

# 11

## Accharā Sutta

The Discourse on Nymphs | S 1.46

Theme: The vehicle to nirvana

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2019

### 1 Summary and background

**1.1 SUMMARY. The Accharā Sutta** (S 1.46)—the discourse on apsaras [heavenly nymphs]—relates how a zealous monk, on account of over-exerting himself in practice, dies even as he leans against the terrace-post. He arises in Tāvatiṃsa leaning against a door-post. He finds himself surrounded by apsaras who entice him with music and song. [2]

Thinking that he is still a monk, he rejects their advances and tries to get back to his meditation. The devas then bring a cheval-glass to show him his beautiful divine form. He did not rejoice in his newly attained divine state. His moral virtue still intact, he goes to the Buddha to seek counsel. He utters his question in verse, and the Buddha replies in three: they are all slokas.<sup>1</sup>

**1.2 ACCHARĀ.** Cosmologically, apsaras belong to Tāvatiṃsa, where they live and play in Nandana grove, serving as entourage (*paricārikā*) to Sakra (P *sakka*), the lord of the gods (*devānam inda*), for whom they sing and dance (J 2:93). When they dance, they emanate diverse hues at will (*puthu nanatta,vaṇṇiyo*, M 1:337). We must imagine that their life is like an on-going disco party.

There are several grades of apsaras, some of them gods in their own right (such as Lājā). Apparently, on account of their youthful beauty, they are variously referred to as “deva’s daughters” (*deva,dhītā*), “celestial maidens” (*deva,kaññā*) and apsaras (*accharā*). They do not appear so often in the suttas as they do in the Commentaries.<sup>2</sup>

In Buddhist mythology, an **apsara** (*accharā*) is a female celestial nymph—the masculine counterpart being a gandharva (*gandhabba*)<sup>3</sup>—reputedly with beautiful ruddy dove-like feet (*kakuṭa,pādiniyo*). In Buddhist art, they are often depicted as beautiful well-adorned women with flimsy flowing gowns flying in the air.<sup>4</sup> Apparently, apsaras, on account of their sensual and voluptuous, almost physical, nature, are found only in Cātum,mahā.rājika and Tāvatiṃsa.<sup>5</sup>

**1.3 THE SUTTA’S PURPOSE.** **The Accharā Sutta** (S 1.46) is instructive in showing us how a monk diligently devotes himself to his practice, emulating the Bodhisattva’s own efforts in seeking awakening. However, on account of his extreme practice, he dies and is reborn as a deva in Tāvatiṃsa. Even then, he is simply

<sup>1</sup> A sloka (P *siloka*; Skt *śloka*) a popular epic metre (also called Skt *ānuṣṭubha* or P *anuṭṭhubhā*), consisting of 4 lines or quarter-verses (*pāda*) of 8 syllables each, or 2 lines of 16 syllables each, found, eg, in the Dhammapada. They can be sung or put to music.

<sup>2</sup> M 1:253,10, 337,27\*, 2:64,10 = V 3:17,22, M 2:64,12; Thī 374 (ThīA *citta,rathe ca* ~); J 2:93,7 (*kakuṭa,pādiniyo*, “dove-footed, cf U 22,24), 6:269,28\*, 6:590,16\* (*tāvatiṃsā*); Vv 94, 318 f (*kāma,vaṇṇinī*, “assuming nay form she wishes,” cf MA 2:24,3), 971. Also *dev’accharā* (only in Comys): VA 1:212; AA 1:343; DhA 1:122; ThīA 252; J 2:93, 121,254; UA 172; SnA 1:124; VvA 290; ApA 197. See CPD <sup>2</sup>accharā.

<sup>3</sup> On *gandhabba*, see (5.4).

<sup>4</sup> M 1:253 (pl *accharāyo*), 2:64; Thī 374 (= *dev’accharā viya*, “like a divine apsara,” ThīA 252,21); J 5:152 f (*alam-busā accharā*); Vv 5.5 (= *deva,kaññā*, “a girl deva,” VvA 37); Vv 17.2, 18.11 etc; DhA 3:8, 19; PvA 46 (*dev’accharā*); Miln 169; Sdhp 298.

