion to awakening itself.

The Commentary explains 700b as referring to “the unblemished habit of the noble ones (the saints) in the quest, that is the alms-round” (ariyehi āciṇnam anupakkiliṭṭham bhikkhācariyam pariyesāmanassa, SnA 2:491,7-9).

Sn 701. The Buddha begins his teaching by telling Nālaka to be resolute in his endeavor. [Sn 702] He should cultivate equanimity towards abuse and homage in the world, keeping his mind at peace, and be humble.

Sn 702. The Commentary says that 702 refers to abandoning defilements arising from engagement (socializing) with the village (gāmūpanibaddha,kilesa-p.pahānāṁ dassento) and to promoting austerity (sallekha) (SnA 2:492,5-8). The Mahāvastu parallel to 702 calls him Nālaka Katyāyana and records the Buddha as instructing: “Maintain your equanimity whether you be reviled or be well spoken of in the village” (samāña, bhāgaṁ kuryāsi grāme ākruṣṭa, vanditaṁ).

The Commentary notes that the observance of sagehood (moneyya) here is that of supreme self-effacement (parama,sallekha) (SnA 2:492,5), as taught in the Sallekha Sutta (M 6).

Sn 703. Sensual pleasures arise in many forms like a great forest-fire. The sage (as practitioner) should not in any way be drawn to women: he should lead a purely celibate life. The Commentary says that 703 refers to the abandoning of defilements connected with attachments to the forest (āraññûpanibaddha,kilesa-p.pahānāṁ dassento, SnA 2:492,16).

Sn 704. He should refrain from any kind of sense-pleasures, and not be attached to anyone or anything at all in the world. The Commentary on 704 notes that it is an abridgement of the “morality of the monastic code” (pātimokkha,sīla, SnA 2:493,20 f), and that “having abandoned sense-pleasures” (hitvā kāme) and the rest of Sn 704 refers to “sense-restraint” (indriya,saṅvara, SnA 2:493,21 f).

67 Mvst 3:387.6 :: Mvst:J 3:384 f. See also Sn:N 309 n702.
68 M 6 (SD 51.8).
Sn 705. Understanding the golden rule,⁶⁹ says the Buddha, he [Nālaka] should neither kill nor encourage it.

Sn 706. He should not harbour any kind of lust, but mindfully practise to overcome suffering. The Commentary says that 706a, on the overcoming of greed and lust highlights the “purity of livelihood” (ājīva,parisuddhi), esp with regards to being satisfied with one’s basic support of robes, almsfood, shelter and medical supply (SnA 2:493,23 f + 27-30).

Sn 707a. The practice of moderation in food.

707b. He should be moderate in his food, and overcome all wishes—be desire-free. The Commentary speaks of the 4 kinds of fewness of wishes: “Having few wishes (app’icchā) regarding support (paccaya), austerities (dhutaṅga), theoretical knowledge (pariyatti) and attainment (adhipa)” (SnA 2:494 f).

Essentially, the Commentary says that the true sage does everything in moderation. He is easy to support because he has few and simple needs, and not arrogant about his qualities.

(A) Few wishes regarding requisites (paccay’app ‘icchatā), the Commentary speaks of the “12 kinds of contentment” (dvādasa,vidha santuññhi), that is, the 3 kinds of contentment in terms of the fewness of wishes regarding the 4 requisites. This is being content (santosa) towards each of the requisites in terms of the gains (yathā,lābha,santosa), in terms of one’s strength (yathā,bala,santosa), and in terms of the suitability (yathā,sārumpa,santosa) of the robes, almsfood, lodging or medicine.

(1) Robes. In terms of gains, he uses whatever robe he receives, whether it is of good or bad quality, wishes not for another, and rejects it even when offered a new one. In terms of strength—when he is ill or easily tires with a heavy robe, he exchanges it with an agreeable monk for a suitably cool place, and continues with his ascetic practice. In terms of suitability—when he receives a costly robe of fine material, he gives it to worthy learned elders, and is content to collect pieces of cloth from the dust-heap or elsewhere, and make a robe for himself.

(2) Almsfood. Whatever he gains, good or bad, he eats it according to his need. In terms of strength—if he is ill and his food is unsuitable, he gives it to an agreeable monk for some ghee, honey, milk and so on. He goes on with his ascetic practice. In terms of suitability—when he gets fine food, he gives it to worthy elders long gone forth or other monks in need of such food. He is content with walking for alms and eating mixed foods.

(3) Lodging. Whatever he gains, he accepts. In terms of strength—if he is ill or his illness worsens in a crowded lodging, he exchanges it with an agreeable monk for a suitably cool place, and continues with his ascetic practice. In term of suitability—he rejects any fine lodging that conduces to heedlessness, where he easily gets drowsy and falls asleep, and where, upon waking, he may be filled with sensual thoughts. He is content living in the open air, at the foot of a tree, or in a leaf-hut. [707d]

(4) Medicines. Whatever he gains, such as myrobalan,⁷⁰ he is content with it, rejecting ghee, honey, palm syrup and so on, even when he is offered them. In terms of strength—when he is sick and gets palm syrup, he gives it to an agreeable monk for some oil to prepare medicine, and continue with his ascetic practice. In terms of suitability—when he is given a choice of a bottle of myrobalan in cow’s urine and a bottle of a blend of the 4 sweets, he reflects: “The homeless life relies on medicine of cow’s urine—you should persevere in that way for life” (V 1:58).⁷¹ He will choose the myrobalan in cow’s urine as medicine.

(KhpA 145-147)

(B) Fewness of wishes regarding ascetic practices (dhutaṅg’app’icchatā). He practises only those austerities that are useful for his personal and meditative progress. He does not in any way wish, “May others know me as an ascetic practitioner!”

(C) Fewness of wishes regarding learning (pariyatti.app’icchatā). He does not accumulate knowledge for its own sake, nor to boast, “May others me know me as one who is learned!”

⁶⁹ On the golden rule, see Veļudvāreyya S (S 55.7.6-12), SD 1.5. For other refs, see DEB, sv.
⁷⁰ Yellow myrobalan or emblic myrobalan (haritakani vā āmalakani vā) (SnA 1:146).
⁷¹ Pāti,mutta,bhesajjam nissāya pabbajjā tatthe ye yāva,jivaṁ uṣāho karaṇīyo (Mv 1.30.4 @ V 1:58,20).
(D) **Fewness of wishes regarding attainment** (*adhigam'app'icchatā*). As for “attainment,” even when he has won any level of awakening, even arhat-hood, he does wish, “May others know me as having attained a wholesome state!” Such an exemplar is the elder Majjhantika, well known for his modesty. Despite being an arhat, he does not want anyone to know this.\(^{72}\) (SnA 2:494)

Further, it is helpful to be mindful of fewness of wishes regarding attainments in terms of our own times: the true practitioner sees arhat-hood as the only final goal in the Buddha’s teaching, without the need or wish for new Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities, demons or beings. Where the exist, they are merely understood as skillful means that symbolizes various qualities of the historical Buddha or his Dharma. In other words, these “beings” are only literary devices not to be mistaken as real in themselves, which is wrong view, entailing serious bad karma with subhuman rebirths.

**Sn 708.** He should live under a tree at the forest’s edge, [709] and there he should joyfully meditate to his best ability.

**Sn 709.** see Sn 708.

**Sn 710.** At dawn, he should enter the village for alms, mindfully without any expectation. He should finish his meal and return just as he has left, collecting nothing from the village. **710cd** describes the true sage’s practice of “going for alms from the house to house without missing out any” (*ghara,paṭipātiyā piṇḍapātena*, SnA 2:497,2).

**Sn 711.** While in the village, he should respect families, keep silent, or be mindfully of few words. **711b** means that the true sage, when on alms round, neither takes breaks in his round of houses nor socially engages with the house-people (*ananumikaṁ gīhi,sainsaggāṁ na apaṭijeyya*, SnA 2:497,5 f).

