

SD 62.10i (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta

The (Sixes) Discourse on Intractability | A 6.115

Theme: Hindrances to wholesome learning and their remedies

Translated by Piya Tan ©2025

1 Sutta summary

1.1 SUMMARY OF A 6.115

The (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta (A 6.115) lists the hindrances to wholesome learning and the remedies to the hindrances. The hindrances to learning are *a lack of tractability, bad friendship and mental distraction*. Their remedies are those of tractability, good friendship and breath meditation, all of which should be cultivated.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF A 6.115

The (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta gives a triad of unwholesome habits and their opposites [2.0.1].

The unwholesome triad—*intractability, bad friendship and mental distraction*—are the unwholesome qualities that prevent one from gaining mental focus for keeping the mind calm and clear to see directly into true reality to gain awakening and freedom from suffering.

Intractability is an *internal* unwholesome condition that prevents one from learning the Dharma so that one does not understand one's true self and how one relates to others for a happy personal life and harmonious connection with others.

Bad friendship is an *external* unwholesome condition where one follows and repeats the negative qualities of others. This negative habit further hardens one's intractability, so that one continues to live an unwholesome life.

As a result of intractability and bad friendship, one is distracted and unable to cultivate one's mind for spiritual development. Thus one remains chained to the world and its sufferings.

2 Related terms: A comparison

2.0 THE SUTTA TERMS AND THEIR RECURRENCES

2.0.1 The A 6.115 pair of triads

The (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta (A 6.115) contains the following pair of triads, that is, 3 pairs of opposite terms, thus:

<u>3 states to be abandoned</u>		<u>3 states to be cultivated</u>	
(1) intractability	<i>dovacassatā</i>	tractability	<i>sovacassatā</i>
(2) bad friendship	<i>papa, mittatā</i>	spiritual friendship	<i>kalyāṇa mittatā</i>
(3) mental distraction	<i>cetaso vikkhepa</i>	breath meditation	<i>ānāpāna, sati</i>

These terms recur elsewhere in the suttas and the Abhidhamma. We will look at some of these references by way of comparative study.

2.0.2 The Saṅgīti Sutta

The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) mentions the following pairs of qualities:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) <i>dovacassatā ca papa, mittatā ca</i> | intractability [2.0.6.1] and bad friendship ¹ [2.0.6.2]; |
| (2) <i>sovacassatā ca kalyāṇa, mittatā ca</i> | tractability [3.1] and spiritual friendship ² [3.2]. |

2.0.3 The Katthī Sutta (A 10.85)

The Katthī Sutta (A 10.85) records the elder Mahā Cunda as teaching the monks a list of qualities that bring spiritual decline (*parihāṇa*). Amongst them is this pair of unwholesome qualities:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| (1) <i>dovacassatā</i> | intractability | [2.0.6.1] |
| (2) <i>pāpa, mittā</i> | (keeping) bad friends | [2.0.6.2] |
| | | (A 10.85/5:159, 161) |

2.0.4 The Sāmaka Sutta (A 6.21)

The Sāmaka Sutta (A 6.21) gives the following triad of qualities that bring one ruin (*parihāṇiya*):

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| (1) <i>saṅgaṇikārāmatā</i> | delighting in society | [2.0.6.4] |
| (2) <i>dovacassatā</i> | intractability | [2.0.6.1] |
| (3) <i>papa, mittatā</i> | bad friendship | [2.0.6.2] |
| | | (A 6.21/3:310) |

2.0.5 The Abhidhamma

2.0.5.1 In the Abhidhamma, the **Dhammasaṅgaṇī** in its “summary of the sutta dyads” (*suttantika, -duka, nikkhepa*)³ and the **Vibhaṅga** in its “analysis of small items” (*khuddaka, vatthu vibhaṅga*) (ch 17), list the various Dharma qualities in sets connected with *dovacassatā*, thus:

dovacassatā ca pāpa, mittatā ca (Dhs 7,23; Vbh 346,35)⁴
intractability [2.0.6.1] and bad friendship [2.0.6.2].

2.0.5.2 The Vibhaṅga, in its **Tika Mātikā** (triad matrix), in connection with *dovacassatā*, lists the following 2 triads of Dharma qualities (a+b), followed by stock definitions⁵ for a few of them; also glosses from other texts and Commentaries:

- (a) *dovacassatā pāpa, mittatā nānatta, saññā* (Vbh 347,36; VbhA 499 x2)
Intractability [2.0.6.1], bad friendship [2.0.6.2], perception of diversity [2.0.6.5]
- (b) *anādariyaṃ dovacassatā papa, mittatā* (Vbh 347,40)
disrespect [2.0.6.6], intractability [2.0.6.1], bad friendship [2.0.6.2]

¹ D 33,1.8(6)/3:212.

² D 33,1.8(7)/3:212.

³ Dhs §1325/228,10-14.

⁴ Def at Dhs 228,20.

⁵ A “stock definition” is standard or fixed register of terms defining a term given within a text.

2.0.6 Explanations of the negative terms

The **Vibhaṅga**, and also a few places in the **Dhammasaṅgaṇī**, explain the above negative qualities as follows. For explanations of recurrent terms, see their first occurrence in each case.

2.0.6.1 INTRACTABILITY (*dovacassatā*) [2.0.1 (1)]

The **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** and the **Vibhaṅga** give this stock definition of intractability:

Therein, what is intractability?

Having been spoken to in keeping with the Dharma, one (reacts) unamenably, without being amenable, without amenability, holding on to contrariness, being in a state of non-regard, disrespect, non-deference.

This is called *intractability*.⁶

This very same stock definition is used by the **Puggala Paññatti** in its chapter on “the 2 individuals” (*dve puggalā*) to define an unamenable person (*puggalo dubbaco*) as one who is difficult to speak to in terms of giving advice (Pug 20). Hence, we can take **dubbaca** as a synonym of *dovacassa* (adj).

2.0.6.2 BAD FRIENDSHIP (*papa, mittatā*) [2.0.1. (2)]

The **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, the **Vibhaṅga** and the **Puggala Paññatti** give this stock definition of bad friendship:

Therein what is bad friendship?

There are those persons who are without faith, of bad morality, of little (Dharma) learning, mean, lacking wisdom. The associating with, resorting to, consorting with, connecting with, familiarizing with, befriending, being devoted to, entanglement with such persons—

this is called **bad friendship**.⁷

Broadly, bad friendship—the negative opposite of spiritual friendship [3.2.1]—is any kind of association with another that distracts one from the 3 trainings—those in moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom—that makes or influences one to be immoral, distracted or misinformed and deluded.

2.0.6.3 MENTAL DISTRACTION (*cetaso vikkhepa*) [2.0.1 (3)]

The negative quality of mental distraction is listed or discussed in a number of suttas, such as the following:

(1) **Tayo Dhamma Sutta** (A 10.76/5:145, 147 f passim, 149), SD 2.4

The **Tayo Dhamma Sutta** uses a “dependent ending” formula in 10 steps, each of which is a triad of unwholesome states that explains why and how we need spiritual training and practice, as follows (paraphrased):

⁶ *Tattha katamā dovacassatā. Sahadhammike vuccamāne dovacassāyaṃ dovacassiyaṃ dovacassatā vippaṭṭikula-g, gāhitā vipaccanīkasātātā anādariyaṃ anādaratā agāravatā appatissavatā. Ayaṃ vuccati dovacassatā.* (Dhs 228 = Vbh 359, 369, 371; cf DA 3:978)

⁷ *Tattha katamā pāpamittatā? Ye te puggalā assaddhā dussīlā appassutā maccharino duppaññā, yā tesaṃ seva-nā nisevanā samsevanā bhajanā sambhajanā bhatti sambhatti taṃ sampavaṇkatā. Ayaṃ vuccati papa, mittatā.* (Dhs 228 = Vbh 359, 369, 371 = Pug 20,16-22, 24,9-21; cf DA 3:979)

- 1 The Buddha arises and teaches Dharma to shine in the world because of
 - 2 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 3 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 4 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 5 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 6 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 7 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 8 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 9 which can only be overcome by abandoning
 - 10 which can only be overcome by abandoning
- birth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*)--
lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)--
personal identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vīci-kicchā*) and attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, -bata, parāmāsa*)--
unwise attention (*ayoniso, manasikāra*), the wrong path (*kummagga, sevana*), and mental sluggishness (*cetaso līnattā*)--
unmindfulness (***muṭṭha-s, sacca***), lack of clear awareness (***asampajañña***) and a distracted mind (***cetaso vikkhepa***)--
not desiring to see the noble ones (*ariyānaṃ adasana, kamyata*), not desiring to hear the noble Dharma (*ariya, dhammassa asotu, kamyata*), a mind bent on hostility (*upārambha, cittata*)--
restlessness (*uddhacca*), non-restraint (*asaṃvara*) and immorality (*dussīla*)--
lack of faith (*assaddhiya*), unfriendliness (*avadañña-ta*) and laziness (*kosajja*)--
disrespect (*anādariya*), intractability (*dovacassatā*) and bad friendship (*papa, mittatā*)--
lack of moral shame (*ahirika*), lack of moral fear (*anottappa*) and heedlessness (*paṃāda*).

