

8a

Rohitassa Sutta 1

Paṭhama Rohitassa Sutta The First Discourse to Rohitassa | A 4.45

Theme: The world's end cannot be reached by going

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Introduction

1.1 THE ROHITASSA SUTTAS

1.1.1 There are 3 discourses with the title **Rohitassa Sutta**:

(1) Rohitassa Sutta	S 2.26/1:61 f	SD 7.2	omits the opening found in (2)
(2) Rohitassa Sutta 1	A 4.45/2:47-49	SD 52.8a	with traditional introduction
(3) Rohitassa Sutta 2	A 4.46/2:49 f	SD 52.8b	without introduction; the Buddha as narrator

1.1.2 The Rohitassa Sutta 1 (A 4.45) is an account of the devaputra meeting with the Buddha related by the sutta narrator—traditionally said to be the venerable Ānanda at the 1st council—with the traditional introduction, beginning, “At one time” (*ekam samayam*). Without the introduction [§1], the Rohitassa Sutta 1 is identical to **the Rohitassa Sutta** (S 2.26), SD 7.2.

1.1.3 The reason for the repetition of this Sutta is that while **the Rohitassa Sutta** (S 2.26) is recorded in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya** (that is, handed down by the Saṃyutta reciters, *saṃyutta bhāṇaka*), while **the Rohitassa Sutta 1** (A 4.45) is preserved in **the Aṅguttara Nikāya** (handed down by the Aṅguttara reciters, *aṅguttara bhāṇaka*). The Rohitassa Sutta 1 has an introduction (mentioning the Sutta location) probably because—like other Aṅguttara Nikāya suttas—it is mainly recommended for the edification of the laity, while it is assumed that monastics are more likely to know or deduce the Sutta's location.

For the sutta notes, besides those given here, we should refer to SD 7.2.

1.2 RELATED SUTTAS

There are a few suttas related to **the Rohitassa Suttas** either by way of applying the parable of the archer or the qualities of an archer, especially the “archer's qualities” stock—*daḥa, dhammo dhanu-g, gaho sikkhito kata, hattho kat'upāsano* [§5.2], namely:

• Issattha Sutta	S 3.24,9.2/1:99	SD 44.18	The fearful boys and the brave boys
• Dhanu-g, gahā Sutta	S 20.6,2/2:265 f	SD 52.7	The 4 archers and the superman
• Lok'āyatikā Brāhmaṇa Sutta	A 9.38,4.2/4:430	SD 35.2	The 4 supermen in quest of the world's end

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Rohitassa Suttā 1

The First Discourse to Rohitassa

A 4.45

¹ At one time, the Blessed One was residing in Jeta’s grove in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park near Sāvaththī.

1.2 ²Then, when the night was well advanced, the devaputra Rohitassa—his surpassing beauty lighting up the whole of Jeta’s grove—approached the Blessed One, saluted him and stood at one side.³

² Standing at one side, the devaputra Rohitassa⁴ said this to the Blessed One:

“**Is it possible, bhante, by going, to know or to see or to reach the end of the world**, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, **[48]** does not pass away (from heaven), is not reborn?”⁵

³ “As to that end of the world, avuso, *where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, is not reborn—it cannot be known, seen or reached by going*, I say.”

⁴ “It is wonderful, bhante! It is amazing, bhante! How well this is stated by the Blessed One: ‘As to that end of the world, avuso, *where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, is not reborn—it cannot be known, seen or reached by going*, I say.’

Rohitassa’s astral journey

⁵ Once in the past, bhante, I was a seer named Rohitassa Bhoja,putta [son of Bhoja], possessed of psychic power, able to travel through the sky [space].⁶

5.2 Just as swift as a **strong-bowed**⁷ archer, trained,⁸ tried⁹ and true masters of archery¹⁰ [trained, expert, master in archery],¹¹ could easily shoot past the shadow of a palmyra tree¹² with a light arrow, endowed were they with such *speed*¹³—

¹ This intro occurs only (§1, SD 52.8) and in **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26,1.2), SD 7.2.

² **Rohitassa S 2** (A 4.46) starts here and continues with the rest of this Sutta.

³ This section only in A 4.45,1/2:47.

⁴ For an interesting possible identification of Rohitassa, see **Kevaladdha S** (D 11), where the Buddha tells the story of a “certain monk,” with the psychic power of astral travel, and wishing to discover if the end of the physical universe could be reached, astrally speeds through it. (D 11.67-85), SD 1.7.

⁵ *Yattha nu kho bhante na jāyati na jiyati na miyyati na cavati na uppajjati, sakkā nu kho no bhante gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñatumaṃ vā daṭṭhumaṃ vā pāpuṇitumaṃ vā ti?*

⁶ *Bhūta,pubbāham bhante rohitasso nāma isi ahoṣiṃ bhoja,putto iddhimā vehāsaṃ,gamo.*

⁷ “Strong-bowed,” *dalha,dhammo*. Comy glosses *dalha,dhammo* (lit, “strong by nature”) as *dalha,dhanu* (“with a strong bow”); possessed of a bow of the greatest size (*uttama-p,pamāṇena dhanunā samannāgato*) (SA 1:115). The plural *dalha,dhammino* occurs at S 708b/1:185. K R Norman, in his tr (Tha:N) of **Tha 1210** proposes that this form must have been borrowed from a dialect where *-nv-* > *-mm-* instead of *-nn-*. SED lists two Skt words meaning “having a strong bow,” *dr̥ḍhadhanvan* and *dr̥ḍhadhanvin*. See Tha:N 289 n1210. Bodhi proposes that we could assume it is the former that appears in Pali as *dalha,dhamma*, the latter as *dalha,dhammin*. See SD 52.7 (1); also S:B 393 n181 & 411 n264.