The Commentary advises that a monk should simply be silent, especially when there is no need for speech. When he is ill, if he wishes, he may speak for the purpose of healing his illness. When he is healthy, he should not even hint for a lodging; he should not speak in any way that is insinuating, indirect or suggestive of desiring any other requisites. (SnA 2:497).

**Na vacaṁ payutaitā bhane** recurs in the *Kathāvatthu Sutta* (A 3.67), in a broader context.\(^{73}\) Its commentary explains the line as “one should not speak words that mix lies with truth” (*saccālika,patisam-yuttāṁ bhane*, AA 2:314,1-2). The *Mahāvastu* parallel says: “He speaks not desirous words” (*na vācā prepsutāṁ bhane*) (Mvst 3:388,1).\(^{74}\) *Prepsā* is the desiderative of *pra + āp*, to obtain, meaning “wish to obtain, desire, longing for”; the adj *prepsu* (mfn) means “wishing to attain, desirous of obtaining, seeking, longing for, aiming at” (SED).

**Sn 712.** The true sage is happily equanimous whether he receives almsfood or does not: he is said to be “just so” (*tādī*), contented even with a tree-dwelling, where he asserts himself spiritually.

**712d:** He returns to his tree-dwelling to continue his practice, to have his meal, or to rest—not for inaction or idling. The Commentary seems to take the -v- in *rakkhaṁ iva upanivattati* as comparative *iva* (SnA 2:497), but it is also possible to read it as the emphatic *eva*.\(^{75}\) In such a situation, it is best to be inclusive and let the Pali line speak for itself—the -v- is polysemous [717d]. The translation tries to combine these twin senses of the Pali:

(1) One should be a **like** (*iva*) a person seeking fruits, approaches a tree and whether not he finds some fruit, he leaves just as it has come, neither delighted nor disheartened. In the same way, a sage approaches families: whether or not he receives anything, he leaves in a neutral state of mind.

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\(^{72}\) MA 2:139,25 f; AA 1:76,2.

\(^{73}\) A 3.67,12d*/1:199,12, SD 46.11.

\(^{74}\) Cf Mvst:J 3:386 n7, which takes it in a different sense.

\(^{75}\) The Skt parallel, however, simply reads *rakkhaṁ vinivartaye*, “he returns to the tree” (Mvst 3:388,5).
(2) Whether the sage receives alms from the village or not, he simply (eva) returns to the tree (the same one or a different one) because it is his dwelling, the home of a sage.

Sn 713. On his alms-rounds, he is totally silent, accepting whatever food he is offered from whomever.

Sn 714. Spiritual practice is attended by different kinds of difficulties. We awaken only once, but we there are different stages of progress towards awakening.

714a: The Commentary says that the line “high and low is way of practice” (uccāvacā ... patipadā) is an allusion to the 4 paths of progress (patipadā), that is, the “high” is that of pleasant progress with quick direct knowledge; the “low,” that of painful progress with slow direct knowledge; in the remaining two paths, the “low” refers to the painful or slow direct knowledge, while the “high” is the pleasant or quick direct knowledge.76

714b: There seems to be a wordplay on samanena, which can refer either to “the recluse,” that is, the Buddha or to “any recluse.” In the latter case—referring to recluses in general—the verse, then, addresses the 2 extremes (antā) rejected by the Buddha in the Dhamma, cakka Pavattana Sutta (S 56.11,3), SD 1.1. They do not constitute the path to nirvana. Since neither works, we cannot get there even once. See notes on 714c+d, especially the BHS reading śrāmanyena for Pāli samanena.

714c: Na pāraṁ di,gūṇaṁ yanti. The Commentary explain this as meaning: “It is ‘one-way’; they go not to nirvana twice” (eka,magga dvi-k,hattuṁ nibbānaṁ na yanti, SnA 2:497 f). The defilements that have been destroyed by the path cannot and need not be destroyed again.77 Yet, although the “far shore” (pāra) is reached only once, it can be felt again any time for the arhat.78 See notes on 714b+d.

714d: Na-y-idam eka,gūṇaṁ mutaṁ. The Commentary explains this as follows: “There is no arhat who touches the far shore only just once” (taṁ ca pāraṁ eka-k,hattuṁ yeva phusan’arahāṁ na hoti, SnA 2:497,3), that is, there are the 2 kind of nirvana: the first is “with remains” (sa,upādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu), the arhat living with the 5 aggregates, and the final one is “without remains” (anupādi, sesa nibbāna, dhātu), when he is no more reborn.79 We can also say that nirvana is seen (in different ways) by the 4 kinds of noble individuals—the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat.

The Mahāvastu version closely parallels the Pāli, but inverts the lines as cd-ab, thus: na pāraṁ dvi,-gūṇayati nāpi caivaṁ gūṇayati | uccāvacā pratipadā śrāmanyena prakāsitā, “Neither one goes twice to the far shore nor one goes only once, | high and low are the paths proclaimed by recluseship.” The compound caivaṁ should be changed to caikaṁ (ca-ekaiṁ) following the Pali (Mvst.J 3:388 n1). Śrāmanyena is probably a wrong reading, and should be corrected to śramaṇena, as in the Pali. See also notes on 714b+c.

Sn 715ab. The one who has overcome craving is no more reborn. He has abandoned the karma of good and bad, and thus free from the “stream” (sotā) of defilements, such as craving. 715c: The Commentary glosses this line as referring to the abandonment of both the wholesome and the unwholesome (kusalâkusala-p, pahînena, SnA 2:498,11-13). This is synonymous with “abandoning both good and bad” (puñña,papa,pahîna), as stated in Dh 3980 “given up good and bad” (pahîya puñña,pâpaṁ, Sn 520); “on the utter destruction of good and bad” (puñña, pâpa, parikkhaya); 81 “with the utter exhaustion of good and bad” (puñña, pâpa, parikkhīno). 82 715d: The “fever” (parilâho), is the heedlessness arising from lust or from hate (râga,jo vā dosa,jo vâ appamattako, SnA 2:498,10).

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76 SnA 2:497,26-498,3. The 4 modes of practice are given in Patipadā Vagga (A 4.161-170), see esp A 4.167 (SD 46.16). See SD 4.11 (3).
77 DA 744,7 f; MA 1:230,1 f.
78 See also Mvst 3:389 :: Mvst:J 3:388 n1 qu I B Horner. See lines bd nn.
79 See Sa,upādi, sesa S (A 9.12), SD 3.3(3).
80 SD 2.10 (3.2.3.4).
81 Vv 992/63.18/92; Pv 19.
Sn 716. When Nālaka thinks that attaining arhathood is easy, the Buddha reminds him to be “sharp” (clear-minded) like a razor (SnA 2:498,13-17). The Commentary, however, interprets this parable, thus: Just as we should carefully lick honey smeared on a razor, so that we do not cut our tongue, so should we make use of properly obtained supports so that defilements do not arise in the mind (SnA 2:498,20-28).

Sn 717. His spiritual effort should be just right, and he should free his mind of thoughts. Without clinging even to thoughts, he will be free of defilements.

717c: “Free from raw stench” (nirāmagandho) means “free from defilements,” nikkkileso, especially overcoming craving and views (tānha,diṭṭhi) (SnA 2:499,4-6). The Āmagandha Sutta (Sn 2.2) discusses the true nature of āmagandha as “raw stench.”