Fully stated, the 4th link reads:

Without giving up 3 things, bhikshus, one would be unable to give up unwise attention, following the wrong path, and mental sluggishness.

What are the three?

They are **unmindfulness, lack of clear awareness, and a distracted mind.**⁸

Unmindfulness (*muṭṭha, sacca*) is the opposite of *sati* or *paṭissati*. Basically, **mindfulness** (*sati*) directs the mind (attention) to the proper mind-object. Mindfulness has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not forgetting, manifested as guarding.⁹

Clear awareness (*sampajañña*) also means “full awareness” or “full understanding.” It follows up the work of mindfulness (*sati*). The Visuddhi, magga explains that **clear awareness** (*sampajañña*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is investigation, manifested as scrutiny. (Vism 4.172/163)

A distracted mind (*cetaso vikkhepa*) is mental restlessness (*uddhacca*) (ThaA 1:176), which is the theme of the **(Chakka) Uddhacca Sutta** (A 6.116), SD 62.10j.¹⁰

⁸ “A distracted mind,” *cetaso vikkhepaṃ*, mental restlessness (*uddhacca*) (ThaA 1:176).

⁹ See SD 54.2h (2.2.1.2).

¹⁰ Other refs are: **Nm** 1:220; **NmA** 2:325; **Dhs** 86, 205, 216; **Vbh** 168, 255 x2, 348, 369, 372, 373; **VbhA** 277; **ItA** 2:177; **ThaA** 1:176.

(2) Visuddhi,magga (Vism 8.65/347)

Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on the practice of body-based mindfulness (*kāya,gata,sati*), mentions the 10 skills of keeping one's attention on the meditation-object. The 4th skill is that of “warding off distraction,” which he explains thus:

As to warding off distraction: one must prevent [temptation] to lose the meditation-subject and to let one's mind get distracted among the variety of external objects. For if not, just as when a person is going on a foot-wide cliff-path, if one looks about here and there without watching one's step, one may miss one's footing and fall down the cliff, which is perhaps as high as a hundred men; so too, when there is external distraction, the meditation-subject gets neglected and deteriorates. So one should keep one's attention to it, warding off distraction.¹¹

2.0.6.4 DELIGHTING IN SOCIETY (*saṅgaṇikāramātā*)¹² [2.0.3 (1)]

A number of suttas warn renunciants against the tendency of socializing, that is, delighting in or being caught up with groups and busyness, and engaging with the laity other than in direct connection with the Dharma, thus:

(1) Mahā Suññata Sutta (M 122,3/3:109, 110), SD 11.4.

It is impossible for a renunciant (or meditator) to attain dhyana for the purpose of self-awakening.

(2) Bhaddaka Sutta (A 6.14/3:293)

A renunciant who delights in society will neither have a good death nor fully make an end of suffering. Such a negative habit will bring one rebirth in a suffering state (*apāya*) (AA 3:348).

(3) Saṅgaṇik'ārāma Sutta (A 6.68/3:422)

A renunciant who delights in society is unlikely to delight in the solitary life of renunciation. It will be impossible for him to obtain the meditation-sign during meditation (that is, to gain samadhi). This in turn will make it difficult for him to fulfill right view; which then makes it impossible for him to get right concentration; which makes it impossible for him to abandon the mental fetters. Hence, he is unable to attain nirvana.

(4) Dhammānupassanā Sutta (A 6.117/3:449 f)

Without abandoning the following 6 things one will *not* be able to contemplate the body in the body (*kāye kāyānupassī*; basically do any body-based meditation to attain right mindfulness for dhyana or freedom), that is:

delight in work, in talk, in sleep, in society, in not guarding the sense-doors, and in immoderate eating.

(5) Dhammānupassī Sutta (A 6.118/3:450)

Similarly, without abandoning *delight in work, in talk, in sleep, in society, in not guarding the sense-doors, and in immoderate eating*, one will not be able to cultivate satipatthanas, that is,

¹¹ *Vikkhepa,paṭibāhanato ti kammaṭṭhānaṃ vissajjtvā bahiddhā puthutt'ārammaṇe cetaso vikkhepo paṭibāhitabbo. Appaṭibāhato hi yathā nāma eka,padikaṃ papāta,maggaṃ paṭipannassa purisassa akkamana,padaṃ asal-lakkhetvā ito cito ca vilokayato pada,vāro virajjhati, tato sata,porise papāte patitabbarṃ hoti, evam eva bahiddhā vikkhepe sati kammaṭṭhānaṃ parihāyati paridharāsi. Tasmā vikkhepa,paṭibāhanato manasikātabbarṃ.*

¹² **D 16,1.7/2:78** (SD 9); **M 122,3/3:110** (SD 11.4); **A 5.89/3:116, 6.14/3:293 f** (SD 111.4), **6.21/3:310, 6.68/3:422**. Cf *saṅgaṇikārāma* VbhA 474; *saṅgaṇika,rata* D 2:78; Sn 54; *saṅgaṇike rata* Tha 84. See also MA 1:102; SnA 1:169; ThaA 2:208.

contemplate <u>the body</u> in the body	internally, ... externally, ... both internally and internally;
contemplate <u>feeling</u> in the feeling	internally, ... externally, ... both internally and internally;
contemplate <u>mind</u> in the mind	internally, ... externally, ... both internally and internally;
contemplate <u>dharma</u> in the dharma	internally, ... externally, ... both internally and internally. ¹³

(6) Adhimāna Sutta (A 10.85/5:164)

In this Sutta, the elder Mahā Cunda warns that one may boast of having attained the various dhyanas or any of them (the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas, and cessation). However, the dhyanas one has attained will decline and one will lose them due to any of the following 10 unwholesome conditions, namely:

(1) immoral conduct, (2) lack of faith, (3) little learning, (4) intractability, (5) keeping bad friends, (6) laziness, (7) muddle-headedness, (8) deceit, (9) being difficult to support, and (10) being unwise.

(A 10.85/5:164)

Although **the (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta** mentions only 3 states to be abandoned—*intractability, bad friendship, and mental distraction*—we should understand these as being only *a few* of the prominent unwholesome qualities which include or lead to any or all of the 10 unwholesome conditions listed in **the Adhimāna Sutta**.

2.0.6.5 PERCEPTION OF DIVERSITY (*nānatta,saññā*) [2.0.5.2 (a)]

(1) The (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta (M 128) records Anuruddha informing the Buddha that Anuruddha and his colleagues (Nandiya and Kimbila) are unable to attain mental concentration beyond perceiving “light and vision of forms,” which disappear not long afterward. The Buddha then explains that any of 11 mental impurities (*upakkilesa*) may result in such a loss of mental concentration.¹⁴

Perception of diversity (*nānatta,saññā*) is the 10th of the 11 mental impurities mentioned.¹⁵ This set of 11 mental impurities is probably an early list of mental hindrances which evolved into the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*).¹⁶

(2) Thus, the Vibhaṅga defines *nānatta,saññā* as “perception of sense-desire, perception of ill will, perception of violence” (*kāma,saññā vyāpāda,saññā vihiṃsā,saññā*). The Vibhaṅga Commentary goes on to explain the 2 kinds of perceptions of diversity, namely:

Perception regarding diverse things, because of arising in respect of objects which have many signs, is “**perception of diversity**” (*nānatta,saññā*). (i)

Or “because perception of sense-desire is one, perception of ill will is another, and so on; therefore perception is diverse.” (ii)

Hence, it is perception of diversity.¹⁷

(VbhA 499,17-19)

¹³ Basically, “internally” refers to one’s own self, “externally” to another person. For a practical analysis of these 4 satipatthanas, see SD 13.1 (5); on “internally,” etc: SD 13.1 (3.7.4).

