Sakka Vatthu

The Story of Sakra | DhA 15.8

Ee Sakk’upaṭṭhāna Vatthu The Story of Sakra’s Ministering

Theme: Sakra’s last meeting with the Buddha

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1 Sutta summary

The Sakka Vatthu, the story of Sakra (DhA 15.8), is a commentarial account of the humility, service and love of Sakra, the lord of the devas, towards the ailing 80-year-old Buddha [2.1.1]. The Story comprises the following sections:

(1) how Sakra ministers to the Buddha who is ill with dysentery during his last days [§§1-6];
(2) how Sakra first meets the Buddha [§§7-11]; and
(3) related teachings from the Dhammapada [§§12-15].

A survey of the significance of these sections follows [2].

2 Sutta significance

2.1 Sakra’s ministering to the sick Buddha [§§1-6]

2.1.1 Humility, service, love

2.1.1.1 The Sakka Vatthu opens with an account of how Sakra, learning that the 80-year-old Buddha is ill with dysentery, leaves the glory and comfort of his heaven to personally minister to him [§§2-3]. Sakra insists on ministering to the Buddha all by himself despite the Buddha’s protestation [§§4-5], and only departs after the Buddha has recovered [§6].

2.1.1.2 The Sakka Vatthu is a story of the lord of the devas, Sakra’s love and respect for the Buddha. The reason for this is given by the Buddha as being that he removed the fear of death in Sakra, and by instructing him Dharma, created the right conditions for Sakra’s attaining streamwinning [2.2.2.2]. A streamwinner (sotāpanna), it is well known, has great faith—which includes wholesome love—in the 3 jewels. The Sakka Vatthu, then, is an account of Sakra’s active love for the Buddha.

2.1.1.3 Of special interest is the Buddha’s remark to Sakra that “to the devas the smell of humans smells from even a hundred yojanas is like that of carrion tied to the neck” (manussa,gandho joyana,-satato paṭṭhāya gale buddha,kunapaṁ viya hoti) [§5]. This is a metaphor of repulsion and avoidance as in the parable of “the well-dressed, ‘well-dressed and fond of ornaments, would feel troubled, ashamed, disgusted by a carcass of a snake, a dog, or a human [120] hung around his or her neck.”

2 A summary of Sakka Vatthu (DhA 15.8) is also found at SD 54.8 (6.2.3).
3 On Sakra’s fear of death, see SD 54.8 (2.2.3.1).
4 Atṭiyāti harāyati jigucchati: see Nibbidā, SD 20.1 (2.3).
2.1.1.4 Sakra replies that he has come to minister to the Buddha on account of the Buddha’s supreme moral virtue, whose fragrance spread over a great distance (“84,000 yojanas”), that is, it reaches him in Tāvatiṁsa. Sakra’s response reminds us of the sentiment of the Dhammapada verse that says:

Na puppha, gandho paṭivātam eti
na candanaṁ tagara, mallikā ca
satañ ca gandho paṭivātam eti
sabbā disā sappuriso pavāti

The scent of flowers goes not against the wind,
nor the scent of sandalwood, tagara\(^6\) and jasmine.
But the fragrance of the good goes against the wind;
the true person pervades all the quarters. (Dh 54)\(^7\)

2.1.1.5 There is another reason—even the key one—for Sakra’s enthusiasm for meeting and ministering to the ill and aged Buddha. This will be the last time that he is able to meet the Buddha, since he will very soon pass away. Hence, Sakra does not mind having to bear with the foul human smell! We must imagine that his enthusiasm is also tinged with a deep sadness—after all, he is only a streamwinner. [2.2.2.3]

Sakra is like a celestial son who comes to perform his final duties to his spiritual parent, as a gesture of love, respect and gratitude.\(^8\) This sentiment is strongly reflected in the closing verses, the Dhammapada verses on which the Sakka Vatthu is based [2.3]

2.1.2 Sutta source

2.1.2.1 The 1st part of the Sakka Vatthu [§§1-6] is based on the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 9) account of the Buddha’s being afflicted with dysentery (SD 16). The Sutta, however, records the Buddha as being attacked by dysentery on 2 occasions:

(1) The 1st attack: Beḷuva,gāma (D 9,2.20-24);
(2) The 2nd attack: Pāvā (D 9,4,20).