717d: In the text-note [§39d], we have already noted that parāyana can mean either “support” (in a mundane or “instrumental” sense) or as “going across (to the far shore, that is, nirvana)” (in the supermundane sense). Parāyana is polysemic and the translation—“as a support for going across.” We should be free from craving and views (tānha,diṭṭhi) through “crossing over” (parāyana) into the 3 trainings (sikkha-t, taya), that is the whole of the holy life: sikkha-t, taya, sakala, sāsana, brahmacariya, parāyano (SnA 2:499,4-6).[712d]

Sn 718ab. The Commentary takes ekāsana (“solitary seat”) broadly to mean “solitary dwelling,” that it refers to “all postures” (vivittāsanna ... sabbha, iirtya, pathā) in reference of “bodily solitude” (kaya,-viveka) (SnA 2:499,7 f). It sees a wordplay on samanāpasāna (718b), linking āsana to “seat,” taking the whole phrase as referring to “mental solitude,” ie, meditation (citta, viveka, SnA 2:499,10-12). This is a reference to the 3 kinds of solitude (viveka). [See following note.]

718b “And attend to the recluse’s duties” (samanāpasanassa ca): this refers to “the cultivation of the 38 meditation-objects” (attha,ṭīmsārammanā, bhāvanā) for the ascetics. These 38 meditation-objects do not seem to be listed in the suttas or Commentaries—they are simply a sum of meditation methods taught in the suttas, but the “38 meditation-objects” (attha,ṭīmsa aramananā) or “38 meditations” (attha,-tiṁsa kammatthāna) are often alluded to in the Commentaries.

However, they are fully listed in chapter 7 of Upatissa’s Vimutti,magga, as follows: 10 kasinas (kasīṇa): those of earth (pathāvī), water (āpo), fire (tejo), wind (vāyo); blue-green (nīla), yellow (piṇḍa), red (lohitā), white (odāta); space (ākāsa) and consciousness (viññāṇā).

104 http://dharmafarer.org

83 Sn 2.2/42-45 (Sn 239-252), SD 4.24.
84 On the 3 trainings, see Śīla samādhi pañña, SD 21.6.
85 The 38 meditation-objects (attha,ṭīmsa aramananā or attha,tiṁsa kammatthāna) are mentioned (not listed) at VA 1:229,16; DA 1:185,32 = MA 1:254,30 = SA 3:184,6 = VbhA 349,7; DA 2:393,23+25 (ad D 1:223,12) = MA 2:413,-24 (ad M 1:329,31); DA 644; MA 1:168,25, 195,25, 2:87,25; SA 1:99,9, 104,10 (ad S 1:47,13*); AA 3:111, 266, 4:95; SnA 2:499; J 1:316,23, 5:257,11; PmA 1:166,22; VbhA 118,17. The 40 meditation subjects: Vism 89,28, 110,14, 110,20-111,7 full list; Abdhv 90,25 f; AbdhvNT 2:220,23; CA 315,23; VVN 3128; DhsA 168,9. For other refs, see CPD: kamma-ṭhāna.
86 Vimm ch 7. Vimutti,magga (Vimm) is an Abhidharma work (pre-5th cent), perhaps from northern India, prob written in Pali, which is lost. It has been full tr into Chin as 脫道論 (Jiētōu dúào lùn (505) by Saṅghāpāla of Funan (Khmer, 甘帕拉 or 番貢拉, anachakr nokoro phnom or hvaunan; Chin 扶南 Fúnnán, Mekong delta, Khmer). Buddhaghosa used it as the basis of his Visuddhi,magga (Vism). While Vimm reflects the Abhayagiri ideology, Vism represents that of the Mahāvihāra in Sri Lanka. Eng tr of Chin by N R M Ehar, Soma & Kheminda, The Path of Freedom (Vimm:ESK), Colombo, 1961:63.
87 For the 40 meditations (Vism 3:104-133/110-112), see Abhs §§6-11 (Abhs:BRS 332-338); SD 15.1 (Fig 8.1); DEB (App 2). On meditation in general, see Bhāvanā, SD 15.1.
88 “Blue-green” or verdigris (nīla). Buddhaghosa describes it as “greenish blue [verdigris] (kaṇṣaṇa nīla), leaf-green (paḷāṣa nīla), collyrium blue (aṇjana nīla), surrounding it with a different colour element. See SD 15.1 (9.2.2); SD 15.12 (9.1).
10 perceptions (saññā) of (the stages of bodily) decomposition: those of the bloated (uddhūmātaka), the livid (vinīlaka), festering (vipubbaka), the cut-up (vikkhitaka), the gnawed (vikkhāyītaka), the hacked and cut-up (scattered) (hata, vikkhitaka), the bleeding (lohitaka), the fissured (vicchiddaka), the worm-infested (puḷuvaka) and bones (āṭṭhika).

10 recollections (anussati): those of the Buddha (buddhānussati), the Dharma (dhammānussati), the sangha (saṅghānussati), moral virtue (silānussati), charity (cāgānussati), deities (devatā nussati); death (maraññussati), mindfulness regarding the body (kaya, gata, sati),

mindfulness of the breath (ānāpāna, sati) and peace (upasamānussati).

4 immeasurables (appamañña): the cultivation of lovingkindness (mettā, bhāvanā), compassion (karuṇā, bhāvanā), gladness (muditā, bhāvanā) and equanimity (upekkhā, bhāvanā);

1 delimitation (vavattāhāna): the analyses of the 4 elements (cattu, dhātu, vavattāhāna), of earth, water, fire and wind;

1 perception of the loathsomeness [foulness] of food (āhāre paṭikkula, saññā);

1 the base of nothingness (ākūta cañña attānā); and

1 the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (n’eva, saññā, nāsaññā āyatana).

718c: The Commentary says that “aloneness or solitude” of sagehood (mona) is “on account of the solitude of body and mind” (kaya, citta, viveka, vasena) (SnA 2:499,16 f). This may be understood as referring to living a life of moral virtue and sense-restraint (bodily solitude) for the purpose and benefit of mental cultivation and stillness, including dhyana where possible (mental solitude). Broadly, as here, mental solitude includes the states of the Buddha and the saints. The 3rd kind of solitude is the “solitude from the substrates” (upadhi, viveka). The “substrates” (upadhi) are the defilements (kilesa), the aggregates (khandha) and formations (abhissankhāra) (or karma). “The solitude from the substrates” refers to the death-free, nirvana.

The purpose of the holy life is to win nirvana. Hence, the sage should live a solitary life dedicated to recluseship, enjoying the joy of aloneness.

Sn 719. Through his practice and attainment, the true sage’s fame will spread through the 10 directions (east, south, north, west, those in between, above and below), that is, everywhere. The silent sage who has

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90 The Vimm sequence is: uddhumātaka, vinīlaka, vipubbaka, vikkhitaka, vikkhāyītaka, hata, vikkhitaka, vicchiddaka, lohitaka, puḷuvaka, and āṭṭhika.

91 Technically, in the suttas, this is the “perception of the impurities” (asubha, saññā) or simply “the impurities” (asubha or ascuci): Mahā Saṭipaṭṭhāna S, D 22.5/2:293), SD 13; Ānāpāna, sati S, M 10,10/1:57 (SD 13 = SD 7.13); Giri-mañanda S, A 10.60/5:109 (SD 15.15), asubha, saññā (perception of foulness) or simply asubha (the foul) or ascuci (the impurities). It refers to the observing of the 31 parts of the body, of which the Comys list 32 parts, adding “brain (in the head)” (matthake matthaṭṭhagaṁ) (Khp 3/2, Pm 1:6 f, Vism 8.42-144/236-266 & KhpA 60), calling them kāya, gata sati (mindfulness of the body)—which in Kāya-gata, sati S (M 119,7) broadly refers to “body-based contemplation” (kāyānupassanā), SD 12.21.

92 The recollection of peace (upaṇamānussati) refers to the meditation on nirvana (M 140,28), SD 4.17.


94 Sometimes known as “the one perception” (eka, saññā) (Ap 1:121,10-11; ApA 396; Ap 210,4).

95 The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. In the above sutta list of kasinas, the space kasina and the consciousness kasina: technically, they are identical with the base of boundless space and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, respectively. Vism adds the light kasina (āloka kasina) and the limited space kasina (paricchinn’ākāsa kasina), making a total of 40 meditation methods (Vism 3.104-133/110-112).