¹⁴ M 128/3:160 x2, 162 x2 (SD 5.18).

¹⁵ The 11 mental impurities are: (1) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (2) inattention (*amanisāka*), (3) sloth-and-torpor (*thīna,middha*), (4) terror (*chambhitatta*), (5) excitement (*ubbilla*), (6) inertia or inaction (*duṭṭhulla*), (7) excessive effort (*accāraḍḍha, viriya*), (8) weak effort (*atīlīna, viriya*), (9) longing (*abhijappā*), (10) perception of diversity (*nānatta,saññā*); (11) excessive scrutinizing of forms (*atinijjhāyitattaṃ ... rūpānaṃ*). SD 5.18 (3).

¹⁶ Basically, the hindrances arise when one engages with any of the physical senses or the mind—technically, the mind-consciousness elements and the mind-element itself [(3) below]—with an unwholesome mind. In fact, comys usu gloss *upakkilesa* as “the 5 mental hindrances” (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*), eg DA 3:881; SA 2:304, 3:201; AA 2:322. See **(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12; **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

(i) refers to *the diversity of perception of a sense-object (ārammaṇa)*—such as a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, or a touch, or a thought¹⁸—in which one is caught up with greed, hatred or delusion. One moves around from one object to another, or these objects arise and distract one so that one loses the meditation-object.

(ii) refers to *the diversity of perception* arising from one's attention to or “minding” of (*manasikāra*) the object, that is, with an **unwholesome root** (*greed, hatred or delusion*). Greed for the object, for example, is due to delighting in it (associating it with some past pleasant memory of something similar); or feeling hatred for the object due to disliking it on account of associating it with some bad past memory; or one is deluded by it, *not* knowing how to keep the mind focused due to not understanding the object.¹⁹

(3) **The Visuddhi, magga**, in its commentary on formless states, explains the phrase “**with non-attention to perception of diversity**” (*nānatta,saññānaṃ amanasikāra*), as referring either “to perceptions occurring in diverse sense-fields [visible form, sound, etc]” (*nānatte vā gocare pavattānaṃ saññānaṃ*) or “to perceptions of diversity (itself)” (*nānattānaṃ vā saññānaṃ*).

The term “perception of diversity” is mentioned for 2 reasons—as analyzed in the Vibhaṅga—as follows:

Therein, what is perception of diversity?

The perception, perceiving, state of having perceived, in one who has not attained dhyana and who is endowed with the mind-element and mind-consciousness element²⁰—

these are called perceptions of diversity. (Vbh 261)

In other words, the perception of such a one (perceiving diversity), comprising the data of his mind and mental awareness of sense-experiences, goes on in a field of diversity with reference to difference in sights, sounds, and so on. And also because “the field of diversity” comprises 44 kinds of perceptions (according to the Abhidhamma).²¹ (Vism 10.20/330)²²

2.0.6.6 Disrespect (*anādariya*) [2.0.5.2 (b)]

The (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta lists “intractability” (*dovacassatā*) as the first of the 3 unwholesome states to be abandoned for spiritual progress [§2]. *Dovacassatā* is also listed or explained along with

¹⁷ *Puthu, nimittārammaṇesu pavattito nānattesu saññā nānatta,saññā. Yasmā vā aññā va kāma,saññā, aññā vyā-pād’ādi,saññā, tasmā nānattā saññā ti pi nānatta,saññā.*

¹⁸ Vibhaṅga mentions here 7 types of perceptions: those arising from eye-contact, from ear-contact, from nose-contact, from tongue-contact, from body-contact, from mind-element contact, and from mind-consciousness-element contact. (Vbh 403)

¹⁹ These 2 kinds of *nānatta,saññā* can also be applied wholesomely to a proper meditation-object, such as in kasiṇa meditation (based on a colour or an element) [*Bhāvanā* SD 15.1 (9.2)].

²⁰ “Mind-element” (*mano,dhātu*) is the cognitive faculty that cognizes thoughts or ideas, “making sense,” of the various sense-experiences; it is the “mind” behind each of the 6 sense-experiences. “Mind-consciousness element” (*mano,viññāṇa dhātu*) is the purely mental process that “minds” (ie, perceives, conceives, judges, constructs, projects, and so on) those experiences. See SD 60.1d (1.1.1.6), SD 62.1d (2.3.1.2).

²¹ “Because of the 44 kinds of perception, namely: 8 kinds of sense-sphere wholesome perception, 12 kinds of unwholesome perception, 11 kinds of sense-sphere wholesome-resultant perception, 2 kinds of unwholesome-resultant perception, 11 kinds of sense-sphere functional perception.” (Vism 10.20/330)

²² Other refs to *nānatta,saññā*: D 3:161; M 2:233+234 3:160; Pm 1:32, 45, 64, 67, 97; Nm 1:74; Vbh 261, 347, 369 x3; DA 3:1017; MA 4:208 x2; AA 3:57; NmA 1.100; NcA 62; ItA 2:138; PmA 1:132, 133; DhsA 202; VA 1:163. On *nānatta,saññā*, D 1:31; M 2:233, 234; DA 1:119; MA 1:38.

other unwholesome states, such as **disrespect** (*anādariya*) [2.0.5.2 (b)] all of which should be abandoned. Some examples of other Dharma sets that include *dovacassatā* and *anādariya* include the following:

(1) The Tayo Dhamma Sutta (A 10.76)²³ [2.0.6.3 (1)]

The Tayo Dhamma Sutta lists 10 stages of training leading to the overcoming of “birth, old age and death,” that is, suffering. The training starts with moral conduct, that is, one has to abandon **lack of moral shame** (*ahirika*), **lack of moral fear** (*anottappa*) and **heedlessness** (*pamāda*).²⁴

On the positive side, moral shame (*hiri*) arises from respect of others; moral fear (*ottappa*) is rooted in self-accountability or karma, that our actions and speech, good or bad, have real effects on us.²⁵ Heedfulness is the constant attention and care given to moral shame and moral fear in our actions. As we progress in our spiritual training, according to **the Tayo Dhamma Sutta** [2.0.6.3 (1)], we should abandon the triad of unwholesome habits that are:

disrespect (*anādariya*), intractability (*dovacassatā*) and bad friendship (*papa, mittatā*).

(2) Dovacassatā is also explained in a number of Abhidhamma texts alongside mention of *anādariya*, such as the following:

*Tattha katamā dovacassatā.
Sahadhammike vuccamāne dovacassāyaṃ dovacassiyaṃ dovacassatā vippaṭṭikula-g, gāhitā
vipaccanīkasātataṃ anādariyaṃ anādaratā agāravatā appatissavatā.
Ayaṃ vuccati dubbaco.* (Pug 2.6/20)

Therein what is intractability?

Having been spoken to in keeping with the Dharma, one (reacts) unamenably, without being amenable, without amenability, holding on to contrariness, being in a state of non-regard, disrespect, non-deference.

This is called **disobedience**.

This passage is identical to the one in **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** (Dhs 228) and **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 359, 369, 371) [2.0.6.2] except for the last line where the Puggala Paññatti passage that reads “disobedience” (*dubbaco*). Note also the presence of “disrespect” (*anādariya*) and its synonym, “non-deference” (*anādaratā*). In other words, *dubbaca*, *anādariya* and *anādaratā* are synonyms of *dovacassatā*.

2.1 PALI IDIOM

2.1.1 The oral tradition

2.1.1.1 Note that the Pali passages—found in the Puggala Paññatti, the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī, and the Vibhaṅga—have words that *alliterate and rhyme* [2.0.6.6(2)]. Such alliterations (beginning with the same sound or letter) and rhymes are very common, especially in the Pali definition of terms.

A reader or scholar not familiar with **Pali idiom**, especially its polysemy, may righteously or desperately criticize that “the author(s) of these passages did not really know how adequately to define the term.”²⁶ To some modern readers the English translation of the above passage may sound repetitive and

²³ A 10.76/5:146, 148.

²⁴ See SD 62.4b (3.4.2.1).

²⁵ See **Moral shame and moral fear**, (SD 2.5).

