Sutta summary

The Khattiya Sutta (S 1.14) is a short discourse of 2 verses, the first spoken by a deity regarding 4 things of the highest value in the world in socioeconomic terms. The Buddha responds with another verse, stating that, on a spiritual level, what outshines their mundane counterparts.

Being a noble (kshatriya) is a social status that wield power and influence over a particular group, but the self-awakened (sambuddha)—here, referring to the Buddha or an arhat—is a liberated state attainable by anyone who follows the path.

While the ox is valuable as a beast of burden, for ploughing the field and so on, the thoroughbred is a horse of special good qualities valued by kings, nobles and breeders.

In marriage, in a patriarchal society (like ancient India), a maiden (a virgin) is highly prized, but a truly good wife is one who is attentive to her husband and family.

Wealthy families and those of high social status value the first-born son, but the best son or daughter is one who is amenable.

2 The deity’s verse (S 26*)

2.1 The deity’s verse (S 26*) is probably a popular gnomic saying put into a quatrain. The lines might have originally been separate sayings on their own, or they could have existed as a popular quatrain of slokas. They are uttered by the deity but the sayings, ironically, represent worldly or human proclivities.

2.2 “The kshatriya [The warrior] is the best of the two-legged” [S 26a*].

2.2.1 Occurrences of the statement. The Pali for the header sentence is khattiya dvi,padām seṭṭho. The phrase khattiya seṭṭho is well known, found in a number of suttas and also often quoted in the Commentaries. However, it is almost always attributed to the Brahma Sanaṅkumāra [2.2.3.1], as shown here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sutta</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>sutta contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambaṭṭha Sutta</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>Buddha approves of the verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggañña Sutta</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Buddha approves of the verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekha Sutta</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td>21.14</td>
<td>Ānanda to Mahānāma who approves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khattiya Sutta</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>54.3d</td>
<td>Uttered by a deity to the Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanaṅkumāra Sutta</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sanaṅkumāra to the Buddha who approves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahā Kappina Sutta</td>
<td>21.11</td>
<td>2.284</td>
<td>Spoken by the Buddha, with Dh 387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mora,nivāpa Sutta</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>5.327</td>
<td>The Buddha quotes Sanaṅkumāra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 On gnomic sayings, see SD 54.2a (3.2.2).
2 But here (S 1.14), a deity utters the verse [S 26a*].
3 Or, (Bhikkhu) Mahā Kappina S.
4 A 11.10 is a composite of A 3.143+144+145, with an additional dyad, making it an “eleven” item.
2.2.2 Sanaṅ,kumāra’s statement

2.2.2.1 The Brahma Sanaṅkumāra is recorded to have made his statement to the Buddha in the Sanaṅkumāra Sutta (S 6.11), of which the Buddha approves [2.2.1]. The ancient Indian theologians, thinkers and leaders made use of a well-known method of legitimizing social status, priestly power, religious teachings and rituals, or any statement or act by a “fiat,” especially a religious fiat, especially writing holy scriptures (putting words into the mouth of God, gods or some superhuman being).

The brahmins (high-caste priests) fabricated the myth that they issued forth from the mouth of Prim-eval Man (puruṣa), the kshatriya (warrior caste) from his arms, the vaishyas (business caste) from his thighs, and the shudras (menial workers caste) from his feet. The lower classes’ duty was to serve and support those classes higher than them. Brahmā is often taken as synonymous with the Purusha.

Hence, the Aggañña Sutta (D 27) and the Assalāyana Sutta (M 93) record the brahmins’ false claim that: “Brahmins are Brahmā’s own sons, the offspring from his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, the heirs of Brahmā.” To counter this false ideology, the suttas record the Buddha as turning the tables on the brahmins by giving the following responses, among others:

(1) Mahā Brahmā masters the Buddha Dharma so well that he becomes a non-returner.8
(2) Brahma Sanaṅ,kumāra declares that the kshatriyas are the best of “the two-legged.” [S 26a*; 2.2.3]

2.2.2.2 The idea behind the statement that “the kshatriya is the best of the two-legged” is found in the Pali canon in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta (D 3), and the whole passage recurs in the conclusion of the Aggañña Sutta (D 27 [2.2.1]. This passage (spoken by the Buddha) runs thus:

“Now, Ambaṭṭha, this verse was uttered by the brahma Sanaṅkumāra, thus:

\begin{align*}
    \text{khattiyo seṭṭho jane tasmiñ} & \quad \text{The kshatriya is the best in this generation} \\
    \text{ye gotta,paṭisārino} & \quad \text{for those who look up to clan.} \\
    \text{vijjā,carṇa,saṃpanno} & \quad \text{The one endowed with wisdom and conduct:} \\
    \text{so seṭṭho deva,maṅuse.} & \quad \text{he is the best amongst gods and humans.}
\end{align*}

This verse, Ambaṭṭha, is well-sung, not ill-sung, by the brahma Sanaṅkumāra, well-spoken, not ill-spoken, endowed with meaning, not without meaning—I approve of it. I, too, Ambaṭṭha, say thus:

The kshatriya is the best in this generation for those who look up to clan; The one endowed with knowledge and conduct: he is the best amongst gods and humans.”

(D 3,1.28/1:99), SD 21.3; D 27,32/3:97 f (SD 2.19)

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5 Rg.veda 10.90 (Puruṣa Śūkta); DAT 3:46. The brahmins also claimed recluses arose from Brahma’s soles (DA 254 = MA 2:418).
6 See Rg.veda 10.90 (Puruṣa Śūkta); DAT 3:46; also Gombrich 1992a:163 f, cf 167. The phrase orasā mukhato jatā, lit “the breast-born ‘sons’ born from the mouth,” is ironic as it suggests two different and incompatible places of origins.
7 D 27,3/3:81 (SD 2.19) = M 93,5/2:148 (40a.2). On the Cosmic Man vs the great man, see SD 21.3 (2.2.1.3). On the Buddha’s knowledge of the brahminical texts, see SD 1.8 (2.1.3).
8 See SD 12.2 (2.3.4), esp (2.3.4.3).
2.2.3 Sanaṅ,kumāra and his verse

2.2.3.1 Sanaṅ,kumāra (Skt sanat,kumara) is one of the great brahmas (mahā,brahmā), one of the High Gods of the 1st-dhyana form realm. The name sanāṅ,kumāra means “Ever Young” or “Forever Virgin.” Like the true brahmams of old, he practiced “the celibate divine life” or “virginal celibacy” (komāra,-brahma,-cariya, A 5.192). A term, I think, better rendered as “living the celibate ever since he was just a boy” or “lifelong celibacy,” since brahma,cariya itself connotes celibacy.

Buddhaghosa says that in a former birth, Sanaṅ,kumāra practised dhyana while yet a boy (kumāra) at the stage where his hair was tied in 5 top-knots. He was reborn in the brahma world. Even as a brahma, he retained his youthful looks; hence, his name (MA 3:33; SA 1:219). Sanaṅ,kumāra, then, represents, to the early Buddhists, the ideal brahmin, one who is a spiritual exemplar, not the worldly status-conscious priest of latter-days. Such an ideal brahmin, ironically, is identical with the ideal renunciant of early Buddhism.11

It should be understood that “Forever Virgin” (sanaṅ,kumāra) does not imply that sexuality is “un-holy” or bad. Rather, virginity here represents closing the doors to the samsaric course of births and deaths, so that this dualistic cycle is broken forever. The name, then, is a foretaste of the necessity and possibility of self-awareness and nirvana, the liberation of the death-free.

2.2.3.2 The oldest mention of Sanat,kumāra (Skt) is in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (ch 7). In the post-Buddha epic Mahābharata (3:185, Bombay ed), he expresses a sentiment very similar to that of his verse here. T W Rhys Davids12 sees the Sanaṅkumāra story as the Indian counterpart of the Arthurian legend of Galahad.13

2.2.3.3 One of the most successful skillful means of the Buddha is his use of brahminical categories. This is like using fire to fight fire: only that while the brahminical fire burns with heat, the Buddha’s fire shone with light. The suttas are spicily peppered with helpful brahminical terms in Buddhist guise—brahma, brahma, brahma,cariya, brahma,vihara, brāhmaṇa, jhāna, uposatha, veda, and so on. This is a profoundly potent skillful means known as natural adaptation.14

2.2.3.4 The Buddha not only adapted brahminical and Jain terms to Buddhist advantage: he also converted the key Vedic gods, especially the highest of them and the most popular of them: Mahā Brah- mā and Śakra. From a pompous status-conscious theistic Lord who thought he is Creator,15 Brahma became the embodiment of a cosmic father-figure compassionately concerned with the welfare of all beings.16