The Sakka Vatthu opens with stating that the Buddha is staying in “the village of Beḷuva” (beḷuva.-gāma), at a time “when the Tathagata’s life-formation (āyu,saṅkhāra) was at an end” [§2]. Hence, it is clear that this refers to the Buddha’s 1st attack of dysentery, as related in Chapter 2 of the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta.

2.1.2.2 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta, however, makes no reference to Sakra’s ministration of the Buddha during his 1st dysentery attack. The Sutta only reports the following:

Then, it occurred to the Blessed One:
“It is not fitting that I should attain parinirvana without addressing my supporters and taking leave of the order of monks. I must make an effort to ward off this illness and dwell, having determined my life-force.”

Then, the Blessed One made an effort to ward off the illness and dwelled, having determined his life-force. Then, the Blessed One’s illness abated. (D 9,2.23), SD 9

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\(^5\) Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave itthī vā puriso vā dharo yuvā manḍanako, jātiko ahi, kuṇapena vā kukkura, kuṇapena vā manusso, kuṇapena vā kaṇṭhe asattena atṭiyeyya harāyeyya jīguccheyya (M 20,4.2). SD 1.6. Cf the parable of the young person who loves grooming himself: Parihāna S (A 10.55,6.1), SD 43.5.

\(^6\) Tagara is the shrub Tabernaemontana coronaria.

\(^7\) Qu at J 3:291,14*; Miln 333,19*.

\(^8\) See also SD 54.8 (6.2.3.3).

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When we weave together the two narratives—that of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (D 9) and the Dhammaṅgāra Commentary (DhA 15.8)—we can see that while Sakra ministers to the Buddha externally (DhA 15.8), the Buddha himself works internally, using his meditation to endure his pains until he recovers (D 9). In fact, this is exactly what the Buddha does during his 2nd attack of dysentery, too [2.1.2.3].

2.1.2.3 The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta recounts the Buddha’s 2nd attack of dysentery. After taking the meal-offering by Cunda the smith, “a serious illness arose in him [the Buddha], severe pains with bloody diarrhoea, with sharp pains as if he were about to die.” But he endured all this mindfully and fully aware, and without complaint.” (D 9, 20:2.127 f). On recovering, he proceeds with the monks to Kusināra. Sakra does not appear here at all.

2.2 Sakra’s 1st meeting with the Buddha [§§7-11]

2.2.1 Sakra’s love for the Buddha. When the monks spoke admiringly of Sakra’s love and devotion to the Buddha, he explains Sakra’s wholesome attitude, thus:

(1) On account of the Buddha’s teaching him, Sakra is able to attain streamwinning, even as he listens to him [§8].
(2) Sakra first meets the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave through the intercession of Pañca,sīkha, the celestial minstrel [§9].

Both these events are recorded in full in the Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21). Interestingly, the Buddha mentions the spiritual event first, followed by the social event, that is, Sakra first meets the Buddha, and then, attains streamwinning and a new rebirth. [2.2.2]

2.2.2 Sakra’s 1st meeting and last meeting with the Buddha

2.2.2.1 The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 31) details the first meeting between Sakra and the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave [§9], where the Buddha is meditating. Sakra, fearing that the Buddha may not want to meet with him, gets his minstrel, Pañca,sīkha (one of the Buddha’s favourite attendants) [§9] to intercede on his behalf. When Sakra meets the Buddha, Sakra relates to him how he has been keeping up his Dharmic practice.