²⁶ S Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, 1996a:92, 130.

verbose. However, such texts belong to **an oral tradition** where repetition and lexical lists help the listener to have a clear fix on the flow of the teaching.²⁷

2.1.1.2 The early Buddhist oral tradition as we know it today employs **Pāli**²⁸ or Māgadhī, a classical²⁹ Middle Indo-Aryan language of the Indian subcontinent.³⁰ It is widely studied because it is a language of the early Buddhist texts,³¹ today collectively known as the Pali canon or Tipiṭaka,³² and is also the sacred language of Theravāda Buddhism (which was a much later ethnic development in Sri Lanka and SE Asia).³³

Pali as a language is not homogeneous but **a mixed dialect** with numerous dialectal particularisms.³⁴ We must imagine the monk-scribes—forming recital communities called *bhāṇaka*, “reciters”—having heard the Buddha or being relayed his teachings (and those of other saint teachers) would orally transcribe or standardize what they heard into the canon that has come down to us. Hence, Pali has no script of its own. When the Pali texts came to be written down, amongst the scripts used were Brahmi (Asokan), Kharoṣṭhī (Gāndhārī) and the scripts of Nepali, Sinhala, Burmese, Khmer, Siamese, Laotian, Devanagari and of course roman (English).³⁵

2.1.2 Pali dynamics

2.1.2.1 Pali is well known for its effective “**mechanics**”³⁶ employing such mechanisms as *sandhi*, *tenses*, *polysemy*, *etymologies*, *word lists*, *stock passages and repetitions*. As a phonetic language, Pali is pronounced as it is spelt.³⁷ Pali **pronunciation** is also made easy and beautiful, and recitable, even sung, by the rule of **sandhi** or euphony (similar to Italian). Sandhi also helps in the formation of Pali compounds which connect words and ideas in a set (as is common in German).³⁸

2.1.2.2 Tenses in Pali are more contextual than they are in English. In Pali, the tenses express time as well as aspects, that is, the beginning, duration, completion or repetition of the action—Pali tenses are

²⁷ See SD 60.1d (5.2.3); SD 61.5b (1.0.2.2, 2.0.3).

²⁸ “Pāli” orig referred to “the text” or “canon” of *Dhamma* in contrast to the Commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*). It came to refer to a language only in ethnic Buddhism of Sri Lanka and SE Asia, and in modern scholarship. See Norman, 1.

²⁹ The Govt of India designated Pali as a classical language on 3 Oct 2024. [NDTV] [LiveMint] 21 Jan 2025.

³⁰ A Middle Indo-Aryan language, Pāli is closest to Old Indo-Aryan language, ie, Vedic, Sanskrit and Dardic of NW India. Although it has the same type of relationship with Old Indo-Aryan language as all other Middle Indo-Aryan languages have, it is difficult to derive it completely from any of the well-documented older dialects. Hence, it is prob that the basis of Pali may be some other Old Indo-Aryan dialect. For instance, the enclitic 3 personal pronoun in Pāli *se* is found in Avestan *se*, Old Persian *saīy*, but not in Vedic or Sanskrit. (Sanjay Kr Singh, in (eds) Sarao & Long, *Buddhism and Jainism*, Springer, 2017:836)

³¹ Early Buddhist oral texts were compiled in various local dialects or vernaculars. However, apparently, only the Pali texts survived as a most complete canon to our times.

³² *Ti,piṭaka* or “3 baskets” comprises the Vinaya,piṭaka, the Sutta,piṭaka and the Abhidhamma,piṭaka. For their composition, see SD 3.2 (1); Abhidhamma, SD 26.1 (2.1.2).

³³ For refs, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pali>.

³⁴ Geiger, *Pali Literature and Language*, tr B Ghosh, 2nd ed, Calcutta, 1956:1.

³⁵ Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1974, 3rd ed 1991:1-9. [Pali tutorial] 21 Jan 2025.

³⁶ In the sense of “the procedural or operational details (of *something*)” (OED).

³⁷ In Pali, each letter (incl ligatures) has only one sound.

³⁸ English examples of sandhi are seen in these words borrowed from Latin, “indirect,” “impossible” and “illuminate.” The final *n* of *in-* harmonizes with initial *-d* of “direct” since both the letters are dental. *In-* becomes *im-* before “possible” to harmonizes with the initial labial *p-* of “impossible.” *In-* becomes lingual *il-* before initial *-l* “illuminate.” They are also easier to pronounce than “*inpossible*” or “*inluminate*.” [Sandhi] 21 Jan 2025.

thus less fixed than in English.³⁹ Often there is the use of the historic present to narrate past events, such as *ekam samayam bhāgavā sāvatthiyam jetavane viharati*, literally, “Once the Blessed One stays in Jetavana outside Sāvattthī.” Idiomatically, we should translate this as: “Once the Blessed One was staying in Jetavana outside Savatthī.” In other words, translating according to the context is the rule for Pali suttas.⁴⁰

2.1.2.3 Polysemy means the possibility or applicability of multiple meanings to a word or expression concurrently expressing the breadth of its connotation. However, the passage context will usually define its sense in more practical terms. The best known of polysemous words is the term *dhamma*, which can mean “‘thing,’ truth, justice, teaching, code, quality, mental state, phenomena, concept, idea, conditionality, quality, and so on.”⁴¹

Polysemy arises from the pervasive interconnectedness of reality of which we tend to view or express in parts or pieces to facilitate reference, discussion, understanding and communication. It is a hallmark of an oral tradition and a teaching that is to be experienced and internalized rather than merely spoken of in words, symbols, dogmas or mysteries.⁴²

2.1.2.4 Etymology gives Pali words their basic senses or trace these basic senses down to the root (the part of a word giving the main sense from which other forms derive). Philologists however often are able to explain words historically by tracing out and describing the elements of a word with their modifications of form and sense. It is however up to us, the informed reader, to read the word or expression in its current context to bring out the intended or proper sense.

Along with other components like prefixes and affixes, an informed reader will be able to read deeper senses or subtler nuances of the words. The root √GAM, “to go,” for example, when prefixed with *ā-* (meaning “to, towards” and also “from”)—*ā* + √GAM—takes the sense of “to come.” *Nibbāna* derives from the prefix *ni-* (down or out) + the root √vĀ, “to blow,” that is, “to blow out (the fires of greed, hatred and delusion).”

2.1.2.5 The Pali texts often use **teaching lists and stock passages**—even in assimilating outside terms or teachings to highlight its teachings, regular events or high points in the narrative. Such stock passages include the following situations or developments:

- the Buddha has arisen in the world, and the teaching and practice are available, **D 2,40** (SD 8.10);
- the moralities (early list of Vinaya practices of the renunciants), **D 13**, SD 1.8 (1.1.1);
- the 6 qualities of the Dharma (recollection on Dharma), **S 11.3,13** (SD 15.5);
- the true Sāvitrī, “with its 3 lines and 24 syllables” (the 3 refuges) **Sn 457** (SD 22.2);
- the Buddha has arrived outside the village or town; his reputation is announced, **S 55.7,2** (SD 1.5);
- disciples plead ignorance and request the Buddha to teach them Dharma, **A 10.58** (SD 57.20b);
- the listener takes leave of the Buddha after a teaching, **M 36,55** (SD 49.4);
- the fruits of recluseship (the 3 trainings) benefit all who truly renounce, **D 1,8-27** SD 25;
- a disciple goes into solitary retreat and emerges as an arhat, **D 9,56.4 n** (SD 7.14);
- the arhat’s 4 knowledges (*te, vijjā*) (same name as the “3 Vedas”), **D 13,1.8** (2.2.2).

³⁹ In Pali, the present tense or present aspect includes more than just actions happening now. It may refer to actions in the immediate future or a historical present (relating a past event as if it’s happening now). The present tense is also used to indicate the future, esp one that is imagined.

⁴⁰ Tense vs aspect & participles in Pali language: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTBbqudoa7c>. 21 Jan 2025. On Pali verbs, see [TipitakaNetwork] 250707.

⁴¹ On the polysemy of *dhamma*, see SD 51.25 (2.2.2.5)

⁴² See SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2); SD 54.3b (2.1.1.4); SD 62.10d (2.2.2.1).