96 See Viveka, nissita, SD 20.4 (4.2).

97 A better term here would be “recluseshood,” although it is a neologism, but a helpful one in reminding us that it is a state that is not bestowed on one, but arises naturally as a result of one’s spiritual efforts.
given up sense-pleasures will inspire the Buddha’s disciples in their moral life and spiritual faith in their practice.

Sn 719d: “Hearing the silent fame” (suvā ... niggghosaṁ) is a beautiful wordplay on an oxymoron, where niggghosa (literally, “without sound or voice” = moneyya or mona, “sagehood,” the wisdom of blissful silence. The Commentary explains niggghosa (literally, “voicing out”) as “the sound of glory,” (kitti,ghosa, SnA 2:499,22). The meaning is that “The wise proclaim him.” It also has a different sense at 818 (“outcry”) and 1061 (“proclamation”). At 959, niggghosa means “noise-free.” These examples attest to the polysemy of niggghosa and many Pali words [comy 722 n]. Clearly, niggghosa is a play on the silence of the sage.98

In 719d, note also that māmakā (“mine”) is singular and clearly refers to Nālaka. See note in the translation.

Sn 720. Small streams flow noisily, while the ocean moves silently. Fools are like small streams; the wise like the ocean. [721] The fully awakened is peacefully filled with wisdom, like a full lake. The foolish, like a half-filled pot, knowing little, but talks as if he know everything.

Sn 721, see 720.

Sn 722. The recluse, when he speaks much, speaks only meaningful and purposeful Dharma on the spiritual training and nirvana. The true sage is self-restrained, speaking much from experience and wisdom. He is a worthy sage because he is awakened. 722b: The Commentary (alluding to line c, too) explains attha,saṁhitā as “endowed with good means endowed with attha, endowed with dhamma” (atth’upetām dhamm’ upetām ca hitena ca saṁhitān, SnA 500,13 f). Attha here is polysemic.99 This explanation is best understood in the light of attha,veda dhamma,veda, “joy in the meaning, joy in the teaching.”100

This verse and its commentary can be taken as an explanation of the word upaññissāṁ [701a = 716a] and upaññāta.101

Sn 723b. “Knowing, he speaks not much,” means “Knowing that what is spoken does not bring good and happiness to beings, he does not speak much of that” (yam bhāsitaṁ satānaṁ hita,sukhāvahaṁ na hoti taṁ jānaṁ bahu bhāsati, SnA 2:500,26f). Here the Commentary seems to limit the sage’s “silence” to selective speech. According to the Muni Sutta (Sn 1.12), the muni is an anchorite (who lives or wanders alone) or a hermit (who lives a solitary life in a small group) (Sn 207-221, SD 109.5).

One is not versed in Dharma who merely speaks much.
One who, hearing but little, who sees truth directly [personally]—
he is truly one ‘versed in the Dharma,’ who is not heedless of the truth.” (Dh 259)

Sn 723d. The Commentary defines sagehood (mona) in terms of spiritual practice and liberation, thus: “one who is worthy of sagehood is one reckoned as being on the path of sagehood” (moneyya,paṭipaddā,- saṅkhataṁ monaṁ arahati); “one who has reached sagehood is reckoned to have attained the path-knowledge of arhatthā” (arahatta,magga,ñāna,saṅkhataṁ monaṁ ajjhagā) (SnA 2:500,27 f). In short, the Commentary equates the sage (mona) with an arhat.

———

98 See SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).
99 For another polysemy, see Sn 696b; see comy 719d. On Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1 f).
100 See (Agata,phala) Mahānāma S (A 6.10) SD 15.3 (4); SD 10.16 (3.4.3.2).
101 (Duka) Upaññāta S (A 2.5) + SD 51.5 (5.1.1 + 5.1.2.1).
The Nālaka Discourse
Sn 3.11

THE INTRODUCTORY VERSES
(Vatthu,gāthā)\(^{102}\)

Asita’s vision

[Narrator:]  

1 Ānanda,jāte ti, dasa, gañe patte  
sakkañ ca indāṃ suci, vasane ca deve  
dussaṃ gaheṭvā atirīva thamayante  
asi to addassā diva, vihāre

During his day-rest, the seer Asita saw  
d the joyful and revelling host of 30\(^{103}\)  
and Sakra, lord of the devas, in clean clothes,  
holding cloth, praising exceedingly.\(^{104}\)

2 Disvāna deve mudita, mane udagge  
cittiṁ karitvāna idam avoca  
tadhā na devatā marū, hasten to  
dispel my doubt, dear sirs!

Seeing the devas glad and joyful,  
showing regard, said this to them,  
“Why is the deva host exceeding glad?  
Why do they hold cloth, twirling them about?

3 Yadā pi āsī asurehi saṅgamo  
jayo surānaṁ asurā parājita  
tadā na devatā marū, hasten to  
dispel my doubt, dear sirs!

Even after a battle with the asuras,  
a victory for the devas, defeat for the asuras,  
there is no such hair-raising excitement:  
“Why do they hold cloth, twirling them about?  
having seen what marvel do the gods rejoice?\(^{106}\)

4 Seḷenti gāyanti ca vādayanti ca  
manussa, loke hita, sukhatāya jāto  

They whistle\(^{107}\) and sing and play music;  
they slap their arms and dance;  
I ask you, dwellers of Meru’s crest:  
hasten to dispel my doubt, dear sirs!”\(^{108}\)

[The devas:]  

5 So bodhi, satto ratana, varo atulyo  
manussa, loke hita, sukhatāya jāto

“The Bodhisattva, incomparable, noble jewel,  
is born in the human world for its good and joy,

---

\(^{102}\) These 20 verses \([679-698]\) are called \(vatthu,gāthā\) by Comy (SnA 2:483.18). See Jayawickrama 1978a:13. They are ascribed to Ānanda at the time of the 1\(^{st}\) Council (saṅgīti). See Sn:N 300: n679-723.

\(^{103}\) “Host of 30,” \(ti, dasa, gañe\), a poetic ref to the 33 devas (tāva, tiṁ saṅa): see SD 1.7 App.

\(^{104}\) For the Asita story refs, see (1.1.37) n.

\(^{105}\) Asita is able to know this on account of his power of recollecting the past and the future: see (6.1.1) n ad loc.

\(^{106}\) Comy relates, in this connection, the story of how the youth Magha becomes Sakra (SnA 2:484 f). The full story is at DhA 2.7b/1:264-272 (tr DhA:B 1:314-319). Sakra’s 7 vows are at Vata,pada S (S 11.11/1:228), SD 54.12.

\(^{107}\) Selenti, (Comy selenti), pl of seleti (ab obscure word), Comy glosses as “to produce a whistling sound with the mouth” (mukhena usseḷaṇa, saddam muṇcati, SnA 2:485,25 ≈ VAṬ:Be 2:373,24 which adds “it mean to go on making loud silly sounds” (mahantam kavīva abyatta, saddam pavattentītī atho); “to make rowdy noises with the mouth” (selentīti mukhena selita,saddam karontī); DAT 2:39 ≈ MAṬ:Be 2:341 on selana. See CPD: useḷ(h)ana.

\(^{108}\) Anguttara Comy: Mārisa is a vocative term of endearment, used esp by deities (mārisāti piya, vacanam etain, devatānaṁ pāṭiyekko vohāro, DA 2:698,27). SED equates P mārisā with mādrīsa, from mādrī, “like me, resembling me.”
in Lumbinī village, in the country of the Sakya. Hence, we rejoice exceedingly in festive form.\textsuperscript{109}

Supreme amongst beings,\textsuperscript{110} foremost person is he: a bull among men, supreme amongst all mankind. He’ll turn the wheel in the park called Seer [\textit{isi}], like a roaring lion, mighty overlord of the beasts.”