The Buddha is impressed and invites Sakra to ask him any questions he wishes. The Buddha teaches and Sakra listens attentively—just then, Sakra’s lifespan ends: he is at once reborn into a new lease of his Sakra-state. It is unlikely that anyone notices this, but clearly the Buddha would have known.10

2.2.2.2 The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 31) gives the following chronology regarding Sakra’s spiritual growth and rebirth:11

The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21) on Sakra’s streamwinning and rebirth:

§2.7.10 Sakra declares himself a streamwinner (the 1st time): this is his streamwinning path-attainment (not mentioned so in the Sutta). [§8]

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9 This is the second attack of dysentery. The first attack mentioned at §2.23. On whether the Buddha was poisoned, see (13.1).
10 See Sakka,pañha S (D 21, 2.7.10, 2.8.2, 2.10.4).
11 On Sakra’s streamwinning, see SD 54.8 (1.2.4).
§2.8.2 Sakra’s death and immediate rebirth as Sakra again. [§8]
§2.10.4 Sakra declares himself a streamwinner (the 2nd time): this is his streamwinning fruition [§10].

Interestingly, the Sakka Vatthu (DhA 15.8) actually mentions all these 3 events, and states that the 3rd (D 21.2.10.4) is his streamwinning fruition. As such, the 1st mention of streamwinning clearly refers to his streamwinning path-attainment. In between, Sakra dies a streamwinner and does not fall into a lower realm, but is reborn at once as Sakra again.

In the case of most other devas who have not attained the path (at least being streamwinners), they would be troubled by the foreknowledge and visions of their impending death. On account of their unwholesome last thought, they would fall into a subhuman realm, even hell itself, as stated in the (Catukka) Puggalā Sutta 1 (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

2.2.2.3 The Sakka Vatthu (DhA 15.8) is important because it records the last meeting between the Buddha and Sakra. As already noted, Sakra’s key reason for his great enthusiasm in ministering to the ill and aged Buddha is simply because this will be the last time he is able to see the Buddha [2.1.1.4]. At the very moment of the Blessed One’s passing into parinirvana, Sakra—says the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (D 9)—Sakra utters this stanza:12

\[
\text{Anicca vata saṅkhārā | Impermanent, alas, are formations!}
\text{uppāda,vaya,dhammino | It is their nature to rise and fall:}
\text{uppajjitvā nirujjhanti | having arisen, they cease to be—}
\text{tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho | happy it is when they are stilled!}
\]

This famous verse, spoken by Sakra, is an ancient remnant from the teaching of the Buddha just before ours, that is, Kassapa. It is said that only Sakra remembers it, and now he transmits to us this verse that is the heart of the Buddha Dhamma, a reflection on impermanence in the manner of the 4 noble truths. On this account, this verse is famously recited by Buddhists as the highlight of the last rites for the dead.

2.3 RELATED TEACHINGS [§12-15]

2.3.1 The foolish and the wise

2.3.1.1 At the root of the Sakka Vatthu (DhA 15.8) are 3 Dhammapada verses: Dh 206-208.13 Essentially, these verses have a common theme of associating with the wise, which reminds us of the very first 2 supreme blessings (maṅgala uttama), that is, not associating with the foolish (asevanā ca bālānaṁ), and associating with the wise (paññatānaṁ ca sevanā).14 These are the nascent steps to an effective training.

2.3.1.2 The wise (dhīra, pañña)—according to Dh 206—are the noble saints (ariya), that is, the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat. They are “wise” in the sense that they understand the nature of true reality at various liberating levels, and that they are liberated at various

13 On where Dh 206-208 were spoken, see SD 54.8 (6.2.3.5).
14 Khp 5,6 = Sn 2.4 (Sn 258), SD 101.5.

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levels. Associating with them will inspire and prepare us to reach and win the path of awakening ourself, as Sakra himself has done.