2.1.2.6 The Pali texts are renowned for their **repetitions**, especially of key teachings. This allows the audience to follow the flow of ideas in a more cohesive manner and remember the teachings. Keywords are listed with synonyms or near-synonyms.⁴³ Such mechanisms give a kind of subliminal perception of the key sense of the register of synonyms or terms. Or they act like a familiar chorus in a song so that even when we hear only parts of it, we at once read the whole of that passage or stage of the narrative.

2.1.3 Listening to Dharma

Today, listening, whether to a **live speaker** or to **audiobooks**, can lead to developing deeper connectedness or empathy with the teacher or speaker. Instead of simply reading words on a page, we are better able to feel the emotion or emphasis behind the speech thanks to the narrator's voice (and image).

Listening to a compelling storyteller will engage the brain's emotional circuits, allowing us to process the narrative better and enjoy the material more. Listening also has a social component since there's a voice between the listener and the audiobook or digital video. The narrator's voice allows the reader to identify with the characters, even develop lovingkindness (*mettā*) toward them.

For most people, listening is easier, less straining and less stressful than reading. Nowadays, with audiobooks and digital information, listening is also more accessible and more convenient. We are able to pause the reading or make notes at our own pace, and some are just as good with making notes with a live speaker or making recordings of a lecture or session.

2.2 LISTENING OR READING?

2.2.1 Good listening

2.2.1.1 Early Buddhist oral tradition is both about listening (*savana*) and enjoying the listening (*sus-sūsā*). **Listening** is a *passive* act of attending to the teachings by a wise and experienced teacher in the sense of hearing Dharma and being amenable to instructions (such as keeping the precepts and to a meditation routine). One **enjoys listening** to the sound of what is well recited in Pali or a good translation in a familiar language so that one becomes more familiar with the suttas and teachings. One feels joyful (*savanīya*) through hearing the Dharma. "Timely listening to Dharma (*kālena dhamma-s, savanam*)—this is a supreme blessing" (Khp 5,8/3 = Sn 266).

We thus see suttas repeating Dharma teachings by the Buddha and his saint-disciples. Such a repetition of teachings is done for at least 2 reasons. Firstly, the teachings are repeated for the benefit of those who have *not heard* them. Secondly, it is to ensure that the listener or audience *remembers* the teaching, which is, after all, important enough to be repeated.⁴⁴

2.2.1.2 **The Vimutt'āyatana Sutta** (S 5.26) is a short but helpful teaching which says that listening, reciting and learning Dharma will benefit us by bringing us mental freedom even here and now. **The 5 grounds for spiritual freedom** (*vimutt'āyatana*) in terms of occasion are as follows:⁴⁵

1. "deep listening" to (or feeling) the Dharma	<i>paṭisaṁvedeti</i>	[S 5.26,2]
2. teaching the Dharma	<i>deseti</i>	[S 5.26,3]
3. reciting the Dharma	<i>sajjhāyaṃ karoti</i>	[S 5.26,4]
4. reflecting on the Dharma	<i>manasānupekkhati</i>	[S 5.26,5]
5. meditating (mental concentration)	<i>samādhi, nimittaṃ suggahitaṃ</i>	[S 5.26,6]

⁴³ See "Repetition in a Pāli sutta text": M Allon, *Style and Function*, Tokyo, 1997:273-363.

⁴⁴ SD 56.16 (2.2.2.3).

⁴⁵ These key points are also given in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(25)/3:241).

Each of these exercises should lead us to “knowing the Dharma and its meaning [goal]” (“knowing the Dharma as purpose and as truth,” *attha, paṭisaṃvedī ca hoti dhamma, paṭisaṃvedī ca*), that is, understanding the true purpose of the teaching and the wisdom it entails.⁴⁶

The modern habit of reading is subsumed under (1) “deep listening,” reading the Dharma as self-study. (2) Teaching the Dharma and (3) reciting the Dharma are ways of letting the Dharma be heard by others; the speaker also hears that same Dharma, and thus benefits from it, too. Methods (4) reflecting and (5) meditation are situations where one practises the Dharma, thus, as it were, “becoming” the Dharma.

When one hears the Dharma, “knowing more” about it is the theoretical aspect of learning; when one’s habits and life are transformed by Dharma, one “becomes” the Dharma by practising it. If one sees Dharma-learning as “knowing more,” it should be knowing more about oneself. Hence, we should not see Dharma learning or knowledge as a *status* (self-ordained, inherited, licenced or conferred by some authority) but rather as a state of goodness and freedom that one attains through self-transformation and liberating wisdom.

2.2.1.3 Suttas can either be *heard, recited or studied*, or all three. Direct teacher-pupil connection is vital in Buddhist training, since it is more about personal transformation than a mere transfer of knowledge or title. By **listening**, one gains knowledge and understanding from another; this is mostly theoretical learning, that is, wisdom through listening. Then by **reflecting** on such knowledge or understanding, one gains deeper insight; this is wisdom through thinking. Finally, by **meditating**, one gains calm and clarity with which one directly sees into true reality; this is wisdom through mental cultivation.

Underlying the 5 grounds for spiritual freedom [2.2.1.2] are the **3 kinds of wisdoms** or 3 levels of knowledge, that is,

- (1) “wisdom through listening” (*suta, mayā paññā*), that is, knowledge arising through receiving teachings, especially a direct transmission from a living teacher;
- (2) “wisdom through thinking” (*cintā, mayā paññā*), that is, knowledge arising through recollection and reflection;
- (3) “wisdom through mental cultivation” (*bhāvanā, mayā paññā*), that is, the understanding arising through direct seeing, that is, a personal experience of true reality.

(D 33,1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh 324)⁴⁷

2.2.2 Reciting and reading

2.2.2.1 Reading consistently improves concentration and critical thinking skills while strengthening brain network connectivity. For people used to a “reading habit,” like many in the West, they can easily read a book with sufficient attention and comprehension of the materials. For others who have a shorter attention span, listening to a live teacher helps to keep one better connected with the information flow.

This is not to say that one of these methods is better than the other. Reading and listening are equally important for developing cognitive and literacy skills. In terms of studying, which approach is more effective depends on the material being used. Reading, for example, can have the advantage of visuals by way of summaries, diagrams, notes (footnotes, endnotes, etc), pictures, references, reviews, critical feedbacks and bibliographies.

⁴⁶ See S 5.26,2.3 (SD 21.5); SD 10.15 (4.4.2).

⁴⁷ Further see SD 21.5 (3.1).

2.2.2.2 Since the oral tradition did not depend on any kind of documentation (neither writing nor printing), it fully relied on human memory. In significant ways, this is similar to the way that singers and actors remember their lines—by reciting and rehearsing. Hence, “**reciting the Dharma**” (*sajjhāyaṃ karoti*) is listed as the 3rd of the 5 grounds for spiritual freedom [2.2.1.2]. Recitation improves memory; “non-recitation is the rust of formulas” (*asajjhāya, māla mantrā*, Dh 241).⁴⁸

The early practice of reciting Dharma always refers to both remembering and learning the Dharma. One first memorizes the word (*vyañjana*) of Dharma; listening to teachings one deepens one’s understanding of its spirit (*attha*). Then, one puts Dharma into practice through body and speech (moral conduct), which facilitates one’s mental cultivation. With a calm and clear mind, one then sees directly into true reality, or, in one’s own time, one reflects on the Dharma and frees the mind.

2.2.2.3 Is **reading** (a printed book, a document or a screen) more advantageous than listening to a living speaker or recording? There are no definitive answers for this question. There may be some situational difficulties in either case. When reading, we may have difficulties in the actual pronunciation of foreign words and expressions used in the English text. We can of course look these up.

Conversely, when **listening** (without notes), we may have difficulties in knowing how certain words are spelt; or the speaker may speak too fast or unclearly, or we are distracted for a moment. Unlike in a live listening situation, in the case of reading printed text or listening to a recording, we are unable to ask the writer or speaker for clarifications at a suitable time.

Anyway, it remains that both ways of transmitting knowledge are here to stay. Today we read the newspapers, watch television, engage with the computer; and we talk with our phones and through the internet. To know the Dharma, we still need to listen (as in early Buddhism) to talks and teachings, and read the suttas and Dharma writings.

Then we have to set them aside so that we have the inner silence to calm and clear the mind to directly understand for ourselves what we have heard or read. No matter how much we have heard or read, we still need to seek the truth and see reality for ourselves so that we are free of suffering.