<sup>5</sup> Cātum,mahā.rājika is the realm of the 4 great kings guardians of the 4 quarters. Along with Tāvatiṃsa, they are the 2 lowest of the heavens, and are “earth-bound” (*bhumma,bhūta*), ie, closely related with the human world: see SD 54.3a (3.5.1). For details on *accharā*, see SD 54.3a (2.3.2).

alarmed at attaining this divine state—unlike the 3 monks in **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21,1.11.4), who delight in being reborn as mere lowly gandharvas in Tāvātimsa.<sup>6</sup> His mind is set on the path of awakening in this life itself. With this determination, he approaches the Buddha for instruction.

## 2 The deva and his verses

### **2.1 THE MONK WHO BECAME A DEVA**

**2.1.1 The diligent monk.** **The Sutta commentary** (SA 1:85,16-86,5) tells us that he went forth in the Buddha’s teaching.<sup>7</sup> For 5 monastic years (*vassa*), he fulfilled his monastic duties, and performed the invitation (*pavāraṇā*).<sup>8</sup> He had mastered the 2 matrices (*dve,māṭikā*), learned about what’s right, what’s wrong (in Dharma terms), learned meditation that brought joy to his heart, and whose needs are simple. Having done all this he entered the forest (for his practice).

### 2.1.2 How the monk died

**2.1.2.1** Just as the Buddha sleeps only during the middle part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> watch<sup>9</sup>--that is, from 2-4 am<sup>10</sup>—the monk allowed himself only the same, for fear that he would be heedless. At night, he did not lie on a bed (rested sleeping upright), and in the day he took no food, keeping only to his meditation. (SA 1:85,-21-24)

**2.1.2.2** Keeping to such an extreme routine, he suffered sharp physical pains, threatening his life. Thus, he died during his practice. While monks were known to have passed away sitting or lying down on their robe-spread at the head of the meditation walkway, or adorning a Dharma-seat, teaching a group of people—like all these monks who passed away in practice, he died during his walking meditation, when he stopped to rest against a support-pillar (*ālambana-t,thambhaṃ*). On account of his weakness, dying while doing his walking meditation, he did not attain arhathood. (SA 1:85,24-86,3)

### 2.1.3 The monk’s rebirth

**2.1.3.1** Upon dying, the monk was reborn (immediately) at the entrance of a great heavenly mansion, as if waking from sleep. His form was like that of a golden gateway (*toraṇa*), 3 gavuta (some 9 km)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> D 21,1.11.4/2:271 (SD 54.8).

<sup>7</sup> We do not know whether he did so as a deva (in human form) or was did so when born as a human. The former is unlikely; hence, the latter must be what is meant here.

<sup>8</sup> *Pavāraṇā* is the “invitation ceremony” highlighting the end of the rains retreat and adding a monastic year to that monastic who properly kept the retreat: SD 4.18 (2.1.3).

<sup>9</sup> Comy here says “the time-sector for sleeping during the middle watch” (*majjhima,yāmo sayanassa koṭṭhāso*, SA 1:85,21). The 3 watches of the night (*yāma*) are: the 1<sup>st</sup> watch (6-10 pm) (*paṭhama,yāma* or *purima,yāma*), the 2<sup>nd</sup> or “middle” watch (10 pm-2 am) (*majjhima,yāma*), 3<sup>rd</sup> or “last” watch (2-6 am) (*pacchima,yāma*). **Dīgha Comy** actually says that the Buddha sleeps during the “2<sup>nd</sup> part” (*dutiya,koṭṭhāsa*) of the last watch, he sleeps, lying on his right, lion-like ... (*pacchima,yāmaṃ ... dutiya,koṭṭhāse ... dakkhiṇena passena ... sīha,seyyaṃ kappeti*, DA 1:47,30-24).

<sup>10</sup> Although the Buddha is said to sleep only 2 hours a day, he daily does dhyana meditation and also takes after-meal breaks: SD 36.2 (5.6).