The foolish (bālo) are, conversely, those who have not attained the path at all, the outsiders (bāhira) who are still worldlings (pāthujjana). They are “outsiders” in the sense that they have no vision of true reality at all, and are, as such, really “blind” (andha), fallen into ignorance and craving, fettered to views.

They are “worldlings” in the sense they are caught up with the crowd, with manyness—those whose worth is measured by the size of their crowd and the crowdedness of their lives. Fettered to craving, they run after numbers and clinging to self and others—because they find no real satisfaction in whatever they think, say or do. They are hollow persons (mogha, purisa), unable to hold anything good.

2.3.2 “Just like meeting relatives”

2.3.2.1 If we are to select a line pointing to the essence of the closing Dhammapada verses, it would be the last line of Dh 207: “just like meeting with relatives” (paññānam va saṃāgamo, Dh 207f). This line characterizes the interconnection between the Buddha and Sakra—or the Buddha and any disciple—they are like relatives; indeed, they are more than relatives: their friendship is in the Dharma, immeasurable in its truth and beauty. In short, this is spiritual friendship (kalyāṇa mittatā).\(^{15}\)

The truth is that Sakra benefitted greatly from associating with the Buddha, especially listening to his teachings. The Buddha explains that Sakra respects him—seeing him as he truly is—because it is on the Buddha’s account that Sakra, “having attained streamwisdom, gave up his old Sakra-state and gained his young Sakra-state” [§8]. Sakra’s faith in the Buddha brings him to the start of the path of awakening and a new life in his Sakra-state as the lord of the Tavatīṁsa devas and Dharma exemplar to others.

The beauty of this connection is that Sakra, in his gratitude and devotion to the Buddha, is like a celestial son who comes to perform his final filial duties to his spiritual parent, out of love, respect and gratitude.\(^{16}\) This, then, is his faith expressed in wholesome action.

In short, this is a beautiful example of when kindness is acknowledged and joyfully reciprocated (kataññū kata, vedī). The acknowledged kindness done is the “truth” of the connection; the joyful reciprocation is the “beauty” of it all. Sakra is one who knows the Buddha’s kindness and joyfully reciprocates it: he is one who is kataññū kata, vedī.\(^{17}\)

2.3.2.2 The wise (dhīra) and happy (sukha)—those who see and live the Buddha Dharma—are like relatives to one another. Indeed, the Buddha points out this universal biological or existential reality: we have journeyed in samsara (saṃsāra) (this cycle of births and deaths, rebirths and redeaths) for so long that “it is difficult to find a being ... who has not before been your mother ... your father ... your brother ... your sister ... your son ... your daughter.”\(^{19}\) These are our common natural bonds in life, but we often forget this, even those to whom we are immediately close, here and now, our own mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter.\(^{20}\)

When we understand the Dharma and learn to let go of a narcissistic self-notion, an “I” dependent on others, feeding on their attention and approval. We begin to see how we are all like islands in the floods of existence, the ocean of samsara. But when these waters are drained away, we see that we are

\(^{15}\) See Spiritual friendship: A textual study, SD 34.1.
\(^{16}\) See also SD 54.8 (6.2.3.3).
\(^{17}\) Kataññū Kata, vedī S (A 2.11.2), SD 3.1(1.4.4).
\(^{18}\) The wise (dhīra) (Dh 207e); the happy (sukha) (Dh 206b).
\(^{19}\) See respectively: Mātā S (§ 15.14), SD 57.2; Pitā S (§ 15.15), SD 57.3; Bhātā S (§ 15.16), SD 57.4; Bhaginī S (§ 15.17), SD 57.5; Putta S (§ 15.18), SD 57.6; Dītā S (§ 15.19), SD 57.7.
\(^{20}\) See SD 54.3c (3.3.2.2).
all peaks of a single earth. Yet, even flooded over by the waters, we are still peaks connected together by a common ground. The Buddha Dharma helps us see this fundamental and natural interbeing of all sentient life. This is the essence and spirit of Buddhist ecology.