If Māra is the demonic power of Death that entices us to remain in the world—the antithesis of renunciation that the Buddha teaches—Brahmā is the divine presence that excitedly and immediately in-

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9 On his appearance to the devas of Tāva,tīnsa and teaching them Dharma, see Jana,vasabha S (D 18,12-20/2:-207-220), SD 62.3
10 See Dona Brāhmaṇa S (A 5.192/3:224 f), SD 36.14.
11 As described in Dona Brāhmaṇa S (A 5.192/3:224 f), SD 36.14.
14 On the early buddhicization of brahminical terms, see SD 12.1 (6).
15 See Brahma, jāla S (D 1,39-44/1:17-19), SD 25.2.
16 See SD 52.1 (10.3.4).
17 See SD 52.1 (9.1).
vites the newly awakened Buddha to declare his Dharma to all.\textsuperscript{18} Brahma is present at almost every key event in the Buddha’s life: his birth, renunciation, awakening, teaching the first discourse, when he dismisses noisy monks, and so on.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{2.2.3.5} Brahma represents the divine parent-figure who cares for the welfare of the world, who reminds the faithful that He need no worshipping. He advises worshippers to rightly direct their faith to the more deserving, the arhats.\textsuperscript{20} In contrast to such a sedate figure, there is Sakka (Skt śakra), the mercurial, almost world-loving, counter-archetype of divine playfulness and goodness.\textsuperscript{21}

Sakra was known as Indra (P inda, “leader”) in the Vedas. In the Rgveda, Indra’s title of purandara, “destroyer of cities,” is mentioned at least 11 times.\textsuperscript{22} As a Buddhist, he is now known more amicably as purinādada, “the one who gave offerings before” (pure pure dānam adāsi).\textsuperscript{23} He is also mentioned with this title in the Mahā, samaya Sutta (D 20,42f*).\textsuperscript{24}

Like brahma Ghaṭikara, Sakra is often present at the key events in the Buddha’s life. In fact, both Brahma and Sakra, being so close to the Buddha, listening to the Dharma and practising it, have themselves attained the path of awakening. Brahmā is a non-returner; Sakra (Indra) a streamwinner.\textsuperscript{25} Clearly, then, this explains why these erstwhile greatest of the Vedic gods never returned to their old ways in the old religion. [3.5]

\textbf{2.3 “Of the four-legged, it is the ox (that is the best)”} [S 26b*]. This line from the deity’s verse is similar in theme to another deity’s verse in the N’atthi Putta, sama Sutta (S 1.13), SD 54.3c: “No wealth equals that of cattle” (n’atthi go,samitām dhanam) (S 24b*). “Cattle” (go) is a broader term and includes the “ox(en)” (balivaddo). We have elsewhere discussed in some detail how cattle serves as wealth amongst the ancient Indians, such as the 5 bovine products (pañca go, rasa)\textsuperscript{26} and so on and mentioned Dhaniya’s wealth.\textsuperscript{27} [3.2]

\textbf{2.4 “A maiden is the best of wives”} [S 2.6c*]

\textbf{2.4.1} This statement by the deity may today be viewed by many as being patriarchal and masculinist. The deity’s narrow view is not surprising since Indian society, dominated by the patriarchal brahmins, is “masculinist.” The injustice of such a view is that the men do not have to be virgins or even moral! This is where sexuality has been politicized, and used as a means of propagating the family, keeping the family lineage “pure” (a pedigree) and holding the pride of social status.

The deity’s verse represents the prevalent ancient Indian (and ancient Chinese) view of women as merely objects of pleasure for men or as baby-makers. For these very reasons, there are Vinaya rules that clearly separate monastics from any kind of sexual engagement so that they are not caught in this objectifying of the body.