Asita and the child Bodhisattva

[H]earing that word, he hurried down, and went to Sudhodana’s abode. Seated there, he told the Sakya,

“Where is the boy [prince], I wish to see him.”

Then, the boy blazing just like gold, fashioned so skillfully at the furnace’s mouth, resplendent in glory, perfect in complexion—the Sakya showed the boy to him named Asita.

Seeing the boy, like crested flame, pure bright lord of stars, crossing the heavens, burning like the sun in the cloudless autumn sky, he was overjoyed, welling in abundant bliss.

They held up in the sky a parasol\textsuperscript{113} of countless ribs and a thousand circled tiers,\textsuperscript{114} a golden handled yak-tailed whisks fanned, but the bearers of whisks and parasols are unseen.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{109} Comy: They joy arises from the fact that with the advent of the Buddha, they (the gods), as well as humans, will be able to attain the path of awakening as learners (\textit{sekha})—streamwinners, once-returners and non-returners—and adepts (\textit{asekha}), arhats, ie the 4 kinds of noble individuals. (Sn 2:486).
\item \textsuperscript{110} Comy gloss \textit{sattā} as “devas [gods] and humans” (\textit{deva,manussa}), and \textit{pajā} (line b) as “the rest of the courses or realms (of beings)” (\textit{sasa,gati}) (Sn 2:486,19). \textit{Pajā}, however, refers only to humans. Hence, the senses of the two words apply more correctly in reverse, ie, \textit{sattā} refers to all beings in general, while \textit{pajā} to “devas and humans.”
\item \textsuperscript{111} Be avasari; Ce \textit{Se avasarī}; Ee SnA:Ce avarsari.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Ce \textit{Ee avovāsī}; Be (Phayre) \textit{avvaca cāpi; Be \textit{Se avocāpi}.
\item \textsuperscript{113} “A parasol,” \textit{chatta}, ie, a white celestial parasol (\textit{dibba,sēta,c,chatattā}, Sn 2:487,10) [Sn 689c]. The white parasol (\textit{chatta}) and the fly-whisk (\textit{camara}) are emblems of royalty. The fivefold royal regalia (\textit{kakudha,bhaṇḍa}) are: (1) the crown (main symbol of kingship), (2) the sword (symbolizing military might), (3) the royal staff (justice), (4) the royal fan (golden) and fly-whisk (hair from the white elephant’s tail), and (5) the royal slippers (golden). An important in situ (fixed) royal emblem is the 9-tiered white parasol, which hangs above the king in state. See SD 36.10 (5,4.2.4).
\item \textsuperscript{114} V Comy speaks of 2 kinds of umbrellas: (1) with the handle attached to the ribs in the umbrella’s centre (like a modern umbrella) (\textit{maṇḍala,baddha}) and with the handle attached to the rim (\textit{salāka,baddha}); see Sn:N 304 n688. However, from the sutta account, we could imagine that the celestial parasol actually has no handle at all (like the
11 Disvā jaṭī kannā,siri,vyāho iś
suvanna,nikkhaṁ viya paṇḍu,kambale
setān ca chattaṁ dhāriyanta muddhane
udagga,citto sumano paṭiggae
The matted-hair,115 seer, Kannha,siri,116 having seen
him like a gold ornament on a red blanket,117
with a white parasol being held above him,
heart uplifted, joyful minded, received him.

12 Paṭiggaheṭvā pana sakya,puṅgavaṁ
jigīsaka lakkhaṇa,mana,paṅgagā
pasanna,citto giram abhuddhirayi
anuttarāyaṁ dvi,padānam uttamo
Holding the bull of the Sakyas,
the master of signs,118 and mantra-expert,
with a radiant heart, he raised his voice,
“The peerless one, supreme of the two-legged!”

13 Ath’attano gamanam anussaranto
akalya,rupto gālayati assukāni
disvāṇa sakyaṁ isim avoca punudantaṁ
No ve kumāre bhavissati antarāyo119
Then, recalling his own departure,
downcast, his tears rolled off.
Seeing the seer sorrowing, the Sakyas asked,
“Surely, there’s no danger to the child!”

14 Disvāṇa sakyaṁ isim avoca akalye
nāhām kumāre ahītam anussarami
na cāp ‘imassa bhavissati antarāyo
na orakāyaṁ adhimanasā212 bhavātha
Seeing the Sakyas saddened, the seer said,
“I see,120 neither harm to the boy
nor danger will there be to him—
This is no mean gain.122 Be not concerned!”

15 Sambodhi-y-aggaṁ phusissat’āyaṁ kumāro
so dhamma,cakkāṁ parama,visuddha,dassī
vattessat’āyaṁ bahu, jana, hitānukampī
tithārik’assā bhavissati brahma, cariyaṁ
This boy will flower into foremost awakening;
who sees the perfectly pure Dharma-wheel,123
Out of compassion, good for the many,
he will turn this Dharma-wheel.
widely renowned will be his holy life. [135]

16 Mamaṁ ca āyu na ciram idhāvaseso
ath’antarā me bhavissati kāla,kiriyā
so ‘hain na sossāṁ asama, dhurassā dhammaṁ
ten’amhi atto vyasanāṁ,gato aghāvī
But my time not long remains;
my time will be done before then.124 I will not hear
the teaching of the one of the peerless task.
Thus, disaster is mine, miserable!”

royal umbrella hanging from the ceiling of the throne hall of the Thai king. Such an umbrella must be suspended in
the air or held by some deva by its peak from above.

115 Comy glosses jaṭī as “matter-hair ascetic” (jaṭila) (SnA 487,13).
116 Meaning “black glory,” since he is of dark complexion and greatly wise seer (isi) (SnA 2:483,25).
117 “Red blanket”: In the cpd paṇḍu,kambala, paṇḍu (Ved pāṇḍu, pāḷa) is a colour that has a range of
red, reddish, light red, and pale/light yellow, and kambala is a woollen blanket. Comy however glosses paṇḍu,-
kambala as “red woollen blanket” (ratta,kambala, SnA 2:487,15).
118 “Signs,” lakkhaṇa, ie, the 32 marks of the great man and its 80 lesser tokens: see SD 36.9 (3+4). See [1.2.2.1].
119 Sn 691d: All read No ce ... . It would read better with the emphatic ve, which we follow here. B Comy here has:
“They asked ... ‘Is there to be some stumbling
block for our young master?’” (BA:M) (Kin nu kho bhante amhākaṁ
aya, puttassa koci antarāyo bhavissati ti pucchiṁsu, BA 277,3). Hence, although no can be read as the interrogative
nu, we can simply read it as it is, meaning “our.”
120 “I see,” a contextual tr of anussarāmi: see (Sn 681).
121 Be adhimanasā; Ce Ee Se adhimanasā (pref).
122 “This is no mean gain,” na orakāyaṁ. I see a wordplay in -āyaṁ, reading it as ayam, “this” and as āya, “coming
in, arrival, source; inlet, entrance; income, revenue; profit” (S 1:59,20; A 4:282,19; Sn 978).
123 Be parama,visuddhi, “perfect purity.” Hence, line c can alt read: “who sees the Dharma-wheel of perfect purity,”
Comy glosses parama,visuddha,dassī as “the seer of nirvana” (nibbāna, dassī, SnA 2:489,6). Here, the Dharma-
wheel symbolizes both the teaching and its goal, nirvana.
124 “Before then” (ath’antarā), ie, Asita will pass away before the Buddha’s awakening (SnA 2:489,9).
Instructions to Nālaka

[Narrator:]

17 So sākiyānaṁ vipulāṁ janetvā pītiṁ ante, puramā niggamā brahma, cārī so bhāgineyyaṁ sayam anukampamāno samādapesi asama, dhurassa dhamme

Having inspired abundant joy in the Sakyas, he left the inner palace. The brahmachari, out of compassion for his own nephew, urged him to undertake the peerless task in the Dharma.