⁸ “Trained,” *sikkhito*; see SD 52.7 (1.2.2.2).

⁹ “Tried” (*kata,hattha*), see SD 52.7 (1.2.2.3).

¹⁰ “True masters of archery: (*katūpāsana*), see SD 52.7 (1.2.2.4).

¹¹ **The archery stock**—*sikkhito kata,hattho kata,yoggo katūpāsano*—is applied to an archer in **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26), and applied to 4 boys, one each from the 4 classes, incl the opp qualities, in **Issattha S** (S 3.24)—both add the characteristic, “well-practised,” *kata,yoggo* (S 1:62,2) ≈ (S 1:99,10): see (S 2.26,5/1:62), SD 7.2 & (S 3.24,6.2/1:99), SD 44.18 respectively. This stock phrase describing an adept archer recurs in **Dhanu-g,gahā S** (S 20.6/2:266); (**Lok’āyat-ika**) **Brāhmaṇā S** (A 9.38.4a/4:428), SD 35.2.

6 my *stride* was such, bhante, that it spanned the eastern ocean and the western ocean. Then, bhante, the wish arose in me, ‘I will reach the end of the world by going.’

7 Although possessing such speed and such a stride, and having a lifespan of a hundred years, living for a hundred years, travelling for a hundred years, pausing only to eat, drink, to take meals and snacks, to void and pee, to sleep and dispel tiredness— I would die along the way without reaching the world’s end.¹⁴

8 It is wonderful, bhante! It is amazing, bhante! How well this was stated by the Blessed One: ‘As to that end of the world, avuso, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, does not arise—it cannot be known, seen or reached by going, I say.’”

Reaching the world’s end

9 “However, avuso, *without having reached the end of the world*,¹⁵ *there is no making an end to suffering, I say.*

So, avuso, in this very fathom-long body,¹⁶ along with its perception and mind, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the ending of the world, and the way leading to the ending of the world.”¹⁷

10	<i>Gamanena na pattabbo lokass’anto kudācanam na ca appatvā lok’antam dukkha atthi pamocanam</i>	The world’s end can never be reached by way of going [through the world], and yet without reaching the world’s end there is no release from suffering.	356
11	<i>Tasmā bhava loka, vidū sumedho lok’anta, gū vusita, brahmacariyā</i>	Therefore, truly, the world-knower, the wise one, gone to the world’s end, the holy life fulfilled,	

¹² “Palmyra tree,” *tāla*, the fan palm, *Borassus flabelliformis*.

¹³ §§5.2-6: *Tassa mayham bhante eva, rūpo javo ahosi seyyathā’pi nāma dalha, dhammo dhanu-g, qaho sikkhito kata, hattho kat’upāsano lahukena asanena appa, kasirena tiriyaṃ tāla-c, chātīm atipāteyya, eva, rūpo pada, vīti, hāro ahosi seyyathā’pi nāma puratthimā samuddā pacchimo samuddo*. These lines recur at **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26, 5.2+6), SD 7,2; **Rohitassa S 2** (A 4.46, 5.2+6), SD 52.8b. The “archer’s qualities” stock is underlined.

¹⁴ This is elaborated as a parable in (**Lok’āyatika**) **Brāhmaṇā S** (A 9.38, 4/4:428), SD 35.2.

¹⁵ By “world” (*loka*) here the Buddha means the “world of formations” (*saṅkhāra, loka*), speaking on the level of “ultimate truth” (*param’attha, sacca*) in response to Rohitassa’s question based in reference to the “physical world” (*okāsa, loka*), ie, on the level of “conventional truth” (*sammuti, sacca*). On the 2 levels of language, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9) @ SD 7.14 (4).

¹⁶ “In this very fathom-long body,” *imasmiñ-ñ-eva vyāma, matte kaḷevare*. The word *kaḷevare* is probably cognate with the English “cadaver.” The expression **vyāma, matta** has a Skt cognate, *vyāma, mātra*, which, according to Śata, patha *Brahmaṇa* 1.2.5.14 is the measure of the Vedic altar, with a man’s shape. It is not only the counterpart of sacrifice, but also the manifested counterpart of the Creator, Prajā, pati, “and his body is understood as being identical with the cosmos within which all changes take place. If we deny the existence of the Creator, these changes can occur only in a human being.” (Jurewicz 2000:79). Comy glosses these 4 statements as those of the 4 noble truths. Thus the Buddha shows: “I do not, avuso, make known these four truths in external things like grass and wood, but right here in this body composed of the four great elements.” (SA 1:117 f)

¹⁷ *Api khvāham āvuso imasmiñ, ñeva vyāma, matte kaḷevare saññimhi samanake lokam ca paññāpemi loka, samudayam ca loka, nirodham ca loka, nirodha, gāminim ca paṭipadan ti.*

*lokassa antaṃ samitā,viñātvā
n'āsimsati lokam imam parañ ca*

having known the world's end, he is at peace:
he longs not for this world or the next.

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