\textsuperscript{18} On Brahma inviting the Buddha to teach, see Āyacana S (S 6.1), SD 12.2.
\textsuperscript{19} See Cātumā S (M 67/1:456-462), SD 34.7.
\textsuperscript{20} See Brahma, deva S (S 6.3/1:140-142), SD 12.4.
\textsuperscript{21} On the derivation of deva from Voiv, “to play,” see SD 54.3a (3.2.3).
\textsuperscript{22} RgV 1.102.7c, 1.109.8a, 2.20.7a, 3.54.15c, 5.30.11c, 6.16.14c, 7.6.2c, 8.1.7c, 8.1.8a, 8.61.8c, 8.61.10a.
\textsuperscript{23} Sakka, nāma S (S 11.12/1:229,8); DhA 1:264,9.
\textsuperscript{24} D 20,14 (42f*), SD 54.4. The term inda, nāma, “those with Indra’s names (Sakra’s followers) is mentioned 4 times: SD 54.4 (1.2.1.4).
\textsuperscript{25} Understandably, from the Puranic period, both these gods stopped being worshipped by the brahmins to forestall Buddhist influence.
\textsuperscript{26} SD 54.3c (2.3.1.1).
\textsuperscript{27} SD 54.3c (2.3.1.2).
2.4.2 Instead, we should see it as a vehicle for bringing us to the path of awakening. Reflecting on the impurity of the body is recommended for practice by monks or nuns who are attracted to the physical body. The constant reflection on the impermanence of the body helps us see it in proper perspective so that we are neither attracted to it, nor hate it in an unhealthy way. We respect our body: see it for what it is and keep it healthy to serve us optimally in our Dharma practice. [3.3]

2.5 “Of sons, it is the first-born (who is the best)” [S 26d*]

2.5.1 This verse is related to the one in the N’atthi Putta, sama Sutta (S 1.13), which says: “There is no love like that for a son” (n’atthi putta, sama pemaṁ) (S 24a*). The verse here (S 26d*) is more specific, that is, the “first-born” (pubba,ja). He is said to be “the best of sons (or children)” because he will take over from his father as the family head and carry on the main line of the family. This is as far as the worldly family and society go.

2.5.2 Mother’s love for a child

2.5.2.1 The above perception is likely to be that of a father’s or a patriarchal figure’s mindset [2.5.1]. A mother, on the other hand, will love all of her children, as stated in the N’atthi Putta, sama Sutta (S 1.13): “There is no love like that for a child” (S 24a*). The only metaphor in the (Karaṇiya) Metta Sutta (Sn 1.8 = Khp 9) says:

Just as a mother would guard her own child—her one and only child, with her own life—let one cultivate a boundless heart!

(Khp 9,7 = Sn 149), SD 38.3

2.5.2.2 Buddhaghosa, in his Visuddhi, magga, gives the parable of a mother with 4 children: a young child, a sick child, an adolescent, and one busy with his own affairs. “She wants the young child to grow up; she wants the sick child to get well; she wants the adolescent to long enjoy the benefits of youth, but is not at all bothered about the one busy with his own affairs.” (Vism 9.108/321)

Buddhaghosa explains the 4 divine abodes (brahma, vihāra) in terms of this same parable: loving-kindness is the mother-to-be’s care and hope for the child in her womb; compassion is the mother’s concern and response to her infant’s needs; gladness is the mother’s pride and confidence in her youthful child; and equanimity is the mother’s “loving unconcern” for her grown-up married son (AA 2:204).28 [3.4]

3 The Buddha’s verse (S 27*)

3.1 Contrasts

3.1.1 While the deity sings of the greatest blessings of socioeconomic life [S 26], the Buddha replies with a more sublime truth of greater spiritual significance. There are no directly deep teachings here. Dharma teachings are only found in S 27a, which declares that the sambuddha—a term for the Buddha and the arhats—as the best of the two-legged, here presumably referring to humans [3.4].

3.1.2 In the deity’s verse [S 26] is patently mundane. The quatrain addresses class (the kshatriya), wealth (the ox), wife or family (the maiden) and family (the first-born son). These are the greatest blessing we

28 On the 4 sevens, see SD 38.3 (7.2).
should have, declare the deity. However, being mundane, these blessings do not bring real or lasting happiness.

Countering each of the lines of the quatrain, the Buddha declares that the true and best blessings are, respectively, those of the self-awakened, the thoroughbred, an attentive wife or partner, and children who are amenable. The most significant of these blessings is, of course, the arising of the Buddha, included in the “self-awakened” [S 27a].

On account of the greatest significance of the self-awakened, compared to all the other blessings, which are worldly, it should be placed last. In our discussion below, we have thus listed the self-awakened last [3.5].

3.2 “Of the four-legged, it is the thoroughbred (that is the best)” [S 27b*]

3.2.1 We may think that the Buddha, coming from the kshatriya class [2.2], would naturally favour the thoroughbred (ājāniya) horse, that is not only the best of race-horses but also a peerless war-horse because of its intelligence, endurance, besides its beauty and elegance, which makes it fitting to be the steed of a noble or warrior. It should be remembered that the kshatriya (P khattiya) we also accomplished agriculturalists who depend on the oxen to plough their fields and as beasts of burden.