[Asita:]

18 Buddha 'ti ghosaṁ yada parato suṇāsi sambodhi, patto vivarati dhammamaggam

gantvāna tattha samayaṁ pariḥ paripucchamāno carassu tasmiṁ bhagavati brahma, cariyaṁ

“When you hear from another the sound ‘Buddha,’ then, he has revealed the foremost teaching [the Dharma-path].”

[Narrator:]

19 Tenānusiṭṭho hita, manasena jādinaṁ anāgatė parama, visuddha, dassinā so nālako upacita, puṁsa, saṅcayo jinaṁ patikkhaṁ parivasi rakkhit' indriyo

Having been counselled with such good by him who sees highest purity to come, Nālaka, who has himself piled up merits, with faculties guarded, dwelled awaiting the Conqueror.

[ Narrator:]

20 Sutvāna ghosaṁ jina, vara, cakka, vattane
gantvāna disvā isi, nisabhaṁ pasanno moneyya, seṭṭhaṁ muni, pavaraṁ apucchi
samāgata atitā, vhayassa sāsane 'ti

Hearing word of the Conqueror’s noble wheel-turning, he went and saw the mighty bull of seers, with faith, he asked the noble sage about the highest sagehood— the prophecy of the one called Asita is fulfilled.

The introductory verses concluded (Vatthu, gāthā niṭṭhitā)

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125 “Brahmachari,” brahma, cārī, “one who lives the celibate holy life,” here referring to Asita.
126 The embedded “m” is Romanized (while the rest of the word is italicized) to indicate its polysemy [comy 722 n]. See foll n.
127 Comy glosses dhammamagga as both dhamma, magga and as dhamma, magga (SnA 2:489,27-29; see Miln 21,29 + Miln:H 29 n5). The alt tr shows that there are two possible readings here, both of which apply. As a path, Comy explains dhamma, magga as “the path to nirvana, the highest reality” (paramattha, dhammassa nibbānassa maggaṁ, SnA 2:489,27).
128 Be Se hita, manena; Ce Ee hita, manasena.
129 Comy says that Nālaka meets the Buddha on the 7th day after the Buddha’s 1st discourse (SnA 2:490).
130 Comy glosses “the highest sagehood” (moneyya, seṭṭhaṁ) as “supreme knowledge, path-knowledge” (ūttataṁ magga, ñāṇaṁ), ie, sainthood (SnA 2:490,23).

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NĀLAKA’S VERSES\textsuperscript{131}

(*Nālaka Gāthā)
or, The (Nālaka) Discourse on Sagehood, (Nālaka) Moneyya Sutta

[Nālaka:]

21 *Aññātam etaṁ vacanaṁ asitassa yathā,tathāṁ
taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāṁ sabba,dhammaṁ pāraguṁ

“Having understood this utterance of Asita to be true to reality,
I ask you about this, Gotama,
who has gone beyond all states [dharmas].\textsuperscript{132}

22 Anagāriy’ upetassa bhikkhā,cariyan jītiṁsate\textsuperscript{133}
muni pabrūhi me puṭṭho moneyyaṁ uttamaṁ padaṁ

Having gone into homelessness.
there is desire to go on alms-round.\textsuperscript{134}
Tell me, O sage, who have asked,
about the supreme state of sagehood.”

[The Buddha:]

23 *Moneyyaṁ te upaññissaṁ (iti bhagavā)
dukkaraṁ durabhisambhavāṁ
handa te naṁ pavakkhāṁ santhambhassu dalho bhava

“I shall show you how to gain\textsuperscript{135} sagehood,
said the Blessed One:
(difficult to practise, difficult to attain.
Now then, I will tell you about it:
Be resolute,\textsuperscript{136} be firm!”

24 Samāna,bhāgaṁ\textsuperscript{137} kubbetha
gāme akkuṭṭha,vandiṁ mano,padosaṁ rakheyya
santo anuṇṇato care

Cultivate an even mind, responding alike,
to abuse and homage in the village.
You should guard against a troubled mind:
fare on in peace, not haughty.\textsuperscript{140}

25 Uccāvacā niccharanti dāye\textsuperscript{142}aggi,sikhūpamā

High and low [Good and bad]\textsuperscript{141}
emerge like the crests of flames in a forest fire.

\textsuperscript{131}For a Skt parallel, see Mvst 3:382, 386-389 (tr Mvst:J 3:379, 385-388).
\textsuperscript{132}Or, “the transcender of all states.” Comy explains that \textit{Sn 699d} refers to the 6 aspects (ākāra) of transcending of all states (dhamma) as stated in \textit{Hemavata S} (Sn 1.9) (SnA 2:491,5-7): this is the discarding of all clinging to world, ie, the 5 cords of sense-pleasures and the mind as the 6th (\textit{channam eva upādāya chassu loko vihaññati, Sn 169d; see 169-172}).
\textsuperscript{133}Be jīgisati; Ee Se jīgīṁsato.
\textsuperscript{134}\textit{Sn 700b}: see (6.2) ad loc.
\textsuperscript{135}“I shall teach you how to taste,” \textit{upaññasiṁ} [701a=706a], fut 1 sg of \textit{upajānāti}, “to know for oneself.” This means: “I shall show you from my own experience, not taught by others.” See (6.2) ad loc for comy & \textit{(Duka) Upaññāta S} (A 2.5) + SD 51.5 (5.1.1 + 5.1.2.1). See also CPD & DP: upa-jānāti.
\textsuperscript{136}Comy glosses \textit{santhambassu} (2 sg imp) as “prop yourself with the support of effort with ability that is difficult to muster” (\textit{dukkara,karaṇa,samatthena viriyūpāthambhena attānaṁ upathambhaya, Sn A 2:491,29-27}).
\textsuperscript{137}Comy glosses \textit{dalho bhava} “Be firm, be not lax in endeavour, able to endure what is difficult to obtain!” (\textit{draphhisambhava,sahana,samatthāya asithila,parakkamatāya thiro hohi, Sn A 2:491,29 f}).
\textsuperscript{138}\textit{Sn 702a}: Be Ce SnA samāna,bhāgaṁ; Ee Se samāna,bhāvaṁ. The Comy lemma (SnA 2:492,9 and all other eds) and Mvst 3:387,6 give -bhāgam. See (6.2) ad loc.
\textsuperscript{139}See (6.2) ad loc.
\textsuperscript{140}\textit{Sn 703a}: \textit{Uccāvacā} (mfn; ts), lit, “high and low,” (idiomatic) “this and that,” good and bad (ie, karma); various, diverse, manifold: for refs, see CPD sv.
<p>nāriyo muniṁ palobhenti<sup>143</sup> tā su tam mā palobhayuṁ</p>

<p>Women may try to tempt the sage—<br/>may they not tempt you.<sup>144</sup></p>

<p><b>26 Virato methunā dhammad</b> <br/>hitvā kāme paro pare<sup>146</sup> aviruddho asāratto <br/>pāṇesu tasa, thāvare</p>

<p>Refraining from sexual intercourse,<sup>145</sup> having abandoned sense-pleasures, fine or coarse, neither adverse nor attached <br/>to beings, moving or still.<sup>147</sup></p>

<p><b>27 Yathā ahaṁ tathā ete</b> <br/>yathā ete tathā ahaṁ <br/>attānaṁ upamaṁ katvā <br/>na haneyya na ghātaye</p>

<p>As I am, so are these; <br/>as these are, so am I.<sup>148</sup> <br/>Comparing oneself to others,<sup>149</sup> let one neither kill nor cause to kill.</p>

<p><b>28 Hitvā icchaṁ ca lobhaṁ ca</b> <br/>yathā satto puthujjano <br/>cakkhumā paṭipajjeyya <br/>tareyya narakam imam</p>

<p>Having abandoned longing and greed,<sup>150</sup> wherein the worldling is stuck,<sup>151</sup> as one with eyes he should walk the path <br/>so that he would cross this hell.<sup>152</sup></p>

<p><b>29 Ūnûdaro mitāhāro</b> <br/>app ‘icchassa alolupo</p>

<p>Without a full belly,<sup>153</sup> measured in food,<sup>154</sup> with few wishes,<sup>155</sup> not greedy.<sup>156</sup></p>

<sup>142</sup> Dāya [Skt dāva, forest fire; wood = easily inflammable; related to dunotī (to burn), caus dāvayati; cf Gr. θαίο (to burn) & P dava (1) (PED)] wood; jungle, forest; a grove (V 1:10 (miha–), 15, 350, 2:138; S 2:152 (tiṇa–), 4:189 (bahu, kaṇṭaka ~ = jungle); A 5:337 (tiṇa–); J 3:274, 6:278. See also dāva. Dāy, pāla, a grove keeper (V 1:350; M 1:205).