3 The positive Sutta terms

Since all the negative terms have been defined or explained earlier [2.0.6], we will here only discuss the positive terms or the positive aspects of the terms.

3.1 LEARNING AND FELLOWSHIP

3.1.1 Tractability (sovacassatā) [2.0.1 (1)]

3.1.1.1 There are 2 suttas of the same title of “Tractability”: **Sovacassatā Sutta 1 + 2** (A 7.34+35).⁴⁹ These 2 teachings are each repeated by a deva to the Buddha; they both list the 7 conditions for the non-decline of a monk, that is:

(1) respect for the teacher (the Buddha)	<i>satthu, gāravatā;</i>
(2) respect for the Dharma	<i>dhamma, gāravatā;</i>
(3) respect for the sangha	<i>saṅgha, gāravatā;</i>
(4) respect for the training	<i>sikkhā, gāravatā;</i>
(5) respect for mental concentration	<i>samādhi, gāravatā;</i>
(6) tractability	<i>sovacassatā;</i>

⁴⁸ SD 56.16 (2.2.2.3).

⁴⁹ A 7.34/4:29; A 7.35/4:30.

(7) spiritual friendship

kalyāṇa, mittatā.(A 7.34/4:29; A 7.35/4:30)⁵⁰

In **A 7.35**, the elder Sāriputta then elaborates on the teaching by adding that one should encourage each quality in others, and to praise when any of those qualities are seen in another.

In this set of teachings for understanding the nature of the 3 jewels (*ti, ratana*) and the proper practice of 3 trainings, tractability acts as an openness to wholesome learning and to straightening one's views. Spiritual progress is not about being right or knowledgeable but having overcome wrong view and attaining the path.

3.1.1.2 The suttas often pair **tractability** with **spiritual friendship**. The basic reason for this is that both qualities are concerned with wholesome communication and Dharma fellowship rooted in the 3 trainings. In this context, the sangha is seen as a learning and teaching community of renunciants.

(1) In the section on “Dharmas” or “conditions” in the Book of Twos (*duka, nipāta*) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the sutta is simply prefaced with the words, “Monks, there are these 2 states or things (*dhammā*)”:

Intractability (being difficult to correct) and bad friendship.

dovacassatā ca papa, mittatā

Tractability and good friendship.

sovacassatā ca kalyāṇa, mittatā

(A 2.94+95/1:84)

These teachings are tersely stated because they have been addressed more fully in other suttas, which Dharma teachers would quote and elaborate on with their wisdom and experience for the benefit of their audience.

(2) The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) lists the pair as being rightly taught (*sammad-akkhātā*) by the Buddha:

Tractability and spiritual friendship (*sovacassatā ca kalyāṇa, mittatā ca*) (D 33, 1.9(7)/3:212)

The Das'uttara Sutta (D 34) lists this same pair of virtues as qualities that conduce to distinction (*visesambhāgiyā dhammā*). “Conduce to distinction” means that it creates favourable conditions that bring one to the path of awakening. Tractability is the personal or “internal” quality of the joyful desire to learn and grow in Dharma; while spiritual friendship is the interpersonal or “external” aspect of wholesome communication between teacher and pupil. (D 34, 1.3(6)/3:274)

(3) The Maṅgala Sutta (Khṇ 5, 9/3 = Sn 266)

Tractability (*sovacassatā*) is listed with patience (*khantī*) amongst the 38 supreme blessings (*maṅgala*) of the **Maṅgala Sutta**:

Patience and **tractability**—this is the highest blessing.

Khantī ca sovacassatā ... etaṃ maṅgalam uttamam.

Patience here refers to the wholesome acceptance of our shortcomings and the joy to be able to work with our lack and failures to transform them into strength and goodness. This is possible through the openness to learning from others, from their failings, and from the wisdom of compassionate teachers.

⁵⁰ A 7.35 is an expansion on the teaching-narrative of **(Chakka) Devatā S** (A 6.69/3:423-425), which omits item 5 (mental concentration), which is included in item 4 (training).

3.1.1.3 The Kakacūpama Sutta (M 21) records a conversation between a slave-woman and the Buddha. When the slave-woman complains to the Buddha that her mistress the house lady Vedehikā is “fierce, not humble, not calm,” the Buddha exhorts her regarding patience.

A certain monk may appear “to be very gentle, very humble, very calm, that is, *so long as no disagreeable course of words touches him*.” But it is when he hears disagreeable words that he should make the effort to be *gentle, humble and calm*.

Further, a monk may appear tractable [easy to admonish] *for the sake of robes, almsfood, lodging and medicine, support and necessities for the sick*. The Buddha does not call such a monk “tractable” because he is intractable when he does *not receive any of these 4 supports*.

But, bhikshus, when a monk, honouring the Dharma, respecting the Dharma, esteeming the Dharma, venerating the Dharma, revering the Dharma,⁵¹ is **tractable**, or makes himself tractable, him I say to be one who is *tractable*.

Therefore, bhikshus, you should consider, thus:

‘Only in honouring the Dharma, respecting the Dharma, esteeming the Dharma, venerating the Dharma, revering the Dharma, we shall be *tractable*, or *make ourselves tractable*.’

This is how, bhikshus, you should train yourselves. (M 21,10/1:126,13-29), SD 38.1

3.1.1.4 The Sallekha Sutta (M 8) records the Buddha as advising us to avoid unwholesome ways of life for wholesome ones. An unwholesome state leads downwards to failure and suffering; a wholesome state leads **upwards** (*upari,bhāvaṃ,gamanīyā*). The Sutta lists 24 unwholesome mental states each of which should be overcome by its wholesome opposite, thus (paraphrased):

	<u>should be overcome by</u>	
(1) sloth and torpor	freedom from sloth and torpor;	<i>vigata,thīna,middha</i>
(2) restlessness	non-restlessness;	<i>anuddhatā</i>
(3) doubts	crossing over doubts;	<i>tiṇṇa,vicikicchā</i>
(4) anger	non-anger;	<i>akkodhanā</i>
(5) grudging	non-grudging;	<i>anupanāhī</i>
(6) scornfulness	non-scorning;	<i>amakkhī</i>
(7) spitefulness	non-spitefulness;	<i>apaḷāsī</i>
(8) jealousy	non-jealousy	<i>anissukī</i>
(9) miserliness	non-miserliness;	<i>amaccharī</i>
(10) fraudulence	non-fraudulence;	<i>asaṭhā</i>
(11) deceitfulness	non-deceitfulness;	<i>amāyāvī</i>
(12) callousness	non-callousness;	<i>atthaddhā</i>
(13) arrogance	non-arrogance;	<i>anatimānī</i>
(14) being hard to speak to	being easy to speak to;	<i>suvācā</i>
(15) bad friendship	spiritual friendship;	<i>kalyāṇa,mittatā</i>
(16) heedlessness	heedfulness;	<i>appamāṭṭa</i>
(17) lack of faith	faith;	<i>saddhā</i>
(18) moral shamelessness	moral shame;	<i>hirimanā</i>
(19) lack of moral fear	moral fear;	<i>ottāpī</i>
(20) lack of learning	much learning	<i>bahu-s,sutā</i>
(21) laziness	exertion of effort;	<i>āraddha,viriyā</i>
(22) unmindfulness	establishment of mindfulness;	<i>upaṭṭhita-s,sati</i>

⁵¹ Even the Buddha reveres the Dharma, putting it above himself: **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2), SD 12.3.

(23) lack of wisdom	accomplishment of wisdom;	<i>paññā,sampadā</i>
(24) clinging to self-views	non-clinging to self-views, not holding on to them	<i>asandiṭṭhī,parāmāsī</i> <i>anādhāna-g,gāhī</i> ⁵² (M 8/1:44), SD 51.8

This is an ancient miscellaneous list of “common defilements” causing one to habitually resort to negative emotions and hold wrong views. The list sounds like a list of colloquial shortcomings which over time evolved into various sets of teachings (like the triads studied in this lesson) and the 5 hindrances⁵³ and the 3 fetters.⁵⁴

3.1.1.5 In the (Chakka) Aparihāniya Sutta (A 6.22), the Buddha speaks of “6 states that lead to non-decline” (*cha parihāniyā dhammā*), thus:

(1) not delighting in work,	<i>na kammā,rāmatā,</i>
(2) not delighting in talk,	<i>na bhassā,rāmatā,</i>
(3) not delighting in sleep,	<i>na niddā,rāmatā,</i>
(4) not delighting in socializing,	<i>na saṅgaṇikā,rāmatā,</i>
(5) tractability, and	<i>sovaccassatā,</i>
(6) spiritual friendship,	<i>kalyāṇa,mittatā.</i>

In the past, all those who did not decline in wholesome qualities did so due to these 6 qualities.