<sup>11</sup> A *gāvuta* is a ¼ league (*yojana*), ie, 4 *gāvutas* = 1 *yojana*. 1 *gāvuta* = 2.6 km (1.6 mi): see SD 52.1 (4.4.2).

tall!<sup>12</sup> Within his mansion, there were a thousand apsaras. When they saw him, they thought: “The deity who is lord of this mansion has come! Let us entertain him with music!” And they surrounded him.

**2.1.3.2** The young deity (an erstwhile monk) did not know about his rebirth-state. He still thought he was a renunciant when he saw the apsaras—he was like a vihara-dwelling monk feeling ashamed (*lajjī*) when seeing women. It is as if he were taking his dust-heap robe of the finest cloth, arranging it to one side and covering himself with its corner. Mustering his sense-restraint, he just stood, keeping his head down. (SA 1:86,3-14)

**2.1.3.3** The apsaras, noticing the monk-deva’s disposition, realized: “This is a recluse deity!” (*samaṇa,deva.putto ayan’ti*). They explained to him: “Noble deity, this is the deva-world. This is not the place for a recluse’s practice. This is your chance to enjoy the glory you have gained!” He remained just as he was.

Then, the deities, holding out their musical instruments to him, declared: “Don’t you see these?” He stood on without looking. Then, the deities brought a cheval-glass so that he could see his whole body. Looking at his full image in the glass, he finally learned about his rebirth-state. With regret, he thought: “I have not taken up the practice of recluseship to attain this state, but to gain the supreme goal of arhathood!”<sup>13</sup>

Not giving up his fight, he did not rejoice in his heavenly state,<sup>14</sup> thinking: “Gaining the heavenly state may be a good thing, but the arising of buddhas is difficult to see!” Then, leaving his mansion with his moral virtue intact, surrounded by the host of apsaras, he went before the Buddha and saluted him. Then, standing at one side, he uttered his verse [S149; 2.2].

## 2.2 THE DEVA’S VERSE

<p>1 <i>Accharā,gaṇa,saṅgh’uṭṭham</i> <i>pisāca,gaṇa,sevitam</i> <i>vanam tam mohanam nāma</i> <i>katham yātrā bhavissatīti</i></p>	(S 149)	<p>Noisy with a party of apsaras [nymphs], haunted by a horde of demons,<sup>15</sup> this wood is called “Delusion” (<i>mohana</i>): how is one free from this?<sup>16</sup></p>
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### 2.2.1 Nandana, a garden of delusion

**2.2.1.1** The monk-deva, with his virtue still intact, surrounded by the retinue of nymphs, goes before the Buddha and utters the first verse. On account of his extreme practice, he suddenly dies and is immediately<sup>17</sup> reborn in Nandana, the garden of delight, in Tāva,timsa.<sup>18</sup> The garden is “noisy with a party of apsaras”—they are singing, playing music and frolicking.

<sup>12</sup> This is, of course, the heavenly dimensions of the gods, non-physical in form. They also have control over their size and freely move in space.

<sup>13</sup> *Na mayā imam thānam paṭṭhetvā samaṇa,dhammo katvā. Uttam’attham arahattam patthetvā kato’ti* (SA 1:86,21-23).

<sup>14</sup> Unlike the 3 monks who are reborn as gandharvas as recounted in **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,11), SD 54.8.

<sup>15</sup> Since the reciter of these verses was previously a diligent monk, he sees the apsaras as “demons” (SA 1:86,31 f).

<sup>16</sup> Cf **Catu,cakka S** (S 1.29/1:16).

<sup>17</sup> This is an occasion when a being is immediately reborn. However, in most cases, where the being is less mindful or full of negative emotions, especially craving, his rebirth will take longer while he is caught in the limbo of a craving-fed “intermediate state”: see **Is rebirth immediate?**, SD 2.17 (3+4); SD 2.7 (1.2.2).

<sup>18</sup> See **Nandana S** (S 1.11), SD 54.3a.

Note that the monk-deva is speaking to the Buddha: he is recalling what has just happened. His immediate impression of Nandana is that it is a “noisy” place, unlike his solitary forest retreat. A practitioner has a natural love for peace and quiet.