<sup>143</sup> Sn 703c: Palobhenti = palobhayanti (in the sense of “attempt to seduce or tempt”), see Thñ 387 + Thñ:N 143 n387.

<sup>144</sup> See (6.2) ad loc.

<sup>145</sup> See (6.2) ad loc.

<sup>146</sup> Paro’pare, lit, “high and low,” (idiomatic) good and bad (ethical or aesthetic), all kinds. = uccāvaca [§25a]. Here, “high” is meditative or dhyanic bliss, and the low (or coarse) is sense-based stillness and joy. See also Brahma Nimantanika S (M 49,9c*), SD 11.7.

<sup>147</sup> “Moving or still,” tasa, thāvare. Here, this Pali idiom incl the senses: (1) worldlings (the “moving”) and saints (the “still”) or (2) beings (people etc) who are spiritually cultivated (“still”) uncultivated. = tasā vā thāvarā vā: Karaṇiya Metta S (Khp 9,4b = Sn 146b) + SD 38.3 (5.3).

<sup>148</sup> Lines ab is an expression of specific conditionality applied to Buddhist ethics. On specific conditionality (idap-, paccayatā), see SD 5.16 (2).

<sup>149</sup> These 2 lines recur at Dh 129 f. The ideas expressed in this verse is the basis for the “golden rule”: see SD 1.5 (1.2).

<sup>150</sup> See (6.2) ad loc.

<sup>151</sup> There is a beautiful wordplay with satto, which normally means “a being,” but here it can also mean “stuck”: past part of sajjati (from /Getty, “to hang”), “to hang (on), cling (to), be attached (to)” (V 1:185; D 2:246; Dh 342; J 1:376).

<sup>152</sup> “Hell” (naraka) refers to “wrong livelihood” (micch′ajīva) and “craving for the supports” (paccayat, tanhā) (SnA 2:494,4 f).

<sup>153</sup> “Without a full belly,” ūnûdaro = ēna + udara, which Comy glosses as “not having a bloated belly” (uddhumā-tūdaro, SnA 2:494.14-16). As “unfilled belly,” see dīgha, ratṭhām ūnûdaro (v1 onâdaro), “with empty belly all night long” (DhA 1:170,23). But here, it is not an “unfilled or empty belly,” but rather practicing moderation in food, i.e., stopping before one feels full: see SD 37.13. How Pasenadi overcame his gluttony. Cf opp: udāvadehaṁ bhūjīati, see (Majjhima Ceto, kha) S (M 16,23), SD 32.14.

<sup>154</sup> This line recurs at Sāriputta Tha (Tha 982 c).

<sup>155</sup> See (6.2) ad loc.

<sup>156</sup> See (6.2) ad loc.
Never at all hungry with yearning, having no wishes—cooled is he.

Having walked on his alms-round, the sage brings himself to the forest’s edge. Setting himself up at the foot of a tree, the sage takes his seat there.

One wise in meditation [one intent on dhyana] should delight in the forest-edge. Let him meditate at the foot of a tree, to his heart’s content.

Then, when the night is ended, he should bring himself to the village; he should delight neither in collecting alms nor in bringing anything from the village.159

The sage who has come to a village shall not act disruptively with families, he cuts off talk about search for food, he utters not an ulterior word.161

‘That which is received is good, what is not received is well, too.’ In either case, he is simply just so:163 he simply returns to the tree.164

Wandering about, bowl in hand, he’s not dumb, but regarded to be so. He should neither despise a small offering nor scorn the giver.

For, high and low is the way of practice proclaimed by the recluse.166 There is

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157 Nicchāto: from nī (“out, down, not”) + chaśa (“hungry”): “free from hunger” (here used figuratively to mean “free from craving”).

158 “Setting himself up” (upaṭṭhito), “standing at the foot of a tree” (SnA 2.495,14 f). Its n form is upaṭṭhāna, as in sati upaṭṭhāna, “setting up (or foundation, focus) of mindfulness” [SD 13.1(3.1.2)].

159 On Sn 710cd, see (6.2) ad loc.

160 Sn 711b, see (6.2) ad loc.

161 Recurs at Sn 930b & Kathāvatthu S (A 3.67,12d), SD 46.11. On payutvā (vl payuttvā), see (6.2) ad loc.

162 “Well” (kusala) and “good” (sadhu) in line a are synonyms.

163 Sn 712c. “Just so” (tādi), which Comy glosses as “remaining unchanged” ( nibbidhō huvā, SnA 2:16 f). Its abstract n is tādi, bhava. In both cases—as n and as adj—tādi also has the sense of “impartiality,” ie, the action of wisdom and compassion working together for the benefit of others: see M 47.10.2 n (SD 35.6); SD 15.7 (2.2.2). In important way, its sense overlaps with that of tathāgata [SD 15.7 (2)]. On tādi, see SD 15.7 (2.2.2); SD 47.10.2 n (SD 35.6); SD 49.20 (1.3.1). On tādīna (gen sg), see Sabba Kamma Jaha S (U 3.1.12/21) + SD 39.3 (1.4.2).

164 Sn 712d: see (6.2) ad loc.

165 On the sense of “high and low,” see n onuccāvacā at §703.

166 Sn 714a: see (6.2) ad loc.
na pāraṁ di, guṇaṁ yanti
na-y-idaṁ eka, guṇaṁ mutaṁ

neither going over to the far shore twice
nor is this felt [experienced] but once.

37 Yassa ca visatā n’atthi
chōna,sotassa bhikkhu
kicčākika-ppañhassa
pariḷāha na vijjati

For whom there is no craving.
for the monk whose stream is cut off, who has
abandoned what is to be done and not to be done,
there is no fever.

38 Moneyyan te upañissamaṁ
(itī bhagavā)
khura,diṁrapamo bhave jivhāya tālum āhacca
udare saññato siyā

I shall show you how to gain sagehood,
(said the Blessed One).
Be sharp as a razor’s edge.
Having pressed the tongue against the palate,
he should be restrained regarding the belly.

39 Ahiṇa, citto ca siyā
na cāpi bahu cintaye
nīrāmaṁgandho asito
brahma, cariya, paraṇaṇo

His mind should neither be sluggish
nor should he think too much.
Free from raw stench,
unclinging.
The holy life is the support for going across (to the
far shore that is nirvana).

40 Ek’āsanassa sikkhettha
samaṇṇapāsannassa ca

He should train himself for a solitary seat
and attend to the recluse’s duties.