2.3.2.3 The Dhammapada saying “Trust is the best of relatives” (vissāsa, paramā ṭī, Dh 204c) gives an excellent overview of our social and spiritual interbeing and connection with one another, especially when we stand in the same Buddha Dharma. On a simple daily level, we can say that vissāsa is a social manifestation of respect (gārava) for and faith (saddhā) in one another—accepting ourselves as we are and happily associating by way of learning and wisdom. To live, then, is to love; to love is to learn; to learn is to be wise; to be wise is to be truly free.21

We can now see how vissāsa (usually translated as “trust”) has the twin aspects of respect and love. Proper respect for someone means accepting another as he is and doing so with lovingkindness, that is, wishing him well and happy, too. When this respect is expressed in action—especially through personal service or acts of charity—that benefit the other in wholesome ways—this is love. This English word is used here in a broad sense of both worldly love (pema) and spiritual lovingkindness (mettā).

In this sense, it is said: “Trust is the best of relatives” (Dh 204c). In other words, the connection is not or not merely biological but broader, treating others as being part of a single universal spiritual family like the monastic sangha.22

2.3.2.4 The Sutta’s closing section comprises Dh 206-207 §§14-15 which are “instructive” verses. Having explained the goodness and benefits of associating with the wise, the Buddha concludes this by exhorting us to be steady and wise (dhīrañ ca paññañ ca) [Dh 208a]. Both the Pali adjectives dhīra and pañña have the meaning of “(being) wise.” Dhīra also has the meaning “firm” in the sense of being self-reliant,” that is, mentally focused and ready for wisdom; in short, this is mental diligence. Pañña is an adjective with a broad sense of wisdom arising from Dharma training and this is liberating.

In fact, the last Dhammapada verse is just that: the Buddha’s call that we at once take to the path of training. We should ourself be learned, wise and steady” [Dh 208a], that is, to search the suttas, understand them to better our meditation so that our mind is steady and our heart radiant. Underlying all this is our practice of moral virtue, knowing what to do and not to do (“dutiful”), and doing what is right: we can then be said to be noble like the arhats and saints [Dh 208b]. We should then each aspire to be a true noble individual” [Dh 208c], that is, one who keeps to the path of awakening.

If that is difficult at the moment, then we should—like the moon keeping to its celestial orbit—follow such noble individuals to learn about the path; or, better, by aspiring ourself to be a streamwinner in this life itself. [Dh 208d]

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21 On trust and the family, see SD 38.4 (4.2).
22 See also SD 54.8 (2.1.2.2).

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1 \textit{Sādhu dassana’ti}. The Teacher gave this teaching while he was staying at the village of Beḷuva\textsuperscript{23} with reference to Sakra. [269]

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**The Story of Sakra**

DhA 15.8

2 For, when the Tathagata’s life-formation\textsuperscript{24} was at an end and he was suffering from an attack of dysentery, Sakra, the king of the devas,\textsuperscript{25} became aware of it and thought, “I must go before the Teacher to do my duties in ministering to him in his sickness!”

3 Then, he left his own body, measuring 2 gavutas (three-quarters of a yojana) high, approached the Teacher, saluted him, and with his own hands massaged the Teacher’s feet.

4 When the teacher asked, “Who is this?” he replied, “Bhante, it is I, Sakra.” “Why have you come here?” “To minister to you in your sickness, bhante.”

5 “Sakra, to the devas the smell of humans even from a hundred yojanas\textsuperscript{26} is like that of carrion tied to the throat.\textsuperscript{27} Go now! I have monks who will minister to me in my sickness.”

5.2 Bhante, from a distance of 84,000 yojanas, I smelt the fragrance of your virtue, and so I have come here. I alone will minister to you in your sickness.”