As the Vinaya forbids monks from listening to music and socializing with women, the monk-deva’s reaction is that these apsaras must be demons or are demon-like in their conduct since they will induce him to break the monastic rules. Hence, he sees them as “a horde of demons.” [S 149b]

**2.2.1.2** This verse (S 149c\*) centres on a wordplay: while the gods enjoy **Nandana**,<sup>19</sup> the garden of **delight**, to the monk-deva, it is **Mohana**, a garden of *delusion*. To the devas, it is a place of delight, since they are unaware of impermanence or forgotten about this truth. The monk-deva understands impermanence, and clearly still remembers this truth—since he has not forgotten his monk-state.

**2.2.2** The Saṃyutta Commentary explains the question, “**How is one free from this?**” (S 149d\*), as meaning: “How is this renounced? How is this overcome?” (*katham nikkhamam bhavissati, katham atikkamo bhavissati*, SA 1:87,1 f). In other words, his intention, explains the commentator, to request the Buddha: “Teach me the insight that is the basis for arhathood.”<sup>20</sup> (SA 1:87,2 f)

### 3 The Buddha’s verses

**3.1 THE VERSES AS A SET.** The 3 verses uttered by the Buddha form a set which can be said to be laid out on the framework of **the 3 teachings** (*sikkha-t.taya*), that is, in moral virtue, in samadhi (mental stillness) and insight wisdom, overlapping in the 3 verses. Hence, we gave the following collation:

- moral training: S 150\* + 151a\*,
- samadhi training: S 151bc\*, and
- insight wisdom: S 151d\* + 152\*.

#### **3.2 VERSE S 150\***

<p>2 <i>Ujuko nāma so maggo abhayā nāma sā disā ratho akūjano nāma dhamma,cakkehi saṃyuto</i></p>	(S 150)	<p>“Straight” is the name of the way; “Fearless” is the quarter [direction] called; the chariot<sup>21</sup> is named “Noiseless,” fitted with Dharma-wheels.</p>
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#### **3.2.1 Moral training**

**3.2.1.1** The 1<sup>st</sup> aspect of the 3 trainings concerns **moral virtue** (*sīla*), that is, the disciplining of our speech and the body through proper restraint (*saṃvara*), right action (*sammā kammantā*) and right speech (*sammā vācā*). In practice, this is the foundation of the eightfold path.

**Right speech** is the abstinence from falsehood, harsh speech, divisive speech and idle chatter. The positive counterparts of these are timely truth-telling, pleasant speech, unifying speech and beneficial talk. Right speech not only promotes wholesome communication, but also is the basis for the effective teaching and transmission of the Dharma.

<sup>19</sup> On the Nandana pleasure-garden, see

<sup>20</sup> *Tena arahatassa me pada-ṭ,ṭhāna,bhūtaṃ vipassanaṃ ācikkhatha bhagavā’ti vadati.*

<sup>21</sup> For another chariot parable, see **Kama,bhū S** (S 41.4/4:291 f) SD 71.9, = U 76,26 f.

**3.2.1.2 Right action** entails the abstinence from killing (out of respect for life and compassion); from stealing (out of respect for the happiness of others and generosity); and from sexual misconduct (out of respect for the freedom of others and for contentment). For monastics, this last precept includes the practice of celibacy (abstinence from any kind of sexual activity for the sake of freeing the mind from the body to attain higher states of mind leading to nirvana).<sup>22</sup>

The monk-deva, mindful of his precept of abstinence and celibacy, reacts with alarm towards the advances and activities of the apsaras [2.1.3.2]. This shows him to be both a diligent practitioner as well as a morally virtuous renunciant who also keeps to **right livelihood**.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2.2 The straight and the fearless

**3.2.2.1** The Commentary says that the eightfold path is called **the straight way** (*ujuko maggo*) because it is free from crooked deeds of body, speech and mind. The goal, nirvana, is said to be **fearless** (*abhaya*) because nirvana has nothing that arouses fear and because the one who has gained nirvana has no fear. Unlike a physical chariot, which rattles or squeaks when its axle is not well lubricated or when it carries too many people, the eightfold path neither rattles nor squeaks (*na kujati na viravati*) even when fully mounted with 84,000 beings. The chariot itself is the eightfold path, and its **wheels of wholesome states** (*dhamma, cakka*) are bodily and mental energy. (SA 1:87,26-28)

Note here that the Sutta takes both the *road* and the *chariot* as the eightfold path. The “road” is the learning or theory, and the “chariot” is the practice and attaining of the path.