3.2.2 The Pali for “thoroughbred” is ājāniya, ājāniya (with variant ājāniyya), ājāneya (variant ājaneyya); and also the form ājānīha (a poetic variant). All these function as either a noun or an adjective (mfn). It is usually used to refer to a noble pure-bred horse (ass’ājānīya), and less frequently about a bull or an elephant.

The form ājānīya is sometimes used in the suttas to refer to a person who is the son of a noble family, a nobleman. The Buddha often uses ājāniya about his “noble” (ariya) disciples, especially the arhats, but here in the Khattiya Sutta [S 27b*], he uses it for a thoroughbred horse.29 The meaning of this allusion is that upon entering the path of awakening, we become “noble” through rising and leaving the crowd of greed, hate and delusion. Our lives are happily regulated by the joy and truth of the Buddha Dhamma, the vision of true reality and liberation. In that sense, we have become one of the spiritual “thoroughbreds” of the noble sangha, not through biological pedigree, but through our own spiritual effort.

3.3 “An attentive woman is the best of wives” [S 27c*]

3.3.1 To the deity’s statement that “a maiden is the best of wives” [S 2.6c; 2.4], the Buddha replies that “an attentive woman” (sussūsā) is the best of wives [S 2.7c]. The word suṣṭūsā (an adjective, from su-, suggesting something good, amenable, + vśru, “to hear” + sā, adjectival ending), “wishing to hear or learn, obedient.”30

Here, suṣṭūsa does not mean “docile, fawning”31 but suggests a disposition of the desire to learn for the sake of wisdom. This wholesome attitude is clearly stated in the Ālavaka Sutta (Sn 1.10): “one gains wisdom through the willingness to listen [to learn]” (suṣṭūsā labhate paññāṁ, Sn 186). It is elaborated

29 For refs, sv: CPD, DP.
30 S 1:6; J 4:134. As a n, suṣṭuṣā, “amenability, obedience,” occurs at D 3:189; A 5:136; Tha 588; Sn 186; J 3:526; Miln 115.
31 Cf the Confucian notion of the “3 obediencies” (sanjū; Chin sancong 三從) of women, ie, she has to obey her father before marriage, her husband during marriage, and her son after her husband’s death (禮記 Li ji, “Book of Rites”). See SD 66.13 (3.7.1.3).
by the Iṭṭha Dhamma Sutta (A 10.73) as: “The willingness to listen and (the habit of) asking questions are food for wisdom” (sussūsā paripucchā paññāya).  

The best context for the practical senses of sussūsā (n) is found in the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) [3.3.2] and its Dharma senses are listed in the Sussūsā Sutta (A 6.88) [3.3.2.2].

3.3.2 Contexts for sussūsā

3.3.2.1 The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) not only gives the best context for the usage of sussūsā, “the willingness to listen, amenability,” but also lays down the reciprocal conduct and duties of husband and wife, thus:

In 5 ways, young houselord, the wife as the west [the back quarter], should be ministered to by the husband, thus:
(a) By treating her with respect.
(b) By not showing her discourtesy.
(c) By not being unfaithful to her.
(d) By handing over authority to her.
(e) By providing her with adornments.

The wife, young houselord, as the west, having been ministered thus by the husband shows him compassion in these 5 ways:
(f) She manages her work very well.
(g) She is hospitable to those around her [such as servants and husband’s relatives].
(h) She is not unfaithful to him.
(i) She looks after the household stores [and property].
(j) She is skillful and diligent in all her duties.

In these 5 ways, young houselord, the wife, as the west, having been ministered thus by the husband, shows him her compassion.