In the future, all those who will not decline in wholesome qualities will be due to these 6 qualities.

At present, too, all those who do not decline in wholesome qualities do so due to these 6 qualities.

(A 6.22/3:310)

The 1st item in the 6 qualities clearly precludes the set from referring to worldly work (*kamma*). There is also a hint here that a true renunciant is careful not to create bad karma through thought, speech and action so that the Vinaya precepts are not violated. Similarly, a renunciant avoids “coffee talk” or idle chatter, which is a wrong speech. This quality pairs with “not delighting in socializing,” which means keeping contact with the laity only for teaching Dharma and Dharma-related duties (like performing the last rites). Due to the calm and restful nature of a meditative monastic life, renunciants should spend just enough time for rest and recuperating, and more time in study and meditation.

A good renunciant is one who is **tractable**, easy to instruct and speak with. **Spiritual friendship** is a special Dharma-spirited relationship between teacher and pupil, especially in meditation or sutta studies. The teacher here may be a monastic or a lay practitioner. The spirit of such a friendship entails all the other qualities mentioned here.

⁵² V 2:89,27; D 3:45,18, 48,3 (DA 839,13), 247,2; M 1:43,24, 96,13 (MA 1:190,27, 3:839,11), 97,14 f; Sn 891.

⁵³ The 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇā*) are (1) sensual desire (*kāma-c,chandā*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*), (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): **Nīvaraṇa** (SD 32.1).

⁵⁴ The 3 fetters (*ti samyojanā*) are: (1) self-identify view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) doubt (*vicikicchā*), and (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*): **Tayo Dhamma S** (A 10.76) [2.0.6.3 (1)3]; SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

3.2 FRIENDSHIP

3.2.1 Spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa mittatā*) [2.0.1 (2)]

3.2.1.1 The Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54), also called Vyaggha,pajja Sutta, mentions charity in its definition of **spiritual friendship** (*kalyāṇa mittatā*), the 3rd of the 4 benefits of worldly welfare for one living a Dharma-spirited life,⁵⁵ thus:

What is spiritual friendship?

Here, Vyagghapajja, in whatever village or market town the son of family dwells, he associates, converses, discusses with houselords or houselords' sons, young men mature in virtue or old men mature in virtue, endowed with **faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom**.⁵⁶ He emulates the faith of the faithful, the virtue of the virtuous, the charity of charitable, and the wisdom of the wise.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of spiritual friendship.

(A 8.54,6/4:282), SD 5.10

The Sampadā Sutta 1 (A 5.91) lists these 4 spiritual attainments [blessings] (*sampadā*) as the defining qualities of spiritual friendship, that is,

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| (1) the attainment of faith, | <i>saddhā sampadā;</i> | |
| (2) the attainment of moral virtue, | <i>sīla sampadā;</i> | |
| (3) the attainment of learning, and | <i>suta sampadā;</i> | |
| (4) the attainment of charity. | <i>cāga sampadā.</i> | (A 5.91/3:118) |

We can see that the first 2 and 4th qualities here are the same as those of the first 3 of **Dīgha,jānu Sutta** [3.2.1.1]. The 3rd quality of **Sampadā Sutta 1** is the “attainment of learning” (*suta sampadā*); and the 4th quality of **Dīgha,jānu Sutta** is wisdom (*paññā*). “Learning” (*suta*) is a quality to be cultivated by both monastics and laity. While **Sampadā Sutta 1** is a general teaching addressed to all laity, **Dīgha,jānu Sutta** is addressed specifically to the young man, Vyaggha,pajja, for whom “wisdom” is prescribed by the Buddha as “directed to the rising and falling away (of phenomena) ... leading to the destruction of suffering.”⁵⁷

3.2.1.2 The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī defines spiritual friendship as follows:

*Ye te puggalā saddhā sīlavanto bahussutā cāgavanto paññāvanto—yā tesam sevanā
nisevanā saṁsevanā bhajanā sambhajanā bhatti sambhatti sampavaṅkatā—ayaṁ vuccati*
(Dhs 228,24-28)

To associate with, consort with, frequent the company of such persons who are filled with faith, virtuous, deeply learned, generous and wise; to be close to them, devoted to them, enthusiastic about them, to be inclined to them.

⁵⁵ The other 3 benefits here and now are: (1) the accomplishment of diligence (*uṭṭhāna,sampadā*), (2) the accomplishment of watchfulness (*āraṅkha,sampadā*), and (3) the accomplishment of balanced living (*sama,jīvitā*) (A 8.54,-3-7/4:281 f), SD 5.10

⁵⁶ These 4 are also the conditions for spiritual welfare (in the world to come or rebirth) (A 8.54,11/4:284), SD 5.10.

⁵⁷ *Paññavā hoti, uday’attha,gāminiyā paññāya samannāgato* (A 4:285); also D 3:237,17; M 1:356,19; S 5:197,19; A 3:2,26; Nm 40,2. On watching the rising and falling of feeling, see (**Aññathatta**) **Ānanda S 1** (S 22.37/3:37 f), SD 33.11.

The **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** list of qualities of a spiritual friend combines both the sets of qualities mentioned in **Dīgha,jānu Sutta** and **Sampadā Sutta 1** [3.2.1.1], giving a comprehensive set of 5 qualities: *saddhā, sīla, suta, cāga* and *paññā*.

3.2.2 The 2 types of spiritual friendship

3.2.2.1 The kind of friendship we have discussed so far [3.2.1] is in the broad sense of the term in the spirit of Dharma-spirited friendship. This is the kind of wholesome love, fellowship, cooperation and generosity that should exist between spouses, and amongst family members, relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues. This is called “true-hearted friendship” (**suhadā, mittatā*).

The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) describes **the true-hearted friend** as being a helper, one constant in joy and sorrow, a good counsellor and one caring, thus.⁵⁸

The helper (*upakāra*) has the following qualities:

- (1) He guards you when you are heedless.⁵⁹
- (2) He guards your property when you are heedless.
- (3) He is a refuge to you when you are in fear [in danger].
- (4) When you are faced with tasks, he provides you with double the supplies you need.⁶⁰

The one constant in joy and sorrow (*samāna, sukha, dukkha*) has the following qualities:

- (1) He tells you his secrets.⁶¹
- (2) He keeps your secrets.
- (3) He does not abandon you in your troubles.⁶²
- (4) He would even give up his life for you.⁶³

The good counsellor (*atth’akkhāyī*) has the following qualities:

- (1) He restrains you from (doing) bad.
- (2) He exhorts you in (doing) good.
- (3) He lets you hear what you have not heard before.⁶⁴
- (4) He shows you the way to heaven.

⁵⁸ D 31,21-26/3:187 f (SD 4.1).

⁵⁹ Comy: “When he sees that you have fallen in the middle of town or at the city gate or on the road after having taken some drinks, he sits down by you until you wake, lest your clothes be stolen.” (DA 3:949)

⁶⁰ *Uppannassa kicca, karaṇīyesu tad diguṇaṃ bhogaṃ anuppādeti.*

⁶¹ Cf “secret speech” (*raho, vāda*) in **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,13(4)), SD 7.8.

⁶² This is also the reciprocal quality that your “friends and companions” should show you [§31i].

⁶³ A famous example here is that of **Ānanda**, who stands right in front of the Buddha to prevent the intoxicated elephant Nālāgiri from trampling the Buddha. Ānanda remains where he is despite the Buddha forbidding him thrice. The Buddha “makes the earth turn around” to get Ānanda out of the way (J 533/5:335 f; DhA 1.12/1:140 f). In this connection, the Buddha relates **Cūḷa Haṃsa J** (J 533, 5:333-354), **Mahā Haṃsa J** (534/5:354-382), and **Kakkaṭṭa J** (267/5:341-345) on how, even in previous lives, Ānanda gave up his own life to save the Buddha. On what is even higher than dying for those (or what) we love, see **Spiritual friendship**, SD 34.1 (2.5.3).