**3.2.2.2** Interestingly, **S 150\*** (S 1:33) recurs in the Gāndhārī Dharmapada,<sup>24</sup> that is, as **Dh:G 97**.<sup>25</sup> Here are the two parallel verses:

**S 150\*** *ujuko nāma so maggo  
abhayā nāma sā disā  
ratho akūjano nāma  
dhamma, cakkehi saṃyuto*<sup>26</sup>

**Dh:G 97** *uju’o namu so magu  
abhaya namu sa diśa  
radho akuyano namu  
dharma, trakehi sahado*

This verse speaks of “the path” (*magga/magu*),<sup>27</sup> “quarter [direction]” (*disa/diśa*), “chariot” (*ratho/-radho*), and “wheels” (*cakkehi/trakehi*). The Gāndhārī *traka* here has nothing to do with *takka* (Skt *tarka*), “thought.” It simply means “wheel.” Unsurprisingly, this may be due to Greek influence: since the “Greek inscription of Aśoka from Kandahar may encourage us to believe that the Greek language was sufficiently widely used in the Northwest”<sup>28</sup> for the Gāndhārī translator to naturally use *traka*, the Greek of which is **τροχός**, *trokos*.

<sup>22</sup> See SD 10.16 (4).

<sup>23</sup> On right livelihood, see SD 10.16 (5).

<sup>24</sup> To date we have 2 versions of **the Gāndhārī Dharmapada** (Dh:G): (1) Dh:G(B) rf John Brough (1962), and (2) Dh:GL, “the Gāndhārī London Dharmapada” (see T Lenz, *A New Version of the Gāndhārī Dharmapada ...*, 2003:11-29). The works date to 1<sup>st</sup> cent CE: <http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/SALANC.html>.

<sup>25</sup> It is found in Dh:G 97, ch 6 on “the path” (*magu*). For text and scholarly comments, see John Brough, *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1962. Repr Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001: 133, 207 f.

<sup>26</sup> Cf *dhamma, takka, purejavāṃ*, “led by thoughts of Dharma” (lit, “with Dharma-thoughts running ahead”) at Sn 1107b. For scholarly discussion, see Brough 1962:207 f.

<sup>27</sup> The terms are listed as (Pali/Gāndhārī).

<sup>28</sup> Brough 1962:208.

**3.2.2.3** in verse **S 150c\***, the Burmese and European (2<sup>nd</sup>) editions have the reading *akūjano* (Be Ee2), which is preferred; while the Sinhala and European (1<sup>st</sup>) editions read *akujano*, with the common Siamese reading<sup>29</sup> as *akujjano*. The form *akūjano*, which comes from *kūjati*, “to be crooked,” is rare and probably a wrong reading.<sup>30</sup> The better reading is *akujano* or *akujjano*, derived from *kujati* or *kujjati*, “to make an inarticulate or monotonous sound.”<sup>31</sup>

This is supported by **the Mahā Nārada Kassapa Jātaka** (J 544), where the chariot is the body<sup>32</sup> and the charioteer the mind. The chariot is described as *vācā,saññam-akūjano*, “not rattling by restraint of speech,” which supports the reading and rendering adopted here.<sup>33</sup>

**3.2.2.5** We can further compare the chariot of **S 150c\*** with that of the “divine [perfect] vehicle” (*brahma,yāna*) in **the (Magga) Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (S 45.4). The Sutta is about the all-white chariot of Jānussoṇī, king Pasenadi’s purohita. The elder Ānanda, seeing the remarkable chariot, wonders if the noble eightfold path can be compared to a divine vehicle for the removal of greed, hate and delusion. The Buddha agrees with Ānanda that such a metaphor is possible.<sup>34</sup>