Thus the west is covered by him and made safe and secure. (D 31,30/3:190), SD 4.1

Notice that in the list of duties of a wife, there is no mention of “obedience, amenability” (sussūsā), but which is listed in the duties of the good student, described in the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta, thus:

32 A 10.73/5:136,24 (SD 105.14).
33 “Wife,” bhariyā, but above (D 31,27) given as “wife and children,” putta,dārā, lit “son and women,” which reflects the social and family values in the Buddha’s days. In our own times, it would be appropriate to contextualize this to “family.” Similarly, “husband,” sāmika, lit “owner,” should here be properly contextualized in a gender-neutral way (“spouse”) to reflect the current situation.
34 On the ideal couple, see Sama,jīvi S (A 4.55/2:61 f). On compatibility of couples, see Saṁvāsa S (A 4.54/2:59-61), SD 5.1.
35 Issariya,vossaggena, lit “surrendering over lordship,” ie, giving her authority concerning the food and meals of the house (bhatta,geha, DA 3:955). Cf (Cira-t,thita) Kula S (A 4.255/2:249), SD 39.10 on the successful family life.
36 Alāṅkārānuppadāna = alāṅkāra + anuppadāna. The verb for alāṅkāra is alam,karoti, meaning (a) to adorn; (b) to dress oneself, to put on; (c) to content oneself with (CPD); here appears to be a wordplay connoting that the husband should keep his wife happy and contented.
37 Nakula,mātā S (A 8.48) lists 8 virtues of a woman that would bring her rebirth amongst the Manāpa,kāyikā devas (A 8.48/4:268 f), SD 5.3. These virtues are an elaboration of the 5 given here.
38 “The servants [and husband’s relatives],” parijana, lit “the people around,” ie, “attendants, servants, retinue, suite” (PED) but Comy explains as “husband’s relatives” (DA 3:955).
39 Incl goods brought back by her husband.
In 5 ways, young houselord, teachers as the south [the right quarter], should be ministered to by the student, thus:

(a) By rising (in salutation). \( \text{utthānena} \)
(b) By waiting upon them. \( \text{upaṭṭhānena} \)
(c) By eagerness to listen [to learn]. \( \text{sussūsāya} \)
(d) By personal service. \( \text{pāricariyāya} \)
(e) By learning the arts [and professions] with respect. \( \text{sakkaccaṁ sippa, paṭiggahaṇena} \)

Note that the word \text{sussūsāya}, the instrumental form of \text{sussūsā} appears in the 3\text{rd} duty of the good student, as described above. In other words, \text{sussūsā} is used in the suttas (certainly in S 27c* in S 1,14) with the meaning of “willing to learn” skills and attaining wisdom. Of course, we may also include amenability in the daily sense of household life, too, which contributes to the happiness of married life.

3.3.2.2 The practical senses of the term \text{sussūsā} is fully laid out by the Buddha in the Sussusā Sutta (A 6.88), where the Buddha declares that through deep listening, we are certain to attain the wholesome states, that is, non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion, thus:

Bhikshus, one accomplished in 6 ways when listening to the true Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of wholesome states. What are the six?

When the Dharma-Vinaya declared by the Tathagata is being taught,

(1) he wishes to listen; \( \text{sussūsati} \)
(2) he listens attentively; \( \text{sotāṁ odahatti} \)
(3) he applies his mind to final knowledge (that leads to liberation); \( \text{aṁñā, cittaṁ upaṭṭhapeti} \)
(4) he holds on to what is profitable (to spiritual development); \( \text{attham ganhati} \)
(5) he lets go of what is not profitable (to spiritual development); \( \text{anattham riñcati} \)
(6) he is endowed with mental receptivity that goes with the grain. \( \text{anulomikāya khantiyā saman-nāgato hoti} \)

This means that his desire to listen to the Buddha Dharma keeps his mind focused on the teaching. Then he applies what he has learned to the attaining of the path of awakening. He promotes whatever is connected with non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion, and abandons what is connected with greed, hate and delusion. He progressively knows and sees true reality leading to his liberation.

3.4 “Of sons, one who is amenable (is the best)” [S 27d*]

3.4.1 The 4\text{th} and last statement of the deity is that the first-born is the best of sons [2.5]. The Buddha retorts that the best of sons is one amenable (\text{assava}) [S 27d*]. The word \text{assava} (Skt āśrava, Sadd 636, 19-24) means “docile, compliant, obedient, biddable, amenable”; the last sense best fits the context here. The Sutta commentary glosses \text{assava} with \text{āsuṇamāno}, “not listening” (SA 1:34,16).\(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) Here \text{sippa} apparently refers to “education” in general. Cf n to §28h.

\(^{41}\) Opp \text{anassavā avacana, karā} (lit, “not doing what was said”), “not obedient,” NmA 1:114,32.
### 3.4.2 Occurrences of assava

From a study of these occurrences of assava in the suttas and the Milinda, pañha, we will have a better idea of its range of meanings and how it is used in the Khattiya Sutta [S 27d].