6 Sakra allowed no one else even so much as to touch the chamber-pot containing the excrement from the Teacher’s body. He himself carried the chamber-pot out on his own head, taking it without the slightest sign of wincing his face,\textsuperscript{28} acting as though he were holding a vessel of fragrance.\textsuperscript{29} This was how Sakra ministered to the Teacher, departing only when the Teacher had recovered.\textsuperscript{30}

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\textsuperscript{23} Beḷuva (gāmaka or gamaka means “hamlet”; pāda,gāma, SA 3:201,28) was located south of Vesālī (MA 3:12,- 24, spelt beluva), just outside her city-gates (SA 3:201,27-28). It is likely that it is also called Veluva, where Anuruddha died (Tha 919).

\textsuperscript{24} “Life-formation,” āyu,saṅkhāra, SD 9 (9.2.3). Here, however, it simply refers to the Buddha’s life; but see the details [2.1.2].

\textsuperscript{25} “Sakra, king of the devas,” sakko deva,rājā, instead of the usual “Sakra, lord of the devas” (sakko devānāṁ indo).

\textsuperscript{26} A yojana or league is about 11.25 km or 7 m. Hence, 100 yojanas is about 1,125 km or 700 mi.

\textsuperscript{27} See (2.1.1.3).

\textsuperscript{28} “Without the slightest sign of wincing his face,” mukha,saṅkocana,mattaṁ pi na akasi.

\textsuperscript{29} The pious may read such noble accounts as an inspiration for serving monastics in the humblest way, but the real message is that we should care for the sick (incl our parents and others) to the best of our ability and the noblest of ways. Ministering to worthy monastics is, of course, twin blessing: the good renunciant deserves such care, and we accumulate great good karma doing so.

\textsuperscript{30} “Had recovered,” phāsuka,kāle.
Sakra’s love and gratitude

7 The monks began this talk:

“Oh, what love Sakra has for the Teacher! To think that Sakra should leave behind his celestial glory to carry on his own head the Teacher’s chamber-pot containing the excrement from the Teacher’s body, without the slightest sign of wincing his face, acting as though he were holding a vessel of fragrance!”

8 The Teacher, hearing their talk, said,

“What are you saying, monks? It isn’t strange at all that Sakra, the king of the devas, should show me such love. For, it was on my account that this Sakra, king of the devas, having attained streamwinning, gave up his old Sakra-state and gained his young Sakra-state.

Sakra’s 1st meeting with the Buddha

9 For, Sakra, terrified with the fear of death, had come to me, preceded by the celestial musician, Pañca,sikha, and sat down in the midst of the devas in the Inda,sāla cave.

I removed his suffering, saying to him:

\[ \text{Puccha vāsava maṁ pañhaṁ} \]
\[ \text{yang kiñci manas'icchasi} \]
\[ \text{tassa tass'eva pañhassa} \]
\[ \text{ahaṁ antaṁ karomi te'ti.} \]

Question me, Vāsava, [ask me a question], whatever your heart desires. To that and every question, too, I will make an end of it!

10 Having dispelled his suffering, I taught him the Dharma. At the conclusion of the teaching, 14 crores of beings attained breakthrough into the Dharma, and Sakra himself, even as he sat there, gained the fruition of streamwinning, and became the young Sakra.

31 Ayaṁ sakko hi deva,rājā maṁ nissāya jara,sakka,bhāvaṁ hitvā sutāpanno hutvā taruṇa,sakka,bhāvaṁ patto.
Translating the absolutives (hitvā ... hutvā) first—but in reverse sequence—then the past part (patto). He firsts attains the path of streamwinning. On reversal of Pali verbal phrases in translation, see (Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha S (M 127,8.1), SD 54.10; SD 54.12 (2.2.1); SD 54.13 (3.1.9.2); SD 54.8 (1.2.1 Chapter 2). For his attaining the fruition of streamwinning, see §10.

32 On Pañca,sikha, see SD 54.8 (4.1).

33 This is a ref to Sakka,pañha S (D 21), SD 54.8. On the Inda,sāla cave, see SD 54.8 (1.5.1).

34 This refers to Sakka,pañha S (D 21/2:263-289); this verse is §48*, which closes the Sutta’s 1st recital (ch 1), SD 54.8.