### **3.3 VERSE S 151\***

<p>3 <i>Hirī tassa apālambo</i> <i>satyassa parivāraṇaṃ</i> <i>dhammāhaṃ sārathim brūmi</i> <i>sammā,ditṭhi,pure,javaṃ</i></p>	(S 151)	<p>Moral shame is the rest-board, mindfulness are its fittings. The Dharma, I say, is the charioteer, With right view running ahead.</p>
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#### **3.3.1 Mental training (1)**

**3.3.1.1** With the body and speech disciplined and at peace, we are ready to take up the 2<sup>nd</sup> training—that of mental stillness (*samādhi,sikkhā*). This is mind training, that is, essentially directing our mental energies in a harmonious way through **right effort** to the attaining of mental focus. This is the meaning of “**moral shame is the rest-board.**” Moral shame here includes moral fear, and together they are the bases of moral virtue.<sup>35</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> right effort is keeping to the precepts so that we do not have any guilt or negative thoughts about our moral virtue, and to be happy, which helps in gaining mental focus.<sup>36</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> right effort is that of ridding the mind of the mental hindrances to mental focus, that is, in overcoming sensual lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.<sup>37</sup>

With this, we then apply the 3<sup>rd</sup> right effort in cultivating mental focus by arousing and sustaining joy in our mind and heart, to the point of mental stillness (*samādhi*) [3.3.1.2].

<sup>29</sup> All the Siamese texts—the Royal Siamese and the Mahachula editions—read so,

<sup>30</sup> *Kujati*, “to be bent, crooked” is rare (Sdhp 166); prob *kujjati*, better *kujjhati*. Geiger takes *akujana* as “krumm sein” (be crooked), but gives the right roots: *vkujja* or *vkūj* (1930:51 n3). Clearly here, this is not the reading.

<sup>31</sup> Dhātp 78 (*kūja avyatte sadde*); Dhātm 92; J 2:439.7\* (Be Ce Ee *mora-c.chapo va ~ati*; Se *kujjati* (2): DP); Ap 2,4 (Be Ce Ee *vāta,vegana ~anti soṇṇa,mālā*; Se *kujjanti*), 427,13 (Be Ce *usabho va mahī nadati miga,rājā va ~ati*; Se *kujjati*; Ee *kuñjati*, prob wr) qu Sadd 461,8 (Ee *~ati*); SA 1:87,24 (Be Ce Ee *pākati,ratho akkhe vā anabbhañjite ...~ati viravati*; Se *kujjati*).

<sup>32</sup> J 544/1128\*/6:252,20.

<sup>33</sup> J 544/6:252 f.

<sup>34</sup> S 45.4/5:4-6 (SD 65.15).

<sup>35</sup> On moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*), see **Moral shame and moral fear**, SD 2.5.

<sup>36</sup> On the 4 right efforts, see SD 10.16 (6).

<sup>37</sup> On the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*), see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

As our mind gets used to this joyful stillness, we apply the 4<sup>th</sup> right effort, that is, to attain dhyana (*jhana*) [3.3.1.3].

**3.3.1.2** The 3<sup>rd</sup> right effort, in some detail, refers to **right mindfulness**, which is the practice of the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*; anglicized as “satipatthana”). This is the meaning of “**mindfulness are its fittings**” [3.3]: essentially, this is to begin with being mindful of the body, both its nature and our actions.

The best body-based meditation is the mindfulness of the breath (*ānāpāna*, *-sati*).<sup>38</sup> Even before we are able to attain samadhi or dhyana, we should habitually reflect how we cannot own even this breath of life: we take it in, and then we let it go. This is the root to our understanding of true renunciation, the basis of our spiritual life.

As we watch our body as the physical breath, it becomes more subtle. We may then notice **feelings**: pleasant or unpleasant or neither. We simply observe them as they are, just as we have done with the breath.<sup>39</sup> Again, it greatly helps to see all feelings as being impermanent. As the feelings settle, or in the process of doing so, we may notice **thoughts** or the mind working with the feelings. We simply observe our thoughts, how the mind itself arises and passes away—this, too, is impermanent. We keep doing this until the mind is fully free of thoughts.