#### 3.4.2.1 The word assava famously occurs thrice in the Dhaniya Sutta (Sn 1.2), that is Sn 22a, 23a and 32a (the 5th, 6th and 15th verses respectively). In the 1st verse, after Dhaniya sings about his wife, thus: “Obedient is my wife [Gopī], not wanton” (gopi mama assava alole, Sn 22a), the Buddha replies with this line: “Obedient is my mind, liberated” (cittam mama assavam vimuttam, Sn 23a). This is helpful, since we can see how assava is used both to qualify a person (Sn 22a) and also the mind (Sn 23a).

Then, towards the end of the Sutta, Dhaniya declares that “my wife [Gopī] and I are ready to listen” (gopi ca ahañ ca assava, Sn 32a), that is, they are ready listen to the Dharma, which probably marks the original ending of the Dhaniya Sutta.42 Here, we see an interesting use of assava to refer to spiritual maturity. (Sn 1.2), SD 50.20

#### 3.4.2.2 A synonym of assava is vidheyya, but both appear together in a verse in the Lakkhana Sutta (D 30) on the qualities of a wheel-turning monarch (cakkavattī): “amenable and obedient are his followers” (bhavati parijan’assavo vidheyyo) (D 30*). Its Commentary glosses assavo with vacana, karo, “obedient” (DA 3:929,12).

#### 3.4.2.3 In the Yassaṁ Disaṁ Sutta (A 5.134), we see another synonym of assava, occurring alongside it, that is, ovāda, paṭikara, “responsive to admonition, amenable.” The 3rd of the 4 qualities of a “head-anointed kshatriya rajah” (rājā khattiya mudhā, pasitto), is that “he possesses a powerful army that is amenable, responsive to his admonition” (catur-aṅginiyā senāya samannāgato assavāya ovāda, paṭikarāya) (A 5.134).44

#### 3.4.2.4 In the Milinda, pañha, the monk Nāgasena explains to king Milinda: “The arhat’s mind, maharaja, is developed, well developed, it is tamed, well tamed, docile and obedient” (arahato cittarāja bhavitam hoti subhavitam dantām sudantarā assavam vacana, karam, Miln 254,6 f). Interestingly, in this context, the arhat’s mind can be said to be “docile” (assava) in a wholesome way. It means that his mind is both “ready and willing to be taught” (although he is an adept with regards to the 4 noble truths) and “easily handled and managed,” since he is free from all defilements.

### 3.4.3 Forms related to assava

#### 3.4.3.1 The opposite of assava is anassava, “disobedient, not biddable.”45 It occurs in the Lūkha,-pāpuraṇa Sutta (S 7.14) where an old father, driven out of his own home by his sons and their wives, prays his own walking-stick:

9 Daṇḍo’va kira me seyyo yañ ce putṭa anassavā.47

Better to me is this staff than such disobedient sons.

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42 See Dhaniya S (Sn 1.2) n at Sn 32 numbering.
43 D 30.1.18(2)/3.154,1*, SD 36.9.
44 A 5.134/3.151,20 (SD 103.4) :: AA 3:285,14.
46 Also called (Be) Mahā, sāla S (S 7.15/1:176,18*), SD 50.35.
47 Opp assavā, “obedient” (of the army of a head-anointed kshatriya, Yassaṁ Disaṁ S (A 5.134/3.151.20), SD 103.4. Qu at Sadd 636,20.
10 **Andha, kāre pure hoti**

It keeps away a fierce cow
or a fierce dog, too.

In the dark, it goes before me;
in the deep, it gives me a footing—
by the power of this staff,
after stumbling, I stand again.

(S 7.15/1:176, 18*+31*), SD 50.35

3.4.3.2 The 9th verse of the **Khagga, visāna Sutta** (Sn 1.3) goes like this:

**Dussaṅghahā pabbajitā’pi eke**

Some wanderers are unkindly disposed [unfriendly]
and (some) householder in their houses, too.

**Appōssukko para, puttesu hutvā**

Unconcerned with the children of others—
wander alone like the rhinoceros.

3.4.3.3 Another rare Pali word is the abstract noun, **assavanatā**, “not hearing,” which occurs in the **Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14): “There are beings, who perish through not hearing the Dharma” (santi sattā ... **assavanatā dhhammassa parihāyanti**), D 2:38, 15.50 The abstract noun, **assavanatā**, seem to occur in the suttas only in this context (that is, Mahā Brahmac’s inviting the Buddha to teach), that is:

(Mahā Brahmac:)

1 **Desetu bhante bhagavā dhammaṁ desetu sugato dhammaṁ.**

Bhante, may the Blessed One teach the Dharma!
May the wellfarer [sugata] teach the Dharma!

