Ahiṁsaka Sutta
The Discourse on the Non-violent | S 7.5 [Ee S 7.1.5]
or, Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja Sutta the Discourse on Bhāra,dvāja the non-violent
Theme: Non-violent in word and in deed
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1 Sutta significance
1.1 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT

1.1.1 The Ahiṁsaka Sutta (S 7.5) is a very short discourse relating how the brahmin Ahiṁsaka introduces himself to the Buddha. The Buddha replies in a single verse (S 624), highlighting the significance of his name. He seems to be an independent Bhāra,dvāja who meets the Buddha, and after merely listening to a short Dharma teaching from him—on account of his (Ahiṁsaka’s) own karmic readiness—renounces the world, and in due course becomes an arhat.

1.1.2 From the Sutta location, it is likely that Ahiṁsaka is from Sāvatthī. We know of at least two other Bhāra,dvājas—Jaṭā and Suddhika—from there. Jaṭā Bhāra,dvāja is the interlocutor of the Jaṭā Sutta (S 7.6), which is about cutting the inner tangle, while Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja, of the Suddhika Sutta (S 7.7), is taught that the highest purity is the spiritual one. It is likely that these three Bhāradvājas are related, but other than being members of the same gotra and that they all become arhats, the suttas and commentaries tell us nothing more about them.

1.2 COMMENTARIAL NOTE

1.2.1 The Sutta Commentary says that the name Ahiṁsaka (“non-violent”) may have been assigned to him by the council elders because he “asks a question,” that is, asserts himself, about harmlessness. Alternatively, Ahiṁsaka may have been his given name, and that Bhāra,dvāja is his clan or gotra (gotta) name. (SA 1:230). From the Sutta itself, it is clear that the second alternative is the more likely explanation.

1.2.2 The more famous bearer of the name Ahiṁsaka is Aṅgulimāla, that is, before he is so called. As a young student, before being forced into a life of violence by his foolish teacher, he is called Ahimsaka Māṇa, “the youth called ‘harmless’.” (MA 3:329). He is nicknamed Aṅguli,māla (the one with a garland of fingers) after his spree of mass murdering, at which he collects a single finger from each victim and strings them together in a garland, which he wears.

1.2.3 A teaching on harmlessness (ahiṁsaka,bhāva) is also given to the elder Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, as recorded in the Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya Thera Vatthu (DhA 19.4) regarding Dh 260-261. The verses essentially say that a true elder (thera) is not defined by age, but by truth, goodness, non-violence, restraint and self-taming.

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1 On the significance of the name, Bhāra,dvāja, see SD 50.10 (2.1.2).
2 S 7.6/1:165 (SD 50.22); S 7.7/1:165 f (SD 50.23).
3 On the council elders (sangiti,kāra), see SD 50.20 (comy 1-2/8).
4 See Aṅguli,māla S (M 86), SD 5.11.
5 DhA 19.4/3:387 f.
1.3 The Brahama,Dvajas

1.3.1 The very first chapter of the Brāhmaṇa Samyutta—the Arahanta Vagga—contains 10 suttas (S 7.1-10) recording the conversion and arhathood of various members of the Bhāra,dvāja clan. The Ahiṁsaka Sutta (S 7.5) is the fifth of these suttas.6

1.3.2 There is no other information, either in the suttas nor in the Commentaries, on Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja of Sāvatthī. He does not seem to be any of the famous Bhāra,dvaja brothers of Rājagaha, all of whom renounce the world and become arhats.7

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The Discourse on the Non-violent
S 7.5

1 Originating in Sāvatthī. Then, the brahmin Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he exchanged greetings with the Blessed One.

2 When the courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the brahmin Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the brahmin Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja said this to the Blessed One:

3 “I am Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja, master Gotama! I am Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja, master Gotama!”8

Ahiṁsaka’s verses

[The Buddha:]

4 Yathā nāmaṁ tathā c’assa
siyā kho tvam ahiṁsako.
Yoh ca kāyena vācāya
manasā ca na hiṁsati.
Sa ce ahiṁsako hoti
yo paraṁ na vihiṁsatīti. [S 624] If you are what your name is, you would be the harmless one. But it is through body, through speech, and through mind, who does no harm—if he is the harmless one he is one who harms not another.

Ahiṁsaka joins the order

5 When this was said, the brahmin Ahiṁsaka Bhāra,dvāja said this to the Blessed One: “Excellent, Master Gotama! Excellent! Master Gotama!

Just as if one

were to place upright what had been overturned,
were to reveal what was hidden,
were to show the way to one who was lost, or

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6 For the whole list of “Bhāra,dvāja” suttas, see SD 50.10 (2.2).
7 See SD 50.10 (2.2).
8 Cf Māna-t,thaddha S (S 7.15,9), where the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha only introduces himself to the Buddha after he perceives the Buddha as being able to read his mind (SD 50.36).
were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by the Blessed Gotama.
I go to the Blessed Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.
May the Blessed Gotama give me the going-forth (pabbajjā), give me the ordination (upasampadā).”
6 And the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra, dvāja received the going-forth and the ordination in the
Blessed One’s presence.

Ahimsaka becomes an arhat

7 THE FULL ARHATHOOD PERICOPE

Then, not long after he was ordained, the venerable Ahimsaka Bhāra, dvāja, dwelling alone, aloof,
diligent, exer-tive, and resolute,
in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,
attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,
for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.
8 THE ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,
the holy life has been lived,
done what is to be done,
there is no more of this state of being.”

And the venerable Ahimsaka Bhāra, dvāja became one of the arhats.

— evam —

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9 For details, see Poṭṭhapāda S (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.
10 On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see Poṭṭhapāda S (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.