The fruit of satipatthana is the arising of **dharmas** (*dhamma*), the 4<sup>th</sup> satipatthanas, that is, flashes or moments of realities that appear in our still and clear mind. These may occur as visions, the mental hindrances [3.3.1.1], or their opposites, the 7 awakening-factors.<sup>40</sup> We may also have flashes of insight into the 4 truths, the 5 aggregates, and other truths taught by the Buddha. None of these insights are to be analyzed as they arise (or they will end right there): we simply observe them joyfully—this is the true transmissions of the Dharma through self-effort.

### **3.3.2 Mental training (2)**

**3.3.2.1** The next path-factor is that of **right concentration**—that is the attaining of dhyana (*jhāna*). This only begins to happen when we understand the nature and necessity of joy (ranging from simply gladness, to zest, to happiness).<sup>41</sup> With a natural ability to feel joyful, we are able to attain samadhi, which deepens into dhyana, a state that transcends all our physical senses to experience the mind just as it is, fully, joyfully and radiantly.<sup>42</sup>

**3.3.2.2 Dhyana** is not only the highest joy and peace that can be experienced in this world. Properly understood and applied, it serves as the springboard out of this worldliness. The dhyanic mind is completely thought-free during dhyana.<sup>43</sup>

On emerging from dhyana, we apply our supremely calm and clear mind to the dharmas or truths that we have learned or understood, seeing them more profoundly in the light of impermanence, suffering and non-self.<sup>44</sup> When we penetrate the truth of impermanence, we attain streamwinning, and our real journey on the path of awakening has begun.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> On the breath meditation, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,5-7+15-22), SD 7.13.

<sup>39</sup> On the observation of feelings (*vedanā'nupassanā*), see SD 30.3 (2.6.2).

<sup>40</sup> On the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*), see **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15.

<sup>41</sup> In Pali, respectively, *pāmuḍḍa*, *pīti* and *sukha*; see **Upanisā S** (S 12.23/3:29-32), SD 6.12; **Vimutt'āyatana S** (A 5.26/3:21-24), SD 21.5 (2); SD 8.4 (6.3).

<sup>42</sup> See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,32.2), SD 49.4; SD 33.1b (4.4.3); SD 54.2e (2.3.5).

<sup>43</sup> SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

<sup>44</sup> On the 3 characteristics (*ti,lakkhaṇa*), see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).

**3.4 VERSE S 152\***

4	<i>Yassa etādisaṃ yānaṃ itthiyā purisassa vā sa ve etena yānena nibbānass'eva santike'ti</i>	(S 152)	Who has such a vehicle as this, whether a woman or a man, truly, by means of this vehicle, he would surely be in nirvana's presence.
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**3.4.1 Wisdom training**

**3.4.1.1** The “Dhamma” that is called the charioteer is the supramundane path, with the **right view** of insight (*vipassanā,sammādiṭṭhī*) **running out in front** (*pure,java*) [3.3]. For, just as the king's servants first clear the path before the king appears, so the right view of insight clears the way by contemplating the aggregates and so on, as being impermanent and so on. Then, the right view of the path (*magga,-sammā.ditthi*) arises, fully understanding the round of existence. (SA 1:88,1-11)

**3.4.1.2** The unawakened mind is burdened and bothered by views. There is the constant processing of sense-data that arise at the 6 sense-doors. Instead of seeing sense-events as they arise, the unawakened regularly measures and projects its own data onto those events tinting and skewing them to fit the way we view things. Hence, we are living in our own virtual world, rarely, if ever, knowing true reality that is right before us.