2 **Santi sattā appa, raj’akkha, jōtikā assavanatā dhhammassa parihāyanti.**

There are beings with little dust in their eyes,
who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma.

3 **Bhavissanti dhhammassa aññātāro’ti.**

There will be those who will understand the Dharma.51

This passage, in full, spoken by Mahā Brahmac, or in part (1+2), spoken (or thought) by the Buddha, etc, is found in the following texts:

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48 Here, -kappa means “having the same form, resembling, like” (Sn 35d; SnA 65.10; Miln 105.3; Vism 234,8).

49 NCA’s original title is Saddhammatthitikā, but the Sāsana,vaṁsa (p69) calls it Saddhamma,pajjotikā, by which it is known in Sri Lanka. See also Gandhavamsa (p61); Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, 1909:117.

50 See also Sadd 636, 19-24.

51 V 1:5, 25 = 6, 13 = 21, 7 (SD 12.1); D 14/2:37, 16 = 38, 15 = 46, 4 + 29 = 47, 16 + 37 = 48, 13 (SD 49.8); M 26, 20/1:168,- 22 (SD 1.11), 143, 15.3/3:261, 27 (SD 23.9); S 4.5/1:105, 32 (SD 61.19) = 6.1/137, 16 (SD 12.2).

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3.5 “The self-awakened is the best of the two-legged” [S 27a*]

3.5.1 The kshatriya

3.5.1.1 The deity’s opening statement is “The kshatriya [The noble] is the best of the two-legged” (khattiyo dvi, paddam settho) [S 26a]. We have already noted the social background to this statement [2.2]. This statement reflects the social conditions in the central Gangetic plain during the Buddha’s time: that the kshatriya class were dominant, and that the brahmins were only influential to the far west.\(^{52}\)

3.5.1.2 Like the rest of the deity’s verse (S 26*), which is mundane, this line deals with the social reality of the times, uttered by a deity. This legitimizes the statement as coming from some superhuman level.

3.5.2 The self-awakened

3.5.2.1 By declaring: “The self-awakened is the best of the two-legged” (sambuddho dvi, paddam settho) [S 27a*], the Buddha asserts two vital truths. The first is that even when a statement comes from a divine or divinely inspired source, it is still mundane, especially in this case of the kind of class that is the “best” of humans (“the two-legged”). Of course, we may assume that the “two-legged” here include the gods (although some of them are formless). But then, the ancient Indians seemed to imagine that the gods were above such classes.

3.5.2.2 The second truth of the Buddha’s utterance is that even a human, like the Buddha, can make such a universally valid and significant statement. Anyone, human or divine, through self-effort, can be self-awakened (sambuddha). But one self-awakened transcends both the human and the divine since he has destroyed all his defilements and is fully liberated from suffering. Hence, the Buddha’s statement deserves to have the last say here.

\(^{52}\) Such as Kosambi and beyond: SD 2.19 (6.1).
Khattiya Sutta
The Discourse on the Kshatriya
S 1.14

1 At Sāvatthī.
2 Standing at one side, the deity uttered this verse before the Blessed One:

3 Khattiyo dvi, padam seṭṭho
   balivaddo\(^{53}\) catu-p, padam
   komāri\(^{54}\) seṭṭhā bhariyānam
   yo ca puttāna pubbajo’ti
   (S 26)

   The kshatriya [The noble] is the best of the two-legged,
   of the four-legged, it is the ox;
   a maiden is the best of wives,
   of sons, it is the first-born.

(Bhagavā:)

4 Sambuddho dvi, padam seṭṭho
   ājānīyo catu-p, padam
   sussūsā seṭṭhā bhariyānam
   yo ca puttānam assavo’ti
   (S 27)

   The self-awakened is the best of the two-legged,
   of the four-legged, it is the thoroughbred;
   an attentive woman is the best of wives,
   of sons, one who is amenable.

— evāṁ —

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\(^{53}\) Ce Ee balivaddo; Be:Ka Ke Se balibaddo. Be tend to labialize the semi-vowel -v- throughout.

\(^{54}\) Be Ee kumārī; Ce Se komārī. The latter is the better reading mc: cf S 27c.