In western philosophy, cf Aristotle’s: “But it is also true that the virtuous man’s conduct is often guided by the interests of his friends and of his country, and that he will, if necessary, lay down his life in their behalf. For he will surrender wealth and power and all the goods that men struggle to win, if he can secure nobility for himself; since he would prefer an hour of rapture to a long period of mild enjoyment And this is, doubtless, the case with those who give their lives for others Also the virtuous man is ready to forgo money if by that means his friends may gain more money; for thus, though his friend gets money, he himself achieves nobility ... ” (10.8.9 Loeb tr).

⁶⁴ Ie, he teaches you what you do not know.

The caring one (*anukampaka*)⁶⁵ has the following qualities:

- (1) He does not delight in your misfortunes.
- (2) He delights in your good fortunes.
- (3) He prevents others from speaking ill of you.
- (4) He commends others who speak well of you.

3.2.2.2 The Buddha describes **friendship between teacher and student** on 2 levels, the secular and the spiritual. **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** describes this educational friendship in terms of reciprocal ethics, in terms of mutual respect for each other.

Secular friendship between teacher and student is described thus. The student shows respect to the teacher in the following ways:

- (1) By rising (in salutation).
- (2) By waiting upon them.
- (3) By eagerness to listen [to learn].
- (4) By personal service.
- (5) By learning the arts (and professions)⁶⁶ with respect.

Teachers, having been ministered to thus by the student,⁶⁷ show him their compassion in these 5 ways, thus:

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| (1) They discipline him | so that he is well-disciplined. |
| (2) They teach him | so that he is well-taught and learned. |
| (3) They ensure that he is | learned in every art and learning. ⁶⁸ |
| (4) They introduce him to | friends and companions. |
| (5) They provide him with | safety in every quarter. |

These teachers clearly reflect the social conditions of Indian urban society during the Buddha's time, that is, for example, **the ancient Indian ashram** (*aśrama*) or residential school (*guru-kula*) system.⁶⁹ Considering that these are social teachings (thus culturally conditioned), we can and must make appropriate adjustments for the conditions in our own working environment today.

3.2.2.3 The **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** records the Buddha as going on to prescribe how "the son of family" (*kula,putta*, a broad term referring to a student) should respect "**recluses and brahmins**" (religious renunciants and practitioners). In this context, "brahmin" (*brāhmaṇa*) clearly does not refer to the caste priests, but is a "reformed term" used by the Buddha for monastics who keep well to the training, and to the path of sainthood. Of course, we may include well-behaving brahmins who are open to the Buddha's teaching and practice with the term here.⁷⁰

A student should respect and minister to the religious teacher in these 5 ways, thus:

⁶⁵ "Caring," *anukampaka*, fr the verb *anukampati* = *anu* (after, repetitive) + *kampati* (shake, tremble), lit, "he shakes or trembles along after (someone)" (D:RD 3:171).

⁶⁶ Here *sippa* apparently refers to "education" in general. Cf n to D 31,28h (SD 4.1).

⁶⁷ "Student," *antevasī*, lit, "inmate," ie, a resident student, apprentice.

⁶⁸ This refers to a well-balanced (even cross-disciplinary) curriculum.

⁶⁹ For refs, see "Gurukula" [Wiki] 24 Jan 2025.

⁷⁰ On buddhicization of brahminical terms, see **Why the Buddha hesitated**, SD 12.1 (6).

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|----------------------------|--|
| (1) By physical acts of | lovingkindness. |
| (2) By words of | lovingkindness. |
| (3) By thoughts of | lovingkindness. |
| (4) By keeping the house | open to them. |
| (5) By providing them with | material needs [or the means to such needs]. |

Recluses and brahmins (*religious renunciants and practitioners*), having been ministered to thus by **the son of family**, show him their compassion in these 6 ways, thus:

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|-----------------------------|---|
| (1) They restrain him | from (doing) bad. |
| (2) They exhort him in | (doing) good. |
| (3) They, with a good mind, | show him compassion. |
| (4) They let him hear | what he has not heard before. ⁷¹ |
| (5) They clarify | what he has heard. |
| (6) They show him | the way to heaven. |

3.2.2.4 “Spiritual friendship” (*kalyāṇa, mittatā*) is the term given to the dynamic relationship between an experienced meditation teacher and his pupils. It is said to be “the whole of the holy life”⁷² since it encompasses training in moral conduct, meditation and wisdom.⁷³ **The Kalyāṇa, mittatā Sutta** (S 45.49) states that spiritual friendship is the *external* condition for the noble eightfold path.⁷⁴ **The Yoniso Sutta** (S 45.55) says that wise attention is the *internal* condition for the noble eightfold path. In this “liberating bond” *spiritual friendship* supports the conducive conditions and teachings for mental cultivation, while *wise attention* refers to the student’s efforts in knowing, shaping and freeing his mind.⁷⁵

3.3 THE MIND AND THE BREATH

3.3.1 The Buddha and breath meditation

The (Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta lists “mental distraction” as the 3rd state in the unwholesome triad [S2]; this is to be overcome by the practice of “breath meditation,”⁷⁶ that is, the 3rd state in the wholesome triad [S4]. The breath meditation is specifically mentioned since historically it is the meditation used by the Buddha himself on the night of his awakening and which brought him awakening, as stated in **the Padīpōpama Sutta** (S 54.8).⁷⁷

3.3.2 Breath meditation [2.0.1 (3)]

Breath meditation is an ancient yogic practice popular with Indian yogis over the centuries, and even to this day. However, the traditional non-Buddhist method was often done with some form of breath control or with religious mantras, prayers and visualizations. The Buddha made use of the breath meditation just as it is—as the flow of breath that he was fully aware of—until it frees itself completely from the body to become a purely mental process.

⁷¹ Duties (4) and (6) are the same as (3) + (4) of the “true counsellor” [3.2.2].

⁷² **Upaḍḍha S** (S 45.2/5:2 f), SD 34.9.

⁷³ See **Meghiya S** (A 9.3 ≈ U 4.1) & SD 34.2 (2.1.1). See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1; **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness**, SD 8.1.

⁷⁴ S 45.49/5:28 f @ SD 34.11.

⁷⁵ SD 34.2 (2.1).

⁷⁶ **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118, 5-7 + 15-22) SD 7.13.

⁷⁷ (S 54.8/5:316-320), SD 62.2; (**Ānāpāna**) **Āsava-k, khaya S** (S 54.20), SD 56.13a(4).

The freed breath brings the mind to full focus and into dhyana. Emerging from the dhyana, with the resultant calm and clarity, the Buddha then sees directly into the true nature of reality; its impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself. There is nothing to grasp in anything; thus he frees himself from greed, hatred and delusion, and gains awakening.

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(Chakka) Dovacassatā Sutta The (Sixes) Discourse on Intractability

A 6.115

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| <p>1 (Originating in Sāvatthi.)</p> <p>2 There are, bhikshus, these 3 states.
What are the three?
 (1) intractability;
 (2) bad friendship;
 (3) mental distraction.
 These, bhikshus, are the 3 states.</p> <p>3 These are the 3 states, bhikshus, to be abandoned.</p> <p>4 Three (other) states are to be cultivated.
What are the three?
 (1) For the abandoning of <u>lack of tractability</u>
 tractability should be cultivated.
 (2) For the abandoning of <u>bad friendship</u>
 good friendship should be cultivated.
 (3) For the abandoning of <u>mental distraction</u>
 breath meditation should be cultivated.</p> <p>5 These, bhikshus, are the 3 states to be abandoned.</p> <p>These are the 3 states to be cultivated.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">(sāvatthī, nidanam)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>tayo’me bhikkhave dhammā
katame tayo
dovacassatā
pāpa, mittatā
cetaso vikkhepo
ime kho bhikkhave tayo dhammā
imesaṃ kho bhikkhave tiṇṇaṃ
dhammānaṃ pahānāya</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>tayo dhammā bhāvetabbā
katame tayo
<u>dovacassatāya</u> pahānāya
sovacassatā bhāvetabbo
<u>papa, mittatāya</u> pahānāya
kalyāṇa, mittatā bhāvetabbo
cetaso vikkhepassa pahānāya
ānāpāna, sati bhāvetabbo</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>imesaṃ kho bhikkhave tiṇṇaṃ
dhammānaṃ pahānāya
ime tayo dhammā bhāvetabbā ti.</i></p> |
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—evaṃ—

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