As streamwinners, we begin to shed the scales over our eyes to catch glimpses of true reality. We are like travelers, lost in a desert, parched, thirsty and weak, who see a well with water. But we still lack a pail with a rope to draw some water. In a matter of time, as we rest and gather strength, we are somehow able to draw the water and slake our thirst and get out of the desert.<sup>46</sup>

**3.4.1.3** To be awakened, then, is to have a full mastery of **right thought [intention]**. Even as streamwinners, we still have views, but our thoughts and intentions are less burdened by covetousness and ill will, by liking and disliking, by loving and unloving. We understand delusion even though we may not have the full mastery of removing it. However, we are not easily clouded or misled by false view.

Even as **streamwinners**, we are inspired and diligent in cultivating renunciation (to counter covetous thoughts), lovingkindness (to counter thoughts of ill will) and compassion (to counter thoughts of violence). We not only strengthen our divine abodes of love, ruth, joy and peace,<sup>47</sup> but are free of self-identity view, attachment to rituals and vows, and doubt<sup>48</sup>—we have overcome selfishness and narcissism.

We understand true reality more profoundly and are able to comprehend the Buddha Dharma of the suttas more fully and effectively, and we have deep and radiant faith in the true teaching of the Buddha. We are streamwinners, bound for awakening in 7 lives at the most.<sup>49</sup>

**3.4.2 Conclusion**

The Commentary says that the Buddha, having given the discourse in verses, goes on to teach the 4 noble truths. At the end of the teaching, the monk-deva won the fruit of streamwinning. The other

<sup>45</sup> See (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>46</sup> (Musīla Nārada) Kosambī S (S 12.68,60) SD 70.11.

<sup>47</sup> On the 4 divine abodes (*brahma,vihāra*), see *Brahma,vihāra*, SD 38.5.

<sup>48</sup> These are the 3 fetters broken by the streamwinner: see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

<sup>49</sup> Sa,upādi,sesa S (A 9.12, 8-10), SD 3.3(3).

beings present, too, attained the fruits of awakening according to their own supporting conditions. After honouring the Buddha with fragrance (*gandha*) and so on, they departed. (SA 1:88,12-19)

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## Accharā Sutta

### The Discourse on Nymphs

S 1.46

THE DEVA:

- |  |         |  |
|--|---------|--|
| <p>1 <i>Accharā, gaṇa, saṅgh' uṭṭham</i><br/><i>pisāca, gaṇa, sevitaṃ</i><br/><i>vanan taṃ mohanaṃ nāma</i><br/><i>kathaṃ yātrā bhavissatīti</i></p> | (S 149) | <p>Noisy with a party of apsaras [nymphs],<br/>haunted by a horde of demons,<sup>50</sup><br/>this wood is called “Delusion” (<i>mohana</i>):<br/>how is one free from this?</p> |
|--|---------|--|

THE BLESSED ONE:

- |   |         |  |
|---|---------|--|
| <p>2 <i>Ujuko nāma so maggo</i><br/><i>abhayā nāma sā disā</i><br/><i>ratho akūjano nāma</i><br/><i>dhamma, cakkehi saṃyuto</i></p>           | (S 150) | <p>“Straight” is the name of the way;<br/>“Fearless” is the quarter [direction] called;<br/>the chariot is named “Noiseless,”<br/>fitted with Dharma-wheels.</p> |
| <p>3 <i>Hirī tassa apālambo</i><br/><i>satyassa parivāraṇaṃ</i><br/><i>dhammāhaṃ sārathim brūmi</i><br/><i>sammā, diṭṭhi, pure, javam</i></p> | (S 151) | <p>Moral shame is the rest-board,<br/>mindfulness are its fittings.<br/>The Dharma, I say, is the charioteer,<br/>With right view running ahead.</p>             |
| <p>4 <i>Yassa etādisaṃ yānam</i><br/><i>itthiyā purisassa vā</i><br/><i>sa ve etena yānena</i><br/><i>nibbānass'eva santike'ti</i></p>        | (S 152) | <p>Who has such a vehicle as this,<br/>whether a woman or a man,<br/>truly, by means of this vehicle, he<br/>would surely be in nirvana's presence.</p>          |

— evaṃ —

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<sup>50</sup> Since this verse's speaker was previously a diligent monk, he sees the apsaras as “demons” (SA 1:86,30-35). For details, see (2.1).