35 We may tr this Pali line literally, “Ask me a question, Vāsava!” We can then take “question” (pañha) as an accountable noun, so that this is “The discourse on Sakka’s question (or questioning).” Cf Malay for “question,” pertanyaan, which can be singular or an abstract noun.

36 This verse is §48* in Sakka,pañha S (D 21.1.13.2), SD 54.8.

37 14 crores (cuddassanam pāṇa,kotinam) (DhA 3:270,23). A crore (koti) is 10,000,000. Hence, the total is some 140 M! But Sakka,pañha S (D 21,2.10.15), referring to the same event, mentions only “80,0 deities.” The huge number above refers to “beings” (pāṇa), ie, deities and others.

38 “Breakthrough into Dharma” (dhammābhisamaya), as used here, then, has a broader sense, referring to any of the 4 stages of sainthood, and incl those who have understood the truths but did not attain any of the stages. Hence, the huge figure.

39 The “young Sakra” (taruṇa sakka) refers to his new birth (his present life): this moment of rebirth is recorded in §49 of Sakka,pañha S (D 21,2.8.2/2:285), SD 54.8. Further, this para also qu D 21: respectively, §2.10.15 (conclusion) & §2.10.4: see also SD 54.8 (1.2.4.1).
11 Thus I was of great help to him, and it isn’t strange at all that Sakra, the king of the devas, should show me such love.

The Buddha’s closing verses

12 For, bhikshus, happy it is to see the noble ones;⁴⁰ [271] happy it is, too, to live with them in the same place. However, it is suffering indeed to be with fools!

Having said this, he uttered these verses:⁴¹

13 Sādhu dassanaṁ ariyānam
    sannivāso sadā sukhā
    adassanena bālanāṁ
    niccam eva sukhī siyā

    Good is the seeing of the noble saints,
    ever happy it is associating with them.
    Not seeing the foolish,
    one would always be happy.

14 Bāla, saṅgata, cāri hi
    dīgham adhāna socati
    dukkho bālehi saṁvāso
    amitten’eva sabbadā
    dhīro ca sukhā, saṁvāso⁴²
    ṇātinaṁ va samāgamo.

    For, one who moves in the company of fools
    grieves for a long time.
    Painful is living with [being close to] the foolish,
    truly like being with an enemy always.
    But it is happiness to live with [being close to] the wise,
    just like meeting with relatives.

15 Therefore,

    dhīrañ ca paññañ ca bahussutañ ca
    dhorayaḥ, siḷāṁ vata, vantāṁ āriyāṁ
    tam tādisaṁ sappurisam sumedham
    bhajetha nakkhatta, pathaṁ’va candimā

    being learned, wise and steady,⁴³
    engaged in moral virtue, dutiful, noble—
    such a one is a true individual, wise,
    let one follow as the moon keeps to its starry path.

[Commentary has been omitted.]

At the end of the teaching, many attained the fruition of streamwinning.

— evaṁ —

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⁴⁰ The noble individuals are the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats.
⁴¹ These verses are also at SD 24.6b (5.5).
⁴² As suggested by V Lesný, it is possible that dhīra stands for dhīreiḥ (“A new reading of Dhammapada 207,” JPTS 1924-1927:235-36); cf bāle, “the foolish” (pl) (Dh 61). Uv 30.26 reads dhīrais tu sukha, saṁvāso, “There is happiness being close to the wise.” See O H de A Wijesekera (Syntax of the Cases in the Pāli Nikāyas,” 1993:11) & Dh:N 113 n207.
⁴³ There is poetic licence here in reversing the sequence of these 3 qualities. The tr keeps to the normal sequence for easy reading to the modern eye. On reversal of Pali verbal phrases in translation, see §8 n at the end.

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