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167 Sn 714b: see (6.2) ad loc.
168 Sn 714c: see (6.2) ad loc.
169 Muta. “felt or sensed,” ie, experienced. Muta forms part of the well known phrase, “the known, the heard, the
sensed and the cognized” (diṭṭha, sota, muta, viññāta) [SD 3.13 (5.2); SD 53.5]—ie, it encompasses hearing, tasting
and touching. However, here, it is used in a non-technical sense simply meaning “experienced.” However, I prefer
simpler Anglo-Saxon words, esp where they convey the same sense or can be defined so; hence, “felt” or “sensed”
-ie, experienced through any of the senses). Hence, it is here a general word for “experience,” not necessarily a direct
one, when I would normally use “feel.”
170 Sn 714d: see (6.2) ad loc.
171 Sn 715a: Comy glosses visatā as “craving” (tanha, SnA 2:498,10). Visata or visata is cognate with BHS visṛṭa
(from vi-srī, the act of flowing asunder), “gone in various directions, dispersed; come forth, issuing or proceeding
from; stretched out, spread, extended” (SED 1001a). Here it is a gerund (a verb functioning as a noun). Mahāvastu,
however, has yasyāṭa saritaṁ nātī. “For whom there is no flow of desire” (Mvst 3:388,10). (Jālinī Tanha S (A
4.199) uses both sarita and visatta to describe craving: “craving is the sticky net that traps, cast wide into a river”
tanha jālinī saritaṁ visattaṁ visattikā, A 4.199/2:211,31-32), SD 31.15. The same Sutta speaks of 108 “currents of
craving” (aṭṭha, sota tanha, vicarita). Cf Tha 282d chinna, sutta.
172 Sn 715b: “Stream,” sota, ie, that of defilements (kilesa, sota) which is cut off (SnA 2:498,10; Nm 433,15-19 ad
Sn 948, of craving (tanha).
173 Sn 715c: see (6.2) ad loc.
174 Sn 715d: On “fever,” pariḷāhö, see (6.2) ad loc.
175 See (6.2) ad loc.
176 Sn 716b: See (6.2) ad loc.
177 Sn 717a: “Free from raw stench,” nirāmaṁgandho = nir + amagandha, “defilements”; Comy glosses “free from
defilements, undefiled” nikkilesa, esp overcoming craving and views (tanha, diṭṭhi) (SnA 2:499,4-6). On amagandha,
see Amagandha S (Sn 2.2), SD 4.24.
178 “Unclinging,” asito = free from craving and views (SnA 2:499,5).
179 Sn 717d. Here, paraṇaṇa has the sense of “support” in the “instrumental” (philosophical) sense; more commonly
it is used is the “intrinsinc” sense of “ending in; goal.” Cf Mahāvastu, where instead of brahmacariya, paraṇaṇo, we
have vṛksa, mūla, paraṇaṇo, “with the root of a tree as support/goal” (Mvst 3:388,16). See (6.2) ad loc.
180 Sn 718ab: see (6.2) ad loc.
ekatām monam akkhātam
eko ve abhiramissatii

Aloneness [Solitude] is called sagehood: alone, you will surely rejoice.

41 vt Adhā bhāsihi186 dasa, disā
sutva dhīrāman nighghosān
dhāyinām kāma, cāginaṃ

tato hiriṅ ca saddhaṅ ca
bhiyyo kubbetha māmako

Then, you will brighten the ten quarters.
Having heard the silent fame of the wise, of the meditators, of those who have given up sense-pleasures, then, let my disciple all the more grow in moral shame and faith.

42 Tan nadīhi vijānātha
sobbhesu padaresu ca
saṇāntā yanti kusobbbhā
tūṃhī yāti190 mah’odadhī

Know this from the waters in crevices and in pools; noisily go the little streams, silently flows the great ocean.

43 Yad ānakain taṅ saṇāti
yām pūrām santam eva taṅ
addha, kumbhāpamo bālo
rahado pūro ’va paṇḍito

What is not full makes noise, what is full is ever at peace. Like a half-filled pot is the fool, like a full lake is the wise.

44 Yaṁ samanṇo bahu191 bhāsati
upetanī attha,sanhitam
jānam so dhammam deseti
jānam so bahu bhāsati

The recluse speaks much, replete in sense and goal.
Knowing, he teaches the Dharma, knowing, he speaks much.

181 Be Se savaṇṇa-sa ca; Ce samaṇṭ’upāsana-sa ca; Ee samaṇḍ-pāsana-sa ca.
182 Be Se samaṇṭ-pāsana-sa ca; Ce samaṇṭ’upāsana-sa ca; Ee samaṇḍ-pāsana-sa ca.
183 Be Se samaṇṭ-pāsana-sa ca; Ce samaṇṭ’upāsana-sa ca; Ee samaṇḍ-pāsana-sa ca.
184 Be eko ce abhiramissasi; Ce eko ve abhiramissati; Ee eko ce abhiramissati; Se eko ve abhiramissasi.
185 Sn 718. This verse has 5 lines (pāda). Clearly, line a flows with Sn 718d, and 2 parallel lines form a half-verse in Mvst 3:388,13°. Norman thinks that line c is an “intruder” (Sn:N 314 n719).
186 Be bhāsihi; Ce Ee Se bhāsihi. Bhāsihi (fut 2 sg) from bhāsi, to shine (bhāsati).
187 Sn 719d: see (6.2) ad loc.
189 Sn 720b: Comy glosses sōbbhesu as “channels, water-courses” (mātikāsu, SnA 2:499 f), which are usu man-made. Sōbbha, however, is “a (natural) pool” (S 2:32; Sn 720b; Vism 186). Padaresu is glossed as darīsu (SnA 2:500,1, where darī means “cleavage, cleft, hole, cave, cavern” (J 1:18, 462, 2:418). Clearly here a contrast is meant to be highlighted.
190 Be Se yanti; Ce Ee yāti.
191 Be bhāmi; Ce Ee Se bhuṃ.
192 Sn 722a: Comy says that “the recluse” (samaṇṇa) refers to the Buddha (SnA 2:500,12). Taking the Buddha as our exemplar, the teaching of the verse also applies to us, both monastic and lay, at our own level of practice.
193 Adhā, sanhitam here poetically refers to famous attha,veda and dhamma,veda, “joy in the meaning, joy in the purpose” formula—the teaching is presented complete in meaning (attha) (1st + 2nd noble truths) and purpose (dharmma) (3rd + 4th noble truths): see (Agata,phala) Mahānāma S (A 6.10), SD 15.3 (4); SD 10.16 (3.4.3.2). Sn 722b: see (6.2) ad loc.
194 The Buddha speaks from direct knowledge and understanding, knowing whatever that needs to be known and can be known (Nm 1:131; Pm 2:195,1-7). Cf Mvst: “knowing, he speaks much for the realization of nirvana” (nirvāṇanā sāksīkāryāyā jānanto bahu bhāsati, Mvst 3:389,9).
195 Note that Sn 723b says just the opposite and yet makes good sense in terms of the muni.
**45** Yo ca jānaṁ saṁyat’atto\(^{196}\)  
\(jānaṁ na bahu bhāsati\)  
sa munī monam arahati  
\(sa munī monam ajjhagā’ti\)

For, he, knowing, is self-restrained;  
knowing, he speaks not much\(^{197}\)—  
he’s a sage worthy of sagehood;\(^{198}\)

723 he’s a sage who’s reached sagehood.”

— evaṁ —

**READING**

[For full Bibliography, see the end of SD 49c]

Norman, K R  
Nālaka Sutta: tr pp 89-94, nn pp301-314. Download from  

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\(^{196}\) Be Se *saṁyat’atto*; Ee *yatatto* (which means *Sn 723a* has only 7 syllables), Fausboll’s ed has *saṁyatat’atto*; Ce *samaṁ yutto*. The tr “mentally self-restrained” highlights that the sage’s or arhat’s mind, too, is harmoniously restrained. This is contrasted with “self-restrained” (*yat’atta*), eg, at Sn 490b, where it refers to monks in general, not all of whom may be arhats or even non-returners.

\(^{197}\) *Sn 723b*: see (6.2) ad loc.

\(^{198}\) *Sn 723d*: see (6.2) ad loc.